

Marginalised: Comparative Depictions of Irish and Muslim groups in Satirical Caricatures

Humour can be a source of joy, but also a tool to mock and to segregate societal groups. Much humour is at the expense of somebody else and persists despite changing targets. Visual sources and caricatures have been used throughout history to satire, and consequently marginalise, groups seen as “others”, be that in terms of nationality, ethnicity, religion, class or gender. This work takes two examples of such marginalised groups, comparing three *Daily Mail* images parodying the Irish population between 1969-1972, with examples of Muslim satires from the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. Lewis P. Curtis affirms that cartoonists mock ‘people far beyond their own class and ethnicity – namely, the Other,’ and indeed, the Irish and Muslim minority populations fall into this category and therefore make perfect targets for satirical cartoons.¹

The Irish population has long been satirised, particularly during the nineteenth century after the large influx of Irish migration. Images during this century used the technique of extreme simianisation, as a ‘deliberate attempt’ to reduce the Irish to a ‘candidate for oppression in the debased pseudo-Darwinian science of racial superiority.’² Roy F. Foster contends however, that by the late 1880s ‘Irish matters were far less prominent’ whilst Dennis G. Paz argues that ‘Irish stories began to fade out...round about the mid-1850s.’³ It is therefore noteworthy that images produced by John Musgrave-Wood in the twentieth century continue to mock the Irish population.

Additionally, these images use the term ‘Hooligan’ to refer to the Irish depicted. This term, although previously used in association with the Irish population, had by the 1960s and 1970s, become more widely used to describe ‘rival football fans bent on brawling’.⁴ These images therefore, are

¹ L. P. Curtis Jr., *Apes and angels: the Irishman in Victorian caricature* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1997), p. x.

² R. F. Foster, *Paddy and Mr. Punch: connections in Irish and English history* (Hammersmith: Penguin, 1993), p. 171.

³ Foster, *Paddy and Mr Punch*, p.190.; G. D. Paz, ‘Anti-Catholicism, Anti-Irish Stereotyping, and Anti-Celtic Racism in Mid- Victorian Working -Class Periodicals’, *Albion*, 18.4 (1986), p. 616.

⁴ A *Funny Folks* series published between May 1889 and March 1894 previously satirised the Irish as Hooligans; P. T. Leeson, D. J. Smith and N. A. Snow, ‘Hooligans’, *Revue d’économie politique*, 122.2, (2012), p. 214.

somewhat an anomaly during this period, not only satirising the Irish in the context of The Troubles, but also using the term 'Hooligan' to do so. These images demonstrate the fact that even with the passing of time, the same groups continue to dominate satirical caricatures, despite historical and political contexts changing.

More recent sources which demonstrate the pertinence of satirical humour are images published by *Charlie Hebdo* between 2006 and 2017. Despite now targeting Muslims and the contemporary time period, these humorous caricatures continue to mock and further segregate. *Charlie Hebdo* is globally famous after the enormous press attention it received following the 2015 attacks on their headquarters. Yet, secondary literature has failed to analyse examples from this publication, in terms of marginalising groups through satire. Historians have, instead, favoured the 2005 Danish 'Muhammed Cartoons' controversy, which reflects similar themes.⁵ Consequently, this work is a more informed and up-to-date response to such images, comparing this relatively new Islamophobic phenomena, with a long-existing anti-Irish sentiment.

The Irish population has long been targeted and these *Daily Mail* images continue to use the same techniques to satire and marginalise. Curtis analyses nineteenth-century simianisation, contending that the act of caricature 'thrives on difference'.⁶ This has manifested as physical difference, with Irish characters depicted as bestial and ape-like in order to reduce the perceived threat posed by them. This exaggeration technique is evident in all three of Musgrave-Wood's images, which portray Irish characters as large men with over-sized jaws.

⁵ Christian F. Rostbøll, 'Autonomy, Respect, and Arrogance in the Danish Cartoon Controversy', *Political Theory*, 37.5, (2009), pp. 623-648.; Lasse Lindekilde, Per Mouritsen and Ricard Zapata-Berrero, 'The Muhammad Cartoons Controversy in Comparative Perspective', *Ethnicities*, 9.3, (2009), pp. 291-313.

⁶ Curtis, *Apes and Angels*, p. 149.

Figure 1 emphasises this simianisation, with the characters' faces almost completely covered by hats, other than their large, round jaws.⁷ Furthermore, they are depicted as rural peasants, possibly farmers, indicated by the yoke equipment they carry and their working clothes, in contrast to a figure in the background wearing a suit and top hat. This is reminiscent of earlier depictions of 'poverty and hardship' and connotations of 'Irish agricultural backwardness', suggesting they

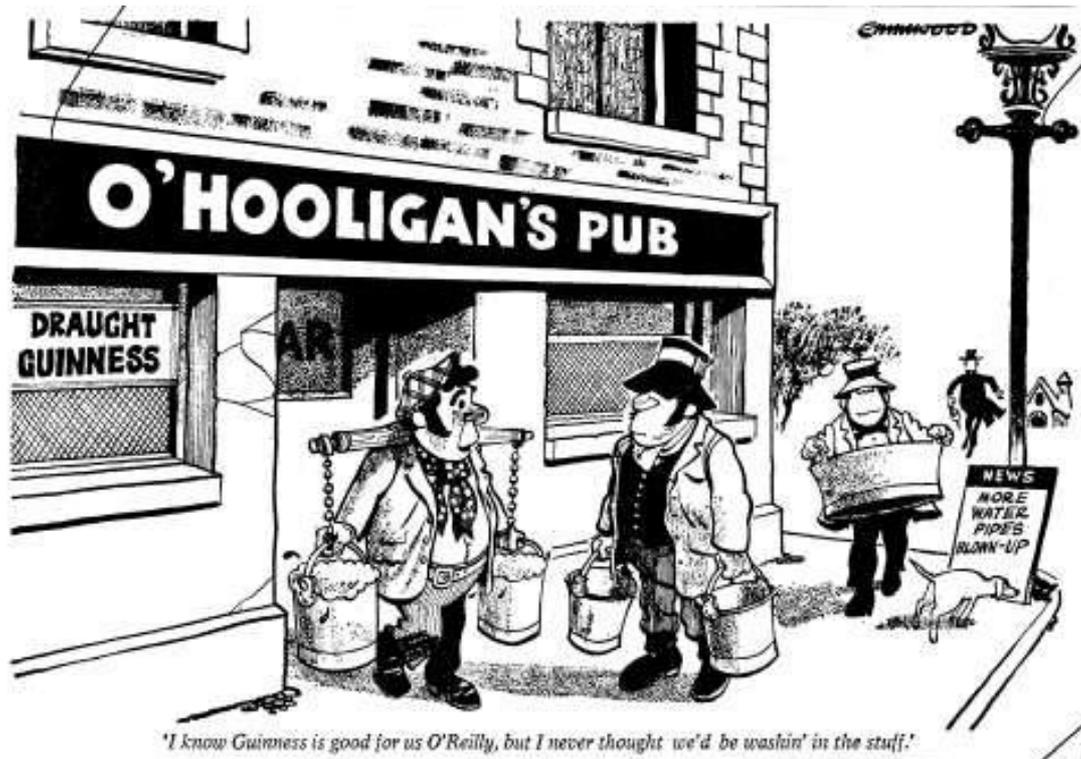


Figure 1

continued to be viewed as inferior, even into the 1970s.⁸ This pastoral image of a working-class 'Paddy' is also evident in Figure 2, set in 'O'Hooligan's Bar' as the characters are wearing similarly large overcoats and hats, again drawn with exaggerated physical features.⁹ This image also plays on the notion of Irish identity, with the caption transcribed in an Irish dialect, notably words such as 'Oi'll' and 'moight'. This, and the name 'Paddy' immediately inform the audience that the characters

⁷ J. Musgrave-Wood, 'I know Guinness is good for us O'Reilly, but I never thought we'd be washing in the stuff!' *Daily Mail*, (26 April 1969), in *University of Kent British Cartoon Archive* <https://archive.cartoons.ac.uk> [accessed 16 September 2019], Ref. MW2838.

⁸ D. M. MacRaild, *Irish Migrants in Modern Britain, 1750-1922* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1999), p.5, p. 51.

⁹ J. Musgrave-Wood, 'Oi'll tell yez Paddy, we moight have achieved nuthin' – but 'twas the best nuthin' we've ever achieved!' *Daily Mail*, (08 February 1972), in *University of Kent British Cartoon Archive* <https://archive.cartoons.ac.uk> [accessed 16 September 2019], Ref. 15150.

are Irish and that the humour is derived from the fact that a superior English reader is able to laugh at their ridicule.



Figure 2

Another theme apparent in all three images, is that of violence, most evidently, in Figure 3 depicting 'O'Hooligan' in 'Long Kesh Internment Centre'.¹⁰ Collins Dictionary defines internment as 'the practice of putting people in prison for political reasons,' highlighting the political message behind the cartoon with regards to the context of the Troubles.¹¹ Internment centres, often used for preventative confinement, rather than following a conviction, suggests that Irish violence was

¹⁰ J. Musgrave-Wood, 'You've got a genuine complaint NOW O'Hooligan – Harold Wilson's comin' over!' *Daily Mail*, (15 November 1971), in *University of Kent British Cartoon Archive* <https://archive.cartoons.ac.uk> [accessed 16 September 2019], Ref. MW2810.

¹¹ Collins Dictionary Online, « <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/internment> » [accessed 04 November 2019].

assumed, and this image reinforces this stereotype. Indeed, the naming of the characters as 'O'Hooligan' is in itself a reference to violence. In fact, hooligans have been defined as people who 'enjoy conflict for conflict's sake', therefore the deliberate use of this name with the prefix 'O'



Figure 3

meaning descendent of, suggests it is an inherently Irish characteristic.¹² Furthermore, Figure 2 depicts a sign reading 'no...swearing, politics, religion or bombs'.¹³ This is a clear implication of the violent nature of the Irish: the fact that bombs are as common an issue in a bar, as swearing. This perception that the Irish were 'quick to violence' has prevailed since the nineteenth century and continued to do so during the Troubles.¹⁴ Perhaps the most obvious depiction of violence is Figure 1, which references a bomb planted by members of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) at a water

¹² Leeson, Smith and Snow, 'Hooligans', p. 214.

¹³ Musgrave-Wood, 'Oi'll tell yez Paddy...'

¹⁴ MacRaild, *Irish Migrants in Modern Britain, 1750-1922*, p. 162.

pipeline between Lough Neagh and Belfast.¹⁵ A newspaper board with the headline ‘more waterpipes blown up’ implies that it is a regular event and that Irish violence is not really surprising. Consequently, the characters are obliged to ‘wash’ in Guinness, an alcoholic drink already inextricably woven into the Irish identity. This humorous stretching of the stereotype emphasises a predilection for alcohol to the extent of bathing in it. This is reinforced by the fact that two of the three images depict pubs, with Figure 2 also depicting the characters as drinking.¹⁶ Indeed, there is even a poster on the wall which offers Guinness as the solution to problems: ‘Have a Guinness’. This persistent link between the Irish and alcohol therefore maintains relevance during the 1960s and 1970s when these images were produced.

Finally, several other negative characterisations are demonstrated by this series of images, which results in an overall depiction of the population as a lazy, inferior and violent group with a predilection for alcohol. The poster in Figure 2 proposing Guinness as a solution to ‘Tired feet’ not only reinforces alcohol as a solution but implies a certain laziness or inability to work due to fatigue.¹⁷ Figure 3 also implies that they constantly moan and protest, and the fact that their complaints might not be ‘genuine’ suggests that this is done without due reason.¹⁸ Finally, there is an implication of limited intellectual capacities, again a frequently-used theme which subordinates the Irish and renders them less of a threat to the English. Figure 2 refers to a Civil Rights march in Newry, following the shooting of 13 civilians in Derry, in January 1972. The characters appear to know little of the reasons behind this protest, or the results, stating that it was the ‘best nuthin’ [they’d] ever achieved.’¹⁹ This clearly demonstrates a lack of awareness and limited intelligence on the part of the Irish.

¹⁵ Musgrave-Wood, ‘I know Guinness is good for us...’.

¹⁶ Musgrave-Wood, ‘O’Il tell yez Paddy...’.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Musgrave-Wood, ‘You’ve got a genuine complaint NOW O’Hooligan...’.

¹⁹ Musgrave-Wood, ‘O’Il tell yez Paddy...’.

Overall, the depiction of the Irish characters as violent, alcoholic, lazy and generally problem-causing for society, is one which has endured. It is shocking to see this imagery persisting until the 1970s, yet satirical images endure today, despite targeting different groups.

The satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* is an example of humour being used to isolate minority groups from society, one of which being Muslims. Three images display how the magazine both mocks the religion of Islam, but also associates it with more serious connotations of violence. Figure 4

illustrates Muslim academic Tariq Ramadan, who was accused of sexual misconduct in 2017.²⁰ The character is exaggerated, depicted with large erection, which immediately highlights the scandal for



Figure 4

which he has been accused. The fact that he refers to himself as the '6th pillar of Islam' suggests that him as an individual, as well as the sexual misconduct he represents are a fundamental part of the religion of Islam, placing it at the same importance of the other five pillars, namely faith, prayer,

²⁰ *Charlie Hebdo*, No. 1319 (1st November 2017), « <https://charliehebdo.fr/editions/1319/> » [accessed 20th September 2019].

charity, fasting and the pilgrimage to Mecca. An article in *Newsweek* which reacts to this publication, explains that 'some more radical proponents of Islam...argue that the sixth pillar is jihad, or holy war.'²¹ By citing the sixth pillar, this image therefore directly hits the centre of an already sensitive issue, however replaces this with the sexual violence represented by Ramadan. The press has drawn similarities between this scandal and the case of Harvey Weinstein; however the difference is that *Charlie Hebdo* uses Ramadan to represent Islam as a whole, rather than treating him as an individual. Therefore, although this image is a personal attack on an individual accused of sexual misconduct, the publication goes so far as to suggest that it is a fundamental part of the Muslim identity, even forming one of the pillars on which this religion is based.

Figure 5 also reinforces this link between Islam and violence, by depicting the Prophet Mohammed crying because he is 'overwhelmed by fundamentalists.'²² The word 'débordé', translated as overwhelmed or even 'snowed under', suggests that this issue is one which runs rife throughout the religion, again linking Islam to extreme violence. Furthermore, the language in the speech bubble 'it's hard to be loved by idiots' can be translated into far more vulgar interpretations. Again, this equates everyone who practises Islam with being a fundamentalist, which is not only a direct attack on the religion itself, but also incites fear by the strength of the language used.

²¹ C. Maza, 'Charlie Hebdo gets death threats over Islam erection cartoon' *Newsweek*, « <https://www.newsweek.com/charlie-hebdo-tariq-ramadan-erection-cartoon-death-threats-703239> » [accessed 20th December, 2019].

²² *Charlie Hebdo*, No. 712 (8th February 2006), « <https://www.galaxidion.com/livre/3450484-charlie-hebdo-n712-numero-special-mahomet--collectif-edite-au-bureau-du-journal> », [accessed 20th September 2019].



Figure 5

Finally, Figure 6 is perhaps the most extreme publication in terms of equating Islam with extremism and violence, not only in terms of language, but also the directness of the image depicted.²³ It labels Islam as a 'religion of eternal peace', whilst contrasting this with an image of the victims of the Barcelona attacks in August, 2017. This image especially makes use of large font and bright colours, in order to draw attention to the image. The very bold use of bright red, for both the blood of the victims, and the lettering, as well as crosses drawn for eyes is a very blunt, unsympathetic image, intended to shock. Again, the reference to Islam is clear, linking these events directly to the religious group and classing the whole religion as culpable.

²³ *Charlie Hebdo*, No. 1309 (22nd August 2017), « <https://charliehebdo.fr/editions/1309/> », [accessed 20th September 2019].

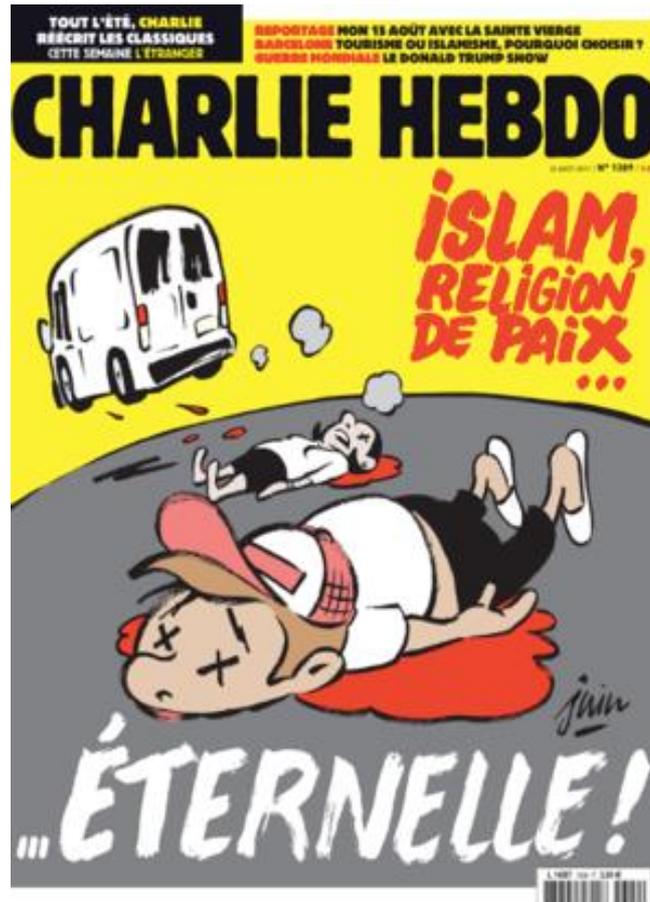


Figure 6

Similar to the *Daily Mail* cartoons, the theme of violence is the most apparent, depicting this group as a societal threat. This violence appears mainly in the form of extremist beliefs, but also sexual violence, and it is intentionally associated with the religion, implying that it is fundamental to the Muslim identity. Contrastingly, these images make use of colour, particularly bright colours to catch attention, rather than exaggerated depictions of physical attributes, as in the cartoons depicting the Irish. Despite their different approaches, both images use satire to mock an already marginalised group, to the extent where it could even be interpreted as not only offensive but damaging in a society which already treats them as “others”. Christian F. Rostbøll discusses the 2005 Danish series which mocked the Prophet Mohammed, suggesting that had the cartoons been published in an atmosphere characterised by ‘mutual respect and attempts to try to understand and listen...there

would have been no reason for moral reproach of *Jyllands-Posten*'.²⁴ This raises the issue of context and how this impacts what a society may find humorous or offensive. Both the Irish cartoons in the late-20th Century, and the contemporary *Charlie Hebdo* images, have been produced at a time when sentiments against these two groups were high, which adds to the shocking nature of the images. The fact that we still are able to understand the jokes and satire of dated publications suggests that certain images and stereotypes continue to persist in our minds. Despite most cartoons satirising the Irish population appearing during the 19th century, the themes present in these more modern examples are still very similar, continuing the image of the Irish as incompetent, alcoholic and violent. Meanwhile, cartoons satirising Muslims are a more recent phenomenon, yet it is clear that similar violent themes are present, this time revolving around their religious identity, rather than national. When discussing the Danish cartoon series, Rostbøll explains that they were: 'part of a pervasive hateful discourse, orchestrated by powerful groups, and targeted at a marginalised group who already felt discouraged from participating as equals in society.'²⁵ This citation can be applied to both the *Charlie Hebdo* examples and Musgrave-Wood's series. The historical context to all of these images is one of hateful discourse and misunderstandings between social groups. These images produced by powerful media publications target two groups which have been marginalised from society and discourage them further from feeling part of it. Despite a humorous element, and one which we can all immediately identify, there is a very thin line between humour and real damage, on both individual and societal levels.

In conclusion, both the Irish and Muslim groups targeted by such cartoons are clear examples of peoples marginalised from society, due to their differences. These images are enduring examples of satirical humour, and its power in mocking identities. It is hard to say whether these images are merely humorous or if there is a serious element of offense and danger, as humour is a subjective entity. Yet it is clear that the images produced of these two groups, and many other marginalised

²⁴ Rostbøll, 'Autonomy, Respect, and Arrogance in the Danish Cartoon Controversy', p. 627.

²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 641.

groups, such as Jews, criminals and foreigners, were intended to offend, incite hate and reinforce existing prejudices against groups seen as “others”.

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