

# Animal Anxieties

## Vegan Discourse in Making and Unmaking of Postcolonial Ireland

COREY L. WRENN PHD

LECTURER IN SOCIOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF KENT

CO-DIRECTOR, CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL MOVEMENTS

PAST-CHAIR, SECTION ON ANIMALS & SOCIETY, AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

CO-FOUNDER, INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF VEGAN SOCIOLOGISTS



THE VILLAGE OF BIRROU.



HAYDEN.



MILLER OF THE DOVE, AT DUBRISH.

# Overview

---

- ❖ Most societies are deeply dependent upon the systematic exploitation of other animals
  - ❖ **Veganism disrupts this narrative**
- ❖ For precarious **newly developed nation-states**
  - ❖ Economic reliance on other animals is often presumed mandatory for global participation and legitimacy
  - ❖ Citizens of these new nations are frequently overcoming the legacy of **colonialist racialization**, which characteristically **animalizes** them to justify their subjugation

# Animal Nationalism

- ❖ Animality relevant to defining national and cultural identities
- ❖ Material relationships with nonhumans undergird nation-building
- ❖ Metaphorical relationship between humans and other animals enforced



Dalziell, J. and Wadiwel, D. 2017. "Live Exports, Animal Advocacy, Race and 'Animal Nationalism'." Pp. 73-89, in *Meat Culture*, A. Potts (Ed.). Leiden: Brill.

Freeman, C. 2009. "This Little Piggy Went to Press: The American News Media's Construction of Animals in Agriculture." *The Communication Review* 12: 78-103.

Nibert, D. 2013. *Animal Oppression and Human Violence*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Saha, J. 2017. "Colonizing Elephants: Animal Agency, Undead Capital and Imperial Science in British Burma." *British Journal for the History of Science* 2: 169-189.

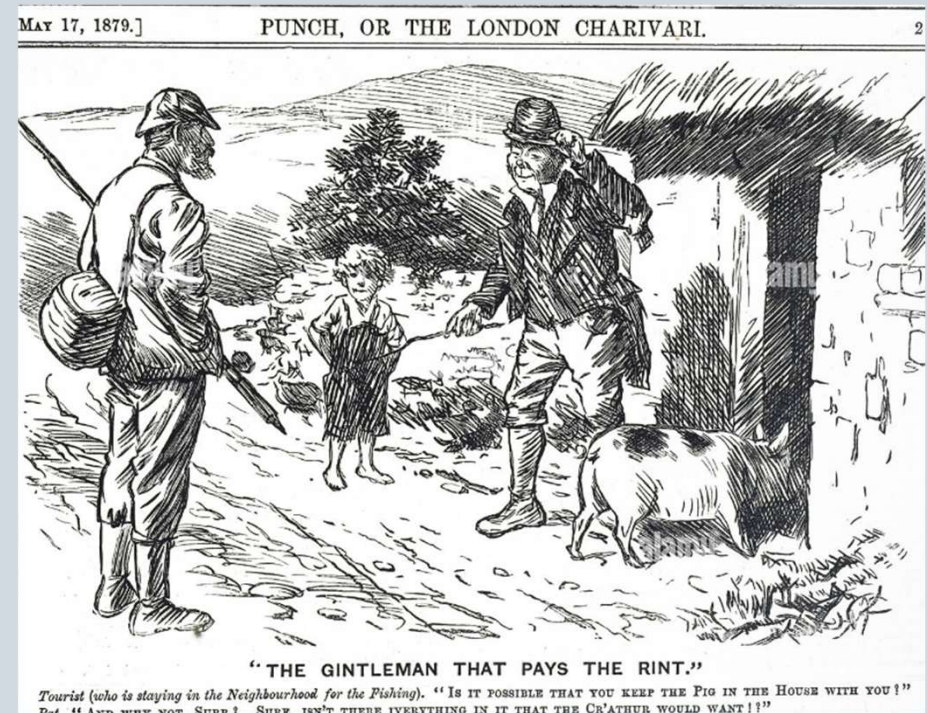
Stănescu, V. 2018. "'White Power Milk': Milk, Dietary Racism, and the 'Alt-Right'." *Animal Studies Journal* 7 (2): 103-128.

Suzuki, Y. 2017. *The Nature of Whiteness: Race, Animals, and Nations in Zimbabwe*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.

Wiley, A. 2017. "Growing a Nation: Milk Consumption in India Since the Raj." Pp. 41-60, in Cohen, M. and Otomo, Y. eds. *Making Milk*, M. Cohen and Y. Otomo (Eds.). New York: Bloomsbury.

# Case Study: Ireland

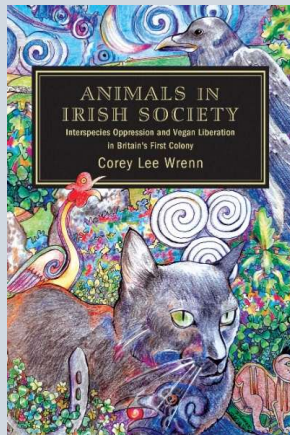
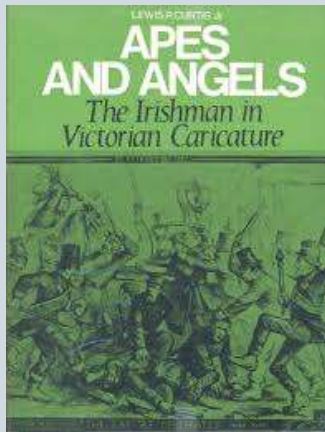
- ❖ Colonized for 800 years, primarily Britain
- ❖ Premised on the outsourcing of animal agriculture
- ❖ Forced removals & land enclosure
- ❖ Justified by “primitive”/ “uncivilized” nature of Irish peasantry
  - ❖ Including their co-habitation with animals, “undeveloped” animal agriculture, and plant-based diet



“Pigs” *Punch Magazine* 1879



# Animalizing Ireland



Curtis, L. 1971. *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature*. Newton Abbot: David and Charles.

Loughnan, S., Haslam, N., Sutton, R. and Spencer, B. 2014. "Dehumanization and Social Class." *Social Psychology* 45 (1): Online.

MacManus, S. 1921. *The Story of the Irish Race: A Popular History of Ireland*. New York: The Irish Publishing Co.

# *The Celtic Revival*

---

- ❖ Poignancy of **white fragility**
- ❖ Reclaiming of the **Irish “race”**
- ❖ Presented as **superhuman/angelic**
- ❖ Language **revival**, literature, theatre, history, archaeology



Caren, M. 2018. *The Quest for the Irish Celt*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press.

Curtis, L. 1971. *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature*. Newton Abbot: David and Charles.

DiAngelo, R. 2018. *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism*. New York: Beacon Press.

Foster, R. 2014. *Vivid Faces: The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland 1890-1923*. London: Penguin Books.



## *Independent Ireland*

---

- ❖ After years of colonialism and several decades of post-colonial poverty, Irish people became meat-eating, milk-drinking full-fledged **humans**, signaling their newfound independence through their ability to consume diets of privilege and dominate other animals
- ❖ The process of decolonialization, in other words, entailed an **emergence from the animal-like colonial subject** to the human status granted by autonomy
- ❖ **White fragility** and a history of **colonialism** inform an “**animal anxiety**”

# Method

- ❖ Content analysis of Boards.ie discussion about GVW billboard in Mitchelstown, IE
- ❖ 342 posts, Dec 2017 – April 2018
- ❖ Qualitative coding

## Vegan anti dairy Billboards. See mod note in post#1.

**Wildsurfer**  
Registered User  
21-Dec-2017 13:10  
#1

Don't know is this a new development or am I late seeing these, but driving through Mitchelstown earlier and I saw a full size Go vegan billboard saying something or other about stealing babies from their mothers. Couldn't stop to take a photo. In the home of Dairy providing so many jobs in that area I'm wondering how long it will be before it is ripped down or sprayed over but I guess I was just shocked to see it there at all. They must be well funded to be able to afford this type of outlet for their spin.





**Table 1: General Tone Frequencies**

Supportive	27	8%
Neutral; unclear	95	28%
Negative	220	63%
<b>Total</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 2: Nature of Negative Posts**

Threat of violence	4	1%
Charges of hypocrisy	24	7%
Tone-policing	39	11%
Logical fallacy	45	13%
Dismissive	108	31%
<b>Total</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>63%</b>

**Table 3: Reasons Given for Dismissiveness, General**

Profiteering	2	1%
Vegan food not tasty or satisfying	4	1%
Ignored by public	6	2%
Outsider or elite-funded	7	2%
Low in numbers	8	2%
Criminal, Dangerous	11	3%
Cognitively impaired; cult-like	22	7%
General dismissiveness; other	48	13%
<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>31%</b>

**Table 4: Tone-Policing**

Yuppie; middle-class	1	0%
Overly emotional	7	2%
Misanthropic	15	4%
Preachy; evangelical	16	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>11%</b>

# On Ireland

---

- ❖ **Just 28 posts mentioned Ireland specifically**
- ❖ Mostly referred to the superiority of Irish farming
  - ❖ And sanctity and astuteness of Irish farmers
- ❖ Some religious comments
  - ❖ Reference to decline of Catholic Church in Ireland
  - ❖ Wariness of religiosity
  - ❖ Some pro-vegan posts referenced fragile state of economy and heavy subsidization of failing animal agriculture
- ❖ On hegemony...
  - ❖ Large side debate on the naturalness of eating non-carnivorous animals (although pigs, fishes, etc. not acknowledged)
  - ❖ Moderators protected anti-vegans; vegans cautioned and deleted

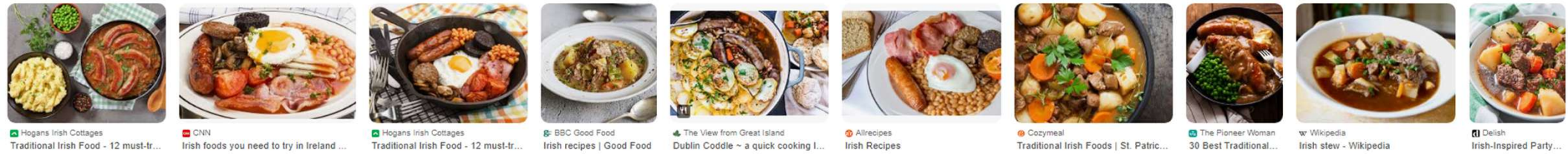
## *Colonized Diet*

---

- ❖ **Colonizer diet is one of privilege**, and not one that is especially sustainable or fair
- ❖ As diet-related diseases, pandemics, and climate change continue to threaten Ireland's public health, **the Standard Irish Diet is under scrutiny**
- ❖ Chefs, scholars, and foodies working to detach Irish food from its uncomfortable British legacy and **recenter indigenous foods**
  - ❖ But **overlooks plant-based heritages** predating British invasion
  - ❖ Several leaders in Celtic revival adopted vegetarianism
- ❖ **The colonial lens continues to normalize animal products as the epitome of “good food” for modern citizens**



- Culture
- Christmas
- Cuisine
- Northern Ireland
- Discontinued
- Dublin
- Irish pub
- Restaurants
- St patrick's day
- Stew
- Menu
- Grain free dog
- FOOD.COM Logo
- Chipper
- Seasonal
- Direct provi...



Hogans Irish Cottages Traditional Irish Food - 12 must-tr...  
 CNN Irish foods you need to try in Ireland ...  
 Hogans Irish Cottages Traditional Irish Food - 12 must-tr...  
 BBC Good Food Irish recipes | Good Food  
 The View from Great Island Dublin Coddle ~ a quick cooking I...  
 Allrecipes Irish Recipes  
 Cozymeal Traditional Irish Foods | St. Patric...  
 The Pioneer Woman 30 Best Traditional...  
 Wikipedia Irish stew - Wikipedia  
 Delish Irish-Inspired Party...



Taste of Home 24 Traditional Irish Foods...  
 www.foodireland.com Food Ireland  
 Veggie Desserts Traditional Irish Foo...  
 BBC Good Food Slow cooker lamb stew recipe | Good Food  
 Celtic Canada 10 to try: traditional Irish food ...  
 The Pioneer Woman 30 Best Traditional Irish ...  
 Freepik Irish food cuisine me...  
 The Irishman's Wife Full Irish Breakf...  
 Taste of Home 24 Traditional Irish Foods...  
 Chewing the Fat Eat in Ireland and Where by Nata...



Related searches

- irish coddle
- irish food
- ireland traditional irish food

a poppy place. Irish Foods: 13 Must-Try Eats Fr...  
 CLINK Hostels 20 Irish Dishes You Can't Miss - ...  
 FamilySearch Six Traditional Irish Foods to Try at ...  
 The Spruce Eats Traditional Irish Stew Recipe  
 Our Escape Clause The Best Food in Ireland: What to...  
 Ingmar App Recipe: The national dish of I...  
 CNN Irish foods you need to try in Ireland ...  
 Will Fly for Food Irish Food: 12 Must-Try Dishes in ...



BEST OF IRELAND...  
 Will Fly for Food Irish Food: 12 Must-Try Dishes in ...



## *Limitations*

---

- ❖ Only one discussion
- ❖ Dated discourse
- ❖ Many dominant voices (repeat posters)
- ❖ Anti-vegan moderators setting tone
- ❖ Not much evidence for how animalization feeds anti-vegan attitudes



## *Follow Me*

---

**Facebook** @coreyleewrenn

**Instagram** @coreyleewrenn

**Twitter** @drcoreyleewrenn

**Web** @coreyleewrenn.com

