



Gaelic Vegetarianism and Veganism & Colonial Resistance

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Highlights

- Legacy of Irish animism and vegetarianism
- Entanglement of colonial oppression and animal oppression
- Animal oppression in the making of the Irish nation-state
- Veganism in the modern Irish discourse

Irish Vegetarian Ethic

- Animist culture
- Limited 'hunting' and 'slaughtering'
- Mostly plant-based diets
- Cow-based economy
- Both landscape and human bodies shaped by relationship to cows and sheeps



Irish Vegetarian Ethic

- Under British, shift to 'meat' and dairy based economy
- Ireland as an outsourced feedlot
- Reliance on a nearly vegan diet, heavy on potatoes, cabbage, and wild plants
 - High food insecurity
- Sustaining **indigenous Gaelic vegetarianism** replaced with **precarious colonial vegetarianism**



Animals & Colonial Oppression

- Many nationalists recognized role of animal agriculture in Irish oppression
 - Some advocated vegetarianism to liberate bodies and country
- Irish also animalized to justify colonialism and inability to self-rule



New Irish Nation

- Rather than uproot speciesism in new Irish state, animal ag embraced to achieve legitimacy and competitive edge in capitalist world system
- Cow population 1.8 mil at Great Famine
 - Today 6.3 mil
- €3.7 billion meat and livestock exports
 - 1/3 of food and drink exports
 - €3.38 billion in dairy
- EU membership subsidizes
- Ireland exceeds emissions cap



Defining the Irish

- Irish farming as superior
 - Evoking farmer tradition, family heritage, and mummies
- Animal cruelty narratives used to otherize
 - Muslim recipients of 'live export'
 - Travellers

Win a Man!

No, this is not a competition. It's a gentle hint. Cheese makes a man feel great. So use a little cunning. Serve a man cheese. And win his heart.

Cheese is manfood!

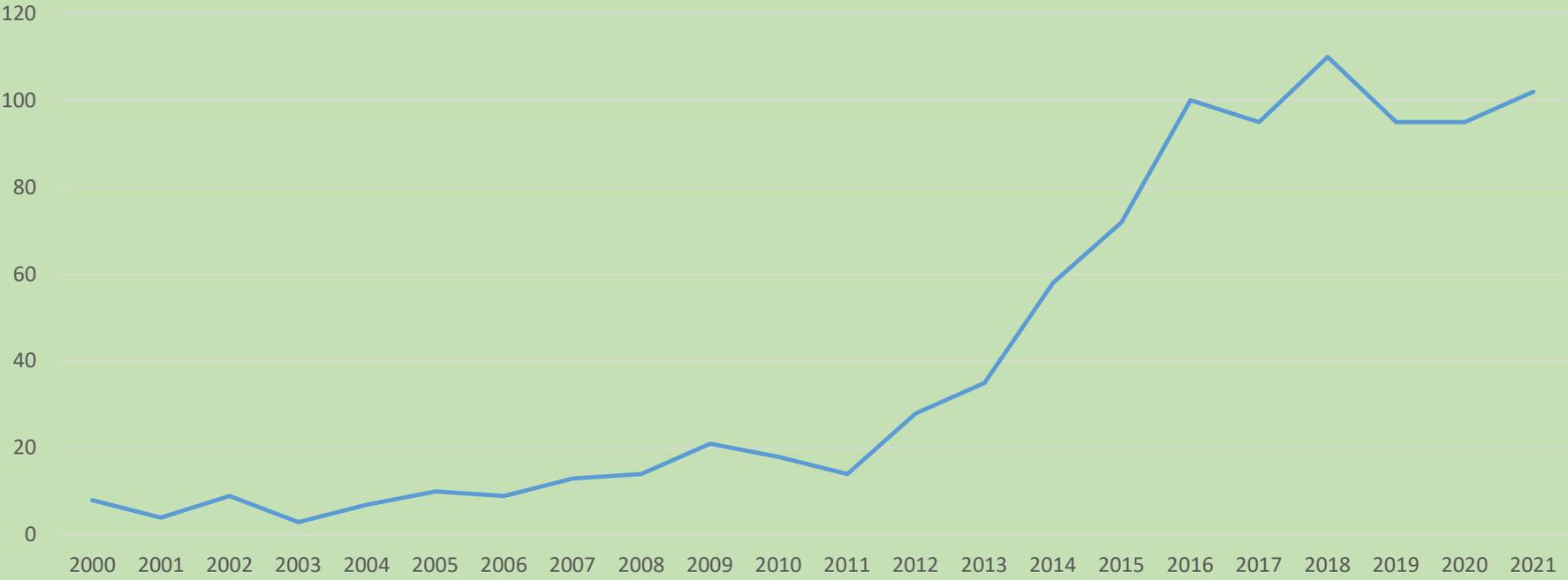
NDC National Dairy Council KENNY'S

Civilizing Ireland

- Non-veganism framed as key to evolution of Irish bodies
 - Veganism would lead to a “nutrient deficit population;”
“massive population health issue” National Dairy Council
on *Pat Kenny Show*
- And Irish society
 - Famine as evidence to the fallibility of vegetables
 - Vegan claims of climate change framed as hoax

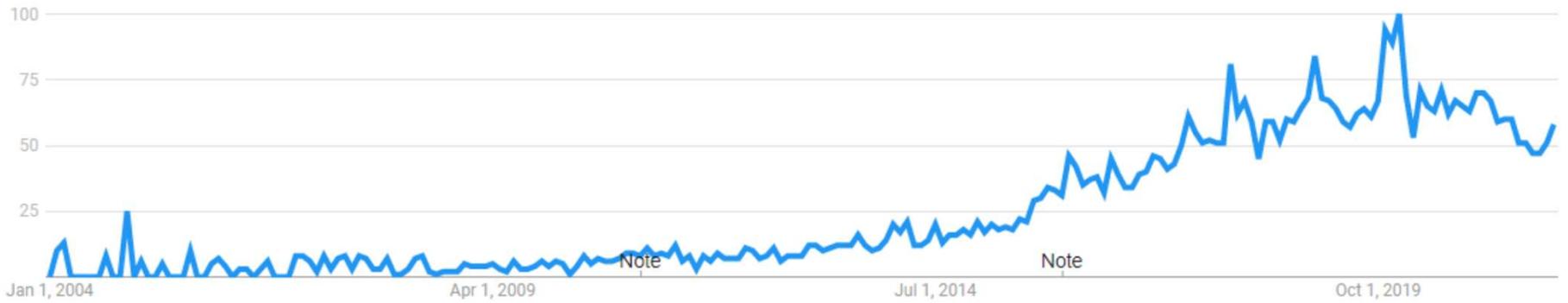
Coverage in *The Irish Times*

Mentions of Veganism



Google Trends

Interest over time [?](#)



Veganism as a Sideshow

- As a fringe movement, considered a curiosity
- Extremists
- Spectacles

Day to Day *The Only Vegan in Ireland: Voyage of the Rubicon*

EVER hear of a vegan? We were talking to one to-day — Ireland's only vegan.

A vegan is a super-vegetarian. A vegetarian who not only eschews fish, flesh and fowl, but also such by-products as eggs, milk, cheese and margarine. A hard course to take, we would think.

But Miss Moira Henry, the only example in this country, seems very cheery about it. She has been a vegetarian for 15 years and a vegan for four. She

an old-timer tells us that one used to thrive in College Street, Dublin.

Kate O'Brien

Connemara has a distinguished trio of women writers. Farthest west there is Ethel Mannin, living near the bay which bears her name; in Galway, but well-known throughout the west, lives Claire Sheridan, the writer and sculptress; and in Roundstone is Kate O'Brien, who has taken over a haunted house.

But Kate O'Brien at the moment is moving far from Connemara. We met her in Dublin yesterday in the last stages of preparation for a trip to America where she is going out to supervise the staging of her latest novel "That Lady."

It will be remembered that Katharine Cornell, one of the great figures on the American stage and her husband Guthrie McClintic were over in Dublin recently working with her on the script. Now they are all ready for an opening tour, and after a run round the east coast, will come to New York in October.

Anyone who has read that glorious piece of storytelling will wonder if the play is to be given a splash treatment and in as a historical tapestry—as must be a great temptation. Kate O'Brien tells us that it is only eleven speaking parts; the main part, that of Ana de Mendoza, being taken by

French own a stick about the place, but as long as they can make a living out of them, hewing wood and drawing water, the foreigner may hoist any piece of coloured cloth he likes.

All of which, you may think, adds up to an interesting comment on empire-building.

'An Irish Way'

The French are a very jovial crowd — "always willing to drink, dance and sing . . . they have an Irish way about them."

"They each have a small bar which is stocked with only the best wines and liqueurs for the benefit of social evenings with their friends. They have built an airdrome and it is used very little, just to land the mail kite once a month. A ship brings supplies now and then. This sounds O.K., but when you have to wait for this "now and then" ship to bring man's staple food which we in Ireland never run short of, namely water . . ."

Well, there are some snags.

Yes, he says, a heavy year's rain here just lasts five minutes. The big gombeen man ashore has "anything you want." But you had better have something of value to exchange. "I found an Arab boy," writes John L., "to purchase my surplus kit that we are forced to sell from the boat to fetch food. I called him Ali Baba and believe he is actually named that."

Envv Him



Jack McClelland leaving the sea when he finally reached the Irish mainland after his mammoth swim of what amounted to approximately 18 miles from Tory Island.

The Irish Times 1949

Veganism as a Threat

- Vegan message frequently juxtaposed with animal ag authority
 - Irish farmers as sensible and authentic Ireland
- Go Vegan World ads refused by Dublin Bus and Irish Rail
 - “overtly emotive and provocative”
- NDC identifies vegan “influencers”



Veganism as Terrorism

- Veganism as foreign, terroristic threat to state
 - Dalziell & Wadiwel (2017) & Laura Wright's (2015) *The Vegan Studies Project*
- Go Vegan World as “ISIS” or “Militant”
- Sensationalizing vegan protest
 - “Farmer Subjected to ‘Frightening’ Online Abuse By Vegan Campaigners” – *Independent.ie*

HUMANE MILK IS A MYTH

The dairy industry took all her babies & all her milk.
Now it will take her life for meat, leather & byproducts.
She is 6 years old. Her natural lifespan is 25 years.



Veganism as a Diet

- Vegan food is largest theme
 - Animal rights and environmentalism rarely discussed
 - Depoliticizing
- Often linked with travel or trendy restaurants
 - Exotifying / non-Irish



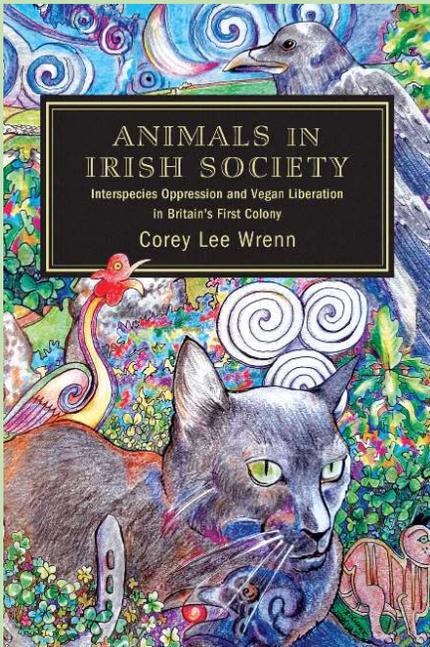
Veganism as Authentic?



- Some media are curious, welcoming, even celebratory of new Irish vegan cuisine, products, and restaurants
- Room to reimagine veganism as indigenous rather than external/other
- Resistance to oppressive, unhealthy, unsustainable colonial foodways



Learn More



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- Vegansociology.com
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