



Astray

By Emma Donoghue

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A trainer coaxes his beloved elephant onto a ship carrying him to a life of fame. A mother searches for her baby girl, sent away on a train headed west. A teenage soldier wrestles with his conscience far from home.

The fascinating characters who roam the pages of Emma Donoghue's stories have all gone astray. They are emigrants, runaways, drifters, gold miners and counterfeiters, attorneys and slaves. They cross countless borders. They travel for love or money, incognito or under duress.

The celebrated author of *Room* transports us from Puritan Massachusetts to Revolutionary-era New Jersey, from antebellum Louisiana to a highway in Toronto, lighting up four centuries of wanderings that have profound echoes in the present and offering us a moving meditation on restless times.

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Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review Inspired by various newspaper articles and stories from the last four centuries, Booker Prize finalist Donoghue's (*Room*, 2010) masterful new short story collection explores the ways people's lives can take unexpected and unprepared-for turns. A fallen woman in Victorian England supports herself and her child by the only means available to her until her younger brother comes up with another option. As the Civil War rages on, a slave and his mistress plot a daring escape. A bitter Puritan seeks revenge upon two women who spurned him. A woman sails toward Canada to join her husband, not knowing he's fallen gravely ill with cholera. A lawyer sets his sights on a wealthy young widow who seeks his help. A young woman makes a startling discovery about her politically powerful father after his death in New York City at the dawn of the twentieth century. Donoghue details the particular historical source that inspired her at the end of each story, and she discusses how each one fits in with her overall theme in the afterword. Revolutionary-era New Jersey, Civil War-era Texas, the gold rush Yukon, and many other settings come to life in this wonderfully imaginative, transporting collection. --Kristine Huntley

Review

"Time and again, Emma Donoghue writes books that are unlike anything I have ever seen before, and *ASTRAY* is no exception. There is such a deep and compassionate imagination at work in every story in this collection that *ASTRAY* feels almost like an act of clairvoyance."?Ann Patchett, author of *State of Wonder*

"Emma Donoghue is one of the great literary ventriloquists of our time. Her imagination is kaleidoscopic. She steps borders and boundaries with great ease and style. In her hands the centuries dissolve, and then they crystallize back again into powerful words on the page."?Colum McCann, author of *Let the Great World Spin*

"This book demonstrates once again that there's little she can't do well; indeed, the afterword is as moving as the stories....The short story can be a precious, self-enclosed form, but in Donoghue's bold hands, it crosses continents and centuries to claim kinship with many kinds of people.... Another exciting change of pace from the protean Donoghue."?Kirkus Reviews

"...Masterful.... Revolutionary-era New Jersey, Civil War-era Texas, the gold rush Yukon, and many other settings come to life in this wonderfully imaginative, transporting collection."?Kristine Huntley, Booklist (Starred Review)

"Donoghue applies her talents for characterization and depth of feeling over and over again as she documents restless wanderers and lost souls across four generations, each in a world as strange and real as the last."?Emily Temple, Flavorpill

"Donoghue's affinity for yesteryear's untold tales is charming, and her talent for dialect is hard to overstate, which is why it's the first-person stories in *ASTRAY* that shine brightest....Each and every one of Donoghue's characters leaves an impression."?Time

"Donoghue establishes a distinct voice and person [and] the stories are vivid, curious, and honest..."?Publishers Weekly

"[The] tales...feel like discoveries, stories that were waiting to be told."?Stephan Lee, *Entertainment Weekly*

"This collection is filled with such acts of imaginative sympathy-each chiseling all that one can, from what Donoghue aptly describes as 'the shadowy mass of all that's been lost.'"?Mike Fischer, *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

"The stories are taut, vivid and memorable, and the collection reveals Donoghue's remarkable gift for placing herself in the minds of people who otherwise might be lost to history."?Margaret Quamme, *The Columbus Dispatch*

"The stories are showcases for a wide range of speaking voices studded with period vernacular."?Sam Sacks, *The Wall Street Journal*

"Fans of... *Room* will recognize the same imaginative flexibility and ventriloquism in *ASTRAY*, only multiplied and lightly patinated.... A refreshing break from the trend of linked collections; each story is entirely discrete, and strong enough to be read in isolation."?Holloway McCandless, *Shelf Awareness*

"Haunting.... These seekers and their stories pull you in-and stir your heart."?People (4 stars)

"Splendid.... "[An] original and compelling collection."?Mameve Medwed, *The Boston Globe*

"From England, Canada and the United States, Donoghue has created a restless world of travelers, finders and seekers, as well as a book that is an interactive narrative hybrid, one that gets us lost in other lives, that probes our history, that reveals the artist behind the word and that ultimately shows us something fresh, unsettling and enduring about ourselves."?Caroline Leavitt, *The San Francisco Chronicle*

"Sensitive and intuitive...moves fearlessly between centuries and between genders.... Donoghue displays a ventriloquist's uncanny ability to slip in and out of voices....[and she] reveals them all, in their place of exile, with gentle yet devastating truth."?Brooke Allen, *The New York Times Book Review*

"Donoghue is...something of a literary archaeologist, speaking in voices that have been lost.... Donoghue's empathic imagination is remarkable...so convincing[] that the reader feels these stories could be actual historical narratives."?Patricia Hagen, *Minneapolis Star Tribune*

"A rich roster of tales [and] a real adventure in reading.... Donoghue's gift for storytelling is remarkable...."?Sandy Leonard, *Lambda Literary*

"Donoghue is gifted at imagining narrators from all walks of life.... Anyone who appreciates a well-told tale will enjoy these 14 short stories. It's perfect for the bedside table or the quiet commute-rich tales by a writer near the top of her game."?Rob Merrill, *Associated Press*

"Gentle yet devastating..."?The New York Times Book Review (Editors' Choice)

"Donoghue's *ASTRAY* masters the long reach of short tales.... What is most impressive about these stories is her ability to plumb historical footnotes for timeless emotional resonance and reanimate 'real people who left traces in the historical record.'"?Heller McAlpin, *The Washington Post*

"[An] intriguing new story collection...Change is inevitable for the migrant-and for us all. In *ASTRAY*,

Donoghue makes us tremble at the idea and revel in its possibilities."**Connie Ogle, The Miami Herald**

"We were interested to see if [Donoghue's] third-person narration skills translated well into the oftentimes more complicated vernacular of adults hailing from different eras and different corners of the globe.... In our opinion, she succeeded."**The Huffington Post**

"Dazzling.... [A]ll the voices are so distinct, the plots so diverse, that the reading experience is a bit like nibbling from a long, strange, trippy literary buffet. Comedy, history, legal drama, political intrigue, adventure...all served up side by side in one volume. It's wonderful."**Maggie Galehouse, The Houston Chronicle**

"Reading ASTRAY is a bit like watching a magician create a wondrous illusion before you and then reveal a few enticing hints as to how she did it."**Tarra Gaines, Houston Cultural Map**

"A well-written collection of short stories that go back and forth between despair and hope."**Bobby Blanchard, The Daily Texan**

"Donoghue breathes life into stories that seem like nothing more than footnotes in the grand scheme of history, but are important reminders of all the little things we miss looking at the big picture."**Sharra Rosichan, The Tennessean**

"Her new and splendid collection...is all about breaking through barriers."**Boston Globe**

"These stories are striking for their range and freedom.... One senses cumulatively throughout this book the capacious curiosity of Emma Donoghue's mind, and the breadth of her knowledge.... Never dull, these stories illuminate worlds like a magic lantern....Donoghue's imagination can alight upon almost anything and revivify it."**Claire Messud, The New York Review of Books**

"ASTRAY is an exceptional uniting of history and imagination."**Jake Cline, The Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel**

"A beautifully rendered collection of hauntingly vivid short stories.... Redolent with historical details, Donoghue's tales are entralling.... Each story is so complete that there's a sense of mourning as one comes to a close, but also a thrill as to what she will come up with next.... She could not have assembled a richer cast of characters. We sense Donoghue's compassion for all of them—even the least appealing ones like the ultra-judgmental Englishman who settles in Yarmouth or the Illinois counterfeitors who conspired to steal Abraham Lincoln's corpse. Gorgeously written and thoroughly engrossing, ASTRAY captures the uncertainty and complexity of settling into unknown turf. The voices of her characters reverberate in our heads, long after putting the book down."**Claudia Puig, USA Today (4 stars)**

"[Donoghue is] one of those rare literary alchemists who can deliver a story that is both sensationally suspenseful and richly satisfying in the artistry of its sentences and the depth and seriousness of its themes."**Ed Tarkington and Chapter16.org, Nashville Scene**

"Emma Donoghue's characters seem thoroughly unique and alive."**Tobias Carroll, Time Out New York**

"Illuminating.... [and] affecting..."**Eileen Weiner, The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette**

"The characters in Emma Donoghue's solid collection ASTRAY are on the move and similarly are sure to

move readers."?**Natalie Danford, American Way**

"A strong collection.... Donoghue is first rate.... Real people can't go backward, but writers can, and Donoghue does so with great success."?**Susan Balée, The Hudson Review**

"The author of *Room* displays her mastery at inventing the speech of the most unlikely characters in this story collection.... How do people sound? That's one of the primary concerns of a writer. Get that right, and everything follows. Donoghue gets it right, as anyone who's read *Room* would know.... Donoghue reads like she takes a dry eraser and deletes chunks of letters and words-there's something constantly missing, and parts of the world are a mystery. But isn't that how we think to ourselves, as Joyce demonstrated, skipping over the river of thoughts and refusing to bother explaining the obvious or the visual? With such ingenuity, Donoghue achieves the effect of creating magic and wonder in the real world. To follow Donoghue into the unknown is one of the most pleasurable experiences I can think of."?**Jimmy So, The Daily Beast**

"Wildly informative and engaging.... Donoghue...throws the windows of the world open in fourteen stories of wanderlust, exploration, and possibilities promised by new and unknown lands.... By giving us true stories of wanderers and vagabonds in search of broader vistas, Donoghue has given narrative weight to both the journey and the destination. And in offering up history newly made into stories, Donoghue makes the journey of literary reinvention into its own reward."?**Jessica Freeman-Slade, The Millions**

"In...ASTRAY...imagination becomes possibility.... Moving through the centuries with her short stories, Donoghue turns everyday situations and period-piece slice-of-life situations into something of which O. Henry and Paul Harvey would be proud. Indeed, some of these tales start with a little sleight of word, poking our emotions in one way, then slowly twisting them into another direction before giving us the real story. You never know where these tales will end, and that's a good thing."?**Terri Schlichenmeyer, Washington Blade**

"A marvel of imagination, in which Donoghue utilizes items she's found over the years...to create unforgettable stories about change..."?**Nina Sankovitch, The Huffington Post**

About the Author

Born in Dublin in 1969, Emma Donoghue is an Irish emigrant twice over: she spent eight years in Cambridge, England, doing a PhD in eighteenth-century literature before moving to London, Ontario, where she lives with her partner and their two children. She also migrates between genres, writing literary history, biography, and stage and radio plays, as well as fairy tales and short stories. She is best known for her novels, which range from the historical (*Slammerkin, Life Mask, The Sealed Letter*) to the contemporary (*Stir-Fry, Hood, Landing*). Her international bestseller *Room* was a *New York Times* Best Book of 2010 and a finalist for the Man Booker, Commonwealth, and Orange Prizes. "The Hunt" (from ASTRAY) has been short-listed for the *Sunday Times* EFG Private Bank Short Story Award, the world's most valuable short story prize.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Bernard Martin:

Why don't make it to be your habit? Right now, try to ready your time to do the important behave, like looking for your favorite reserve and reading a e-book. Beside you can solve your long lasting problem; you

can add your knowledge by the guide entitled Astray. Try to make book Astray as your friend. It means that it can be your friend when you sense alone and beside that of course make you smarter than before. Yeah, it is very fortunate for you. The book makes you much more confident because you can know every thing by the book. So, let us make new experience in addition to knowledge with this book.

Clemencia Torres:

Information is provisions for people to get better life, information currently can get by anyone with everywhere. The information can be a information or any news even a problem. What people must be consider while those information which is inside the former life are challenging to be find than now is taking seriously which one is acceptable to believe or which one often the resource are convinced. If you get the unstable resource then you have it as your main information we will see huge disadvantage for you. All those possibilities will not happen within you if you take Astray as the daily resource information.

William Glover:

Reading can be called head hangout, why? Because while you are reading a book especially book entitled Astray your brain will drift away through every dimension, wandering in each and every aspect that maybe mysterious for but surely might be your mind friends. Imaging each and every word written in a guide then become one contact from conclusion and explanation this maybe you never get just before. The Astray giving you a different experience more than blown away your head but also giving you useful details for your better life in this particular era. So now let us demonstrate the relaxing pattern here is your body and mind will probably be pleased when you are finished reading it, like winning a. Do you want to try this extraordinary investing spare time activity?

Oliver Whitley:

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