

Cult of the Sexless Casement
with Special Reference to the Novel
The Dream of the Celt by Mario Vargas Llosa
(Nobel Prize Winner for Literature 2010)

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Abstract:

The Irish revolutionary Roger Casement, executed in 1916, has spawned an army of books, articles, and news stories, more about his diaries and the authenticity controversy that still surrounds them than about his seminal work encouraging and arming Irish separatism or his humanitarian investigations in the Congo and the Peruvian Amazon. His aura and image in life, and more so in death, was Christ-like. A cult developed that required him to be sexless. The more he was said to be an active homosexual, as graphically revealed in his journals, ironically, the more he was revered as an icon by his Catholic nationalist supporters. The entry of Nobel prizewinning novelist Mario Vargas Llosa to the field and his adoption of a mixed, even contradictory, view of Casement's sexuality in his *Dream of the Celt* (2010) has sparked a new round of disputation particularly from Angus Mitchell, the foremost proponent of the diary forgery theory. This emerges in his extensive *Field Day Review* articles, one of which provides a full history of the controversy.

Keywords: Black Diaries, Roger Casement, gay Irish revolutionaries, Mario Vargas Llosa, *The Dream of the Celt*

It remains unquestionable and remarkable – and maybe it tells you something – that the two best-known, and most written about gay characters in the last 150 years were both Irish, and both went to jail, although only one to the gallows.

My intention here is to reclaim Roger Casement, not as a gay icon or gay role model, but as a gay Irishman of consequence. As the centenary of 1916 approaches, it will become ever plainer that he was of great significance to, and in the creation of, an independent Ireland and particularly its foreign policy. He was an early and indefatigable Irish separatist. Even though the founding

fathers (and now their children) have died, the creation myths have receded, and the country's once dominant founding political party, Fianna Fáil, has been broken, Casement's legacy to the Irish Free State has not diminished.

The basic story of his Black Diaries is well known, although every single fact about them has or will be disputed or challenged. Belief in their authenticity to many once, and some still, is heresy.

Briefly, after Casement's capture in Co. Kerry in April 1916 coming off a German submarine, the diaries were handed in to Scotland Yard by a Mr Germain who stored his luggage in Ebury Street, London. Casement never had a dwelling of his own so his life's work and voluminous papers were scattered over many addresses. Accompanying a large arms shipment in the German steamer *Aud* for the Irish Volunteers, the precursor of the IRA, he was none the less intent on getting the Rising called off for what he felt was inadequate German support.

The three diaries, a ledger and a notebook cover four separate years: 1901, 1903, 1910 and 1911. That of 1901 is of no import being little more than a jotter. There are two 1911 items, one a cashbook or ledger with frequent personal entries, and the second, a flowing or discursive diary, with substantive sexual descriptions. It has only ever been published in my 2002 book. The ledger was last published in 1959 by Maurice Girodias.

In the appendices there is evidence of Casement's mode and modus operandi, his cruising and musing. He was no shrinking violet either in sexual manners or manly achievement, similar to many contemporary gay men. However he had little or no chance – and may well not have wanted any form of substantive or long-term relationship. That opportunity has come to many only recently. Instead, he successfully compartmentalised his sexual life.

Two boyfriends did however cross-over and one, the Norwegian Adler Christensen, was to betray him, twice. The Ulsterman Millar Gordon did not. A small number of more worldly friends worked it out, for example the historian Alice Stopford Green, of whom more later. Some others like his lawyer George Gavan Duffy probably knew but avoided expressing his understanding.

None of this calls into question Casement's effective humanitarian work on the Amazon or Congo rivers, or requires one to let his political work in Ireland and Germany pass without question. In the Irish department, Casement succeeded beyond his wilder dreams in the creation of a separate state yet failed dismally in his chosen province of Ulster. And it matters that Casement was gay, not least because it is unlikely otherwise he would have been such a rebel or devoted so much time to both humanitarian and revolutionary activity.

One of the complaints of the forgery school is that homosexuals are trying to turn Casement into a gay icon. This unwarranted assertion infers that gay men are, as a class, historically minded – which has a grain of truth. The notion however that Casement has a cult following like Marilyn Monroe, James Dean or Lady Gaga is laughable.

Up close, everyone is human so it is unwise to admire too much – Oscar Wilde, W.H. Auden, Christopher Isherwood, James Baldwin, Harvey Milk, Peter Tatchell might be or become gay icons. But they are, or were, all flawed, and at times horrible. A personal icon would be the 1950s law reformer and author of *The Other Love* (1970), Montgomery Hyde, who wasn't gay but did more for gay people than most, and paid the price in career terms. But he was a terrible snob and something of a chancer. No cult likely there, not least because he was the Unionist MP for North Belfast.

With this article's title, two things have to be explained or proved: how and why did the cult of Casement come about? And why had he to be sexless for it? First was he sexless? If the diaries are entirely fraudulent then he was, which in itself is a bit unusual. Women gathered around him in numbers, most noticeably at his London trial where the audience included Lady Lavery, Eva Gore Booth and Alice Milligan, and of course his faithful and devoted Liverpool cousins Gertrude and Elizabeth Bannister. Also earlier, when a number of aristocratic Ulster women from the Caledon and Norbury families, Margaret Dobbs of Castle Dobbs, Rose Young (Rois Ni Ogain) of Galgorm Castle, Ada McNeill cousin of Lord Cushendun, and other titled Englishwomen such as Lady Constance Emmott and the Duchess of Hamilton befriended him. And that is not to mention literary giants who were friends or supporters like Arthur Conan Doyle, Joseph Conrad (but not in 1916), Rider Haggard and of course W.B. Yeats. But there was never a hint of amorous activity with these women, some quite attractive and several of the marrying kind – rather the opposite. He even pleaded with his cousin Gertrude to get Ada McNeill to cool her interest, writing, "I wish poor old soul she would leave me alone. These repeated invitations to go to meet her are a bit out of place. I have very strong feelings of friendship for her, and good will, and brotherly Irish affection, but I wish she would leave other things out of the reckoning" (NLI MS 13074/8).

He had a number of gay male friends or people that it is reasonable to assume were gay, notably Sidney Parry who was to chastely marry Casement's cousin Gertrude in 1916 after the execution, and the Belfast solicitor and antiquarian Francis Joseph Bigger. Bigger was someone who cultivated boys and young men, particularly *Fianna* and Protestant rebels, about which stories were exchanged although none revealed impropriety in today's terms. There is no evidence that they discussed such matters, while Bigger was sufficiently naïve only to discover the raw truth when he went through Casement's correspondence and other diaries stored at his house, Ardrigh, after the outbreak of war. And unfortunately burnt the lot, including probably his cache of boyfriend letters plus many interesting and unconnected items. Two such are the incoming E.D. Morel and Gertrude Parry correspondence, both almost entirely missing.

The evidence that Casement was a busy homosexual is in his own words and handwriting in the diaries, and is colossally convincing because of its detail and extent. You could hardly ask for more. There is also some corroboration

from Norwegian interviews with friends and colleagues of Adler Christensen who was however also the marrying sort, managing three wives simultaneously. He was last heard of in Canada in 1928 abandoning the third.

Was a cult developed around Casement, one that required him to be without the stain of sex and which would not have got under way otherwise? It is that peculiar yet fascinating intense Irish Catholicism, one which took over the Irish Free State for fifty years, which Casement was able in death to evoke. A couple of recently released letters exemplify the cult that was developing. A nun at the Convent of the Holy Faith, Glasnevin, Dublin wrote to Gertrude:

Words fail to express the depth of my feeling for you in this most bitter sorrow. I had hoped to the last that the united prayers of so many would be granted [...] What a glorious death – he was perfectly resigned to Almighty God’s appointment – he bore no ill-will to his murderers – he loved God, he loved his fellow men and he died for his country. (NLI MS 49,154/16/4)

And Lily O’Farrelly said:

We are heart-broken and can’t realise as yet the awful tragedy. I never imagined they would carry out their awful sentence. Thank God they can’t touch his pure soul. His death was glorious and his memory will ever be enshrined in Irish hearts. (NLI MS 49,154/16/5).

His own defence counsel, Serjeant Sullivan, spoke later of “Casement worshippers”, warning cultists that “Casement was a megalomaniac” (1956). They were not likely to listen to the lawyer, as he was a known enemy of Irish separatism, illustrated by a serious assassination attempt on him in Kerry in 1920. Casement however left a clue to his own thinking on the matter when in his last days he wrote asking his friends to “roll away the stone from my grave” (The National Archives, HO 144/1637/182). Truly a demi-God.

Later in 1976, Roger McHugh¹ at a Dublin meeting said the diaries “show a pathological condition and wildly promiscuous behaviour while what is known of Casement at the same time establishes his moral integrity and common sense”. This remains the forgery formulation of today. He was too good to have written the diaries.

The historian and biographer, Angus Mitchell, currently the doyen of the forgery school, says:

If he did write the documents, then we must contend that he deliberately authored diaries that executed him, dramatically compromised his work as an investigator of atrocities and betrayed himself as ‘a man of no mind’ [...] if the Black Diaries Casement is the one true Casement, it is right that gay history should claim him as their own for Casement was the true martyr of the gay rights cause more than Oscar Wilde. (Quoted from Daly 2005, 117)

This is dangerous territory for the forgery theorists, if Casement did write the diaries; he is in their words a truly awful person, worthy of jail if not the gallows.

Mitchell is by no means alone. He has worked in concert with the old-fashioned Roger Casement Foundation, the now former Fianna Fáil TD Martin Mansergh and the swelling ranks of anti-revisionists in the British & Irish Communist Organisation/Irish Political Review/Athol Books nexus which had so much hidden influence in and on the north in the 1970s and 1980s. And, as discussed later, Mitchell left an early and substantive impression on Mario Vargas Llosa, the Nobel prize winning novelist and author of *El sueño del celta* (2010; *The Dream of the Celt*, 2012). So much so that Vargas Llosa effectively wrote a history not a novel. His attempt at fictionalised history being described by one American reviewer, Richard Eder, as “more a matter of embroidery” (2012). *The Sunday Times* cruelly called it “an exercise in anaesthesia” (Kemp 2012) with too many lists.

Casement’s martyr status was only accentuated by the extra trial he experienced, after execution, when his reputation was sullied by publicity about his diaries. Adding to the whole overheated atmosphere by becoming a Roman Catholic in the death cell, he was further guaranteed saintly status. His Jesus-like looks, as in much popular Catholic iconography, brought a dramatically visual aspect to the whole confection. Being seriously handsome (with a permanent beard) added to the potential for the creation of a hero-martyr – one whose public life had been dedicated to the poor and oppressed. Ironically, the Black Diaries were to end up while unseen, only convincing people more of his virtue.

That extreme version of faith had its origin in the peculiar combination of myth and religiosity which was to revolutionise Ireland. The Catholic nation, numerically devastated by famine, but strengthened by a vastly extended land ownership and a modernisation that had required seeing off the Gaelic language, was, in 1916, seriously out of step with its power potential. The English-speaking Catholic majority in the south had now been denied achievable Home Rule in their area for two generations. And they acted in a revolutionary manner from 1916 on, easily obtaining the Free State. The Protestant ruling caste was seen off having been in retreat for nearly a century.

Casement however presented both a problem and a challenge. As part of that sacrifice, and singled out to be judicially executed – hanged, not shot, months after the other leaders faced their firing squads or were reprieved – his death hurt Ireland and his leadership friends. As that new elite took power, his role was amplified and it could be seen how critical he had been for a number of reasons, not least his involvement in the founding of the Irish Volunteers and their initial arming, but also in his laying out of a foreign policy and *raison d’être* for the new state. But he was not just a party to the founding of the state, he was himself a saintly martyred figure, a humanitarian who sacrificed himself for others, both in Ireland and beyond. It was not and could not be conceivable to believers that he was a moral degenerate guilty of sex crimes

that were once so awful Christians could not name them; “*Inter Christianos non nominandum*”, as Sir Robert Peel stated when introducing the Offences Against the Person Bill in 1828. Consequently the unseen diaries were specious and could only have been concocted – another crime to lay at England’s door. No matter the evidence, that will remain the view of a critical number of old believers. They must not contemplate anything else or their faith dies; nor can they ever be convinced to let up their campaign. And they are joined by new recruits from abroad.

Even if Casement was homosexual, several hurdles remain for Irish nationalists. He often did it with young teenage boys (see appendices below for relevant diary extracts), frequently out of doors and also wrote down the details. These issues, however need not be addressed, indeed can be avoided, if the forgery question stays centre stage. Just as is the case with a fellow Irishman and Protestant nationalist, Oscar Wilde whose penchant for young rent boys would land him in gaol then and could today, the prosecution itself became the issue, not the crime.

Casement, the Irish separatist ideologue, was more important than Casement, the British government’s humanitarian trouble shooter. He nurtured (in the early years), financed, and armed (twice) those Irish Volunteers who went out in 1916. But his diaries also give an amazing, almost unique, insight into a homosexual life lived hard and largely well over 100 years ago – gay history, in other words, not just something for antagonists to deny and redact.

The extensive articles by Angus Mitchell in Notre Dame University’s *Field Day Review* (2012) revive much of the debate. He had been largely silent since 2000 when, as he writes, “acting on the advice of several senior Irish academics I had decided to remove myself from the [diary] controversy rather than engage with every new polemical development”. This self-denying ordinance came shortly after he reviewed my book in a highly dismissive manner, describing it as a “queer reading [...] serving the cause of gay unionism” (2012, 110). Mitchell is consumed by a mammoth sense of what Italians call *dietrologia* – that what matters is under the surface. So no government employee and no academic apparently does anything except consciously yet secretly, to serve the interests of their masters. This is how he can seriously suggest the shadowy forces around British Intelligence and in key universities didn’t just forge the diaries in 1916 but worked at them for a further “43 years to perfect the look” (120) until they were suitable to be made available in the Public Record Office in 1959! The only problem is that no written trace of this colossal operation has survived or ever surfaced.

We are first required to believe that one or more forgers went to Naval Intelligence in 1916 and reported in as highly experienced, open homosexuals ready to do their duty for King and Country (against a fellow gay) by writing and researching more than a thousand diary entries. These had to detail a great deal of rampant sexual activity, alongside innumerable characters, many

famous, plus a host of daily incidents and meetings, mostly in South America, not to mention the weather on particular days over a decade.

Angus Mitchell wrote earlier:

In the run of recent work analysing the interface between sexuality, empire, race and gender, the Black Diaries have been treated with some level of caution and circumspection. Casement's 'gay' status has been invoked more often as a symbol of Irish 'modernity', or as a means of humiliating intolerant attitudes amongst Irish nationalists, than as a blueprint for 'gay' lifestyles [...] To argue, therefore, that the diaries are essentially homophobic may be unfashionable, but it is not unreasonable. They impose various homophobic stereotypes of the 'diseased mind' type and situate sexual difference in a marginal and alienated world bereft of either love or sympathy. Equally problematic is the treatment of the willing 'native' as silent and willing victim of the diarist's predatory instincts. (2009a)

In the *Field Day Review* (2012) he writes at length, running over and annotating the whole diaries' controversy (and Casement's time in Germany). Throughout he acts like a defence lawyer not an historian, omission being his mode of avoiding key evidence. The piece was precursor to the big international conference on Casement in Tralee in October 2013 run by Notre Dame University. He points out that my book initially

[...] gained academic approval, following a launch by Professor Lord Bew of Queen's University, Belfast. This somewhat eccentric publication which included extensive passages from all the disputed diaries, along with fresh interpolations, and thoughtful omissions amounted to little more than an updated and camped-up version of the 1959 edition², with a few original insights into Casement's early years in Antrim. Dudgeon upheld the diaries as the heart and soul of Casement's biography³ and used them provocatively as a means of destabilising (or queering) the martial spirit of Northern Irish Protestant nationalism and representing it as some deviant youth movement. The book baffled academics, and was as unashamedly political as it was scholastically unsound. (2012, 110)

This deviancy refers to The Neophytes, a pre-Boy Scout group of young intellectuals formed by Francis Bigger that included the musician Herbert Hughes who wrote the memorable songs *My Lagan Love* (1904) and *She Moves Through the Fair* (1909). Other in his circle included the poet Joseph Campbell who wrote the lyrics for the latter song and the singer Cathal O'Byrne, both Republican activists. Mitchell obligingly mentioned that,

The most searing critique of Dudgeon's book appeared in the ACIS *Irish Literary Review Supplement* (March 2004). The reviewer Cólín Owen [...] found disturbing contradictions with a Casement who on one hand was excoriating Belgians, British and Peruvians for colonial looting while, on the other, taking advantage of local men and boys. In Owens view the Diaries condemn Casement as a pioneer of sex tourism. He also dismisses the diaries as 'repetitive, dull, almost entirely without originality [...] boring, tasteless, pathetic, pathological' [...] Owens also criticised Dudgeon's publication for 'reinforcing the very stereotypes of the gay lifestyle what has been with

us for so long: of the emotionally unstable, predatory, sadomasochistic, and promiscuous homosexual'. More problematically he condemned Dudgeon for throwing 'a mantle of righteousness over pederasty and the sexual abuse of minors'. (2012, 110)

I actually replied to Owens at the time, saying:

I am not a Catholic and am an ethnic, not a religious, (Ulster) Protestant, so I did not concern myself with my subject's spiritual hopes as C oil n would wish. It was also not possible for me, in the case of Casement's youthful sexual partners, to 'obtain records of the damage done to their lives, their psyches or their souls.' [...] If they had been available, I would have quoted them but I suspect the damage, in most cases, was negligible or non-existent. (2004)

Most, as stated, were urbanised, consenting, indeed enthusiastic, young men. Later in *History Ireland*, Mitchell wrote that the then phase

of the Casement controversy unleashed the argument that Dudgeon has yet to either recognise or address: the separation of the issue of sexuality from the textual. In case he still hasn't yet grasped the subtleties of the position, let me remind him once more. The argument is no longer about Casement's status as a homosexual. (2009b, 12)

None the less he is again, and still, querying the evidence of his homosexual status. Casement's most recent biographer, S emas   S och ain, wrote: "When old 'discrepancies' or 'contradictions' have been found to be no longer sustainable, the forgery school has continued to reinvent itself by discovering new ones" (2008, 493). He also said that the few contradictions and inconsistencies within the diaries are paradoxically a sign of authenticity, when he dealt in an appendix with the small number that Mitchell has ever drawn attention to.

Mitchell has described me as homophobic. Another (gay) writer also described my book as prurient. I argued I was, to some degree, trying to put the sex back into homosexual. Some critics suggest I may be using Casement's sexuality against his causes, thereby trying to diminish them, much like those progressives and nationalists who taunt Orangemen with the doubtful story that King William was gay⁴. These charges are taken seriously: it may be true that I have provocatively told some people they can't have a hero who they also say is a gay villain (if the diarist), and if that is what they believe, and their hero is proved gay in their eye (which is unlikely given the belief aspect) so be it. It is their choice to risk diminishing their cause, be it Republicanism or an old-fashioned Catholicism with a lay martyr-saint, should it be proved that Casement was the diarist, someone they have labelled an exploiting sexual monster.

Mario Vargas Llosa is described as "a recognised master story teller" (2012, 117) and he truly is, particularly in his masterpiece novel *La fiesta del chivo* (2000; *Feast of the Goat*, 2001) about the assassination of Generalissimo Trujillo of the Dominican Republic. But Mitchell seems to feel betrayed and turns on the

master, pointing up the novel's poor reviews outside Spain. Vargas Llosa, he says sadly, offered "some passing credence to the forgery theory" but "the Casement described is not merely sexually deviant but prone to bouts of psychosis and delusional dreaming" (2012, 119). In truth, he got to the writer first and neutered a good novel. Few other Casement authors escape harsh treatment in the piece.

It is a false notion to think the authenticity question was resolved by the forensic tests arranged with support and funding from the Irish government by RTE and the BBC. It is impossible for evidence to prove to such people that Casement wrote the diaries, or wrote the sexual parts of the diaries, or, if he wrote them, meant what he wrote, and if he did mean what he had written, never did what he said he did. It is impossible to prove a negative but the forgery theorists have a jolly good try, now ably aided by Derridean deconstructionism.

Vargas Llosa won the Nobel Prize for Literature just months before he published his novel. There could be no more prestigious writer, with a number of superb novels under his belt, to take on the task of Casement. Not an easy subject, but made more difficult as his homosexual life was almost entirely out of sight and disconnected from his career and political work. The story is difficult to integrate in any art form, film, TV programme, or novel. His life is so complex and dramatic as to make a single product impossible, although Vargas Llosa tried. The exhaustive biography by Séamas Ó Síocháin of National University of Ireland, Maynooth, remains the best and most definitive attempt to date.

My book, diaries aside, concentrated on only three parts: his family and background in Antrim, his early life mostly spent in England in genteel poverty – recently digitised newspaper reports of Roger and his brother Tom, being convicted of stealing in a London court reveal more of his dysfunctional childhood – and his Irish political life. I would argue psychologically that his outlook was deeply shaped by being an ersatz Irishman brought up in England. His Ulster Protestant family back in Ballymena and Ballycastle provided a degree of financial assistance but would not go the extra mile and put the bright boy through university, rather obliging him to leave school at 16 and migrate to his uncle's shipping world in Liverpool to make a living.

Vargas Llosa has adopted the view of some diary forgery theorists that the sexual passages in the Black Diaries were largely a work of fantasy. This colours his whole novel and makes Casement out to be more saintly than anything else. Someone riven with guilt about his activities as well as a sexual incompetent. He has even spoken of the diaries "with all their noxious obscenities" (2012, 399). It only occurred to me while researching and writing this article, that Vargas Llosa had been so influenced by Angus Mitchell that he had adopted a postmodern approach to Casement and his sex life. But the clues were visible all along. Alice Stopford Green, the historian who, along with her relatives, colonised Irish Secretary, Augustine Birrell and his deputy Sir Matthew Nathan, and whose biography Mitchell is presently researching, is given undue prominence in the novel, in a clunky fashion, and way beyond

her role. She was always “Mrs Green” to him. Others noted just how odd and tedious the repeated mentions of her were. Obviously a woman was needed, over and above Casement’s mother, Anne Jephson⁵, who in real life probably failed her children (if so, ably assisted by a feckless and over-opinionated father), but others were better choices like Gertrude Parry, his loving cousin, portrayed as “knowing” by Patrick Mason in his recent *Radio Éireann* play (2012). Yet Mrs Green was given pre-eminence.

Carol Taaffe in the *Dublin Review of Books* (2012) was canny enough to say the novel “reads like a tedious history primer [...] that it is a means of exculpating Casement for the diaries’ contents [...] an approach that hints – in a faintly postmodern fashion – at the unreliability of documents, the pitfalls of interpretation and the inherent falsity of historical narratives”.

Roy Foster, described by Mitchell as “the doyen of the Irish revisionist agenda” (2012, 114), said in his *Times* review that the novel was “wooden, creaky and unrelievedly dull”, also pointing out that Alice Stopford Green is introduced “with the same information in almost the same words on three occasions within 80 pages” (2012). Since Foster had previously reviewed (2008) Séamas Ó Síocháin’s definitive biography, as had this author (2008), Mitchell kindly added in the *Field Day Review*:

Both O Síocháin and Foster made clear their reliance and support for the work of Jeff Dudgeon, whose perplexing edition of the Black Diaries did much to reinstate belief in their authenticity, at a moment when their legitimacy was starting to collapse under the weight of unsustainable internal contradictions. (2012, 115)⁶

I know Vargas Llosa bought my book and listened intently to what I told him on our couple of days together in Belfast and Co. Antrim, but was aware he had already written much of the novel in his mind, if not on paper, before he read it or indeed saw me. His first and primary influence seems indeed to have been Mitchell who sewed the seed in his head that there was great doubt in Ireland about the authenticity of the diaries and perhaps, even if Casement wrote them, he could never have lived them.

The *Irish Times* reviewer, Alison Ribeiro de Menezes (2012), spotted that Vargas Llosa’s “reiteration of the heroic nationalist vision of the 1916 rebels [was] curious given the author’s strident criticism of nationalism in other writings”. He is a noted anglophile but perhaps where Spain and its empire is concerned, England’s piratical role is not appreciated. (Vargas Llosa is actually a Peruvian, very much of the white Criollo caste and brought up in Bolivia by his mother and her family). She also quotes him saying, “Casement wrote the famous diaries but did not live them, at least not integrally, there is in them a good deal of exaggeration and fiction” (2012, 399).

Another reading of Vargas Llosa is that he is a straight guy, and one brought up in the 1940s with a strong sense of his mother. Square even in 1960s terms. His family background is itself interesting and has occasional whiffs of Case-

ment. He seems to transfer some of it to Roger who in the novel is for ever dreaming about his mother and suggesting that had she lived he would have gone on to a better job, and indeed a wife and family. None of this seems to have concerned Casement in the slightest and of course was never going to happen if one believes that sexual orientation for most gay men is set in perhaps the first four years of life and that an influential aspect to homosexuality is desynchronisation from standard surroundings as happened in his case. But that may be an unfashionable analysis and certainly another matter.

Colm Tóibín in the *London Review of Books* wrote:

Vargas Llosa's efforts to evoke Casement's childhood in Ireland are at the sugary end of historical novel writing. There are moments where it is hard not to feel that Jean Plaidy and Georgette Heyer had a hand in the book's creation. [e.g.] The young Casement at Galgorm Castle 'heard for the first time the epic battles of Irish mythology. The castle of black stone, with its fortified towers, coats of arms, chimneys, and cathedral-like façade, had been built in the 17th century by Alexander Colville, a theologian with an ill-favoured face – according to his portrait in the foyer – who, they said in Ballymena, had made a pact with the devil, and whose ghost walked the castle. On certain moonlit nights, a trembling Roger dared to search for him in passageways and empty rooms but never found him'. (2012, 12)

I have to say my heart sank when the novelist whom I took to Galgorm in Ballymena, saw the Colville portrait and homed in on it at speed. We heard the story from Christopher Brooke who was showing us his decaying castle. He told us of the BBC filming an episode of their *Ghost Busters* programme there. I later heard that the mysterious sounds being investigated had been traced to a Ballymena taxi firm's radio.

Vargas Llosa depicts a sexual Casement on only a small number of occasions and none convince. Indeed that below from the longest episode is exceptionally clumsy and I hope badly translated. Given that Casement does not record having sex with natives, let alone native boys, as opposed to urban or Europeanised individuals, it goes against the man in the diaries. However one can see the reason for Mitchell's horror as it highlights and makes concrete a paedophile, or more accurately pederastic aspect to Casement.

Forgery theorists, Mitchell and Martin Mansergh in particular, can be hoist with their own petards as they claim the diarist was "a psychopathic predator" and a "pederastic exploiter" (quoted in Dudgeon 2002, 515), or someone who "had absolutely no conscience in regard to his own sexual life" (Mansergh 2005, 193). It is one thing to argue forgery but another to regard the diarist as a sexual monster; indeed it is quite perilous if that person is proven to be one and the same man whom Dr Mansergh has also stated it was "legitimate to co-opt him as a forerunner of Ireland's independent foreign policy" (2005, 192). Which is not to say Casement did not on occasions groom teenagers. Unsurprisingly, Mansergh has not endorsed the results of

the forensic tests on the diaries (encouraged by his own government) which in 2001 found them to be written by Casement.

The sexual encounters are characterised by those Vargas Llosa themes, where same sex sex is concerned, of shame followed by thoughts about mother and sadness over the lack of a family life (2010, 264-265), while this (African) event seems also to be more a description of inter-adolescent activity than anything else:

Two young Bakongos were swimming there naked as he was [...] One of the two boys was very beautiful, He had a long blue-black well-proportioned body, deep eyes with a lively light in them, and he moved in the water like a fish... Roger feeling a kind of fever swam towards them... He felt shame, discomfort, and at the same time unlimited joy [...] then Roger felt someone else's hands searching out his belly, touching and caressing his sex, which had been erect for a while [...] his body embracing the boy's whose stiff penis he could also feel rubbing against his legs and belly. It was the first time Roger made love, if he could call it making love when he became excited and ejaculated in the water against the body of the boy who masturbated him and undoubtedly also ejaculated, though Roger didn't notice that [...] What shame he felt afterwards. (247-248)

Compare this with Casement's nostalgic and cheerful diarying (with my commentary), on 10 May 1911 when he wrote of returning to his home town:

Glorious day. May day. Season surpassing! ... To Ballymena and back 4/-... Millar [his Belfast boyfriend] Postages 6d. Telegrams 8d... To B'mena demesne 3d. Beggar 3d. To Ballymena to Comptons. [his tailors] Very hot indeed. To old Turnpool by Braid and Devenagh Burn of Nov. 1877 !!! Rippling in brown and swift, and there too when I plunged across in Mch 1879! Glorious boys of Erin, big and fair. [This entry is very revealing as Casement is reminded of events and boys, out swimming in 1877, when he was thirteen, and later in 1879, when fourteen. It seems he was observing other males sexually as a young teenager and that his desires and sexual orientation were already fixed. It also appears he was not, even at that early stage, riven by guilt. This (deep) turnpool in the Braid river is on the Galgorm Castle demesne, the home of the Young family where the boy Casement often stayed]. (Dudgeon 2002, 280)

In conclusion, Casement was plainly not sexless nor has the cult gone away. It continues and is now cloaked in an anti-revisionist form. Nor should it go away, as Mario Vargas Llosa said: "The diary controversy did not end. Probably it will go on for a long time. Which isn't a bad thing. It's not a bad thing that a climate of uncertainty hovers over Casement, as proof that it is impossible to know definitively a human being" (2012, 399).

However it has to be said Casement gives us more information than most to make a good assessment. Perhaps because I know his flaws and failings and share only a number of his enthusiasms – but much of his background – I can't find my way into his heart. I see no real warmth in his character except his capacity for pity and love of nature, and wonder if he was not overly self-regarding and

obsessive, shallow despite his intellectual strengths, or in Conrad's much quoted words, "a man properly speaking of no mind... all emotion"⁷ (The New York Public Library, John Quinn Papers, Conrad's letter to Quinn, 24 May 1916).

His ability to run a busy gay life effectively and without guilt in the 19th and early 20th century does remain a remarkable achievement. His lack of curiosity about the matter given his radical and enquiring mind equally remarkable.

Notes

¹ Senator Roger McHugh, an academic and active Republican, wrote *Dublin 1916*, Arlington Books, London 1966, which carries extracts from Casement's German diary. He worked assiduously to prove the diaries were not Casement's rather the work of a degenerate obtaining the opinion of a famous Belfast psychiatrist, Pearse O'Malley, to confirm this.

² That Olympia Press edition published in Paris by Maurice Girodias was followed by Roger Sawyer with the 1910 Putumayo report and black diary, Ó Síocháin with the 1903 Congo report and black diary, and Mitchell's 1910 'Amazon Journal' or white diary and 1911 correspondence (but no Black Diaries).

³ Exactly not. I gave equal space to his family and upbringing and his role in Irish and Ulster politics, which aspect Angus Mitchell is unwilling or incapable of engaging with. My book's title tells it precisely: *Roger Casement: The Black Diaries – With a Study of his Background, Sexuality, and Irish Political Life*.

⁴ Evidence, I think, against, comes when William Bentinck (1st Earl of Portland) wrote to William III in 1697 saying "the kindness which your Majesty has for a young man, and the way in which you seem to authorise his liberties... make the world say things I am ashamed to hear." This, he added was "tarnishing a reputation which has never before been subject to such accusations." The King replied, "It seems to me very extraordinary that it should be impossible to have esteem and regard for a young man without it being criminal" (Robb 1966, 399).

⁵ Contrary to most writers' belief, Casement's mother was an (Anglican) Protestant from Portland Street, Dublin who, sometime after her marriage, converted to Roman Catholicism. Her son shared her view of the Church of Ireland as cold and stony.

⁶ One significant internal contradiction has been raised and that concerns Casement describing himself as a celibate. The meaning of the word is actually either sexually chaste or unmarried. Casement was certainly the latter.

⁷ Joseph Conrad writing to John Quinn: "He was a good companion but already in Africa I judged that he was a man, properly speaking, of no mind at all. I don't mean stupid. I mean that he was all emotion. By emotional force (Congo report, Putumayo – etc) he made his way, and sheer emotionalism has undone him. A creature of sheer temperament – a truly tragic personality, all but the greatness of which he had not a trace. Only vanity. But in the Congo it was not visible yet" (The New York Public Library, John Quinn Papers, Conrad's letter to Quinn, 24 May 1916).

⁸ Mrs Green may have been a comrade of Casement but she could be quite acid in her attitude to him. In 1913, she is to be found, after listening to "a particularly vehement Irish tirade," once he had left, exclaiming "Sometimes when I listen to that man I feel I never want to hear the subject of Ireland mentioned again" (McDowell 1967, 94).

⁹ I would dispute just one part of Tóibín's view, and that concerns the erotic effect of the diary entries. Given the recognised difficulty in good sex writing, this diarist, who was plainly not writing with a view to publication, by the very terse and direct nature of the words, is successful where others who try are not.

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Appendices I – V

- I. 1911 Cash Ledger 29 August – 4 September
- II. 1911 Black Diary samples
- III. “Dream of the Celt” – extracts from reviews and interviews with its author
- IV. Description of Casement as demi-god

I. *Extract from the 1911 Cash Ledger for 29 August – 4 September telling of Teddy Bidy [Teddy (Edward Kay) Bidy, according to recently available US ship passenger lists on the internet, was 13 or 14 years old in 1908 when Casement met him in Barbados, and 16 or 17 during the 1911 visit], with this author’s commentary in square brackets (below are the same dates in the Black Diary telling of Stanley Weeks, an older boy, in Barbados).*

Tuesday 29th August At Barbados. At Sea View Hotel... Boy to bathe 6d. [in margin] X 6d. ...2 boys to swim today. Expect Teddy at 4. At 4 he has not come so I fear he is away in St. Vincent.

Boys R. and O. for spending 3.0.

Teddy came, met on bicycle and back to room and dinner. After dinner to room and he looked and looked. I saw his big huge and felt mine and he looked all the time and back on bicycle... Teddy to come tomorrow at 5 to bath. Then will see and feel. [This day’s entry is marked on the government’s typed copy with a forest of crosses. Teddy Bidy, a previous acquaintance, must have been summoned immediately on arrival. The youth has a never-before noticed, or revealed history, dating three years back to the two month convalescence Casement spent, in 1908, in Barbados, when suffering terrible gastritis. In another

cash ledger now in the NLI, a *Cyclopean Exercise Book*, inscribed “Notes at Barbadoes” he merited his own entry headed “Teddy a/c.” Casement carefully recorded eight different items in it amounting to “1.3.0”. They included “4.2” for a “Ticket” which from the price of four shillings for his own “Bath Ticket” suggests it too was a season entry to a swimming pool. This item is compelling, corroborative evidence of the authenticity of the Black Diaries].

Wednesday 30 August To Hastings Bath 7.50 and several and then nice fair haired boy, blue pants and thick and stiff. To bath together 11.30. Bath 3 Cg'ttes 1/-. Bath (11.30) 5d. He then glorious form and limbs and it... Teddy and “Budds” at 5.30. Latter lovely and huge one too. Only 11 years old on 17th July. Bath Budds present 5/-...

Seen to-day	1 oldish man huge one
	2 clergyman small
	3 lovely youth thick fine one
	4 big youth nice clean one
	5 lover, only top stiff and lovely
	6 Budds beauty

[The ten days on board ship crossing the Atlantic were followed, as on other occasions, by an explosion of sexual activity with frequent visits to a local seaside park, Hastings Rocks, to scrutinise boys – some of them disturbingly young, if apparently sexually mature].

Thursday 31 August To Hastings Bath 5d, clergyman there told me was father of beauty. Returned 11 and beauty came glorious limbs but did not show it alas I love him...Walked to Father Smith and the Convent and then to Club.

September 1911 Begins at Barbados in Seaview Hotel. Friday September 1st. My 47th Birthday!

To Bath at Hastings to meet Beauty for last time. Bath 5d. His name is Hughes. Born March 16. (Did not come) Stamps 1/- Cg'ttes 1/10 Sweets 2/9. 5 7 Trams 8d. – Lunch with Crawford. Then shortly Meztise boy of 16 or 17 in blue at Church Sq. Longed for & talked to & asked to come to bath Sunday & was most willing. The Biddys at 6. Teddy looking often – They went 6.40. [The reference to “The Biddys” is explained by inspection of the ledger’s inside cover. Alongside addresses for other sexual partners such as “Jean of Algiers” and “Amron Kali” is one for “Master E.K. Bidy”. These Biddys were a local family he had befriended, possibly to gain access to Teddy, who when met three years earlier in 1908 must hardly have been pubescent.

From Casement's scornful remark, the Biddys appear to be poor whites]. To Hastings Rocks & then to town. Club 1/-. Darkie guide 1/-. Trams 2d. 2 2 £0 8 2 [From recently available Ellis Island records on the internet it seems the Biddys (mother and children) migrated in June 1912 to Hartford, Connecticut. Edward Kay Bidy was then 16].

Saturday 2 Sept. 1911

Trams 6d. Paper 1d. Cgttes 3/8 Club waiter 4/- Cotton wool 1/. Beads for Nina 3/-.

Passage to Pará by Bonif	16.13.4
X St. John's poor white boys X	6.10
Clothes for Ricudo and Omarino	1.17.6
...Coleridge King. [a line with an X connects his name to the above "poor white boys"].	

£23. 9. 2

6.10

23.16. 0 X Coleridge King [37th sex costs accumulation].

Sunday 3 Sept 1911 Spent in Barbados...Still at Barbados. "Boniface" not in during night. Hair cut 1/6 Cocktail 6d. Bathed at Light House. Fine big Darkie 1/-. Trams 6d. Club 1/6. Saw several beauties...

Monday 4 Sept Out to Light House & saw a nice boy. Asked him to bath & he came on bone. Stanley Weeks 20. Stripped. Huge one – circumcised – swelled & hung 9" quite & wanted it awfully – asked come at 11.30. Boniface arr. & out at 12 & Stanley again & wanted it fearfully. His stiff & mine stiff. Then had to leave. Farewell to Stanley!

I.I Extract with this author's commentary in square brackets from the Black Diary 29 August – 4 September (and 9th) telling of Stanley Weeks (above the same dates in the 1911 Cash Ledger and Teddy Bidy).

29 TUESDAY In Barbados. Wrote Spicer about O'Donnell.

30 WEDNESDAY Do.

31 THURSDAY Called at Ursuline Convent on nuns and Father Smith.

SEPTEMBER

1 FRIDAY My Birthday 47 today. Nina is over 55! At Barbados. The Biddys came at 6. Very sick at sight of them. They are beggars like all here.

2 SATURDAY In Barbados. Tried to get Dudley Stanson by telephone from Bathsheba. Poor boy could hear nothing of him. Saw Coleridge King & the other poor white boys.

3 SUNDAY Bathed & read novels.

4 MONDAY [At top of page:] 4 Sept. Met Stanley Weeks at Barbados. Came back from Trinidad by "Voltavia" on 28 August & is looking for work at the electric. 20 years old. Out at 8.30. Met Coleridge King & took his a/c at Mrs Seon's. [She ran the Sea View Hotel in Hastings. Her letterhead read "Proprietress Mrs I. Seon. Cuisine properly attended to. A well stocked Bar."] Gave him 5/-. [in margin, twice: X 5]. Then to Bath & met Stanley Weeks 20 years. Has certificate from Trinidad Electrical concern – trying to get work here at the Electrical. Bathed together first 9 a.m. Huge one & then 12.45 – Huger still. Hung down curved & swollen & wanted awfully. Poor boy. Wished I had taken him. Will try & get him to Iquitos. Was waiter once in a B'bados Hotel. Two scars on face from fall. One on thigh too – set off in Boniface for Pará with Ricudo & Omarino.

[...] 9 SATURDAY Steaming in Amazon water some time now. Since 7th really – but did not see the line of division. Thinking much of poor young Stanley Weeks at Bridgetown and his beautiful specimen and his gladness in showing it and youth and joy. His glorious limb of Antinous! [The Emperor Hadrian's much sculpted boyfriend Antinous drowned in 120 AD while swimming in the Nile at Alexandria].

II. 1911 *Black Diary samples, terse or extended, which tell of Casement's cruising (and musing), his sexual enthusiasms and in particular his seduction in Iquitos of one José.*

[5 March 1911 in Dublin]: "How"? 2/6 X. Trams 1/- "How"? 2/6 X 3.6 Enormous 19 - about 7" and 4" thick. X [...] Supper at Jury's [...] Enormous Dublin under 19. Very fair, thin leg knickers & coat, white scarf. Blue eyes & huge huge stiff, long & thick - a limb.

[11 May 1911 in Belfast]: Glorious day [...] Swimming bath 3d [...] Saw the man, a glorious type get in Belfast. Fair hair and blue eyes and tall strong, well dressed at [Castle] "Junction." He looked and smiled and felt again and again. To Swimming Bath and four Beauties [...] Harry 10/- X [...] at Northern Railway Company.

[15 September 1911 in Pará, Brazil]: Bad headache Did not go out to João at 7 a.m. as was too seedy. Poor boy – will try & see him later. To Val de Caens at 10.30 to lunch with Harveys and then they brought me back in Lotus. Jigsaw at 7 to 8 p.m. with Ricudo & Dickey. Then out to Palace Square & at once

entered Kiosque & huge long one (about 7½” lying), tried to get me. Man of 27 or 28, like Barber wanted awfully. Saw “*Passear*” too, after at 8.30, so left to B. Campos – Whisky – None & then Paz none & Nazareth (twice) none & Theatre Square & round & round several times. None at all. Saw caboclo Indian at Paz who looked lovely but still at 12 none after another wait at Palace Square.

[17 September 1911 in Pará, Brazil]: To Sacramento with Andrews at 9 after many types & there after 6 for it then to zoo – & Huge ones on several & so home at 4.45. to beer & then my diary. In evg after rest, out at 7 to Palace Square & almost at once a beautiful moço in white looked & entered Kiosque. Met outside & invited to *passear* and away we went. Felt in darkness big head – & then to B. Campos & on by Souza tram to Marco where in dark travessa [lane] he stripped almost & went in furiously – awfully hard thrusts & turns & kisses too & biting on ears & neck. Never more force shown. From Rio. Returned 10 changed & out till 11.30. Huge one in café on moço.

[On blotter:] X “Rio” entered huge thrust.

[18 September 1911 in Pará, Brazil]: I waited for two trams to pass and then walked along and was looking back at a lovely caboclo sailor when a moço hurried over and held out his hand and it was this boy. He had followed – at once took my arm and squeezed and led away side – and arranged meet at Nazareth Square at 8. To Dickey, ill, and then to Nazareth & at 8.15 he came and at once led me off. Felt, huge – thick as wrist – only 17 or 18. From Lisbon. 4 years in Pará. Walked to Sao Braz he squeezing hand and wrist all time and then “*assenta!*” [sat down] on grass in dark lane he admitted his wish at once and so I took it. First spittle but so big could not get in – then glycerine honey and in it went with huge thrust and he sunk on me and worked hard.

[25 November 1911 in Iquitos, Peru]: José came at 8.10 – sat down beside me with coat off and we started Spanish exercises – my hand on “muscles” and I felt it often. Then got him to stand against wall and to measure, and it was up, and I put my hand on it often and felt it swelling and stiff. He wanted awfully – blushing and loving and gleaming eyes. Sitting again – it up huge and I played with it. (quoted in Dudgeon 2002)

III. ‘*Dream of the Celt*’ – extracts from reviews and interviews with its author

Colm Tóibín in the *London Review of Books* (2012):

Ireland, in the meantime, remains on Casement’s mind. This is partly thanks to the Irish historian Alice Stopford Green, who is the occasion of one of the worst sentences [...] in the entire novel: ‘In those early months of 1904, Alice Stopford Green⁸ was his friend, his teacher, the woman who introduced him to an ancient

past where history, myth, and legend – reality, religion, and fiction – blended together to create the tradition of a people who continued to maintain, in spite of the denationalising drive of the Empire, their language, their way of being, their customs, something which any Irish man or woman, Protestant or Catholic, believer or doubter, liberal or conservative, had to feel proud and obliged to defend’.

Were the diary entries written about things that didn’t happen, but belonged instead in the realm of the wishful, then they would surely have a much greater erotic charge⁹ than the scribbled notes that Casement wrote. Most of the entries merely record the transaction, sometimes with a reference to the size of the companion’s penis, the amount of money paid and the location where the sex took place. Sometimes there is another cryptic comment; occasionally an entry is entirely cryptic. Vargas Llosa’s question in his epilogue about the possibility of these notes having been ‘falsified’ is hardly worth asking. O Síocháin, having considered all the evidence, concludes that ‘the various pieces of evidence, positive and negative, suggest that the Black Diaries are the work of Roger Casement’ and could not have been forged.

John Banville in the *New York Review of Books* (2012):

In pursuit of this goal, the contents of secret diaries he had kept in the Congo and in Peru, detailing promiscuous sexual activity with young native men, which had been discovered in Casement’s London flat after his arrest, were circulated widely among the clubs and pubs of London, causing general shock and outrage. For many years Irish republicans and others regarded the so-called Black Diaries as forgeries concocted by British intelligence to destroy Casement’s reputation and ensure there would be no commutation of the death sentence that had been passed on him. It has since been shown that the diaries were not forged, although that is not to say that what is contained in them is entirely factual.

Mario Vargas Llosa seems to regard the sexual adventures recorded in the diaries as for the most part fantastical, as romantic daydreams to aid in masturbation, or as wishful attempts at self-consolation. There is little doubt, however, that Casement was an active homosexual; whether he was criminally culpable in his exploitation of the boys and young man whom he paid to engage in sex with him is for the reader, and the historian, to decide. These sordid matters, even when they were considered the result of mischief-making by perfidious Albion, cast a shadow over Casement’s memory among Irish nationalists and made them wary of admitting him into what the historian Tim Pat Coogan used drily to refer to as the ‘pantehnicon of Irish heroes’.

David Gallagher in the *Times Literary Supplement* (2010):

Vargas Llosa holds – it is, he believes, his ‘right as a novelist’ to do so – that the diaries were written by Casement, but that he did not do all that he

described in them; he was promiscuous, and had a compulsive need to pick up young men, though not with the frequency recorded in the diaries. So Vargas Llosa's Casement sometimes records a recent sexual exploit, and sometimes a fantasy of what might have taken place. We see him trying to fight his compulsions, feeling disgust after a night out and embarking on long periods of abstinence. But we also see him happy when the sight of some athletic young man re-awakens his yearning. These are moments when Vargas Llosa is at his best; sexual duplicity is a recurring subject in his work.

Vargas Llosa comes to his conclusion about the Black Diaries slowly. At first, his Casement is ambivalent about them. When asked about them by his prison visitors, he changes the subject or claims he does not know what they are talking about. He thanks Fr Casey for not asking about 'those filthy things which, apparently, they are saying about me.' He tells the priest that he will not heed Cardinal Bourne's outrageous request that, before he becomes a Catholic, he should repent of all those 'vile things the press is accusing me of.' But we also see Casement reminiscing – alone in his prison cell – about his first homosexual awakenings; how in Africa he felt free of the constraints of Victorian society; how that boy in Boma, with whom he went fishing, suddenly closed up on him. 'Shutting his eyes, he tried to resurrect that scene of so many years ago: the surprise, the indescribable excitement . . . ' Little by little, over the course of the novel, we see Casement picking up more and more boys. Towards the end, he falls in love with Eivind Adler Christensen, a Norwegian he picks up in New York in 1914, who travels with him to Germany. Christiansen [sic] was later to denounce him to the British – one instance where sex does real damage to Casement. Despite the betrayal, Vargas Llosa's Casement has erotic dreams about Christensen at Pentonville.

Extract from Eileen Battersby interview with Mario Vargas Llosa (2012):

The Casement who emerges in *The Dream of the Celt* echoes Parnell and Wilde. Vargas Llosa looks thoughtful at the mention of Wilde and admits he has not considered the parallels. The explicit homosexual content of his personal diaries effectively destroyed Casement. Although there had been suggestions that they were forgeries, Vargas Llosa feels Casement did write them. But I believe that they belonged to a fantasy life, he imagined these happenings, but he didn't live them. I see him as a lonely person, very gentle, too shy to have acted in such a brutal way.

Extract from Angus Mitchell (AM) interview with Mario Vargas Llosa (MVL) (2009b):

AM: The question of sexuality has played a disproportionate role in the discussion on Casement. Would it be wrong to guess that the so-called Black

Diaries are central to the shaping of your own historical novel? In a recent interview in *The Guardian* you were quoted as saying that “There is a great debate about his [Casement’s] homosexuality and paedophilia that has never been resolved and probably never will be”.

MVL: Let me correct this a little bit. I don’t think that there is a possible doubt about Roger Casement’s homosexuality. I think he was a homosexual, but what I think is still, particularly after reading what you have done in *The Amazon Journal*, that it is still possible to discuss the authenticity of the Black Diaries. You give very strong perceptions of all the contradictions between the Black Diaries and the report. But I think he was a homosexual. This is another very dramatic, tragic aspect of his life if you place homosexuality in the context of the prejudices and persecution of homosexuals.

AM: I would say that the issue of authenticity is now more about the textual rather than the sexual.

MVL: That’s right, absolutely. Exactly. It is the textual which is controversial. It is very strange all these contradictions in very concrete facts in texts written almost simultaneously. I was in Oxford very recently with John Hemming and we were discussing this and he was saying “No, no, no the diaries are authentic. I assure you that they are authentic. There was no time for British Intelligence to fabricate them, there was no time”. But I answered: “How can you explain the inaccuracies in the Black Diaries if he was writing both things at the same time”. So I think this is something that can be discussed and still considered controversial. But not his homosexuality. The homosexuality was something which was another very personal element of the tragedy he lived all his life. No?

AM: Very interesting. A few years ago there was a brief exchange between two figures involved in the controversy about who could legitimately speak for Casement. The suggestion was put that only a gay man could really understand and speak for Casement. How would you respond to this point of view?

MVL: (Laughing) That is a terrible prejudice. If that was so a man couldn’t write about women or Peruvians couldn’t write about Europeans. No, no, I think literature is a demonstration of how this is all absolutely ridiculous prejudice. A writer can write about every type of human and character, because there is a common denominator which is more important behind the sexual orientation, the cultural tradition, the language, the races. No, I believe in the unity of the human kind, I think literature is the best demonstration of the universal experiences that can be understood and shared among people of very different extractions, very different identities and other levels of life including, of course, sex.

IV. *Descriptions of Casement as demi-god*

E.D. Morel: “I saw before me a man, my own height, very lithe and sinewy, chest thrown out, head held high – suggestive of one who had lived in the vast open spaces. Black hair and beard covering cheeks hollowed by the

tropical sun. Strongly marked features. A dark blue penetrating eye sunken in the socket. A long, lean, swarthy Vandyck type of face, graven with power and withal of great gentleness. An extraordinarily handsome and arresting face”.

Darrell Figgis [an Englishman living in Ireland who assisted in the first gun running episode and whose love life was to end in a messy court case and his own suicide]: “His face was in profile to me, his handsome head and noble outline cut out against the lattice-work of the curtain and the grey sky. His height seemed more than usually commanding, his black hair and beard longer than usual [...] as I spoke he left his place by the window and came forward towards me, his face alight with battle. ‘That’s talking’, he said [...] Language had wandered far from its meanings when one man could say to another that he was talking, when his appreciation and brevity betokened an end of talking”. (both quoted in Dudgeon, 2002, 144, 419)



Roger Casement in New York in 1890 aged 26 (Courtesy of Patrick Casement)



Mario Vargas Llosa and Jeffrey Dudgeon in Belfast in 2009 (Courtesy of Jeffrey Dudgeon)