



Indigo: In Search of the Color That Seduced the World

Catherine E. McKinley

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For almost five millennia, in every culture and in every major religion, indigo—a blue pigment obtained from the small green leaf of a parasitic shrub through a complex process that even scientists still regard as mysterious—has been at the center of turbulent human encounters.

Indigo is the story of this precious dye and its ancient heritage: its relationship to slavery as the "hidden half" of the transatlantic slave trade, its profound influence on fashion, and its spiritual significance, which is little recognized but no less alive today. It is an untold story, brimming with rich, electrifying tales of those who shaped the course of colonial history and a world economy.

But *Indigo* is also the story of a personal quest: Catherine McKinley is the descendant of a clan of Scots who wore indigo tartan as their virile armor; the kin of several generations of Jewish "rag traders"; the maternal granddaughter of a Massachusetts textile factory owner; and the paternal granddaughter of African slaves—her ancestors were traded along the same Saharan routes as indigo, where a length of blue cotton could purchase human life. McKinley's journey in search of beauty and her own history ultimately leads her to a new and satisfying path, to finally "taste life." With its four-color photo insert and sumptuous design, *Indigo* will be as irresistible to look at as it is to read.

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