

Roger Casement in Argentina

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Abstract: *Roger Casement made two journeys to Argentina: the first was in 1907 and the second was in 1910. Little is known about either trip beyond a few fragmentary references in letters and some encrypted entries in the contested Black Diaries. Nonetheless, these traces would suggest that Casement was connected into a vibrant Irish-Argentinian network that played a vital role in the independence struggle before and after 1916. Through reconstructing evidence of these visits and locating his friendships within Ireland's broader transnational struggle, this essay excavates a dimension of informal diplomacy that prepared the ground for the emergence of Irish foreign policy after 1919.*

Keywords: *Roger Casement; Argentina; Fianna; R.B. Cunninghame Graham; Irish Diplomacy; Balder Olden.*

Resumo: *Roger Casement fez duas viagens à Argentina: a primeira, em 1907 e, a segunda, em 1910. Pouco se sabe sobre essas viagens, pois não há nada além de algumas referências fragmentárias em cartas e algumas entradas criptografadas nos contestados Diários Negros. No entanto, esses traços sugerem que Casement esteve conectado a uma vibrante rede argentino-irlandesa, que desempenhou um papel crucial, antes e depois da luta pela independência de 1916. Por meio da reconstrução de evidências dessas visitas e da localização de amigos envolvidos, de modo mais amplo, com a luta transnacional da Irlanda, este ensaio traz à tona uma dimensão da diplomacia informal que preparou o terreno para o surgimento da política externa irlandesa após 1919.*

Palavras-chave: *Roger Casement; Argentina; Fianna; R.B. Cunninghame Graham; Diplomacia Irlandesa; Balder Olden.*

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Introduction

Some years ago, while participating in a conference at a university in the west of Ireland, I was approached by a woman in her mid to late seventies. Her accent was obviously North American; her look was unmistakably Irish. A Donegal tweed hat sat at an angle on her head and a narrow gold torc clasped the line of her neck. She introduced herself courteously saying that she had been fascinated to hear the discussion about Roger Casement's exploits in South America, as there was a vivid memory of Casement in her own family background. She

then proceeded to relate how her father, a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, used to run messages for Casement from New York to Buenos Aires. I listened attentively, but before I could ask for her name and contact details to follow up her story, our brief conversation was interrupted and, in that fleeting moment of distraction, the woman disappeared, never to be seen again. Her fragment of information, however, has lodged in my mind for a decade now and nurtured a deep curiosity: how did Argentina fit into Casement's transatlantic network?

The reach of Ireland's influence in the Atlantic world has received much attention in recent years through the advances of diaspora studies and the reconfiguration of the Atlantic as an alternative location for understanding transnational modernity and countermodernity. The space opened up by the on-line journal *Irish Migration Studies in Latin America* has raised awareness of the extensive and deep connection linking Ireland and Argentina. Missionaries, mercenaries, farmers, and paupers were all part of this migratory flow. Once settled in Argentina, members of the Irish community took up commercial, religious, military, political and professional occupations. The Irish potato famine of the 1840s was the tragedy which precipitated much of this movement. But subsequent waves of migration, resulting from the Land Wars and widespread social unrest and deprivation of late nineteenth-century Ireland, extended the links between the two countries. Casement's brief contact with Argentina belongs to this longer historical context and to the web of interlinking struggles for social justice, antislavery activism, and anti-imperial agitation: the other causes of Casement's life linked to the struggle for Irish national independence.

Casement's Journeys to Argentina

After arriving in South America in 1906, Casement made two journeys to Argentina. Six months after taking up his first consular appointment at Santos, he wrote to his collaborator in the Congo reform movement, E.D. Morel, of a meeting with William Warden:

I was down in Buenos Aires for a few days in March & saw Warden. He sent me the enclosed Yankee cartoon of Leopold to send to you. We drank success to you & the cause one night when I dined with him ... I am giving most of the last consignment of Congo papers to the (Anglican) Bishop of the Falkland Islands whose diocese is the whole of South America! (*London School of Economics, ED Morel Papers, Santos, 2 April 1907*)

William Warden was a member of the British expatriate business community resident in Buenos Aires, who befriended Casement and became interested in his various causes and campaigns.¹ He appears to have served as Casement's eyes and ears in Argentina and kept tabs on the reporting of the Congo reform movement in the Argentine press. In 1913 Warden supported Casement's efforts to bring relief to typhus-stricken communities in the west of Ireland. The reference to the (Anglican) Bishop of the Malvinas is also poignant and confirms how Casement was tirelessly working to raise the profile of the cause of Congo reform among influential churchmen. This included both bishops in the Catholic and Anglican churches and leading evangelical and non-conformist preachers.

His second journey to Argentina, undertaken in March 1910, was a much longer stopover, lasting almost a month. He arrived into Buenos Aires on 11 March and stayed until 4

April, when he departed for Europe via Montevideo, travelling on the Lamport and Holt steamship *Veronese*. From the limited and sketchy knowledge relevant to this visit, it is apparent that he strengthened his contacts with different factions of the Irish community in South America. By 1910, and despite his work as a British Foreign Office consul, Casement was engaged in the clandestine support of individuals and organisations which six years later would be at the centre of the events of the Easter Rising in Ireland. In the extensive biographical interpretation of Casement there has been a tendency to situate his support for Irish independence and his role in the Irish rebellion as something which emerged comparatively late and extended from his disaffection with the British Empire and the Foreign Office. This analysis, however, ignores his much longer and deeper association with and commitment to the organisation of those sympathetic to Irish independence. From as early as 1904, Casement was operating with the emerging political and cultural elements of the separatist struggle and using his official position to raise awareness about Ireland wherever he was. To the British authorities who began to examine his self-confessed treason in 1914, the use and abuse of his official power to further the cause of Irish independence made his treason all the more indefensible.

Beyond a few, brief comments in personal letters there are scant references to help piece together what he was up to in Argentina. If the mysterious lady, who told me about her father's work as a personal courier running messages from New York to Buenos Aires, is to be believed, it is not unreasonable to assume that Casement was meeting with Irish expatriates sympathetic to Irish independence. Beyond a few references in letters, the most important source detailing his movements is the disputed "Black" Dollard's Office Diary for 1910, which includes very brief entries covering his days in Argentina. Rumours of these sexually explicit diaries appeared at the time of Casement's trial and were used unscrupulously by the British authorities to undermine Casement's defence and confuse his supporters. For those who uphold the Black Diary narrative as genuine, then Casement spent most of his time in Buenos Aires in the embrace of a man called "Ramon". To those like myself, who treat the narrative of the Black Diaries cautiously, suspect their authenticity and believe their purpose is to distort meaning, manage the conflicting secret worlds of Casement and assassinate his character, then the figure of Ramon is probably a fictitious character used to divert us away from Casement's clandestine activities, either as an official secret service officer and 'man on the spot' working for the British Foreign Office or, the more likely option, of covering up his clandestine work building up international support for advanced Irish nationalism. Deep comparative analysis of the Black Diary narrative reveals how concentrated sexual descriptions and sustained silences in the Black Diary often indicate more undercover activities by Casement. Moreover, if the diaries are forged then it is not unreasonable to assume that much of the information configures factually with his movement, although the entries for his weeks spent in Argentina in 1910 are suspiciously cryptic and lacking in detail. The relevant excerpt from the 1910 Diary dealing with his days in Argentina has been appended at the end of this introduction.²

After disembarking from the steamship *Asturias*, Casement spent the first five days in Buenos Aires, where he once again met up with William Warden at the Hurlingham Club. On 16 March he travelled by train to Mar del Plata, and remained there from 16-21 March. This can be confirmed by a letter sent to his cousin Gertrude Bannister and written on the day he left Mar del Plata:

"This is called the "Brighton" of the Argentine – and is a very fashionable place indeed ... There are a great many Irish people here & most of them very rich indeed. They are far the most successful of all the immigrants into this wonderful country.

(NLI, Mar del Plata, Argentina, 21 March 1910)

The fact that he travelled down on 16 March and spent St Patrick's Day in Mar del Plata is significant. St Patrick's Day possessed both symbolic and sacred importance in Casement's calendar. His official report, written the following year, describing the condition of the Putumayo Indians in the northwest Amazon, was purposefully dated and delivered on 17 March. On that day, in 1914, he marched through the streets of Limerick at the head of a group of Irish Volunteers, to a parade ground at Raheen, where he carried out an impromptu inspection of unarmed men. Therefore, from this letter to his cousin we might safely deduce that he spent 17 March in the company of like-minded Irish-Argentinians.

The reference to 'many Irish people ... most of them very rich indeed' also throws light on one of his networks in Argentina. It seems likely that his visit to Mar del Plata was connected to the launch of the advanced nationalist newspaper *Fianna*, edited by the leading Irish republican activist, Patrick McManus. Born in Co. Donegal, McManus had ended up in Argentina after an eight-year stint in the US navy. His adopted country served him well. He amassed estates equivalent in size to County Donegal and was able to finance various initiatives in support of advanced Irish nationalism. (Geraghty 2009) He was one of the founders of the Gaelic League in Buenos Aires and in 1907 married Elsa O'Rourke, a sister-in-law of the journalist William Bulfin, author of *Rambles in Eirinn* (1912), a popular travel book describing a journey through Ireland on a bicycle. McManus was also connected to Mar del Plata, where he had attended college and worked as a mathematics teacher. By 1910 Casement and McManus were active in the same cultural circuits working for Irish independence, although direct evidence of their collaboration has not yet come to light.

In the tradition of advanced Irish nationalist newspapers, *Fianna* was a vehemently anti-British Empire newspaper; similar to the *United Irishman*, *Sinn Féin* and *Bean na hÉireann*, other publications supported by Casement with either pseudonymous articles or financial support. The chosen name of the newspaper *Fianna* – the name used to describe mythical Irish warriors – might also suggest Casement's hand at play, for it was his intellectual protégé, the Belfast Quaker, Bulmer Hobson, who was the principal grassroots organiser of the *Fianna na hÉireann*, founded on 16 August 1909 by Hobson, the Countess Markiewicz and the activist Helena Molony. (Hay 2009) This semi-military youth movement, established to counteract the growing influence of the Boy Scout movement in Ireland, became an important training ground for the IRB and later the IRA. The fact that McManus chose to call his newspaper *Fianna*, would suggest both contact and sympathy for *Fianna na hÉireann*, a link quite possibly routed through Casement and one which might explain his diversion to Argentina? (Murray 2005)

On returning to Buenos Aires on 22 March, Casement made a trip by train to the district of Belgrano and the following day he journeyed to La Plata to lunch at the hotel, although the Black Diary narrative is unclear why or who he visited in either place. That evening he arranged to travel the following day to a place called "San Marco" in the company of 'Eddy Duggan.' This fleeting reference connects his activities to the Duggan family, one of the most illustrious of all Irish-Argentine dynasties and one which linked Casement back to the inner circle of power in London. The location of "San Marco" persists as one of the abiding mysteries regarding his movements in Argentina. Was this, as one researcher has suggested, the name of a Duggan estancia located somewhere in the pampas near Buenos Aires? Or, is it a fictitious rendezvous? The Black Diary narrative is cryptic and short on detail, describing "San Marco" with the vague comment: "interesting but very wet."

It is clear that at some point during this trip he spent time with Thomas Duggan

(1827-1913). The Duggans were part of the post-famine exodus from Ireland.³ They hailed initially from Ballymahon, County Longford, and several sons emigrated to Argentina in the latter half of the nineteenth century and worked as wool traders in Buenos Aires, where they built up extensive property and business interests. Thomas Duggan, the most successful of the brothers, helped finance *The Buenos Aires Standard*, an English-language newspaper co-founded by his brother, Michael Duggan. Although the newspaper was editorially allied with British trading interest in Argentina, Thomas Duggan was sympathetic to Irish nationalism, although not in the overtly republican manner of McManus. (Byrne, Coleman & King 2008)⁴ By the early twentieth century, the Duggan power was increasingly focussed on British-Argentine trade links. In 1905, one of Thomas' sons, Alfredo, was appointed to the Argentine Legation in London, where he moved in the same diplomatic circles as Casement. It is quite possible that Alfredo arranged for Casement's introduction to his father, Thomas, as the two certainly met in Argentina in 1910, although the circumstances of that meeting remain unclear.

The Casement-Duggan connection is also intriguing due to Alfredo's wife, Grace Elvira Hinds, an Alabama-born heiress, and the only child of J. Monroe Hinds, a former US Minister in Brazil. Grace gave birth to two sons and a daughter by her Argentine husband: Alfredo (b.1903), Huberto (b. 1904) and Marcella (b.1907). After the premature death of her husband in London in 1915, at the age of forty, Grace went on to marry George Nathaniel Curzon, a former viceroy of India, who had served as undersecretary of state to the Foreign Office under Lord Salisbury, where he almost certainly came into personal contact with Casement. He would later serve as British foreign secretary from 1919-1924. Curzon was one of that elite breed of British administrative luminaries whose lives are shrouded in the mystique of imperial majesty. His name is linked to the Casement story over both the Congo investigation and the independence struggle in Ireland. Grace possibly attended the Royal Courts of Justice in June and July 1916 to observe some of the legal proceedings during Casement's trial for high treason.

A few months after Casement's execution, Curzon and Grace Duggan were wed and the offspring of her first marriage to Alfredo – the grandchildren of Irish famine emigrants – were then raised in Lord Curzon's exclusive household. Grace became the Marchioness of Kedleston and the children enjoyed the kind of access and entitlement accorded to the British upper class.⁵ The notoriety of the eldest boy, Alfredo, whose antics as a rich *bon viveur* while an undergraduate at Oxford, inspired characters in the novels of Evelyn Waugh and Anthony Powell and excited the pens of gossip columnists. After squandering most of his fortune, Alfredo spent the last years of his life gaining a reputation as a popular author of historical fiction. (Derbyshire 2005) The younger son, Huberto, served as a Conservative Member of Parliament and, after the breakdown of his marriage, had a string of affairs with some of the most glamorous socialites of the day, including Diana Fellowes and Lady Bridget Parsons (daughter of the 5th Earl of Rosse).

The trajectory of the Duggan family into the bosom of the British aristocracy marked the culmination of a deepening factional divide within the Irish community in Argentina, which became apparent in the years before the First World War. The Duggans fostered closer commercial ties between the Irish community and British trading interests. These views were reflected in the newspaper, *The Standard*, an overtly pro-British publication with diminishing sympathy for Irish Home Rule and the nationalist struggle in Ireland. By 1916 any previous association with Casement was most probably considered by the Duggans as a stigma and all evidence of any dealings with Casement or his various causes was probably either concealed or

destroyed.

One other well-known Irish-Argentinian, who quite probably passed through Casement's orbit during these years was William Bulfin. Known among his friends as "Che Buenos," he emigrated to Argentina and became the editor and proprietor of *The Southern Cross* – the voice of the Irish community in Argentina. In 1909, Bulfin moved back to Ireland and sent his son, Eamon, to Patrick Pearse's progressive Irish language school, St Enda's. During its brief life, Casement developed a strong association with St Enda's and on various occasions he was invited to address the school and present prizes to the pupils. In the build up to 1916, Eamon Bulfin remained closely associated with Pearse and other advanced nationalists. He fought in the GPO during the Easter Rising and was later imprisoned in Frongoch.⁶ In 1919, he was appointed by Casement's former defence solicitor, George Gavan Duffy, as the Sinn Féin envoy in Argentina and, at the second meeting of the Dáil cabinet in April 1919, £500 was awarded to him for running expenses – quite a generous amount given the limited public resources at that time and also indicative of the strategic importance of Argentina to those early years of independence.⁷

When Casement left Buenos Aires in early April 1910 his life was about to alter course. On his return to South America in July he headed straight for the Amazon to undertake his official investigation into the atrocities resulting from the extractive rubber industry. This would dominate his last three years as a consular official. He would never return to his posting in Rio de Janeiro, or to Argentina. The *Fianna* ceased publishing in 1912. That same year Arthur Griffith wrote to Patrick McManus seeking financial support for his newspaper, *Sinn Féin*. And over the next few years advanced nationalist ties between Ireland and Argentina deepened, which is evident from the regular references in the advanced nationalist press to the circle of Argentinians sympathetic to the struggle for independence. It is not unreasonable to assume that Casement kept in close touch with several in that circle, and this would explain why, as the revolutionary conspiracy in Ireland deepened, a messenger was required to run secret communications between New York and Buenos Aires.

Robert Bontine Cunninghame Graham

Another individual deeply associated with South America, and particularly Argentina, who would enter Casement's orbit, was the Scottish adventurer and politician, Robert Bontine Cunninghame Graham, or "Don Roberto," as he was affectionately called. Casement and Cunninghame Graham share fascinating connections and points of common interests. Both men were concerned with questions of social justice, civil liberties and the devolution of power. Both reacted in different ways to the inequalities born of power during their day. Both men were considered idealistic adventurers and involved themselves passionately in the political independence of their countries and other progressive campaigns. They mixed in the same circles and had many friends in common including the playwright George Bernard Shaw, the novelist Joseph Conrad and the trade unionist John Burns. Cunninghame Graham is sometimes referred to as the "Scottish Parnell" and was a staunch supporter of Irish Home Rule, but after Casement's trajectory towards Germany and his invocation of armed resistance to the empire, his sympathy for the latter subsided.

Robert Bontine Cunninghame Graham was born in Scotland in 1852 to a family with land and status. The years of his youth were largely spent travelling, but it was Argentina and the gritty, independent lifestyle of the gaucho that most appealed to him. In his twenties he

undertook several epic journeys on horseback across Argentina, Paraguay and southern Brazil. In 1872 he rode some 600 miles up the river Parana to the waterfalls of Iguacu, a journey which would later inspire his historical novel *A Vanished Arcadia* (1901) on the early Jesuit missions. In the 1880s, after inheriting the ancestral estates in Scotland, Cunninghame Graham interested himself in politics and under the influence of an emerging group of socialist intellectuals including William Morris, G. Bernard Shaw, Annie Besant and Keir Hardie, his sympathies moved gradually towards socialism. He also attended rallies of the Irish Party parliamentarians including Charles S. Parnell, and land agitators such as Michael Davitt; and began to rethink the question of land in Scotland through the prism of the Irish Land War. He won a seat in Parliament as a Liberal in the election of 1886 on an extraordinarily radical platform advocating Scottish Home Rule and universal suffrage. In 1887, at the famous ‘Bloody Sunday’ demonstration in Trafalgar Square against coercion in Ireland, Cunninghame Graham was arrested, put on trial and imprisoned in Pentonville for his inflammatory speech.

Casement and Cunninghame Graham were introduced through their mutual friend, the exiled Polish writer, Joseph Conrad. Conrad encountered Casement at Matadi, on the lower Congo in 1890, where Conrad was immensely impressed by Casement. Seven years later, Conrad met Cunninghame Graham and a deep friendship developed between the two men. In 1904, as Casement returned to London from his investigation of colonial administration in the upper Congo – a journey clearly shaped by his recent reading of *Heart of Darkness* – Casement contacted Conrad asking him to join the campaign for Congo reform. Conrad refused, and instead suggested Casement contact his friend Cunninghame Graham. The letter from Conrad to Cunninghame Graham introducing Casement is a candid and insightful description of a man, who had little public exposure at the time.

I send you two letters I had from a man called Casement, premising that I knew him first in the Congo just 12 years ago. Perhaps you’ve heard or seen in print his name. He’s a protestant Irishman, pious too. But so was Pizarro. For the rest I can assure you that he is a limpid personality. There is a touch of the Conquistador in him too; for I’ve seen him start off into an unspeakable wilderness swinging a crookhandled stick for all weapons, with two bull-dogs: Paddy (white) and Biddy (brindle) at his heels and a Loanda boy carrying a bundle for all company. A few months afterwards it so happened that I saw him come out again, a little leaner a little browner, with his stick, dogs, and Loanda boy, and quietly serene as though he had been for a stroll in a park. Then we lost sight of each other. He was I believe B[riti]sh Consul in Beira, and lately seems to have been sent to the Congo again, on some sort of mission, by the Br. Govt. I have always thought that some particle of Las Casas’ soul had found refuge in his indefatigable body. The letters will tell you the rest. I would help him but it is not in me. I am only a wretched novelist inventing wretched stories and not even up to that miserable game; but your good pen, keen, flexible and straight, and sure, like a good Toledo blade would tell in the fray if you felt disposed to give a slash or two. He could tell you things! Things I’ve tried to forget; things I never did know. He has had as many years of Africa as I had months – almost. (Graham qtd. In Watts, 1969, 149)

In a private letter to Casement, Conrad advised him not to let Cunninghame Graham’s “reputation for socialism influence your judgment ... [it] has never been anything but a form of

his hate for all oppression and injustice ... his social relations extend from Dukes to Labour-members".⁸ Casement managed to elicit Cunninghame Graham's support for both his campaign for Congo reform and, later, for his work in the Amazon. His name was on the list of those who attended the Morel Testimonial in 1911, the London gathering of a group of sympathisers to the cause of international social justice. Between 1904 and 1916 Casement's own political sympathies shifted towards socialism as the Congo campaign attracted world intellectuals associated with progressive reform and anti-imperialism. Mark Twain, G. Bernard Shaw and Rosa Luxemburg were others who, like Cunninghame Graham, were prepared to lend their names to Casement's fight against crimes against humanity and the new slaveries of the twentieth century.

Within a week of the publication of the Blue Book containing Casement's reports examining the treatment of the Indians of the north-west Amazon, Cunninghame Graham wrote a letter in support of the findings and excoriating the British board of directors, some of whom were respected British financiers working in the City of London:

The Press of Ecuador, of Colombia and of Brazil during the years 1907-10, teemed with accounts of atrocities in the Putumayo. The directors in London, although no doubt like the ancient Greeks, they spoke no language but their own, must have been in touch with people some more or less intelligible 'pidgin' coming from the countries where the papers were published, and from which their bloodstained money was drawn. I suppose the ignorance of the directors was possible; but at the same time it is surprising. When ignorance means money 'tis folly to be wise. (*The Daily News* 1912)

But in the light of Casement's last years, his perceived support for Germany and his trial and execution, both Conrad and Cunninghame Graham turned their backs on the disgraced Irishman. The Cunninghame Graham papers held at the National Library of Scotland elide Casement's significance and the Casement-Cunninghame Graham correspondence has disappeared. In 1928, Cunninghame Graham wrote a long, quite spiteful and curiously inaccurate attack on Casement where he disagreed vehemently with the supportive portrayal of the man written by their mutual friend, the journalist Henry Nevinson.⁹ The letter was published in full in the 1937 biography of Cunninghame Graham written by another well-known European adventurer in Argentina, A. F. Tschiffely. It appeared a year after Cunninghame Graham's death in the Plaza Hotel in Buenos Aires after a visit to the home of his friend, the naturalist and ornithologist, W.H. Hudson. This posthumously-published coda in the Conrad-Casement-Cunninghame Graham entanglement further isolated Casement within the pantheon of Irish revolutionaries:

. . . it is an outrage (in my opinion) to Owen Roe O'Neil, Tyrconnel, Wolfe Tone, Emmet, O'Connell, Parnell and Davitt, to place such a man as Sir Roger Casement in their ranks. These men (Most of them) gave their lives for Ireland, but what did Casement do? Nothing as far as I can see. Peace to his ashes. May his bravery have washed out all his short-comings and his faults. (Source in text)

This harsh and quite punishing dismissal of Casement by Cunninghame Graham, written more than a decade after his execution, discloses a deepening abhorrence for Irish republican politics in Britain. But it also reveals the widespread ignorance about the contribution made by Casement to the independence movement in Ireland. Casement always

operated in the shadow; he avoided the limelight and because of his official work for the Foreign Office he was required to hide his deepening commitment to the Irish revolution from his professional friends. For eighty years after Casement's execution his life and legacy were discussed in terms of polemics and controversy. His name is still able to provoke strong reactions of both love and hate in those who hold either strong views about the Irish Republic or the British Empire. Only recently has his interpretation entered a less antagonistic space, where he can be assessed in terms of his relevance to the different historical contexts relevant to his life.

Balder Olden

A final noteworthy connection linking Casement to the Southern Cone concerns one of the earliest and most obscure biographies of Casement – *Paradiese des Teufels* (1933) – by Balder Olden (1882-1949), an intellectual with a German Jewish background. Within weeks of publication the title was added to the library of forbidden books – *Bibliothek Verbrannter Bücher* – banned by the Nazi party and burnt in front of Von Humboldt University. Olden's interest in Casement was nurtured during the four years (1916-1920) he spent as a prisoner of war in a British prison camp in Tanzania German East Africa, where he developed strident anti-colonial views. After his release in 1920, Olden returned to Berlin to work as a journalist and critic. With his brother Rudolf, he became a staunch pacifist, Weimar intellectual and early opponent of the Nazi regime. A year after the publication of his Casement biography, he published a fictionalised attack on the Nazi Party translated as *Blood and Tears*. Soon afterwards and with the Nazis in power, Olden fled first to Prague and then to France. For a while he lived in the colony of anti-fascist exiles in Sanary-sur-mer, the resort town made famous at the time through the residence of other exiled writers and artists including Bertholt Brecht, Thomas Mann, Stefan Zweig, Arthur Koestler and Ludwig Marcuse. After the Nazi occupation of France, Olden was interned in a prison camp in Audierne, but managed to escape. From there he took a ship to Buenos Aires, where he settled for two years, before taking up residence in Montevideo. During his last years he used his pen to facilitate the settlement of other exiles. He eventually committed suicide on 24 October 1949, following a period of desperate health problems precipitated by two strokes.

Olden's biography is one of many examples of the international allure of Casement's life and legacy. It has required a different world for his life to be understood and accepted. The fictionalised autobiography – *El sueño del celta* – by the Nobel Laureate, Mario Vargas Llosa, may have introduced Casement to a wider audience in the Spanish-speaking world, but this somewhat conventional interpretation conforms with a representation informed by mythology and controversy and shaped by the imagination of the novelist. It does not allow for the long war fought between Irish memory and British history over Casement's legacy and the apparent reluctance of the Irish state to reconcile Casement's history with a more official and state-sanctioned narrative of the revolutionary period, which has required palpable distortions and silences. But the perspective on Casement is now changing and his meaning is undergoing a process of recovery. Spanish, Italian and Brazilian translations of his *Amazon Journal* are now available. In 2020 the Brazilian director, Aurélio Michiles directed a full-length documentary *Segredos do Putumayo* documenting Casement's investigation into crimes against humanity. This has already led to interpretations of Casement's relevance to different configurations of power and to the wider Atlantic world. The study by Argentinian journalist Ovidio Lagos of

Julio César Arana is one of several recent efforts to retrieve and situate Casement's part in a critical chapter of South American history.¹⁰ Casement's investigation of the extractive rubber industry is now claimed as a critical juncture in the formative history of international human rights.¹¹ What is apparent is that the early twentieth-century Irish community in Argentina was integral to Casement's reimagining of Atlantic power relations and his brief journeys through the country will remain a source for further inquiry.

An Unresolved Incident

In his short story *The Theme of the Traitor and the Hero* (1944) Jorge Luis Borges considers the approaching centenary of a famous (fictional) Irish revolutionary, Fergus Kilpatrick. To commemorate the occasion, Kilpatrick's biography is contemplated by his great-grandson, Ryan. As he embarks on his research, Ryan enters into a maze of contradictions where fact and fiction are indistinguishable – the stories, rumours and lies that inevitably accrete around the life of a revolutionary occur inside some “secret shape of time.” It is a temporality informed by literature, where events are written in advance of their happening. The life and death of Kilpatrick cease to be comprehensible as history and unravel as both mystery and tragedy.

Through this narrative, Borges suggests how stories about revolutionaries survive and persist at odds with empirical process and the structure of official, public histories. In the course of his investigation Ryan discovers disconcerting facts about Kilpatrick's end that he decides to suppress. With this idea, Borges captures the paradox at the core of the Casement narrative, indeed at the heart of much anti-imperial resistance: treason can be a heroic act. Through imagining Kilpatrick's biography, Borges reveals the trans-temporal nature of all revolutionary resistance. Revolutionaries endure because their cause is never fully realised. In every generation, the struggle against oppression and the dominant formations of power is reborn. Revolutions and revolutionaries connect across time and space. In this regard, Fergus Kilpatrick and Roger Casement are modelled from the same revolutionary clay. The former is the product of the literary imagination and the latter a certifiable hero-traitor, depending on the subjectivity of the narrator. Their stories follow similar fictive paths articulated through interpolation, cycles of betrayal and literary forgeries. (Borges 1998)

Notes

1 See NLI 13073 / 16 (ii) contains five letters from Warden to Casement.

2 For the most recent analysis of the diaries see Paul Hyde, *Decoding Casement: Anatomy of a Lie* (Wordwell, 2019).

3 <http://www.irishgenealogy.com.ar/genealogia/D/Duggan/hugh.htm>

4 Edmundo Murray says that Casement visited Thomas Duggan at his ranch in San Antonio de Areco. This was apparently in 1910, although he might well have visited during his journey to Argentina in 1907.

5 The Marchioness Curzon of Kedleston, *Reminiscences* (London: Hutchinson, 1955). Thanks to Paul Cullen for drawing my attention to this book as well as some other interesting aspects of Casement's contact with Argentina.

- 6 Séamas Ó Buachalla, *The Letters of P.H. Pearse* (Dublin: Colin Smythe, 1980); Sean O Mahony, Frongoch: *University of Revolution* (Dublin: FDR Teoranta, 1987). My thanks to Brian Murphy for his knowledge of Patrick Pearse.
- 7 See Michael Kennedy “‘Mr Blythe, I think, hears from him occasionally’: The Experience of Irish Diplomats in Latin America, 1919-23” in Michael Kennedy and J.M. Skelly (eds) *Irish Foreign Policy 1919-1966: From Independence to Internationalism* (Four Courts Press, 2000)
- 8 NLI, MS 13,073 (27/ii), Joseph Conrad to Roger Casement, 29 December 1903. Casement has scribbled at the top of the letter ‘Rec’d 1 Jan. 1904’.
- 9 The letter is reproduced in A.F. Tschiffely, Don Roberto, *The Life of R. B. Cunninghame Graham* (London, Heinemann: 1937).
- 10 Ovidio Lagos, *Arana Rey del Caucho: Terror y Atrocidades en el Alto Amazonas* (Buenos Aires, Emece, 2005)
- 11 See Jordan Goodman, *The Devil and Mr Casement: One Man’s Fight for Human Rights in South America’s Heart of Darkness* (London, Verso, 2008)

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- The Daily News* 24 July 1912. Cunninghame Graham followed this up with a further letter on 9 July 1913.

Attachment

The Dollard’s Diary 1910

March

8, Tuesday

Left in ‘Asturias’ for B. Aires.

11, Friday

Arr B Aires & on shore to the Hotel of before. Algerian.

12, Saturday

Morning in Avenida de Mayo. Splendid erections. Ramón 7\$000. 10" at least. X In.

13, Sunday

To Hurlingham to Warden. Lunch. Saw Ramón get off train at Zoo & sit down on seat & read – pencil under ear – watched long & then on to station. Back at 10 p.m. Met Ramón at Palace after sailor with request of fleet. Ramón 10\$000 to meet tomorrow.

14, Monday

Ramon. At Zoo entrance & Ramon to breakfast at Restaurant there – no it was in Chocolate House & name written on paper This pencil mine... gave 20\$000.

Again at night.

15, Tuesday

Ramón. Breakfast at Restaurant arr at Plaza Hotel at 11 p.m.

16, Wednesday

Left for Mar del Plata.

17, Thursday

At Mar del Plata

18, Friday

At Mar del Plata

19, Saturday

At Mar del Plata [Ramón 20\$ has been crossed out]

20, Sunday

Mar del Plata

21, Monday

Returned to Buenos Aires

22, Tuesday

Ramon at Zoo again and in the Bosquet afterwards – By train to Belgrano & back.

23, Wednesday

Ramon X In To La Plata & lunch at Hotel there. Lay down after for an hour and then to Gardens & Tea & back at 5.30 train. At Club & arranged go San Marco tomorrow.

24, Thursday

To San Marco by 6. Train with Eddy Duggan. Brothers there & played Bridge. San Marco interesting but very wet.

25, Friday
At San Marco

26, Saturday
At San Marco

28, Monday
Ramón. At Zoo & lunch & walk to Gardens of Palermo.

29, Tuesday
Ramón. Left for Mar del Plata but sick of night train – so stayed behind. Many types. Especially Martinez of Entre Rios.

30, Wednesday
Left for Mar del Plata by Day train – seeing Hares and Birds – & Enjoying the journey.

31, Thursday
Mar del Plata

April

1, Friday
Mar del Plata. Left Mar del Plata at 3 train and arrived B Aires at 11 p.m. To Hotel and bed.

2, Saturday
Wrote Ramon – Drew money £80 & got ticket for L'pool by Lamport & Holt 'Veronese'. Met Sailors of fleet & others.
At Club with 'Amethyst' officer.

Sunday 3rd Last time Ramon at Tigre. At Hurlingham & then to Tigre with Ramon from Belgrano. Saw last time at Belgrano. Never again.

4, Monday
Left B. Aires in 'Veronese'. Wrote Ramón from Montevideo.

5, Tuesday
At Montevideo. Posted letter to Ramón. Sailed 4 p.m.