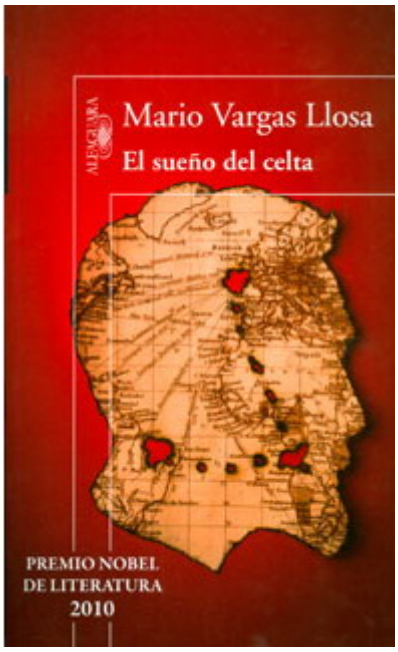
Theme and structure

The Dream of the Celt combines elements of the historical novel with those of the journalistic chronicle; the main human and historical themes explored are those relating to the colonial subjugation and enslavement (via a process of systematic terror and torture) of the native inhabitants of the Congo Basin and the Peruvian Amazon during the latter part of the 19th and early part of the 20th century. The novel naturally and purposefully invites comparison with Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (the direct appearance of Conrad in the novel leaves little doubt in this regard).[8][5]

It is within this larger context that the complex and ultimately tragic story of British consul Roger Casement unfolds. The most notable events of this *vita* being his exposure to and his first-hand accounts of the systematic tortures inflicted on the native inhabitants of the Congo and Peru by European commercial concerns; his attainment of a British knighthood for these same humanitarian endeavors; his subsequent transformation into a radical fighter for Irish independence, collaboration with the German military, and participation in the Easter Rising; his arrest, prosecution, and conviction for treason by the British; the late revelations of a submerged history of pederastic activities as per his own secret diaries; his execution by hanging.[9][10]

The story is told in alternating chapters, with the odd chapters detailing the last three months of Casement's life (in 1916), and the even chapters encompassing the protagonist's experiences up to that time; the latter are themselves divided into three parts, each one named after a specific colonial geography and reality to which Casement was exposed: "Congo," "Amazonia," "Ireland." Ultimately, odd and even chapters converge on a final structural and dramatic point, which is also the final point (and, in a sense, purpose) of Casement's life.



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