**Anthony Weir on Dream of the Celt by Mario Vargas Llosa**

**Amazon review**

[*1.0 out of 5 stars*](https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/customer-reviews/R1QQGVE3VM46B1/ref%3Dcm_cr_srp_d_rvw_ttl?ie=UTF8&ASIN=0571275710) [Embarrassing reading.](https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/customer-reviews/R1QQGVE3VM46B1/ref%3Dcm_cr_srp_d_rvw_ttl?ie=UTF8&ASIN=0571275710)

10 August 2012

[Format: Hardcover](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Dream-Celt-Mario-Vargas-Llosa/product-reviews/0571275710/ref%3Dcm_cr_srp_d_rvw_fmt?ie=UTF8&formatType=current_format)

Vargas Llosa is an extremely uneven writer. The War of the End of the World was a marvellous book which took my breath away and had me sobbing uncontrollably.

This book, however, is almost unreadable - especially for an Irishman. Llosa has not done his research, in fact doesn’t even seem to have looked at a map of Ireland. If he had, he would have realised that County Antrim is not "in the heart of Ulster", but a coastal county closer to Scotland than to most of Ireland.

His Casement is a stiffly cardboard character, completely unconvincing. The translation is not only pedestrian, but aimed at a solely American audience. The idea of a sheriff in Pentonville Gaol in 1916, and of an "attorney" - bizarrely given the French title of Maître - rather than a solicitor visiting Casement in his cell is simply ludicrous. The whole Irish/English element in this book languishes in ignorance not just of the subtleties, but of the basics.

The Congo and Putumayo sections are far better treated in the various biographies of Casement. Fifty years ago I read the first British edition of "The Black Diaries" which printed Casement's own jottings as well as a lucid commentary upon the ghastly things that the Belgians were perpetrating in what amounted to King Leopold II's private and vast heart-of-darkness concentration-camp, and that a gangster-business founded on forced labour was doing in the Peruvian Amazon.

Nobel prize-winner Vargas Llosa's lengthy, ill-considered, ineptly-translated, book adds nothing to our understanding of Casement-the-flawed-hero, or of the people who crossed his path.

15 people found this helpful

3 Comments

[AnthonyWeir](https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/profile/amzn1.account.AGYBZMXOFNVDQRMFTF6AJGAUYVPA/ref%3Dcm_cr_getc_d_pdp?ie=UTF8) 4 years ago In reply to [an earlier post](https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/customer-reviews/R1QQGVE3VM46B1?ref=pf_vv_at_pdctrvw_srp)

Yes it's a fiction - but definitely not a good fiction. 'Literary fiction' should enlighten and inform the reader, not provide mere meretricious entertainment, especially when it is by a very famous writer who simply can't be bothered to 'do his homework' and who simply doesn't understand Casement or 'where he was coming from'.

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[RichardP](https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/profile/amzn1.account.AENHVKBSF25XGQCBFXF53NQWQ6MQ/ref%3Dcm_cr_getc_d_pdp?ie=UTF8) 4 years ago In reply to [an earlier post](https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/customer-reviews/R1QQGVE3VM46B1?ref=pf_vv_at_pdctrvw_srp)

It's the curse of the Amazon review, not reviewing the book but the supposed point of view of the writer. As you say, it's a fiction.

Leave a reply

[HMC](https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/profile/amzn1.account.AFUFAGXKHDFVJZG7CCMPECON4QMQ/ref%3Dcm_cr_getc_d_pdp?ie=UTF8) 6 years ago

You do realise it's a fiction, and the 'heart of Ulster' bit is figurative, right?