



Star of the Sea

By Joseph O'Connor

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In the bitter winter of 1847, from an Ireland torn by famine and injustice, the Star of the Sea sets sail for New York. On board are hundreds of refugees, some optimistic, many more desperate. Among them are a maid with a devastating secret, the bankrupt Lord Merridith, his wife and children, and a killer stalking the decks, hungry for the vengeance that will bring absolution.

This journey will see many lives end, others begin anew. Passionate loves are tenderly recalled, shirked responsibilities regretted too late, and profound relationships shockingly revealed. In this spellbinding tale of tragedy and mercy, love and healing, the farther the ship sails toward the Promised Land, the more her passengers seem moored to a past that will never let them go.

As urgently contemporary as it is historical, this exciting and compassionate novel builds with the pace of a thriller to a stunning conclusion.

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Star of the Sea By Joseph O'Connor Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #274595 in Books
- Brand: Mariner Books
- Published on: 2004-03-08
- Released on: 2004-03-08
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x 1.07" w x 5.31" l, .85 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 432 pages

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Joseph O'Connor's impressive historical novel, *Star of the Sea*, examines the unsettled personal tragedies among a group of interrelated characters and their difficulties in disregarding the past. Lord Merridith and his family board the titular ship in 1847, bound for New York, leaving behind an Ireland devastated by famine and strife. The family's beautiful nanny, Mary Duane, is with them, having fled a life of poverty, prostitution, and extreme tragedy. Another passenger, American journalist Grantley Dixon, is lured to America by business and his thinly veiled affair with Lady Merridith. Mary Duane discovers that Pius Mulvey, her former fiancé and the brother of her deceased husband, is among the overcrowded group of disease-ridden steerage passengers. A renowned thief and murderer, Mulvey abandoned Duane, only to return and sabotage her life in Ireland. Despised by his countrymen, Mulvey has been ordered by a group of steerage thugs to assassinate the demonized Merridith or face his own death.

Conflict is inevitable, but O'Connor is more interested in the complexity of history and relationships and how each makes reinvention and resolution impossible. O'Connor presents the story as a work of journalism written by Dixon, composed in the era's tabloid style, even including passages from the captain's register and crew interviews. These devices lend the work a sense of authenticity, reinforced by the author's intimate knowledge of the period and his evocative, realistic prose: "At night one sensed the ship as absurdly out of its element, a creaking, leaking, incompetent concoction of oak and pitch and nails and faith, bobbing on a wilderness of viciously black water which could explode at the slightest provocation." O'Connor conveys a sense of immediacy and dimension in his ambitious story, providing this uncertain voyage with an ultimate sense of direction. --*Ross Doll*

From Publishers Weekly

First published in the U.K. and shortlisted for Irish Novel of the Year, this brooding new historical fiction by novelist, playwright and critic O'Connor (*Cowboys and Indians*) chronicles the mayhem aboard *Star of the Sea*, a leaky old sailing ship crossing from Ireland to New York during the bitter winter of 1847, its steerage crammed to the bulkheads with diseased and starving refugees from the Irish potato famine. The novel takes the form of a personal account written by passenger G. Grantley Dixon, a New York Times reporter who intersperses his narrative with reportage and interviews as he describes the intrigue that unfolds during the 26-day journey. There's Pius Mulvey, "a sticklike limping man from Connemara" known to the passengers as "the monster" or "the ghost," who shuffles menacingly around the ship and is the subject of many a rumor. There's Earl David Merridith of Kingscourt, one of the few passengers in first class, who has evicted thousands of his tenants for nonpayment of rent, dooming them and their families to almost certain death by starvation. Also aboard is the young widow, Mary Duane, a nanny for the Kingscourt children who shares a history of intimacies with both Kingscourt and Mulvey. And there is, of course, Kingscourt's wife, with whom Dixon is having an ill-advised affair. One of these passengers is on a mission to commit murder, and another is the fated victim. Through flashbacks, the complicated narrative paints a vivid picture of the rigors of life in Ireland in the mid-19th century. The engrossing, well-structured tale will hold historical fiction fans rapt.

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From [Booklist](#)

O'Connor's luscious book brews the suspense of a thriller with the scope and passion of a Victorian novel--seasoned in authentic historical detail and served up in language that is equal parts lyrical and gritty. A voyage from Ireland to New York in 1847 brings together people whose lives--past and present--twist around

each other in ways that threaten to strangle. While some have more personal reasons for making the crossing, they're also emigrating from a country scorched by famine, oppression, and the violence erupting from a desperate underclass. The author loads the ship with compelling characters, and the most intriguing is the vengeful and cunningly manipulative Pius Mulvey. In this passage, he kills a prison guard who had abused him: "He sank to his hunkers, said an Act of Contrition in his dying rapist's ear and bashed in what was left of his face with the rock." Mulvey deserves a place among the classic villains of literature, just as his creator, a Dublin-based novelist, is earning his spot in the ranks of great Irish storytellers. *Karen Holt*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Patrick Vanmeter:

As people who live in the modest era should be update about what going on or data even knowledge to make these individuals keep up with the era which is always change and move forward. Some of you maybe will probably update themselves by studying books. It is a good choice for you but the problems coming to a person is you don't know what type you should start with. This Star of the Sea is our recommendation to make you keep up with the world. Why, as this book serves what you want and want in this era.

Jeremy Gable:

Exactly why? Because this Star of the Sea is an unordinary book that the inside of the e-book waiting for you to snap it but latter it will zap you with the secret the idea inside. Reading this book next to it was fantastic author who else write the book in such incredible way makes the content on the inside easier to understand, entertaining technique but still convey the meaning totally. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this anymore or you going to regret it. This book will give you a lot of positive aspects than the other book get such as help improving your proficiency and your critical thinking approach. So , still want to postpone having that book? If I were you I will go to the book store hurriedly.

Catherine Benavidez:

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Corinne Schlegel:

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