

“Casement’s Funeral”

Richard Murphy

After the noose, and the black diary deeds
Gossiped, his fame roots in prison lime:
The hanged bones burn, a revolution seeds.
Now Casement's skeleton is flying home.

5 A gun salutes, the troops slow-march, our new
Nation atones for her shawled motherland¹
Whose welcome gaoled² him when a U-boat threw
This rebel Quixote³ soaked on Banna Strand.

10 Soldiers in green guard the draped catafalque⁴
With chalk remains of once ambiguous bone
Which fathered nothing till the traitor's dock
Hurt him to tower in legend like Wolfe Tone⁵.

15 From gaol yard to the Liberator's tomb
Pillared in frost, they carry the freed ash,
Transmuted relic of a death-cell flame
Which purged for martyrdom the diarist's flesh.

20 On the small screen I watch the packed cortege⁶
Pace from High Mass. Rebels in silk hats now
Exploit the grave with an old comrade's speech:
White hair tossed, a black cape flecked with snow.

¹ 'shawled motherland': refers to the countryside region of Kerry, where Casement's boat had landed before his arrest. Kerry people were involuntarily made witnesses for the Crown during Casement's trial.

² 'gaoled': imprisoned

³ 'Quixote': The main character of Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote* is idealistic to the point of being impractical.

⁴ 'catafalque': a raised platform to support the coffin during ceremonious funerals.

⁵ 'Wolfe Tone': Wolfe Tone was a leading 18th-century Irish revolutionary figure.

⁶ 'cortege': solemn procession



The feminised Irish “Nation atones for her shawled motherland” (l.8):
The tradition of using female allegorical figures had its golden age during 19th-century nation building. While it associated female icons with patriotic virtues, it contributed to a long history of using female representations for abstract concepts such as nations, rather than to memorialise actual historical female figures.

1. Using separate colours for each category, highlight the words associated with a) death, b) remembering, c) movement, d) rebirth.

2. What does the poem do with these different categories? How does it evoke Casement's funeral?