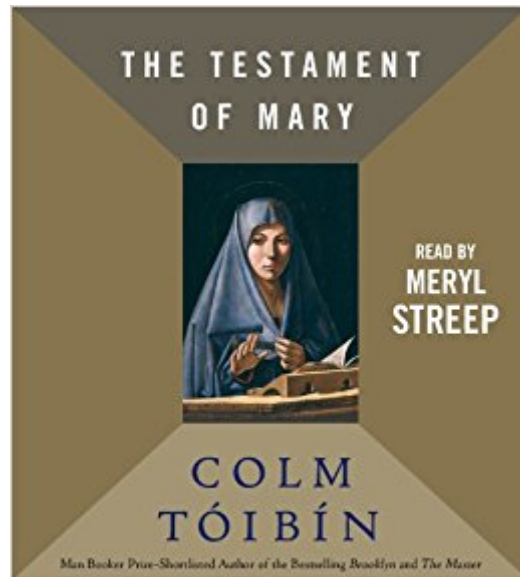




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The Testament Of Mary



Synopsis

Meryl Streep's performance of Colm Tóibín's acclaimed portrait of Mary is hailed by the New York Times Book Review as "an ideal audiobook," presenting the three-time Academy Award-winner in "yet another great role." Shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize, Colm Tóibín's *The Testament of Mary* presents Mary as a solitary older woman still seeking to understand the events that become the narrative of the New Testament and the foundation of Christianity. In the ancient town of Ephesus, Mary lives alone, years after her son's crucifixion. She has no interest in collaborating with the authors of the Gospel. They are her keepers, providing her with food and shelter and visiting her regularly. She does not agree that her son is the Son of God; nor that his death was "worth it"; nor that the "group of misfits he gathered around him, men who could not look a woman in the eye," were holy disciples. This woman who we know from centuries of paintings and scripture as the docile, loving, silent, long-suffering, obedient, worshipful mother of Christ becomes a tragic heroine with the relentless eloquence of Electra or Medea or Antigone, in a portrait so vivid and convincing that our image of Mary will be forever transformed. Now Meryl Streep brings Tóibín's tour de force of imagination and language to unforgettable life with "simplicity, honesty, [and] a clarity that draws us into the emotional landscape of the book through the beauty of the writing," writes Charles Isherwood in the New York Times Book Review. "Streep has an impressive ability to crest the structurally intricate sentences Tóibín has fashioned, which sometimes have the flowing, rhythmic cadences of certain passages in the Bible itself," Isherwood writes of her performance. "Streep's voice is familiar to generations of moviegoers, but its beauty as an instrument can be appreciated in this context as it often cannot be in films." *The Testament of Mary*'s exquisite book [is] rendered by Streep with all its detached, quiet, consoling humanity intact.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“Tá fán is at his lyrical best in *The Testament of Mary*, a beautiful and daring work—it takes its power from the surprises of its language, its almost shocking characterization, its austere refusal of consolation.” (Mary Gordon *The New York Times Book Review*) “[An] exquisite novella” “Tá fán gives a familiar story startling intimacy.” (The New Yorker) “A heartfelt, powerful work.” (Sam Sacks *The Wall Street Journal*) “Dramatic and poetic” “A powerful, devastating story.” (Ron Charles *The Washington Post*) “Lovely, understated and powerfully sad, > finally gives the mother of Jesus a chance to speak. And, given that chance, she throws aside the blue veil of the Madonna to become wholly, gloriously human.” (Annalisa Quinn NPR) “Mary—silent, obedient, observant—has echoed down two millennia, cementing a potent ideal in the Western imagination. Now the masterful Irish writer Colm Tá fán puts a jackhammer to the cozy, safe, Christmas-card version in *The Testament of Mary*.” (Karen R. Long *Cleveland Plain Dealer*) “A slim, grave, exquisitely emotional book” “The *Testament of Mary* is a spellbinding, surprisingly reverent book.” (Jeff Giles *Entertainment Weekly*) “Tá fán applies a Joycean ruthlessness—Imagining himself into Mary—,s interior life is his boldest jump yet.” (Hermione Lee *The New York Review of Books*) “Tá fán’s intimate approach make Mary feel more credible and human” “The result, >, feels true.” (Claire Cameron *The Millions*) “Tá fán suffuses the story with a sense of mystery and makes the reader feel (perhaps as never before) the tragedy of the crucifixion.” (Macy Halford *Buzzfeed*) “A deeply, if at times painfully, human portrait of Mary, tearing asunder the robes of red and blue that envelop her in paintings and sculptures.” (Michael O’Loughlin *America* magazine) “With this masterly novella, Tá fán has finally tackled the subject of Christianity—and he has done so with a vengeance” “Nowhere in this beguiling and deeply intelligent, moving work is Mary’s attention to detail more instrumental (and more like a novelist’s) than in her account of her son’s death” “In a single passage—and in a rendition,

furthermore, of one of the most famous passages of western literature – T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* – shows how the telling and the details are all-important. (Robert Collins Sunday Times (UK)) “[A] monumental achievement – equally powerful and poignant whether it is read by one who espouses or eschews the New Testament – a tender, soul-rending exploration of a mother's mourning; a searing, stunning work. (Leyla Sanai The Independent (UK)) “The Testament of Mary is an important and persuasive book: Eliot's weary Mary, sceptical and grudging, reads as far more true and real than the saintly perpetual virgin of legend. And Eliot is a wonderful writer: as ever, his lyrical and moving prose is the real miracle. (Naomi Alderman Observer (UK)) “There is a profound ache throughout this little character study, a steely determination coupled with an unbearable loss. Although it has some insightful things to say about religion and the period – the descriptions of the Crucifixion are visceral – it has a universal message about the nature of loss. E. E. Schattschneider can tell you now, when you say he redeemed the world, I will say that it was not worth it. It was not worth it. (Stuart Kelly Scotland on Sunday) “This novel is the Virgin's version of the life of Christ. After a lifetime listening to everyone else's versions of that life, she is angry and frustrated because they are all questionable. (John Spain Irish Independent) “A flawless work, touching, moving and terrifying. (Linda Grant The New Statesman (UK)) “Reading this perfect little novella is like watching someone light a candle inside a lantern. (The Age (Australia)) “A stunning interpretation that is as beautiful in its presentation as it is provocative in its intention. (Booklist) “[A] poignant reimagining of the last days of Christ. (Publishers Weekly) “[The Testament of Mary] builds to a provocative climax, one that is as spiritually profound as its prose is plainspoken – a work suffused with mystery and wonder. (Kirkus Reviews) --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Colm T. O'Leary is the author of seven novels, including *The Master*, winner of the Los Angeles Times Book Prize; *Brooklyn*, winner of the Costa Book Award; *The Testament of Mary*, and *Nora Webster*, as well as two story collections. Three times shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize, T. O'Leary lives in Dublin and New York.

Not a bad book, but it wouldn't rate as one of my favorites. It would probably be offensive to some people. It does tell the story of Christ's ministry and crucifixion from a unique angle. It is a very short book, but I wouldn't say that it's a quick read or enjoyable.

What a devastatingly sad account of the mother of Jesus being at her son's crucifixion. This book was certainly able to get into your head because of the ordinariness of such a monumental event. The suffering is so raw. I found it interesting that Mary described the disciples as a bunch of misfits and did not even want to be in their presence when they came to the house to visit Jesus. Perhaps any mother would have felt that way considering the possibility of the trouble that was to come through their association. From my earlier memories of following the Catholic faith I had always been led to believe that Mary was there with her friends to see to the body after the death on the cross but this was described later in the book but it was portrayed as a dream and something that Mary was guilty about because of not actually being there. Mary comes across as all too human. She was a person that existed and therefore would certainly have gone through such misery and suffering regardless of whether we believe her son was indeed the Son of God or just an extraordinary human being. She wrestles constantly with her emotions and guilt that she was not able to change what happened. There is no real mention of Joseph other than that Mary had a husband. I would like to have got some background to his position regarding his upbringing and what influence he may have had. I found the book a little too fast paced when it came to Jesus walking the countryside with his followers and creating miracles to all of a sudden being sentenced to death but it just seemed to happen too quickly. It has to be said that I am calling this person who died as Jesus but in actual fact this name is never mentioned in the book. It is after all a novel and the question has to be asked - "why did Tolbin write this account"? I guess for me the most telling point of the whole story is when the "guardians" are pronouncing that he was the Son of God and he was sent to redeem the world to which Mary replies "I will say that it was not worth it. It was not worth it." This book is about the unconditional love of a mother, nothing more, nothing less. A very powerful account but you have got to be up for it!

This book presents the story of Jesus and his deification from Mary, as his mother. Very interesting take on how she might have seen her son and his disciples.

This is a very short book. And, while it's not short on creativity, it is short on substance. Tolbin gave a completely different take on post-Crucifixion Mary. After all, none of the gospels, nor Acts, nor Paul say anything at all that I can recall about Mary's life after Jesus' death. Therefore, the author had a uncultivated field to plow in portraying her as a mother suffering for the rest of her life from her

son's death. As a Catholic, I've been raised in a culture that Protestants understandably describe as Mary worship. I understand my Church's motivation in treating Mary with such dignity and respect, but some of it (just some?) doesn't ring true. The Mary of The Testament . . . is distinctly not the mythical, legendary Mary of Catholicism. For that, it's an interesting and compelling work. It just could have been fleshed out more. Still, a worthwhile read.

Somewhat interesting approach to write a book from the perspective of Mary, mother of Jesus, in the final days leading up to his death. In general, the book felt like a stretch in the fictional attempt to write a narrative from Mary's perspective as this subject, and the author's fictional depiction, could be perceived as heresy by many Christian believers. The mother Mary character in the book seemed bitter about the path her son was chosen to take and that she didn't believe he was the son of God. As an adult man, she seemed to no longer know nor connect with her son. She desired him to be as he had been during his childhood and to live to see her through her old age. The fictional book deviates from Christian teachings thereby likely to have a chilling effect on some readers.

A fascinating book group discussion was engendered from the novella. Mary is humanized here and the idea of the crucifixion is somewhat re-imagined.

Colm Toibin is a fine writer; that's not in question. But this novella about the final days in the life of Mary, mother of Jesus is muddled and meandering. Mary's character is never quite clear; she comes off as confused and bitter, but lacking in insight on all that has gone on around her. There is also some intentional obscurity here, with characters left unnamed and the passage of time fluid. This read more like a first draft than a completed work.

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