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“Leaving hardly a sign—and no memories”: Roger Casement and the Metamodernist Archive

By Alison Garden

On Friday, 11th May 1923, the *New York Evening Post* ran an article entitled “Conrad and Casement Hut Mates in Africa.”¹ In it, the journalist John Powell detailed his encounter with Joseph Conrad and Conrad’s thoughts on his one-time friend, the former darling of the British Empire turned Irish nationalist rebel, Roger Casement. Conrad told Powell of “[h]is first impression of Casement”; a tale told “so vividly that it stands out with the clearness and blackness of a silhouette caught unexpectedly in a lonely place, casting a hint of ill omen.”² Despite the earlier friendship that had existed between Casement and Conrad, in the profile of Casement drawn from Conrad’s words, Casement is an unknowable, malevolent figure:

Conrad was running his boat down the sluggish river when a tall, gaunt figure rose against the perpendicular face of a dark bluff. Crouching behind him, in an attitude suggesting a perverted sort of worship, was his servant and at his heels were two black bulldogs. This sinister picture did not fade, for Casement remained always mysterious, and, after months of the close companionship necessitated by a hut in the wilderness, Conrad knew him no better.

Powell, inspired by his meeting with Conrad, goes on to claim, “[p]erhaps it is this vision of Casement that influenced Conrad in his conception of ‘Kurtz.’” The friendship between Casement and Conrad has long been the subject of fascination. While the textual rendering of Casement in *Heart of Darkness* has received some limited academic attention, these throwaway lines facilitate an illuminating new reading of Conrad’s seminal text on European imperialism.³ There is much in both the novella and the archive to support such a reading of

Kurtz, although whether these similarities constitute anything further than “morbid coincidences” is likely to remain a matter of debate (Kirkland, “Rhetoric and (Mis)recognitions,” 170). However, when reading Conrad’s confession that this “sinister picture” of Casement continued to haunt him—thirty-three years after the two first met in the Congo Free State and seven years after Casement’s death—it is hard not to hear the voice of Marlow, lamenting that he “shall see” the “eloquent phantom” of Kurtz for “as long as [he] live[s]” (*Heart of Darkness*, 185).

Nestled alongside Powell’s piece in *The New York Evening Post* is a shorter article, “Scientists Disagree on Saturn’s Halo.” This constellation of Conrad, Casement and Saturn animates a striking intertextual relationship with W. G. Sebald’s *Die Ringe des Saturn* (1995), translated into English as *The Rings of Saturn* (1998). Powell’s article on Conrad and Casement has received little commentary, so it is unlikely that Sebald would have been aware of this archival curiosity, although, given Sebald’s obsession with the archive, it would have no doubt delighted him. Sebald’s literary project is, J. J. Long claims, “profoundly concerned with the material and infrastructural basis of knowledge systems, . . . his narrators spend an inordinate amount of time in museums and galleries, libraries and archives, zoos and menageries.”⁴ Long’s observation is testament to the sheer wealth of information that finds its way into Sebald’s literature and this preoccupation is in full display in *The Rings of Saturn*. It is, as Simon Cooke articulates, a work that “weaves together . . . cultural artefacts, memories both personal and cultural historical, in what seems to be the performance of a kind of encyclopaedic imagination.”⁵ This archival impulse is deeply intertextual and Sebald’s style, Martin Swales asserts, is the “summation of the condition of European prose.”⁶ A key intertext for *The Rings of Saturn* is Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. Intriguingly, Roger Casement plays a role in both *Heart of Darkness* and *The Rings of Saturn*: where *Heart of*

Darkness is only implicitly ghosted by Casement, *The Rings of Saturn* mobilizes his spectre in a decided fashion. In addition to *Heart of Darkness*, Chapter V of *The Rings of Saturn* draws heavily on a range of archival sources to construct a fictionalized account of various biographical moments from the lives of Casement and Conrad: Conrad's traumatic childhood; their time in the Congo Free State; Casement's human rights activism in the Congo and the Amazon; and Casement's execution by the British for treason. I argue in what follows that tracing the archival, textual and historical dialogue between these two works—embodied by Casement's ghost—enables us to read the metamodernist aesthetics of Sebald as a form of ghostly intertextual memory, indicative of the post-imperial debris that continues to haunt our contemporary moment.

What is it about Casement that makes him such a resonant and significant figure for both authors (fig. 1)? Although Casement is now primarily remembered as an Irish nationalist and for his sexually explicit “Black Diaries,” he led a remarkably varied life. Born an Anglo-Irish Protestant in Dublin, in 1864, Casement worked for the British Colonial Service and Foreign Office, and his reports of the violent abuse and racialized oppression that were inflicted upon slave labourers in the Congo (1903–1904) and Putumayo region (1910–1911) in pursuit of rubber earned him a knighthood. His time working for the imperial administration strengthened his support for Irish independence, and the romantic nationalism of his youth matured into a cosmopolitan anticolonial politics. Such developments led to Casement's retirement from the British Foreign Office in 1913, so that he could devote himself to sourcing support, financial and otherwise, for Irish independence. These efforts took him first to the United States and subsequently, during World War I, to Germany, where he attempted to recruit an “Irish Brigade” of Irish Prisoners of War to fight alongside the Germans. In April 1916, Casement was arrested off the coast of County Kerry, trying to land German

armaments into Ireland for use in the Easter Rising. While he was on trial, the British, keen to discredit Casement, circulated his so-called “Black Diaries” amongst key figures from Britain, Ireland and the United States. These diaries detailed Casement’s sexual activities with men and adolescents; suspicions were raised about their veracity and there is still a significant faction of amateur and professional historians who believe these documents to have been forged by the British. When Casement was executed for treason in 1916, he was the last of the leaders of the Easter Rising to be put to death. Through his multiple and slippery allegiances—human rights activist; key figure in the struggle for Irish independence; traitor to British imperialism; homosexual martyr—Casement has offered writers a symbol of contradiction and multiplicity, able to signify and perform conflicting roles at the same time.

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It is perhaps for his enabling indeterminacy that Casement has proved such an enduring ghost in twentieth-century literature. I invoke the rhetoric of spectrality purposefully. While the rich and elastic theoretical remits of the “spectral turn” in cultural and critical theory are productive, as will be discussed subsequently, this language is particularly pertinent to my argument here. Indeed, it is through the figure of the “spectre” that a clear parallel can be established between the phantom-like Kurtz of Conrad’s novella and Casement, who has been consistently described in spectral ways throughout the twentieth century. A significant example would be W. B. Yeats’s “The Ghost of Roger Casement” (1938), a poem that concludes each one of its four stanzas with the repeated refrain, “*The ghost of Roger Casement / Is beating on the door.*”⁷ In Yeats’s poem, Casement is a restless figure who makes demands of the reader, with his continued beating on the door of Irish (and British) cultural memory: he calls to be let into the national narrative of Ireland, even as he on “the threshold stands.” The insistence of “beating” is twinned with the repetition of the refrain

itself, and the present tense, with the active verb, “beating,” is significant in its unsettling affective power, granting Casement an unremitting, disquieting agency. The twentieth century has bought no real “closure” to our understanding of Casement and he has remained a “figure not easily resolvable,” so it is unsurprising that this association of Casement with the ghostly has proved persistent.⁸

The spectral motions towards two interconnected a/effects: firstly, spectrality functions as a “conceptual metaphor” used to “to expose and address the way certain subjectivities have been marginalized and disavowed,” particularly with regards to race, gender, sexuality and ethnicity; and, secondly, to be haunted implies a temporal dislocation, for to be haunted “alters the experience of being in time, the way we separate the past, the present, and the future.”⁹ Casement, in life and death, is a figure that speaks to “marginalized” subjects through his endlessly disputed sexuality, his human rights work on behalf of the peoples of the Congo Free State, the Putumayo region and Connemara, and his anti-colonial Irish nationalism.¹⁰ As Avery Gordon has argued, haunting is a process through “which a repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known,” and Casement animates the ghosts of imperial and capitalist violence in Europe, Africa and South America (*Ghostly Matters*, xvi). This “disavow[al]” of “certain subjectivities” and the violence of marginalization—whether epistemic or actual—is a deeply traumatic process. The unfinished, reverberating nature of such a traumatic history repeats on the present and we can read the presence of the spectre as a symptom of this “wounded historical experience.”¹¹ Both *The Rings of Saturn* and *Heart of Darkness* are haunted by violence and, most obviously, the fatalities of European imperialism. Conrad and Sebald’s texts are histories of massacre, written from the “ultimate vantage point” of “standing on a mountain of death.”¹²

It is crucial, however, to note that not all dialogue with the past is a form of haunting and that what is particularly “distinctive about haunting is that it is an *animated* state” (Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, xvi). We can think here, for example, of Yeats’s Casement “beating on the door” and asking to be let into the national consciousnesses of both Ireland and Britain. “Unlike trauma,” Gordon argues, haunting “is distinctive for producing a something-to-be-done” (xvi). In invoking the ghosts of Conrad, Casement and *Heart of Darkness* in his travelogue, Sebald insists that we converse with these ghosts of the past. Indeed, in these engagements, *The Rings of Saturn* can be productively read as what David James and Urmila Seshagiri would term a “metamodernist” text. Such texts, James and Seshagiri suggest, are shaped by efforts to “reassess and remobilize narratives of modernism.”¹³ These include the recapitulation and explication of modernist aesthetics and commitments, particularly those of a political or ethical nature, but also a preoccupation with the historical production of modernist cultures. Sebald’s metamodernism operates on a both an aesthetic and thematic level. In *The Rings of Saturn*, his abiding preoccupations—memory and the archive—not only shape the content of his text but also its form: Sebald’s travelogue imitates various features of modernism, from his dedicated exploration of consciousness to his formal experimentation with prose style and shifting narrative register.

It is worth teasing out here the methodological component of metamodernist writing, for it is as much a methodological practice as an aesthetic strategy. “Metamodernism,” with the Greek “meta” meaning across, through or with, positively invites a critical method that reads texts across and through one another. What retrospective illumination might reading *Heart of Darkness* through *The Rings of Saturn* provide? What is at stake in reading both *Heart of Darkness* and *The Rings of Saturn* as haunted by Casement? Tracing the intertextual spectre of Casement from Sebald’s text back through archival sources, and into *Heart of Darkness*,

not only provides compelling evidence for Casement as a source for Kurtz, but also has broader implications for our understanding of the relationships between memory, (meta)modernism and the archive. In the dialogue thus generated it becomes apparent that memory and the archive—or, more specifically, the failures of memory and unease about archives—are significant preoccupations for Conrad too, revealing a profound ambivalence and anxiety towards the imperial project. Conversely, if we read *The Rings of Saturn* through *Heart of Darkness*, Sebald’s travelogue becomes a meditation on Conrad’s ambivalence, and Sebald’s mobilization of Casement, an anti-colonial agitator and human rights activist, acts as an explicit critique of the violence unleashed by European imperialism.

Reading Casement in Conrad

If we follow Powell’s tantalising suggestion from the *New York Evening Post* article from 1923, and search for similarities between Casement and Kurtz, there is much to support his assertion, Reading Casement into Conrad’s novella productively complicates our understanding of a man who has been, at times, crudely simplified. Both Casement and Kurtz are couched by Conrad in the language of spectrality and are fashioned as unforgettable, but unknowable, phantom-like figures (fig. 2). Across Conrad’s archive, the indistinct, troubled spectre of Casement gestures toward an uncanny fault line between history and memory, between absence and amnesia. This echoes the emphasis within *Heart of Darkness* itself on absence, ambivalence and obscurity. Conrad’s novella, Gabrielle McIntire argues, displays a sustained “preoccupation with shadows and darkneses,” and there is a “general absence of naming,” which adds to the sense of inexpressible mystery.¹⁴ These silent ellipses in Conrad’s novella gesture towards the ineffable trauma and horror of the European imperial enterprise, where colonial Africa is figured—not unproblematically—as a “vast grave full of unspeakable secrets” (169). But these silences do speak: the absence of names, most crucially, that of the Congo Free State; the deliberately obscure remove of the narrative structure; Marlow’s efforts to displace his memories of Kurtz and his yearning to “give [Kurtz] up too to the past . . . to surrender personally all that remained of him,” articulate a refusal to engage with the historical specificity of the violence that characterized European imperialism (181). They betray a desperate desire for amnesia. And just as these traumatic

markers plague Conrad's fiction, this is echoed in Conrad's letters, where he writes of the Congo Free State and the "[t]hings I've tried to forget."¹⁵ Where Marlow predicts that he "shall see [Kurtz's] eloquent phantom as long as I live," Conrad's Congo experiences continued to haunt him (185).

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It is significant, however, that it is Casement who inspires Conrad to write of the "[t]hings" he has "tried to forget." These words come from a letter written in 1903 by Conrad to Robert Cunninghame Graham:

He is a Protestant Irishman, pious too. But so was [Francisco] 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 have seen him start off into an unspeakable wilderness swinging a crookhandled stick for all weapon with two bull-dogs, Paddy (white) and Biddy (brindle) at his heels and a L[u]anda 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 L[u]anda boy, and quietly serene as though he had been for a stroll in the park. . . . He could tell you things! Things I have tried to forget, things I never did know. (Conrad, *Letters*, 149)

Conrad's description here recalls an incident in *Heart of Darkness* where, after meeting Kurtz's disciple, the Russian Harlequin, Marlow reports: "as a rule Kurtz wandered alone, far in the depths of the forest." The Russian goes on to add that "[v]ery often coming to this station, I had to wait days and days before [Kurtz] would turn up" (*Heart of Darkness*, 162). These descriptions of both Casement and Kurtz suggest an ease with the local environment and people that Conrad finds disturbing; such descriptions remind us of Conrad's comments

to the *New York Evening Post*, where Casement's African servant is depicted "[c]rouching behind him . . . suggesting a perverted sort of worship."

However, this letter was written in 1903 and reflects a changing relationship between the two men; when the two first met, in Matadi, in the Congo Free State in 1890, Conrad had nothing but praise for Casement. In a diary entry from June 13th, 1890, Conrad writes, "Made the acquaintance of Mr. Roger Casement, which I should consider as a great pleasure under any circumstances and now it becomes a positive piece of luck."¹⁶ In 1890, Casement was working for a US diplomat, Henry Sanford, gathering ivory. If we return to Conrad's diary, a brief throwaway line attests to the commercial nature of Casement's presence in the Congo: "24th [June]. Gosse and R. C. [Roger Casement] gone with a large lot of ivory down to Boma" (Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 101). Prior to this, Casement had been working with Henry Morton Stanley and the African International Association, an organization that Casement had joined in 1884, aged nineteen. The African International Association (*Association internationale africaine*) was ostensibly established to protect the rights of Africans but, in actuality, was King Leopold's method of taking control of the areas that would become the Congo Free State.¹⁷ One of Casement's earliest activities in the Congo region was the sourcing and securing of European imperial interests and, in particular, ivory: not unlike Kurtz.

By all accounts, Casement, like Kurtz, was regarded as an outstanding employee and highly regarded for both his professional and personal attributes. A fellow employee of Stanley, Herbert Ward, recollected that Casement was a "man of great distinction and great refinement, high-minded and courteous" (Inglis, *Roger Casement*, 28). We find an echo here in accounts given to Marlow by various figures in *Heart of Darkness* referring to Kurtz as a

“very remarkable person” and “an exceptional man.” What is more, specific reference is made to Kurtz as “a first-class agent,” who is of the “greatest importance to the Company” (120, 124). Casement was similarly respected by his superiors in the African International Association, who, according to Casement biographer Brian Inglis, “expressed their opinion of him by describing him, in their testimonial, as an *agent exceptionnel*” (*Roger Casement*, 32). Conrad positions Kurtz as an agent working for Leopold’s project to gain literal and intellectual mastery of the Congo territory; the “International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs had intrusted [Kurtz] with the making of a report, for its future guidance” (*Heart of Darkness*, 154–55). Cedric Watts suggests in the notes to his edition of *Heart of Darkness* that “Conrad was perhaps recalling the International Association for the Exploration and Civilizing of Africa . . . of which King Leopold II was the president”: the same Association that first led Casement to the Congo in 1884 (214n155). Additionally, and curiously, this foreshadows Casement’s most prominent and celebrated legacy as the author of the damning reports on the Congo, in 1904, and the Putumayo region of the Amazon, in 1911.

Marlow’s response to Kurtz’s posthumous report bristles with the same sentiment that Conrad was later to display in relation to Casement. Speaking of Kurtz’s report, Marlow states, “I’ve read it. It was eloquent, vibrating with eloquence, but too high-strung” (155). This juxtaposition of intellect and extreme, unstable emotion that veers towards insanity is a defining feature of Kurtz’s characterization by Marlow. At another point in the novella, Marlow laments that while Kurtz’s “intelligence was perfectly clear . . . his soul was mad” (174). This bears an uncanny resemblance to Conrad’s description of Casement, revealed in a letter to John Quinn, dated 24 May 1916:

He was a good companion: but already in Africa I judged that he was a man, properly speaking, of no mind at all. I don't mean stupid. I meant that he was all emotion. By emotional force he made his way, and sheer emotionalism has undone him. A creature of sheer temperament—a truly tragic personality: all but the greatness of which he had not a trace. Only vanity. But in the Congo it was not visible yet.¹⁸

Here, it is worth highlighting the temporal lapse between Conrad's writing of *Heart of Darkness*, first published serially in 1899, and this letter, which Conrad wrote after details of Casement's so-called treason had come to light. By 1916, Conrad was convinced that Casement was a "creature of sheer temperament," but at this point, Casement's activities in Germany were already widely reported; the Easter Rising was largely considered a failure; and Casement had been arrested by the British for attempting to ship German armaments into Ireland. It is predominantly believed—and the archive overwhelmingly supports this—that when Conrad and Casement met in the Congo, Casement was still regarded as an "*agent exceptional*." What is more, writings by Casement from his time in Africa in the early 1890s reveal that his thoughts about indigenous peoples he encountered tallied with benevolent imperial sentiments and stereotypes. Furthermore, although his ideas altered and shifted over his lifetime, some of his later writings retained contradictions and ambivalences that are often sidelined in considerations of Casement's politics.¹⁹ So what are we to make of these similarities between Casement and Kurtz? In rereading the novella in this way, are we not in danger of anachronistically ascribing undue weight to the role that Casement plays in Conrad's text?

Heart of Darkness, though, is a text that courts anachronistic rereadings, with its deliberate temporal, historical and formal obscurity facilitating multiple interpretations and encouraging readers to generate their own exegetic relationships to the text. Rather than view

“anachronism as *error*, as a failure to pay proper respect to the temporal ordering of historical events,” Helen Groth and Paul Sheehan propose that we read anachronism as “produc[ing] a kind of temporal double exposure, with past and present occupying the same plane, avoiding the rigidity associated with linearity and hierarchy.”²⁰ They argue that anachronism’s “historical re-imagining points to the temporal sedimentation associated with the palimpsest” (“Introduction: Timeliness and Untimeliness,” 579). The temporal landscape of *Heart of Darkness* is decidedly sedimented: the novella’s preoccupation with histories of colonialism is overlaid onto its contemporary focus on an unnamed African territory, reminding readers that London, too, had “been one of the dark places of the earth” (*Heart of Darkness*, 105). Marlow’s understanding of the African environment in which he finds himself is filtered through the lens of stadial history; Marlow and his colleagues are “wanderers on a prehistoric earth, on an earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet” (138). The racist imperialism that underscores such an observation is underscored by the belief that the Africans encountered are at a different stage in their cultural development from the societies of Europe. It is revealing, too, that this temporal gap between the two groups is marked by a sense of the uncanny: this African world is “unknown.”²¹ Indeed, the temporal sedimentation of the novella’s composite historical vistas is underpinned by the haunted quality of Marlow’s palimpsestic memory; motifs of blackness, mourning and phantom-like Kurtz surface again and again in the textual fabric of Conrad’s work.

The novella’s shadowy and indeterminate nature also invites anachronistic readings of the text. A frequently quoted passage highlights how the text refuses to perform any one interpretation: “the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of

moonshine” (*Heart of Darkness*, 105). Again, the language of obscurity reverberates through these lines, where clarity can only be gained by “spectral illumination.” This sense of the spectral here is crucial, for it draws attention to the nature of Marlow’s palimpsestic memory and, more significantly, this invocation of ghosting marks the continued interruptions of the past throughout the novella. For an anachronistic text is a haunted text, replete with anapopism and metalepsis, and the slippage between unspecified instances in the deep time of the “prehistoric earth,” the contemporary moment and the recent past, galvanizes the associative power of memory as a form of affective history. For if something continues to haunt, then it is unfinished; to be haunted is to be “gripped indefinitely by an anachronistic event” (Blanco and Peeren, *Spectralities Reader*, 11).

Hauntings, Memory and Archival Remains

Kurtz himself is another anachronistic element of Conrad’s novella. As an “eloquent phantom,” Kurtz both mobilizes the past and signals towards the future. For spectres are, as Derrida suggests, always both *revenant* and *arrivant*, with future readings encoded in the ghosts of the past.²² For all of the anachronistic aesthetics that memory engenders throughout the novella, Kurtz is the central figure that haunts Marlow’s memory. So potent is Kurtz’s impact on Marlow that he “can’t choose” whether or not to remember him, for “[h]e won’t be forgotten”: remembering Kurtz is an involuntary act (*Heart of Darkness*, 155). This insistence that Marlow “can’t forget” Kurtz is reiterated at numerous points throughout the text, with Marlow’s emphasis on Kurtz’s potent afterlife highlighting the remarkable qualities of the man; “[w]hatever he was, he was not common” (156, 155). Kurtz’s legacy is also powerful for his fiancée, who, when Kurtz visits her, is still “in mourning . . . more than a year since his death.” For both Marlow and the Intended, remembering Kurtz is both

unavoidable and linked to the affective power of melancholia, as the Intended “seemed as though she would remember and mourn for ever” (183).

However, even as the Intended laments how little is left of Kurtz, “nothing remains—nothing but a memory,” she is consoled by the fact that some traces do indeed survive: “His words, at least, have not died” (185). For Kurtz’s legacy consists of both memory—those of the people around him and, curiously, his own—and in tangible, textual traces. Kurtz leaves behind a small but significant archive of his own in the form of pamphlets, letters and a painting of his intended. It is the act of physically dispensing with Kurtz’s archive—“a slim packet of letters and the girl’s portrait”—that Marlow believes will enable him to leave Kurtz in “the past . . . to surrender personally all that remained of him” (181). There is no official repository for these materials although, in being so entrusted with these material traces, Marlow becomes an archivist, of sorts, of Kurtz’s memory. The primary component of these archival remains is the report that Kurtz writes for the “International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs,” a document that Marlow calls “a beautiful piece of writing . . . luminous and terrifying.” It is this document that Kurtz displays the most sustained anxiety over, “repeatedly entreat[ing Marlow] to take good care of ‘my pamphlet’” (155). Here, Conrad establishes a relationship between text, archive and memory: Kurtz’s memories become a posthumous archive—a memory—of him. It is fitting, too, that this constellation carries an affective register, for thinking about Kurtz’s archival remains leads Marlow to *hear* the voice of Kurtz as he speaks to him after his death, emphasising the importance of “my pamphlet.” Memory, then, carries a haunting, affective and disconcerting resonance that unsettles the teleological relationship between past, present and future.

Kurtz's anxieties about what will happen to his pamphlet, and further documents, are shared by other members of the company. Marlow recounts an incident, after Kurtz's death, of a "clean-shaved man, with an official manner" coming to Marlow's house and "ma[king] inquiries, at first circuitous, afterwards suavely pressing, about what he was pleased to denominate certain 'documents.'" Marlow is "not surprised" by this pressure to release these documents, for he had already had "two rows with the manager on the subject out there" in Africa. This anxiety over what the documents may contain leads the man to become "darkly menacing," arguing . . . that the Company had the right to every bit of information about its "territories" and, subsequently, make a "threat of legal proceedings." Marlow adds that "[a]nother fellow, calling himself Kurtz's cousin, appeared two days later" with requests to look through Kurtz's letters. When Marlow does hand over the report on the "Suppression of Savage Customs," both men are unsatisfied, although the second visitor is reported as "t[aking] himself off with this plunder" (180–81). This uneasiness about what exactly Kurtz's pamphlet might contain foreshadows the apprehension displayed over Casement's reports and the potentially damaging impact they could have on the projects and interests of those involved in the Congo and the Amazon.²³ Casement, like Kurtz, was a prolific writer and his archival legacy extends far beyond governmental reports. In 1923 William Maloney wrote that "Casement was an extraordinary secretary bird. He kept copies of letters he sent, letters he got, things he wrote, thoughts he had."²⁴ His archive extends throughout Europe, with holdings in Germany, London, Belgium and Dublin, and across the Atlantic to New York, Brazil and Peru. His "archival legacy," Angus Mitchell claims, "links up to expose colonial abuse on a worldwide scale and systemic failure at every turn," constructing "a counter-knowledge or counter-history which destabilises the architecture of imperial knowledge."²⁵

Indeed, the constellation established by Conrad between memory, text and archive returns us, once more, to Roger Casement. After all, Casement was, according to Conrad, a man who “could tell you things! Things I [Conrad] have tried to forget, things I never did know.” Just as Marlow is haunted by Kurtz, Conrad is haunted by Casement. It is ironic, however, that we only know of this because of Conrad’s own archive. Conrad’s anxiety about never really “know[ing]” Casement, or his secrets, is echoed in Marlow’s distressed claims that Kurtz “was just a word for me. I did not see the man in the name any more than you do. Do you see him? Do you see the story?” (Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 129). Both men, the historical and the fictional, are depicted by Conrad as unknowable, phantasmagorical figures, lingering in the memory despite active efforts to forget. Casement’s afterlives, literary and otherwise, emphasize his obscurity; in the *New York Evening Post* article, John Powell’s time with Conrad led him to declare “after months of the close companionship necessitated by a hut in the wilderness, Conrad knew him no better.” Re-reading *Heart of Darkness* through and across this archive, then, reveals a sense of profound ambivalence towards the affective, disorienting power of memory. The ellipses between memory and knowledge generate powerful silences in the narrative, with the trauma that Kurtz, and Casement, represent becoming powerful *lieu d’amnésie*: haunting sites that both gesture towards but defer the horrors of European imperialism.²⁶

Metamodernism and *The Rings of Saturn*

Reading *Heart of Darkness* and *The Rings of Saturn* as haunted texts, “animated” by imperial debris and colonial ghosts, induces a sense of “something-to-be-done” in order to galvanize an ethical imperative. This suggestion seems especially relevant to Sebald’s metamodernist remobilization of Conrad for, if there is a latent criticism of the “horror” of imperialism in

Heart of Darkness, Sebald's text teases this out in multiple ways—of which one is, of course, his deliberate invocation of Casement as a champion of anti-colonial nationalism and the oppressed. This interaction between imperialism, colonialism and modernism has often been discussed in fraught, reductive terms; Jahan Ramazani writes that “postcolonial criticism has,” in the past, “sometimes represented the relation between postcolonialism and Euromodernism as adversarial.”²⁷ Recent criticism produced by Ramazani, Simon Gikandi, and Laura Doyle urges a complex and sophisticated reconsideration of this relationship between the postcolonial and modernism.²⁸ For these critics, many postcolonial writers create texts that operate by “redeploying modernism,” refashioning it and “reshap[ing] it through indigenous genres and vocabularies.” Such literature has “recentered . . . non-Western landscapes and mythologies” and “often invert[s] its racial and cultural politics” (Ramazani, “Modernist Bricolage,” 449). Rather than “writ[ing] back to’ an imperial Euromodernism,” we might better understand these authors and poets as writing *through* modernism (446). With these thoughts in mind, I posit that we should read Sebald's metamodernist engagement with *Heart of Darkness* as a metatextual critique of—or perhaps even corrective to—Conrad's novella, where Casement is adduced as a vital aspect for his metatextual project.

In his metamodernist engagement with *Heart of Darkness*, Sebald animates spectres of the imperial project—most significantly, for our purposes, Casement—to populate sites of amnesia and remind us of the incomplete and reverberating nature of imperialism. *The Rings of Saturn*, written with what Jesse Matz describes as “postcolonial insight,” can be read as a knowing dialogue with the anachronistic challenge that *Heart of Darkness* presents us.²⁹ Sebald's implicit and explicit intertextuality acts as an insistent, repetitive form of cultural memory. It is telling that we are introduced to Casement in Sebald's text through mediated archival memory: a British Broadcasting Company (BBC) documentary about Casement and

Conrad in the Congo that our unnamed narrator (likely Sebald himself) watches while falling asleep. Sebald writes, “As my waking consciousness ebbed away, I could still hear every word of the narrator’s account of Casement with singular clarity, but was unable to grasp their meaning” (*Rings of Saturn*, 103). Here, then, the archive is intricately interlinked with memory, both personal and cultural, but it is also, as in Conrad’s novel, symptomatic of forgetting, obscurity and the *failures* of memory. Casement comes to Sebald’s narrator through a state of semi-consciousness, a phantasmagorical figure who emerges “from the depths of a dream” with “singular clarity,” but Sebald is “unable to grasp” his “meaning.” Sleeping through the documentary means that, for Sebald, the “rest of the [documentary] narrator’s account of the lives of Casement and Conrad” is “lost” to him; Casement and Conrad reduced to a “few words and some shadowy images of the two men” (104). The “shadowy images” immediately resonate with *Heart of Darkness*, a text often noted as overly tenebrous, and, in particular, with the spectral, unknowable figure of Kurtz.³⁰

Casement’s haunting return through a “BBC broadcast” is noteworthy for multiple reasons. *The Rings of Saturn* shares with Sebald’s other writing a preoccupation with “official or institutional storage sites for cultural memory”; as a documentary produced and televised by the BBC, this broadcast constitutes part of an official British archive of national memory (Cooke, “Cultural Memory on the Move,” 16). What is more, elements of this documentary draw on “rare archive footage” of Casement and the past, indicating that the archive is always-already haunted by history (Sebald, *Rings of Saturn*, 103). That Sebald’s narrator is “unable to grasp [the] meaning” of the BBC documentary is revealing of the uncomfortable liminality of Casement’s legacy in relation to national histories and speaks to the failings of the British state to adequately address the divisive and polemical nature of Casement’s legacy.

It is especially curious how the “constellations of cultural memory” in Sebald’s writing also galvanize personal memory, creating an effect of archival seepage (Cooke, “Cultural Memory on the Move,” 26). Sebald’s account of what happens after he falls asleep to the documentary about Casement bleeds this official form of cultural memory into his own failure to remember, before ventriloquizing Conrad’s archive in a performative move that blurs the border between history and memory. After falling asleep, Sebald “emerged hours later, from the depths of a dream” and could only “recall . . . that the programme had begun with an account of Casement’s meeting with the writer Joseph Conrad in the Congo.” This is followed by Sebald’s narrator quoting directly from Conrad’s archive: “I’ve seen him start off into an unspeakable wilderness,” Sebald writes, repeating sentences verbatim from Conrad’s 1903 letter to Cunninghame Graham, with no form of punctuation to differentiate between Sebald’s narration and Conrad’s words. The only indication, for those unfamiliar with this letter, that Sebald is appropriating the words of someone else is his admission in parenthesis, “thus the exact words of a quotation from Conrad, which has remained long in my head”; Sebald continues to quote from Conrad for a further six lines (*Rings of Saturn*, 104). The end of this quotation is not marked by anything other than the confessional change of subject, as Sebald notes “I had lost the rest of the [documentary] narrator’s account of the lives of Casement and Conrad,” indicating that Sebald, and not Conrad, is speaking once more as the first person narrative “I”. This confusing move between two first person narrators, Conrad and Sebald, suggests a peculiarly affective power of the cultural archive to repeat on individual memory; note how “the exact words” of Conrad have “remained long in [Sebald’s] head.” In so collapsing the distinction between archive and personal memory, Sebald highlights the ghostly imposition of history on the present.

This uncanny temporality of Sebald's prose, where "many ages are super-imposed here and coexist," echoes the metamodernism that characterizes Sebald's engagement with modernism broadly, and *Heart of Darkness* in particular (*Rings of Saturn*, 36). Both *Heart of Darkness* and *The Rings of Saturn* are, in a sense, texts of "an endless graveyard," haunted by masses of bodies (79). Sebald asserts that "our globe [is] nothing but prone bodies, row upon row," barely twenty pages after a double-page spread of a photograph depicting rows of bodies found upon the Liberation of Bergen-Belsen in 1945 (97). The Holocaust is a shadow that ghosts all of Sebald's work, as has been well documented but, in *The Rings of Saturn*, Sebald's engagement with *Heart of Darkness* and the Congo Free State establishes a complex intertextual haunting.³¹ As Sarah de Mul argues, "various people—from Hannah Arendt to Nadine Gordimer—have brought the atrocities that happened in the Congo Free State into connection with the Jewish Holocaust."³² Sebald's travelogue, with its limber imaginative traversing of the Congo, Belgium and Germany, and haunted as it is by the spectre of the Holocaust, forges similar associative connections for the reader. *The Rings of Saturn's* complex inter- and metatextual relationship to *Heart of Darkness* widens the remit of the travelogue's historical and geographical reach; the insistent haunting of this key text from European literary memory working to create spectral affinities amongst the ghosts of history. One such historical ghost that works to create spectral affinities is, of course, Casement; as a humanitarian and relentless agitator against colonial rule, Sebald's Casement acts almost as a riposte to the "mountain of death" his travelogue is haunted by. However, before Sebald turns his full attention to Casement, he indulges in his most direct and sustained engagement with Conrad and *Heart of Darkness*. In so doing Sebald teases out and emphasizes the full horror and violence at the heart of the imperial project, which serves to highlight Casement's compassionate and concerned commitment towards the people of the Congo.

Sebald returns to key passages in Conrad's text in order to foreground the terror and brutality that accompanied the European colonization of Africa. In one instance, Sebald imagines Conrad at the Headquarters of the *Société Anonyme Belge pour le Commerce du Haut-Congo* (The Belgian Limited Company for Trade on the Upper Congo) in Brussels, "sitting in a gloomy office beneath a map of Africa that covered the entire wall" (*Rings of Saturn*, 116). In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow is greeted by a "large shining map, marked with all the colours of a rainbow" upon his arrival at the Company offices in Brussels. The differences between these portrayals are marked and significant; in Conrad's rendering, this "shining map" seems to gleam with the prospects of adventure, with the many "colours" denoting imperial possessions and also providing a contrast to the focus on darkness and blackness that will subsequently permeate the novella. In his metamodernist dialogue with a pivotal moment in Conrad's text, Sebald dwells on the impression of a "gloomy office," turning the "map of Africa" into an oppressive, threatening image that "covered an entire wall." Here, Sebald's return to Conrad accentuates the menacing undercurrent of the scene and, in this instance, we can read Sebald's metatextual engagement with modernism as propelled forward by contemporary ethical and political concerns.

Sebald's dialogue with Conrad is ripe with searing anti-colonial commentary. Note, for example, how the two authors make reference to the childhood "passion" excited by these maps of Africa for young Conrad and Marlow, who would spend "hours" looking at them, "reciting the colourful names" (117) ([fig. 3](#)).³³ Both Sebald and Conrad record that in the years that passed between the childhoods of Conrad and Marlow, the Congo "had ceased to be a blank space of delightful mystery—a white patch for a boy to dream gloriously over" and "had become a place of darkness" (*Heart of Darkness*, 108). In *Heart of Darkness*, as various critics have discussed, this "darkness" is ambiguous: does Conrad use the term to

refer to an “Africa trapped in primordial barbarity” or to the “brutality and absurdity of imperialism”?³⁴ If Conrad’s novella is ultimately ambivalent on this matter, with its “anti-imperialist message . . . undercut both by its racism and by its impressionism,” Sebald addresses this ambiguity in no uncertain terms.³⁵ In Conrad’s text, Marlow praises the “vast amount of red” on the map “because one knows that some real work is done” in these British colonies, and thereby moderates, to some degree, an anti-imperialist critique (*Heart of Darkness*, 110). In contrast, Sebald explicitly condemns the imperial project for unleashing this terror on the people of the Congo as part of a comprehensive, European history of colonialism, which Rebecca Walkowitz has termed Sebald’s “panoramic view,” and his inclusion of Casement in his text—one of the foremost critics of British colonialism—works to reaffirm this broader project (*Cosmopolitan Style*, 164).³⁶ Amongst the liberal quoting of *Heart of Darkness*, Sebald notes, with accusatory clarity, “the fact is that in the entire history of colonialism, most of it not yet written, there is scarcely a darker chapter than the one termed *The Opening of the Congo*” (*Rings of Saturn*, 118).

[<insert fig. 3 about here>](#)

This borrowing of central phrases from *Heart of Darkness* foreshadows Sebald’s repetition of entire passages from Conrad’s novella. As Sebald traces Conrad’s journey into the Congo, his prose increasingly conflates Conrad with Marlow, recreating the indeterminate quality of the modernist narrator in a haunted metamodernist fashion. This engagement goes beyond the simple sampling or allusive practice of intertextuality and, instead, in a knowing gesture toward modernist aesthetics, actively mimics the complicated formal properties of modernist narrative style. Following Conrad deeper into the Congo, Sebald writes that Conrad had “already been for a day or so in this arena . . . when (as Marlow later describes in *Heart of Darkness*) he came upon a place some way off from the settlement where those who were

racked by illness, starvation and toil had withdrawn to die” (119–20). It is Sebald’s narrator who “speaks” here, even as the action unfolds around Conrad; this, of course, echoes a similar remove in Conrad’s novella, where the unnamed narrator makes Marlow the focus of this scene. In only a few lines, however, the focus of Sebald’s prose will change:

I began to distinguish the gleam of the eyes under the trees, says Marlow. Then, glancing down, I saw a face near my hand. The black bones reclined at full length with one shoulder against the tree, and slowly the eyelids rose and the sunken eyes looked up at me, enormous and vacant, a kind of blind, white flicker in the depths of the orbs, which died out slowly. (120)

As elsewhere in *The Rings of Saturn*, Sebald makes no distinction, through either punctuation or a change in narrative tone, when he begins to quote from an external source; apart from Sebald’s addition of “says Marlow,” at the end of the first sentence, these three sentences are repeated verbatim from *Heart of Darkness* (118). In including these additional two words, Sebald not only establishes a complicated, echoing memory trail through a diverse archive of cultural and literary texts but, in producing this moment of free indirect discourse, also animates the affective instability of the modernist voice itself. What is more, Sebald generates the same twice-removed narrative structure that organizes Conrad’s novella, as Sebald’s quasi-autobiographical narrator uses Marlow’s story to deploy Conrad’s biography.

Here, then, we see how Sebald pairs metamodernist aesthetics with a contemporary political and moral imperative in order to critique imperialism. Sebald’s metamodernist impressionism is affectively unsettling, like that found in Conrad’s novella. However, rather than use this impressionism to create the enduring effect of ambiguity, as Conrad does, Sebald uses it to generate a lingering affect of unease which he *then* couples with an aggressive attack on

colonial and imperial violence. *Heart of Darkness* is fundamentally ambivalent, with Patrick Brantlinger suggesting that “[a]mbiguity” may even be the “main form of ‘darkness’ in the story,” and that “Conrad overlays the political and moral content of this novella with symbolic and mythic patterns which divert attention away from Kurtz and the Congo to ‘misty halos’ and ‘moonshine’” (“Anti-Imperialism, Racism, or Impressionism,” 372). In *The Rings of Saturn*, rather than “divert attention away” from “political and moral content,” Sebald intersperses his (meta)modernist impressionism with moments that call attention to the horrors of imperialism with absolute clarity. It is noteworthy that Sebald chooses to reproduce one of the most traumatic and harrowing sequences from Conrad’s novella in this metatextual fashion. The Congolese natives that Marlow encounters here in Conrad’s text are suffering from exhaustion, disease, malnourishment and some had “withdrawn to die” in the “greenish gloom” of the shade (*Heart of Darkness*, 118). In his description of the scene, Sebald writes “[a]s if after a massacre they lay there in the greenish gloom”; “greenish gloom” is borrowed directly from Conrad, but Sebald’s crucial addition of “as if after a massacre” ascribes and suggests a degree of intentional violence—indeed, of systematic slaughter—that Conrad omits from his account (*Rings of Saturn*, 120). For those who might not notice his metatextual corrective, Sebald adds a note clarifying the full scale of the decimation: “In some parts of the Congo, the indigenous people were all but eradicated by forced labour, and those who were taken there from other parts of Africa or from overseas died in droves of dysentery, malaria, smallpox, beriberi, jaundice, starvation, and physical exhaustion.” In stark contrast to the ambivalent—if affecting—indeterminate “horror” of Conrad’s prose, Sebald exposes the devastating impact of European intervention in the Congo, stating that “[e]very year from 1890 to 1900, an estimated five hundred thousand of these nameless victims, nowhere mentioned in the annual reports, lost their lives” (119). In this haunted metamodernist prose, juxtaposing verbatim repetition of various phrases from

Conrad with these moments of searing redress, Sebald illustrates the lingering and repeating after a/effects of the colonial incursion.

It is after this prolonged engagement with *Heart of Darkness* that Sebald turns his focus to Casement, offering a condensed biography detailing his humanitarian activism and work as an Irish nationalist. Casement's engaged rage, empathy and committed activism is contrasted with the ambivalent malaise of Conrad. In his humanitarian undertakings in the Congo Free State and the Putumayo region of the Amazon, Casement drew international attention—and condemnation—to the atrocities that were being committed against indigenous peoples in the pursuit of rubber. After publishing his report on the Congo for the British Government in February 1904, Casement, Dr. Henry Grattan Guinness and Edmund Morel co-founded the Congo Reform Association (CRA) as part of their ongoing efforts to unveil and curtail the horrific activities taking place under Leopold II.³⁷ Numerous authors were quick to lend their support, artistic and financial, to these efforts. In 1905, Mark Twain published a pamphlet, *King Leopold's Soliloquy*, a deeply satirical piece written from the perspective of Leopold himself and in 1909, Arthur Conan Doyle followed this up with *The Crime of the Congo*. Tellingly, although Conrad wrote to Casement sending “the warmest wishes for [his] success” with the CRA, he would not himself officially support the initiative.³⁸ Casement's fury against injustice spilled into his personal correspondence. In 1904 he wrote to his friend and ally, Alice Stopford Green, that the crimes taking place in the Congo were a “tyranny beyond conception”; In 1911, lamenting the horrors he had witnessed in the Putumayo, Casement wrote to her again, of the “human beings held today in hopeless slavery, accompanied by the most inhuman cruelty” and raged bitterly against the “enormous extension of the most disgraceful slavery” that had “taken place in the last 25 years.”³⁹ In Casement, Sebald finds a figure and archive that embodies his own disgust and fury with

colonial cruelty: “Casement made it perfectly clear that hundreds of thousands of slave labourers were being worked to death . . . and that mutilation, by severing of hands and feet, and execution by revolver, were among punitive means of maintaining discipline in the Congo” (*Rings of Saturn*, 127).

In *The Rings of Saturn*, Casement’s ghost brings these historical catastrophes into dialogue with each other and the numerous episodes in the blood-soaked history of modernity are brought together through Sebald’s distinctive “panoramic view.” Casement recognized that violence committed against indigenous communities took place in the pursuit of deeply intertwined colonialist and capitalist interests. It was his humanitarian efforts abroad that attuned him to the “Irish question” and the great injustices of British colonial rule in Ireland (129). In 1907, Casement wrote, “when up in those lonely Congo forests where I found Leopold—I also found myself, the incorrigible Irishman . . . I realised then that I was looking at this tragedy with the eyes of another race—of a people once hunted themselves.”⁴⁰ Upon retiring from the British Foreign Office in 1913, Casement became heavily involved in the relief operation in Connemara after a typhus outbreak, raising public awareness about the desperate poverty that blighted the people in the Western district of Ireland. In a piece written for the *Irish Independent* on the 20th May 1913, Casement drew attention to what he called “the stain of this enduring Putumayo” in Ireland. This analogy, as would be expected, shocked Irish and international readers; Mitchell asserts that Casement’s “use of ‘Putumayo,’ so plainly associated with the regime of slavery, extermination and ethnocide in the Amazon, at the forefront of the public imagination in 1913, was bound to cause heated reactions,” and Casement was subsequently challenged on this statement in the *Irish Times* (Mitchell, “‘An Irish Putamayo,’” 43). These analogies—which are not, of course, unproblematic—prove particularly appealing for Sebald, who draws attention to Casement’s efforts “espous[ing] the

cause of ‘the white Indians of Ireland’” (*Rings of Saturn*, 129). Within Sebald’s textual tapestry, Casement becomes an especially enabling figure in his ability to gesture towards the interconnected, transnational nature of colonial and capitalist violence. Through Casement’s ghost, we can read not only the horrors of the Congo but the enduring anxieties about British-Irish relations that Sebald tentatively engages in an anecdote in Chapter VIII, “An Irish Memory,” about the Anglo-Irish Ashbury family.

Casement’s Metamodernist Afterlives

In *The Rings of Saturn*, Casement becomes a kind of palimpsest, drawing connections among various lingering phantoms of European imperialism: anti-colonial Irish nationalism, British and Belgian colonialism and, through Sebald’s transcultural, textual memories of an “endless graveyard,” the Holocaust. In his metatextual engagement with *Heart of Darkness*, which seeks to populate and animate the silences within Conrad’s novella, Sebald invokes Casement as a crucial component. It is unclear whether Sebald knew of the weight that Casement may have carried for Conrad as he wrote *Heart of Darkness* but the archival evidence that links Casement back to Conrad’s text is cogent, even if largely circumstantial. However, much of the evidence proffered by Conrad actually constitutes a retrospective rewriting of his own archive. This seems crucial: it speaks not only to Casement’s shifting, amorphous afterlife, but also to Conrad’s imperial amnesia, his inability to adequately process the realities of the horror he witnessed. Conrad’s admission to Casement in a letter from 1903 that he had “never heard of the alleged custom of cutting off hands amongst the [Congolese] natives; and I am convinced that no such custom ever existed,” when photographic evidence documents the practice, might be just such an example of his conscious or unconscious refusal to acknowledge the full scale of European violence in the colonies.⁴¹ Indeed, pursuing Conrad’s

evolving memories of Casement through his archive suggests how central Casement was to Conrad's "memories of that time" in the Congo.

Tracing the various patterns of engagement between Sebald and Conrad has implications that resonate beyond a simple exploration of the role that Casement plays in both texts. This dialogue also animates questions about texts as bodies of memory; the intertextuality of metamodernism can be read as a haunted form of cultural memory but, crucially, *The Rings of Saturn* also highlights the memory work of the archive—both in general and specifically modernist. For, as Kevin Brazil has highlighted, modernism is now an "institutionalized archive, a series of critical and intellectual formations, and a set of styles and techniques," and one that Sebald consciously echoes in his formal aesthetics, critical engagements and thematic reach.⁴² But while *The Rings of Saturn* unambiguously draws from the literary archive of modernism, it is engaged with the archive of European imperialism more widely, too, and its intertextual borrowing often facilitates a metatextual critique of imperial and colonial endeavours. The ghost of Roger Casement is central to this project of critiquing the violence of European modernity. As an encrypted spectre that skulks through *Heart of Darkness*, he worries at the fabric of Conrad's novella with its alternate horror and ambivalence towards the European imperial project. In returning to Casement, Sebald calls attention to the "continuing oppression, exploitation, enslavement and destruction, across the borders of social class and race, of those who were furthest from the centres of power" (*Rings of Saturn*, 134).

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¹ John Powell, "Conrad and Casement Hut Mates in Africa," *New York Evening Post*, May 11, 1923, 16.

² I am grateful to Richard Kirkland's essay, "Rhetoric and (Mis) recognitions: Reading Casement," for alerting me to this article. See Kirkland, "Rhetoric and (Mis) recognitions: Reading Casement" *Irish Studies Review* 7, no. 2 (1999): 163–72.

³ See, for example, Kirkland, "Rhetoric and (Mis)recognitions"; Anthony Bradley, "Hearts of Darkness: Conrad, Casement, and the Congo," *ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 34, no. 2–3 (2003): 197–214; Colin Bower, "Against Moral Seriousness as a Literary Value: Casement, Conrad, and Leavis," *Cambridge Quarterly* 44, no. 1 (2015): 62–68; Hunt Hawkins, "Joseph Conrad, Roger Casement, and the Congo Reform Movement," *Journal of Modern Literature* 9, no. 1 (1981–1982): 65–80; Rebecca L. Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 153–70; and Helen Finch, *Sebald's Bachelors: Queer Resistance and the Unconforming Life* (Oxford: Legenda, 2013).

⁴ J. J. Long, *W.G. Sebald: Image, Archive, Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 11.

⁵ Simon Cooke, "Cultural Memory on the Move in Contemporary Travel Writing: W. G. Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn*," in *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 15–30, 22.

⁶ Martin Swales, "Theoretical Reflections of the Work of W.G. Sebald," in *W. G. Sebald: A Critical Companion*, ed. J. J. Long and Anne Whitehead (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 23–30, 23.

⁷ W. B. Yeats, *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (London: Macmillan, 1971), 352–53. For more on Casement and Yeats, see Michael Steinman, *Yeats's Heroic Figures: Wilde, Parnell, Swift, Casement* (London: Macmillan, 1983); and Lucy McDiarmid, *The Irish Art of Controversy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

⁸ Kathryn Conrad, "Queer Treasons: Homosexuality and Irish National Identity," *Cultural Studies* 15, no. 1 (2001): 124–37, 131. Various authors and critics have invoked the spectral to discuss Casement. See, for example, Paul Muldoon's poem, "A Clear Signal," *New York Times*, March 17, 1992, A25; W. J. McCormack's academic study, *Roger Casement in Death: Or, Haunting the Irish Free State* (Dublin: UCD Press, 2002); Michael Carson's novel, *The Knight of the Flaming Heart* (London: Doubleday, 1995); John Murray, Kim Bartley, and Alan Gilsenan's documentary, *The Ghost of Roger Casement*, television program, RTÉ, 2002; David Rudkin's radio play, *Cries from Casement as his bones are brought to Dublin*, (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1974); and Fintan O'Toole's dramatic monologue, "The Fever: Part II" (unpublished; I am grateful to O'Toole for providing a digital copy).

⁹ María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren, "Spectral Subjectivities: Gender, Sexuality, Race / Introduction," in *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*, ed. María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 309–16, 310; and Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters:*

Haunting and the Sociological Imagination (Mineapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), xvi.

¹⁰ For more on Casement's humanitarian work, see Angus Mitchell, "'An Irish Putumayo': Roger Casement's humanitarian relief campaign among the Connemara Islanders, 1913–14," *Irish Economic and Social History* 31, no. 1 (2004): 41–60; and Angus Mitchell, *Sir Roger Casement's Heart of Darkness: the 1911 documents* (Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 1999); Séamas Ó Siocháin and Michael O'Sullivan, ed., *The Eyes of Another Race: Roger Casement's Congo Report and 1903 Diary* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2003); and Patrick Mullen, "Roger Casement's Global English: From Human Rights to the Homoerotic," *Public Culture* 15, no. 3 (2003): 559–78.

¹¹ María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Preen, "Introduction: Conceptualizing Spectralities," in *The Spectralities Reader*, 1–28, 12.

¹² W. G. Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn* (London: Vintage, 1998), 125.

¹³ David James, and Urmila Seshagiri, "Metamodernism: Narratives of Continuity and Revolution," *PMLA* 129, no. 1 (2014): 87–100, 89.

¹⁴ Gabrielle McIntire, "The Women Do Not Travel: Gender, Difference, and Incommensurability in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*," *Modern Fiction Studies* 48, no. 2 (2002): 257–84, 257, 281.

¹⁵ Joseph Conrad, *Joseph Conrad's Letters to R. B. Cunninghame Graham*, ed. C. T. Watts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 149.

¹⁶ Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness & Selections from The Congo Diary* (New York: Modern Library, 1999), 100.

¹⁷ Also known as the International African Association, the International Association for the Exploration and Civilization of the Africa or the International Association for the Exploration and Civilization of the Congo.

Also, see Brian Inglis, *Roger Casement* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1973), 21–32; and Séamas Ó Síocháin, *Roger Casement: Imperialist, Rebel, Revolutionary* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2008), 21–43.

¹⁸ Joseph Conrad to John Quinn, 24 May 1916, MS 17,601/2/2, Joseph McGarrity Papers, 1789–1971, National Library of Ireland.

¹⁹ For more on this see Lesley Wylie, “Rare models: Roger Casement, the Amazon, and the ethnographic picturesque,” *Irish Studies Review* 18, no. 3 (2010): 315–30; and Robert Burroughs “Imperial Eyes or ‘The Eyes of Another Race’? Roger Casement’s Travels in West Africa,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 37, no. 3 (2009): 383–97.

²⁰ Helen Groth and Paul Sheehan, “Introduction: Timeliness and Untimeliness,” *Textual Practice* 26, no. 4 (2012): 571–85, 579.

²¹ Chinua Achebe highlighted that the depiction of Africa as a country of unknowable mystery is underpinned by European racism: “*Heart of Darkness* projects the image of Africa as “the other world,” the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where man’s vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality”. For more on this, see Chinua Achebe, “An Image of Africa,” *Research in African Literatures* 9, no. 1 (1978): 1–15, 3.

²² See Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (1993, rpt., New York: Routledge, 1994), especially chapter 5.

²³ For more on Casement's report from the Congo Free State and the reaction to it, see Ó Síocháin and O'Sullivan, ed., *The Eyes of Another Race*; and Pierre-Luc Plasman and Catherine Thewissen, "The Three Lives of the Casement Report: Its Impact on Official Reactions and Popular Opinion in Belgium," *Breac: A Digital Journal of Irish Studies* (2016), <https://breac.nd.edu/articles/the-three-lives-of-the-casement-report-its-impact-on-official-reactions-and-popular-opinion-in-belgium/>. For more on his report from the Putumayo region and the reaction to it, see Jordan Goodman, *The Devil and Mr. Casement: One Man's Battle for Human Rights in South America's Heart of Darkness* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2009).

²⁴ William Maloney, "Letter to John Quinn," November 10, 1923, Maloney Collection of Irish historical papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library.

²⁵ Angus Mitchell, "Beneath the Hieroglyph: Recontextualising the Black Diaries of Roger Casement," *Irish Migration Studies in Latin America* 7, no. 2 (2009): 253–65, 256.

²⁶ I owe this phrase to Simon Cooke, who uses it in his article, "Cultural Memory on the Move in Contemporary Travel Writing: W. G. Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn*."

²⁷ Jahan Ramazani, "Modernist Bricolage, Postcolonial Hybridity," *Modernism/modernity*, 13, no. 3 (2006): 445–63, 446.

²⁸ See Simon Gikandi, "Preface: Modernism in the World," *Modernism/modernity* 13, no. 3 (2006): 419–24; and Laura Doyle, "Notes Toward a Dialectical Method: Modernities, Modernisms, and the Crossings of Empire," *Literature Compass* 7, no. 3 (2010): 195–213.

²⁹ Jesse Matz, *Lasting Impressions: The Legacies of Impressionism in Contemporary Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 154. Matz's analysis of Sebald's "impressionist historicism" is compelling and convincing (229–53).

³⁰ The novella has been criticized for being "excessively atmospheric, as well as structurally and adjectivally difficult, shadowy, and undecidable" (McIntire, "The Women Do Not Travel," 281).

³¹ The Holocaust is of central importance across Sebald criticism, but for particularly significant commentary, see Dora Osborne, "Memory, Witness and the (Holocaust) Museum in H. G. Adler and W. G. Sebald," in *Witnessing, Memory, Poetics: H. G. Adler and W. G. Sebald*, ed. Helen Finch and Lynn Wolff (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2014), 159–79; Dora Osborne, *Traces of Trauma in W. G. Sebald and Christoph Ransmayr* (Oxford: Legenda, 2013); Stefan Gunther, "The Holocaust as the Still Point of the World in W. G. Sebald's *The Emigrants*," in *W. G. Sebald: History, Memory, Trauma*, ed. Scott Denham and Mark McCulloh (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 279–90; and Long, *W. G. Sebald: Image, Archive, Modernity*.

³² Sarah De Mul, "The Holocaust as a Paradigm for the Congo Atrocities: Adam Hochschild's *King Leopold's Ghost*," *Criticism* 53, no. 4 (2011): 587–606, 588. It should be noted, however, that De Mul argues the contemporary currency with which the "Holocaust paradigm" operates in contemporary debates is due to the publication of Hochschild's *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* in 1998.

³³ For the original section in Conrad, see *Heart of Darkness*, 108.

³⁴ Achebe, "An Image of Africa," 13; and Cedric Watts, "'A Bloody Racist': About Achebe's View of Conrad," *Yearbook of English Studies* 13 (1983): 196–209, 204.

³⁵ Patrick Brantlinger, "'Heart of Darkness': Anti-Imperialism, Racism, or Impressionism?" *Criticism* 27, no. 4 (1985): 363–85, 383.

³⁶ Walkowitz also offers an insightful, if brief, analysis of Casement's role in Sebald's text (*Cosmopolitan Style*, 167–69).

³⁷ For more on this, see Hawkins, "Joseph Conrad, Roger Casement, and the Congo Reform Movement," 65–80.

³⁸ Joseph Conrad to Roger Casement, 21 December 1903, MS 13 073 / 27. II, Roger Casement Papers, National Library of Ireland.

³⁹ Roger Casement, "Letter to Alice Stopford Green," April 24, 1904, Maloney collection of Irish historical papers, New York Public Library; and Roger Casement, "Letter to Alice Stopford Green," May 24, 1911, Maloney collection of Irish historical papers, New York Public Library.

⁴⁰ Roger Casement to Alice Stopford Green, 20 April 1903, MS 10,464, Alice Stopford Green Papers, National Library of Ireland.

⁴¹ Joseph Conrad to Roger Casement, 17 December 1903, MS 13 073 / 27. II, Roger Casement Papers, National Library of Ireland.

⁴² Kevin Brazil, "Histories of the Future: The Institute of Contemporary Arts and the Reconstruction of Modernism in Post-War Britain," *Modernism/modernity* 23, no. 1 (2016): 193–217, 194.