



Testimony of an Irish Slave Girl

By Kate McCafferty

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Kidnapped from Galway, Ireland, as a young girl, shipped to Barbados, and forced to work the land alongside African slaves, Cot Daley's life has been shaped by injustice. In this stunning debut novel, Kate McCafferty re-creates, through Cot's story, the history of the more than fifty thousand Irish who were sold as indentured servants to Caribbean plantation owners during the seventeenth century. As Cot tells her story—the brutal journey to Barbados, the harrowing years of fieldwork on the sugarcane plantations, her marriage to an African slave and rebel leader, and the fate of her children—her testimony reveals an exceptional woman's astonishing life.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Between 1558 and 1603, the British government sought to meet the needs of a growing empire by sending tens of thousands of Irish men, women and children to the New World. They were technically indentured servants not slaves but this distinction was illusory: the initial term of indenture could be extended indefinitely. McCafferty explains this neglected piece of history in the preface to her debut novel. The brief recital of historical facts sets the tone for a story in which much is told and little is shown. This tendency is inherent in the novel's form: most of the tale is delivered as an oral narrative, told by Cot Daley, who was 10 years old when she was kidnapped from Galway and sent to Barbados. Now a young woman, she has been imprisoned for her role in an uprising in which Irish servants and African slaves rebelled against the plantation owners. Cot's largely unrelieved rendition of her life story paragraph after paragraph of her "testimony" never acquires the immediacy of a compelling voice, being more a litany of brutal experiences than an affecting insight into a woman's inner life. Interruptions by a secondary character the British officer interrogating Daley are jarring reminders of the awkward construction. Unfortunately, this form undermines the author's gifts as a stylist. And despite the legendary Celtic propensity for poetic speech, it is hard to believe that an unschooled Irish peasant would say anything even approximating "For once again I felt the manic demiurge called hope."

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From *Booklist*

McCafferty's haunting novel chronicles an overlooked chapter in the annals of human slavery. In the mid-seventeenth century, it was not unusual for Irish citizens to be kidnapped and sold into indentured servitude to provide economical labor for the plantation owners of the Caribbean. Abducted at the age of 10, Cot Daley is subjected to one bewildering indignity after another as she is sold and resold as both a house servant and a field hand. Eventually incarcerated for her participation in a mixed-race slave revolt, she is questioned by Peter Coote, an English physician commissioned by the governor to evaluate the utility of the various races of slaves residing in Barbados. Spinning an incredible tale of inhumanity, Cot recounts her life as a slave, her marriage to a proud African rebel, and her role in a noble, but doomed, uprising against the brutal plantation owners. A meticulously researched piece of historical fiction that will keep readers both horrified and mesmerized. *Margaret Flanagan*

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Review

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Booklist "Thousands of Irish men, women and children were sold into slavery to work in the sugarcane fields of Barbados in the 17th century... McCafferty has researched her theme well and, through Cot, shows us the terrible indignities and suffering endured." Irish Independent "McCafferty's imagined oral record is convincing - a harrowing tale about events too long ignored by textbooks." Los Angeles Times "McCafferty

does a remarkably vivid and thorough job of portraying what life was like for the indentured Irish." Boston Globe"

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Larry Pulido:

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