

Task #3: Ghostly interpretations

1. Form a group with at least one other student who has read the same text as you (A, B, or C) for task #2. Together, discuss the following questions:

- ◆ Describe the type of ghostly presence that Roger Casement has in your text. How is he present despite his absence (death)?
- ◆ What elements from Roger Casement's life are relevant for the way he is being remembered?

→ Possible answers:

A) *The Knight of the Flaming Heart* by Michael Carson

- ◆ Describe the type of ghostly presence that Roger Casement has in your text. How is he present despite his absence (death)? → Casement appears as a physical manifestation of his spirit in this novel. However, even in the scenes in which his ghost does not appear, the *idea* of his ghost remains central, haunting every conversation and every space.
- ◆ What elements from Roger Casement's life are relevant for the way he is being remembered? → The "Black Diaries" and his rumored homosexuality are central in this novel. They determine what different groups of characters think about him: the young gay men like and praise him, the older, more conservative locals are shocked, and the Church officials try to deny and hide Casement's apparition because his sexuality makes him an undesirable saint.

B) "No Other Place" by Martina Devlin

- ◆ Describe the type of ghostly presence that Roger Casement has in your text. How is he present despite his absence (death)? → The story takes place on the anniversary of Casement's death (August 3rd). Though he is not physically there, he assumes an invisible, threatening presence in the room, dividing Milligan and the policeman, and thoroughly poisoning the atmosphere. To Alice Milligan, Casement becomes a symbol of her ongoing identification with the cause of Irish Nationalism. To the policeman Norman, on the other hand, he represents the enemy, the side he dislikes and opposes strongly. The memory or ghost of Casement alone is powerful enough to affect both characters strongly.
- ◆ What elements from Roger Casement's life are relevant for the way he is being remembered? → his support for the cause of Irish Nationalism, his execution by the English Government

C) "The Butterfly Collector" by Rebecca Solnit

- ◆ Describe the type of ghostly presence that Roger Casement has in your text. How is he present despite his absence (death)? → Firstly, the text revives Roger Casement by reprinting his diary entries. In this way, his voices can be heard again. Secondly, starting off with the very butterflies that Roger Casement caught, killed, collected, and brought back from his expeditions¹, and then following the butterflies to Auschwitz and into more abstract, philosophical terrain, the text strongly connects Casements to butterflies. Thus, by close association (metonymy), the butterflies and Casement become one, and haunt the different spaces of the text together.
- ◆ What elements from Roger Casement's life are relevant for the way he is being remembered? → His hobby of butterfly collecting; his expeditions to the Congo Free State and the Putumayo, where he documented the atrocities committed by the respective colonial administrations; his political activism.

¹ The butterflies Casement collected could be considered a "secular relic" (see McDiarmid). The "Afterlife" section also contains a teaching unit on Casement's bones and secular relics. Task a) deals with the McDiarmid text, specifically.