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## **De Valera's gains: The Masculine Body in Irish Political Cartoons, 1922 - 1939**

### **Introduction: Masculinity, Power, the Body and the Political Cartoon**

Éamon de Valera was unquestionably one of the most significant political actors in twentieth century Ireland. His political career, spanning almost six decades, from the Easter Rising in 1916 to his death in 1975 makes him a fascinating subject for study. Indeed, de Valera's time in high office is arguably one of the longest of any democratically elected leader in history. Perhaps his most significant political achievement, was the 1937 Irish Constitution. Controversially, this document proclaimed that "mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labor to the neglect of their duties in the home."<sup>1</sup> This invites the following question: what connects gender and political power in de Valera's career? How, for instance, was the representation of de Valera's masculinity used to confer political legitimacy? Conversely, how were representations of his perceived lack of masculinity used to denigrate his legitimacy?

This article analyzes the representation of Éamon de Valera over the period 1922-1939 through the medium of political cartoons. It argues that cartoons demonstrate how discourses of masculinity were central to the construction of political power in the Irish Free State, using de Valera as a case study. The period 1922-39 represents a period of post-revolutionary consolidation in Ireland. It was during this period that the Irish state introduced a series of legislation that sought to limit the role of women in public life. During this the period, the Irish state gradually achieved sovereignty from Great Britain. Whilst the Irish state had only attained dominion autonomy in 1922, by 1939 it could demonstrate its sovereignty through its declaration of neutrality in the Second World War.

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<sup>1</sup> Bunreacht na hÉireann. art. XLI, § 2, cl. 2.

Masculinity offers a useful analytical lens with which to consider the political culture of the Irish Free State. Indeed, few historians would disagree that the political culture of the Irish Free State privileged masculinity over femininity.<sup>2</sup> Legislation limited women's participation on juries in 1924 and 1927. It also limited their access to contraception in 1929 and 1934. Moreover, whilst not a result of formal legislation, between 1923 and 1933, only one woman took her seat in Dáil Éireann (Margaret Collins O'Driscoll).<sup>3</sup> This was the result of a pro-Treaty victory in the Irish Civil War. Most politically active women supported the anti-Treaty side. Anti-Treatyites were ridiculed by their opponents as "the women and Childers party."<sup>4</sup>

The way in which political life is represented as masculine has indeed been a constant in political history. As Wendy Brown argues, "politics has been more exclusively limited to men than any other realm of endeavor and has been more intensely self-consciously masculine than most other social practices."<sup>5</sup> As a state that had emerged from a nationalist revolution, the Irish Free State was particularly marked by a masculine political culture. To quote Joan Wallach Scott, emergent rulers have often sought to legitimize "domination, strength, central authority, and ruling power as masculine . . . and [have] made that code literal in laws . . . that put women in their place."<sup>6</sup> As Nira

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<sup>2</sup> See for instance: Maryann Valiulis, "Power, Gender and Identity in the Irish Free State," *Journal of Women's History* 6:1/7:4 (Winter/Spring 1995): 117-36;

Caitrona Beaumont, "Women, Citizenship and Catholicism in the Irish Free State, 1922-1948," *Women's History Review* 6:4 (1997): 563-85.

<sup>3</sup> Several other women were elected to the Dáil in this period but refused to take their seats.

<sup>4</sup> See for instance: Jason Knirck, *Women of the Dáil: Gender, Republicanism and the Anglo-Irish Treaty* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006). This quote refers to Erskine Childers, a prominent anti-Treaty politician.

<sup>5</sup> Wendy Brown, *Manhood and Politics: A Feminist Reading in Political Theory* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, 1988), 4.

<sup>6</sup> Joan Wallach Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review* 91:5 (Dec. 1986): 1072.

Yuval Davis argues, gender is heavily implicated in constructions of nation.<sup>7</sup> Nationalist revolutions are therefore particularly imbued with a rhetoric of masculinity. Drawing on the theories of Ashis Nandy, Geraldine Meaney argues that, in these circumstances, of which Ireland offers a classic example, “colonized peoples, often long after colonization itself has ended, tend to observe or impose strictly differentiated gender roles in order to assert the masculinity and right to power of the (male) subjects.”<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, recent scholarship has demonstrated the intellectual potential of masculinity as a lens for analysis of Irish society and politics. Since the 1990s, scholars of Irish studies have increasingly demonstrated an interest in this subject. Caroline Magennis and Raymond Mullen have written on the role of masculinities in both Irish literature and culture.<sup>9</sup> The discipline of history has also shown encouraging signs of coming to terms with the complex relationship between masculinity and political life. Patrick McDevitt’s work on sport and masculinity in the British Empire has recognized the significance of Gaelic Games in constructing an Irish nationalist masculinity.<sup>10</sup> Fearghal McGarry’s biography of Eoin O’Duffy has demonstrated how masculinity and virility figured prominently in its subject’s political rhetoric.<sup>11</sup> More recently, Joseph Valente, Sikata Bannerjee, Jane McGaughey and Aidan Beatty have all used masculinity as an analytical lens to understand the dynamics of political

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<sup>7</sup> Nira Yuval Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage, 1997).

<sup>8</sup> Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983);

Geraldine Meaney, “Sex, Culture and Nation: Women in Irish Culture and Politics,” in *Irish Women’s Studies Reader*, ed. Ailbhe Smyth (Dublin: Attic Press, 1993), 233.

<sup>9</sup> Caroline Magennis, *Sons of Ulster: Masculinities in the Contemporary Northern Irish Novel* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010);

Caroline Magennis and Raymond Mullen, eds., *Irish Masculinities: Critical Reflections on Literature and Culture* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2011).

<sup>10</sup> Patrick F. McDevitt *May the Best Man Win: Sport, Masculinity and Nationalism in Great Britain and the Empire, 1880-1935* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). See also, in particular, Idem, “Muscular Catholicism: Nationalism, Masculinity and Gaelic Team Sports, 1884-1916,” *Gender & History* 9:2 (Aug. 1997): 262-284.

<sup>11</sup> Fearghal McGarry, *Eoin O’Duffy: A Self-Made Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

life in modern Irish history.<sup>12</sup> Graduate scholars, such as Conor Heffernan and Rebecca Mytton have also made valuable contributions to this field.<sup>13</sup> Of particular note, Aidan Beatty's research has highlighted the significance of masculinity in the construction of power in de Valera's early political career, noting that "the trope of masculinity did much work for Sinn Féiners . . . It permitted them to critique British rule as an effeminizing influence on Irish men."<sup>14</sup> This article takes these insights further and extends them into the post-revolutionary era of de Valera's career, using the lens of political cartoons.

Political cartoons, as visual sources, are particularly potent means of representing masculinity. Politicians are, by nature, public figures who most regularly appear before large audiences. This necessitates their visibility. Politicians' bodies offer a masculine symbol of power. As Judith Butler argues, gender is constituted through "discursively constrained performative acts that produce the body through and within the categories of sex."<sup>15</sup> R. W. Connell further notes that masculinity is

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<sup>12</sup> Joseph Valente, *The Myth of Manliness in Irish National Culture, 1880-1922* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2011). See also, Idem, "The Manliness of Parnell," *Éire-Ireland* 41:1&2 (Spring/Summer 2006): 64-121;

Jane G. V. McGaughey, *Ulster's Men: Protestant Unionist Masculinities and Militarization in the North of Ireland, 1912-23* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012);

Sikata Bannerjee, *Muscular Nationalism: Gender, Violence, and Empire in India and Ireland, 1914-2004* (New York: New York University Press, 2012);

Aidan Beatty, *Masculinity and Power in Irish Nationalism, 1884-1938* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

See also:

Rebecca Anne Barr, Sean Brady and Jane McGaughey, eds., *Ireland and Masculinities in History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

<sup>13</sup> Conor Heffernan, "Strength Peddlers: Eddie O'Callaghan and the Selling of Irish Strength" *Sport in History* 38:1 (Oct. 2018): 23-45.

Rebecca Mytton, "Nationalist Masculinities and the Irish Volunteers, 1913-1916" (M.A. diss., University of Sheffield, 2016).

<sup>14</sup> Aidan Beatty, "Masculinity and Nationhood in the East Clare By-Election, 1917" *Éire-Ireland* 51:3&4 (Fall/Winter 2016): 164.

<sup>15</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1990), vii.

dependent on performance, and it is vulnerable if the performance cannot be sustained.<sup>16</sup> Understandably, therefore, the body is primarily represented visually. As Anthea Callen argues, “in pictorial images we recognize likeness or difference; we identify ourselves, or find a different ‘other’, another which, equally powerfully, serves to reinforce our image of our own bodily existence.”<sup>17</sup> As a result, the visual presentation of a masculine body has proved vital for numerous political careers.

There is, indeed, a rich scholarship on the representation of gender in Irish visual culture. Much of this scholarship turn, has facilitated reflections on constructions of masculinity in Irish visual culture. Debbie Ging, for instance, has written extensively on the complex manifestations of masculinity in Irish film.<sup>18</sup> Catherine Nash has also shown how the visual culture of landscape in Ireland is inherently gendered, whilst Úna Ní Bhroiméil and Dónal O Donoghue have demonstrated the potential of a visual methodology to explore constructions of gender in Irish teacher training in the early twentieth century.<sup>19</sup> There has also been interest in the simultaneous construction of both gender and nation in Irish visual culture. Of particular note, Síghle Bhreathnach-Lynch and Tricia Cusack have published a collection of essays on the representation of nationhood through the gendered symbol of the “national mother figure.” Whilst this collection is international in scope, essays by John Turpin and Hilary Robinson, give a particular focus to Irish experiences.<sup>20</sup> Both Bhreathnach-Lynch’s work on art in twentieth century Ireland, as well as Eimear O’Connor’s reflections on the art of Séan

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<sup>16</sup> R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge: Polity, 1995), 54.

<sup>17</sup> Anthea Callen, “Ideal Masculinities: An Anatomy of Power” in *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff (London: Routledge, 1998), 401.

<sup>18</sup> Debbie Ging, *Men and Masculinities in Irish Cinema* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

<sup>19</sup> Catherine Nash, “Reclaiming Vision: Looking at Landscape and the Body” *Gender, Place & Culture* 3:2 (1996): 149-170;

Úna Ní Bhroiméil and Dónal O Donoghue, “Doing Gender History Visually” in *Gender and Power in Irish History*, ed. Maryann Gialanella Valiulis (Newbridge: Irish Academic Press, 2010), 159-182.

<sup>20</sup> Tricia Cusack and Síghle Bhreathnach-Lynch, eds., *Art, Nation and Gender: Ethnic Landscapes, Myths and Mother-Figures* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

Keating, also demonstrate how art can be used to understand representations of masculinity.<sup>21</sup> The art of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Ireland was strongly rooted in the ideology of cultural revival, as may be seen in the paintings of Séan Keating, Jack B. Yeats, Paul Henry, Charles Lamb and Maurice McGonigal. Irish nationalist ideology naturally lent itself to the promotion of a particular vision of masculinity that was keen to throw off the shackles of effeminizing colonialism.<sup>22</sup> This was clearly expressed in art. As Bhreathnach-Lynch argues, in Yeats's paintings there "is no cowering peasant, but an Irish man who confidently dominates his world," whilst in Keating's paintings we see the "romantic image of the fighting men of the Easter Rebellion and of the War of Independence."<sup>23</sup> Elaine Sisson's and Gail Baylis's explorations of the constructions of Irish nationalist boyhood at St. Enda's College, through photography, offer another such example of this trope.<sup>24</sup>

Yet, much of the research on the connection between visual culture, gender and politics in post-independence Ireland has focused primarily on the visual personification of Ireland as the feminine Erin or as an anonymous farmer in the romanticized west of Ireland. Scholars have given less attention, however, to visual representations of the masculinity of particular political figures in the Irish Free State. Whilst Fintan Cullen both acknowledges and considers the role of masculinity in the history of Irish portraiture, for instance, he focusses primarily on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, exploring the depiction of figures such as Lord Edward FitzGerald, Daniel O'Connell and Charles Stewart Parnell, with limited attention given to politicians in early independent Ireland.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Síghle Bhreathnach-Lynch, *Ireland's Art, Ireland's History: Representing Ireland, 1845 to Present* (Omaha: Creighton University Press, 2007);

Eimear O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2013).

<sup>22</sup> Meaney, "Women in Irish Culture and Politics," 233.

<sup>23</sup> Bhreathnach-Lynch, *Ireland's Art, Ireland's History*, 75.

<sup>24</sup> Elaine Sisson, *Pearse's Patriots: St. Enda's and the Cult of Boyhood* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2004).

Gail Baylis, "Boy Culture and Ireland 1916" *Early Popular Visual Culture* 13: 3 (Oct. 2015): 192-208;

<sup>25</sup> Fintan Cullen, *Visual Politics: The Representation of Ireland, 1750-1930* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1997);

Idem, *The Irish Face: Redefining the Irish portrait* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2004).

Political cartoons offer a particularly useful source for many aspects of the visual representation of politicians, not least their masculinity. Whilst a politician may sit for a portrait, at most, several times in their career, they may appear in hundreds of cartoons, that appear on a weekly, if not, daily, basis in the press. The sheer number of cartoons published mean that the many complex facets of a politician's public image, as well as the gradual shifts in that image over time can thus be studied in greater depth. As Thomas Milton Kemnitz has argued, the political cartoon "has played an important role in the dissemination of images" of political leaders.<sup>26</sup> This is perhaps because, as Denise Bostdorff argues, they offer a "purposeful condensation of sometimes complex meanings into a single striking image."<sup>27</sup>

In the interwar period, political cartoons were particularly prominent in the press. As Isabel Simeral Johnson noted in 1937, "today is the day of the picture. The public has neither time nor wish for the great editorials which formerly did so much to mold political history. The cartoonist, no longer just a commentator on the passing show, has become an editorial writer who produces a leading article in the form of a picture."<sup>28</sup> In interwar Ireland, political cartoons were widely read and enjoyed by large audiences. *Dublin Opinion*, a popular humorous journal, published a wide variety of cartoons over its existence between 1922 and 1968. From 1925 onwards, it enjoyed a very healthy circulation, roughly constant at about forty thousand.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Thomas Milton Kemnitz, "The Cartoon as a Historical Source," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 4:1 (Summer 1973): 84-5.

<sup>27</sup> Denise Bostdorff, "Making Light of James Watt: A Burkean Approach to the Form and Attitude of Political Cartoons," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73 (1987): 44.

<sup>28</sup> Isabel Simeral Johnson, "Cartoons," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 1:3 (July 1937): 44.

<sup>29</sup> Felix M. Larkin, "Humour is the Safety Valve of a Nation: *Dublin Opinion*, 1922-68" in *Periodicals and Journalism in Twentieth Century Ireland*, eds. Mark O'Brien and Felix M. Larkin (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2014), 141;



L. P. Curtis's seminal study, *Apes and Angels*, demonstrates the intellectual potential of political cartoons as a source for Irish political and cultural history. Curtis draws together British cartoons of the Irish, colonial discourses, and intellectual debates over physiognomy and evolution in a sophisticated analysis of British cultural and political attitudes towards Ireland in the nineteenth century.<sup>30</sup> Curtis's insights have been further developed by Joseph Valente, who, in turn, uses cartoons to investigate the gendering of Charles Stewart Parnell's public persona.<sup>31</sup> The historiography of Irish political cartoons has largely followed Curtis, in focusing on British views of Ireland (and vice versa).<sup>32</sup> Scholarship on Irish representations of Irish politics have largely focused on nineteenth century nationalist leaders such as O'Connell and Parnell.<sup>33</sup> The literature on political cartoons in early independent Ireland is quite brief. Felix Larkin has written on political cartoons in both the *Freeman's Journal* and *Dublin Opinion* during the twentieth century.<sup>34</sup> Anne Dolan has also

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Mark O'Brien, *De Valera, Fianna Fáil and the Irish Press: The Truth in the News* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2001), 45.

<sup>30</sup> L. P. Curtis, *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature*, revised ed. (Washington DC: Smithsonian Books, 1997).

<sup>31</sup> Valente, "The Manliness of Parnell."

<sup>32</sup> See for instance: Roy Douglas, Liam Harte and Jim O'Hara, *Drawing Conclusions: A Cartoon History of Anglo-Irish Relations* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1998);

Roseanna Doughty, "Seamus O'Fawkes and Other Characters: The British Tabloid Cartoon Coverage of the IRA Campaign in England' *Media History* 24 (2018): 1-18.

<sup>33</sup> See for instance: Peter Gray, "'Hints and Hits': Irish Caricature and the Trial of Daniel O'Connell, 1843-4" *History Ireland*, 12:4 (Winter, 2004): 45-51;

Joel A. Hollander, "Heroic Construction: Parnell in Irish Political Cartoons, 1880-91" *New Hibernia Review* 4: 4 (Winter, 2000): 53-65.

<sup>34</sup> Felix Larkin, *Terror and Discord: The Shemus Cartoons in the Freeman's Journal, 1920-1924* (Dublin: A. & A. Farmar, 2009);

Felix Larkin, "Dublin Opinion, 1922-68."

written an unpublished thesis on *Dublin Opinion* between 1922 and 1923. Although cartoons are referenced in this work, they are not the principal focus of the dissertation.<sup>35</sup>

This article explores political cartoons as reflections of these discourses of political power. Whilst this article makes suggestions about how audiences may have interpreted these cartoons, it does not assume that the impact and reception of these cartoons was predetermined by their content. As Stuart Hall suggests, the transmission of media should perhaps be thought of, not as a simple linear process, but rather as “a structure produced and sustained through the articulation of linked but distinctive moments- production, circulation, distribution/consumption.”<sup>36</sup> As Hall argues, audiences make their own meanings. They can choose to accept, negotiate or reject the intended hegemonic meaning of the cartoon. Instead, this article understands political cartoons primarily as reflections of broader discourses of de Valera’s political persona. I argue that representations of de Valera’s body in these cartoons were inherently gendered, and that the gendering of his body reflected his perceived political power at the time. As this article shows, perceptions of de Valera were not homogenous. These perceptions changed with time, and with the political viewpoint of the author and publisher of the cartoons.

As this article argues, contemporary audiences would have readily recognized the gendered implications of particular representations of de Valera’s body. This article argues this by highlighting particular compositional elements of the cartoons explored that had a gendered significance in Irish culture. Such compositional elements included bodily build, sporting activities or facial features. This article examines the deeper meanings of political cartoons by exploring the significance of these

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<sup>35</sup> Anne Dolan, “‘Fumbling in the Greasy Till:’ *Dublin Opinion* and the Irish Bourgeoisie, 1922-3” (MA diss., University College, Dublin, 1996).

<sup>36</sup> Stuart, Hall, “Encoding/Decoding” in *Culture, media, language*, eds. Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe and Paul Willis (London: Routledge, 1992), 128.

compositional elements in wider social, cultural and political discourses of both the Irish Free State and the wider interwar world (particularly, Great Britain and the U.S., which, as English-speaking constitutional democracies, had similar political cultures to the Irish Free State). In particular, this article considers broader discourses of gender and the representation of women in the Irish Free State. As Aidan Beatty suggests, it is worth thinking about the ways in which “‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ are coterminous and each implicated in the other.”<sup>37</sup>

This article uses a discourse analysis methodology to analyze the broader cultural significance of the cartoons discussed. As a methodology, discourse analysis seeks to chart the flow of discourse from text to text. By “text”, I mean anything that contains signs, endowed with meaning and that can be read by audiences. Texts can indeed be verbal, or visual. Discourse analysis is therefore particularly useful in understanding how images relate to their wider contemporary context. Discourse analysis is a particularly appropriate methodology for the subject matter of this article, because as Gillian Rose argues, it is “centrally concerned with the production of social difference, through visual imagery. It addresses questions of power as they are articulated through visual images themselves.”<sup>38</sup> Compared to other visual methodologies, such as semiology, discourse analysis is particularly concerned with the broader social construction of meaning.<sup>39</sup> If we use visual images to consider questions of power and gender, this is an issue that cannot be ignored.

This article first explores the changing representation of de Valera over the period 1922-39 in *Dublin Opinion*. It argues that, in this journal, the masculinity of de Valera’s body changed in line with his

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<sup>37</sup> Beatty, *Masculinity and Power*, 11.

<sup>38</sup> Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: Sage, 2016), 217.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 144.

level of perceived political power. At times when publications deemed de Valera to be politically weak, they depicted de Valera with a weak, emaciated and effeminate body. Conversely, once de Valera's political fortunes rose once more, his body appeared with attributes that were widely recognized as being strong and masculine. Interestingly, Joseph Valente has made similar observations about the changing depiction of Parnell in cartoons. Whilst, during his political zenith, Parnell appeared victorious in "man-to-man combat of various sorts,"<sup>40</sup> by the time of his fall, he appeared as "a morally effeminate, not to say degenerate, political has-been."<sup>41</sup> This article then considers how publications that actively opposed de Valera depicted his body throughout this period. Here, Gordon Brewster's cartoons in the *Evening Herald* and cartoons from Cumann na nGaedheal election posters are examined.<sup>42</sup> In these cartoons, subtle innuendos about de Valera's ethnicity, intersected with representation of his masculinity. In these images de Valera's perceived lack of masculinity paralleled his perceived want of Irishness.

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<sup>40</sup> Valente, "The Manliness of Parnell," 109.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 113.

<sup>42</sup> Gordon Brewster (1889-1946), the son of a general manager of the *Irish Independent*, was educated at the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art, before settling down to draw cartoons for the *Evening Herald* from 1922 onwards.

## **De Valera's Body in *Dublin Opinion***

Across the interwar world, the muscular, healthy body was a symbol of both masculinity and power. Widespread concerns over loss of national political power were framed through the discourse of the degeneration of the national body. Anxieties over the nation's political power were represented through the metaphor of the unhealthy body politic. Moreover, the supposedly deteriorating physical health of the nation's children was presented as a threat to the nation's power. This discourse was intensely gendered. The powerful nation was conceived as having a healthy, masculine body politic. In this discourse, the nation's strength was (ideally) to be supported by the healthy bodies of its young men, who would be produced through the reproductive capacity of healthy, feminine mothers.

This discourse was stimulated by the prominence of social Darwinism. Healthy, fit and appropriately gendered bodies were most likely to survive and to pass on their genetics to the next generation, thus ensure the nation's future. Supporting healthy, masculine bodies was therefore vital to both the present and future health of the nation. J. A. Mangan argues that in the masculine world of British public schools around the turn of the century, social Darwinism was as influential in constructing models of manliness as the ideology of muscular Christianity.<sup>43</sup> These concerns were, if anything, deepened by the impact of the First World War. Not only had the war reduced the national population, through an increased death rate and reduced birth rate, it also fed preexisting anxieties about the physical fitness of the nation's young men, and thus, in turn, the nation's ability to defend itself. In 1919 the British Ministry of National Service issued a report that urgently noted that war had

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<sup>43</sup> J. A. Mangan, "Social Darwinism and Upper-Class Education in Late Victorian and Edwardian England" in *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Morality in Britain and America, 1800-1940*, eds. J. A. Mangan and James Walvin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 140.

“compelled us to take stock of the health and physique of our manhood; this stocktaking had brought us face to face with ugly facts.”<sup>44</sup>

In Ireland, immediately after the Irish Civil War, similar concerns over the physical degeneration of the nation were expressed in a similarly gendered idiom. In the Free State, the reduced birthrate and prevalence of emigration lead to campaigns against birth control being justified through reference to “race suicide.”<sup>45</sup> Critiques of the state of the Irish nation after the Civil War were also expressed in terms of the unhealthy body. Kevin O’Higgins argued in 1923 that “the body politic of Ireland is sick—the poison of anarchy has raced through its veins and after a feverish year there has set in a lethargy—mental, spiritual and physical.”<sup>46</sup> An early draft of the constitution of the Cumann na nGaedheal party, established that year (of which O’Higgins was a prominent member), also committed the party to securing the proper physical development for the nation’s children.<sup>47</sup> These aspirations naturally had gendered implications. Eoin O’Duffy, a prominent supporter of the Treaty, notably declared that “all countries are now alive to the importance of preventing race deterioration and physical decadence, . . . the greatest asset a country can have is a healthy, clean-living young manhood.”<sup>48</sup> Thus, it is easy to see how, in the Irish Free State, healthy, virile male bodies were viewed as symbols of national strength, and thus, in turn, of political legitimacy. Conversely, weakened and effeminate bodies were

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<sup>44</sup> *Report Upon the Physical Examination of Men of Military Age by National Service Medical Boards from November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1917- October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1918*, xxvi [C. 504], H. C. 1919, i, 6, quoted in Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men’s Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (London: Reaktion Books, 1996), 172.

<sup>45</sup> Maryann Gialanella Valiulus, “Virtuous Mothers and Dutiful Wives: The Politics of Sexuality in the Irish Free State” in *Gender and Power in Irish History*, ed. Maryann Gialanella Valiulis (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2009), 108.

<sup>46</sup> Kevin O’Higgins, Typescript of Speech at Dún Laoghaire, 29 October 1923, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/366, Archives of University College, Dublin, quoted in Jason Knirck, *Afterimage of the Revolution: Cumann na nGaedheal and Irish Politics, 1922-1932* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014), 39.

<sup>47</sup> Mel Farrell, *Party Politics in a New Democracy: The Irish Free State, 1922-37* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 73.

<sup>48</sup> *Garda Review*, Dec. 1928, quoted in McGarry, *Eoin O’Duffy*, 159.

perceived as symbols of national and political weakness. This can be illustrated through *Dublin Opinion*'s changing depiction of Éamon de Valera.

During the years 1922-1927 *Dublin Opinion* depicted de Valera as gaunt and emaciated (figure 1; figure 2).<sup>49</sup> This period saw de Valera in a marginalized position after finding himself on the losing side of the Irish Civil War. Due to his position of abstentionism, he could not take the oath needed to enter the Dáil. His perceived weakness was further compounded by a Treatyite perception that the pro-Treaty side was masculine and the anti-Treaty side was feminine.<sup>50</sup> William Cosgrave declared that “neurotic girls are among the most active adherents of the Irregular [anti-Treaty] cause.”<sup>51</sup> Gavin Foster, has described this statement as amounting to “a psychosexual critique of women as violent ‘furies’ and ‘harpies’, ill-suited for rational political discourse.”<sup>52</sup> As well as the charge of effeminacy, Treaty supporters were also able to suggest that their opponents were simply lacking in the physical strength that would support the masculinity that one needed to properly govern. As Foster also notes, the pro-Treaty side frequently decried its opponents as physically weak, degenerate “corner boys.”<sup>53</sup> This may be seen in a cartoon from the *Freeman's Journal*, that depicted its vision of the average anti-Treatyite: a physically emaciated, stunted, and hunched boy smoking a cigarette.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Arthur Booth, *What's the Betting, Gentlemen?* [1922], cartoon, *Dublin Opinion* [hereafter cited as *DO*], April 1922; Unknown Artist, *The End is not Yet* [1922], cartoon, *DO*, March 1922.

<sup>50</sup> The majority of Cumann na mBan branches opposed the Treaty.

<sup>51</sup> “A Message of Hope,” *Freeman's Journal*, 1 Jan. 1923, quoted in Gavin Foster, *The Irish Civil War and Society: Politics, Class and Conflict* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 33.

<sup>52</sup> Foster, *The Irish Civil War and Society*, 33.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-9.

<sup>54</sup> Ernest Forbes, *Super Film; New Terrorist Production; 'The Idealist'; Starring the Boy Gunman, the New Juvenile Lead; Until Further Notice*, [1922], cartoon, *Freeman's Journal*, 27 July 1922.

The rhetorical practice of equating political weakness with femininity and political strength with masculine physical strength was not just confined to Ireland. Indeed, as David Jarvis argues, the British Conservative party strongly emphasized the need for masculinity in political life. Party literature depicted Stanley Baldwin as Saint George, a “figure of rocklike strength”, whilst Ramsay MacDonald was seen as a “female figure, unattractive, shameless, and with a difficult brood of children.” Indeed, in one constituency contest, the Conservative party candidate’s cricketing and footballing prowess was contrasted with the Labour party candidate who was lambasted as idle and weak.<sup>55</sup>

By 1927 de Valera’s political fortunes had begun to change, Fianna Fáil went to the polls for the first time, in the first election of that year (in June). It then went on to increase the number of its seats in the second election of the year (in September). Moreover, in some ways, the assassination of Kevin O’Higgins was a blessing in disguise. By forcing the party to drop its policy of abstentionism, Fianna Fáil entered the Dáil and gained a new level of political influence. This entry into the Dáil was characterized in heavily gendered terms. Ernest Blythe argued that de Valera had “discovered that the oath is an empty formula- he had not the manliness to say that he had changed his mind.”<sup>56</sup> By taking the oath and thus entering the Dáil, for the first time since 1922, de Valera could once again perform the role of a masculine politician. Robert Briscoe noted that in doing so, “de Valera was determined that he would no longer remain a helpless spectator of Ireland’s ruin . . . he was free to enter the arena of action.”<sup>57</sup> Here, whilst de Valera’s “helplessness” implies feminization, his “action” carries clear connotations with strength and masculinity. As Anne Pulju argues, on this occasion, de Valera employed “his own established public persona” that drew upon several sources, not least, “his

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<sup>55</sup> David Jarvis, “The Conservative Party and the Politics of Gender, 1900-1939” in *The Conservatives and British society, 1880-1990*, eds. Martin Francis and Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996), 184.

<sup>56</sup> “Two Ways of Getting Money,” *Irish Independent*, 8 Sept. 1927.

<sup>57</sup> Robert Briscoe, *For the Life of Me* (London: Longmans, 1958), 226.



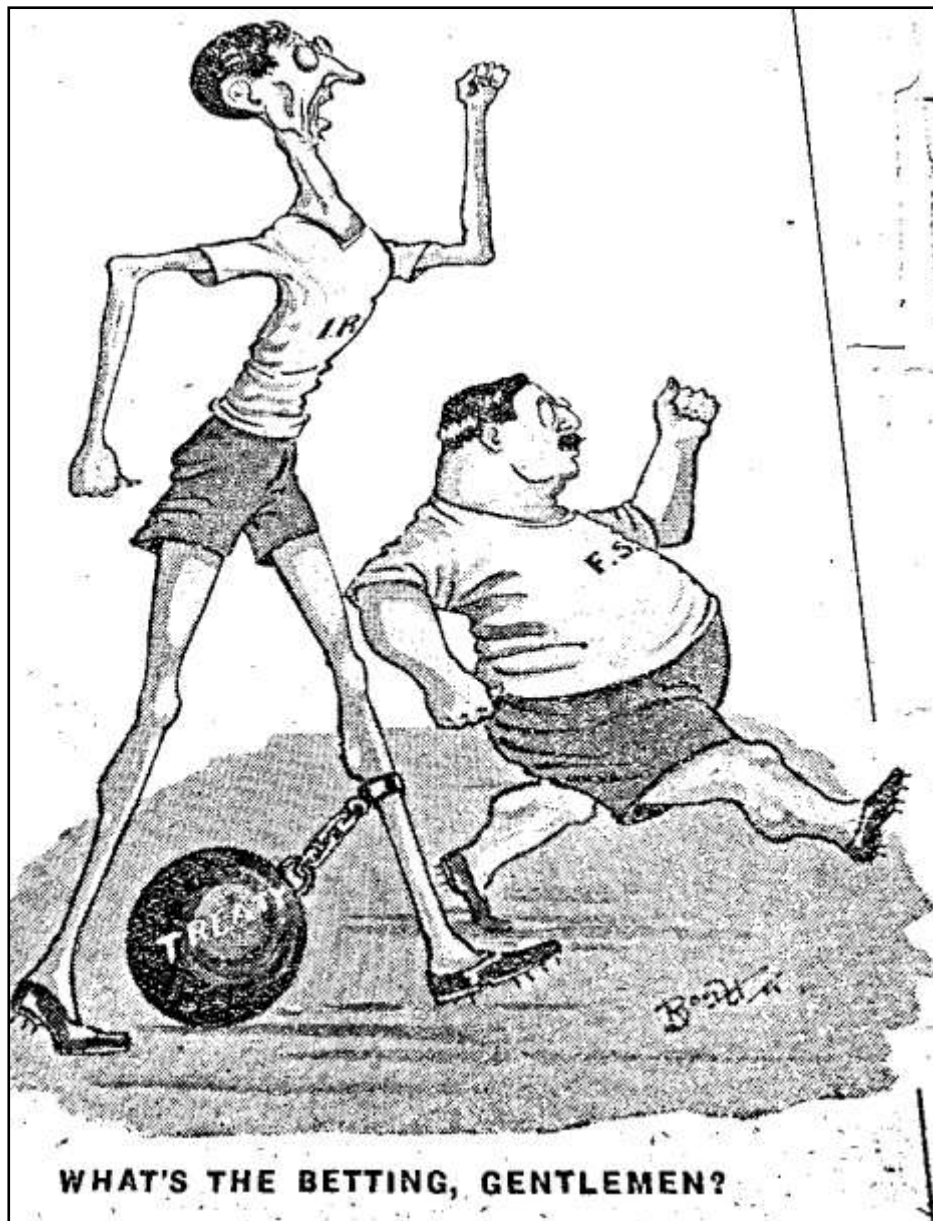
function as a visible symbol of whiteness, maleness, and Catholicity.”<sup>58</sup> By the end of 1927, cartoons started to appear where de Valera’s body was healthy and virile. In one issue of *Dublin Opinion*, de Valera and Cosgrave both appeared as muscular charioteers, racing competitively with each other.<sup>59</sup> This was a clear commentary on the inconclusive result of the two elections of 1927, whereby Fianna Fáil began to present itself as a serious alternative to the Cosgrave government.

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<sup>58</sup> Anne Pulju, “De Valera Performs the Oath: Word, Voice, Book and Act” in *Crossroads: Performance studies and Irish culture*, ed. Sara Brady and Fintan Walsh (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 135.

<sup>59</sup> Unknown artist [possibly Charles E. Kelly], *The Leaders have a rough night after seeing “Ben Hur,”* [1922], cartoon, *DO*, Nov. 1927.

FIGURE 1. Arthur Booth, "What's the Betting, Gentlemen?," *DO*, April 1922.



**FIGURE 2.** Unknown Artist, "The End is not Yet," *DO*, March 1922.



From 1927 onwards, the cartoon de Valera increasingly appeared in homosocial environments that were conducive to the development and celebration of the healthy male body. He appeared with other politicians participating in sporting competitions, for instance. McDevitt has noted the potential for sport to project Irish manliness, arguing that it helped to facilitate “an image of Irish masculinity of which the nationalist community could be proud.”<sup>60</sup> Interestingly, de Valera (a secret rugby fan) was depicted playing golf and cricket, sports which were widely regarded as British, rather than Gaelic, games.<sup>61</sup> Although the depiction of Irish politicians playing “British” games signified a sense of homo-sociability, at the same time, it created a sense of bathos, appropriate to a humorous journal, that perhaps would not have been projected if the politicians had been depicted playing more appropriately nationalist sports.

De Valera also appeared, alongside other Irish politicians, at the seaside.<sup>62</sup> This environment entailed the visible presentation of seminude, male bodies in the fresh air and sunshine, and was thus conducive to the celebration and development of the healthy male body. The importance of this environment was not lost on the Fine Gael organ, *United Ireland*, (published at a time when the party incorporated the resolutely masculine Blueshirt movement). The journal spoke highly of the beneficial “effect of sunlight on the human body.”<sup>63</sup> The seaside was also an inappropriate environment to see the different genders and sexes mixing. One Catholic bishop argued that, at the

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<sup>60</sup> McDevitt *May the Best Man Win*, 16.

<sup>61</sup> Charles E. Kelly, “The Parliamentary Golf Society,” [1928], cartoon, *DO*, Sept. 1928;

Idem, *Second Test Match* [1934], cartoon, *DO*, Aug. 1934.

<sup>62</sup> Charles E. Kelly, Front Cover [1933], cartoon, *DO*, Aug. 1933

<sup>63</sup> “Physical Culture: The Use and Abuse of Sunlight,” *United Ireland*, 7 July 1934.

seaside, “no manly man wants mixed bathing, . . . let the men have their own bathing places to take part in the healthy exercises of bathing and swimming.”<sup>64</sup>

In contemporary British cartoons, a similar milieu may also be seen in the Colonel Blimp cartoons of David Low, which appeared in the *Evening Standard*. Here the titular character regularly appeared in a Turkish bath, often alongside the leading male politicians of the day. As Lawrence Streicher notes, this environment supplied “an intimate atmosphere of the male baths, opinion freely expressed between naked equals.”<sup>65</sup> In one cartoon, Blimp appeared in the bath towel of the Turkish bath, representing masculine, hawkish statesmanship, haranguing a female figure who attempted to safeguard peace by locking away armaments.<sup>66</sup>

This contrast between male and female space may also be seen in the cartoons of *Dublin Opinion*. In one cartoon (figure 3), de Valera, along with contemporary Irish politicians of all parties and none, played on the beach together, whilst a solitary woman (Kathleen Clarke, the Lord Mayor of Dublin) looked out awkwardly from her bathing cubicle.<sup>67</sup> Whilst de Valera was now clearly a man amongst men, women (represented by a solitary Clarke) were clearly excluded from Ireland’s hypermasculine political culture. Here, Clarke’s feminine body appeared out of place amongst the male bodies of Ireland’s political elite. It is telling that, in the cartoon, de Valera would rather play in the sand with James Craig, Unionist Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, than a woman politician (whom he turns his back on). Indeed, attitudes and policies towards female sexuality on both sides of the Irish border

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<sup>64</sup> “Bishop’s Warning; The Dangers of Dance Halls; Mixed Bathing,” *Cork Examiner*, 11 May 1931.

<sup>65</sup> Lawrence H. Streicher, “David Low and the Sociology of Caricature”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 8:1 (Oct. 1965): 4

<sup>66</sup> David Low, “The Key”, [1935], *Evening Standard*, 2 Sept. 1935, illustrated in Streicher, “David Low and the Sociology of Caricature,” figure 2, pp. 4-5.

<sup>67</sup> Charles E. Kelly, Front Cover, [1939], *DO*, Aug. 1939.

for much of the twentieth century were very similar. As Leanne McCormick notes, there was considerable “unity across religious and political divides regarding female behavior.”<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Leanne McCormick, *Regulating Sexuality: Women in Twentieth Century Northern Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 151.



In 1931, de Valera appeared, fathering a new newspaper, the *Irish Press* (figure 4).<sup>69</sup> Here, *Dublin Opinion* depicted him gaining greater political influence (through a new, supportive newspaper), as a manly father. Figure 5 depicts the 1937 Constitution, which explicitly re-enforced male authority over the Irish family, in similar fashion, as the product of de Valera's masculine loins.<sup>70</sup> As Elizabeth Frances Martin notes, images of the woman in the context of family life was a frequent motif in the visual art of the Irish Free State, surfacing in the art of Seán Keating, Maurice McGonigal and Charles Lamb. Martin argues that this image of the woman was indeed bolstered by de Valera's 1937 Constitution, with women represented "as part of a domestic union, as mother, or as an aged peasant woman whose life served as a visual personification of a life lived in accordance with Catholic church and nationalist ideals."<sup>71</sup>

In figure 4 de Valera represented a masculine side of this particular gender dichotomy. Here, he appeared as a strong, paternal and masculine figure, unlike the feminine, maternal figures in the art of Keating, McGonigal and Lamb. Yet, nonetheless, this image of the patriarchal father of the nation represented the same gender ideology that underpinned the representation of "family women" in contemporary Irish art. The Constitution also had the effect of underscoring the virility of de Valera's body. It is also worth noting how the word "constitution" has strong connotations with bodily health and physical fitness, which *Dublin Opinion* also recognized. In another cartoon, de Valera appeared as a doctor prescribing a "new constitution" to a female Ireland (figure 6).<sup>72</sup> Here, de Valera, as a man, simultaneously offered both a healthy body and rational masculine authority to Ireland, personified as a woman.

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<sup>69</sup> Charles E. Kelly, "The Dawn Patrol," [1931], cartoon, *DO*, March 1931.

<sup>70</sup> Charles E. Kelly, "Da Valera," [1937], cartoon, *DO*, July 1937.

<sup>71</sup> Elizabeth Frances Martin, "Painting the Irish West: Nationalism and the Representation of women," *New Hibernia Review/Iris Éireannach Nua* 7:1 (Spring 2003): 43.

<sup>72</sup> Charles E. Kelly, "Say'98!" [1935], cartoon, *DO*, Sept. 1935.



FIGURE 4. Charles E. Kelly, "The Dawn Patrol," *DO*, March 1931.



FIGURE 5. Charles E. Kelly, "Da Valera," *DO*, July 1937.

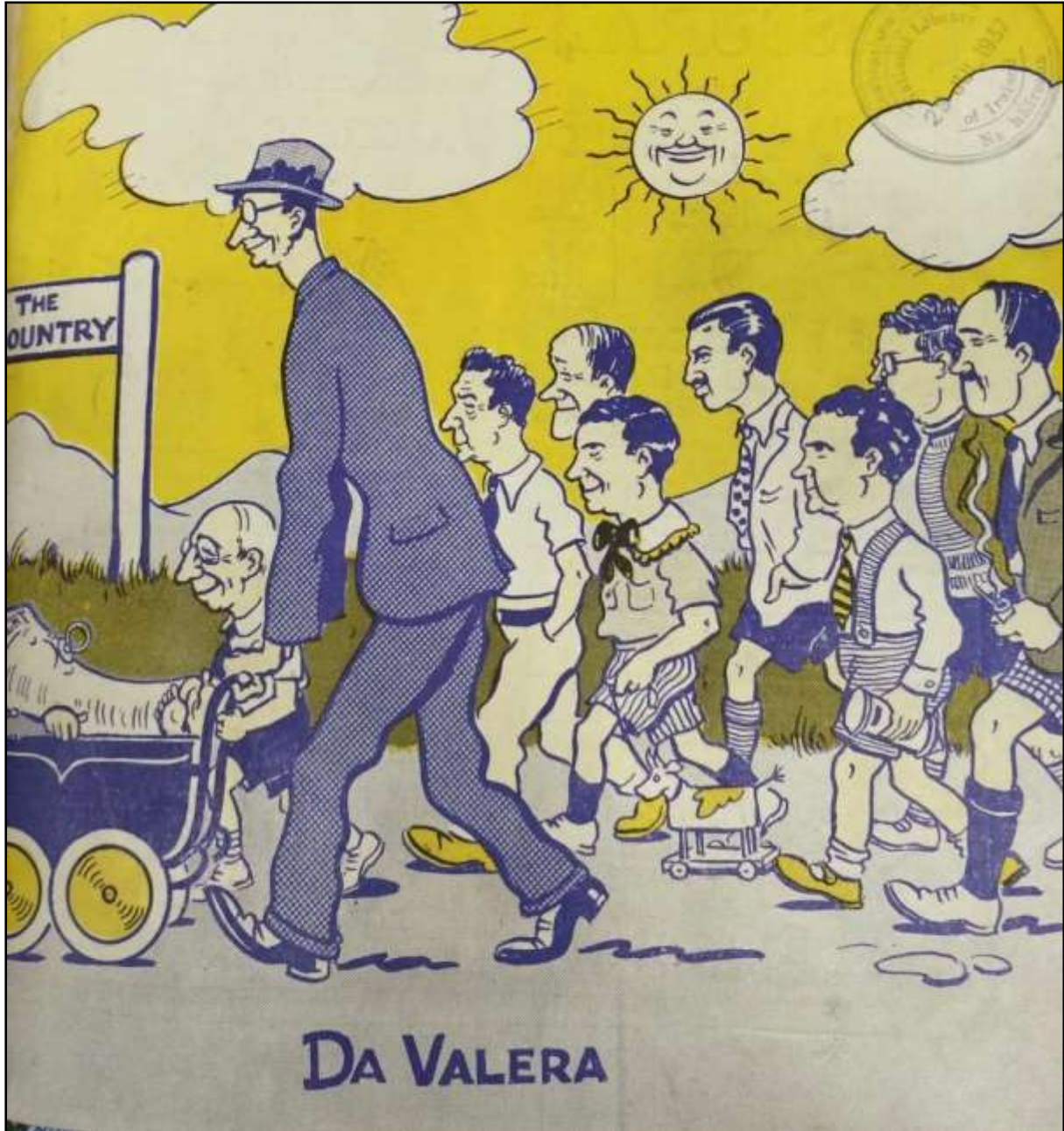


FIGURE 6. Charles E. Kelly, "Say '98!," *DO*, September 1935.



Although de Valera's new constitution was approved by plebiscite in July 1937, he lost seats at the concurrent general election, thus making him the leader of a minority government. Charles Kelly communicated the weakness of the government by depicting it training physically to make itself stronger (figure 7).<sup>73</sup> This implied that Fianna Fáil was not yet strong (and therefore not yet masculine) enough to command the authority that came with a parliamentary majority. Fortunately, for Fianna Fáil, in the election the following year, it finally won a decisive majority. As a result, a cartoon from July 1938, (figure 8) depicted de Valera's government as being exceptionally muscular.<sup>74</sup> By the late 1930s, several cartoons had appeared that depicted de Valera as being both physically strong and muscular. The 1938 agreement with Britain, in placing the Treaty ports under Irish sovereignty all but completed the task of gaining full political sovereignty and independence for the twenty-six counties that had made up the Irish Free State. One cartoon depicted de Valera successively testing his strength at the fairground (following the 1938 agreement with Britain).<sup>75</sup> This cartoon effectively illustrates Meaney's argument that, in response to the 'feminization' of colonialism, Irish sovereignty was coded by nationalist politicians as masculine.

Another cartoon depicted de Valera and Sean T. O'Kelly as brave, muscular Native American warriors encircling a weakened James Craig on horseback.<sup>76</sup> This cartoon reflected an image of that de Valera himself had constructed. During his visit to the United States in 1919, de Valera was made an honorary chief of the Native American Chippewa tribe and was famously pictured in the headdress of the tribe.<sup>77</sup> This cartoon also broadly reflected the preoccupations of a culture in which a rural,

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<sup>73</sup> Charles E. Kelly, "Recess," [1937], cartoon, *DO*, Sept. 1937.

<sup>74</sup> Charles E. Kelly, "The Strong Government and the Weak Taxpayer," [1938], cartoon, *DO*, July 1938.

<sup>75</sup> Charles E. Kelly, "Give the Gentleman a Big Cigar," [1938], cartoon, *DO*, July 1938.

<sup>76</sup> Charles E. Kelly, "With Apologies to Custer's Last Stand," [1939], cartoon, *DO*, June 1939.

<sup>77</sup> Unknown Photographer, *Photographic Print of Éamon de Valera in the head-dress of the Chippewa tribe*, 1919, photograph (Éamon de Valera Papers, P150/871, Archives of University College, Dublin.)

“primitive” masculinity set against a rugged landscape was prized over refined, metropolitan and imperial notions of manliness. This ideal was also reflected in Sean Keating’s paintings, *The Race of the Gael* and *The Gael*. As Síghle Bhreathnach- Lynch argues, in these images, the figures are “sturdy, pragmatic peasants whose very masculinity symbolically asserts the new Gaelic ideal. These men are seen to flourish in this sparse, but invigorating place, . . . they embody the repossession of the land, historically perceived as an object to be possessed.”<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Síghle Bhreathnach-Lynch, “Landscape, Space and Gender: Their role in the Construction of Female Identity in Newly Independent Ireland” in *Gendering Landscape Art*, eds. Steven Adams and Anna Gruetzner Robins (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 78.

FIGURE 7. Charles E. Kelly, "Recess," *DO*, September 1937.



FIGURE 8. Charles E. Kelly, "The Strong Government and the Weak Taxpayer," *DO*, July 1938.



De Valera's body in the pages of *Dublin Opinion* was clearly, therefore, a meaningful symbol and accurate barometer of his political power. Events that strengthened de Valera's political power and influence, such as his reentrance into the Dáil, and his four election victories in the 1930s were represented as distinctly masculine occurrences. Yet, as de Valera gained political power over time, his opponents attempted to counteract this by depicting him as unmasculine. In their own visual representations, de Valera's suspect heritage (he was born to an Irish mother and Hispanic-American father in New York), in particular, reaffirmed his lack of manliness.

### **Pro-Treaty Views of de Valera: Age and Physiognomy**

As has already been established, in nationalist discourse, nationality and manliness are inextricably linked. Irish nationalism is no exception. Patrick Pearse declared that the anglicized (and therefore un-Irish) education system, under British rule, was “emasculating our boys.”<sup>79</sup> The force of youth (ideally bearing arms) offered a powerful statement of Irish nationality, and in turn, represented the highest assertion of Irish masculinity. In the Irish Free State, masculinity and youth were thus both desirable political symbols. The third and fourth incarnations of the Blueshirt movement were the Young Ireland Association and League of Youth respectively. One issue of *United Ireland*, noted that whilst middle-aged men could “still give great service to the country in the Blueshirts, they need to be mixed with men representing a new generation.”<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Stenographic Copy of Speech delivered by Patrick Henry Pearse, Philadelphia, 1914 (Patrick Pearse Papers, MS33702, National Library of Ireland), quoted in Beatty, *Masculinity and Power*, 123.

<sup>80</sup> “Blue Flag Notes,” *United Ireland*, 12 October 1935.



Given the wider symbolic currency of the youthful body as a political symbol in interwar Ireland, it is understandable why politicians in the Free State sought to project a youthful image of themselves, whilst depicting their opponents as aged. In its election materials, Cumann na nGaedheal depicted de Valera with exaggerated lines on his face, so as to make him appear older. If we compare a 1932 Cumann na nGaedheal election poster (figure 9),<sup>81</sup> with de Valera's depiction in *Dublin Opinion* in the 1930s (as seen earlier), this is all the more apparent. In figure 9, de Valera appeared as a stooped, elderly man and his face was conspicuously more wrinkled than it was in *Dublin Opinion*.

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<sup>81</sup> Cumann na nGaedheal, "The Dead Who Died For an 'Empty Formula' Was it Worth it? Vote for Cumann na nGaedheal," 1932, Printed Poster (Department of Ephemera, PD EPH F43, National Library of Ireland).



**The dead who died for  
An "EMPTY FORMULA"**

**WAS IT WORTH IT?**

**VOTE FOR  
CUMANN NA  
nGAEDHEAL.**

Issued by Cumann na nGaedheal and Printed by McConnell's Advertising Service, 10 Pearse Street, Dublin.

FIGURE 9. Cumann na nGaedheal (Unknown artist, published by McConnell's Advertising Service), "The Dead Who Died for an 'Empty Formula': Was it Worth it- Vote for Cumann na nGaedheal," Department of Ephemera, PD EPH F43, National Library of Ireland, 1932.

De Valera's posture in both cartoons was notable. In figure 9, in contrast to his (more appropriately gendered) female companion, the youthful assertive figure of Erin (typical of the traditional female personification of Ireland in the visual arts), he appeared hunched, weaker and less self-confident. Both figures looked on at a field of nationalist martyrs, who had died in the Civil War. Through their martyrdom it was implied that the Civil War dead retained their masculinity as they had died bearing arms in the Civil War. In death, they remained forever young. This contrasted with the aged de Valera who appeared degenerate and therefore lacking in the eternally youthful masculinity of his fallen comrades.

This contrast between de Valera, Erin and the fallen is something of an inversion of W. B. Yeats's 1902 play, *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*. As Marion Quirici argues, Yeats's play should be regarded as a "performance of regeneration and rehabilitation," with the titular character (an old woman) returning to youth through the blood sacrifice of the young masculine figure of Michael.<sup>82</sup> Conversely, in figure 9 the figure of Erin was already young, whilst it was de Valera who had entered a state of degeneration, rather than regeneration. Here, de Valera's aged, degenerate masculinity is an inversion of the strong, manly character of Michael in Yeats's play. Cumann na nGaedheal thus used an image of de Valera's body to detract from his masculinity, and, in turn, his political legitimacy. This rhetorical strategy was paralleled, around the same time, in the US, by the Republican Party's campaigns against Roosevelt in 1932. As Davis Houck and Amos Kiewe note, members of the Hoover administration "saw Roosevelt's disability as an index of his imperiled masculinity."<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Marion Quirici, "Cathleen ni Houlihan and the Disability Aesthetics of Irish National Culture," *Éire-Ireland* 50:3&4 (Fall/Winter 2015): 79.

<sup>83</sup> Davis W. Houck and Amos Kiewe, *FDR's Body Politics: The Rhetoric of Disability* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2003), 81.

A contrast to this image of de Valera may be found in some of the later cartoons in *Dublin Opinion*. In one such cartoon, in the 1930s, de Valera sat up straight, with strong, square shoulders alongside other international statesmen, advancing the cause of Irish self-determination amongst the nations of the world.<sup>84</sup> In Irish nationalist discourse, self-determination and representation amongst other European nations was deemed masculine. A Gaelic League handbill from the 1900s declared, that it aimed at “fitting Ireland for a place in the brotherhood of nations. Ireland a nation will enrich the world, like a strong healthy-hearted man.”<sup>85</sup> In this (politically-neutral) *Dublin Opinion* cartoon, de Valera appeared far more a “healthy-hearted” Irish man than in figure 9. Here, de Valera’s Irishness, healthy masculinity, and governing skills all intersected.

In Treatyite cartoons, de Valera’s facial features also signified his lack of masculinity, Irishness, and the ability to govern. In figure 10, a cartoon from the anti-Fianna Fáil *Evening Herald* de Valera’s face protruded outward about the nose, with a sloping forehead.<sup>86</sup> In comparison, in a more neutral *Dublin Opinion* cartoon, from just a few months later (figure 11), de Valera’s face was relatively straight and vertical, rather than protruding outwards.<sup>87</sup> His facial angle (the angle formed by the jaw line and the line from forehead to chin) was relatively high, in comparison to figure 10. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, facial angles were deeply significant in the pseudoscience of physiognomy. The position of the jawline in relation to the upper portion of the face was believed to reflect the individual’s degree of civilization. Africans supposedly had typical facial angles of 70°, whereas supposedly more civilized Europeans had typical facial angles of 80°.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Charles E. Kelly, “Johnny, I hardly knew you!”, [1935], cartoon, *DO*, Oct. 1935.

<sup>85</sup> “Reasons Why You Should Join the Gaelic League”, n.d., (Stephen Barrett Papers, G3/1476, National University of Ireland, Galway), quoted in Beatty, *Masculinity and power*, 131.

<sup>86</sup> Gordon Brewster, “Taking it for Granted,” [1927], cartoon, *Evening Herald*, 8 Sept. 1927.

<sup>87</sup> Charles E. Kelly, “Lies and Libels,” [1927-8], cartoon, *DO*, Feb. 1928.

<sup>88</sup> Curtis, *Apes and Angels*, 7-8.

FIGURE 10. Gordon Brewster, "Taking it for Granted," *Evening Herald*, 8 September 1927.

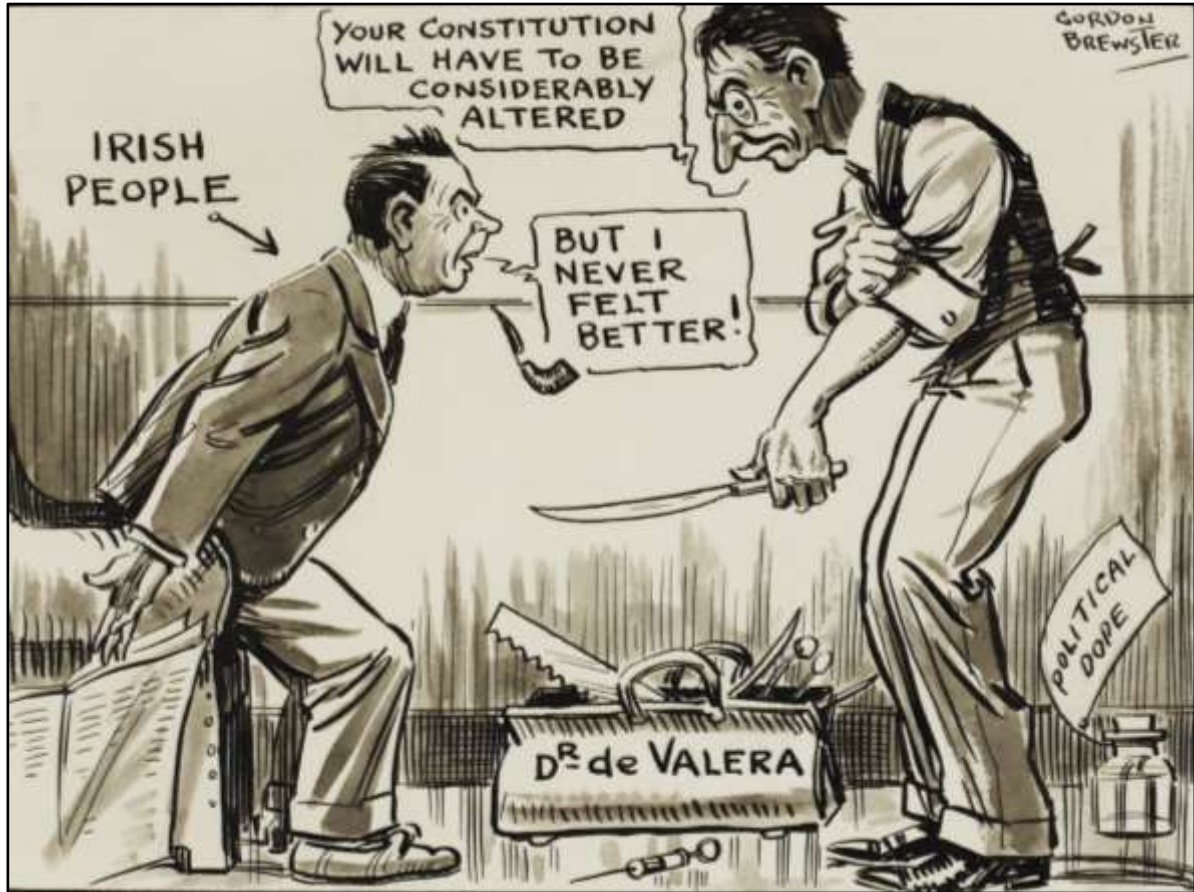
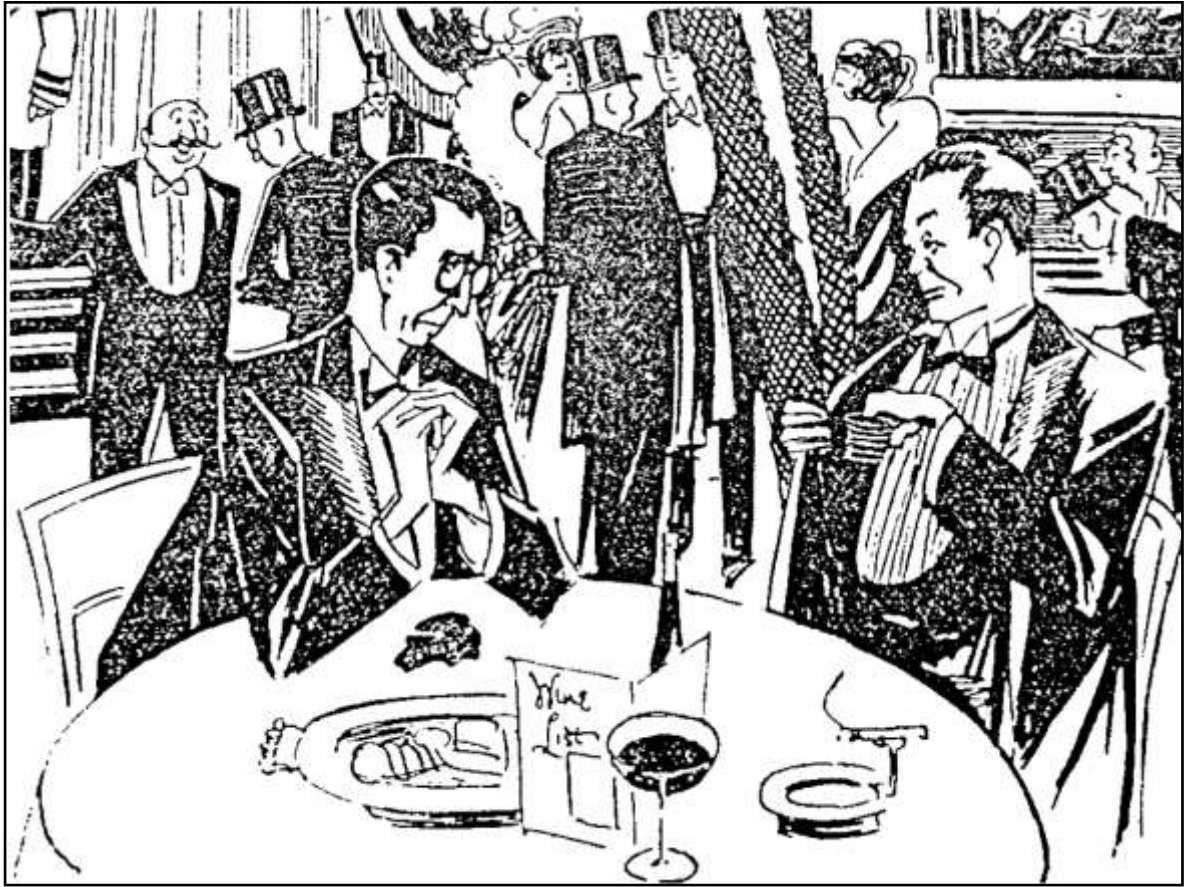


FIGURE 11. Charles E. Kelly, "Lies and Libels," *DO*, February 1928.



As L. P. Curtis shows, during the nineteenth century, British authorities utilized physiognomy to construct the Irish as inferior, and thus incapable of self-governance. According to several physiognomic and racial theorists, the stereotypical Irish face indicated that the Irish were unfit for self-rule. Daniel Mackintosh, a Scottish ethnologist, argued that the stereotypically simian Irish face indicated deficiency in “depth of reasoning power,” “want of prudence and foresight” and “veneration for authority.”<sup>89</sup> This stereotypical Irish face incorporated a sloping forehead, low facial angles and a beastlike, prognathous mouth. This classic stereotype may be seen in a cartoon (figure 12) entitled “Two Forces” from *Punch* magazine in 1881.<sup>90</sup>

As Joseph Valente argues, British racial discourses of Irishness, were both highly gendered and had implications for the exercise of political power.<sup>91</sup> The British historian J. A. Froude argued that “incompleteness of character” made the Irish unfit for self-rule, as they were “without the manliness which will give strength and stability to the sentimental part of their dispositions.”<sup>92</sup> Irish “beastliness” was thus perceived to contribute to an overtly emotional disposition and lack of self-control. In figure 12, Ireland was represented by both a beastly and unruly Fenian Brotherhood, who lacked the manliness that would come with self-restraint and foresight, and Hibernia, an utterly feminine figure, who required the protection of Britannia. Indeed, the only truly, masculine figure in the cartoon was Britannia who appeared to be stoic, strong and restrained.

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<sup>89</sup> Daniel Mackintosh, “The Comparative Anthropology of England and Wales,” *Anthropological Review and Journal* 4 (1866): 15-6, quoted in Curtis, *Apes and Angels*, 18.

<sup>90</sup> John Tenniel, “Two Forces,” [1881], cartoon, *Punch*, 29 Oct. 1881.

<sup>91</sup> Valente, “The Manliness of Parnell,”: 73-82.

<sup>92</sup> J. A. Froude, *The English in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, and Co., 1873), 21-22, quoted in Valente, *The Myth of Manliness*, 14-15.

FIGURE 12. John Tenniel, "Two Forces," *Punch*, 29 October 1881.



TWO FORCES.



These discourses seem to have endured well into the twentieth century. This, in turn, suggests that at least some members of an interwar Irish audience would have been able to read these images of de Valera as indicating a lack of racial purity and manliness. Indeed, as postcolonial theorists argue, in postcolonial situations, the colonized internalize the discourses of the colonizer. Edward Said notes that even when colonizers left their colonies “they retained them not only as markets but as locales on the ideological map over which they continued to rule morally and intellectually.”<sup>93</sup> Frantz Fanon similarly argues that “every colonized people- in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality- finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country.”<sup>94</sup>

There are considerable similarities between Mackintosh’s and Froude’s comments about the Irish in 1865, and Treatyite comments about political opponents in 1922. As previously noted, Treaty supporters deemed their opponents to be irrational and therefore effeminate, unconsciously borrowing from British colonial discourses. During the Civil War, reports of the Free State Army’s South West command stated that “our officers have found the Kerry irregulars of a much lower and more brutal type than anywhere else.”<sup>95</sup> As Foster notes, the words “brutal” and “lower” both have strong negative connotations within evolutionary and racial theories.<sup>96</sup> The emergence of new racial pseudo-sciences in the interwar period also infused the older intellectual discipline of physiognomy with new meanings. During the 1930s, the Harvard Archaeological and Anthropological Mission to Ireland (which incorporated both German and American expertise) sought to demonstrate that the Irish were

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<sup>93</sup> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1994), 27.

<sup>94</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann, new ed., (London: Pluto, 2008), 9.

<sup>95</sup> Reports of FSA Field GHQs, S. W. Command, Limerick, 22 August 1922, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/71, Archives of University College, Dublin, quoted in Foster, *The Irish Civil War and Society*, 42.

<sup>96</sup> Foster, *The Irish Civil War and Society*, 42.

of thoroughly “European stock, with the implication of a Nordic dolichocephalic [i.e. with large crania] heritage,” through anthropometric facial measurements carried out on the Irish people.<sup>97</sup>

Treatyite discourse also blended older, postcolonial racialized tropes of the uncivilized republican with antisemitic conspiracy theories about de Valera’s parentage. Anti-Semitism in inter-war Ireland, when compared to other European nations, as Cormac Ó Gráda notes, “was of a relatively mild variety.”<sup>98</sup> That said, it still existed. Anti-Semitism certainly had some appeal amongst the conservative, Catholic Ireland that formed the backbone of support for the Blueshirts and Fine Gael. Some Catholic orders, (particularly the Redemptorists who participated in the 1904 Limerick boycott) had rather anti-Semitic views. Trisha Oakley Kessler’s work on Jewish experiences in early twentieth century highlights the presence of this kind of anti-Semitism during this period.<sup>99</sup>

De Valera was certainly the target of several anti-Semitic conspiracy theories. Timothy Healy, Governor General of the Irish Free State, revealed in a private letter that John Devoy, a veteran Fenian and supporter of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, had described de Valera as a “Jewish b-stard.”<sup>100</sup> De Valera was, himself, conscious of anti-Semitic insinuations about his heritage, and at one point, he addressed these allegations, stating “there is not, as far as I am aware, a drop of Jewish blood in my veins. . . . I have lived amongst the Irish people, . . . I have given everything in me to the Irish nation.”<sup>101</sup> De

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<sup>97</sup> Mairéad Carew, *The Quest for the Irish Celt: The Harvard Archaeological Mission to Ireland, 1932–1936* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2018), 69.

<sup>98</sup> Cormac Ó Gráda, *Jewish Ireland in the Age of Joyce: A Socioeconomic History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 191.

<sup>99</sup> Trisha Oakley Kessler, “In Search of Jewish Footprints in the West of Ireland,” *Jewish Culture and History* 19:2 (2018): 191-208.

<sup>100</sup> Letter from Timothy Healy to Annie Sullivan, 19 August 1924 (Timothy Healy Papers, P6/A/103, Archives of University College, Dublin).

<sup>101</sup> *Dáil Éireann Debates*, vol. 1 (1934), col. 2514.

Valera's "suspect" heritage provided the basis for these attacks. *United Ireland* noted that "during the Moorish occupation, enormous numbers of Jews settled in Spain, where they multiplied, . . . [until] they numbered something like one-fourth of the population. Very few of them took the alternative of leaving Spain."<sup>102</sup> As Kessler notes, the "political, religious and business voices' that were opposed to Fianna Fáil 'attempted to place Fianna Fáil's industrial drive into a negative Jewish space."<sup>103</sup>

In figure 10 de Valera somewhat resembled an anti-Semitic caricature. Whilst the *Evening Herald* was not an avowedly anti-Semitic publication, it was indeed both politically right-wing and avowedly anti-Communist. It openly exhibited sympathies with Fascist Italy, for instance. The author of figure 10, Gordon Brewster, published a congratulatory cartoon for the fifth anniversary of Fascism in Italy.<sup>104</sup> Some covert, or unconscious, anti-Semitic leanings would therefore have not been out of step with the broader outlook of the newspaper. In figure 10, de Valera appeared with an exaggeratedly pointed nose and large ears, in addition to low facial angles. Both these facial characteristics in the racial pseudoscience of the 1930s were commonly associated with Jewishness and thus featured prominently in interwar, anti-Semitic discourse. He also appeared, threatening the Irish people (represented by an appropriately gendered Irishman) with a knife. This was a resurfacing of the "brutish" Irishman that was typical of Anglo-American cartoon views of Ireland in the nineteenth century. Yet it also, perhaps, has some parallels with the anti-Semitic Shakespearean trope of the Jewish Shylock, demanding a pound of flesh.

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<sup>102</sup> *United Ireland*, 10 March 1934.

<sup>103</sup> Kessler, "In Search of Jewish Footprints in the West of Ireland," 200.

<sup>104</sup> Gordon Brewster, "Birthday Greetings: Fascism has entered in on its Fifth Year," [1926], cartoon, *Saturday [Evening] Herald*, 9 Oct. 1926.

Anti-Semitic tropes worked to render de Valera “un-Irish.” They also removed his status as an Irish-*man*. As Aidan Beatty argues, the stereotypical figure of “the Jew” in Irish culture, at this time, often functioned as “the antithesis of the stable, pure and masculine Irish nation that political sovereignty delivers.”<sup>105</sup> In figure 10, moreover, de Valera appeared with a knife, threatening the Irish constitution, personified through the body-politic of an Irish-*man*. In this cartoon, de Valera’s wielding of the knife, his somewhat ‘unhinged’ facial expression and the exasperation of the figure representing the Irish people, indicated a lack of self-possession, rationality and restraint; and instead, a burst of irrationality, violence and anarchy. Here the contrast between de Valera and the Irish people strongly resembled the contrast between the unmanliness of Irish anarchy and the manliness of British rule that was depicted in figure 12.

The discourses of Victorian manliness that prioritized self-control and emotional regulation continued well into the mid-twentieth century. Indeed, as Martin Francis notes, in Britain, “in the interwar years, a revulsion against the violence of the Great War and extremist politics on the continent, added to a desire to appeal to a more ‘domesticated’ (i.e. mixed-gender electorate reinforced the imperative of restraint.” Francis further observes that Stanley Baldwin, (whose fourteen-year leadership of the Conservative party was contemporaneous with the Irish Free State), “was the paradigm of emotional control in interwar politics, his phlegmatic and steady personality matching his political gospel of social harmony.”<sup>106</sup>

Baldwin’s model of stoic, businesslike masculinity would no doubt have been approved by Treatyite politicians. Like Baldwin, Cosgrave promoted a cautious political style of a conservative “return to

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<sup>105</sup> Beatty, *Masculinity and Power*, 59.

<sup>106</sup> Martin Francis, “Tears, Tantrums and Bared Teeth: The Emotional Economy of Three Conservative Prime Ministers, 1951-1963,” *Journal of British Studies* 41 (2002): 359-60.

normalcy” following wartime upheaval. Cosgrave’s chairmanlike political style contrasted with de Valera’s distinctly emotive and charismatic appeal to his supporters. Cumann na nGaedheal and, later Fine Gael supporters attempted to turn this to their advantage, by attempting to construct de Valera as unbalanced, hysterical and therefore unmanly. Towards the end of the Civil War, Kevin O’Higgins declared that “those who are in opposition to the Government may be in a mood, after their year of hysteria, to review the situation.”<sup>107</sup> Ned Cronin, similarly declared, some years later, in 1935 “We of the Blueshirt movement care little for the abuse of our political opponents. We are accustomed to it. We have survived all the hysterical attempts to conceal the political vices of Fianna Fail.”<sup>108</sup>

It is also worth noting that representations of political “otherness” in cartoons could be coded as both ethnically “suspect” and female. In one cartoon, from the *Evening Herald* (figure 13) a figure (who somewhat resembled de Valera) appeared as a stereotypical female Romany fortune teller, with a notably long and hooked nose.<sup>109</sup> The “back to the past” politician could quite possibly be a subtle reference to de Valera. Throughout his political career, de Valera demonstrated a keen interest in the Irish past and enthusiastically attended commemorative events. As Mary Daly argues, “De Valera’s long and active life inevitably blurred the line between past and present, between history and contemporary events.”<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> “‘Not about a Republic’: Minister on Conflict,” *Irish Independent*, 12 Feb. 1923.

<sup>108</sup> “Charges against Blueshirts,” *Southern Star*, 13 July 1935.

<sup>109</sup> Gordon Brewster, “Eyes Front,” [1927], cartoon, *Evening Herald*, 26 March 1927.

<sup>110</sup> Mary E. Daly, “De Valera’s Historical Memory,” *Memory Ireland* 1 (2011): 143.



**FIGURE 14.** Gordon Brewster, “Eyes front,” *Evening Herald*, 26 March 1927.

In this cartoon, “Mr. Voter” represented the people of Ireland, who desired proper governance and meaningful action in the onward development of the nation. As the *Evening Herald* broadly supported Cumann na nGaedheal, this cartoon suggested that “Mr. Voter” would continue supporting Cumann na nGaedheal with its future vision in governing Ireland, whilst Fianna Fáil would merely sit back and dwell on the Civil War. By suggesting that “back to the past” politics was incompatible with proper governance, this cartoon thus coded modernity and action as masculine and Irish, and the politics of the past and inaction, as effeminate and un-Irish.

Thus, whilst de Valera's lack of masculinity could be signified quite openly in cartoons through bodily symbols such as muscle tone, build, age and vitality, it could also be signified subtly through the symbolism of facial features, and in turn, racial categories. In anti-de Valera cartoons a parallel, intersectional want of masculinity and Irishness thus signified a lack of political legitimacy and ability to wield legitimate political power.

### **Conclusion:**

The political cartoons of this period were deeply meaningful, profound and subtle comments on the politics and society of interwar Ireland. There is especially good reason for historians of gender in this period to utilize political cartoons as sources. Cartoonists used the language of gender and masculinity to express a wide variety of political points. In cartoons, the male body, in particular, offered a potent visual symbol of masculinity. Bodily symbols (such as build, age and facial characteristics) in these cartoons were used to both laud and attack politicians' masculinity. As a result, the portrayal of de Valera's masculinity in political cartoons, through the symbolism of his body, offered an indicator of his perceived political power.

One of the interesting facets of these cartoons was the way that they showed the sheer variety of ways that political power was gendered as male. The fact that an increasingly powerful de Valera increasingly appeared with other male politicians in homosocial environments reflects the very real fact that political life in the Irish Free State excluded women. Both Irish political parties pursued policies that marginalized women in public life. Other political events, such as electoral victories were represented in gendered terms. The male body, in particular, took on political significance. The veneration of the male body reflected a broader context where bodies needed to be strong and healthy in order to uphold national strength in the face of powerful enemies. For Cumann na nGaedheal, for

instance, De Valera's supposedly aged body underlined how, for Treatyites, the violence of the Civil War stemmed from weak, unmanly bodies. This focus on politicians' bodies was profoundly intersectional. Un-Irish bodies were depicted as effeminate, whilst self-determination was represented as the task for the manly Irish body.

Whilst it is difficult to trace the impact and reception of these cartoon representations of de Valera, the fact that gendered themes can be easily traced within these representations attests to the importance of masculinity in the representation and construction of political power in the Irish Free State. This raises further, wider questions about the role of cultural representation in the construction of political power in this period in Ireland. Whilst, Richard Dunphy highlights the significance of class structures and economic policies in bolstering Fianna Fáil's status in Ireland, it is also important to consider the role of culture, as well as economic and political structures.<sup>111</sup> Although the popular mythos of de Valera as an all-powerful, mystical "chief" figure obscures many realities, the very endurance of this image of de Valera highlights the importance and significance of the image itself. Masculinity was a significant component of this image.

The political cartoon, as just one form of cultural representation, can therefore shed much light on the relationship between masculinity and power in Irish politics, particularly in the period immediately after independence. In a transformative period for de Valera's political career, when de Valera's political stock fell, then rose again, discourses of masculinity were central in constructions of his political power and influence.

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<sup>111</sup> Richard Dunphy, *The Making of Fianna Fáil Power in Ireland, 1923-1948* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).