



**BELONGING BEYOND BORDERS:
Cosmopolitan Affiliations in Contemporary
Spanish American Literature**

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Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism in the Global Era in the Fictions of Mario Vargas Llosa

Celui qui voit dans tout être humain son semblable, qui souffre de ses peines et jouit de ses joies, celui-là doit écrire ses mémoires, lorsqu'il s'est trouvé en situation de recueillir des observations, et ces mémoires feront connaître les hommes sans acception de rangs, tels que l'époque et le pays les présentent.

Anyone who sees in every human being their counterpart—suffering their pains and celebrating their joys—this person must write their memoirs once they have found themselves in a position to gather observations, and these memoirs will make others known, regardless of rank, just as they were in their time and country.

—FLORA TRISTAN, *PÉRÉGRINATIONS D'UNE PARIA*

Mario Vargas Llosa is one of the most prolific Latin American authors of the past six decades, the last living member of the Boom, and one of many Latin American writers to have led a very active cosmopolitan public life. He is also a very polarized, and polarizing, intellectual. In December 2010, Vargas Llosa entered the literary pantheon when he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature “for his cartography of structures of power and his trenchant images of the individual’s resistance, revolt, and defeat” (Nobel Foundation). In his acceptance speech, the Peruvian brought up the importance reading has had in his life from an early age. “La lectura convertía el sueño en vida y la vida en sueño y ponía al alcance del pedacito de hombre que era yo el universo de la literatura” (Discurso Nobel 1)

(“Reading changed dreams into life and life into dreams and placed the universe of literature within reach of the boy I once was”¹), he recalled, and all the characters he encountered in his readings “hablaban un lenguaje universal” (4) (“spoke a universal language”). Perhaps unconsciously, this idea of *universality* never left him, and it is, to this day, one of the main features of his body of work. Although he does not state it clearly in the Nobel speech, he implies that writing serves as some sort of catharsis, a way to rectify past and current mistakes; it “embellece lo feo” (1) (“beautifies ugliness”). Vargas Llosa is adamant: “Seríamos peores de lo que somos sin los buenos libros que leímos, más conformistas, menos inquietos e insumisos y el espíritu crítico, motor del progreso, ni siquiera existiría. Igual que escribir, leer es protestar contra las insuficiencias de la vida” (2) (“We would be worse than we are without the good books we have read, more conformist, not as restless, more submissive, and the critical spirit, the engine of progress, would not even exist. Like writing, reading is a protest against the insufficiencies of life”).² As a matter of fact, most of his characters—and namely, the three I study in this chapter, the fictionalized Flora Tristán and Paul Gauguin in *El Paraíso en la otra esquina* (2003), and Roger Casement in *El sueño del celta* (2010)—are strong leaders who do protest against *las insuficiencias de la vida* by drawing attention to new ideas in an attempt to change the world, to make it a better place for their fellow human beings.³ In the same way Vargas Llosa believes in trying to make the world a better place through literature.

One of the recurring utopian visions in Vargas Llosa’s books—though less studied than the role of nationalism in his work—is precisely cosmopolitanism. Often, in his novels, much like in his non-fiction, he represents it as a counterpoint to nationalism; both are often used by Vargas Llosa’s characters as tools by which to protest against *las insuficiencias de la vida*. These utopian concepts are multi-faceted driving forces of humanity: after all, “lo más humano es tratar de alcanzar lo imposible” (“the most human reaction is to try to achieve the impossible”; Vargas Llosa qtd. in Camín). Vargas Llosa’s interest in cosmopolitanism has evolved according to his experiences as an engaged writer and public intellectual over several decades, from the 1950s until the present. From the cosmopolitan literary experimentation of the 1960s to his current tackling of global issues, the Peruvian’s writings reflect the evolution of Spanish American literature

writ large; his own intellectual evolution also runs parallel to the evolution of the discourse about cosmopolitanism in Latin America.

The chapter is divided into two sections: a historical and theoretical framework, followed by the literary analysis of two novels. In the first, I map Vargas Llosa's personal and literary evolution toward cosmopolitanism, and later in his career toward a liberal, rooted cosmopolitanism. I then focus on how his political positions became intertwined with his literature. I also discuss how his latest fictions reconceptualize both the historical and the Latin American historical novel. The second section is dedicated to the literary analysis of *El Paraíso en la otra esquina* and *El sueño del celta*, two historical novels that advocate in favour of liberal rooted cosmopolitanism, and in so doing, reflect his own political leanings. In the current world order of rising nationalisms, individualism, and exclusionary political projects, these two narratives focus on the role individuals play in the making of history, and they encourage readers to draw lessons from the lives of strong-minded individuals and develop empathy with their fellow human beings through contact with difference. As Vargas Llosa himself said, “la literatura es fuego” (“literature is fire”): it sparks the changes we ought to see in the world.

A Literary Evolution Defined by Tensions

Born on 28 March 1936, in Arequipa, Peru, Vargas Llosa now holds Peruvian and Spanish citizenship, and is socially and politically active in both countries. He spent his childhood between Peru and Bolivia; in 1958, he moved to Spain, only to relocate to Paris, then considered the epicentre of the world of letters, two years later. He has been crossing the Atlantic back and forth since then. In 1990, he ran for president of the Republic of Peru, losing to Alberto Fujimori (1990–2000). Even after he defeated the author, Fujimori became one of the most vocal opponents of his writings and intellectualism, equally criticizing his supposed lack of Peruvianness and his liberalism. This is but an example of the rather tumultuous relationship Vargas Llosa has maintained with his birth country. In fact, Vargas Llosa has always been a bit removed from his native land: he is part of an elite that lived abroad for many years, and as a result he wrote most of his novels in Europe. As a cosmopolitan, he has always made a

point of thinking beyond the local aspects of his community, yet his fiction incessantly revisits Peru, where he has also participated in highly local endeavours. He embodies Reyes's formulation, being highly universal, while still remaining deeply national. In Vargas Llosa's own words, "¿Qué extraordinario privilegio el de un país que no tiene una identidad porque las tiene todas!" ("Discurso Nobel" 6) ("What an extraordinary privilege for a country not to have an identity because it has all of them!"). For the author, it is not only possible, but necessary, to look further than the bounds of nationality.

Vargas Llosa's openness to other cultures expanded over the years: while his early works were usually set in Peru, they contained literary cosmopolitan features, in that he was clearly influenced by such writers as William Faulkner and James Joyce (American and Irish, respectively). The author's fictionalized settings then grew to encompass Latin America; and while they still showed many of the same features they also broached more universal topics. Finally, his recent works are permeated with cosmopolitanism and involve much broader settings—namely, through the exploration of literary characters and the problems generated by their cosmopolitan attitudes and values. This transition from a national to an international framework began with *La guerra del fin del mundo* (*The War of the End of the World*; 1981), which takes place in Brazil, and built up to *El sueño del celta* (2010). However, most of these international and cosmopolitan novels still involve Peru to varying degrees.

Vargas Llosa's interest in cosmopolitanism is an important feature of his entire body of work, as is his aversion to all forms of absolutism and extremism. Nationalism is one such extreme against which he has advocated the most. Throughout his career, in fiction, literary manifestos, essays, and newspaper articles, he has warned his readers against its dangers. Vargas Llosa believes "that nationalists should be intellectually and politically challenged, all of them, head on, without apology, and not in the name of a different type of nationalism . . . but on behalf of democratic culture and freedom" (*Wellsprings* 94). With this type of political positioning, he joins a long tradition of public intellectuals in Latin America, where novelists, especially those of his generation, have also had a significant political voice.

Politics and Utopia

Vargas Llosa's political voice is as strong in his essays as it is in his works of fiction. At the time of its publication in 2003, *El Paraíso en la otra esquina* was considered one of his most cosmopolitan novels. Two narrative strands run concurrently through the narrative, that of social activist Flora Tristán, and that of her grandson, the painter Paul Gauguin; both characters choose to be citizens of the world in a period marked by the rise of nationalism and the creation of modern nation-states. They are thus defined by their global trajectories, from France to Peru in Tristán's case, and from Peru to France to French Polynesia in Gauguin's. Both are utopian visionaries who fail to bring their visions to life. *El sueño del celta*, for its part, presents the story of the nationalist drift of one of the greatest cosmopolitan figures of the early twentieth century, Sir Roger Casement. Unlike most of Vargas Llosa's narratives, which show the protagonist's shift from a local to a universal outlook, this last novel explores the transformation of one of the first global human rights champions into a fervent nationalist, if only for a short period of time. The novels, albeit in different ways, show that utopias—be they social or national ones—are bound to fail, with their proponents defeated by their own ideals. As Vargas Llosa has himself emphasized, “the search for Utopia . . . is liberating when pursued as an artistic vision, but leads to bloodshed, disaster and tragedy when it becomes a political project” (“Confessions of an Old Fashioned Liberal”). Although the three characters cannot be compared to Antonio Conselheiro in *La guerra del fin del mundo* (1981) in terms of deadly fanaticism, they do show an obstinacy that borders on religious fanaticism, and thus embody Vargas Llosa's criticism of extremes. Consequently, the outcome that meets each character is proportionate to the depth of their extremism. My reading shows that both novels also advance the notion of rooted cosmopolitanism as the best articulation of a universal consciousness and engagement.

A lot of attention has been given to the role of utopia in Vargas Llosa's works, whether in the form of nationalism or deadly fanaticism. In *Vargas Llosa among the Postmodernists* (1994), Keith M. Booker maintains that the author had, to date, shown “an opposition to fanaticism of any kind, a thoroughgoing skepticism about Utopian and apocalyptic visions of history . . . and a similar skepticism toward absolutes of all kinds” (183).

Vargas Llosa's later novels proved that this was not just a phase. However, in "Vargas Llosa's Leading Ladies," Lynn Walford claims that he does not display an outright contempt for utopian projects, "but [rather] a deep and troubled ambivalence toward them" (71). She cites as proof the fact that, unlike *Conselheiro*, whom Vargas Llosa calls "a wretched failure" (76), *Flora Tristán*—and I may add *Roger Casement*—"does not fade into oblivion" (77); indeed, they are shown respect by the author. Walford sees in *Tristán's* portrayal "the possibility—if not the promise—of redemption [which suggests] perhaps, that Vargas Llosa is adding yet another, more hopeful, dimension to his vision" (78). The same can be said of *Roger Casement*, who is offered a possibility of redemption by the narrative voice in the novel's epilogue. Taking this into account, I argue that Vargas Llosa has advocated, perhaps unconsciously, for rooted cosmopolitanism since his early novels, and, taking into consideration his well-known political positions, for liberal rooted cosmopolitanism.

Vargas Llosa's political positioning is one of the main reasons that led to the tumultuous relationship he has had with Peru since he moved to Spain in the 1970s. These tensions were exemplified again when he became the sixth Latin American author to win the Nobel Prize for Literature.⁴ Even if it is a great honour for any nation to have one of its citizens receive the Nobel Prize in any discipline, the Nobel Foundation was harshly criticized by many Peruvians for awarding such a prestigious prize to an author they deemed insufficiently Peruvian. He nevertheless dedicated his Nobel to his home country and later stated that "El Perú soy yo aunque a algunos no les guste, Fujimori no me quería reconocer como peruano, lo que yo escribo es el Perú también" ("I am Peru even if some do not like it, Fujimori did not want to recognize me as Peruvian, what I write is Peru too"; "El Perú soy yo"). On multiple occasions, he has reiterated his view that, while Spain and France allowed him to become a writer, his Peruvian experience remains the primary material from which he draws inspiration.⁵

In his Nobel acceptance speech, Vargas Llosa addressed the issue of citizenship, as well as his contentious relationship with his birth country. He claimed that living abroad not only made him a citizen of the world, but also a better Peruvian: echoing other Boom authors, he said that "lo que más agradezco a Francia [es] el descubrimiento de América Latina"

“Discurso Nobel” 4) (“But perhaps I am most grateful to France for the discovery of Latin America”). In Europe, he discovered that his nation “era parte de una vasta comunidad a la que hermanaban la historia, la geografía, la problemática social y política, una cierta manera de ser y la sabrosa lengua en que hablaba y escribía” (4) (“was part of a vast community united by history, geography, social and political problems, a certain mode of being, and the delicious language it spoke and wrote”), thus first developing a continental understanding of the region. Abroad, he also read writers who were revolutionizing literature and speaking “un lenguaje universal” (4) (“a universal language”)—here he mentions Borges, Paz, Cortázar, García Márquez, Fuentes, Cabrera Infante, Rulfo, Onetti, Carpentier, Edwards, and Donoso. Through these writers stereotypes about Latin America were broken. Vargas Llosa described feeling at home wherever he went, and admits that travel and living abroad have brought him to great discoveries, to the extent that he came to embody the very idea of cosmopolitanism, being open to other cultures while also embracing his own. In the speech, Vargas Llosa pointed out that becoming a global citizen was never a conscious goal, and that it has never meant forgetting his home country. On the contrary, being at a distance from Peru has given him the critical perspective necessary to better tackle issues affecting his country:

Creo que vivir tanto tiempo fuera del país donde nací ha fortalecido más bien aquellos vínculos, añadiéndoles una perspectiva más lúcida, y la nostalgia, que sabe diferenciar lo adjetivo y lo sustancial y mantiene reverberando los recuerdos. El amor al país en que uno nació no puede ser obligatorio, sino, al igual que cualquier otro amor, un movimiento espontáneo del corazón, como el que une a los amantes, a padres e hijos, a los amigos entre sí.

I believe instead that living for so long outside the country where I was born has strengthened those connections, adding a more lucid perspective to them, and a nostalgia that can differentiate the adjectival from the substantive and keep memories reverberating. Love of the country where one was

born cannot be obligatory, but like any other love must be a spontaneous act of the heart, like the one that unites lovers, parents and children, and friends. (5)

Peru, then, is a part of him, whether his detractors believe he embodies the country well enough or not. His life and his work are shaped both by Peru and by his time abroad.

The Way to (Liberal) Rooted Cosmopolitanism

One of Vargas Llosa's first novels to gain international fame—*La tía Julia y el escribidor* (*Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter*), a work of autofiction published in 1977—delves into the tensions between the cosmopolitan and nationalist tendencies of the Latin American writer. In the novel, Vargas Llosa articulates, through his literary alter ego Varguitas, the type of author he aspires to become—namely, one who evolves in a more sophisticated and worldly literary system than the one he knows in Latin America. *La tía Julia y el escribidor* indicates a very conscious understanding of world literature, as well as a clearly articulated goal of living in Europe. This hints at the fact that while he did not plan to be a world citizen, Vargas Llosa always thought of literature in worldly terms, and wanted to be part of that cosmopolitan community.

The novel recounts the story of Mario (alternatively referred to as Marito or Varguitas), a twenty-something law student, radio newswriter, and short-story writer in the making, as he falls in love with his aunt by marriage, *la tía Julia*. The novel is divided into twenty-two chapters: the odd-numbered ones concentrate on Marito's life, while the even-numbered ones are soap opera scripts written by Pedro Camacho, *el escribidor*. Varguitas dreams of going to Paris, the cosmopolitan space par excellence, and of living in the world of letters. He hopes that distancing himself from his native land will open up new horizons, as well as allow him to develop a new perspective. The young Varguitas moves to Europe and makes a name for himself, while Camacho remains in Peru and goes mad, a consequence of being trapped in his national setting.

Once famous, the accomplished cosmopolitan narrator switches his name from Marito or Varguitas to Vargas Llosa. Looking back on his years in Latin America, he states that “el problema era que todo lo que

escribía se refería al Perú. Eso me creaba, cada vez más, un problema de inseguridad, por el desgaste de la perspectiva (tenía la manía de la ficción *realista*)” (*La tía Julia y el escritor* 473) (“The problem was that everything I wrote had to do with life in Peru. As time and distance began to blur my perspective, I felt more and more insecure about my writing [at the time I was obsessed with the idea that fiction should be ‘realistic’ ”]; *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter* 359⁶). This *manía*, or obsession, was a characteristic of Vargas Llosa’s early fiction, which explored Peruvian issues. However, in overcoming this obsession, the Peruvian author set the tone for the ever-expanding cosmopolitan concerns that would come to mark his oeuvre. Indeed, even if “el Perú [le] ha parecido siempre un país de gentes tristes” (473) (“Peru had always seemed to me a country of sad people”; 359), Varguítas makes a point of being able to go home at least once a year: “Para esa época, tenía un trato con una revista de Lima, a la que yo enviaba artículos y ella me pagaba con pasajes que me permitían volver todos los años al Perú por algunas semanas. Estos viajes, gracias a los cuales veía a la familia y a los amigos, eran para mí muy importantes” (472) (“In those days I had an arrangement with a magazine in Lima: I sent it articles and in return received a plane ticket that allowed me to come back to Peru every year for a few weeks. These trips, thanks to which I saw my family and friends, were very important to me”; 359). His creativity is tied to Peru, but only Europe allows him to live off his writings—the best of both worlds. As Varguítas explains,

Ese mes que pasábamos en el Perú, cada año, generalmente en el invierno (julio o agosto) me permitía zambullirme en el ambiente, los paisajes, los seres sobre los cuales había estado tratando de escribir los once meses anteriores. Me era enormemente útil (no sé si en los hechos, pero sin la menor duda psicológicamente), una inyección de energía, volver a oír hablar peruano, escuchar a mi alrededor esos giros, vocablos, entonaciones que me reinstalaban en un medio al que me sentía visceralmente próximo, pero del que, de todos modos, me había alejado, del que cada año perdía innovaciones, resonancias, claves” (473).

That month that Patricia and I spent in Peru each year, usually in winter (July or August), enabled me to steep myself in the atmosphere, the landscapes, the lives of the people that I had been trying to write about in the previous eleven months. It was tremendously useful to me (I don't know if it was true in purely material terms, but certainly it was true psychologically), a kind of "energy injection," to hear Peruvian spoken again, to hear all round me those turns of phrase, expressions, intonations that put me back in the midst of a milieu I felt viscerally close to but had nonetheless moved far away from, thus missing out each year on the innovations, losing overtones, resonances, keys. (360)

Herein also lies a defining tension in Vargas Llosa's body of work, present from early on: both Europe and Peru are absolutely necessary for him to produce strong narratives. This conception of literature triggered his embrace of political cosmopolitanism, both thematically and philosophically.

When the young Varguitas, who had always longed for and idealized Paris, arrives at the centre of the world republic of letters with the stated objective of fulfilling his destiny of becoming a writer, he also, ironically, learns about his cultural roots. His aesthetic cosmopolitanism evolves into a broader vision now encompassing world politics. This tension, which has been present from the very beginning—at least in literary terms—is, as we shall see, now more broadly defined as a main feature of Vargas Llosa's current writing. He discovered his true identity—wordly yet national—while abroad, and it expanded to a full embrace of the notion of global citizenship.

Liberal Cosmopolitanism

Vargas Llosa's novels are set in a wide range of places, and as mentioned earlier, he has not hesitated to make cosmopolitanism a central theme of his later fiction. He overtly acknowledges and discusses the challenges of this position in many essays and newspaper pieces, as is to be expected of one of the most politically engaged and active Latin American authors of his generation; indeed, running for president was a logical step in his social involvement.

The impact of Vargas Llosa's political views on his corpus is so strong that, according to literary scholar Efraín Kristal, his work can be divided into three major cycles: 1) the pro-Cuban phase; 2) the refutation of Cuba's politics; and 3) the embrace of open capitalism and free markets. This third phase coincides with his most cosmopolitan works, written as the borders of nation-states were becoming porous and the very notion of the state deemed archaic. Although Kristal's three-part division appears logical enough, it only takes into consideration the novels published before 2012.⁷

While Kristal uses the term "capitalism" to refer to the third phase, Vargas Llosa discusses, in various interviews, his adherence to liberalism as opposed to neo-liberalism. In fact, both supporters and detractors have described his cosmopolitanism as liberal. Vargas Llosa himself is very open about his political views, and has linked his conversion to this approach to his second reading of French thinker Albert Camus—who was very critical of all sorts of revolutions—as he was drifting away from the Latin American Left in the 1970s.⁸

While classical liberalism espouses liberty and equality, two tenets of human dignity, neo-liberalism, articulated in the 1950s as the Cold War began, emphasized economic policy over other aspects of the nineteenth-century philosophy, and "argued that inequality was a positive value—in reality necessary" (Anderson qtd. in De Castro and Birns 51) for the world to develop properly. Although he has been branded as a neo-liberal both by the adherents and detractors of that label, Vargas Llosa does not meet the definition in the strictest sense of the term, for he has always advocated in favour of equality. In my view, his intellectual trajectory shows that he reoriented his political affiliations and intellectual philosophy after the so-called Padilla Affair in 1971, in which Cuban poet Heberto Padilla was imprisoned for criticizing the government.

Vargas Llosa does not disavow his past allegiances, but he is very critical of the young man he once was. In his George Lengvari Sr. Lecture, delivered in 2013 and entitled *My Intellectual Itinerary: From Marxism to Liberalism*, he recalls his teenage and young adult years as a series of discoveries and disappointments that led to his espousal of liberalism.⁹ He recounts how the military dictatorships that plagued most of Latin America during the 1950s and '60s, and the social inequalities that arose

from years of poor government, pushed him “toward radicalism, toward extremism” (39). In the speech he is extremely self-aware, admitting that because of the historical and social circumstances in which he came of age, it could not have been otherwise. He uses the expressions “enormous enthusiasm” (39) to describe his first steps into Marxism, says that he “became completely infatuated” (39), even calling himself “very Stalinist” (41). He shared, it seems, the same blindness to the dangers of extremisms and absolutism he now blames some of his characters for; in retrospect, he appears to forgive his younger self for having fallen into “this romantic underground way” (41), a characteristic attribute of collectivist ideologies. It soon became clear, however, that he was not suited to communist circles, since they constrained his creativity: “So I couldn’t remain with the communists much longer. They were really extremely dogmatic and I felt imprisoned in something that I couldn’t share 100%” (42). This rejection of dogmatic beliefs, in line with his much-admired Camus, is still at the forefront of Vargas Llosa’s philosophy.

The Cuban Revolution of 1959 marked a turning point for young intellectuals in Latin America: while most of them rejected communism, they still believed in socialism, only to be disappointed some years later when the dictatorial tendencies of the Castro regime became apparent. Once again, Vargas Llosa expresses his regrets at having been fooled by his own enthusiasm (15). A trip to the Soviet Union in 1966 was “the most terrible political disappointment that I have had in my life” and the Padilla Affair marked his break with collectivist ideologies; he even says that the years spent reading about Marxism were wasted (17). His disillusion with socialism brought him to the works of Isaiah Berlin and Karl Popper, two liberal thinkers who shaped his thinking from then on.

Vargas Llosa’s 2005 Irving Kristol Lecture, entitled “Confessions of an Old Fashioned Liberal,” expresses his liberal tendencies in an even more open fashion. In it, he directly addresses his long-standing political affiliations, as well as the various problems that arose out of his outspokenness about such philosophical positions. He begins by thanking the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research for allowing him to be seen “as a unified being, the man who writes and thinks,” rather than simply a writer or essayist, the usual dichotomy proposed by scholars who admire his fictions but despise his political positions. He laments that the term

“liberal” has become a dirty word, especially in Latin America, one used “to exorcize or discredit” him, a variation of the criticism about his lack of national allegiance.

Vargas Llosa understands liberalism as a philosophy, not an ideology, with numerous ramifications, and argues that there are as many liberalisms as there are liberals. He defines himself as a liberal in the strictest sense of the term: “a lover of liberty, a person who rises up against oppression,” one for whom “the free market is the best mechanism in existence for producing riches and, if well complemented with other institutions and uses of democratic culture, launches the material progress of a nation to the spectacular heights with which we are familiar.” At first glance, this could fit the standard definition of neo-liberalism. However, as does his *mâitre à penser* Isaiah Berlin, Vargas Llosa advocates in favour of the free market because it brings economic progress, as long as this progress does not harm society. In fact, if inequalities are created, individual freedom is affected, since not everyone has access to the same opportunities; this goes against his vision (“La corrección política es enemiga de la libertad”). Individual liberties, as well as the free movement of people and goods, are two key elements of Vargas Llosa’s liberalism. The liberal he “aspire[s] to be considers freedom a core value”; in that he concords with most liberals.

Even if Vargas Llosa calls himself a liberal, I propose that his positioning is also based on cosmopolitanism, inasmuch as it echoes the very premise of Appiah’s conceptualization of contemporary cosmopolitanism. Indeed, Vargas Llosa expresses his liberalism as a commitment to others deeply rooted in tolerance and understanding: “Basically, [liberalism] is tolerance and respect for others, and especially for those who think differently from ourselves, who practice other customs and worship another god or who are non-believers. By agreeing to live with those who are different, human beings took the most extraordinary step on the road to civilization” (“Confessions of an Old Fashioned Liberal”). He went further in his George Lengvari Sr. Lecture when he said that “This kind of openness is, I think, the essential virtue of liberalism, and that is the reason why liberalism is the roots of civilization” (“My Intellectual Itinerary” 50). This resonates with Appiah’s conceptualization of two major strands of cosmopolitanism, as well as his understanding that a cosmopolitan is someone who is willing to be open to difference. Vargas Llosa maintains

that “We should coexist in diversity” (51). His liberalism coexists with globalization. In his Irving Kristol Lecture, Vargas Llosa says that he believes that “the inter-dependence of nations in a world in which borders, once solid and inexpugnable, have become porous and increasingly faint” is unavoidable (“Confessions of an Old Fashioned Liberal”). The disappearance of borders is the premise of global governance as proposed by liberal cosmopolitanism. He concludes with a sharp articulation of his position as a liberal cosmopolitan: “We dream, as novelists tend to do: a world stripped of fanatics, terrorists and dictators, a world of different cultures, races, creeds and traditions, co-existing in peace thanks to the culture of freedom, in which borders have become bridges that men and women can cross in pursuit of their goals with no other obstacle than their supreme free will.” What Vargas Llosa expresses here as a dream is close to the actual definition of liberal cosmopolitanism, which, along with uniting the world into one single entity, “wishes to overcome absolute states’ rights through the development of a global order governing the internal as well as the external behaviour of states” through the growth of transnational organizations (Gowan 2). The step from liberalism to liberal cosmopolitanism was a logical one. Vargas Llosa argues that people should be as free as things to move around—no frontiers for people—which is a very cosmopolitan attitude.

Characters Making History

History is another lens through which to view Vargas Llosa’s works. In the article “Mario Vargas Llosa et le démon de l’histoire—Entre histoire et narration” (Mario Vargas Llosa and the Demon of History—Between History and Narration), Christian Giudicelli argues that, although it has been thoroughly studied, setting is not everything in Vargas Llosa’s oeuvre.¹⁰ He argues that history should be used to assess the novelist’s evolution, claiming that “Quarante années d’écriture soulignent une sorte de constance, le retour régulier de l’Histoire et une tendance marquée à transformer l’historique en narratif” (“Forty years of writing reveal a constant of sorts: the perpetual reappearance of History and a marked tendency to transform the historic into narrative”; 189). This *tendance marquée* (“marked tendency”) is a feature not only of Vargas Llosa’s works, but more broadly of Latin American authors of his generation. The fact that Vargas Llosa

has written many historical novels is unsurprising, considering that it is a literary genre that has been, and still is, particularly dominant in Latin America. However, his historical novels do not fit neatly into either Georg Lukács's definition of the classical historical novel or Seymour Menton's assessment of its postmodern evolution in Latin America.

In *The Historical Novel* (1955), Lukács defines the genre as pedagogical in nature, in that it makes the reader reflect on a historical past and seeks a certain degree of accuracy: it “has to *demonstrate* by *artistic* means that historical circumstances and characters existed in precisely such-and-such a way” (43). The best way to tell a story in an authentic manner is to do it through a secondary character that did not partake in the historical events being recounted, and to avoid romanticizing these characters (42). Marginalized secondary characters are then the vessel of the narration; they see history happen before their eyes, but are not part of it—they only witness it. In Lukács's understanding, historical novels are humanist by nature, since they teach and educate readers about different historical contexts.

In *Latin America's New Historical Novel* (1993), Menton rearticulated Lukács's theories of the classical historical novel to elaborate a view that would be specific to the contemporary production of Latin America.¹¹ According to Menton, the publication of Alejo Carpentier's *El reino de este mundo* (*The Kingdom of this World*) in 1949 marked the emergence of this new historical novel. Its main characteristics include “the subordination . . . of the mimetic recreation of a given historical period to the illustration of . . . philosophical ideas.” According to Menton, “these ideas are a) the impossibility of ascertaining the true nature of reality or history; b) the cyclical nature of history; and c) the unpredictability of history.” This includes “the conscious distortion of history through omissions, exaggerations, and anachronisms” and “the utilization of famous historical characters as protagonists” (22–3).¹² This new articulation, then, differs from Lukács's since the historical context is distorted to fit the needs of the author—not everything is perfectly accurate, as in Lukács's formulation—and the protagonists are actual historical characters, not bystanders who watch as history is being made. Nevertheless, most of the characters do not actively try to change the course of history.

For Giudicelli, two major cycles can be observed in Vargas Llosa's body of work, and contrary to what Kristal claims, they are not delineated politically. "Avec le recul des ans," he maintains, "on peut constater que sa production romanesque oscille entre deux pôles principaux, le roman dans l'histoire immédiate ou le roman à la recherche de l'histoire en tant que flot événementiel connu et constitué" ("looking back over the years, we can see that his literary production oscillates between two main poles, the novel set within immediate history, or the novel in search of history as a known and constituted stream"; "Mario Vargas Llosa et le démon de l'histoire" 190). On the one hand, works such as *Historia de Mayta* (*The Real Life of Alejandro Mayta*; 1984) or *Lituma en los Andes* (*Death in the Andes*; 1993) "s'enracin[ent] dans le présent de leur énonciation" ("are rooted in the present of their enunciation"; 190); although not necessarily historical novels in the strictest sense of the definition, it could be argued that they make good use of the historical materials available to the author. On the other, *La guerra del fin del mundo* (1981) or *La fiesta del Chivo* (*The Feast of the Goat*; 2000) reflect on the historical past, using it as a means to improve the historical narrative, since, as Vargas Llosa has explained, "la literatura cuenta la historia que la historia que escriben los historiadores no sabe ni puede contar" ("Literature recounts the history that the history written by the historians would not know how, or be able, to write"; *La verdad de las mentiras* 14, "The Truth of Lies" 326). Literature, then, is a means to counter *las insuficiencias de la historia* ("the insufficiencies of history"). Historical fictions are not less true than historiography; they only present a different version of the past.

Now that the political and ideological underpinnings of Mario Vargas Llosa's oeuvre have been established, we can explore how this understanding applies to specific novels. Both *El Paraíso en la otra esquina* and *El sueño del celta* are set in the historical past; they also present cosmopolitan characters with ties to Peru who become aware of the depth of their cosmopolitan vision while in the country. Although the narratives are set in the past, the ideas explored are contemporary; the remoteness of history and the proximity of contemporary ideas are intertwined. This also reveals an interest on the part of the author in retelling the past to engage with the present through the perspective of past lives and trajectories. The wave of globalization at the end of the twentieth century triggered novels

about internationalism, nationalism, and cosmopolitanism; yet, these novels never propose a solution to the problems they highlight. *El Paraíso en la otra esquina* and *El sueño del celta* also present their characters at a point in their lives when all hope is lost, implying that the utopia of cosmopolitanism is hard to achieve in reality. As long as the characters are striving to embody the philosophical implications of the concept without also understanding its inherent limitations, they are bound to fail. Both novels present their characters as death is closing in on them: “cette dernière étape d’une vie à chaque fois consacrée à un enjeu qui la dépasse est présentée comme une *course à la mort*” (“this final act of a life devoted to a greater cause is presented every time as *a race toward death*”; Lefort 67), meaning that the three protagonists—Flora Tristán, Paul Gauguin, and Roger Casement—are trying to cheat death to attain their goals.

The two novels I analyze in this chapter are also, to date, two of Vargas Llosa’s more explicit explorations of cosmopolitanism; it is no coincidence, then, that both are historical novels. It would appear that this is his chosen genre for portraying extremism, and to address philosophical ideas—in this case the cosmopolitan question and its intricacies. Indeed, these novels openly grapple with global concerns and depict characters who are actively trying to undo either the patriarchy or the colonial legacy. They also concentrate on travelling, and how travel can awaken a passion for one’s fellow human beings and broaden one’s horizons. Venturing outside a known culture and historical circumstances leads to envisioning other possibilities, expanding horizons, and embracing a desire to change how we engage with our culture and the wider world. In Vargas Llosa’s narratives, cosmopolitanism is acquired abroad but realized at home. Interestingly, this mirrors his own trajectory, as portrayed in *La tía Julia y el escribidor*.

Cosmopolitanism and Internationalism in *El Paraíso en la otra esquina*

El Paraíso en la otra esquina presents cosmopolitanism as a grounded utopia; it is fuelled by dreams of change, but nevertheless bound to disappoint. The novel spans the nineteenth century, ranging from France to French Polynesia, and tells the story of two historical figures that left a mark in

their respective spheres: the social activist Flora Tristan, who worked toward a proletarian remapping of the world order, and her grandson, the painter Paul Gauguin, who, paradoxically, needed to escape European decadence in order to create European art.¹³ In a narration reminiscent of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, *El Paraíso en la otra esquina* interweaves the destinies of these two characters, draws parallels between them, and highlights certain paradoxes. Born into wealth, Tristán's life turns into a nightmare when her father dies when she is a young child, leaving her and her mother penniless and forced to fend for themselves. At a young age, Tristán must therefore start to work. Eventually, she marries her boss, André Chazal, a man who shows little respect for his wife and children. Outraged by this treatment, and most of all by the fact that it is not punishable by law, she abandons her husband and two daughters to travel to Peru in search of her ancestors. Her ultimate goal is to secure an allowance for herself and her daughters—although she does not tell her family in Peru, for that might hurt her chances. Rejected by her Peruvian family, she returns to France, and motivated by all the hardships she has faced, turns to social activism. In fact, it is her Peruvian experience that cements her social commitment, and awakens her to the possibility of social activism and proletarian internationalism.

One of Flora Tristán's daughters is the mother of Paul Gauguin, the son who, in spite of a flourishing career as a stockbroker, turns to art. Like his grandmother, Gauguin also has strong ties to Peru; at an early age, his family migrates to the country from France to escape social unrest. Years later, upon returning to France, he would refer to this period of his life as the first time he felt like a "savage," a primitive state he believed he needed in order to paint. It is at the moment when Gauguin is dedicated to his true passion—painting—that he experiences the greatest changes: to fulfill his drive to create groundbreaking art, he travels to several parts of Europe, including the southern French city of Arles, where he lives with his friend, the painter Vincent Van Gogh; he finally settles in Polynesia, where he produces most of his paintings. Both Flora and her grandson Paul are passionate beings who fight for their ideals, but while Flora's main opponents are patriarchal society and the general apathy of workers, Paul enjoys a life full of love and passion in his search for pure art.

The novel is divided into twenty-two chapters; the odd-numbered ones are dedicated to Flora Tristán, while the even-numbered ones concentrate on Paul Gauguin. This symmetrical structure allows for the parallel evolution of both characters, and for Gauguin to refer to his grandmother's work and compare it to his own. Tristán's story starts in Auxerre, France, in 1844, Gauguin's in Mataiea, French Polynesia, in 1892; both their lives are recounted through various flashbacks and memories. An omniscient narrator recounts the story, but the narration is frequently altered by the interruptions of a second-person narrator. Interpretations vary as to what purpose these breaks serve: the ambivalent use of *tú* could either be the internal voices of the characters talking to themselves, or a highly informal way for the narrative voice to address the characters. Either way, it fosters intimacy, and some insight into Tristán's and Gauguin's thinking processes, as well as the narrator's positioning vis-à-vis either of them; the reader gets to see their minds at work.¹⁴ During these short moments, the reader gains insight into the characters' thoughts. In this way, that narrative voice is part of an ongoing dialogue with Tristán and Gauguin: it questions their choice of actions or expresses outright disapproval; it is sometimes a voice of reason, but also an empathetic and often consoling one.

Current articulations of cosmopolitanism emphasize that any cosmopolitan individual belongs first and foremost to a nation. Cosmopolitanism, then, is a dual stance between one's nation and one's desire to reach out to the world. Isaac Sanzana Inzunza describes two kinds of cosmopolitanism: a formal, universalist one and an imagined one. He holds that there is a significant discrepancy between this first type, which is grounded in philosophy, and possible cosmopolitanism, which he describes as "aleatorio, propio a las culturas, esto es, interculturalista" ("accidental, pertaining to cultures, in other words, intercultural"). In sum, the latter form might be termed concrete cosmopolitanism: "La metáfora adecuada para representar este tipo de cosmopolitismo, sería la del 'viaje' (en el sentido clásico y estricto). . . . El viaje que proponemos es aquel que siempre implica cambios, transfiguraciones, encuentros y aprendizajes" ("The most appropriate metaphor to represent this type of cosmopolitanism would be that of travel [in the classic and strict sense]. . . . The travel that we propose is one that always implies change, transfiguration, encounters and learning"; 2). By contrast, the first type of cosmopolitanism—formal

and universalist—is closely related to utopia, and hence can only exist in the realm of ideas. However, concrete cosmopolitanism, constructed by travels and encounters, is within reach of individuals with an open mind. While Tristán's and Gauguin's cosmopolitan stances are widely acknowledged, few scholars have explored the complexities of the characters' quests around the globe.

Tristán's and Gauguin's search for a utopian location and their cosmopolitan outlook, as well as their contributions to a revolution in, respectively, socialist politics and modern art, have been widely noted, although not systematically studied. For instance, in "Cosmopolitismo y hospitalidad en *El Paraíso en la otra esquina*, de Mario Vargas Llosa" ("Cosmopolitanism and Hospitality in Mario Vargas Llosa's *The Way to Paradise*"), Ricardo Gutiérrez Mouat states that the characters, as portrayed in the novel, are cosmopolitan individuals who have travelled and explored the world, and are a source of change in their milieu. Nevertheless, he posits that their differences lie in the type of cosmopolitanism they display: Tristán embodies what he calls *cosmopolitismo de la igualdad* ("a cosmopolitanism of equality") while her narrative counterpart, Gauguin, thrives on *cosmopolitismo de la diferencia* ("a cosmopolitanism of difference"). They share not only certain cosmopolitan traits, but also a longing for utopia that culminates in their demise. While the social militant is pursuing a utopian ideal, concretely rooted in a form of cosmopolitan socialism, the painter is looking for a lost paradise, the search for which leads him to the edge of colonialism and nationalism, stances he once despised. However, in my view, it is Tristán's engagement with other cultures that underscores, to use Gutiérrez Mouat's proposition, her *cosmopolitismo de la igualdad*. But unlike Gutiérrez Mouat, I contend that she also exhibits *cosmopolitismo de la diferencia*. During her travels to Peru, she becomes cosmopolitan through acknowledging difference, and also through interacting with such difference, be it with strong female military figures such as the Mariscala, her own extended family, or Peruvians in general. Only then, after this close contact with difference, does she embrace cosmopolitanism. In this, Tristán undergoes a major transformation: from a young, rather self-centred woman, to a strong promoter of equality between cultures, genders, and classes. Gauguin, by this measure, is not cosmopolitan at all.

The quest for a perfect place arises from the outset with the very title of the novel. The title “viene de un juego de niños que existe prácticamente en todas partes del mundo, aunque con pequeñas variantes. Los niños buscan un lugar que es imposible de encontrar, es como un espejismo que desaparece cuando uno se va a acercarlo a él” (“comes from a child’s game that exists practically everywhere in the world, although with small variations. Children search for a place that is impossible to find, it is like a mirage that disappears whenever one begins to approach it”; Vargas Llosa qtd. in Camín). Vargas Llosa’s explanation highlights that this search for paradise is universal but doomed, as he acknowledges that paradise can never be found where one seeks it. Ultimately, the title implies that there is no way that such a perfect place can be reached, since it is bound to recede as the seeker approaches. From the outset, *el juego del paraíso* appears as the leitmotif for both characters.

Flora remembers playing the game as a child in Vaugirard, France, in the mansion where she was born, and later witnessing it in Arequipa as an adult:

Cuando regresaba al albergue por las callecitas curvas y adoquinadas de Auxerre, vio . . . a un grupo de niñas que jugaban . . . al Paraíso, ese juego que, según tu madre, habías jugado en los jardines de Vaugirard con amiguitas de la vecindad. . . . ¿Te acordabas, Florita? «¿Es aquí el Paraíso?» «No, señorita, en la otra esquina.» . . . Recordó la impresión de aquel día en Arequipa, el año 1833, cerca de la iglesia de la Merced, cuando, de pronto, se encontró con un grupo de niños y niñas que correteaban en el zaguán de una casa profunda. «¿Es aquí el Paraíso?» «En la otra esquina, mi señor.» Ese juego que creías francés resultó también peruano. Bueno, qué tenía de raro, ¿no era una aspiración universal llegar al Paraíso? (Vargas Llosa, *Paraíso* 18–19)

As she was returning to the inn along the winding cobbled streets of Auxerre, she saw . . . a group of girls playing . . . the game called Paradise, which, according to your mother, you used to play in the gardens of Vaugirard with other

little girls from the neighborhood. . . . Did you remember, Florita? “Is this the way to Paradise?” “No, miss, try the next corner.” . . . She remembered the surprise she felt one day in Arequipa in 1883, near the church of La Merced, when all of a sudden she came upon a group of boys and girls running around the courtyard of a big house. “Is this the way to Paradise?” “Try the next corner, sir.” The game you thought was French turned out to be Peruvian too. And why not? Didn’t everyone dream of reaching Paradise? (*The Way to Paradise* 11)¹⁵

Paul, two generations later, also remembers the game, to which he is exposed on various occasions during his life, among others in Arequipa, as a child, and shortly before his death, in the Marquesas Islands:

Pero inmediatamente adivinó qué juego era ése, qué preguntaba la niña «de castigo» saltando de una a otra compañerita del círculo y cómo era rechazada siempre con el mismo estribillo:

—¿Es aquí el Paraíso?

—No, señorita, aquí no. Vaya y pregunte en la otra esquina.

. . . Por segunda vez en el día, sus ojos se llenaron de lágrimas. . . . ¿Por qué te enternecía descubrir que estas niñas marquesanas jugaban al juego del Paraíso, ellas también? Porque, viéndolas, la memoria te devolvió . . . tu propia imagen . . . correteando también, como niño «de castigo», en el centro de un círculo de primitas y primitos y niños . . . preguntando en tu español limeño, «¿Es aquí el Paraíso?», «No, en la otra esquina, señor, pregunte allá.» (466–7)

But he immediately guessed what game it was, and what the girl in the middle asked as she skipped from one child to the

other in the circle, and was always rebuffed with the same refrain.

“Is this the way to Paradise?”

“No, miss, go and ask on the next corner.”

. . . For the second time that day, his eyes filled with tears. . . Why did it move you to discover that these Marquesan girls played the game called Paradise, too? Because seeing them, a picture had formed in your memory . . . of yourself . . . also running back and forth in the center of a circle of cousins and children . . . asking in your Limeñan Spanish, “Is this the way to Paradise?” “No, try the next corner, sir; ask there.” (435–6)

Ultimately, the universality of the game—“no era una aspiración universal llegar al Paraíso?” (19) (“Didn’t everyone dream of reaching Paradise?”; 11)—poses the leitmotif of the novel as the universal search for the unattainable, and the ensuing engagement with cultures around the world to find it. This quest for the impossible is reminiscent of Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516), in which he describes a remote yet paradisiacal island on which a perfect society—that is, an alternative to the one he knew—has come to exist. Naturally, this non-place embodies an intrinsic ambivalence: it is utopian because it is longed for, but as soon as it can be grasped its perfection is bound to fade. Utopia, or *el Paraíso*, then, is an aspiration for a better life, which cannot be achieved.

As mentioned earlier, utopia and cosmopolitanism appear to be accessible by travel; it is, then, of the utmost importance to understand the evolution of the novel’s protagonists. Through a double narration that alternates from one dreamer to the other, *El Paraíso en la otra esquina* presents two characters who are polar opposites yet who are defined by their trajectories around the globe. They share similar experiences with regards to their travels, which have shaped them into who they are. Accordingly, they have an interest in the foreign: “Por lo menos en eso coincidías con las locuras internacionalistas de la abuela Flora, Koke. Dónde se nacía era

un accidente; la verdadera patria uno la elegía, con su cuerpo y su alma” (151). (“In that respect you shared your grandmother Flora’s internationalist manias, Koké. A person’s birthplace was an accident; his true homeland he chose himself, body and spirit”; 135).¹⁶ Even if they express it and live it in radically different manners, their trajectories are intrinsically cosmopolitan.

In Varga Llosa’s novel, Tristán’s character undergoes a transformative experience that leads her from Eurocentrism to cosmopolitanism. However good they turn out to be, at first her actions are not those of a true cosmopolitan individual, but rather the result of her direct contact with other cultures. Indeed, when she travels to Arequipa in 1833–34 to meet with her grandfather, Don Pío de Tristán, she does so because her life in France has become a nightmare. Separated from her husband, and alone with her children, she has no permanent place to live and is forced to tell everyone she meets that she is a widow for fear that she will be forced to send the children back to their father. In 1829, she meets Captain Zacharie Chabrié, who later helps her contact her Peruvian family. That same year, she sends a letter to Don Pío de Tristán y Moscoco, her paternal uncle, asking him for financial assistance. He grants her a monthly allowance but refuses categorically to give her the inheritance she deems to be hers, since there is no document proving that she is the legitimate daughter of Don Mariano de Tristán. Furious, she then starts planning her journey to Peru, during which she hopes to convince her family of her birthright. She idealizes the voyage to her father’s land, hoping that her grandfather will recognize her as a true Tristán and grant the inheritance. She longs for

[el] encuentro [con sus] parientes paternos, con la esperanza de que, además de recibir[la] con los brazos abiertos y dar[le] un nuevo hogar, [le] entregaran el quinto de la herencia de [su] padre. Así se resolverían todos [sus] problemas económicos, saldría de la pobreza, podría educar a [sus] hijos y tener una existencia tranquila, a salvo de necesidades y de riesgos, sin temor de caer en las garras de André Chazal. (176)

the meeting with [her] father's family, [she] hoped that not only would they welcome [her] with open arms and give [her] a new home, they would turn over to [her] a fifth part of [her] father's fortune. Then all [her] money problems would be solved, [she] would no longer be poor, [she] could educate [her] children and lead a peaceful life free of want and risk, and never again fear falling into the clutches of André Chazal. (158)

Accordingly, her trip to Latin America is motivated by her critical financial situation. To convince her family to fund her travels, she even omits key information about herself—namely, her marital situation and the very existence of her three young children. She rightfully fears that her plans would be doomed before she even leaves France. During her stay in the land of her father, she visits orphanages and convents, and becomes aware of other people's poverty and dire situations. She is also inspired to change the social order, and specifically the status of women, by Doña Francisca Zubiaga de Gamarra, also known as La Mariscala (the Lady Marshal), the wife of President Augustín Gamarra, “un personaje cuya aureola de aventura y leyenda [la] fascinó desde que [oyó] hablar de ella por primera vez” (273) (a woman who “possessed an aura of adventure and legend that had fascinated you ever since you first heard talk of her”; 249). La Mariscala becomes her role model, the kind she never had in France. Her short stay in Lima exposes Tristán to more of the world than she would have thought possible, and awakens her to new realities:

Curiosa ciudad esta capital del Perú, que, pese a tener sólo unos ochenta mil pobladores, no podía ser más cosmopolita. Por sus callecitas cortadas por acequias donde los vecinos echaban las basuras y vaciaban sus bacinicas, se paseaban marineros de barcos anclados en el Callao procedentes de medio mundo, ingleses, norteamericanos, holandeses, franceses, alemanes, asiáticos, de modo que, cada vez que salía a visitar los innumerables conventos e iglesias coloniales, o a dar vueltas a la Plaza Mayor, costumbre sa-

grada de los elegantes, Flora oía a su alrededor más idiomas que en los bulevares de París. (318)

An odd city this Peruvian capital. Though its population was only eighty thousand, it could not have been more cosmopolitan. Along its little streets, intersected by channels into which residents tossed their refuse and emptied their chamberpots, there passed sailors from ships anchored in the harbor of Callao, hailing from all over the world—English, Americans, Dutch, French, Germans, Orientals—so that when Flora went outside to visit the countless colonial monasteries, and churches, or walk around the Plaza Mayor, a sacred pastime of the well-dressed, she heard more languages than she had on the boulevards of Paris. (291–2)

At that point in her life Tristán understands Lima as a cosmopolitan city, and even a global one, because it is a crossroads where cultures meet and interact. In this sense, she has yet to fully add all the social layers to her cosmopolitan commitment. She develops a cosmopolitan outlook in Peru—the European becomes cosmopolitan in Latin America, thus embodying the true spirit of unprejudiced discovery and opening. In fact, Peru's capital is her first cosmopolitan school.¹⁷

This scene is reminiscent of modern globalization, further reinforcing my contention that Vargas Llosa's rearticulation of the historical novel is triggered by discussions about globalization, world government, and nationalist backlashes. Here, the reader can infer that Lima is used as a metaphor for the current world order. Lima is not only cosmopolitan; it is also a vision of liberal Peru in the nineteenth century—a period of openness to commerce and foreign influence.¹⁸

In Peru, Tristán discovers otherness and equality, and it is her engagement with other cultures that leads her to develop both her *cosmopolitismo de la igualdad* and her *cosmopolitismo de la diferencia*. Later, she further develops her cosmopolitan sensibilities in England, where she works as a housemaid, but where she also visits brothels and factories as an observer. Her journey to London teaches her about the similarities in working conditions across Europe, or even the world, and that the abuse

by the rich has to be stopped: “Flora se dedicó a estudiarlo todo . . . para mostrar al mundo cómo, detrás de esa fachada de prosperidad, lujo y poderío, anidaban la más abyecta explotación, las peores iniquidades, y una humanidad doliente padecía villanías y abusos a fin de hacer posible la vertiginosa riqueza de un puñado de aristócratas y propietarios” (401) (“spent studying everything . . . to show the world that, behind the facade of prosperity, luxury, and power, there lurked the most abject exploitation, the worst evils, and a suffering humanity enduring cruelty and abuse in order to make possible the dizzying wealth of a handful of aristocrats and industrialists”; 373). Even if she detests her experience in England, and particularly London, she is aware that her vision of universal charity was born out of her various stays on that side of the English Channel:

tenías que reconocer que, sin ese país, sin los trabajadores ingleses, escoceses e irlandeses, probablemente nunca hubieras llegado a darte cuenta de que la única manera de emancipar a la mujer y conseguir para ella la igualdad con el hombre, era hermanando su lucha a la de los obreros, las otras víctimas, los otros explotados, la inmensa mayoría de la humanidad. (402)

you had to admit that without it and its English, Scottish, and Irish workers, you would probably never have come to realize that the only way to achieve emancipation for women and win them equal rights was by linking their struggle to that of the workers, society’s other victims, the downtrodden, the earth’s immense majority. (374)

She reluctantly admits that her experience abroad, be it working for the Spence family or investigating and documenting the factory workers’ precarious living conditions, opened her eyes and expanded her field of action. Consequently, her universalist project is informed by difference, since it seeks to create conditions of equality in different cultures. In fact, there can be no true universal utopia without proper appreciation of the various cultures involved in its creation. Tristán will therefore promote

her dreams of gender and economic equality only after becoming a true cosmopolitan.

The views that Vargas Llosa's Flora Tristán holds on cosmopolitanism are partially rooted in the Stoics' teachings. As a young woman she declares that "nuestra patria debe ser el universo" (352) ("the universe should be our nation"; 325), thus rejecting the idea of limiting herself to changing only her nation and displaying a vision that encompasses all human beings. In opposition to most thinkers of her time, whom she engages in heated debates (both real and imaginary), Tristán acknowledges that all human beings are created equal, regardless of culture or gender. Her *Union ouvrière* (*The Workers' Union*), an essay in which she advocates for the liberation of women and the working class, is an inclusive project that leaves no one behind. However, even if she dreams of a global workers' revolution, she must start, in true cosmopolitan spirit, within her own country: France.

From the outset, the novel emphasizes the French activist's rejection of her contemporary universe. She is portrayed as a resolute woman who has but one objective in mind: to change France, if not the world. She is not daunted by the prospect of failure; her one goal is to build a new world order, and as such she believes that it is time for concrete actions. She is single-minded, driving herself to the point of exhaustion: "Abrió los ojos a las cuatro de la madrugada y pensó: «Hoy comienzas a cambiar el mundo, Florita». No la abrumaba la perspectiva de poner en marcha la maquinaria que al cabo de algunos años transformaría a la humanidad, desapareciendo la injusticia. Se sentía tranquila, con fuerzas para enfrentar los obstáculos que le saldrían al paso" (11) ("She opened her eyes at four in the morning and thought, Today you begin to change the world, Florita. Undaunted by the prospect of setting in motion the machinery that in a matter of years would transform humanity and eliminate injustice, she felt calm, strong enough to face the obstacles ahead of her"; 3). Through her travels in Latin America and Europe, she becomes aware of the growing injustice plaguing the world. Her unwavering resolution, fuelled by her personal utopia, knows no limit. For Madame-la-Colère, as the narrator alternatively calls her, political commitment is more important than anything else in her life; in Vargas Llosa's own conceptualization, the "obsesión matemática de todas las utopías delata lo que quieren suprimir: la

irracionalidad, lo instintivo, todo aquello que conspira contra la lógica y la razón” (“mathematical obsession of all utopias betrays what they want to suppress: irrationality, instinct, everything that conspires against logic and reason”; *Verdad de las mentiras* 136). Tristán embodies this *obsesión matemática*: for instance, she rejects the painter Jules Laure’s declaration of love, and she deems it necessary to leave her female lover, Olympia. In Flora’s opinion, close-knit human relationships, in forming a bond between two individuals, are deeply egotistical. They cannot, therefore, be more important than her ideal of justice and social change: “Le dijo, de manera categórica, que no insistiera: su misión, su lucha, eran incompatibles con una pasión amorosa. Ella, para dedicarse en cuerpo y alma a cambiar la sociedad, había renunciado a la vida sentimental” (*Paraíso* 367) (“She told him categorically that he must not insist: her mission, her struggle, were incompatible with passionate love. In order to devote herself entirely to reforming society, she had renounced affairs of the heart”; 338–9). This echoes Vargas Llosa himself, who in one essay mentions that “En la mayoría de las utopías . . . el sexo se reprime y sirve sólo para la reproducción. . . . Los utopistas suelen ser puritanos que proponen el ascetismo pues ven en el placer individual una fuente de infelicidad social” (“In most utopias . . . sex is repressed and serves only for reproduction. . . . Utopians are usually puritans who propose asceticism because they see in individual pleasure a source of social unhappiness”; *Verdad de las mentiras* 133). On her path to universal freedom, Tristán, then, puts her own desires on the back burner; her collectivist ideas are more important than she is. Even after finding love with Olympia Maleszewska, an artist who understands her and with whom she could have had a meaningful, albeit secret, relationship, she deems that the fate of women and workers is more important than her own happiness: “Y esta relación [with the workers] no tendría el sesgo excluyente y egoísta que tuvieron tus amores con Olympia—por eso los cortaste, renunciando a la única experiencia sexual placentera de tu vida, Florita—; por el contrario, se sustentaría en el amor compartido por la justicia y la acción social” (*Paraíso* 130) (“And your relationship . . . would not have the exclusivist and egotistic slant that your affair with Olympia had had [which is why you ended it, giving up the only pleasurable sexual experience of your life, Florita]; on the contrary, it would be sustained by a shared love for justice and social action”;

116). In her mind, the love between two individuals is egotistical and lacks the collective dimension required to change the world; sacrificing love for revolution, then, is proof of altruism.

In denying (repressing?) the basic human need for meaningful relationships, she paves the way for her grandson, who ends up following the same path. “Both protagonists have suffered the traumatic experience of being expelled from a childhood paradise,” claims Sabine Köllman; “in Flora’s case through her father’s death when she was five years old, in Paul’s through his mother remarrying and sending him off to boarding school. But neither of them had any scruples about abandoning their own families in order to pursue their projects, thus perpetuating a cycle of traumatic life experiences” (246). History, in other words, repeats itself.

Indeed, Gauguin’s search for paradise is ruthless and leaves no place for anyone else. He is willing to abandon almost anyone with whom he has been involved for the sake of his art, be it his wife and children or his friends. While his grandmother is shown to understand human relationships as an impediment to grand social change, the artist perceives them as a waste of time, even considering them detrimental to his artistic production: “En 1888 ya habías llegado a la conclusión de que el amor, a la manera occidental, era un estorbo, que, para un artista, el amor debía tener el exclusivo contenido físico y sensual que tenía para los primitivos, no afectar los sentimientos, el alma” (Vargas Llosa, *Paraíso* 290) (“By 1888 you had come to the conclusion that Western-style love was a hindrance; that love, for artists, should be exclusively physical and sensual, as it was for primitive peoples, that it should not involve the emotions or the soul”; 265). After leaving for Polynesia a second time, Gauguin is fully aware that he and his wife, Mette Gad, will never be together again, nor will he ever be reunited with his children. This seems to be of little importance to him since his stay in French Polynesia allows him to produce great art. Like his grandmother, Gauguin seeks cosmopolitanism without taking his inner circle into consideration. However, whereas Tristán openly works on a universalist project, one that could improve workers’ lives, Gauguin is looking for utopia through an individual project. This is, ultimately, incompatible with cosmopolitanism.

Gauguin’s stance is in complete opposition to the very definitions of utopia and cosmopolitanism, two projects that seek to transcend

egocentrism. Hence, Gauguin's vision of paradise breaks from most theoretical visions that had been formulated previously: it implies neither a collective experience nor redemption. In his rejection of the world, he shares the views of the Greek Cynics, who claimed that organized civilization was man's main problem, and that a return to a natural state—Gauguin's primitive state—would provide the solution. The Cynics' views on cosmopolitanism are of primary importance to understanding Gauguin's character. His utopian quest is undermined by the sheer selfishness of his actions; the negation of others, including family, undercuts the very notion of a collective paradise.

Louisa Shea explains, in *The Cynic Enlightenment*, that the Cynics were “fiercely opposed to any form of theoretical abstraction or institutional organization and famous for defying all codes of decency” (ix). Their main target “was the parochialism of civic and national attachments” (16). By living at the margins of society, they sought to purge themselves from the *polis* itself, but also of social ties of any sort; Shea describes their cosmopolitanism as “the refusal to pay homage to a transient, man-made system of laws; the refusal to contribute to society through work or political office; the refusal to abide by the laws and customs of the polis; the refusal to respect religious rituals, as well as local traditions” (76–7). Just as the Cynics aimed to remove themselves from society in order to criticize it with a fresh perspective, so does Gauguin, fleeing to Polynesia, in order to remove himself from European society, which he considers to be “corrompida por el becerro de oro” (Vargas Llosa, *Paraíso* 245) (“corrupt[ed] by the golden calf”; 222). Later on, he freely admits that Europe's contamination of Oceania is despicable, and has transformed his quest into a failure: “la sustitución de la cultura primitiva por la europea ya había herido de muerte los centros vitales de aquella civilización superior, de la que apenas quedaban miserables restos. Por eso, debía partir” (209) (“the displacement of primitive culture by European ways had already dealt a death blow to the vital core of the island's higher civilization, of which just a few miserable shreds remained. That was why he had to leave”; 190).

Yet, wherever Gauguin goes, he is always dissatisfied with what he finds, for he is looking for a perfect culture in exclusivist terms, a culture untouched by other cultures, which contradicts the very premise of cosmopolitanism. His many travels—to Denmark, Martinique, Panama,

and the Marquesas Islands, incidentally covering a greater span than his grandmother—never lead him to develop a truly cosmopolitan outlook on life; he prefers instead a personal, even egotistical, search for a primitive state as the basis for his artistic vision. This journey cannot be cosmopolitan, for it begins with a denial of his own European culture. He looks for the perfect society that would correspond to his impossibly high ideals of perfection,¹⁹ which he has been seeking for a long time:

Él buscaba eso desde que se sacudió la costra burguesa en la que estaba atrapado desde la infancia, y llevaba un cuarto de siglo siguiendo el rastro de ese mundo paradisiaco, sin encontrarlo. Lo había buscado en la Bretaña tradicionalista y católica, orgullosa de su fe y sus costumbres, pero ya la habían mancillado los turistas pintores y el modernismo occidental. Tampoco lo encontró en Panamá, ni en la Martinica, ni aquí, en Tahití. . . . Apenas reuniera algo de dinero tomaría un barquito a las Marquesas. (209)

He had been seeking all this since he broke free of the bourgeois shell binding him since childhood, and he had spent a fruitless quarter of a century on the trail of that earthly paradise. He had looked for it in tradition-bound, Catholic Brittany, proud of its faith and customs, but there it was already sullied by tourist painters and Western modernism. Nor had he found it in Panama, Martinique, or here in Tahiti. . . . As soon as he got some money together, he would buy a ticket for the Marquesas. (189–90)

However, by definition, utopia can only be a project, a symbolic place that exists solely in thought and the imagination. It cannot, under any circumstances, become reality. As Allemand emphasizes, “l’utopie, on ne peut pas la vivre (il y a contradiction dans les termes); on peut seulement l’imaginer” (“we cannot experience utopia [there is a contradiction in the terms], we can only imagine it”; 8). Moreover, Ernst Bloch stresses, in *L’esprit de l’utopie* (*The Spirit of Utopia*), how crucial it is to differentiate between the ideal—the utopia—and the idealization—the realization of

such a utopia. Therefore, the problem in Gauguin's quest is simply to think that utopia is bound by place, that it has a specific locality upon which he will eventually stumble. His quest, then, becomes an attempt to travel to this very locality, which can only disappoint him once he reaches it.

One of Gauguin's major flaws is that he shows little to no respect for the different places where he is seeking paradise, or to his fellow human beings in general, making his quest, in Appiah's terms, hardly cosmopolitan. For instance, even if he knows how contagious syphilis is—Doctor Lagrange, although uncomfortable, does not shy away from reminding him: “Usted sabe, también, que ésta es una enfermedad muy contagiosa. . . . Sobre todo, si se tienen relaciones sexuales. En ese caso, la transmisión del mal es inevitable” (Vargas Llosa, *Paraíso* 168) (“You know, too, that this is a very serious illness. . . . Especially if one has sexual intercourse. In that case, the transmission of the malady is inevitable”; 152)—he keeps having sexual intercourse with his many wives and girlfriends, thus spreading the disease. Not only does he reject Europe, he effectively spurns Tahiti's culture as well through his destructive and reprehensible behaviour.

Another example of his lack of respect appears when, while in Papeete, he leads a quasi-revolution against what he considers to be a Chinese invasion of the island. Most people, including his inner circle, disagree with the revolution Gauguin tries to stage: “Cuando Paul convocó . . . un mitin del Partido Católico contra «la invasión de los chinos», muchas personas, entre ellas su amigo y vecino de Punaauia, el ex soldado Pierre Levergos y hasta Pau'ura, su mujer, concluyeron que el pintor excéntrico y escandaloso se había acabado de loquear” (279) (“When Paul called a meeting . . . against ‘the Chinese invasion,’ many people, among them the ex-soldier Pierre Levergos, his Punaauia friend and neighbor, and even Pau'ura, his wife, concluded that the eccentric, scandal-rousing painter had finally lost his mind”; 254). What Gauguin fails to see is that the so-called Chinese invaders moved to Polynesia a long time before he arrived. He has no right to criticize their presence on the island, and being a foreigner with no official ties to Polynesia whatsoever, he is an intruder himself. He is unable to admit that the culture of the island has been shaped for over a century by the presence of the Chinese. His aversion to another people and their culture constitutes a denial of cosmopolitan ideals. It renders him narrow-minded and distances him from his ideal, which is to be open

to the possibilities offered by encounters with other cultures. He reverts to colonial stances about what he deems to be an inferior people, often referring to them as “savages,” which for him has the pejorative connotation that “primitive” lacks. In fact, while Gauguin is arguably in search of the primitive, he often confronts the savage, thus oscillating between an artistic utopia and a colonial ideology. While his grandmother had *locuras internacionalistas* (“internationalist manias”) that encompassed the whole of humanity and thrived on cosmopolitanism, both *de la igualdad* (“of equality”) and *de la diferencia* (“of difference”), Gauguin *se loquea* (“loses his mind”) through racism and colonialism.

Examining the characters’ commitments to others shows *El Paraíso en la otra esquina*’s particular exploration of utopia, as well as the complexity of Flora Tristán’s and Paul Gauguin’s ideological positions as depicted in the novel. While Tristán eventually develops a truly cosmopolitan attitude, especially after her time in Peru and England, her grandson never ceases to perceive travelling as a means to escape a civilization he rejects. Consequently, he never actually sets out to live up to the contemporary ideal of simultaneously acknowledging one’s nation as well as the world. Tristán and Gauguin both dedicate their whole existence to their quest for paradise: the French activist seeks to change France with her social utopias, hoping and expecting to be successful during her lifetime, while the post-Impressionist painter, for his part, keeps seeking better inspiration for his art.

Flora dies before she can spread her revolutionary gospel and witness the revolution into which she had put so much faith: “Si las cosas no habían salido mejor no había sido por falta de esfuerzo, de convicción, de heroísmo, de idealismo. Si no habían salido mejor era porque en esta vida las cosas nunca salían tan bien como en los sueños. Lástima, Florita” (459) (“If you hadn’t had more success, it wasn’t for lack of effort, conviction, heroism, or idealism. It was because things never succeed as well in this life as they do in dreams. A pity, Florita”; 429). This last intervention by the narrative voice highlights the relationship between utopia and *sueños*, hinting at the fact that Tristán’s project was doomed to failure from the beginning. Her ill-fated *Tour de France*, in which she wishes to promote her ideals and form unions, is the ultimate proof of her dedication to her collectivist project. She dies on 14 November 1844, in the house of fellow

activists in Bordeaux. She is forty-one years old. Gauguin, for his part, never seems to be able to find his paradise, even after having travelled to so many countries: “¡El juego del Paraíso! Todavía no encontrabas ese escurridizo lugar, Koke. ¿Existía? ¿Era un fuego fatuo, un espejismo?” (467) (“The game of Paradise! You had yet to find that slippery place, Koké. Was it an illusion, a mirage?”; 436). He dies without having found it.

Both Tristán and Gauguin have travelled and explored the world, which makes their trajectories cosmopolitan, but not in the sense outlined by the literary critic Gutiérrez Mouat. According to this scholar, their main difference lies in the distinct type of cosmopolitanism they display, which, I contend, is a conceptually problematic stance for Gutiérrez Mouat to take. He holds that “Flora proclama un *cosmopolitismo de la igualdad* mientras que su descendiente y contraparte narrativo aboga por un *cosmopolitismo de la diferencia*” (“Flora proclaims a cosmopolitanism of equality while her descendent and narrative counterpart defends a cosmopolitanism of difference”; 399). In this theorizing, Flora is reduced to fighting for equality for men and women, the rich and the poor, while Paul is rooted in the Cynic tradition and seeks exoticism as a counterpoint to European civilization—which is not a cosmopolitan stance at all. For Gutiérrez Mouat, Gauguin’s notion of paradise is an engagement with difference. This quest for difference is problematic, since the painter ends up transmitting venereal diseases, defending French colonization, and rejecting not only his own culture, but also the very Europe his grandmother died trying to change. In sum, on the one hand, contact and engagement with actual cultures compel Tristán to evolve, to become cosmopolitan, and eventually to include all cultures in her utopian dream. She is a cosmopolitan with a well-defined political utopia in mind. On the other hand, engagement with the concrete cultures of Oceania only pushes Gauguin to disappointment, since the concrete always leads him to abstraction, and then to the need to keep seeking its realization, ultimately in vain. Vargas Llosa’s Gauguin is really a non-cosmopolitan with an artistic utopia, the tentative achievement of which spurs him to flirt with nationalism toward the end of his life, bringing doom.

Both in Tristán’s and Gauguin’s existence, cosmopolitanism is closely related to utopia. Since utopia is by nature elsewhere, rooted in another culture that has something to teach its seeker, it shows an engagement

with other cultures and is a way of reaching out to the world. The major difference between the two concepts lies in the fact that while cosmopolitanism thrives through concrete cultures, utopia is about imagined cultures and societies. Tristán always has a positive attitude toward different cultures—she learns to love Peru, ultimately even considering it superior to France when it comes to the freedom of women, who, under the guise of a *saya y manto*—veil and mantle covering the face but for one eye—are free to roam the streets of the capital without being bothered (Vargas Llosa, *Paraíso* 319; Pratt 164). In that sense, she is a cosmopolitan who moves from the abstraction of utopia to a more concrete cosmopolitanism in her search for gender and social equality. She partially abandons the abstraction of thoughts and acts in order to improve the world. Yet, she is incapable of half measures: she is not balanced, and that causes her demise. Gauguin, by contrast, lingers in the realm of utopia and is always disappointed with concrete cultures, which never turn out to meet his expectations. Tristán's utopian and collectivist quest is the true cause of her downfall, and, according to Vargas Llosa, this is but the logical outcome of such projects: “La utopía representa una inconsciente nostalgia de esclavitud, de regreso a ese estado de total entrega y sumisión, de falta de responsabilidad, que para muchos es también una forma de felicidad y que encarna la sociedad primitiva, la colectividad ancestral, mágica, anterior al nacimiento del individuo” (“Utopia represents an unconscious nostalgia for slavery, back to that state of total surrender and submission, of lack of responsibility, which for many is also a form of happiness and which embodies primitive society, the ancient, magical collectivity prior to the birth of the individual”; *Verdad de las mentiras* 136). By putting her faith in the collectivity, she undermines her individuality, which, in Vargas Llosa's liberal thinking, can only bring doom. Yet, Gauguin's utopia, although rooted in art, is also destined to fail, for he goes to the extremes of individualism, and shows anti-cosmopolitan behaviour.

In being fuelled by utopian ideals, both Tristán and Gauguin embody Vargas Llosa's aversion to all types of extremism. However, the narrative voice is kinder toward the French social activist: she is eager to change the world, and her utopian extremism stems from her good intentions. Gauguin does not receive such a redeeming treatment from the narrator, for, in the final stage of his life, he turns to nationalism, a stance the author

despises as the worst form of extremism. Utopia can be realized in art, but as soon as Gauguin leaves his artistic realm and tries to realize his utopia concretely, he fails. Politics is, as we shall see in our exploration of Roger Casement, also a space in which utopian ideals are bound to fail.

The Fate of the Cosmopolitan Patriot in *El sueño del celta*

The characters of Antonio Conselheiro in *La Guerra del fin del mundo* and Paul Gauguin both embody, in unequivocal terms, Vargas Llosa's aversion to nationalism. He has held this position since he severed his ties with the Castro regime, and leftist ideologies generally, in 1971 after the Padilla Affair, seeing in nationalism a rejection of the foreign cultural influence he deems necessary for artistic creation, and for human development more broadly.

Although Vargas Llosa's position on nationalism appears rather unambiguous, I argue that *El sueño del celta* (2010) explores the complex nuances of the nationalist position in a manner that marks an innovation in the novelist's body of work. Still, it remains a harsh criticism of extreme ideologies. Unlike most of Vargas Llosa's narratives, which show the protagonist's shift from a local to a universal outlook, this novel explores how one of the first global human rights champions flirts with fervent nationalism, albeit only for a short period of time, before retracting his statements.

Most articles published on *El sueño del celta* read the novel as a criticism of colonialism, post-colonialism, and nationalism (Weldt-Basson; Kanev), a reading with which I agree. As indicated by Helene Carol Weldt-Basson in "El sueño del celta: Postcolonial Vargas Llosa," the novel can be read through the lens of post-colonial theory. She highlights the ambivalence present in every aspect of Casement's personality and actions. The protagonist is the epitome of post-colonial contradiction, "portrayed as both a saint and sinner, as both colonizer and colonized" (232). Casement oscillates between denouncing the atrocities committed against the Black and Indigenous populations of developing countries and stereotyping and fetishizing them for his own sexual gratification. However, the text has not been read through the lens of Vargas Llosa's cosmopolitan liberalism and

recurrent focus on individual liberty, and little attention has been given to how the narrative voice redeems the character of Roger Casement. Indeed, it is interesting to note that while Vargas Llosa's Casement rejects nationalism at the end of his life, the real-life Casement stayed true to his beliefs until the very end. He is quoted as having said, shortly before his death, "Surely [the nationalist Irish cause] is the most glorious cause in history" (Dudgeon 2). As I already mentioned, Walford argues that Vargas Llosa is ambivalent toward utopian projects (76); I add as proof that unlike the wretched failure that is Conselheiro, not only does Roger Casement "not fade into oblivion" (77), but he is also shown a certain respect by the author, and in the epilogue is offered the possibility of redemption by the narrative voice.

"Cada uno de nosotros es, sucesivamente, no *uno*, sino *muchos*. Y estas personalidades sucesivas, que emergen las unas de las otras, suelen ofrecer entre sí los más raros y asombrosos contrastes" (Vargas Llosa, *El sueño del celta* 90) ("Each one of us is, successively, not *one* but *many*. And these successive personalities that emerge one from the other tend to present the strangest, most astonishing contrasts among themselves"; *The Dream of the Celt*²⁰). And so begins *El sueño del celta*, the novel announcing even before the narrative starts that its focus will be the evolution of the character, the multiple facets of Casement's personality, and his stepwise growth. *El sueño del celta* is, in Köllman's conception of Vargas Llosa's body of work, the last—to date—in his series of "grand design novels" (223), or, as they were called during the Boom, *novelas totales*.

This historical novel lays out the nationalist drift of Irishman Roger Casement, a cosmopolitan hero turned nationalist anti-hero. A consul for the British Foreign Office during the first decades of the twentieth century, Casement became acquainted with the Irish nationalist movement later in his life, after he attempted to put an end to colonialism in various regions of the world.²¹ According to Kristal, "in Vargas Llosa's novel, Casement is transformed into a man who embraces a number of utopias and fantasies, and who reinvents himself several times as each of the dreams he embraces comes undone: the imperial dream [of civilizing Africa], the dream that human rights activism can change society, the dream of Irish nationalism, and the dream of the afterlife" ("From Utopia to Reconciliation" 143). The novel opens in 1903 in the Belgian Congo, and ends in 1916 in

Pentonville Prison, a British jail where Casement hopes to be pardoned by the king following his conviction for high treason. After a successful career in the diplomatic corps, Casement had given up his position to devote himself to the Irish cause. In 1915, Casement had formed an alliance with the Germans, then enemies of the British Empire, in a failed attempt to free Ireland during the doomed Easter Rising of 1916.

I maintain that *El sueño del celta* presents a character who makes a tragic mistake, albeit one that is somewhat justified by historical circumstances. The Irish cause that Casement embraces implicates him in a type of nationalism that traps him and makes him stray from the universalist premises that had characterized his work in Africa and Latin America. The protagonist is then forced to coexist with extreme nationalism—betraying his own principles—and becomes a tragic figure who dies without having been understood either by his compatriots or by his British enemies. In my reading of the novel, Casement embodies Vargas Llosa's ideas about the dangers of nationalism, but also the intricacies of the cosmopolitan position—namely, that engagement with other cultures can awaken a passion for one's own, as well as give space to and coexist with patriotism. The novel also portrays the cosmopolitan Casement's patriotic commitment as fraught with the dangers of nationalism. Vargas Llosa makes a distinction here between nationalism and patriotism, the latter being a stance he can reconcile with cosmopolitanism. As he himself explained in his Nobel speech,

No hay que confundir el nacionalismo de orejeras y su rechazo del “otro,” siempre semilla de violencia, con el patriotismo, sentimiento sano y generoso, de amor a la tierra donde uno vio la luz, donde vivieron sus ancestros y se forjaron los primeros sueños, paisaje familiar de geografías, seres queridos y ocurrencias que se convierten en hitos de la memoria y escudos contra la soledad. La patria no son las banderas ni los himnos, ni los discursos apodícticos sobre los héroes emblemáticos, sino un puñado de lugares y personas que pueblan nuestros recuerdos y los tiñen de melancolía, la sensación cálida de que, no importa donde estemos, existe un hogar al que podemos volver. (8)

We should not confuse a blinkered nationalism and its rejection of the “other,” always the seed of violence, with patriotism, a salutary, generous feeling of love for the land where we were born, where our ancestors lived, where our first dreams were forged, a familiar landscape of geographies, loved ones, and events that are transformed into signposts of memory and defenses against solitude. Homeland is not flags, anthems, or apodictic speeches about emblematic heroes, but a handful of places and people that populate our memories and tinge them with melancholy, the warm sensation that no matter where we are, there is a home for us to return to. (8)

Patriotism, then, can be reconciled with one’s cosmopolitan commitment, as the attachment to one’s home is a crucial aspect of rooted cosmopolitanism.

Casement fits neatly within the conceptualization of the tragic hero as defined in Aristotle’s *Poetics*. First, the Irishman is noble in nature (not from birth, mind you, but he does have a title). He also shows nobility of character throughout the novel, and he is, to use Aristotle’s formulation, “highly renowned and prosperous,” his magnum opus being his works in the Belgian Congo and the Putumayo region of Peru. Second, he commits an error of judgment (*hamartia*), and thus proves that he is a man “who is eminently good and just, whose misfortune is brought about not by vice or depravity, but by some error or frailty”—namely, the alliance with the Germans in an attempt to free the Irish people. Third, his reversal of fortune (*peripeteia*) is of his own making, something he readily acknowledges (*anagnorisis*). Finally, he invokes a sentiment of pity when he falls from grace, be it in his falling out of love after a partner’s betrayal or more broadly the homophobic slander that tarnishes his good name when he is arrested and jailed. Casement, like any other human being, makes mistakes, and his “change of fortune [is] from good to bad,” another characteristic of the tragic hero. However, his major flaw is not his extreme hubris, but his longing for love, and, as highlighted by Kristal, his incapacity to set his mind on only one goal. The construction of Casement as a tragic hero seems to be an indication of the textual intention to redeem

him. This idea of redemption is apparent in the portrayal of Casement, whom the narrator describes as a candid idealist. Unlike *El Paraíso en la otra esquina*'s Paul Gauguin, who also turns to nationalism, Casement is depicted as a sympathetic person who is caught up in historical circumstances. Although he embraces a dangerous ideology, Casement appears to have a chance at redemption, for he made a tragic mistake and must pay the price. As a matter of fact, the epilogue stands apart from the rest of the narration, as the implicit author is not only aware that Casement was rehabilitated by the United Kingdom in 1965, but also advocates for a balanced understanding of his trajectory. This narrative intervention points to the textual sympathy that I have identified.

El sueño del celta closely follows Roger Casement's life and recounts his many travels. Like most Vargas Llosa novels, it has a relatively dense structure, which reflects precisely the literary form of the *novela total* (grand design novel). It is divided into three major sections—"El Congo," "La Amazonía," and "Irlanda"—and fifteen chapters, which chronologically follow the protagonist's career. Each part represents his state of mind as he discovers either cosmopolitanism or nationalism. "El Congo" takes place both in Great Britain and the Belgian Congo, consists of seven chapters, and introduces a Roger Casement who can still be described as naive when it comes to his work in Africa, as he realizes only later the extent of the horrors perpetrated there by Leopold II. The second part, "La Amazonía," plays out in Ireland, Brazil, and Peru, consists of five chapters, and highlights Casement's slow awakening to nationalism. Finally, "Irlanda" takes place in Norway, the United States, and Germany, consists of three chapters, and reveals Casement's dedication to the Irish cause. Oddly enough, not much of it actually occurs in Ireland, although the country remains the sole focus of his thoughts. The novel's three parts, then, correspond to the character's three progressive states of mind: first, Casement internalizes the colonizer's perspective and seeks to spread civilization to less fortunate souls; he then becomes disillusioned with colonialism, embraces a more cosmopolitan outlook, and becomes an Irish patriot rediscovering his roots and asserting Irish culture; and finally, he turns to nationalism, seeing it as the only way for Ireland to earn respect. In every stage of Casement's development, his single-mindedness is his

defining characteristic; in a way, he is fanatical every step of the way. Each trip he makes brings him one step closer to what he believes to be his true self.

The novel's narration alternates between past and present. In the odd-numbered chapters, the reader is privy to Casement's last weeks in prison, with a clear focus on his state of mind and newfound religious convictions. In the even-numbered chapters, the major events that shaped his life, and that ultimately led to his being jailed, are recalled in great detail, indeed in an almost didactic tone. Most of the narration is delivered through a third-person omniscient narrator, but the passages in which Casement recalls his life while he is waiting for royal clemency are told through his own perspective. In most instances, the narrator appears to be sympathetic to Casement's situation.

Casement is depicted as an Irish intellectual who from an early age develops a keen interest in various cultures.²² "El Congo" concentrates on his childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood, a period that is synonymous with his discovery of the world. The first phase of Casement's life is one of awakening to other cultures from a Eurocentric or British-centric perspective, during which he endorses the colonizer's perspective and sees himself as superior to colonials. This interest in travel and cultures different from his own appears to come from his father, who served in the Light Dragoons, a cavalry regiment in the British army: "Lo que de veras le interesaba en ese tiempo [his childhood] eran las historias que, cuando estaba de buen ánimo, le contaba el capitán Casement a él y a sus hermanos. Historias de la India y Afganistán, sobre todo sus batallas contra los afganos y los sijs" (Vargas Llosa, *Sueño* 19) ("What really interested him at this time were the stories Captain Casement, when he was in a good humor, recounted to him and his brothers and sister. Stories about India and Afghanistan, especially his battles with Afghans and Sikhs"; 8). As a child, Roger is fascinated by the descriptions of these foreign lands, these "remotas fronteras del Imperio" (19) ("remote frontiers of the Empire"; 8), that somehow belong to the same kingdom he lives in: "Aquellos nombres y paisajes exóticos, aquellos viajes cruzando selvas y montañas que escondían tesoros, fieras, alimañas, pueblos antiquísimos de extrañas costumbres, dioses bárbaros, disparaban su imaginación" (19) ("Those exotic names and landscapes, those travels crossing forests and mountains that

concealed treasures, wild beasts, predatory animals, ancient peoples with strange customs and savage gods, fired his imagination”; 8). At such a young age, these Others against whom his father must fight to maintain order intrigue Casement. His father’s memories and tales are surrounded by an oriental aura, which only adds to the fascination they provoke in the child. This fascination with foreignness is reminiscent of the West’s attitude toward the East during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as expressed by Edward Said in *Orientalism*, and of Bhabha’s theory of ambivalence toward the colonial subject as outlined in *The Location of Culture*. This black and white understanding of the world already sets up a binary distinction in young Casement’s mind.

Although his father was part of the army, Roger is not interested in military feats: “no eran los hechos de armas lo que más encandilaba la imaginación del pequeño Roger, sino los viajes” (19–20) (“it wasn’t feats of arms that most dazzled the young Roger’s imagination, it was the journeys”; 8). He hopes to be able to visit these faraway countries someday. When both his parents die—his mother in 1873 and his father three years later (22)—Roger moves in with relatives. His “tío Edward Bannister, que había corrido mucho mundo y hacía viajes de negocios en África” (24) (“uncle Edward Bannister, who had traveled much of the world and made business trips to Africa”; 11), is a perfect match for the adolescent, for he encourages Roger’s hopes of seeing more of the world. Casement’s dream of travelling is fuelled by his readings of the explorers David Livingstone and Henry Morton Stanley (24–5); he, too, aspires to discover Africa.

In 1883, at nineteen years of age, Casement embarks on a ship sailing to West Africa as a purser for a shipping company, the Elder Dempster of Liverpool, making three trips that very year. He becomes familiar with the life of a sailor, and catches a glimpse of the terrible conditions of the African populations that will eventually allow him to develop the humanistic spirit that leads him to overtly criticize the colonial system some twenty years after he first sets foot on the continent. However, at first, he believes and internalizes the Elder Dempster’s values, and makes its publications his own sacred texts, to the extent that he is sometimes the object of ridicule at the hands of his colleagues: “Su pasión por África y su empeño en hacer méritos en la compañía lo llevaban a leerse con cuidado, llenándolos de anotaciones, los folletos y las publicaciones que

circulaban por las oficinas relacionadas con el comercio marítimo entre el Imperio británico y el África Occidental. Luego, repetía convencido las ideas que impregnaban esos textos” (26) (“His passion for Africa and his commitment to doing well in the company led him to read carefully, and fill with notes, the pamphlets and publications dealing with maritime trade between the British Empire and West Africa that made the rounds of the offices. Then he would repeat with conviction the ideas that permeated those texts”; 13). Casement is imbued with the sense of entitlement that was characteristic of colonial power in this period, and he feels, in Rudyard Kipling’s famous expression, the “white man’s burden” to bring civilization to those less fortunate:

Llevar al África los productos europeos e importar las materias primas que el suelo africano producía, era, más que una operación mercantil, una empresa a favor del progreso de pueblos detenidos en la prehistoria, sumidos en el canibalismo y la trata de esclavos. El comercio llevaba allá la religión, la moral, la ley, los valores de la Europa moderna, culta, libre y democrática, un progreso que acabaría por transformar a los desdichados de las tribus en hombres y mujeres de nuestro tiempo. En esta empresa, el Imperio británico estaba a la vanguardia de Europa y había que sentirse orgullosos de ser parte de él y del trabajo que cumplían en la Elder Dempster Line. (26)

Bringing European products to Africa and importing the raw materials that African soil produced was, more than a commercial operation, 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 a 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 at the vanguard of Europe, and one had to feel proud of being part of it and the work accomplished at the Elder Dempster Line. (13)

In his twenties, Casement is convinced of the inherent good of his work—work that must be done to help the Africans overcome their backwardness. His certainties are so strong that, as he resigns from his job with the Elder Dempster and is about to leave for Africa for good, his uncle, in a thinly veiled allusion to the dangers of fanaticism, remarks that Roger is “como esos cruzados que en la Edad Media partían al Oriente a liberar Jerusalén” (27) (“like those crusaders in the Middle Ages who left for the East to liberate Jerusalem”; 14). The image of crusaders, although hinted at only subtly in the beginning of the novel, becomes more important as the narrative progresses, and ultimately the vision the crusaders have of themselves triggers the Easter Rising.

In 1884, “en un arranque de idealismo y sueño aventurero, [Casement] decidió . . . dejar Europa y venir al África a trabajar para, mediante el comercio, el cristianismo y las instituciones sociales y políticas de Occidente, emancipar a los africanos del atraso, la enfermedad y la ignorancia” (35) (“in an outburst of idealism and a dream of adventure, [Casement decided] to leave Europe and come to Africa to work, by means of commerce, for Christianity, western social and political institutions, and the emancipation of Africans from backwardness, disease, and ignorance”; 22). Casement is blinded by his chance to work with Stanley, his childhood hero, and believes that the work he and his team are accomplishing is “la punta de lanza del progreso en este mundo donde apenas asomaba la Edad de Piedra que Europa había dejado atrás hacía muchos siglos” (38) (“the tip of the lance of progress in this world where the Stone Age that Europe had left behind many centuries earlier was only just beginning to be visible”; 24). Casement is convinced of “las intenciones benévolas de los europeos” (“the benevolent intentions of the Europeans”) who come to Africa: “vendrían a ayudarlos a mejorar sus condiciones de vida, librarlos de plagas como la mortífera enfermedad del sueño, educarlos y abrirles los ojos sobre las verdades de este mundo y el otro, gracias a lo cual sus hijos y nietos alcanzarían una vida decente, justa y libre” (39) (“they would come to help them improve their living conditions, rid them of deadly plagues such as sleeping sickness, educate them, and open their eyes to the truths of this world and the next, thanks to which their children and grandchildren would attain a life that was decent, just, and free”; 25). He does not need much time to shed his illusions, and this disappointment brings about a

new phase in his intellectual and professional development, that of criticizing colonialism and awakening to a more cosmopolitan outlook.

This awakening happens as a result of conversations with journalist and explorer Stanley. Casement becomes aware of the many injustices faced by the native African populations, the main one being that they are signing away all power over their own affairs: not only do they not understand the various contracts they are forced to sign—they are written in French, in a legal language that even the expedition leaders do not understand, and translations in African languages are not provided (41)—but they are also enslaving themselves by agreeing to such terms. Stanley is well aware of this, but maintains that it is for their own good: they ought to be civilized, he argues, to learn that “un cristiano no debe comerse al prójimo” (“a Christian should not eat his neighbor”) and stop speaking in “esos dialectos de monos” (43) (those monkey dialects”; 28). Casement is outraged and cannot agree to be involved in such a scheme—a first step in the development of his cosmopolitan outlook and his becoming a defender of human rights.

Casement’s certainty about the various atrocities committed by Europeans becomes stronger when he reaches the Congo, controlled at the time by King Leopold II of Belgium, where he works for several companies and where he meets Anglo-Polish novelist Joseph Conrad, the author of *Heart of Darkness* (1899).²³ In 1903, the Foreign Office charges him with investigating the alleged abuses perpetrated under the rule of Leopold II. He denounces the hardships suffered by the local population at the hands of settlers and entrepreneurs. He is utterly disillusioned and even comes to regret having worked for the Belgian monarch:

Todo el resto de su vida, Roger lamentó . . . haber dedicado sus primeros ocho años en Africa a trabajar, como peón en una partida de ajedrez, en la construcción del Estado Independiente del Congo, invirtiendo en ello su tiempo, su salud, sus esfuerzos, su idealismo y creyendo que, de este modo, obraba por un designio filantrópico. (49)

For the rest of his life, Roger lamented . . . dedicating his first eight years in Africa to working, like a pawn in a game

of chess, on the building of the Congo Free State, investing his time, health, effort, and idealism, and believing that in this way he was contributing to a philanthropic plan. (33)

The resulting Casement Report, released in 1904, details the atrocities carried out in the name of “civilization” and monetary gains, causes a great scandal, and confirms the universalist pretensions of the protagonist, who has now become a vocal opponent to colonialism. His stay in the Congo also makes him reassess his origins. In a letter to his cousin Gertrude, he admits that his time in Africa has allowed him not only to discover his own country, but also his true self: “te parecerá otro síntoma de locura pero este viaje a las profundidades de Congo me ha servido para descubrir a mi propio país. Para entender su situación, su destino, su realidad. También he encontrado mi verdadero yo: el incorregible irlandés. . . . Tengo la impresión de haber mudado de piel . . . de mentalidad y acaso hasta del alma” (109) (“it may seem like another symptom of madness to you, but this journey into the depths of the Congo has been useful in helping me discover my own country, and understand her situation, her destiny, her reality. . . . I’ve also found my true self: the incorrigible Irishman. . . . I have the impression that . . . I’ve shed the skin of my mind and perhaps my soul”; 80).²⁴ Travelling to the Congo allows him, then, to become another man, *uno de los muchos hombres* of the epigraph, although it must be noted that the protagonist refers to his own discovery of Ireland as *locura* (madness), much like Gauguin refers to his grandmother’s *locuras internacionalistas*.

Casement ponders the state of Ireland to draw parallels between the two countries of which he has most experience, and he notices a sad similarity that will shape his thinking from then on:²⁵

¿No era también Irlanda una colonia, como el Congo? Aunque él se hubiera empeñado tantos años en no aceptar esa verdad que su padre y tantos irlandeses del Ulster, como él, rechazaban con ciega indignación. ¿Por qué lo que estaba mal para el Congo estaría bien para Irlanda? ¿No habían invadido los ingleses a Eire? ¿No la habían incorporado al Imperio mediante la fuerza, sin consultar a los invadidos y ocupados, tal como los belgas a los congolese? Con el tiem-

po, aquella violencia se había mitigado, pero Irlanda seguía siendo una colonia, cuya soberanía desapareció por obra de un vecino más fuerte. Era una realidad que muchos irlandeses se negaban a ver. (110)

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 the English invaded Ireland? Hadn't they incorporated it into 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. It was a reality that many Irish refused to see. (80–1)

Like many Irishmen and -women, this was a reality that had escaped him until then, and its recognition has a deep impact on Casement. Although convinced of what he discovered in the Congo, it is an epiphany that he dares to share only with his closest friends:

A la segunda o tercera vez que estuvieron solos, Roger abrió su corazón a su flamante amiga, como lo habría hecho un creyente a su confesor. A ella, irlandesa de familia protestante como él, se atrevió a decirle lo que no había dicho a nadie todavía: allá, en el Congo, conviviendo con la injusticia y la violencia, había descubierto la gran mentira que era el colonialismo y había empezado a sentirse un “irlandés,” es decir, ciudadano de un país ocupado y explotado por un Imperio que había desangrado y desalmado a Irlanda. Se avergonzaba de tantas cosas que había dicho y creído, repitiendo las enseñanzas paternas. Y hacía propósito de enmienda. Ahora que, gracias al Congo, había descubierto a Irlanda, quería ser un irlandés de verdad, conocer su

país, apropiarse de su tradición, de su historia y su cultura. (119–20)

The second or third time they were alone, Roger opened his heart to his new friend, as a believer would have done with 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, a 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. Now that he had discovered Ireland, thanks to the Congo, he wanted to be a real Irishman, know his country, take possession of her tradition, history, and culture. (88)

After his stay in the Congo, Casement is happy to return to the United Kingdom—first to England, then to Ireland—to recover both his physical and mental strength, and here he becomes "un irlandés de verdad" (120) ("a real Irishman"; 88). Having discovered his Irishness, he is particularly pleased to go back to Magherintemple House, "la casa familiar de su infancia y adolescencia" (121) ("the family home of his childhood and adolescence"; 89). He immerses himself in Irish culture, discovers its mythology, and attempts to learn the language—to no avail—but also becomes acquainted with members of the Gaelic League, an organization that promotes "el irlandés y la cultura de Irlanda" (122) ("Irish and the culture of Ireland"; 90). Under a pseudonym, he even starts writing politically oriented newspaper columns defending Irish culture. Since he is still working for the Foreign Office, he does not criticize Great Britain too openly.

Casement's immersion in Irish culture is for him the first step toward the reappropriation of his Irish past, but it is also his undoing, for it marks the beginnings of his patriotic fervour, which eventually sets him off on a nationalist trajectory. According to Vargás Llosa, in *Wellsprings*, the published draft of a lecture he gave at Harvard University, reclaiming the past is a natural behaviour for nationalist movements: "the victim

nation may be forced to feign ‘acculturation’ for a time; but underneath, it continues to resist, preserving its essence, remaining true to its origins, holding its soul intact, awaiting the hour when its sovereignty and liberty will be redeemed” (76). This form of ethnic nationalism, based on myths, customs, and traditions, is pernicious. Vargas Llosa also disagrees with Casement’s view on the necessity of the preservation of Irish culture at all costs: “Nationalism’s defenders start with a false assumption: that the culture of a country is, like the natural riches and raw materials harbored in its soil, something that should be protected from the voracious avarice of imperialism, and kept stable, intact, unadulterated, and undefiled” (98). The Irish culture, although obviously worth preserving, cannot be defined in absolute and fixed terms—a culture *de verdad*—and can only be enriched by the coexistence with foreign cultural elements. This idea of purity is reminiscent of Paul Gauguin in *El Paraíso en la otra esquina*, who also sees cultures as artefacts worth preserving as they are, and for whom contacts between cultures are equivalent to a loss of *primitivity*.

This view of cultures as subject to change and enrichment by interaction is the basis of current theorizations of cosmopolitanism, a cosmopolitanism that is understood as a conversation between cultures, based on mutual respect. Casement, a rooted cosmopolitan, gives credence to other cultural practices, and he accepts their specificity, aware that cultural enrichment only happens through difference. As a cosmopolitan patriot, Casement is willing to accept such differences between people, for he feels a moral obligation toward all of them, whatever their birthplace. Like Flora Tristán, he embraces both a *cosmopolitismo de la igualdad* and a *cosmopolitismo de la diferencia*. Moreover, he reaches a cosmopolitan outlook through his acceptance of differences. However, his path is in some ways the opposite of the canonical one. Unlike most cosmopolitans who take an interest first in the local, then in the global aspects of their lives, Casement first takes a keen interest in foreign peoples, then in his own. His various stays in Ireland are milestones in the definition of his world view. For Casement,

Aquellos meses significaron el redescubrimiento de su país, la inmersión en una Irlanda que sólo había conocido por conversaciones, fantasías y lecturas, muy distinta de aquella

en que había vivido de niño con sus padres, o de adolescente con sus tíos abuelos y demás parientes paternos, una Irlanda que no era cola y sombra del Imperio británico, que luchaba por recobrar su lengua, sus tradiciones y costumbres. (Vargas Llosa, *Sueño* 143)

Those months meant the rediscovery of his country, his immersion in an Ireland he had known about only in conversations, fantasies, and readings, very different from the one where he had lived as a child with his parents, or as an adolescent with his great aunt and great uncle and the rest of the paternal family, an Ireland that was not the tail and shadow of the British Empire, that fought to recover its language, traditions, and customs. (108–9)

Being in Ireland brings him to a better understanding of his origins, but also makes him more aware of the everyday struggles the Irish face. Around this time, some friends and acquaintances start telling him jokingly that he “[ha] vuelto un patriota irlandés” (143) (“[he has] become an Irish patriot”; 109). Casement, rather, thinks that “[está] recuperando el tiempo perdido” (143) (“[he is] making up for lost time”; 109). “All nationalist doctrine is based on an act of faith,” claims Vargas Llosa, “not on a rational, empirical conception of history and society. Nationalism is a *collectivist* act of faith that imbues a mythical entity—the nation—with a fictive coherence, homogeneity, and unity preserved over time, untouched by historical change” (*Wellsprings* 75). In *El sueño del celta*, the protagonist’s behaviour falls under the idea of the recovery of a past—the mythical Irish past—that he idealizes and wants to make his own, a sort of paradise lost that he wants to recover. Still, according to Vargas Llosa, such melancholy, a “longing for what did not exist” (81), is a useful tool in imagining the nation:

The fact that this nation was never a tangible reality is no obstacle for people who, blessed with the terrible, formidable instrument that is the imagination, manage to fabricate it. This is why fiction exists: to populate the emptiness of

life with phantoms that human beings require in order to make sense of their own cowardice, generosity, fear, pain or stupidity. The ghosts that fiction inserts into reality can be benign, innocuous, or malignant. Nationalism's specter falls into this last group. (81)

This desire to recover a past that is beyond reach is similar to Paul Gauguin's lost primitive state. And much like Tristán and Gauguin, the search for this lost paradise triggers Casement's demise.

From this time on, Casement makes a point of correcting his interlocutors about his origins. He often repeats: "No soy inglés sino irlandés" (297) ("I'm not English, I'm Irish"; 222). He wants Ireland to become a proper state, but he remains a pacifist and believes that Irish institutions can replace most British ones, if only they are given the chance:

Había que ir creando, junto a las instituciones coloniales, una infraestructura irlandesa (colegios, empresas, bancos, industrias) que poco a poco fuera sustituyendo a la impuesta por Inglaterra. De este modo los irlandeses irían tomando conciencia de su propio destino. Había que boicotear los productos británicos, rehusar el pago de impuestos, reemplazar los deportes ingleses como el cricket y el fútbol por deportes nacionales y también la literatura y el teatro. De este modo, de manera pacífica, Irlanda iría desgajándose de la sujeción colonial. (144)

It was necessary to create, along with colonial institutions, an Irish infrastructure (schools, businesses, banks, industries) that gradually would replace the one imposed by Britain. In this way the Irish would become conscious of their own destiny. It was necessary to boycott Irish products, refuse to pay taxes, replace British sports such as cricket and soccer with national sports, and literature and theater as well. In this way, peacefully, Ireland would break free of colonial subjugation. (109–10)

The objective for Ireland is to become an independent country by creating new Irish foundations. However strong his feelings for his native land may be, the protagonist can still reconcile his cosmopolitan openness and his willingness to denounce the poor living and working conditions of the oppressed peoples around the world with his love for Ireland. His cosmopolitanism and nationalism are not irreconcilable; they are, in fact, complementary. This complementarity embodies the contemporary conceptualization of cosmopolitanism, rooted in locality yet open to the world. This is Casement's vision: every person he encounters, whether in Africa, Latin America, or Europe, is someone toward whom he has a moral responsibility. In the first years of his nationalist drift, Casement appears to be a moderate nationalist—in fact, more a patriot than a nationalist, as defined by Vargas Llosa—who sees the situation in Ireland through the prism of human rights. The colonialism that Casement observes abroad leads him to nationalism. His awareness of the atrocities committed in foreign lands and his commitment to the cause of colonized peoples allows him to identify colonialism at home, in his own culture. Ultimately, he adopts the Irish nationalist cause because of his openness and empathy toward others, and his cosmopolitan vision. However, he understands nationalism in a way that does not contradict his cosmopolitan engagement. Indeed, Casement never disavows the work he has performed during his service for the British Foreign Office. Even if he does not share many affinities with the United Kingdom, and does not want it to rule Ireland, after leaving the consular services he remains happy with his work as a foreign service officer. Casement perceives as quite ironic the fact that the United Kingdom, a country that denounces colonial atrocities, itself has colonies that it oppresses. Embracing other cultures leads Casement to accept his own, which had been somewhat sidelined during his career in the British Foreign Service.

Indeed, his concern for Ireland coexists with his interest in other cultures and histories. His second mandate as a diplomat changes his pacifist perception of things. In 1906, the Foreign Office sends Casement to Peru to investigate abuses in the Putumayo, a district on the border between Peru and Colombia. During his stay, he concludes that the employers who exploit rubber treat the Indigenous populations in the same way that the English have treated the Irish for centuries: while the *indios* are made to

forget their traditions, “A [the Irish] se les hacía creer que Irlanda era un bárbaro país sin pasado digno de memoria, ascendido a la civilización por el ocupante, educado y modernizado por el Imperio que lo despojó de su tradición, su lengua y su soberanía” (135) (“The Irish were still made to believe that Ireland was a savage country with no past worth remembering, raised to civilization by the occupier, educated and modernized by the Empire, which stripped it of its tradition, language, and sovereignty”; 102). The protagonist cannot handle the idea of his people being inhumanely treated, and is aware that “Los irlandeses somos como los huitotos y los boras, los andoques y los muinanes del Putumayo. Colonizados, explotados y condenados a serlo siempre si seguimos confiando en las leyes, las instituciones y los Gobiernos de Inglaterra, para alcanzar la libertad. Nunca nos la darán” (239) (“We Irish are like the Huitotos, the Boras, the Andoques and the Muinanes 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”; 186). He becomes convinced that Ireland will only free itself through an armed rising: Why, he asks, would “el Imperio que [les] coloniza” give the Irish their freedom “si no siente una presión irresistible que lo obligue a hacerlo? Esa presión sólo puede venir de las armas” (239) (“the Empire that colonized do that unless it felt an irresistible pressure that obliged it to do so? That pressure can only come from weapons”; 186). Casement returns to Europe in 1911 with only one idea in mind: to free Ireland.

The Blue Book, Casement’s accounts of the atrocities perpetrated in Latin America, comes out in July 1912 and “produ[ce] una conmoción” (324) (“produces an upheaval”; 254), first in Europe, then in the United States. Even before its publication, Casement quits the diplomatic service to focus on the Irish cause and to “ocuparse de otros indígenas, los de Irlanda. También ellos necesitaban librarse de las ‘arañas’ que los explotaban, aunque con armas más refinadas e hipócritas que las de los caucheros peruanos, colombianos y brasileños” (378) (“concern himself with other natives, the ones from Ireland. They, too, needed to free themselves from the Aranas exploiting them, though with weapons more refined and hypocritical than those of the Peruvian, Colombian, and Brazilian rubber barons”; 297. Arana/Araña is both a character’s last name and the Spanish word for “spider,” thus establishing a negative parallel between the exploitative

entrepreneur and the insect). When his commitment as a cosmopolitan patriot turns into political engagement, it assumes the form of nationalism, and his interest in liberating Ireland turns obsessive: “Una idea volvía una y otra vez a su conciencia, una idea que en los días, semanas y meses siguientes retornaría obsesivamente y empezaría a modelar su conducta: ‘No debemos permitir que la colonización llegue a castrar el espíritu de los irlandeses como ha castrado el de los indígenas de la Amazonía. Hay que actuar ahora, de una vez, antes de que sea tarde y nos volvamos autómatas’” (247) (“An idea came to mind over and over again, an idea that in the coming days, weeks, and months would return obsessively and begin to shape his conduct: *We should not permit colonization to castrate the spirit of the Irish as it has castrated the spirit of the Amazonian Indians. We must act now, once and for all, before it is too late and we turn into automatons*”; 192; emphasis in trans.). Casement fears that the Irish will turn into puppets and lose their desire to fight for the freedom of their homeland. Gradually, he loses most of the friendships he had made during his stays in Africa and Latin America, “Pero pese a todo ello, no había cambiado de manera de pensar. No, no se había equivocado” (197) (“But in spite of everything, he hadn’t changed his way of thinking. No, he had not been wrong”; 151). He shows the same single-mindedness and obstinacy that had been his trademark during his period with the Elder Dempster, and later as a human rights activist in the Congo and Peru. His best friend Herbert, whom he met in the Congo, “desconfiaba de todos los nacionalismos. Era uno de los pocos europeos cultos y sensibles en tierra africana” (183) (“mistrusted all nationalisms. He was one of the few educated, sensitive Europeans on African soil”; 141). Through many conversations, he reminds Casement that “el patriotismo es el último refugio de las canallas” (184)—an obvious reference to English writer Samuel Johnson’s famous phrase, “Patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel”—and overtly laughs at his friend’s conversion to nationalism, exhorting him to “volver a la realidad y salir de ese ‘sueño del celta’ en el que se había encastillado” (268) (“return to reality and leave ‘the dream of the Celt’ into which he had retreated”; 210). For Herbert, it simply cannot be: Casement’s openness to the world and desire to save the oppressed populations of Africa and Latin America are irreconcilable with the idea of nationalism, and he is *encastillado*,

enwalled—too stubborn to realize it. Herbert ends up burning his bridges with Casement:

Herbert Ward nunca tomó muy en serio la progresiva conversión de Roger a la ideología nacionalista. Solía burlarse de él, a la manera cariñosa que le era propia, alertándolo contra el patriotismo de oropel—banderas, himnos, uniformes—que, le decía, representaba siempre, a la corta o a la larga, un retroceso hacia el provincialismo, el espíritu de campanario y la distorsión de los valores universales. Sin embargo, ese ciudadano del mundo, como Herbert gustaba llamarse, ante la violencia desmesurada de la guerra mundial había reaccionado refugiándose también en el patriotismo como tantos millones de europeos. (345)

Herbert Ward never took very seriously the progressive conversion of Roger to the nationalist ideology. He tended to mock him, in the affectionate manner typical of him, warning him against tinsel patriotism—flags, anthems, uniforms—which, he would say, always represented, sooner or later, a regression to provincialism, mean-spiritedness, and the distortion of universal values. And yet, this citizen of the world, as Herbert liked to call himself, when faced with the inordinate violence of the world war, had reacted like so many Europeans and had also taken refuge in patriotism. (270–1)

Some of Casement's friends liken his turn to nationalism to a religious conversion; they call him "extremista" ("extremist" 383) and "intolerante" ("intolerant" 388), tell him that he has become "un revolucionario radical" ("a radical revolutionary" 399), and ultimately they abandon him. They do not understand his desire to sacrifice his knighthood and forsake all the work he has done to save the oppressed peoples of Africa and Latin America. But as far as Casement is concerned, these friends are unable to universalize the conditions of oppression in which the Irish live.

In Vargas Llosa's words, the fact that Casement sees the Irish as being oppressed would be an example of "victimization—it serves up a long list of historical grievances to demonstrate the ways in which colonizing powers have tried to destroy or contaminate the victim nation" (*Wellsprings* 76). Casement's allies and friends do not share this victim-centric view of history, and they warn him that this will feed the revolutionary potential in Ireland. This outlook once again mirrors Vargas Llosa's criticism of nationalism:

the truth is that in the conception of humankind, society, and history endorsed by the ideology of nationalism, there is a seed of violence that inevitably germinates whenever nationalists try to meet the demands of their own postulates, especially the main one: to rebuild what Benedict Anderson calls the "imagined community," an illusory nation that is culturally, socially, and linguistically integrated and whose human offspring gain their identity from membership in this collective. (79–80)

However, there is a tragic dimension to Casement's view: by his very own universal concern, he advocates a moderate nationalism that is impossible in these historical circumstances. He wants to free Ireland, and is willing to die doing so, but he does not profess an exclusionary nationalism, nor does he possess the momentum of other extremist patriots with whom he ends up working. At first, he thinks that the process of national liberation has to be sought through dialogue, not necessarily bloody conflict. He agrees, for example, with the idea of home rule—that is, self-government on the part of the Irish—but within the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. He seems to agree with the criticism some of his friends voice against extreme patriotism and nationalism; it may be that he thinks he is able to overcome the problems of extreme nationalism:

El patriotismo cegaba la lucidez. Alice había hecho esta afirmación en un reñido debate, en una de esas veladas en su casa de Grosvenor Road que Roger recordaba siempre con tanta nostalgia. ¿Qué había dicho exactamente la historia-

dora? «No debemos dejar que el patriotismo nos arrebatase la lucidez, la razón, la inteligencia.» Algo así. Pero, entonces, recordó el picotazo irónico que había lanzado George Bernard Shaw a todos los nacionalistas irlandeses presentes: «Son cosas irreconciliables, Alice. No se engañe: el patriotismo es una religión, está reñido con la lucidez. Es puro oscurantismo, un acto de fe». Lo dijo con esa ironía burlona que ponía siempre incómodos a sus interlocutores, porque todos intuían que, debajo de lo que el dramaturgo decía de manera bonachona, había siempre una intención demolidora. «Acto de fe», en boca de ese escéptico e incrédulo, quería decir «superstición, superchería» o cosas peores todavía. (Vargas Llosa, *Sueño* 197)

Patriotism blinded lucidity. Alice had affirmed this in a hard-fought debate during one of the evening get-togethers at her house on Grosvenor Road that Roger always recalled with so much nostalgia. What had the historian said exactly? “We should not allow patriotism to do violence to our lucidity, our reason, our intelligence.” Something like that. But then he remembered the ironic dart thrown by George Bernard Shaw at all the Irish nationalists present: “They’re irreconcilable, Alice. Make no mistake: patriotism is a religion, the enemy of lucidity. It is pure obscurantism, an act of faith.” He said this with the mocking irony that always made the people he spoke to uncomfortable, because everyone intuited that beneath what the dramatist said in a general way there was always a destructive intention. “Act of faith” in the mouth of this skeptic and unbeliever meant “superstition, fraud,” or even worse. (152)

Casement’s interlocutors often use the word “patriotism” as a synonym for “nationalism.” However, as we have seen, Vargas Llosa makes a distinction between these two concepts in *Wellsprings*, and it seems that Casement’s rediscovery and promotion of Irish roots, his love for Ireland, is not pernicious per se. Problems arise when patriotism becomes nationalism, tied

to the realm and excesses of politics; it can then lead down a treacherous path. Nationalist politics invariably tend to become exclusionary, and therefore asphyxiating.

Eventually, Casement comes to terms with the fact that the United Kingdom is unlikely to agree to Irish autonomy: “Ésta no era la solución para Irlanda. Lo era la independencia, pura y simplemente, y ella no sería jamás concedida por las buenas” (*Sueño* 397) (“This was not the solution for Ireland. Independence was, pure and simple, and that would never be granted willingly”; 313). He does not reject the idea of the Irish Brigade, a military outfit that would help Irish forces against the British Empire. In 1914, Casement sails to Germany via Norway, in the hope of setting in motion a mutually beneficial plan on which the Irish and German leaders had previously agreed: if Germany agreed to sell guns to the Irish rebels and provide military leaders, they, in return, would stage a revolt against England, diverting troops and attention from the continental war effort. Once in Germany, when Casement tries to convince the Irish war prisoners to enroll in the brigade, his proposal is met with little interest. Most soldiers call him “traidor,” “vendido,” or “cucaracha” (185) (“*traitor, sold, cockroach*”; 142; emphasis in trans.), which shows that even if they are Irish-born, their allegiance lies with Great Britain, something that is a cause of great disappointment to Casement.

Over time, he becomes acquainted with more extreme forms of nationalism and for reasons of political expediency he seems to embrace these views, although he does so with a degree of ambivalence. While some nationalists believe that “De la inmolación de los hijos de Eire nacería ese país libre, sin colonizadores ni explotadores, donde reinarían la ley, el cristianismo y la justicia” (416) (“From the immolation of the children of Ireland a free country would be born without colonizers or exploiters, where law, Christianity, and justice would reign”; 327–8), he is worried by “la obsesión de [unos colegas] de concebir a los patriotas irlandeses como la versión contemporánea de los mártires primitivos: ‘Así como la sangre de los mártires fue la semilla del cristianismo, la de los patriotas será la semilla de nuestra libertad,’ escribió [Patrick Pearse, a colleague] en un ensayo. Una bella frase, pensaba Roger. Pero ¿no había en ella algo ominoso?” (391) (“Pearse’s obsession with conceiving of Irish patriots as the contemporary version of the early martyrs:

'Just as the blood of the martyrs was the seed of Christianity, that of the patriots will be the seed of our liberty,' he wrote in an essay. A beautiful phrase, Roger thought. But wasn't there something ominous in it?"; 307–8). Casement is confused by such passion, such "celo ardiente, [tanta] glorificación de la sangre y la guerra" (420) ("burning zeal, the same glorification of blood and war"; 330). He sees that his colleagues are bordering on fanaticism, and, while, as a patriot, he wants to free Ireland, he is still not willing to sacrifice lives to do so, and indeed never will be.

However, an impulsive Casement lends credence, out of empathy and loneliness, to everything that the revolutionaries say:

A Roger, el romanticismo un tanto enloquecido de Joseph Plunkett y Patrick Pearse lo había asustado a veces, en Irlanda. Pero estas semanas, en Berlín, oyendo al joven poeta y revolucionario [Plunkett], en esos días agradables en que la primavera llenaba de flores los jardines y los árboles de los parques recobraban su verdor, Roger se sintió conmovido y ansioso de creer todo lo que el recién venido le decía. (416–17)

The somewhat mad romanticism of Joseph Plunkett and Patrick Pearse had frightened Roger at times in Ireland. But during these weeks in Berlin, listening to the young poet and revolutionary on pleasant days when spring filled the gardens with flowers and trees in the parks were recovering their green, Roger felt touched, longing to believe everything the newcomer was telling him. (328)

Isolated from the rest of his group in Berlin, Casement ends up believing in "materializar el sueño místico," and in "el martirio de los santos" (351) ("giving material form to his life's mystic dream" and "the martyrdom of the saints"; 275). He listens to revolutionary poet Joseph Plunkett as he speaks "con la seriedad de quien se sabe poseedor de una verdad irrefutable" (420) ("with the gravity of someone who knows he possesses an irrefutable truth"; 330–1). Casement is blinded by his desire to save Ireland; Plunkett is a die-hard nationalist who knows too well that the planned uprising is bound to

fail and cost many supporters their lives, yet he is convinced of the necessity of such a sacrifice: the immolation of combatants is a new martyrdom, similar to that of the first Christians fed to the lions. For Vargas Llosa, the comparison between religion and nationalism is an obvious one: “like churches, nationalist groups do not engage in true dialogue: they sanctify and excommunicate. Nationalism feeds on instinct and passion, not intelligence; its strengths lie not in ideas but in beliefs and myths. For this reason it is closer to literature and religion” (*Wellsprings* 82). This echoes Benedict Anderson who, in *Imagined Communities*, argues that “national imaginings [have] a strong affinity with religious imaginings” (10), and who traces the rise of nationalism in the eighteenth century to a certain erosion of religious beliefs (12). Plunkett is a prime example of sanctification and excommunication, since he is both absolutist and categorical. There is no room for conversation or middle ground.

One of the priests with whom Casement works in Germany, Father Crotty, believes that, while this desire for martyrdom is aligned with the profound Catholicism of Ireland, it is also dangerous:

La nuestra es una religión sobre todo para los que sufren. Los humillados, los hambrientos, los vencidos. Esa fe ha impedido que nos desintegráramos como país pese a la fuerza que nos aplastaba. En nuestra religión es central el martirio. Sacrificarse, inmolarsse. ¿No lo hizo Cristo? Se encarnó y se sometió a las más atroces crueldades. (Vargas Llosa, *Sueño* 436–7)

Ours is a religion above all for those who suffer. The humiliated, the hungry, the defeated. That faith has prevented us from disintegrating as a country in spite of the force crushing us. In our religion martyrdom is central. To sacrifice oneself, immolate oneself. Didn't Christ do that? He became flesh and subjected himself to the most awful cruelty. (344)

Father Crotty also balances the nationalist discourse and echoes something Casement had already heard back in Peru—namely, that martyrs, or people who see themselves as potential martyrs, are dangerous:

Este muchacho es alguien fuera de lo común, sin duda. Por su inteligencia y por su entrega a una causa. Su cristianismo es el de esos cristianos que morían en los circos romanos devorados por las fieras. Pero, también, el de los cruzados que reconquistaron Jerusalén matando a todos los impíos judíos y musulmanes que encontraron, incluidas mujeres y niños. El mismo celo ardiente, la misma glorificación de la sangre y la guerra. (419–20)

This boy is out of the ordinary, no doubt about it. Because of his intelligence and devotion to a cause. His Christianity is that of the Christians who died in Roman circuses, devoured by wild beasts. But also of the Crusaders who reconquered Jerusalem by killing all the ungodly Jews and Muslims they encountered, including women and children. The same burning zeal, the same glorification of blood and war. (330)

Casement eventually realizes that the priest is right. There is no nuance in Plunkett's approach to nationalism: for him the end justifies the means. This scares the priest, who tries to convince Casement: "Te confieso, Roger, que personas así, aunque sean ellas las que hacen la Historia, a mí me dan más miedo que admiración" (419–20) ("I confess, Roger, that people like him, even though they may be the ones who make history, fill me with more fear than admiration"; 330). Here Father Crotty echoes Vargas Llosa's concerns with nationalism, for he believes that it dehumanizes men and turns them into irrational beings. Aware that the arms he has sought will get to Ireland in time, Casement returns to the island in a hurry, and is intercepted and arrested by the British army.

In one of his last conversations with his confessor Father Carey, in the Pentonville Prison, Casement recognizes his shortcomings and now admits that his hatred toward England was pointless:

—Si me ejecutan, ¿podrá mi cuerpo ser llevado a Irlanda y enterrado allá?

Sintió que el capellán dudaba y lo miró. Father Carey había palidecido algo. Lo vio negar con la cabeza, incómodo.

—No, Roger. Si ocurre aquello, será usted enterrado en el cementerio de la prisión.

—En tierra enemiga—susurró Casement, tratando de hacer una broma que no resultó—. En un país que he llegado a odiar tanto como lo quise y admiré de joven.

—Odiar no sirve de nada—suspiró el padre Carey—. La política de Inglaterra puede ser mala. Pero hay muchos ingleses decentes y respetables.

—Lo sé muy bien, padre. Me lo digo siempre que me lleno de odio contra este país. Es más fuerte que yo. Tal vez me ocurre porque de muchacho creí ciegamente en el Imperio, en que Inglaterra estaba civilizando al mundo. Usted se hubiera reído si me hubiera conocido entonces. (133)

“If I’m executed, can my body be taken to Ireland and buried there?”

He sensed the chaplain hesitating and looked at him. Father Carey had paled slightly. He saw his discomfort as he shook his head.

“No, Roger. If that happens, you’ll be buried in the prison cemetery.”

“In enemy territory,” Roger murmured, trying to make a joke that failed. “In a country I’ve come to hate as much as I loved and admired it as a young man.”

“Hate doesn’t serve any purpose,” Father Carey said with a sigh. “The policies of England may be bad. But there are many decent, respectable English people.”

“I know that all very well, Father. I tell myself that whenever I fill with hatred towards this country. It’s stronger than I am. Perhaps it happens because as a boy I believed blindly in the Empire and that England was civilizing the world. You would have laughed if you had known me then.” (100–1)

Casement has come full circle and has lived through all of his contradictions. In the last conversation he has with his friend Alice Stopford Green in the Pentonville Prison, she reminds him of his cosmopolitan oscillation:

A mí y a ellos nos pasaba algo parecido contigo, Roger. Envidiábamos tus viajes, tus aventuras, que hubieras vivido tantas vidas distintas en aquellos lugares. Se lo oí decir alguna vez a Yeats [the Irish poet]: «Roger Casement es el irlandés más universal que he conocido. Un verdadero ciudadano del mundo.» Creo que nunca te lo conté. (358–9)

Something similar happened to me and them with you, Roger. We envied your travels, your adventures, your having lived so many different lives in those places. I once heard Yeats say, “Roger Casement is the most universal Irishman I’ve known. A real citizen of the world.” I don’t think I ever told you that. (281)

Travel is a defining characteristic of Casement as a character, and a determining factor in his cosmopolitan trajectory. Even on the eve of his execution, he inevitably continues to embody the tension between cosmopolitanism and nationalism. Historical circumstances do not allow him to resolve it. According to Kristal, “Vargas Llosa’s Casement slowly abandons all of his commitments and convictions: the dedication with which he had served Great Britain as a diplomat, the passion with which he had defended

human rights in Africa and the Amazon, his adherence to Germany during the Great War, and his dedication to the cause of Irish independence” (“From Utopia to Reconciliation” 145). His indecisiveness and oscillation are the cause of his demise.

Vargas Llosa’s position on nationalism is clear and well documented: it is a fatal ideology that has to be avoided at all costs; it destroys everything—and everyone—it touches. *El sueño del celta* can be seen as a cautionary tale about these well-known dangers. Most of Vargas Llosa’s writings do not allow for the possibility of cosmopolitan patriotism, since all types of nationalism are rejected as evil. In the novel, however, Casement is treated in a more nuanced way than most of Vargas Llosa’s nationalist characters, precisely because he is a cosmopolitan patriot. However harsh its author’s criticism of this ideology, *El sueño del celta* portrays Roger Casement in a positive light and redeems the historical character, for he is a tragic hero whose patriotic fervour fatally leads, in convoluted historical circumstances and in the turmoil of political expediency, to extreme nationalist politics. Vargas Llosa’s Casement never ceases to oscillate between the two apparent ends of the spectrum linking nationalism and cosmopolitanism. In spite of the author’s rejection of nationalism, the novel interprets the historical character through the prism of a nuanced reflection on the intricacies of the nationalist position, which essentially advocates for the sympathetic portrayal of Casement as a cosmopolitan patriot.

Conclusion

My reading of *El Paraíso en la otra esquina* and *El sueño del celta* is predicated on the following proposition: they are, to date, Mario Vargas Llosa’s two most cosmopolitan novels, in terms of ideas and conceptual articulation.²⁶ Furthermore, while they plot political cosmopolitanism and advocate for rooted cosmopolitanism, they do not shy away from using counter-examples to argue in favour of this position. Indeed, neither Flora Tristán nor Paul Gauguin is a rooted cosmopolitan: it is precisely the fact that they deny one aspect of rooted cosmopolitanism that causes their demise. Tristán is not rooted in her milieu, and does not see the purpose of being so; her goals are global. In turning to nationalism, Gauguin ends up being so rooted that he denies the importance of intercultural contact in

the preservation of cultures. Roger Casement does not fare much better: his temporary rejection of rooted cosmopolitanism amidst the historical turmoil of the fight for Irish independence brings him to nationalism, causing his death. However, it is precisely because he was, at heart, a rooted cosmopolitan that he is given a chance at redemption.

The three protagonists have in common their extensive travels and their interest in other cultures, and it is the contact with these other cultures that marks the beginning of their intellectual, artistic, and political journeys. This alters them in a radical way, and triggers their reflection about the world, but also about the very role cultural diversity plays in the life of individuals. Yet while Flora Tristán and—except for a brief and fatal moment—Roger Casement thrive on cultural diversity, Paul Gauguin rejects it as a dangerous force. The three characters are also openly dissatisfied with their environments, and, through an extra-national encounter with cultural diversity, come to embrace their roles in changing the world order. It is this contact with cultural diversity that leads them to develop a cosmopolitan position, however problematic it might turn out to be.

Flora Tristán closely resembles Roger Casement. Both discover their ideological affiliations in Latin America: Tristán in Lima, Casement in the Putumayo. The contact with different cultures is beneficial for both of them, and cements their respective philosophical positions. While Lima's cultural diversity allows Tristán to discover cosmopolitanism, Casement's stay in Peru allows him to move from the cosmopolitan outlook he had developed in Africa to a more nation-centred one. This brings him to universalize the sufferings of Indigenous peoples, to argue that the Irish are in fact a member of that larger group, exploited and stranded in their subalternity. While Peru opens Tristán up to new possibilities, it reinforces Casement's feelings that his nation needs his help. But Peru, and Latin America more broadly, mark a turning point in both of their lives. Their stay in Peru is also the first step in their undoing.

Both Tristán and Casement are ruled by their feelings, by the experiences they share with those they want to help. In her case, it is workers and women to whom she dedicates most of her time; in his, it is the Indigenous populations of Africa and Latin America. Both devote their life to helping people they perceive as their equal but who are subalternized by exploitative capitalism, colonialism, or patriarchy. The pattern that Casement

follows is the reverse of Tristán's: she universalizes her own condition, she goes from the specific to the universal (one woman, all women); Casement, for his part, goes from the universal to the specific (Indigenous populations in the Belgian Congo and the Putumayo, the Irish). For Tristán and Casement, the discovery of cosmopolitanism leads to the development of some sort of messianic spirit; they both see their work as their mission in life. In each case, the narrative comments on their respective *locura*—internationalism and nationalism, respectively. Such fanaticism does bring about their demise, but the narrator also redeems both characters: indeed, the narrative voice appears sympathetic to their suffering, and is never judgmental. The same cannot be said of Gauguin, of whom the narrative voice is highly critical, for his extremism—in the form of colonialism—is permeated with racism and the rejection of other cultures. Although Gauguin and Casement share the same nationalist political preferences, their treatment could not be more different.

Paul Gauguin and Roger Casement both turn to nationalism, at first glance for the very same reason: the preservation of cultures as *pure* artefacts. Gauguin, in his search for an artistic utopia, cannot bring himself to admit that it is the plurality of cultural backgrounds that makes the Marquesas the very Paradise he was seeking. He rejects the cultural exchanges he encounters—namely, Chinese cultural elements—as some sort of perversion of what he understands to be *pure* Marquesas culture, without grasping that cultures are porous and can only be enriched by coming into contact with others. Casement, for his part, wants to recover a mythical Irish culture that has been destroyed by the English colonizers, but ironically, it is his contact with a plurality of cultures that enables him to detect the importance of his own. Gauguin's rejection of other cultures leads him to colonialism, the worst form of nationalism, a stance rendered despicable by the novel's narrative voice. Casement, for his part, turns to nationalism precisely as a rejection of colonialism, and even then, he remains first and foremost a convinced patriot tragically caught up in the nationalist movement. Gauguin, on the contrary, becomes a radical and exclusionary French colonial nationalist.

In a narration reminiscent of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, *El Paraíso en la otra esquina* intertwines the destinies of Flora Tristán and Paul Gauguin, drawing parallels between grandmother and grandson, and highlighting

the resulting paradoxes. In addition to allowing Gauguin to refer to his grandmother, this structure also reinforces my contention that the narrator acts as a voice of reason and tries to extract lessons from the protagonists' behaviour. In a few instances, when Gauguin is about to make the same type of mistakes Tristán once did, the narrator highlights how grandmother and grandson, although extremely different in their philosophical leanings, are cut from the same cloth. The narrative voice does not stop Gauguin from making mistakes; it only comments on the similarities shared by grandmother and grandson. They are both stubborn and will not stop short of their goals, even if it kills them. This contrapuntal structure demonstrates that liberalism is at play: Plutarch's objective was to study the way individuals affect the course of history, which is, in modern terms, a liberal view of history.

As in Plutarch's text, which presents, by way of conclusion, four unpaired lives, *El sueño del celta* only explores the life of Roger Casement. However, a close reading allows me to argue that the novel is nevertheless about parallel lives, albeit in a broader sense. The epigraph is already a clear indication of the textual intention to present *muchos hombres*—in this case, three different men. Casement's evolution, from a young and naive colonizer to a cosmopolitan patriot, and in the end to a full-fledged nationalist—albeit for a short period of time—runs parallel to the evolution of the Indigenous populations he encounters. Whereas Tristán and Gauguin are clearly parallel lives, Casement's counterpoint is the Indigenous populations he meets at every stage of his life, and the individual he becomes, with the beliefs and values that he develops as a consequence.

The cosmopolitan question has always permeated Vargas Llosa's body of work. Some of his recent novels embody the urgent need to address the cosmopolitan question in the context of debates about globalization. The plotting of characters in narrations reminiscent of *Parallel Lives* promotes a liberal view of history, but also the enunciation of the idea that lessons are to be extracted from the trajectories of exceptional individuals. It should not come as a surprise, then, that the Peruvian intellectual chose to address these themes in a series of historical novels, for they are usually a means of returning to the past so as to reflect on the present. For Vargas Llosa, literature is a space to inspire, to motivate individuals to change things. I have proposed that Vargas Llosa's historical novels fall within

both Lukács's and Menton's articulations, yet also differ from both; they represent an evolution of the historical novel in which the characters take on a very active role. Through their awakening to a global consciousness, they tackle global concerns: while Flora Tristán confronts women's and workers' issues, Roger Casement fights colonialism. Vargas Llosa's novels are framed in historicity and are pedagogical in nature, and the extensive investigation the author undertakes before writing each of his novels indicates a detail-oriented mind that attempts to reproduce his characters' historical context in the most accurate way possible, as Lukács argues, while his protagonists are based on historical characters and discuss philosophical ideas, as Menton claims. Both *El Paraíso en la otra esquina* and *El sueño del celta* show the same attention to detail and make extensive use of the actual writings—be they personal journals or factual reports—of the historical figures they portray. Within these novels, moreover, Vargas Llosa goes one step further than Menton's theorization: the novels are *about* ideas—cosmopolitanism, nationalism, rooted cosmopolitanism; he focuses on real characters; and these characters are the main focus of the narrative. This is, I contend, a powerful example of Vargas Llosa's liberal positions: his novels are about individuals and the very active role they play in the making of history.

Another major difference is that the characters he portrays are not only witnesses to history, as in Lukács's theories, they register what is happening, and more importantly, criticize and overtly denounce the failings of their historical context in unambiguous terms. Flora Tristán writes a travel journal during her stay in Latin America, publishing it under the title *Pérégrinations d'une paria*, while Roger Casement releases the Casement Report and the Blue Book after his stays in the Congo and Peru—such accounts serve as indictments of the abuses they have witnessed, and the implicit author of Vargas Llosa's novels makes the narrators interact with those documents, or the documents are introduced and paraphrased in the novels. Unlike in many recent historical novels, where Latin America plays a central role, in Vargas Llosa's historical novels the continent plays what appears, at first sight, to be a minor role: only a section of each novel takes place on the continent. Yet, it is also a major one: it is the source of both Tristán's and Casement's awakening to cosmopolitanism, as well as the *Paraíso* that Gauguin longs to reproduce. Thus, unlike major

contemporary historical novels, while Vargas Llosa's works are in dialogue with Latin America's history in an oblique manner, they are nonetheless deeply engaged in the debates and ideas that have shaped the continent.

The choice of the historical novel corresponds to the Peruvian author's literary intention and vision. I posit that Vargas Llosa's historical novels "exprime[nt] une vérité" ("express a truth"; qtd. in Michaud and Bensoussan 219)—namely, his own. About historical novels and truth, he has said that "cette vérité n'est pas celle des faits qui se sont réalisés objectivement, en dehors de nous-mêmes. Elle relève de la vérité intérieure de l'homme" ("this truth is not the truth of the facts that occurred objectively, outside of ourselves. It is part of the inner truth of man"; 219).²⁷ This truth, this different version of the historical past depicted in the two novels studied in this chapter, has to do with the philosophical perspective with which the author has chosen to frame each novel as a whole, but most specifically, the very characters he plots. This treatment of the past is especially clear in the case of Roger Casement: while Vargas Llosa's Casement recognizes the error of his ways and ultimately rejects extreme nationalism, the real-life Casement never disavowed his nationalist convictions, proclaiming them anew just minutes before his execution.

Both *El Paraíso en la otra esquina* and *El sueño del celta* are about collectivist ideologies—internationalism and nationalism—yet their literary treatment is framed through liberalism. Albeit in a different contrapuntal manner, both novels focus on the lives of individuals rather than on historical processes, once again warranting comparison with Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*. This intertext highlights the role of individuals, rather than collectivities, in the making of history, and consequently is conceptually framed in a liberal vision of societal processes. While for Marxism, individuals are subordinated to the processes of history and societal structures, liberalism emphasizes the very role of the individual in the making of history. This philosophical and historical intertextuality—Marxism, liberalism, and *Parallel Lives*—illuminate Vargas Llosa's political tendencies: through the plotting of individuals, their impressions of things, the way they struggle and shape history and society, as well as their production—philosophical, literary, and political in Tristán's case; artistic in Gauguin's; and political in Casement's—shine a light on the liberal beliefs of the author, for whom liberty is of the utmost importance. This literary

form reflects Vargas Llosa's liberalism, the aesthetics reveal the political stance of their author, and ultimately, the focus is on individual liberty. In rejoicing in a collectivist project, both Tristán and Casement deny their individual freedom, which leads them to failure: indeed, for Vargas Llosa, "detrás de las utopías sociales yace la fascinación por la servidumbre, el terror primitivo, atávico, del hombre de la tribu—de la sociedad colectivista—a asumir aquella soberanía individual que nace del ejercicio pleno de la libertad" ("behind social utopias lies the fascination for servitude, the primitive, atavistic terror of the man of the tribe—of collectivist society—to assume the individual sovereignty that is born from the full exercise of freedom"; *Verdad de las mentiras* 136). The *tribu* to which both Tristán and Casement want to belong is problematic: for her, because in embracing the whole of humanity she denies the very basic human need for meaningful relationships; for him, because in supporting the Irish national cause, he shuts himself off from the rest of the world. Gauguin, for his part, does enjoy individual liberty, to the extent that he denies his fellow human beings their own, a stance as problematic as his grandmother's.

Vargas Llosa's rearticulation of the historical novel not only allows him to frame his subjects through his liberal positions, but also to discuss ideas and address contemporary issues. As a liberal public intellectual, he is engaged in polarizing debates about democracy and globalization. The Peruvian author plots in fiction the debates in which he is involved; he transposes into fiction the ideas found in these debates, as well as in his newspaper articles and essays, for, as he himself acknowledges, the majority of people are more likely to read and appreciate his fictions, since they are wrongly perceived as less politicized than his essays (Vargas Llosa, "Confessions of an Old Fashioned Liberal"). Both *El Paraíso en la otra esquina* and *El sueño del celta* deal with the dangers of extremism, and in so doing allude to the contemporary world. These fictional worlds invite readers to establish meaningful parallels between the historical past they depict and the present. The characters of Flora Tristán, Paul Gauguin, and Roger Casement all share the same cosmopolitan ethos, and their struggle resonates with current issues, even if they are opposed to each other on many fronts, from the way they understand sexuality to the articulation of their desire to save the world.

The character of Flora Tristán is a case in point: Vargas Llosa plots her to portray contemporary concepts, and to criticize the drift of liberal globalization. Tristán's trip to London to work with the Spence family, whom she despises, takes place during the period of liberal industrialization and early globalization, a situation that mirrors a later form of globalization and its shortcomings—namely, the power of the 1 per cent. Yet, the novel does not propose any solution, it merely makes clear that socialism is not the key to past or current problems. However, in Flora's case, the novel also makes a case for globalization: indeed, it is this nineteenth-century globalized Peru that turns her into a social activist, thus proving the author's point—namely, that “globalization must be welcomed because it notably expands the horizons of individual liberty” (Vargas Llosa, “Culture of Liberty” 69). Furthermore, it is worth clarifying that Vargas Llosa's liberalism does not amount to complacency vis-à-vis the current global order. On the contrary, both novels uphold the denunciations made by the characters of Flora Tristán and Roger Casement, vindicating them and suggesting that their struggles were justified in the past, and would be again today.

Vargas Llosa's current criticism of nationalist forces as killers of freedom is evident in his depiction of both Gauguin and Casement, and resonates with some interventions he has made on the topic of separatist movements, be they in Catalonia or in Scotland. Gauguin's adherence to nationalism is despicable, a return to the primitive state Vargas Llosa claims is removed from civilization; moreover, it is dangerous and has terrible consequences. Unlike Gauguin, Casement is at least partially redeemed through his balanced approach to both his homeland and the world, although he comes close to missing any redemption at all. For example, during his stay in Germany, the once open-minded Casement tries to impose his views on Irish soldiers serving in the British army who refuse to cede to his impassioned nationalist speech. “Seeking to impose a cultural identity on a people,” claims Vargas Llosa, “is equivalent to locking them in a prison and denying them the most precious of liberties—that of choosing what, how, and who they want to be” (69). In trying to impose his will on the Irish soldiers, Casement denies them freedom of choice.

Moreover, the characters of Gauguin and Casement embody Vargas Llosa's criticism of nationalist views of cultural identity. Indeed, he claims

that “If there is anything at odds with the universalist propensities of culture, it is the parochial, exclusionary, and confused vision that nationalist perspectives try to impose on cultural life. . . . Cultures must live freely, constantly jousting with different cultures” (70). This is both Gauguin’s and Casement’s mistake: by arguing that cultures must be preserved, they show an exclusionary vision that rejects the premise that cultures thrive when enriched by others. They conflate *preservation* and *purity*. Their flawed understanding reinforces Vargas Llosa’s stance that “globalization does not suffocate local cultures but rather liberates them from the ideological conformity of nationalism” (69).

In conclusion, Vargas Llosa posits that in an era such as ours, rooted cosmopolitanism is the best way to tackle the issues facing the world. By discussing these ideas in historical novels, Vargas Llosa starts a conversation that is not only cosmopolitan in nature, but that also puts cosmopolitanism proper at the forefront, an evolution of his own literary production that mirrors that of Spanish American letters writ large. His rearticulation of the historical novel allows him to discuss philosophical ideas under the guise of historical fiction. Ultimately, both *El Paraíso en la otra esquina* and *El sueño del celta* are about current issues and the role of individuals in resolving them, sparking a reflection without providing answers.

In the next chapter, we will see how contemporary authors use the global novel to discuss these issues of global citizenship in the contemporary era. They, too, struggle to reconcile the nation and the world while exploring different avenues.

