

“TESTAMENT OF MARY” CLOSES

In April, Colm Toibin's book, *The Testament of Mary*, became the subject of a Broadway play; it opened at the Walter Kerr Theatre. There is no question that Toibin is a gifted writer, but it wasn't easy to see who was going to be drawn to this play, even if it ran for only 12 weeks. His novella was not written to endear himself to Christians—he posits that Mary does not believe her son was the Son of God—though in fairness there is nothing vicious about his work.

Toibin fancies that Mary is not the pious, obedient woman we have come to know. Instead, she very much had a mind of her own, declaring that her son died in vain. Speaking of the crucifixion, she says, “I fled before it was over but if you want witnesses then I am one and I can tell you now, when you say that he redeemed the world, I will say that it was not worth it. It was not worth it.”

Toibin, who is a homosexual ex-Catholic, is not exactly a champion of the Catholic Church. Indeed, he is a vociferous critic of the Church's teachings on sexuality. He is entitled to his views, though it must be said that his attempt to persuade Christians of the fallacies of their religion falls flat.

The play, based on the book by Colm Toibin, opened on April 22 and was scheduled to run through June 16. But instead of lasting 12 weeks, it lasted only two. On the day it opened, Bill Donohue said, “it is not easy to see who is going to be drawn to this play.”

The play bombed. That's why it closed. Quite frankly, there aren't enough people who want to spend their evenings watching a dark performance about a fanciful Virgin Mary who rejects the divinity of her son. Unfortunately we don't have the results of a psychological battery of tests performed on those

who like this kind of stuff.

The *Irish Times*' Fintan O'Toole was furious that the play bombed. He blamed capitalism. "The most basic truth about Broadway is that it's about money. It is the raw, ruthless marketplace to which some people would like to reduce all artistic endeavour. It is a primal form of capitalism: enormous risks in pursuit of enormous rewards."

In O'Toole's world, plays he likes should have a long run on Broadway, even if no one wants to pay to see them (no doubt he would like to get some stimulus money to subsidize his leisure). But one of the great things about capitalism is that it accurately gauges public sentiment, rewarding what people want, and discarding what they don't. A market economy, fortunately, doesn't necessarily reward what the elites want. Which is why they hate it.

Looks like there aren't enough O'Tooles out there to enjoy Toibin's angry discourse on Catholicism.