**Valiant Gentlemen**

**By Sabina Murray Grove/Atlantic,** 2016

A historical novel about Roger Casement, defender of indigenous rights in the Congo and the Amazon, covert homosexual and eventual martyr to the cause of Irish independence.

On this side of the Atlantic, Murray is our Hilary Mantel.”

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Following her New York Times Editor’s Choice collection of short stories Tales of the New World, historical fiction master Sabina Murray returns with an epic and bold novel of friendship and betrayal set across four continents and a 40 year time-span. In prose that is darkly humorous and alive with detail, Valiant Gentlemen reimagines the lives and intimate friendships of humanitarian and Irish patriot Roger Casement; his closest friend, Herbert Ward; and Ward’s extraordinary wife, the Argentinian-American heiress Sarita Sanford. Valiant Gentlemen takes the reader on an intimate journey, from Ward and Casement’s misadventurous youth in the Congo—where, among other things, they bore witness to an Irish whiskey heir’s taste for cannibalism—to Ward’s marriage to Sarita and their flourishing family life in France, to Casement’s covert homosexuality and enduring nomadic lifestyle floating between his work across the African continent and involvement in Irish politics. When World War I breaks out, Casement and Ward’s longstanding political differences finally come to a head and when Ward and his teenage sons leave to fight on the frontlines for England, Casement begins to work alongside the Germans to help free Ireland from British rule. What results is tragic and riveting, as both men are forced to confront notions of love and betrayal in the face of the vastly different tracks their lives have taken. Reminiscent of the work of Peter Carey and Michael Ondaatje, Valiant Gentlemen is a uniquely human account of some of early 20th century’s larger historical figures from a “ravishing” (O magazine) and “brilliant” (Boston Globe) voice in fiction today.

Praise for Valiant Gentlemen:

“A big, ambitious book . . . [with] intelligence and sly prose . . . Murray is canny in tracing the near-imperceptible stages by which Casement and Ward land on opposite sides of bitterly divisive issues . . . She has a knack for alluding to the era’s public events and concerns in a manner that lets us understand their impact and influence without her laboring over their details—an indispensable gift for a historical novelist . . . [A] wise, illuminating novel.” —Washington Post

“Brimming with exquisite detail and clever humor . . . [Murray] maintains an impressive balance of historical accuracy and dramatic momentum, crafting a stellar fiction that shows how the grand course of history can be shaped by the smallest disagreements between friends.” —Publishers Weekly (starred review)

“Sabina Murray’s Valiant Gentlemen is an adventure set amid the secret history of the modern world—the personal revolutions inside the revolutionary Roger Casement, a man who took part in or bore witness to so much of the history we live with now, brought to vivid, thrilling life here. This novel is made out of history but is every bit a modern marvel.” —Alexander Chee, author of The Queen of the Night

“Readers will claim this masterpiece of a novel is a big book, and in terms of being Sabina Murray's magnum opus, it certainly is. But Valiant Gentlemen was far too short for my passions, and when I consumed the last page I felt bereft for days, silently begging the author for more. On this side of the Atlantic, Murray is our Hilary Mantel.” —Bob Shacochis, author of The Woman Who Lost Her Soul

About the Author

Sabina Murray grew up in Australia and the Philippines and is currently a member of the MFA faculty at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She is the author of Tales of the New World, A Carnivore's Inquiry, Forgery, and The Caprices, which won the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction.

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