



As Meat Loves Salt

By Maria McCann

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Transplant Othello to the tumult of a country in social and political flux and en route to regicide -- England in the 1640s -- and render him uncertain about his sexuality, and you have the makings of Jacob Cullen, one of the most commanding characters in contemporary writing. As the book opens, Jacob is an educated, vigorous and dauntingly strong manservant in a Royalist household, who has begun to imbibe god-fearing revolutionary pamphlets. He is on the brink of marriage to his virginal sweetheart, but is unsure of his emotional needs, and in possession of a boiling point he reaches all too often. He is also, we learn, fearful of being identified as the murderer of a local boy, and a potential nemesis arrives on the very day of his wedding feast, prompting the first of a series of impetuous, temper-fuelled bad decisions: Jacob flees, dragging his new wife and one of his brothers with him. Thereafter he proceeds to wreak havoc on the lives of others but mostly on his own fortunes - as a servant, a husband, a brother, a soldier, and, critically, as friend, co-conspirator and lover of another man disaffected by the lurch from freedom to tyranny now apparent in Cromwell's New Model Army. To step outside the law, outside the state, outside the established and natural order of things seems to supply the only prospect of happiness...All this makes for a truly heady historical narrative: gripping, unusual, packed with heady ingredients - truly, we are in a world turned upside down by political fervour, inflammatory pamphleteering, social flux, grisly combat, apocalyptically evangelical Christianity, sexual confusion, and murder most foul...The earthy, tangy quality of McCann's Republican-style prose, infused with a fresh twentieth-century sensibility, makes the whole entirely accessible and irresistible. Is this then perhaps the first great novel of the English Revolution?

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

With her first book, *As Meat Loves Salt*, Maria McCann joins a small, esteemed company of writers--Umberto Eco and Gore Vidal among them--whose historical novels are meticulously researched, politically acute, and rattling good reads. Set in the 17th century, during the English civil war, *As Meat Loves Salt* follows the misadventures of Jacob, born a gentleman but raised a servant, whose overdeveloped sense of personal dignity leads him from one crisis to another. When the book opens, he is already a murderer. Within a hundred pages he becomes a rapist and a thief. All this is perfect training for a military career, and Jacob soon finds himself in Cromwell's New Model army and in thrall to a charismatic man named Ferris. "It was all pre-ordained," says Jacob later, when the men have deserted together, "there had never been a place where I could have leapt free of the net." Rich with period detail, multilayered, and erotic, this is a big, delicious novel with a hint of crunchy intellection. Expect a lost weekend. --*Regina Marler*

From Publishers Weekly

The 17th-century English revolution serves as backdrop to this brilliant, ambitious epic, the story of a compelling antihero who struggles against his own violent tendencies to little avail. Jacob Cullen, the well-intentioned but volatile narrator, is forced to flee his wedding ceremony with bride Caro and brother Zebedee when he learns that he is about to be accused of a murder he rashly committed, perhaps in self-defense. Shocked by Jacob's brutality, Caro takes off with Zeb, and the bereft Jacob is forced to become a soldier in Cromwell's army after being rescued by a soldier named Christopher Ferris. When Christopher deserts, he brings Jacob with him, giving him shelter in his family home in London. Their friendship, already charged, slips gradually into clandestine romance, and the two become passionate lovers. The trajectory of their relationship shapes the second half of the novel, as does a utopian project undertaken by Christopher with Jacob's help. Disillusioned with society, Christopher attempts to cobble together a tiny, independent farming colony, an effort that brings out the bully in Jacob and strains their relationship as the authorities move in to break up the group. Jacob, meanwhile, edges closer to learning the fate of Caro and Zebedee. The first half of McCann's narrative is rather slow moving, but she does a superb job of mustering historical detail and atmosphere in the service of a stunning character portrait of the troubled but charismatic Jacob. The scope of the narrative, the unusual conceit and the resonant writing combine to make this a powerful, unusual debut. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal

Against the backdrop of the English Revolution, Jacob Cullen, a selfish man with an unpredictable and violent temper, struggles to hide his murderous past. Fleeing the manor house where he worked as a servant with his brothers, Jacob is drafted into Cromwell's army and is soon befriended by Christopher Ferris, a gregarious, secret homosexual. He convinces Jacob to desert the army and live with him in London. Once there, Christopher dreams of starting a farming commune, while Jacob is content to live the city life. Even though Christopher is ever forgiving of Jacob's outbursts, the two cannot ultimately hide their relationship, evade the past, and survive their own demons. Published in the United Kingdom two years ago to critical acclaim, McCann's brilliant debut is an eloquent narrative that is historically rich and enthralling. American readers, especially those who enjoyed Sarah Waters's *Tipping the Velvet*, will rejoice. Recommended for all public and academic libraries.

Karen T. Bilton, Somerset Cty. Lib., Bridgewater, NJ

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Sara Love:

Here thing why this particular As Meat Loves Salt are different and dependable to be yours. First of all studying a book is good however it depends in the content of computer which is the content is as tasty as food or not. As Meat Loves Salt giving you information deeper including different ways, you can find any guide out there but there is no guide that similar with As Meat Loves Salt. It gives you thrill looking at journey, its open up your personal eyes about the thing that will happened in the world which is maybe can be happened around you. You can bring everywhere like in park, café, or even in your approach home by train. Should you be having difficulties in bringing the published book maybe the form of As Meat Loves Salt in e-book can be your choice.

Christina Ruiz:

People live in this new day of lifestyle always aim to and must have the extra time or they will get lot of stress from both everyday life and work. So , once we ask do people have extra time, we will say absolutely yes. People is human not only a robot. Then we consult again, what kind of activity have you got when the spare time coming to anyone of course your answer may unlimited right. Then do you ever try this one, reading guides. It can be your alternative in spending your spare time, typically the book you have read is As Meat Loves Salt.

Leroy Barker:

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