

The Irish Legion in Contemporary Colombian Children's Fiction: Jairo Buitrago's Los irlandeses

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Abstract: *During the 1810s and 1820s thousands of Irishmen enlisted in the patriot armies of South America, many of them in the British and Irish Legions fighting with Simón Bolívar in the independence wars of Venezuela and Colombia. Two hundred years later, Colombian writer Jairo Buitrago brings back the lives of those soldiers and officers in Los irlandeses, a short novel for young teenagers that vividly recreates the harshness of the war and the sufferings and loyalty of those brave men. With a thorough investigation of the historical context and a sound and lyric prose, the book tells the story of Lucas, a Colombian fourteen-year-old boy who, in the company of four Irish soldiers from the Rifles, survives the war and grows up, approaching the novel to a Bildungsroman. This paper analyses how the Irish soldiers are portrayed in this novella for children and the historical context in which the action is set. The edition and the illustrations in charcoal by Santiago Guevara provide a new concept in picture books.*

Keywords: *Irish Legion; Irish in independence war; Colombian children's fiction.*

Resumo: *Durante as décadas de 1810 e 1820, milhares de irlandeses se alistaram nos exércitos patrióticos da América do Sul muitos deles faziam parte das legiões britânica e irlandesa, lutando com Simón Bolívar nas guerras de independência da Venezuela e da Colômbia. Duzentos anos mais tarde, o escritor colombiano Jairo Buitrago traz de volta à vida esses soldados e oficiais em Los irlandeses, um romance curto para adolescentes que recria vividamente a dureza da guerra e o sofrimento e a lealdade daqueles homens corajosos. A partir de uma investigação aprofundada sobre o contexto histórico, o livro, composto por uma prosa sonora e lírica, conta a história de Lucas, um garoto colombiano de quatorze anos que, na companhia de quatro soldados irlandeses dos Rifles, sobrevive à guerra e cresce, fornecendo à narrativa traços do Bildungsroman. Este artigo analisa como os soldados irlandeses são retratados nessa novela, bem como o contexto histórico em que se passa a ação. A edição e as ilustrações em carvão de Santiago Guevara fornecem um novo conceito em livros de ilustrações.*

Palavras-chave: *Legião Irlandesa; Irlandeses em guerras de independência; literatura infantil na Colômbia.*

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During the 1810s and 1820s, thousands of Irishmen enlisted in the patriot armies of South America, many of them in the British and Irish Legions fighting with Simón Bolívar in the independence wars of Venezuela and Colombia. Two hundred years later, Colombian writer Jairo Buitrago brings back the lives of those soldiers and officers in *Los irlandeses* (*The Irish*), a short novel for preadolescents (from 10 years old on) that vividly recreates the harshness of the war and the suffering and loyalty of those brave men. With a thorough investigation of the historical context and a sound lyric prose, the book tells the story of Lucas, a peasant boy, who, in the company of four Irish soldiers from the renowned unit of Rifles, survives the war of independence in 1819 Colombia. We will analyze how the Irish soldiers are portrayed in this novella for children and the historical context in which the action is set.

Text and illustrations

Colombian author and illustrator Jairo Buitrago¹ is concerned with the impact of turbulent political history on children. In fact, *Los irlandeses*² is part of a trilogy about violence: it deals with families separated by war and children's military recruitment, a literary corpus through which Buitrago reconsiders three decisive moments in Colombian history on the verge of the bicentennial of independence wars. Buitrago's productions have received many awards for his concern over migration, human ties and discrimination, and his work has been incorporated into the prestigious Honour List of The International Board on Books for the Young (IBBY).



After writing the text for *Los irlandeses*, Buitrago worked closely with illustrator Santiago Guevara⁴ for the inclusion of meaningful images that would enlarge the story. Guevara's powerful charcoal drawings intensify the novel's atmosphere of war and loss. Paratext is particularly important in children's fiction: titles, typography, graphical distribution, illustrations, colour and covers may highlight and redirect interpretations. In the case of *Los irlandeses*, the forty drawings are not placed within the text, but before and after it. The book, a splendid edition in hardback, opens with images that anticipate the story: twenty pages of black-and-white charcoal drawings introduce the context of the war, the troops and the peasants' displacement in the moorland. Then comes the written text. Finally, another twenty

drawings tell us about Lucas's journey and the *Amelia Wilson*, the boat Lieutenant Ferguson dreamed of taking back to Ireland. The illustrations add details and somehow complete the story, suggesting, for example, that Lucas was forced by soldiers to leave his village, an aspect that the written text does not deal with. As Buitrago explains, Guevara's illustrations show no battles but focus on the victims of the war⁵.

In *Los irlandeses*, four lost soldiers from the Irish Rifles Regiment, enlisted to support Bolívar's army during 1819, come across Lucas, a fourteen-year-old peasant boy from "los llanos" (the plains) who, in a storm, loses contact with the patriot troops and wanders with his horse in the cold moorland. The Irish welcome and protect Lucas, allowing him not only to survive grief, hunger and war but also to mature and become a man and a soldier, turning the novella into a coming-of-age story⁶. The novel is structured in thirteen chapters and an "Epilogue", preceded and followed by Guevara's drawings.

If only considering the written text, *Los irlandeses* may be a novella on account of the short length of the story and a reduced development of the plot. From another point of view, as the images enlarge the meaning of the story, it may be considered a picture book⁷, a genre Buitrago is particularly interested in exploring.

The text opens with a short quote from Joseph Conrad's novella *The Duel* (1908) about soldiers lost in the frozen lands, mirroring Lucas's situation⁸. This is soon followed by a long fragment dated July 1819 and allegedly extracted from the journal of a certain Lieutenant Audrey T.N. Ferguson. There are several authentic journals written by Irish and British soldiers on their experiences in Latin America, but none matches the name of Aubrey Ferguson. Moreover, the name "Ferguson" is misleading because there was, in fact, a real officer called William Owens Ferguson, who was Bolívar's loyal aide-de-camp. Buitrago's character may be loosely inspired by this officer, commander of the Rifles Company, Bolívar's élite unit.⁹ With this adequate literary device, he creates a fictional source, a journal written by a fictional Lieutenant Ferguson, from where the fragment has allegedly been extracted. In this way, Buitrago not only sets the atmosphere of war and the time in which the novel is set (July 1819) but also presents one of the most important characters, Lieutenant Ferguson, who in his journal reflects upon the miseries of war and recalls his son in the presence of two young soldiers. This partly historical source allows Buitrago more freedom to portray important Colombian historical characters, not a minor concern when writing a historical narrative for children.

Narrating historical events in children's fiction calls for significant choices, highlighting or omitting material in an attempt to illuminate history with new meanings. There is also a risk that the story may sound like a textbook and that action may stagnate. It is not the case with *Los irlandeses*. Buitrago's approach is never pedagogical. The novella, set during Bolívar's campaign to liberate Nueva Granada, hints at historical references to the independence wars in Colombia and Venezuela. For Colombian readers, acquainted with the participation of the British and Irish Legion and the war of independence, the story is full of details that recreate those months of 1819. For someone unaware of the epic, the novel is still enjoyable and it can be read as an adventure story and an advocacy against war. The very few references to actual geographical places and the nationality of the soldiers contribute to a more universal scope of the story. *Los irlandeses* is not exactly a historical novel, rather, it is an adventure story set in an identifiable historical context.

The Irish

In the novel Ferguson, Dunne, McManus and Lynch are the four Irish soldiers Lucas comes across in the moors. A stray from their group, they introduce themselves as members of the Irish Legion and of the *Rifles*. The Rifles were Bolívar's élite group who fought bravely in the battles of Junín and Ayacucho and are said to have solemnly burned their flags rather than allow them to be sullied by ignoble hands (Fanning 202). In the book the Irish endure great suffering and are portrayed as brave men, loyal to their companions, to Lucas and the cause of Latin American freedom. They have strong convictions and faith and they like a fight and a drink.

Lieutenant Ferguson, the leader, is a peaceful and fervent Catholic who reads the Bible and prays every night under the stars, longing for Ireland and his family and willing to take Lucas with him (91). The boy reminds him of his son. He is very concerned about the Pope's word and what Catholics are allowed to eat and what they are not, even during wartime. But sometimes he gives up for the benefit of his men. Caimans, alligators, rats... As Dunne, the younger officer remarks, "that won't be the first animal I have eaten that has been forbidden by the Bible"¹¹. The narrator tells us that Ferguson was the oldest, he had a scar on his face and his eyes were of a deep blue. "In the morning he would pray in silence . . . among the bushes of the moor. He looked strong but the dark circles under his eyes showed he suffered from some kind of disease that gave him an almost transparent appearance."¹² Buitrago concentrates on Ferguson's portrayal as the leader of the group that reunites the qualities of the Irish soldiers.

Dunne appears to be younger. He wears long tresses and likes a drink because "the poison" keeps him alive. His sense of humor gives the story a lighter tone. Human tragedies are seen as natural and are faced with nobility and courage. He speaks bluntly but without meaning to hurt. It is a soldier's life, full of horror and death. When a horse is put down, he simply concludes: "The condors will eat it . . . , just like they will eat us"¹³. Dunne accepts with reluctance the Pope's prohibition but when his stomach growls, he moans they should have had a horse for dinner (45).

Mc Manus, a huge redhead with enormous hands, is always close to some form of alcohol. He wears a tartan and he may be a Protestant, since, unlike the others, he does not make the cross. He protects the child, carrying him when Lucas's forces fail. Mc Manus and Dunne are an engaging duo that is responsible for funny or ironic comments, mainly referring to alcohol and food, which lighten the tension of some scenes. Rupert Lynch does not speak much. He wears his hair long and his face is burnt by the sun.

Finally, Lucas, the protagonist, is a smart peasant boy from the llanos (the plains), with whom young readers will easily identify. He is forced to leave his village and join the patriot rearguard troops. Lost in the storm in the moorland, Lucas sees four men waving at him, he gallops to meet them, but his horse falls and breaks its legs. The men hurry to him talking "in a language that Lucas did not know" (38). They are friendly and kind discussing "in their language" the best way to proceed. It is never clear whether the soldiers' mother tongue is Irish or English. From the beginning, the soldiers address Lucas in Spanish but are said to use another language to communicate among themselves or to pray. Lucas respectfully addresses them as "Musiús"¹⁴ or as "your worships" ("*sus mercedes*"), an interesting language resource to set the adequate register with a hint of the 19th-century colloquialisms.



The boy recognizes them as “the tall and good warriors his grandfather used to tell him about”, those French and Englishmen who arrived with the war and died soon from the fevers¹⁵. Here Lucas introduces the positive vision that the people from Colombia had of these heroic soldiers at that time of the war. Things changed a couple of years later¹⁶.

The novella revolves around the relationship that grows between Ferguson and Lucas. The soldier shows concern not only for the boy’s health but also for his education (he cannot read) and for his faith (he has been baptized but hardly remembers his prayers). Ferguson’s kindness and advice draw Lucas close to him. Lucas misses his grandfather and his mother but nothing is said about his father. As a paternal figure, Ferguson helps Lucas survive the war, become a soldier and keep the memory of the Irish. It is not only Lucas who learns from the men. His knowledge of the *llanos* and horses contributes to the group’s survival. He and Montesinos, a peasant soldier, represent the people whose life has been completely shattered by the war, yet resilient and proud of their origins and their commitment.

The historical context

The story is set in July 1819, the year in which Simón Bolívar led a campaign to liberate the Viceroyalty of Nueva Granada from Spanish rule. Having chosen the route through the Páramo de Pisba for strategic reasons, his troops had to climb the Andes under low temperatures. The following month saw him defeating the Spanish forces in the decisive battles of Pantano de Vargas and Boyacá. His army was composed of criollos, indigenous peasants, Afro Americans, mix raced men and European soldiers. As Ferguson describes them in the novel, “an army of barefoot, undernourished young men, of officers with no weapons or equipment, yet in the end, an army”¹⁷. It also included a reconstituted British Legion under James Rooke and the Rifles under Arthur Sandes. Half of the members of the British Legion were Irish soldiers from all over Ireland¹⁸. The British and the Irish Legion played an important role in Bolívar’s army. Historian Tim Fanning considers “the experience and bravery of the Irish officers such as Rooke, Sandes and O’Leary had helped Bolivar get his campaign off the ground”¹⁹.

The Irish achieved public recognition for their heroism and loyalty. Bolívar addressed

them with a proclamation of welcome printed in the *Correo del Orinoco (The Orinoco Post)* in January 1820. It read: “Irishmen! . . . I have the glory of counting you as adopted Sons of Venezuela, and as defenders of the Liberty of Colombia”. “Irishmen! Your sacrifices exceed all reward. . .”²⁰.

The European volunteers had to endure a long journey across the Atlantic full of risk and suffering to reach South America. Once there, in the hot, humid climate where it was difficult to breathe, the troops faced the lack of fresh water, the fetid rivers, the wild animals and the mosquitoes, and were depleted by desertion and sickness, especially yellow fever. Many died from tropical diseases while others deserted soon after discovering that the riches they had been promised were no more than an illusion. History says that, ignorant of the climate and expecting to attend elegant balls, many officers had expensive uniforms made for them²¹.

These historical experiences of war and suffering are powerfully intertwined in the novel with the characters’ recollections and comments. Ferguson recalls the first night in the jungle and the soldiers from the 1st Regiment of Hussars, with their scarlet crests, in their awkward uniforms, most unsuitable for the tropical weather. Ignorant of the landscape and expecting to find riches and elegant ballrooms in America, they spent huge sums on a pompous garment. Dunne and McManus laugh at them, “so ostentatious” “and trapped in the mud”. “A month later they looked like beggars in their shabby clothes” and “they had to cross rivers infested with voracious little beasts”²². References to Waterloo and Napoleon retrieve the past military experience of the soldiers of the Irish Legion. Ferguson recalls that “Many came just for the promise of wearing such an elegant uniform” while the cavalry here would ride half-naked and eat nothing but unsalted meat. “For the sake of freedom, we have learned to hold on, to march by them, to eat that meat” declares Ferguson²³.

Catholicism and faith

Religious faith appears in the novel mainly linked to Lieutenant Ferguson, a fervent Irish Catholic. Throughout the story he is constantly praying and often quotes the Scriptures. On their first night together and trying to bring some peace to his men and the boy, Lieutenant Ferguson reads a fragment from Psalm 71 (71:20, 21) from his Bible: “Though you have made me see troubles, / many and bitter, / you will restore my life, / from the depths of the earth, / you will again bring me up, / you will increase my honor / and comfort me once more”²⁴.

Later on, Ferguson must perform a funeral ceremony in the moors for ten peasants - men, women and children - killed by the Spanish. They are hanging from the oak trees, swayed by the freezing wind. The presence of death, war and violence brings Lucas down with sorrow and distress. Still shocked, he asks Ferguson to pray for their souls and later to bury their bodies. This is an intense scene that shows how Ferguson is concerned with the boy’s fate and how Lucas looks for his protection. “Ferguson knelt down and made the cross. He recited an Our father and then, in a low voice, he said a prayer in his language” He reassures Lucas: “Son, I have told them that death is absolutely nothing, that life is intact, without changes. It is what has always been. . . My son, tonight death is gone and it will not come back”²⁵.

Buitrago chooses to build Ferguson’s Irishness around his strong faith and kindness, and manages to bring to life an almost historical character avoiding a shallow portrait or stereotype. Rather than working on Ferguson’s link to an actual historical figure, Buitrago stresses the lieutenant’s will to pull his men through the abyss of the war - without ignoring the

responsibilities of a soldier - and find peace. There is also another kind of faith in the story, one that believes that, even in the cruelest of circumstances, man will see the light.

Donn, the Dark One

As mentioned, it is implied from the beginning that the officers speak a language that Lucas cannot understand, which may be either English or Irish. But Ferguson chooses an *Irish* word to name the horse Lucas has managed to save from the mud in a beautiful and poetic scene framed by tension. The horses are a strong presence in the story: they are on the moors, in battle, in the sky (Centauri) and even in dreams. Ferguson admires the quality of the saved horse and its auburn coat. He names it “Donn”, the Irish word for “brown”, assuring that the animal belongs to the child and that although “those hypocritical gentlemen are as hungry as I am. . . we won’t touch it”²⁶. But there is more in Ferguson’s choice: Donn is also the name of a powerful Irish god. Interestingly, in Irish mythology, Donn (“the dark one”) is believed to have been a god of the dead and an ancestor of the Gaels. He was said to dwell in Tech Duinn (the “house of Donn” or “house of the dark one”), where the souls of the dead gathered²⁷.

“The moor had taken him his beloved horse and now it gave him another, *arisen from the earth*”, reflects Lucas²⁸. This horse, which he struggled to save, emerges from the depths defying death. It has a mythical dimension, a mysterious origin, a link to the Unknown and to the Sphere of the Dead. With this resource to the Irish language and mythology Buitrago gives a finishing touch to the lieutenant’s character.

The future

In an important scene before the final battle, Ferguson and Lucas talk about the future that involves each other. Ferguson’s plans portray many of the illusions that had brought the Irish to South America:

If the wars come to an end in these lands, we might go south, where the earth ends . . . and when all this is over, God willing, I must embark to go back to my island and I will take you with me. We will cross the sea, you will meet my family, I will show you a stone tomb, and I will give you a horse.²⁹ (*Los irlandeses* 91)

The stone tomb recalls the Irish crosses in holy ground. As for Ireland, it is never mentioned with this name in the novella, it is only alluded as the *island* or the *land*.

Ferguson counts on the government’s reward (that was never paid to the real soldiers): “If I am not killed, after five years of service in these lands, I will receive a return ticket and twenty-five acres of land. We will come back on the ‘*Amelia Wilson*’, the very same ship that took me here” (the real ship which brought the Irish to South America was called the *Amelia*).³⁰ Showing his concern for the lieutenant’s health, Lucas assures him that he will see to get Ferguson to the village of Trinidad so his grandfather can cure his persistent fever (91). But as Monasterio says in the story, it is hard to believe the Irish will abandon the fight. They “. . . will never leave this life, they will stay forever in these lands! And they will be killed somewhere there, by bullet or by smallpox”³¹ (*Los irlandeses* 104).

The final battle

Some historical facts and names are reflected in the novella, in particular during the final battle. Assuming the leadership of the decimated Irish Legion, Ferguson addresses the men: “Gentlemen, let’s go and get them. We will look for Colonel Rooke or English and we will be at their service”³². But a dying officer informs them Colonel Rooke has been severely wounded. Now these names are two important historical references: in Colombia Rooke and English are both recognized as heroic leaders of the independence war and are part of national history.

James Rooke, a Dubliner, one of the most prominent Irish officers during the campaigns on the *llanos*, had his arm amputated due to severe wounds during battle. He died shortly afterwards³³. Coronel James Towers English (1782-1819), a Dubliner, arrived in Angostura in 1818 with about 1200 men he had recruited in Ireland and England for the British Legion. He died on Isla Margarita and his funeral was carried out with great ceremony, Irish officers parading by his coffin. One of the Irish units was the Rifles³⁴. According to Tim Fanning, “In May 1819 Bolívar’s army . . . included a reconstituted British Legion under James Rooke and (the unit) of Rifles under Arthur Sandes. It was the height of the rainy season”. Men were ill from the flooded plains and the poor diet. In this condition, they began to climb the mountains in the freezing cold. They suffered from altitude sickness, dysentery, hypothermia and disease. By July 5th, the British Legion had lost a third of its number. On July 25th, at Pantano de Vargas, Bolívar’s army faced a larger royalist force. The arrival of the British Legion strengthened Bolívar’s hand. “The charge of the 2nd Rifles helped save the day”. (Fanning 139). By November 1819 less than six hundred men remained from the thousand that had sailed with the Legion.

Lucas became a cavalry officer and never met the Irish again. But the memory of those soldiers would always hunt him in the noise of battle and in the coldest and most solitary places. The soldiers of the Irish Legion were buried in the cemetery of Zipaquirá, whose iron fence was forged with their own bayonets. However, his tombs were never visited. “Some widows across the sea, received a pension or some compensation, though most of them got nothing, not even a goodbye letter”³⁵.

The last page of the book, purposely printed in green, is an image that encloses loss and despair, everything that the war took away - in Ireland as well as in South America - and never gave back, defeat and frustration, loneliness, silence and death: “The day in which he (Lucas) finally saw the sea, he thought about the *Amelia Wilson* waiting at the harbor for her children and on the green promised lands, with no master to protect them, empty and broken, just like the unsown barren plains.”³⁶

Conclusions

Childhood studies and children’s fiction are growing fields worldwide, both offering new visions and reflections on the experiences of migration and the building of identity. This paper is part of a wider research I am carrying out on Irish childhood and how Irish identity was transmitted in the Irish community in nineteenth-century Argentina, an area which has been scarcely studied.³⁷

A historical narrative for children set in Colombia in 1819 is not as surprising as the

fact that those Irish soldiers who, after Napoleon's defeat, found themselves unemployed and were left to look for a better future in Latin America, may still be attractive to contemporary children's fiction. The novel manages to give a vivid and accurate portrayal of the soldiers' adventurous life and it builds their Irishness upon their courage and convictions, their bonhomie and their will to live and fight for freedom, mainly around Lieutenant's Ferguson character. Brave and committed to the noble cause of the independence, they are not seen as mercenaries but as volunteers. Although some attitudes may reveal that Dunne is there for the pay, he is still a fierce fighter, loyal to his lieutenant and companions. They also show their love for Ireland, their people and their faith. They have a concern for family ties and show affection to Lucas offering him their help. They are also loyal to Lieutenant Ferguson and to their regiment, the Irish Rifles. Humorous interventions suggest their love for a drink and a fight. Some mentions to Catholic faith and Irish language complete the spectrum.

In *Los irlandeses* Buitrago navigates successfully between the blurred margins of history and fiction. It is a great book that may be enjoyed by children as well as adults, both as an adventure and as a deep and necessary reflection upon the tragedy of war. The translation into English or Irish of this book would make a wonderful reading especially for those of Irish origins.

Notes

- 1 Jairo Buitrago (Colombia, 1970) has developed a remarkable career as a writer and illustrator of children's books. Among other prizes, he has won the XI Contest for Picture Books "A la orilla del viento" given by Fondo de Cultura Económica de México (*Camino a casa*, 2008). His work has been incorporated into the Honour List of *The International Board on Books for Young People* (IBBY). In 2009 his book *Eloísa y los bichos* won the prestigious *White Ravens* from the Internationale Jugendbibliothek in Munich, a text which the ACNUR / UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) uses in a campaign in favor of children who have been displaced or are refugees. He was twice awarded the *Beca de creación de libro infantil o juvenil ilustrado* (*Scholarship for the Creation of an Illustrated Children's Book*) given by the Colombian Ministry of Culture (for *El edificio* and *Los irlandeses*). His works have been published in many countries and translated into English, Portuguese, Korean, Chinese, Japanese and Catalan. Buitrago lives in Mexico.
- 2 Buitrago, Jairo- Guevara, Santiago. *Los irlandeses*. Colombia: Babel Libros, 2018
- 3 The trilogy deals with crucial moments of the history of Colombia. It is composed of: a) *El Primer día* (2010) (*The First Day*, illustrated by Rafael Yockteng, celebrates the bicentennial of the Independence of Colombia, b) *Retrato de niños con bayoneta* (2017) (*Portrait of Children with Bayonet*) about children soldiers in the civil War of the Thousand Days (1899-1902) in Colombia and c) *Los irlandeses* (2018) about the wars of independence.
- 4 Santiago Guevara's page includes the sketches for *Los irlandeses* and much of his interesting work. See <https://santiagoguevara.com/>
- 5 "En las ilustraciones de Santiago no hay batallas. Hay víctimas de la guerra." In Juan Diego Quiceno <http://www.eltiempo.com/cultura/musica-y-libros/escritor-jairo-buitrago-habla-de-su-libro-los-irlandeses-210378> 27 de abril 2018
- 6 "Lo más importante para mí, que escribo para los más chicos, es que pueden identificarse con Lucas en su crecimiento, que es físico porque se vuelve un adulto, pero también espiritual, como un héroe clásico que toma el largo camino de regreso al hogar convertido en otra persona, más sabia y reflexiva tal vez", finaliza Buitrago." In: Juan Diego Quiceno <http://www.eltiempo.com/cultura/musica-y-libros/escritor-jairo-buitrago-habla-de-su-libro-los-irlandeses-210378> 27 de abril 2018.
- 7 In picture books, illustrations are not in a secondary level. Text and images are intertwined to the point where the images "make comments" on the text. Images may confirm what the text says, or may deny it, they may be ironic, humorous, etc. On Buitrago's views on text and illustrations see <https://www.otraparte.org/actividades/arte/jairo-buitrago.html>. On picture

- books see: Arizpe, Evelyn y Styles, Morag. *Lectura de imágenes*. Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica. Buenos Aires, 2004 and Bajour, Cecilia *La orfebrería del silencio - La construcción de lo no dicho en los libros-álbum*. Córdoba: Comunicarte, 2016.
- 8 *Los irlandeses*, p.30. “Los únicos rezagados eran quienes se separaban para entregar sus extenuadas almas a la escarcha”, *The Duel*, Joseph Conrad.
 - 9 William Owens Ferguson (1800- Co. Antrim, Ireland - 1828, Colombia), was the commander of the Rifles Company. He took part in many battles and wrote a journal of Bolívar’s journey from Lima to Caracas. A victim of a failed assassination attempt on Simón Bolívar, he was buried with full honors in Bogotá’s cathedral and was accorded a place in the patriotic pantheon among other Irish soldiers. His uniform is exhibited at the National Museum of Ireland- Decorative Arts and History. See <https://www.historyireland.com/18th-19th-century-history/museum-eye-the-irishman-who-took-a-bullet-for-bolivar/>
 - 10 “Es sabido que en estos tiempos la atenuación del espíritu va de la mano con el desangre. En la pasividad de las guarniciones , o en las penosas marchas por los llanos interminables y en el ascenso a las cumbres heladas, nos debilitamos cada día. Dios sabe que el aire aquí, como hiedra amarga, nos hiere por dentro, nos parasita. Han caminado a mi lado dos niños, un corneta y un mensajero, presumiblemente de la misma edad que mi hijo, pero ya no parecen serlo, son fantasmas errantes y salvajes”. (*Los irlandeses* 30)
 - 11 “. . . no será el primer animal prohibido por la Biblia que me coma en estas tierras...caimanes, lagartos.” (*Los irlandeses* 53.) All translations from *Los irlandeses* into English are mine.
 - 12 “En la mañana rezaba en silencio, con las manos juntas, en medio de los frailejones. Parecía fuerte pero las ojeras denotaban que sufría algún mal que además lo hacía ver casi transparente” (*Los irlandeses* 45)
 - 13 “Ya se lo comerán los cóndores (...) como a nosotros”. (*Los irlandeses* 42)
 - 14 *Musiú*: probably derived from the French “monsieur” (“sir”). In Venezuela and Colombia it names a foreigner. From *Diccionario Llanero* in <https://llanera.com/diccionario/index.php?p=981>
 - 15 “Su abuelo le había enseñado a decirles así, había muchos franceses e ingleses por los lados de los hatos de la provincia de San Juan cuando la guerra llegó. Eran altos y buenos guerreros como le había dicho su abuelo” (*Los irlandeses* 40)
 - 16 See Fanning, Chapter 11.
 - 17 “Un ejército de jóvenes descalzos y mal alimentados, de oficiales sin armas ni equipamiento... Pero un ejército, al fin y al cabo”. (*Los irlandeses* 55)
 - 18 About half the enlisted men known as the British Legion were Irish from all counties in Ireland. The remainder were English, Scottish and Welsh, there were also some Germans and some Italians (Fanning 132). The Irish political leader Daniel O’Connell (The Emancipator) bought commissions in the Irish Legion “for his fourteen-year-old son, Morgan, and his nephew Maurice, who became a lieutenant in the Rifles and died in Quito from disease” (Fanning 143).
 - 19 Fanning 140.
 - 20 For the complete English version, see Fanning 154.
 - 21 Fanning 125-126.
 - 22 “¡Eran tan ostentosos esos húsares...enterrados en el fango . . . No era Waterloo... Al cabo de un mes parecían pordioseros con sus trajes raídos . . . tenían que cruzar ríos repletos de bestiecillas voraces” (*Los irlandeses* 65)
 - 23 “Pero acá la caballería montaba semidesnuda . . . Comían carne sin sal y nada más. Por la libertad aprendimos todo, a aguantar, a marchar con ellos, a comer esa carne.” (*Los irlandeses* 66.)
 - 24 “Me has hecho ver muchas angustias y males, pero volverás a darme vida; volverás a levantarme de los abismos de la tierra, aumentarás mi grandeza, y volverás a consolarme.” (*Los irlandeses* 44)
 - 25 “Ferguson se santiguó y se arrodilló. Rezó un padrenuestro y luego una oración en su lengua, en voz, baja (...) Hijo, les dije que la muerte no es nada en absoluto y que la vida se encuentra intacta, sin cambios. Es lo que siempre ha sido . . . Sí, hijo mío. Esta noche la muerte se fue y no volverá”. (*Los irlandeses* 85)
 - 26 “Lo llamaremos Donn, ‘marrón’ en mi lengua” . . . ¿Comérmolo? Claro que no, querido muchacho. Estos caballeros hipócritas están tan hambrientos como yo, pero no te preocupes, ahora te pertenece por derecho propio y no le tocaremos un pelo”. (*Los irlandeses*

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- 27 Donn was buried on a rocky island known as Tech Duinn (the “house of Donn” or “house of the dark one”) which is commonly identified with Bull Rock, an islet off the western tip of the Beara Peninsula. In Ireland there was a belief that the souls of the dead departed westwards over the sea with the setting sun. (From wikipedia <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donn>)
- 28 “El páramo le había quitado a su amado caballo y ahora le daba otro, surgido de la tierra.” (*Los irlandeses* 61)
- 29 “Si la guerra acaba aquí en estos campos, a lo mejor seguiremos marchando hacia el sur, donde se acaba la tierra . . . y cuando toda esta campaña termine Dios lo quiera, debo volver a embarcarme para ir a mi isla, y te llevaré conmigo. Cruzaremos el mar, conocerás a mi familia, te mostraré una tumba de piedra y te daré un caballo”. (*Los irlandeses* 91).
- 30 “Si no me matan, tras cinco años de servicio en estos parajes van a darme un pasaje de regreso y veinticinco acres de tierras. Volveremos en el *Amelia Wilson*, el mismo barco que me trajo”. (*Los irlandeses* 91)
- 31 “Esos no van a dejar esta vida, se van a quedar para siempre en estas tierras! . . . Nosotros vamos a seguir hasta el Perú. Ellos también, y se morirán por ahí, por las balas o por la viruela”. (*Los irlandeses* 104)
- 32 “Vamos a buscarlos, caballeros - propuso Ferguson-, buscaremos al coronel Rooke o a English y nos pondremos a sus órdenes”. (*Los irlandeses* 97)
- 33 James Rooke (ca.1770-1819), was a Dubliner whose family had served in the British Army. His father was a wealthy English soldier and politician. Rooke led the British Legion in South America and was amongst the most prominent Irish officers during the campaigns on the llanos between 1817 and 1819, his widow received honours, a pension, and a compensation. Colombian Army Batallion of Infantry No. 18 bears the name of James Rooke in his honour. The main square in the city of Paipa, Colombia, is named after Rooke. (See Fanning, chapters 10 and 11).
- 34 James Towers English, a Dubliner (1782-1819), was promoted to brigadier-general in commander of the Irish and British volunteers. He arrived in 1819 in Angostura with about 1,200 men recruited in Ireland and England. They were known as the British Legion but half of them were Irish. Interestingly, English and others brought a proposal for an immigration scheme before the patriot congress in Angostura in early 1819 (Fanning 211).
- 35 “Después de la guerra el general Santander donó un terreno en el poblado de Zipaquirá para que enterraran a los soldados de la Legión Irlandesa. Era un lugar tranquilo en el que crecían flores blancas de la Sabana. Nadie, nunca, visitó las tumbas. . . . algunas viudas, al otro lado del mar, recibieron su pensión o un dinero de indemnización. Otras, las más, no recibieron nada, ni una carta de despedida”. (*Los irlandeses* 106). The Cemetery of Zipaquirá is about 40 km from Bogotá, Colombia.
- 36 “El día que por fin se encontró con el mar en su camino, pensó en el *Amelia Wilson* esperando en el puerto a sus hijos, y en las tierras verdes prometidas, sin dueño que las resguardara, vacías y rotas, igual que los páramos yermos, sin sembrar”. (*Los irlandeses* 109)
- 37 For further reading on 19th-century Irish immigrants in contemporary Argentine children's fiction, see Keegan, Viviana. “Irish Roots in Graciela Cabal’s Story ‘Gualicho’”, *ABEI Journal, The Brazilian Journal of Irish Studies*, Vol. 20, 2, Dec. 2018.

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