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[Book Review]

Mario Vargas Llosa. *The Dream of the Celt*. trans. Edith Grossman (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012. $27.00)

Essay:

The Ghost of Roger Casement Who Beat for a While on Mario Vargas Llosa's Door

John Cussen

Abstract: A book review.

Key words: Mario Vargas Llosa, Yeats, Roger Casement, Catholic Ireland

Author: John Cussen is professor at the Department of English, Edinboro University, 219 Meadville Street, Pennsylvania, 16444, USA.
E-mail: jcussen@edinboro.edu

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우리말 요약: 서평

주제어: 마리오 바르가스 로사, 예이츠, 로저 케이스먼트, 카톨릭계 아일랜드인

저자: 존 커슨은 미국 에딘보로 대학교 영문학과 교수이다.

But this is not the old sea / Nor this the old seashore.
…
The ghost of Roger Casement / Is beating on the door.
William Butler Yeats

In 1936, when William Butler Yeats rose up in what he felt was condign dudgeon to inscribe the pair of his poems that bear Roger Casement's name in their titles, he was compelled to do so by his reading of an argument against the authenticity of the notorious "Black Diaries" attributed to Casement, an internationally renowned indigenous peoples' advocate and Irish patriot executed for treason by the British some two decades before. The diaries, descriptive of the ex-British Foreign Officer's (by birth an Irishman) alleged homosexual behaviors with young men and boys in Africa and South America during the two decades of his official sojourns on those continents, were scapegrace forgeries, said the argument, the handiwork of a wanton British propaganda machine employed to its maximum capacity in 1916 in turning public sentiment against Casement, in making easy his condemnation, in rendering palatable in the international eye his hanging, and in making impossible forever after his memory's lionizing in a querulously, puritanically Catholic Ireland. Also, Yeats wrote his poems as a contribution to the cause of Casement's remains' repatriation to Ireland in the twentieth anniversary year of their withholding by the British, of their ignominious scatological probing—confirmatory, said the probers, of Casement's homosexuality—and of their unmarked disposal in a cemetery set aside for the British penal system's deceased felons. Lastly, Yeats wrote because now, as the second of his Casement poems says, the sea that separated Ireland from England was no longer "the old sea," no longer the exclusive, dominated "friend" of "John Bull."[1] The Irish, in other words, were no longer a subject people. Ireland

was now an independent nation, while its former master Britain had become a fading, frayed empire. Indeed, Britain had been forced on many levels in the past two decades, to eat humble Irish pie, but in this one matter, the demanded return of Casement's remains to Irish ground, it had held out invincibly resistant to the urgings of teleological time and geopolitics. "The ghost of Roger Casement," said an indignant Yeats to the British in the second of his poems, "is beating at [your] door."[2)]

To be sure, Yeats' Casement verses were a brave, counter-cultural statement in 1936, and he was chastised by friends and enemies alike for them. Their concern, however, was not that the great ageing poet had overstepped the statesman-like seemliness of his Nobel laureateship and former Irish Senate seat in rebuking a neighbor, creditor nation, but, instead, in the likelihood that the diaries were not forgeries. In other words, they feared that Casement was the homosexual that Britain said he was, and, if that was the case, Ireland would not want his bones returned, nor presumably would Yeats.[3)]

Whether or not the poet would have written so eloquently on the fallen Irish patriot's behalf had he known for sure that Casement was a homosexual, as we now fairly conclusively understand he was,[4)] we will never definitively know, for, as I say, at the time Yeats wrote the poems and for the rest of his life whenever he spoke positively of Casement, he would have as his cover the understanding that Casement's notoriety for homosexuality was an ugly British slander. So, too, Ireland had that cover. In 1965, when, at last the Britain of Harold Wilson's government did finally release Casement's body for repatriation, the Irish received their tragic hero's remains and played out the rituals of his Catholic burial under the suspect cover of the diaries' spuriousness, for though, as Yeats had prophesied, the geopolitical sea separating England from Ireland had changed much in the forty years between Casement's death and his honored interment, not much had changed in the

seas of sexual politics that surrounded Ireland, indeed, in the seas of sexual politics that from time immemorial have surrounded us all.

Of course, it goes without saying that those seas have very much changed today, and, for that reason, no author who writes in these days either to honor or to simply understand Casement very much risks ignominy or censure. The world that we currently live in is ok with Casement's homosexuality; indeed, it rather likes him for it, and is hopeful with each new publication that comes out about him,[5] to find confirmed therein its sense that he was of uncommonly good stuff made. This sea change in sexual politics, I urge here, is the first reality we need to keep in mind as we take in hand *The Dream of the Celt,* Mario Vargas Llosa's recently-published novelized life of Casement, and as we ask ourselves the first question that comes to mind with regard to the book, namely, why the Peruvian Nobel laureate has taken as the subject of his sixteenth book of fiction a turn-of-the-century Irish patriot and indigenous people's advocate little remembered today outside of Ireland? One of the answers to this question, of course, is that he does so because the world will like him for it, like him, that is, for celebrating the heroic actions of a gay man who lost his credit with the world—and, indirectly at least, lost his life, too—because he was gay. What's more, Vargas Llosa has long had need of this specific category of liking in the learned, literate community, because, for as long as anyone can remember, or at least since the release of *The Real Life of Alejandro Mayta* in 1985, a reputation for anti-gay *machismo* has dogged him among that esteemed, progressive group of readers.[6] Their thumping of his record, heard like Roger Casement's beating on his door, has roused him to write. To be sure, this is neither the only nor the most honorable of the distinguished Peruvian's likely motives in choosing to write about Casement; however, it is the most obvious of them, and, as it turns out, it is in the motive whose deliberate frustration yields Vargas Llosa's most striking, if

costly, achievement in the novel, namely, his choice to scorn the politics of the moment and to write counter-culturally.

In actual fact, four, it seems to me, are the Peruvian's likely motives for attempting a novelized biography of an Irish patriot and an indigenous people's advocate whose life would at first glance seem little connected to the writer's typical fields of inquiry. First, Vargas Llosa takes an interest in Casement because the natives rescued by the Irishman's second landmark investigation of racist, imperial and neocolonial capitalism's abuse of indigenous peoples in the Southern Hemisphere were the Putumayo Indians of Vargas Llosa's own Peru. To study Casement, then, is for him to reflect on an important moment in his own country's fraught history. Second, and related to this first motive, those twenty-five years of Casement's life which were spent in zones where a rapacious foreign capital met indigenous vulnerability—the African Congo under Leopold II's notorious sovereignty and the Putumayo region of Amazonian Peru in the era of its enslavement by the British-capitalized Peruvian Amazon Company—would interest Vargas Llosa as the author of several prior fictions centered on the topic of civilization's penchant for exploitation and barbarism at its frontiers: *The Green House* (1966), *The Storyteller* (1987), and *Death in the Andes* (1993), among them. Third, he is drawn into the *central-player, historo-fictive biography*[7] genre by the daunting challenges imposed by the genre itself. Ironically, rather than deter him, these difficulties almost assuredly attract the ever ambitious Vargas Llosa, who has repeatedly in his critical works named daring, ego and transgression as chief among any significant writer's imaginative dispositions.[8] As one of his scholarly explicators has said, for Vargas Llosa "every act of creation . . . is an act of deicide."[9] Or, as another has characterized his thought in this regard: "In and through his art, Vargas Llosa has argued, . . . the writer competes with God: He aims at rectifying his creation."[10] Thus, if in writing a *central-player, historo-fictive biography*, Vargas Llosa sets

himself up as an author required to both kill god and become god, he is pleased.

And, lastly, as I've already said, Vargas Llosa is likely drawn to Casement by the latter's reputed homosexuality, not because he shares that sexual predisposition, but because it serves him aesthetically and politically. Long an advocate of "Georges Bataille's belief that good literature expresses transgression purely and simply,"[11] Vargas Llosa is interested, we can be sure, in the superabundance of earthly pleasure that the Irishman presumably achieved because he lived the majority of his adult life at the edges of Christian, imperial civilization, where his homosexual desires might be prodigiously pursued with little fear of punitive consequences. In *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter* and in *The Notebooks of Don Rigoberto*, Vargas Llosa developed this theme in metropolitan settings with heterosexual male and bisexual female protagonists, now, in the imagined life of a real-world public figure whose posthumously discovered diaries depict copious homosexual acts at the colonized world's frontier, he has the chance to develop it with a gay male protagonist. This thematic line of inquiry also serves Vargas Llosa's political ends, for by writing admiringly of Casement he affords himself the opportunity of coming out from under the charge of anti-gay *machismo* that has long dogged him. Oddly enough, it is this fourth of his likely agendas that causes him trouble in *The Dream of the Celt*'s execution, for rather than seizing the opportunity to render directly the presumably untroubled intimacies of Casement's homosexual conscience, Vargas Llosa chooses throughout his novel to render obscurely that critical aspect of his subject's life. In other words, though Casement's sexuality is at the heart of all his problems at his life's tragic close, and though he, the protagonist, has ample opportunity in Vargas Llosa's account of his last three imprisoned months to step forward in front of his God, the public, and his conscience to own or disown his

sexuality, he never takes that dramatic step. Several of the book's reviewers have already reported this fact as a moral judgment against the novel and against its author, whose sexual ethics are thereby proven to be less liberal than these critics would like.[12] In this essay, I report the novel's determined ambiguity about Casement's most basic moral sense contrarily. I report it as a striking, counter-intuitive and brave choice made by an author who, despite his motives going into the project, chooses in its composition not to write a novel subservient to any specific political cause, not even a cause whose rightness is religion among his most learned readers.

The book has other virtues too. Into each of the three other areas of reflection offered to him by the Casement file, as well as that of the human rights pioneer's likely moral estimate of his own sexuality, Vargas Llosa dives with the insight of a first-rate novelist and the geopolitical, historical grasp of a neocolonized, brokered-state expatriate who is also a cosmopolitan.

A Difficult Genre

To see the Peruvian's considerable achievement here, we might best begin by considering how few are the top-tier novels that take as their subjects the biographies of significant historic personages. In this category, Graves' *I, Claudius*, Yourcenar's *Memoirs of Hadrian,* Broch's *Death of Virgil* and Roa Bastos's *I, the Supreme* (about the mid-19th century Paraguayan dictator José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia) clearly make weight. In many regards, so, too, do Styron's *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, García Márquez's *The General in His Labyrinth*, Eloy Martínez's *The Perón Novel*, Solzhenitsyn's *Lenin in Zurich*, and both of Banville's scientist novels, *Kepler* and *Doctor Copernicus*. Again, though with asterisks, Gore Vidal's principal works in bio-fiction, *Burr*, *Lincoln*, and *Julian*; George Garrett's *Death of the Fox* (about Sir

Walter Raleigh), and Joyce Carol Oates' *Blonde* (about Marilyn Monroe) all qualify as successes in the genre, for, though none takes as its sole or primary narrative consciousness its cover's titular historic personage (the fact conceded by the asterisk), each relentlessly pursues and succeeds in illuminating its marquee character's life and internal profile. Further, each asks to be called a *novel*, unlike, for example, Mailer's *Executioner's Song* and Capote's *In Cold Blood*, which ask *not* to be called *novels* (and which, important here too, are not about major historic personages). Thus, for these three reasons—because they are biographies of important figures, are novels, and are estimable as both works of fiction and of biography—, we should not back off from calling them (the Vidal, Garrett, and Oates books), as well as the previously identified texts, exemplary *central-player, historo-fictive biographies*, a thing that is, as I say, in the whole historic stretch of prose narrative, a rare commodity.

To be sure, fictions about history's satellite actors abound, and good ones: recently, Philippa Gregory's *The Other Boleyn Girl* (about Mary Boleyn, sister to Anne), Hilary Mantel's *Wolf Hall* (about Thomas Cromwell, chief minister of Henry VIII and foil to Thomas More), and Dava Sobel's *Galileo's Daughter* (about Virginia, daughter of the astronomer). Also, we read with some regularity roman a clefs that veil their focus on real personages of central historic and cultural interest by changing, at the very least, the historic figures' names; Somerset Maugham's *The Moon and the Sixpence* (about Gauguin), E.L. Doctorow's *The Book of Daniel* (about Ethel and Julius Rosenberg), and Miguel Ángel Asturias's *El Señor Presidente* (about Guatemalan dictator Manuel Estrada Cabrera) come to mind. Again, many are the novels in which major historic personages appear briefly or appear in the distance. Into *Ragtime*, for example, E. L. Doctorow finds cause to introduce Harry Houdini, J.P. Morgan, Evelyn Nesbit, and Booker T. Washington. Closer to the rare thing in question, the exemplary

central-player, historo-fictive biography, are Scott's *Ivanhoe*, Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, Doctorow's *The March: A Novel*, and Vargas Llosa's own *The Feast of the Goat*, which, respectively, dwell for more than a scene with Prince John and his brother Richard I, with Bonaparte, Sherman and Trujillo. However, by a large margin, none of those historically significant persons supply those novels' nerve centers; their lives are not the novels' stories, and, consequently, those novels also are not the super-achieved big-person bio-fictions that presumably *The Dream of the Celt* aspires to be.

To continue: there is not on our fiction shelves anything named after a monarch that meets the measure of Shakespeare's *Richard II* or *III*, nor of either of *Henry IV*'s two parts, nor of Marlowe's *Edward II*. Again, to continue the stage-page comparison, we do not have in our libraries a novel about a medieval saint or soldier to match Shaw's *Saint Joan*, or Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, or Anouilh's *Becket*. Nor do we have a novelized biography of a scientist to match Brecht's *Galileo*, though, as I've already noted, *Kepler* and *Doctor Copernicus* by Irishman Banville are darn good. Nor, lastly, even after we have read and re-read the several worthy novels above named whose subject is a state leader of military origins, will we feel inclined to say we now have a military-political leader's fictionalized life as durable as Schiller's *Wallenstein* trilogy or either of Shakespeare's ancient histories, *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*.

For sure, the fact that we haven't gotten from writers of undisputed talent and reputation more novelized biographies of prominent historic personages is rooted in serious writers' reluctance to tamper with history. Their role is to illuminate and interpret history, not to displace it with stories of their own. Less clear are the reasons why playwrights have historically felt greater freedom in assigning leading roles in their creative works to history's central players than have fiction writers. In any event, the prose writers' greater reluctance to take on this genre is a necessary context in understanding and

evaluating the engaging and instructive novelized life of Roger Casement offered by Vargas Llosa. And, lastly, before going into *The Dream of the Celt* itself, we should preliminarily recall that Vargas Llosa has once before, rather idiosyncratically, gone into this little-crowded genre precinct. In alternating chapters, his prior effort, *The Way to Paradise* of 2003, novelized the lives of the 19th-century workers' rights advocate and proto-feminist Flora Tristan and of her grandson, painter Paul Gauguin. For sure, then, going into *The Dream of the Celt* he knew the genre's challenges and undertook them regardless, also bravely.

A Protagonist of Scope and Moment

Also, for sure, his novel's biographical subject in *The Dream of the Celt*, Roger Casement, lived a life commensurate with our *central-player, historo-fictive biography*'s requirements for a subject of historic scope and moment. In 1904, at age forty, a heretofore obscure British consul stationed for almost two decades in Africa, Casement authored the document that officially exposed the atrocities rife in King Leopold II's falsely named Congo Free State, the document that so inflamed an international conscience (already somewhat aware of the abuse of indigenous peoples on the colonized planet) that Leopold was forced to shamefacedly relinquish his personal control of the territories as a separate crown property and to hand them off as a colony to the Belgian state (which promised, if it did not always deliver, a more humane administration of its African subjects' lives and possessions therein). Then, seven years later, Casement repeated his heroic performance, when on St. Patrick's Day, 1911, working now as a British Foreign Office investigator in South America, he reported that the very same horrors that had once been the nightmare of Leopold's Congo were now the

regular, daily circumstances of Peru's Putumayo region. Two year later, the Peruvian Amazon Company, the registered entity on London Stock Exchange that had institutionalized the villainy, was forced into closure by a London magistrate.

The timing of Casement's investigations was significant both then and now. The first hell on earth that he documented, the Congo's, had immediately mattered to the British because in its recent Boer War on the African continent's south end it had embarrassed itself by showing to the world the unlimited ruthlessness of its imperial hand, and now, as a result, it had need, both psychic and political, to shout down a rival empire's comparable-and-worse African malefactions. Likewise, his Peruvian denunciations also answered to a British need for immediate moral performance. As I've already mentioned, the entity that was chiefly responsible for torturing and mutilating the Amazonian Indians as a means of forcing them to extract, without meaningful recompense, rubber from their jungle environs was the Peruvian Amazon Company, a registered entity on the London Stock Exchange (albeit foreign-sounding in name and directed still by its Peruvian founder, the rubber baron Julio César Arana). In short, Casement's pair of reports arrived in London at a turn-of-the-century moment when Britain had already begun to take startled, shamed stock of the iniquity, exploitation, and bullying that had forever been its and other European powers' imperial frontiers' chief feature, when, in other words, it had already begun to ask itself questions about the validity of its ethic of the *white man's burden*. Just one mark of this growing sensitivity was the wave of scoffing responses to Kipling's famous 1899 poem of that title, a wave whose noise was generated and heard in both England and America (then publicly debating the ethics of retaining by military force its own imperial hold on the distant, brown-skinned Philippine peoples recently taken charge of by way of the Spanish-American War). Indeed, circulating for several years in England,

Europe and America prior to Casement's first report had been missionaries' and other horrified travelers' claims of unspeakable, man-made misery in the colonies in general and in Africa in particular. However, these rumors, though sustained by Edmond Morel and other journalists interested in the cause of indigenous peoples' rights, needed the backing of credible, on-site documentation if they were to have any substantial impact, if, that is, they were going to force imperial states to reform themselves and to reform one another. And that's what Casement delivered in his 1904 report, a thorough and unflinching indictment of the whole, cruel imperial-commercial structure from its wellsprings in the rapacious policies of the monarch to its hellacious endpoint in the dazed, suffering, extinction-threatened villages of Africa. The document bore one fruit just after its publication when the Congo Reform Association, which Casement himself helped launch, and other like-minded, civic organizations based in public conscience came into being. However, its real effects were yielded in 1907 and 1908 when at least some of the colonial administrators responsible for the atrocities were prosecuted in European courts for their hideous behaviors in Africa and when, lastly, a reluctant Leopold relinquished his absolute control of the Congo to the Belgium Parliament. These of the Report's effects were of landmark, historic consequence for by way of them a healthful precedent in international imperial conduct had been established, one wherein thrones and national executives could no longer anticipate only impunity and profit as the consequences of their and their underlings' distant misdeeds. Indeed, the energies of this precedent contributed some four years later to the British eagerness to call a halt to the evils of the London-capitalized Peruvian rubber operations, and contributed, too, to Casement's assignment to those evils' documentation.

But these two adventures were not the only of Casement's interventions into history. In 1916, he resurfaced in international newspaper headlines when,

two days prior to Ireland's failed Easter Rising, he was arrested by the Royal Irish Constabulary on the rocky strand of Western Ireland's Tralee Bay, having been suspiciously set down there by a disappeared German vessel which his arrestors intuited intended ill for British interests in Ireland, if not in the whole of World War I-torn Europe. His interrogation in the days that followed connected Casement both to the Rising now already begun, and to Germany, then at war with Britain. Indeed, as it turned out, he had been one of the Rising's conspirators, had been in Germany for over a year lobbying the Germans for their support of the Irish insurrection, had secured some small quantity of arms for his comrades, and had been carried into Tralee on a German submarine, which, disappointed by the failure to be met there by another German vessel, the one carrying the arms, had dropped Casement off on the strand with nothing but haplessness and distress to show for himself. However, now at this moment, in addition to feeling peril for himself, he was desperate to get in touch with his fellow conspirators, whom he knew would be doomed if they took to their battle stations without the German support that he had failed to sufficiently muster, but he was concerned, too, that by expressing this worry to his captors he would give his colleagues away. In any event, his fellow revolutionaries were at that very moment in the process of giving themselves away by going forward without him (on whom they had never much really depended anyway, history says). And, further, they were indeed doomed, but even for more reasons than Casement surmised. The Rising was put down in just one week's time, and the majority of its leaders were arrested and executed within the fortnight that followed.

Slower and less summary, however, were the procedural steps that preceded Casement's end. His trial—that of a war-time traitor by British lights, while that of a humanitarian and Irish nationalist by American and international lights—could not be indelicately or angrily executed by the

British, then in the midst of a large war into which they had not yet succeeded in drawing American involvement. Newspapers on both sides of the Atlantic followed the trial, whose legal discernments concerned the term *treason*'s juridical, technical definition in British law and, corollary to that question, the nature of Casement's intentions in bringing the guns into Ireland. In other words, how much did it matter that he was Irish, as opposed to English? And why was he transporting the guns? on the Germans' behalf? or on the Irish Republican Brotherhood's. Further, Casement's lawyers argued, he did no worse in gathering arms into Ireland than did the Ulster Volunteers, whose guns the British did little to interdict? Then, too, there was the question of Casement's character. In the Congo and in Peru, his life and health at the hazard, he had done as much as any man alive to stop history in its deplorable tracks and to save hundreds of thousands of indigenous peoples' lives. On these grounds, he was not the sort of person that honorable governments hanged. On the other hand, there were the diaries, called *Black Diaries* and called *his* from first page to last by the British police who reported having discovered them among his stored belongings at the time of his arrest. If their worst pages were genuinely his and not the spurious productions of the imperial British hands that found them, as some of his supporters claimed, he was a sexual degenerate of shocking dimensions, a man who had spent the whole of his adult life cruising the empire's margins in search of young men and older boys too poor, or too powerless, or too given to depravity themselves to resist his predatory advances. For this sinister side of his inscrutably-bifurcated persona, Casement ought to hang, said his enemies.

Casement lost the trial, though the diaries were not admitted into the proceedings as formal evidence. Ironically, the prosecution had offered them to the defense for use as proof of Casement's mental imbalance, but the defense refused them. Thus, he was sentenced to be hanged in five weeks

time. During that interlude, appeals and petitions for clemency came from various quarters. However, their force was greatly reduced by the choice of many of his and of his causes' allies to stand on the sidelines rather than declare themselves for the saving of a degenerate. In the literary community, those strong for his saving included Arthur Conan Doyle, W. B Yeats, G. K. Chesterton, Lytton Strachey, and Sir James Frazer; while those who refused to come forward on his behalf included Rudyard Kipling, Joseph Conrad, and H.G. Wells (who said, "Certainly not. He ought to be hung"[13]). To be clear, a good deal of the reluctance to save Casement was motivated by the common-cause unity felt by all those who understood Germany to be more of threat to civilization than Britain's imperial penchants. Indeed, this large group included the lion's share of Ireland's peasantry, who, indeed, fought in great numbers on the side of the British in World War I. Still, it's clear that the *Diaries* lost him the support of many.

Casement was executed on Thursday, August 3, 1916. On that last day, say many of his biographers, he so impressed his executioner that later the man would write, "Roger Casement appeared to me the bravest man it fell to my unhappy lot to execute."[14]

However, in the immediate moment, that man's opinion did not much matter. Rather than hand over Casement's remains to his family, who would, perhaps,[15] succeed in arranging for their decent, Catholic burial in Ireland, the British authorities forbade his corpse's repatriation, choosing, instead, to throw it down into an unmarked grave in the forbidding cemetery set aside for its penal system's deceased felons.

And how does Vargas Llosa see this complicated man, whose role in history was to be at one and the same time civilization's paramount conscience and its most notorious deviant? The answer to this question is not a simple one; however, for sure, it begins with the fact that the writer thinks

of Casement as a man of evolving, active conscience.

Act I: A Colonialist's Evolving Conscience

The Dream of the Celt presents its tragic hero's life in alternating chapters, half of which play out the Irish revolutionary's last, post-sentencing days in Pentonville Prison while the other half recount the earnest, sometimes heroic, lifetime trajectory that had somehow, mysteriously delivered him to his doomed and contemned Pentonville quarters. In Vargas Llosa's replay of Casement's early life significant was the Irishman's rearing in an Anglican, military household that was also a closet Catholic's domain. The household's Anglican, military features were contributed by Casement's father, Captain Roger Casement, "who had served," said Vargas Llosa, "with distinction for eight years in the Third Regiment of Light Dragoons in India," and who, when the mood was in him, preached to his like-named youngest son that his true birthplace was not the Dublin suburb where he in fact had been born, but, instead, "County Antrim, the heart of Ulster, the Protestant and pro-British Ireland where the Casement line had been established since the eighteenth century" (7). The Captain also installed in his son's imagination stories of India, Africa, and other of the British Empire's remote frontiers. Meanwhile, with little external show, his mother Anne Jephson supplied the home's Catholic shadow. A convert to Anglicanism for the sake of her marriage, she, nevertheless, practiced her first faith behind her husband's back, and, indeed, in the most secretive of her religious moments, she had had her then four-year-old son Roger baptized a Catholic during a vacation trip to visit family in Wales.

At an early age, Roger lost both of these parents to whom he had been greatly attached. His mother died when he was nine, and his father three

years later. A busy, though divided adolescence followed. When school was in session, he lived with his Casement relatives in the family's ancestral home in Northern Ireland, where he enjoyed for the first time the outdoor delights that were the scenes of mythic Ireland's epics and legends. When he was not in school, he went to live with those of his Casement cousins who lived in Liverpool and whose financial lives were connected to imperial-colonial shipping. Specifically, he lived with his Uncle Edward Bannister, who had travelled much of the world and had made business trips to Africa as an employee of the Elder Dempster Line. With great enthusiasm, the uncle both told him of his own adventures abroad and followed with him in their newspaper accounts those of the intrepid explorer and missionary to Africa, Dr. Livingston, and of his equally brave rescuer, the American Henry Morton Stanley. The wonder that these stories inculcated in Roger's heart reached a first fulfillment in 1879, when, at age fifteen, he left school to take a secretarial position in the Elder Dempster's administration and accounting offices. In that home-office position, he felt the energy and promise of an unfolding African trade market, and he learned, as if a scripture, the imperial subtext of that market's accounting texts, namely, that "bringing European products to Africa and importing the raw materials that African soil produced was, [less] a commercial operation [than] an enterprise in favor of the progress of peoples caught in prehistory, sunk in cannibalism and the slave trade. Commerce brought religion, morality, law, the values of modern, educated, free and democratic Europe, progress that would eventually transform tribal unfortunates into men and women of our time. In this enterprise, the British empire was in the vanguard of Europe . . . ," said the Elder Dempster office culture, as did just about every other of Victorian England's cultural media of the time.

His upbringing in the Elder Dempster household reached its second fulfillment when he left his desk job in Liverpool to go three times to West

Africa on one of the company's ships. Though other of his biographers find cause to think that Casement picked up his first distaste for European imperial projects while making these first African voyages,[16] Vargas Llosa records them, albeit briefly, as positive experiences. Indeed, as Casement set out on his third journey, his hope was to be picked up for fixed employment in Africa by the International African Association, a front organization of King Leopold II's quickly developing Congo initiatives. That aspiration was achieved in late 1884, when, at age twenty, he began his long, monumental Congo affiliation as, ironically, an employee of the Belgian ruler whom he would later contemn.

Two decades later when he was issuing that condemnation, his opponents would ask where his conscience had been during that early pair of years when he worked for Leopold as a junior official of transport and supplies on the IAA's expanding network of trade lines in the African interior, for, presumably, even in those early years he would have seen enough of imperial frontier sordidness to regret his imperial affiliations. Indeed, they would ask this question about the entirety of his several successive African employments before the issuance of his Congo Report in 1904: first, with the Belgian IAA (1884-85), and later with the Sanford Exploring Expedition (1886-1888), the Baptist Missionary Society (1888-89), the Société Anonyme Belge (1890-91), and with the British Foreign Service in Nigeria (1892-1895), in Lourenco Marques (1895-97), in Angola (1898-99), in South Africa (1899-1900), and in, again, the Congo Free State (1900-1903). Many of the African scenes of Vargas Llosa's novelized biography seem designed to answer this question. He imagines, for example, a fictive dialogue between Casement and Stanley, with whom Casement worked in 1884 and 1885. In his version of their interaction, Casement, the freshest of apprentices in the business of introducing Belgian trade and construction initiatives to the hundreds of villages whose territories and resources those initiatives would require, asks

his boss, the already world-renowned Stanley, about the disturbing practice they are both specifically engaged in, namely, that of getting illiterate, half-naked, trinket-suborned and frequently-liquored tribal headmen to scratch their signatures on contracts they couldn't possibly understand, on contracts that would dispossess them of all that was rightfully their people's and that would enslave them for years. "It is for their [own] good," answers Stanley:

Missionaries will come to lead them out of paganism and teach them that a Christian shouldn't eat his neighbor. Physicians will vaccinate them against epidemics and cure them better than their witch doctors. Companies will give them work. Schools will teach them civilized languages. They'll be taught how to dress, how to pray to the true god, how to speak like a Christian and not to use those monkey dialects. Little by little their barbaric customs will be replaced by those of modern educated people. If they knew what we're doing for them, they'd kiss our feet. But mentally they are closer to the crocodile and the hippopotamus than they are to you or me. That's why we decide what is good for them and have them sign those contracts. (28)

Also, he tells his troubled junior associate, "Africa isn't made for the weak" (28). These answers, in this stage of his moral development, suffice for Casement, who, as Vargas Llosa imagines him at the moment, is surrounded by an appalling African primitivism, by ignorance, squalor, paganism, and by Darwinian social customs, all of which would seem to him just as morally objectionable as the harms inflicted on the Africans by their white overlords. Further, the Africans' customs, good and bad, were doomed by modernity's inevitable, proximate advance. The natives' long-term good lay not in the fending off of the powerful outside empire's course encroachments, but in their adapting themselves to the interlopers' ways. So would have reasoned Casement in the 1880's last five years as he moved from his twentieth through his twenty-fifth birth years. To his credit, too, he behaved in those years far more civilly than did his European fellows, earning a

reputation among whites and among Africans as "a friend of the blacks," says Vargas Llosa (42). And, lastly, to his credit also, he for a short time abandoned all his own opportunities in the imperial juggernaut to go to work as a humble, unpaid helper in a Baptist mission. Further, he left that irreproachable work to return to his role as an imperial journeyman, not because he had reconciled the empire's brutal penchants with his conscience, but because he lacked the type of belief that extended service to a church would require. If he was not Kurtz, he was not St. Roger either. In any event, as Vargas Llosa tells this mysterious portion of the Irishman's life story, the young, conflicted Casement has the grace to at least ask the pertinent questions, and has the honesty years later to confess to himself that he accepted those bad answers because, at that time and in that place, "I didn't want to be aware" of the horrifying opposite realities (25).

Less exculpatory is Vargas Llosa's account of Casement's interactions in 1890 with Joseph Conrad, then, still Józef Teodor Konrad Nałęcz Korzeniowski, a young British merchant contracted by the *Societe Anonyme pour le Commerce du Haut-Congo* to serve as captain of one of the small steamboats that carried goods and merchants back and forth on the Upper Congo. On his way to this ship, Conrad spent three weeks with Casement himself in Matadi, where the latter was at that time an agent responsible for the contracting of local villagers as porters. Says the historical record, the two men were together for much of Conrad's waiting time; indeed, the writer's diary of those days suggests they roomed together and got on well with one another. Conrad was greatly impressed by his host's facility with local languages and by his knowledge of the way things worked in that remote, semi-lawless sphere. However, Conrad's response to his larger African sojourn was nothing less than trauma. His time in Matadi and his subsequent half-year journey into and out of the interior shocked and unsettled him as nothing else before in his well-travelled life had. He turned homeward long

before his contract had expired, and, on his way, as Vargas Llosa imagines it, he stopped to tell Casement that he had been "deflowered" by the horrors he had witnessed. "The worst, the worst thing . . . was witnessing the horrible things that happened every day in this damn country. The things the black devils and the white devils do wherever you look" (53). In short, so quick was the future writer's retreat from Africa and so strong his protestations of the continent's malignant imperial features, one is forced to wonder what kept Casement in so vile a place for so long. In other words, why hadn't he made a Conradian exit of his own?

To be sure, no single answer satisfies that question; however, looming large among the likely answers that I've already suggested—imperial delusion, an evolving conscience, fatalism in terms of Africa's conflict with modernity, etc.—is the possibility, too, that the enhanced sexual opportunities that his status in colonized Africa supplied to him caused him to see with less outrage than he otherwise might the continent's horrors under foreign rule. It is a deficiency in Vargas Llosa's narrative that he doesn't follow this obvious line of inquiry. Indeed, though the frequency of Casement's surreptitious encounters with half-dressed porters, laborers and servants in his more heavily diary-ed later life suggest that his sexual escapades as a young man must have been abundant, Vargas Llosa imagines just one of those early encounters, and that incident he imagines late in the novel, in retrospect, from the vantage of Casement's Pentonville cell. Admittedly, Vargas Llosa is justified in withholding his consideration of Casement's early homosexual activities in Africa until late in his novel in as much as his protagonist's factoring of his homosexuality into his ultimate account of himself before death is both plausible and, in terms of the novel, aesthetically well-situated. Indeed, for those two reasons, I'll withhold my own consideration of that passage until this paper's Pentonville section, save to say here that one consequence of Vargas Llosa's delayed handling of Casement's early

homosexual experiences in Africa is that it largely separates the euphoria of those activities from the mystery of his apparent high tolerance for African suffering in the first years of his colonialist's career.

Act II: Conscience Firmed

Casement's moral sense suffered no clouding during the era of his investigations into the horrors of Leopold's Congo and Arana's Peru, though it's a point of Vargas Llosa's text that greed, racism, bullying, and sadism, once they begin taking charge of a society's internal machinery, especially at civilization's frontiers, exert a mind-altering sway over their executors' consciences as well as that of their victims. In the Middle Congo, for example, when Casement tells the Belgian Captain Pierre Massard, the leader of the Force Publique—the African military force created, trained, equipped, and paid by the Belgians to maintain local order—that the practice of crushing the hands and cutting off the penises of the natives who are surly or dilatory in the execution of their rubber industry duties is barbaric and unacceptable, he is surprised by Massard's warped response. The natives are mutilated, he explains, because he has told his Force Publique under penalty of lashing not to waste their ammunition in the hunting of "monkeys, snakes, and the other revolting animals they like to stick in their bellies, sometimes raw." If they shoot a bullet, they must prove its authorized use by "producing the hand or the penis of the man they shot." Thus, says Massard, they cut off a hand or a penis whenever they wish to conceal the shooting of a cuckoo or even a fish, which is often. What is to be done with them? (63-64).

Similarly, in Peru, where conditions are just as bad as those he had documented in the Congo, Casement is met by a white and *cholo*

(mixed-race) bureaucracy convinced of the institutional barbarity's extenuating circumstances, its necessity and, sometimes, too, of its salubriousness. Says one of the Peruvian government officials whom Casement interviews:

> [Putumayo] is a very isolated region. Until a few years ago, virgin forest, populated only by savage tribes. . . . If there's commercial life there now, and work, and a beginning of modernity, it is due to Julio C. Arana and his brothers. . . . Putumayo is not England. It is an isolated and remote world of pagans who, when they have twins or children with a physical deformity, drown them in the river. Julio C. Arana has been a pioneer, he has brought in boats, medicines, Catholicism, clothes, Spanish. (128)

Again, when he asks the British consul about the local practice of kidnapping native children and keeping them as unpaid servants—virtual slaves—, he gets a similar response: We are far from Europe. In Peru's backwater, jungle context, the children who are kidnapped are the lucky one. About his own servants, the consul says, I didn't hire them "because that's the not the practice in Iquitos. The four of them are illiterate and wouldn't know how to read or sign a contract. They sleep and eat in my house. . . . They are free to leave whenever they like. Speak to them and ask them if they'd like to find work elsewhere. You'll see their reaction, Mr. Casment" (158).

And from those who actually hunted, branded, whipped, shot, raped, mutilated, and burnt the indigenous alive, he got a still blunter version of the same lame excuse. Says the most brutal of the local overseers to Casement, "If you lived here, you would think differently" (188). In his own mind, Casement sums up the twisted thinking of those he was prosecuting: "All of them believed that harvesting rubber and making money was a Christian ideal that justified the worst atrocities against pagans, who, of course, were always cannibals and killers of their own children" (133).

Much to his credit, Casement remains strong in his determination to not think as his expatriate racial compatriots do. Relentlessly, he interrogates and rebukes; he demands changes, documents what he observes, and in doing so puts at great risk his own life. At one point, he is told the story of a local newspaperman who had published news items descriptive of the Arana enterprise's cruel practices with the Indians. The man's press had been set on fire. Bullets were shot into his house. His children were bullied. He was forced to re-locate his family. "The last time he was seen was in February 1909, on the embankment. He was being shoved toward the river. His face was swollen from the beating a gang had given him. It may be that he managed to escape to Lima. . . . Or, with his hands and feet tied and wounds bleeding, they might have tossed him in the river for the piranhas to finish off" (117). If the latter was the case and it was ever discovered, the murderers had only to say that Indians had done it.

Faced with similar treatment, Casement held his ground. He answered to his conscience, a startlingly uncluttered one at this point in his life, and he asked that the rest of the world answer to it too. Later in his life, when he himself faced the death sentence, he would recall with bemused regret that in the days of his indigenous people's advocacy he had called for the arrest and execution of those who had killed and maimed in Africa and Latin America on behalf of imperial and capital interests. "He had always been in favor the death penalty" (15).

Act III: Conscience and Insurrection

Conscience plays a key role in Casement's career as an insurrectionist too, albeit a more subtle, nuanced sense of right and wrong. In the first place, an active, many-layered conscience brings him gradually to the position

that the Irish people's only plausible road to governmental sovereignty and ethnic self-respect is the road of violence. He comes to this position mostly as a result of his experiences in the Congo and Peru, where he had seen both the ruthlessness of the imperial will to subject and the enfeebling effect of foreign domination on those oppressed. In the midst of his Congo investigation, Vargas Llosa catches Casement, a paid and sworn official of the British Foreign Service, reflecting on the comparability of the Irish and Congolese situations:

> Wasn't Ireland a colony too, like the Congo? Though for so many years he had insisted on not accepting a truth that his father and so many Ulster Irishmen like him rejected with blind indignation. Why would what was bad for the Congo be good for Ireland? Hadn't they incorporated it in the Empire by force, not consulting those who had been invaded and occupied, just as the Belgians did with the Congolese? Over time the violence had eased, but Ireland was still a colony whose sovereignty disappeared because of a stronger neighbor. (81)

Or, again, once returned from the Congo and now the celebrated author of the *Report* that would forever after put imperial nations on notice that their predatory instincts would be punished, he revealed for the first time to a new friend, the Irish historian and nationalist Alice Stopford Green, his African experience's most potent effect on him, his sense that the Irish, as well as the Congolese, were a wronged people:

> The second or third time they were alone, Roger opened his heart to his new friend, as a believer would have done his confessor. He dared tell her, like him from an Irish Protestant family, what he hadn't told anyone yet: there in the Congo, living with injustice and violence, he had discovered the great lie of colonialism and begun to feel "Irish," that is, like the citizen of a country occupied and exploited by the Empire that had bled and weakened Ireland. He was ashamed of so many things he had said and

> believed, repeating his father's teachings. And he vowed to make amends. (88)

Also, while in the Congo and Peru, he learned of subjugation's demoralizing effects. Asked by a colleague in Peru why the Indians didn't rebel against their outnumbered overseers, Casement responded that it was not so simple:

> They didn't rebel for the same reasons the Congolese hadn't in Africa. Revolt was an exceptional occurrence, localized and sporadic suicidal acts by an individual or a small group. Because when the system of exploitation was so extreme, it destroyed spirits even before bodies. The violence that victimized them annihilated the will to resist, the instinct to survive, and transformed the indigenous people into automatons paralyzed by confusion and terror. Many did not understand what was happening to them as a consequence of the evil in concrete, specific men, but as a mythic cataclysm, a curse of the gods, divine punishment from which there was no escape. (172)

So, too, the Irish, thought Casement. Their self-respect and sense of right had been blunted by their many centuries of British domination, and the only thing that would truly lift them out of their demoralized state was an armed revolt. In the midst of his Peruvian investigations, Casement writes in his diary of Ireland's need for armed revolt:

> We Irish are like the Huitotos, the Borras, the Andoques, and the Muuinanes of Putumayo. Colonized, exploited, and condemned to be that way forever if we continue trusting in British laws, institutions, and governments to attain our freedom. They will never give it to us. Why would the Empire that colonized us do that unless it felt an irresistible pressure that obliged it to do so? That pressure can only come from weapons. (186)

Paradoxically, however, because he had spent the most celebrated portion of his adult life protecting the weak from the violence of the strong, his Irish Republican Brotherhood co-conspirators little trusted his advocacy of armed uprising. If and when the fighting did break out, his stomach for sustained bloodshed would, they feared, prove insufficient. Also, in their discussions, Casement had not signed on to the martyrdom ethic that Pearse and Plunkett in particular espoused. Whenever Pearse, "the radical, intransigent crusader for Gaelic and independence," made statements comparing the insurrectionists' efforts to the blood of martyrs that became the seeds of Christianity, Casement was made uneasy (307-308). He hoped and argued for the planning of a successful rebellion in its first stages as well as in its last. When the guns started firing, he desired that only British blood would be shed, or, if Irish blood had to be offered, the offering would be more necessary than symbolical. For these reasons, Pearse, Connolly, Clarke, Markievicz and others of the group's more militaristic leaders had kept him out of their failed Easter Rising's most intimate strategic plans. Instead, they indulged him in his far-fetched hope to enlist to their cause the Irish who, serving in the British military during World War I, had been taken prisoner by the Germans and were now languishing in German detention centers. As brothers in arms themselves, the Connolly-Clarke-Plunkett-Pearse faction understood what the more evangelical Casement did not, namely, that the imprisoned Irish, having sacrificed so much for the English cause in World War I and having watched fellow Irish lose life and limb for that same cause, were little likely to switch their allegiance to the German side, even if that switching's reward were Irish independence.

As it turned out, the militants' suspicions about Casement's lesser resolve to see blood spilled proved more or less true. In the end, just after it became clear to him that he could assemble no invading force composed of the imprisoned Irish, and clear, too, that German support for the Rebellion was

tepid, he was caught sneaking into Ireland two days in advance of the Rising's first shots. The irony in this was that he had come to Ireland not to participate in the Uprising, but to try to persuade its leadership to call it off. Had he been a less principled person, he might have stayed in Germany and avoided arrest, for in those last days, as he absorbed the disappointment of the jailed soldier's British allegiance and observed up close the German disinterest in Ireland, he also learned of the Rebellion leadership's lack of faith in him. It would serve them right, his ego said, if they died at their battle positions while he followed the skirmish from abroad. However, conscience spoke, telling him that he belonged in Ireland, paying the price with everyone else for the Rebellion's flawed planning. And it was conscience that he listened to.

Act IV: Conscience and the Confessional

All of *The Dream of the Celt*'s internal and external forces, then, call for a reckoning in the novel's end of its protagonist's conscience with the hegemonic heterosexual ethical culture of his day. Externally, the contemporary world in which you and I live and in which the novel is published largely clamors for an historical fiction whose gay protagonist finds his best self in his story's end when he bucks the hegemony in naming his homosexuality a potency and a virtue rather than a perversion. Also, external to *The Dream of the Celt* is the great boon that such a plot, or some version of that plot, would afford the book's reputedly anti-gay, *macho*-istic author.

Then there are the internal novelistic urgencies that call for an airing of Casement's homosexual conscience before novel's end. On a plot level, once he has been arrested and once rumors of his sexuality become a threat to his life, the accused has some need, first, of publicly declaring himself with or

against those who would say he was less than a decent person by virtue of his homosexuality, and, second, even more need of privately declaring himself either not gay, or ashamedly gay, or righteously gay to friends, to family, to himself and to God before his life's end. Further, the several weeks he spends in the Pentonville gaol, described in the text's eight odd-numbered chapters, afford Casement plenty of time to sort out and express his ultimate feelings about his homosexuality. As readers go through these pages, they expect himt to do as does Richard II in the Tower, that is, to get down upon the ground and to name the vulnerabilities of his office, in this case, that of a gay man who is also a public figure.

Internally, there are, too, aesthetic, thematic and psychological reasons why Casement should be expected to declare himself for or against homosexuality before his novel's close. First, because *poetic justice* and Aristotle's notion of a *tragic hero*—frayed, yet potent directives even in contemporary narrative—require such a reckoning. In other words, if not to his homosexuality, to what personal predisposition are we to connect Casement's imprisonment and the peril of his possible execution at his story's end? This question is important, of course, because failing to find its answer, we have neither a story nor a novel, but, instead, a sequence of happenstance events floating around a subjectivity or, two other ways of denominating it, we have falling without gravity and history *sans* narrative. Better for the novel's sake is the naming of homosexuality as the issue Casement's fictional life is meant to resolve than to fail in naming an issue.

Further, even before Vargas Llosa begins to shape Casement's biography into a novel, the historic Casement's life has built into it the ingredients of a classically told fiction framed by the pressures of poetic justice. One of those ingredients is Eivind Adler Christensen, the hero's last faithless lover, a young Norwegian whom Casement first met in New York City while raising money for the Irish revolutionary cause. Thereafter, until the last weeks of

Casement's life when Christensen suddenly disappeared and it became clear to the Irishman that his companion had been for several months reporting his every move to the British, Christensen had seemed Casement's destined, deserved spouse after a lifetime of furtive, transitory encounters. Betrayed by him, it novelistically makes sense that Casement, whose dispositions were increasingly Catholic, would be inclined to think of homosexual relationships as morally wrong and as kindling for tragedy. He might, after the inclination's eruption, have dismissed it as an ethically unsound way of thinking and beneath his contemplation; however, in the fictional playing field where poetic justice and protagonist's conscience regularly intersect in novels, Vargas Llosa's Casement should be expected to succumb to that way of thinking.

Again, Casement's diaries, a fact in the pre-novelized history, also call for a psychological as well as a poetic-justice representation of one sort or another in the fiction. Further, strong among the candidates for that representation is their intimations of a diarist keeping a scrupulous written record of his homosexual adventures, not because he feels good about those activities, but because he wants at some level of conscience to bring down upon himself all the troubles that the diary's pages will surely, eventually occasion for him.

And, lastly, Casement's confession to a Catholic priest just hours before his execution offers the narrative its most obvious opportunity to reveal the condemned man's last feelings about his homosexuality.

How, then, does Vargas Llosa answer this critical exigency of his novel? How does his Roger Casement feel about his homosexuality as he goes to his death?

First, his fiction absolves Casement of making a public statement about his alleged homosexuality by following closely the historical facts which also absolved him of such a statement. Briefly, because the prosecution chose not

to enter the Diaries into the trial's official proceedings but, instead, to circulate them privately among persons of influence who might be inclined to campaign against and to appeal his execution for treason, neither Casement nor his lawyers were ever publicly forced to say anything about them, and, as a matter of courtroom strategy, they decided not to.

To his lawyers, friends and family Vargas Llosa's Casement signals tacitly the veracity of the Diaries' contents. However, in the narrative's clever flow he neither morally defends nor regrets the homosexual behaviors therein described. To his lawyer's request for a statement in response to the rumors circulating about him, for example, Casement signals with "an imperceptible movement of his head" that he has no statement to offer (5). Similarly, when his closest female cousin, Gee, breaks into sobs as she begins to speak about the Diaries, rather than tell her they are untrue, he embraces her and tells her he loves her (17). These gestures get Casement through difficult moments in his last weeks of life, but they do not satisfy the novel's need for his expression of his moral feelings.

The novel does not play at all with the notion that Casement might have written the Diaries salacious passages as a means of getting caught, either to take a punishment that his guilt would make him invite or to confront the institutionally heterosexual hegemony with realities that it would prefer not to consider. Both the historical and novelized Casements are disruptive, anti-institutional characters, and, for that reason, the second motive is as likely as guilt in prompting the Irishman to put down on paper his most private, personal activities. In any event, as I say, *The Dream of the Celt* does not follow this tack in pursuing Casement's conscience.

The book's gaol pages catch Casement musing a-judgmentally, if sadly, about a handful of his life's homosexual encounters. In the first such moment, he recalls his homosexuality's very first physical episode. As a young man in Africa, he entered unclothed into a river where three naked

boys were fishing. A few moments later, their fishing completed, two of the boys left the river, but one stayed in. He approached Casement, touched him where the European was already stiff, and caused him to ejaculate. The experience was for Casement both freeing and discomfiting, a letting go of all the puritanical understandings of sex that he had abided by in Europe, but also slightly shameful (220-21). As regards Casement's moral posture in his last day, it's important to note that the scene's narrative tone is not at all judgmental. It is not the memory of a man who wishes he would have done something differently. Others of Casement's memories are more darkly painted. However, their darkness emanates not from the homosexual nature of the episodes but from their monetary aspect. Buying sex from porters and servants, Casement often runs into characters who demean him verbally and physically—usually for his age—as they engage with him.

Remarkably, because he is very much Catholic by the time he reviews his life from the perspective of the gaol, Vargas Llosa's Casement only minimally thinks of his betrayal by Christensen as a Divine judgment. "I've been an imbecile and deserve my fate," he says to himself as he recalls receiving from his interrogators proof of Christensen's perfidy (149); however, stronger than his feelings of deserved punishment as he recalls the scene in prison are feelings of pain and anger.

Lastly, Vargas Llosa is masterfully deft in withholding the spinning, confused complex that must have been Casement's conscience as he confessed himself to a Catholic priest the day before his execution:

> The priest sat on the edge of the bed and Roger remained on his knees at the beginning of his long, very long enumeration of real or presumed sins. When he first burst into tears in spite of the efforts he made to contain them, Father Care had him sit beside him. This was how the final rite proceeded, in which, as he spoke, explained, remembered, asked, Roger felt that in fact he was coming closer and closer to his mother. . . .

> He cried often, as he didn't recall ever having cried, no longer trying to hold back his tears, because with them he felt unburdened of tension and bitterness and it seemed to him not only his spirit but also his body became lighter. Father Carey, silent and unmoving, let him speak. At times he asked a question, made an observation, a brief, calming comment. After telling him his penance and giving him absolution, he embraced him: "Welcome again to what was always your home, Roger." (347)

Several of *The Dream of the Celt*'s first professional readers, as I've said, have read this ending with disappointment. Indeed, as I sense it, they have dismissed the novel's several postcolonial virtues because in its final pages the last excruciating discernments of Roger Casement's homosexual conscience have been withheld, because a priest, rather than they, has been made privy to those discernments. No doubt, Mario Vargas Llosa would have better served his own reputation by writing a book more revealing of Casement's conscience, by writing one more in keeping with the politics of our era's moral drift. However, in the novel's writing, he did what Yeats would have recommended. He bravely flouted politics and wrote to serve truth, in this case, a Catholic truth, namely, that only the damned do their last business with God in public.

The ghost of Roger Casement is no longer beating on Mario Vargas Llosa's door.

Notes

1) Yeats, William Butler, "The Ghost of Roger Casement," in *The Collected Poems of William Butler Yeats*, ed. Richard J. Finnernan (New York: MacMillan, 2008) 339.
2) Finneran 339.
3) Stephen Coote, *W.B. Yeats: A Life* (London: Hodder, 1977) 558-59.
4) Paul Tilzey, "Roger Casement: Secrets of the Black Diaries." *BBC: History*. 6 June 2011. Web. 19 April 2013.

5) Several new Casement studies have recently appeared: Jordan Goodman, *The Devil and Mr. Casement* (New York: Farrar, 2010). Séamas, *Roger Casement —imperialist, rebel, revolutionary* (Dublin: Lilliput, 2008). *Roger Casement in Irish and World History*, ed. Mary Daly (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2005).
6) See, for example, Demarchi, Rogelio, "Como duele ser macho" ["How It Hurts to Be a Macho"], in *La Voz: Ciudad X* (16 Nov. 2012). Web. 18 March 2013.
7) This term is my own coinage. It's meaning will become clear as the paper progresses.
8) See, in particular, *García Márquez: Historia de un deicidio* (1971), *The Temptation of the Impossible: Victor* Hugo and *Les Miserable* (1994]), and *El viaje a la ficcion: El mundo de Juan Carlos Onetti* [*Journey toward Fiction: The World of Juan Carlos Onetti*] (2011).
9) Alonso Cueto., "Reality and Rebellion: An Overview of Mario Vargas Llosa's Literary Themes" in *The Cambridge Companion to Mario Vargas Llosa*, ed. Efraín Kristal and John King (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012) 12.
10) Braulio Muñoz,. *A Storyteller: Mario Vargas Llosa between Civilization and Barbarism* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 5.
11) Efrain Kristal, *The Temptation of the Word: The Novels of Mario Vargas Llosa* (Nashville: Vanderbilt UP, 1998) 81.
12) Fintan O'Toole, "The Multiple Hero," review of *The Dream of the Celt* by Mario Vargas Llosa in *The New Republic (23 Aug 2012)*, 36-39; Colm Tóibín, "A Man of No Mind" (review of *The Dream of the Celt* by Mario Vargas Llosa) in *The London Review of Books* 34.17 (2012): 15-19. *Book Review Digest Plus (H.W. Wilson)*. Web. 21 Mar. 2013.
13) H.G. Wells qtd. in Seamas O Siochain, *Roger Casement: Imperialist, Rebel, Revolutionary* (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 2008) 464.
14) Qtd. in Wells 475.
15) *Perhaps* because the possibility that Ireland's Catholic bishops would forbid Casement's burial in a Catholic cemetery was strong.
16) Séamus O Síocháin, *Roger Casement: Imperialist, Rebel, Revolutionary* (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 2007) 26.

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