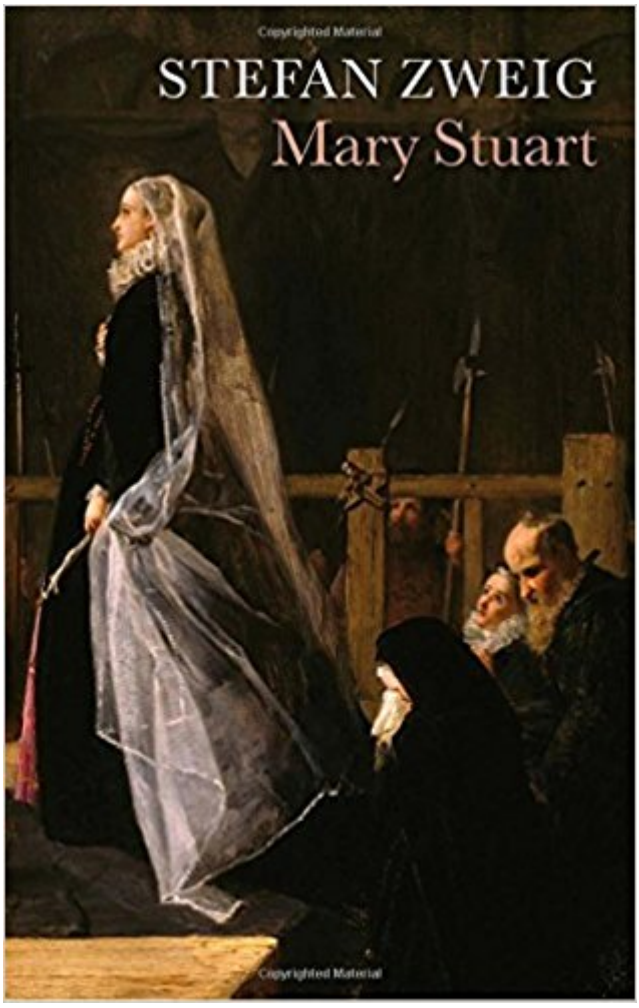
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Mary Stuart



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Synopsis

Mary Stuart Queen of Scots, Queen of France and a claimant to the throne of England, was condemned for treason and executed at the age of forty-four. A potential threat to the stability of the English Crown, she was held captive for twenty years by her cousin Elizabeth I, Queen of England. From the moment of her birth until her execution, her life was spent embroiled in the power struggles that shook the foundations of Renaissance Europe.It has taken the free spirit and the immense talent of Stefan Zweig to justly reconstruct events in the life of a woman who was so cruelly united with destiny. With all the rigor of a scientist and the passion of an artist, Zweig has skillfully reconstituted the character of Mary Stuart and the turmoil that was her fate.

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Customer Reviews

Ã¢â ¬Å“What did Zweig have that brought him the fanatical devotion of millions of readers, the admiration of Herman Hesse, the invitation to give the eulogy at the funeral of Sigmund Freud? To learn that, we would have to have a biography that illuminatedÃ Â allÃ Â aspects of his work, that readÃ Â allÃ Â of his books, and that challenged, rather than accepted, the apparent modesty of his statements about his life and work.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã Â Ã¢â ¬â œ Benjamin Moser,Ã Â Bookforum"Touching and delightful. Those adjectives are not meant as faint praise. Zweig may be especially appealing now because rather than being a progenitor of big ideas, he was a serious entertainer, and an ardent and careful observer of habits, foibles, passions and mistakes."Ã Â Ã¢â ¬â •Ã Â A.O. Scott,Ã Â The New York TimesÃ Â "ZweigÃ¢â ¬â„¢s readability

made him one of the most popular writers of the early twentieth century all over the world, with translations into thirty languages. His lives of Mary Stuart and Marie Antoinette were international bestsellers."Ã Â Ã¢â ¬â •Ã Â Julie Kavanagh,Ã Â TheÃ Â EconomistÃ Â Intelligent Life"ZweigÃ¢â ¬â„¢s accumulated historical and cultural studies, whether in essay or monograph form, remain a body of achievement almost too impressive to take in... Full-sized books on Marie-Antoinette, Mary Stuart, and Magellan were international best sellers."Ã Â Ã¢â ¬â •Ã Â Clive James,Ã Â Cultural Amnesia"Stefan Zweig cherished the everyday imperfections and frustrated aspirations of the men and women he analysed with such affection and understanding."Ã Â Ã¢â ¬â •Ã Â Paul Bailey,Ã Â Times Literary Supplement"To read Zweig is to be in the presence of a properly mature writer, for all that his characters are often in the grip of highly inappropriate desires."Ã Â Ã¢â ¬â •Ã Â Guardian"Zweig is the most adult of writers; civilised, urbane, but never jaded or cynical; a realist who none the less believed in the possibility - the necessity - of empathy."Ã Â Ã¢â ¬â •Ã Â Independent"ZweigÃ¢â ¬â„¢s genius as a storyteller encompasses the brainy as well as those of average intelligence, the very rich and the desperately poor. He deserves to be famous again, and for good'."Ã Â Ã¢â ¬â •Ã Â Times Literary Supplement

Stefan Zweig was born in 1881 in Vienna, a member of a wealthy Austrian-Jewish family. He studied in Berlin and Vienna and was first known as a translator and later as a biographer. Zweig travelled widely, living in Salzburg between the wars, and enjoying literary fame. His stories and novellas were collected in 1934. In the same year, with the rise of Nazism, he briefly moved to London, taking British citizenship. After a short period in New York, he settled in Brazil where in 1942 he and his wife were found dead in bed in an apparent double suicide.

There are certain parts of this translation which are so moving, so powerful that the reader must pause to savor them. Those are the times when one most relishes the wonderful English language. However, other parts, the deep psychological analyses, though compellingly convincing and fresh, seem overlong, even repetitive.Still, the following quotation is just one example of the remarkable insights that Zweig brings to the often told story of Mary's tragic life:"She knew that by inheritance she had been called to the position of ruler, that her beauty and breeding and culture made her worthy to occupy any throne in Europe; and just as other women of her tender years are wont to dream of immeasurable love, so did she dream but one dreamÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â • the dream of immeasurable power."Zweig says that Mary, practically born a queen, and, for a short period, a Queen of France, never saw herself as confined to the poor soil of Scotland but as destined to reign

over England in Elizabeth’s place.In the meantime, she tried to create a bit of France in Holyrood Palace together with her four Mary’s, the young women who had accompanied her to France and back again to Scotland...to this "austere and tragical country".Tragical because it was in the grip of John Knox, a fanatic, a megalomaniac who used religion to glorify himself and to oppress everyone else.Tragical, too, because it’s nearest neighbor was the England of a Queen whose throne Mary also claimed. That claim and Mary’s personal attraction drew innumerable men into her schemes. Again to quote this marvelous writer: "No luck ever blessed him who hated Mary Stuart, and those who loved her were consigned to an even more terrible end."Zweig’s analysis of Mary’s character is extremely interesting, but his analysis of Queen Elizabeth is astonishing: He paints her as a mass of indecision and even of fear, a result of her troubled childhood amid self-seeking nobles, a result, above all, of her strange physical deformity. Yet Zweig states, "She had an earnest wish to be magnanimous and kind....The signing of a death warrant was a misery to her."A striking facet of this account is Zweig’s statement that Bothwell never loved Mary although he violated her. He was a man of brutal instincts, loving his wife but easily betraying her. And Mary the Queen was just another woman to him. Except that she could make him a King.A fascinating analysis of two Queens. But it would have profited from a few cuts.

I have read pretty much every biography on Mary, Queen of Scots that there is. I am somewhat obsessed with her life and her as a person, so I have yet to find any of the current biographies boring. However, there are some that are more dry than others. This is not one of those biographies. Stefan Zweig paints a complete picture of Mary and her life. He makes you feel like you actually know her, and understand what she was thinking and feeling. I love to read, but rarely find a book that I absolutely can’t put down, and this was one of them. I obviously view Mary in a sympathetic way. I feel that she wasn’t prepared to deal with such a harsh and divided nation as Scotland, or with her treacherous and brutal nobles. I also believe that she was completely wronged by her cousin Elizabeth, who imprisoned her illegally and without reason for a good portion of her life. I don’t know whether or not the casket letters were real, or if Mary truly desired the death of her cousin. I do, however believe that Mary would do anything to be free, and for that I can’t blame her. Stefan definitely takes a sympathetic view of Mary as well, but not as much as other authors have. I would recommend this to anyone who is interested in Mary. There is also a French movie based on this biography that is wonderful as well.

The most amazing history of a girl who was named the Queen of France at a very early age and

was married to the heir to the throne of France at eight years old and she became the Queen of France when she 14 years old. Everything fell into her lap during her youth, but all changed when her husband the King of France died and she returned to Scotland as their Queen.The author of this book is a brilliant writer, he not only tells the whole history of Mary Stuart in full, but also analyses her motivations. When she moves to England he describes the relationship she has with Queen Elizabeth the First of England - who was her cousin.Stefan Zweig is a remarkable author, whose work was revered in the 1950's. He spoke several languages and also wrote books in these languages. This book is gripping!A very informative and wonderful work of art on the life of Mary Stuart, Queen of Scotland and the Outer Islands.

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