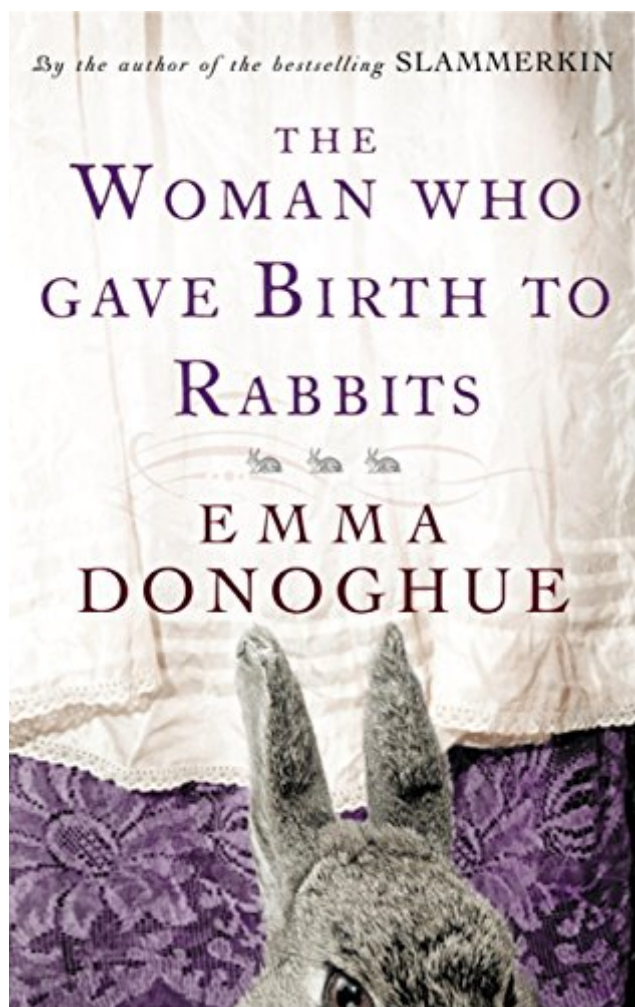


The book was found

The Woman Who Gave Birth To Rabbits



Synopsis

The Woman Who Gave Birth to Rabbits is a book of fictions, but they are also true. Over the last ten years, I have often stumbled over a scrap of history so fascinating that I had to stop whatever I was doing and write a story about it. My sources are the flotsam and jetsam of the last seven hundred years of British and Irish life: surgical case-notes; trial records; a plague ballad; theological pamphlets; a painting of two girls in a garden; an articulated skeleton. Some of the ghosts in this collection have famous names; others were written off as cripples, children, half-breeds, freaks and nobodies. The Woman Who Gave Birth to Rabbits is named for Mary Toft, who in 1726 managed to convince half England that she had done just that. So this book is what I have to show for ten years of sporadic grave-robbing, ferreting out forgotten puzzles and peculiar incidents, asking 'What really happened?', but also, 'What if?'

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Such an amazing short story collection - Emma Donoghue's historic fiction is gorgeously written. As a historian, Donoghue has stumbled upon brilliant stories of extraordinary women lost over time. These seventeen vivacious tales take us back through the last few centuries in England and Ireland,

fleshing out personal accounts discovered through lost letters and archives. The first story, "The Last Rabbit" is an excellent build up for the entire collection. Donoghue narrates the experiences of Mary Toft, who in the 1700's tricked her Irish town and half of London into believing that she could give birth to rabbits. While medical experts tried to desperately to disprove the hoax, Mary suffers the indignities of being a medical marvel, suffering embarrassing examinations from an assortment of "birth experts" and speculators. Her own commentary practically relates childbirth to a form of prostitution, which makes sense that in the last scene she discovers that she has been taken to a brothel to give birth to her rabbits. Marriage, childbirth and the historical low status of women take up most of the storylines. In "Acts of Union", a syphilis infected soldier is tricked into marrying an apothecary's spinster-niece. Though the soldier certainly sees himself a victim, his bride seems to have settled for worse, but is left knowing that this is her only opportunity to marry. There is a certain richness to Donoghue's writing, dealing with religious and social misogyny. Her heroines are strangely tough, vulgar and sometimes shrewd, but there is a undeniable dignity to them. Later characters include a cult leader, a wheel-chair bound woman who leads rescue teams for drowning sailors and a pregnant countess convinced that she'll die during childbirth.

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