

Paul Park's new novel

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Nicholas Gevers — 10 May 2003, 10:20

Readers of Gene Wolfe have often expressed fondness for the works of Paul Park; here's the publication announcement for Park's latest novel, THREE MARYS, which I've edited for Wildside Press. Available through amazon, bn.com, www.wildsidepress.com, and other online booksellers.

--Nick Gevers.

Paul Park, THREE MARYS: A NOVEL

Wildside Press, 178 pages

ISBN: 1-58715-519-2

HC \$29.95

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BOOK DESCRIPTION:

In 1996 Paul Park published *The Gospel of Corax*, a highly acclaimed rendering of a theosophist legend, describing Jesus of Nazareth's journey to the Indian subcontinent and Tibet. In *Three Marys*, his new novel, Park returns to first-century Palestine to recreate with penetrating insight the historical community of Jesus, and to follow the first tangled strands of Christianity after his death. Here is Jesus's world as it very likely was, confused, conflicted, rife with messianic rumor and factional ambition; here is the brazen cruelty of Roman occupation and the domestic oppression that mirrored it, seen through the eyes of the women who knew Jesus best.

This is the story not only of Christ but of the three Marys who survived him and were true to him, each in their own way. Their inner and outer narratives, sometimes tortured, sometimes rhapsodic, make up the spare but radiant tapestry of this novel. There is Mary of Magdala, visionary and wandering, perhaps Jeshua's wife; there is his mother Mary, tough,

charismatic, earthy, ultimately desolated by his loss; and there is Mary of Bethany, the girl who followed Jeshua in his last days and has to bear the burden of her undying brother Lazarus for decades afterwards. Outcasts because of their sex, yet possessors between them of some fragmented sense of the true ineffable nature of Christ the man and Christ the messiah, they are presented with luminous tragic humanity and given proper voice at last.

Paul Park is one of contemporary American literature's most subtle and original explorers of religious experience. As exotic in coloring and as rich in understanding as his superb science fantasy novels, *Three Marys* is a masterpiece of historical and spiritual reconstruction.

ADVANCE PRAISE FOR THREE MARYS:

"Three Marys speaks with such eloquent and mesmerizing authority concerning the early formative period of Christianity, it seems that the novel is less an astonishing recreation and re-estimation of those days than the product of brilliant observation. Paul Park's body of work concerning Jesus and his milieu is unique in American letters."---Lucius Shepard, author of *Life During Wartime* and *Valentine*

"To the short list of successful New Testament extrapolations--a literature that includes Alain Absire's *Lazarus*, José Saramago's *The Gospel According to Jesus Christ*, and Nikos Kazantzakis's *The Last Temptation of Christ*--I would now add *Three Marys*."---James Morrow, author of *Only Begotten Daughter* and *Blameless in Abaddon*

"Paul Park has been, for far too many years, one of the most unjustly unknown contemporary American authors. Those who do know have long spread the word, but ultimately, to know his work you must read the word. *Three Marys* should, I believe, be the novel--rich in incident, warm in characterization, unforgettable in approach--that at last brings him the wider attention he justly deserves."---Jack Womack, author of *Terraplane* and *Going Going Gone*

"From the first moments, Paul Park's intense, always precise language brings ancient stories to life without ever cheapening them through a fake 'realism'. The gospel stories are well served in this vividly imagined book."---Rachel Pollack, author of *Unquenchable Fire* and *Godmother Night*

“Like the canonical Gospels, this story's vibrant tapestry is woven with threads of disappointed hopes, blames and betrayals, and the yearnings of people trapped by multiple oppressions. Unlike those Gospels, it is told in women's voices, fresh out of the maelstrom that might have immediately followed the Crucifixion. Haunting, carnal, stunning, disturbing, Three Marys imprints on the reader's imagination a triptych of powerful women, not easily forgotten.”---The Reverend Peter T. Elvin

“A compelling and iconoclastic narrative of the formation of the early church told from the perspective of the disempowered women who were at its heart, Three Marys is a brilliant book, richly imagined, beautifully written, and intellectually stimulating. Like The Gospel of Corax, Park's new novel artfully incorporates findings from the spate of recent scholarship on the historical Jesus, and offers a fascinating look at the processes through which history is transformed into myth.”---Bradford Verter, Professor of History and Religion, Bennington College