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Casement and History Part Three: The Machinery of Misrepresentation

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In this final part of our examination of interpretations of Casement’s historical role, I will be referring to subsequent developments both public and academic. First there is the role played by Dr Leslie Wylie’s work in the Revisionist case against Casement’s place in history, second the special conference held to discuss Casement’s Putumayo report and Dr O Síocháin’s paper rebutting the Revisionist Case. Thirdly there are the words I would like to offer in interpretation of art works and images that Casement produced in the aftermath of his Putumayo anti-slavery campaign. Lastly, I will attempt to give a summing up of the historical significance of Casement’s work.

The Murdoch press Says Casement ‘was no humanitarian’

On 26 of December 2010, The Irish Sunday Times published an article with the above headline, under it appeared the following justification: “Hero is accused of treating natives as trophy objects and using them against their will to further his campaign, fresh evidence has suggested.” (1)

The paper names Dr Leslie Wylie as its source for these assertions, the problem was that Dr Wylie’s paper did not claim that, “Casement was no humanitarian”. (2) This author contacted Dr Wylie and asked her was she aware of the Irish Sunday Times piece that claimed to be based on her work. She acknowledged the existence of the article and said that a Sunday Times journalist had contacted her to arrange an interview but did not call back. Additionally, I also asked Dr Wylie did she make any attempt to correct the errors that the paper had made regarding the use of her work. She said that she had only noticed the report a month after publication and although “dismayed” at its claims felt it was too late by that stage to contact the Irish Sunday Times to correct the reports interpretation of her work. (3)

It now appears that Dr Wylie’s version of Casement’s humanitarianism has acquired artificial “legs” and has begun to stumble about:

<http://www.metro.co.uk/lifestyle/850614-curiosity-photos-found-hinting-of-days-gone-by>

In Part Two, I attempted to show that the evidence Dr Wylie presents from Casement’s writing is in outright contradiction to the claims she attempts to make about his ideology. That said, there is also the problem of what the reader brings to the reading. Given Casement’s reputation and his “ostensibly rescuing of the two youths” he cared for “from slavery” as Dr Wylie puts it – it would at first glance also be possible to see Dr Wylie purpose to be humanist, as a number of readers have assumed including the current leader of Sinn Fein : <http://leargas.blogspot.com/2010/12/roger-casement.html>

Dr Wylie’s focus is of course on ideology as understood by the late conventions of academic post-structuralism – an approach that a number of historians and Casement biographers have indicated to this author “leaves them cold” (5). And since there is an underlying problem with Wylie’s poststructuralist approach and the terms she uses *not* being understood or properly defined, it is therefore not unreasonable to assume that she appears to be claiming that Casement was a pioneering humanitarian despite his “imperialist ideology”, when in fact, as I have tried to show, it is the contrary that Dr Wylie wishes to claim, that despite Casement’s humanitarian work, his actions and ideas are interpreted as “in line with British imperial ideology”. (6)

**Dr O Síocháin Responds To the Irish Sunday Times and Dr Wylie**

Having initially glanced at the Irish Studies Review article that had been sent to him by a fellow Casement biographer, it was the first understanding (see above) of Dr Wylie’s paper that Dr O Síocháin gave when interviewed by the Sunday Times. Respectful as he was of the interest a fellow academic had shown in Casement’s life, Dr O Síocháin was quoted as being supportive. (7) However, following the publication of the article he examined both its claims and Dr Wylie’s claims in more detail. The result was his paper given at a special workshop-conference at NUI Maynooth marking the one hundredth and first anniversary of Casement’s Putumayo Report and the international conferences that marked this occasion that were held in Manaus (Brazil) and Bogota (Colombia) in 2010. (8)

Not surprisingly having studied Casement’s work and writing in depth, Dr O Síocháin’s paper rejected both the Irish Sunday Times and Dr Wylie’s interpretation of Casement’s work and ideology. He noted that the Irish Sunday Times report was highly selective in what it chooses to reproduce from Dr Wylie’s Irish Studies paper to accuse Casement of not being a humanitarian. For as Dr O Síocháin has also observed Dr Wylie presents evidence that directly contradicts her own thesis on the nature of Casement’s ideas:

I want to draw attention to evidence from within her own article that might serve to cast doubt on her thesis. The following phrases by or about Casement appear in her essay in various places: in a letter to Henry Nevinson, Casement suggested that what he was doing was: ‘so that you and your Nation of true men may see the type and feel that touch of fellow feeling that makes one’s work better and fuller’ (320); and: ‘I may get powerful people interested in them and so in the fate of the whole race out here in the toils’ (318); of Casement and the Indians, she quotes William Rothenstein’s remark that: ‘He was full of their wrongs’ (321); and in her own words she acknowledges: ‘his deserved reputation for humanitarianism’ (316) and that his ‘sympathy for the indigenous people … resonates throughout his writings on the Amazon’ (317). Can these quotations jibe with others of her statements above?

I sense that what we have here is a limited acknowledgement (grudging almost) of Casement’s ‘humanitarianism’ but linked with the suggestion that behind it lay a basically unchanged imperial ideology, in other words that there is a major disjuncture between his feelings of sympathy and his formal imperialist and racist ideology. And I have the suspicion that one contributing factor to this interpretation is a reading of his personality. Wylie actually opens her article by referring to one of the commonly ascribed characterizations of his personality, his ‘dividedness’: she uses such phrases as ‘such paradoxes’, ‘one of many contradictions’, the ‘ambiguous middle line in the divisions of Irish life’ of his being ‘marked by estrangement’ (315). All seem designed to convey an impression of inconsistency, and they set the scene for her thesis – of the non-humanitarian humanitarian. And in all of this what I find missing is a balanced recognition of the broader dimension of his work. (9)

While I agree with Dr O Síocháin that the presence of “Casement as flawed hero” thesis indicates an established trope of Casement’s biographers to use supposed characteristics of his personality to critique his politics and ideology, I would say that Dr Wylie offers her own poststructuralist approach to angle the “non-humanitarian humanitarian” contradiction in a negative direction. Paradox and ambiguity being the classical logos of poststructuralist discourse, these qualities not surprisingly retain their value for the poststructuralist analyst even when he or she wishes to make the opposite case.

For example, Richard Kirkland, a poststructuralist author writing in the same publication where Dr Wylie published her paper, concludes his Irish Studies Review article on the history of the “flawed hero” thesis as a biographical trope, by saying:

[T]he dominance of the flaw in assessing the nature of [Casement’s] achievement is a construction as inadequate within the historical methodology as it is within the generic conventions of tragedy and is indicative of a continuing tendency to understand Irish nationalism as a form of irrepressible juvenilia. (10)

Interestingly, Kirkland ends by proposing that the apparently irresolvable nature of the contradictions of Casement’s subjectivity and legacy (as proffered by his traditional biographers) – should actually be seen as Casement actively trying to work through the contradictions of European nationalism – to see these as persistently exploitable contradictions that appealed to Casement as the “only weapon available” to him.(11)

It is a great pity that Kirkland did not develop this approach as it certainly gives us a more understandable context to the dynamic between Casement’s ideas and actions. Bearing this in mind when we recall the outrage that Casement expressed in a letter to E.D. Morel of 1909 about the Egyptian Danishway incident it is as we can see tempered by his attack on British parliamentary Liberalism:

Can you imagine a real liberal carrying out the Egyptian massacre – ‘executions’ they call it…officers were avenged of a whole rural population by widespread public floggings and hangings. (12)

If the British Liberal Party were not real liberals – then what were they and what should be done about it? Similarly, when Casement perceived that among the leadership of the Volunteers that it actually contained those who wish to change the goals of the Volunteers to support the British war effort, a further critique is produced that finds him closer to the more revolutionary elements in the Volunteer movement.(13)

Moving on to Germany to seek further recruitment and help from the Imperial German Government, his initial support for the German war effort as necessary in 1914 becomes by 1916 a rare political critique of the self serving and thoroughly specious nature of the German high command from close quarters. (14)

And as Dr O Síocháin also points out, it was the Congo and Putumayo reports of 1903 and 1911 that galvanized and renewed this dynamic process of questioning and action. Following Margaret O’Callaghan he agrees that this progress from reform to revolution was “dialectical” :

the relationship between Casement’s consular career, his mounting anti-imperialism, and his increasingly more self-conscious nationalism, is complicated and dialectical, not linear and sequential (15)

That said when Casement and his milieu are seen in a wider context of European radicalization they also begin to make sense as part of a broader radical polity (I will return to this in my conclusion).

However, Richard Kirkland was also right to insist that the meaning of Casement’s legacy is dependent on what cultural and political change will take place in the future, “What more can be said about a figure whose situation remains provisional and whose legacy (whatever that my prove to be) is yet to be inherited?” (16)

The “aestheticized” interpretations and the novelization of Casement’s “flaw” can only really be dispensed with by real and actual revolutionary inheritance. Similarly revolutionary politics become part of art and aesthetics in a genuinely developing revolutionary situation.

**The Politics of Representation**

Now we turn to Dr Wylie’s contention that Casement subjected the two Amerindians to the machinery of imperial representation by “exhibiting of the Putumayo youths as living curiosities and ‘native types’.” And that this process was, “consistent with what Timothy Mitchell has called the ‘machinery of representation’ ” (17).

The three instances where she claims this was done or attempted was (i) the sculpture that Casement hoped to commission from his friend Herbert Ward, (ii) the anthropological photographs that were taken by John Thompson, (iii) a double portrait (partially completed) by the artist William Rothenstein.

**Casement’s Plan for a Sculpture By Herbert Ward**

The first thing it would be useful to recognize is that although the two Amerindians meaning in London in 1911 was as *survivors of an attempted genocide* – a meaning that was accepted by Casement and by the Amerindians in relation to the socio-political truth to be publicized. It was however not at all clear how that exemplary political truth could be represented artistically and aesthetically. Casement had plans and a few ideas on how this could be done. The heroic mode was not far from his mind but neither was the ethical. The problem he had was how to commission work that represented this latter aim. The fact that Casement was a reformer and a photographer at the time he was in the Putumayo were of course necessary conditions of production for Casement’s conception of the Amerindians as human subjects when we come to say what his images are of. (18)

Therefore what Casement was involved in, in London in 1911 was not providing simply types or models for ethnographic or artistic imperial study as Dr Wylie claims but an exemplary subject, the oppressed subject. But how could the Amerindians meaning as oppressed subjects be represented artistically, least of all demonstrated in an artwork of the early 20th century?

In any attempt to understand the purpose of the intended work, a full account of its purpose must be given. This Dr Wylie does not do. The following lines from Casement’s Amazon journal with exclusions are quoted:

He [Ricudo] is a fine youth, quite strong and shapely with a true Indian face. This youth [ . . . ] would

make a fine type for Herbert Ward [ . . . ] (19) The ellipsis are Dr Wylie’s own.

Should we be doubtful of Dr Wylie’s limited approach here? It depends of course on the value of what has been excluded. The paragraph continues, referring to the following information:

This youth (Ricudo) is a bigger boy than either – a married man of 19, probably or 20 and would make a fine type for Herbert Ward in the group I have in mind for South America. This has been for some time in my thoughts, to enlist Ward (and France) on the side of these poor Indians and to do it through their artistic sense. (20)

As Casement indicates the task was not just to render Ricudo as simply a “fine type” in sculptural form (or as a “statue” as Dr Wylie puts it) but to produce a political and ethical work that would somehow demonstrate that Ward and the other artists were, “on the side of these poor Indians” and that the artists commissioned would do this, “through their artistic sense”. Dr Wylie’s exclusion of Casement’s intention to “enlist” Ward (and France) and Casement’s intention to have Ward make a work with a definite *political content* casts substantial doubt on her objectivity in giving an account of the aesthetic and political task that Casement had set himself. No work was commissioned from Ward. Had such a work been commissioned, it success would have been dependent upon a combination of negotiation between the two men, that would have of necessity involved complex transmutations of ideology into artistic form so that the moral and ethical effect of the work, would not only be recognizable in France but on and international level (see Casement And The Modern World below for further discussion).

However, this “problematique” as post-structuralists like to call it, was ignored by Dr Wylie who instead describes two works by Ward that would “give us some sense”, “of the kind of work that Ward might have created”. This was to be gleaned from the following descriptions of two works by Ward. The first was of a tribal chief from the Congo (1908). A work that she describes as, “fierce-countenanced” (21). This Ward sculpture was not reproduced in Dr Wylie’s text but is reproduced here:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Royal_Museum_for_Central_Africa_Hall_Herbert_Ward_Sculpture_The_Chief_Of_The_Tribe_1.jpg>

As can be seen, the tribal chief is not standing ready to throw his spear (as would be the case in popular imagery of the period) but is sitting in a subdued pose, a rather curious position for a “fierce” man to adopt. His actual countenance is that of an older man, his eyes are almost closed; his expression is grave, showing some discomfort. He is feeling the cold, as is indicated by his attempt to keep his feet warm by putting one foot on top of the other and his hand on his leg (quite probably the position that someone would adopt before the evening fire is lit). Is there not someone to light the fire? If not why is he alone? Ward had of course met tribal chief’s in his time in the Congo, but why depict this powerful person as vulnerable? Dr Wylie then quotes approvingly Frances S. Connelly’s description of a second sculpture by Ward called Sleeping Africa (1902), which Connelly describes as, “a plainly allegorical figure” (22) when we can see that the figure is not “plainly allegorical”: <http://www.tandfonline.com/action/showPopup?citid=citart1&id=F0002&doi=10.1080/02666281003650568>

This Ward work was also not reproduced by Dr Wylie’s. The then beaux arts tradition of having Africa represented as an idealized and westernized sleeping figure in a group or on a throne (as can be seen here in Chester French’s sculpture outside the Customs House in New York : <http://www.tandfonline.com/action/showPopup?citid=citart1&id=F0007&doi=10.1080/02666281003650568> )

has been significantly revised by Ward as his figure is more identifiably an African woman in a defenceless pose or even of shame (at being looked at?). The figure of the African woman is lying on an actual representation of the continent of Africa; the iconography is therefore not “plainly allegorical” but emblematic. To make a value judgment in regards to Wards’ morality and what these works are of – in terms of art and ideology one must also include other work. This ethical sculpture known as Grief for example was a gift of Ward to the Mill Hill School in London. It depicts a grieving African man. According to the school, it “symbolises the Congo grieving for its dead” :

<http://www.millhill.org.uk/popups/creative-art1.html>

This sculpture and its ethical mode of representation would be more akin to the approach that Casement would have had to contend with rather than his own ethical-heroic conception of Ricudo which is probably why the sculpture was never made. Dr Wylie then proceeds to make a connection between Casement’s intentions and the wider British imperial cultural project. The British Festival of Empire she tells us, had opened “just a month before Omarino and Ricudo arrived” in London in 1910. The activity she uses to make the connection between the exhibition and its ‘Giants of Empire’ “freak show” and Casement, was his attempt to “label and classify”, the people, customs, flora and fauna of the Putumayo which somehow indicates to Dr Wylie, that Casement’s attempt to realize his artistic project, places his work and project within the, “discourse of the colonial picturesque”. (23)

The term “picturesque” has gone through many revisions since the late 18th Century when it was used to promote aesthetic and critical interest in English vistas and scenery rather than the preferred sites of the continental Grand Tour. It was a discourse chiefly preoccupied with the sublime and not with rigorous labeling or classification. Presumably, Dr Wylie is referring to the ordering of landscape practiced by Capability Brown in the early 19th century which when pictured by an artist commissioned by the manor to paint it, included the people who worked on the estate. The “colonial picturesque” (if there was such a thing) would then be a colonial estate in India, Africa or Malaya. The colonial worker would be a naturalized part of the landscape the power relations present, but suitably understated:

<https://picasaweb.google.com/102237103663068882935/November142011#5674642406523253890>

<https://picasaweb.google.com/102237103663068882935/November132011#5674625520856913730>

In these photographs we see south Asian workers that were directly recruited to work on the British colonial rubber estates in Malaya in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The settlement and growth of these Estates was possible by the exercise of imperial power which industrialized the domestication of varieties of wild rubber trees by British and colonial botanists after capital’s terror slavery regimes in the Congo and the Putumayo. Casement had been to both regions and taken his camera with him to record the violence visited on the bodies of the local population by capital’s overseers:

<http://assets.survivalinternational.org/pictures/1467/1455_original.jpg>

Casement’s photograph of an Amerindian child whipped for not delivering the required amount of wild rubber to the Peruvian Amazon Company. The Company also punished adults for the same “disobedience” :

<http://assets.survivalinternational.org/pictures/1461/amazon-indians_original.jpeg>

Both images became part of the evidence of Casement’s enquiry into the atrocities.

To paraphrase T.J. Clark if the British ruling class were to choose people to represent the colonial worker as part of the natural order of art and capital they could have chosen far less troublesome subjects than Omarino and Ricudo! (24)

**The anthropological photographs Taken by John Thomson**

If the trouble that Omarino and Ricudo signified could not be represented by Ward, Dr Wylie’s inference that that trouble had been successfully eradicated from John Thomson’s ethnographical photographs and that the imperial project of the “colonial picturesque” is here unambiguously present is not an accurate summation of what the photographs are of or what they represent. Dr Wylie sums up the situation that Ricudo, and Omarino were placed in: “These photographs impart nothing of the young men’s lives or personalities”. (25)

This is not the case from the evidence that she herself presents in her previous paragraph where she tells us what was printed on the catalogue card: “Two slaves from Putumayo river, Up. Amazon, Colombia. Engaged in rubber industry and treated with great cruelty.” (26)

Although the additional terminology used is definitely of its time with regard to its misattribution of characteristics of appearance “Malay in colour, features, height and build” and Ricudo’s, “Mongolian” ‘cast of eye’. (27) the description does tell us where these people had come from and what was done to them.

And as we are dealing with ethnographical records what was to be imparted (to use Dr Wylie’s verb) would be in the catalogue and not acted out dramatically.

Was what was produced what Casement required? This we cannot be sure of as there is no evidence to suggest what he felt about Thomson’s work. As far as the images are concerned they did not enter the imperialist canon of ethnographic representations, of Amerindians or even representations of exploited slaves from the Putumayo. And I think it is this last historical designation that holds the key to the fate of the images and why they were simply put away in a drawer and forgotten about.

Contrary to Dr Wylie’s insistence that they were representative of contemporary imperial discourse, their meaning could not be stabilized as part of the traditional imperial canon of ethnographic representation of non-European peoples, for the simple reason that the images were commissioned and designated as images not just of “racial types” as Dr Wylie claims but as specific examples of a political phenomenon: *an exploited race* which was part of their designation here as human subjects.

Because the subject matter of the photographs was slavery, which the two individuals had suffered under – slavery that was not the product of some dynastic despotism that could be mythologically or unconditionally resolved through any contemporary signifying order or ordering but were of living examples of a particular form of exploitation under modern industrial capitalism. It was for that reason I would venture that the images fell into neglect. For to confront and understand the meaning of the images is to accept that their purpose was to publicize one example of modern capitals mass acts of atrocity. It is this dominated subject that is present here in front of the lens, which raised uncomfortable questions about the system of values of the viewer.

**The Double Portrait of Ricudo and Omarino by William Rothenstein**

The question remains then was there a way in 1911 of representing Ricudo and Omarino that signified other meanings than the one of dominated subject?

William Rothenstein had been working in the tradition that had been established by Courbet and Manet in the mid-19th century – the French tradition of realism and later modernism that became known by the early 20th century as ‘post-impressionism’. The history of modernism as an art practice has been particularly lacking in historical accounts of itself. We have become accustomed to the artists preoccupation with pure form and the supposed concern of Modernist pioneers’ ‘will’ or inner need ‘to simply paint’ without regard to subject or wider concerns. The history of modernist painting had from its beginning also been concerned with representing life as it is lived on the edge of society. Courbet’s Stonebraker’s and Manet’s Olympia are examples of such works:

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gustave_Courbet_-_The_Stonebreakers_-_WGA05457.jpg>

Here Courbet manages to involve us in the work of the two stonebreakers but he does not show us the faces of the two men. Twenty years later Manet has the faces and gaze of those forced to live on the edge confront us directly:

<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/0d/Edouard_Manet%2C_A_Bar_at_the_Folies-Bergère.jpg>

<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/6a/Manet%2C_Edouard_-_Olympia%2C_1863.jpg>

The recovery of these meanings and concerns of what modernism chose to represent was the original project of New Art History, a movement that began in the late 1970s. T. J. Clark one of the pioneers of New Art History, has summed up the limitations of Manet’s modernism and raised the following political and aesthetic question:

I am asking for the difficult, and equally certainly for something that Manet [in painting Olympia] did not do. I am pointing to the fact that there are always other meanings in any given social space – counter-meanings, alternative orders of meaning, produced by the culture itself, in the clash of classes, ideologies and forms of control.(28)

Clark’s problematic is also Casement’s task – to find an artist(s) to represent the “counter meanings, alternative orders of meaning, produced by the culture itself”. In other words the meanings that had been produced by Casement’s campaign and of Ricudo and Omarino as survivors of an attempted genocide.

By the time of Rothenstein’s involvement in the Parisian avant-garde he had come to know Degas’ work and how Degas attempted to represent the life of the Paris labouring poor. Laundresses were one of the many new classes that were brought into being by industrialization of the modern city:

<http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/works-in-focus/painting.html?no_cache=1&zoom=1&tx_damzoom_pi1%5BshowUid%5D=2343>

Rothenstein was also to take sides in the debate within post-impressionism as to what was and what was not regarded as important or acceptable subject matter for the avant-garde to paint. At that time (the turn of the 19th century) there was as Clark puts it a “clash of classes, ideologies and forms of control” going on in Paris between those who thought that the working class should be represented in modern art: -

<http://www.victorianweb.org/sculpture/dalou/5.html>

and those who followed the new ethereal Symbolist ideas that modern art should be about purifying the aesthetic of extraneous detail and moral subject matter.

Therefore following this debate when Rothenstein’s friend the sculpture Rodin produced his most well known work The Thinker (1902) it was understood by many to be a study of a worker as it was thought (wrongly) that the figure of the thinker was based on a manual labourer due to his gnarled hands. Rodin in fact had begun the long and difficult journey of becoming a Symbolist sculptor. However, Rothenstein did not follow the majority of his contemporaries and revise his practice in a Symbolist direction, he retained modernism’s interest in depicting the lives of the working class and life as was lived on the edge of modern society, which can be seen from the example of this work from 1919:

<http://www.artfinder.com/lightbox/sheffield-buffer-girls-sir-william-rothenstein/#1>

In this Rothenstein picture the metal workers confront the viewer with the fact of their labour as part of what they do but also, as the expression on the face of the figure on the left suggests, that they were reluctant to be seen solely or simply as young women who did this job – they are still, “dominated subjects” defined by the context of the unpleasant work they were employed to do. Interestingly, both Ricudo and Omarino carry similar expressions in John Thomson’s ethnographic images, which also took as its subject the oppressive work the Amerindians had been forced to do. But how could Rothenstein be involved in producing a meaning that went beyond the basic human empathy? First – and I believe that Clark was quite right to propose that in order to make visible the “counter-meanings” that did then exist in the “given social space” there must be a more direct political and social engagement against the established meanings to access “counter-meanings, alterative orders of meaning”.

Rothenstein had first met Casement in 1907 on the occasion of the testimonial for his friend and fellow anti-slavery campaigner E.D. Morel. As Rothenstein tells us he had contributed to Morel’s testimonial fund. (29)

It was then on the basis of support for the anti-slavery movement that Rothenstein had come to know Casement (a salient fact Dr Wylie neglects) and been approached four years later with the commission to produce portraiture of Ricudo and Omarino. (30)

Having met a number of professional portrait painters, Casement would have been aware that it was standard practice to take a photograph of the subject, as they may not always be available for a sitting. (31) It is then quite likely that Casement had brought the image of Ricudo to Rothenstein’s studio that he had taken in connection with his investigation into the Putumayo atrocities. Examining Casement’s image and the pose that Ricudo has adopted, does suggest that it may indeed have been used by Rothenstein as a basis for the composition of the double portrait:

<https://picasaweb.google.com/102237103663068882935/November22201103#5677794227304287842>

but in reverse:

<https://picasaweb.google.com/102237103663068882935/November22201107#5677798791936193602>

<http://miputumayo.com.co/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/211210-02.jpg> The Rothenstein double portrait.

As can be seen from the double portrait Rosenstein has adjusted the shadow on Ricudo’s face and replaced his rather amused and quizzical look with one of self-confidence and affection, Omarino by contrast has an expression of great determination. (32)

**Conclusion - Casement and The Modern World**

Beginning from 1900 onwards, Europe’s labour, suffrage and socialist movements began to make demands for wide ranging reforms on the bourgeois state. By the middle of the 1910s this agitation had also developed into a European wide mass movement against the drive to war. Ireland also was part of that European crisis as pressure mounted for Home Rule. Casement’s anti-slavery campaigns in the Congo and the Putumayo were part of a general European wide radicalization.

What Dr Wylie and her fellow post-structuralist Michael Taussig have done is to regard these conditions as having no bearing on Casement’s ideology. For the simple reason that they have analyzed Casement’s relation to ideology in terms of British officialdom and British imperial “ideology in general” and not in terms of his specific social, technical, political and actual ideological conditions. That is why there is a misfit between Dr Wylie’s general account of British Imperial discourse, such as that of the 1911 Giants of Empire exhibition and Herbert Ward’s practice, her conception of the “colonial picturesque” and William Rothenstein’s specific conditions of artistic production. And last but not least her and Michael Taussig’s account of the meaning and significance of Casement’s Putumayo investigation. Taussig also fails to note the significance of the fact that Casement’s ideological radicalization was inherently extraneous to officialdom and his political practice was consistently extra-parliamentary. (33)

Casement, as we have seen, by 1909 was in full ideological assault on the Liberal establishment of his day. By 1911 he had rejected reformism as the solution to the Home Rule Crisis and by 1913 had moved decisively in favor of armed revolution. In the years before the First World War these were the specific ideological conditions he worked under and the political conditions he helped produce. Had he been alive today he would not have been a supporter of the current British ‘Liberal’ regime in London nor the British government at Stormont, but would have been arranging meetings and support for the Egyptian revolution, insisting as one would expect that there be a full investigation into the atrocities perpetrated by the armies of Mubarak and Assad.

Notes:

1. Sunday Times Irish edition 26 December 2010 online edition.

2. A better description would be that Dr Wylie's paper tried to place Casement's work in the aftermath of the Putumayo investigation within the confines of "British imperial Ideology" : "that Casement’s views on race and empire remained more or less consistent with British imperial ideology" (Wylie Rare Models p.316).

3. Personal communication with the author on 10th Feb 2011.

4. Wylie RM p318

5. This is mainly due to the language used rather than a concern about any known issues such as post- structuralism's problems with "humanism" or "humanist discourse".

6. See note 2 above.

7. Irish Sunday Times 26 December 2011.

8. NUI Maynooth 26th March 2011

9. Excerpt from "More Power To The Indians" by Dr Séamas O Síocháin

Department of Anthropology NUI Mayooth reproduced by kind permission.

Note: the page numbers in Dr O Síocháin’s presentation refer to Dr Wylie's paper.

10. Richard Kirkland, Rhetoric and (Mis)recognitions: Reading Casement.

Irish Studies Review, Vol 7, No. 2, 1999 p.171.

11. Ibid.

12. Reprinted in O Síocháin, Imperialist Rebel Revolutionary, Lilliput 2008. p.120

After such atrocities Casement wrote, it would be "no longer possible for any Egyptian

group overtly to support the [British] occupation". see note 44 on p.525.

13. Ibid p.390-391.

14. Jeffrey Dudgeon (who is not a supporter of Casement's politics), writes that

Casement's German Diary is essentially “an attack on the German imperial establishment”.

He has prepared an online edition of that which can be downloaded here:

[Roger Casement's 1914-16 diary and associated letters - with appendices](http://www.jeffreydudgeon.com/TDE_CMS/database/userfiles/Casement's%201914-16%20diary%20and%20associated%20letters%20-%20with%20appendices%20MASTER%20COPY.doc)

Dudgeon admits that it was The Black Diaries that were used undermine the campaign for clemency after Casement had been sentenced to death. Had his German Diary been used by his defense council in his appeal it would have shown the true state of affairs between Casement and German high command and how he had opposed their plans for Easter 1916 and why he had returned to Ireland to call off the Rising.

15. Margaret O’Callaghan, ‘“With the Eyes of Another Race, of a People Once Hunted Themselves”: Casement, Colonialism and a Remembered Past’, in Mary E. Daly (ed.), Roger Casement in Irish and World History. Dublin: Royal Irish Academy. 2005 46–63. p.49 quoted by Dr O Síocháin in his presentation.

16. Kirkland p. 171.

17. Wylie RM p.316

18. See Francis Frascina's introduction to The Critical Debate in Pollock and After, Harper's & Row 1985 p.14

where he explains that to say what an image or painting is "of" is to raise a question of historical materialism's understanding of representation as opposed to modernist and Idealist approaches which are currently dominant.

19. Wylie RM p.319

20. Casement's Amazon Journal, Mitchell edition Lilliput 1997 p.341-342

21. Wylie RM p.319

22. Ibid p.319.

23. Ibid p.319.

24. T.J. Clark, "Manet", Open University videotape. 1983

25. Wylie RM p.325.

26. Ibid p.325.

27. Ibid p.325

28. T.J. Clark, Preliminaries to a Possible Treat of Olympia Screen, vol. 21 1, Spring 1980, p18-41

reprinted in Modern Art and Modernism, Paul Chapman Publishing, 1982 p.272

29. William Rothenstein, Men and Memories, Faber and Faber 1932 p.170.

30. Dr Wylie, true to form after conceding that the Rothenstein double portrait of Omarino and Ricudo shows that they “generated their own meaning through self-ornamentation or through posture and gesture” then proceeds to upbraid Rothenstein for saying that the two Amerindians, “stood like rocks”. “Nevertheless,” she continues, Rothenstein’s “description of their petrified bodies could hardly be more passive.” (p.326) This as we have seen is not the first time that Dr Wylie has exhibited a pedestrian understanding of art and discourse by taking words literally. Rothenstein required Ricudo and Omarino to be stiller than usual as the pose they had adopted and which he was attempting to paint, was not conventional as it is at a slight angle to the picture plain.

31. Casement had been professionally photographed and had his portrait painted a number of times most notably by the Irish artist Sarah Purser (1848-1943).

32. Ricudo's amused look could possibly be explained by the sight Casement presented to him of a very tall man with a beard that obscured one part of his face and a camera that obscured the other. But Casement's

photograph of Ricudo appears to have been seminal in informing Rothenstein's double portrait. It is the best answer we have to T. J. Clark's plea for an art that gave us other meanings of the dominated.

33. For an in-depth discussion of this distinction between "ideology in general" and "specific ideology" see Anthony Easthope, British Post-Structuralism since 1968, Routlege 1988 p.65-67. This is no small matter for radical analysis of culture as the example of the Frankfurt School and Adorno has shown, where cultural and political phenomena such as Jazz and the Enlightenment are simply examined as "ideology in general" and subjected to relentless "ideologie critique". It is in this tradition that some practitioners of post-structuralism stand, as it has not been the first time that modern culture and the Enlightenment have been described as authoritarian: “Films, radio and magazines make up a system which is uniform as a whole and in every part. Even the aesthetic activities of political opposites are one in their enthusiastic obedience to the rhythm of the iron system.” See Wiesengrund-Adorno, The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception in Dialectic of Enlightenment, first published 1944: <http://marxists.org/reference/archive/adorno/1944/culture-industry.htm>

Theory such as this can never be a guide to how recover radical and revolutionary meaning of the oppressed.