



## Waiting for Columbus

*Thomas Trofimuk*

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**A man arrives at an insane asylum in contemporary Spain claiming to be the legendary navigator Christopher Columbus. Who he really is, and the events that led him to break with reality, lie at the center of this captivating, romantic, and stunningly written novel.**

Found in the treacherous Strait of Gibraltar, the mysterious man who calls himself Columbus appears to be just another delirious mental patient, until he begins to tell the “true” story of how he famously obtained three ships from Spanish royalty.

It's Nurse Consuela who listens to these fantastical tales of adventure and romance, and tries desperately to make sense of why this seemingly intelligent man has been locked up, and why no one has come to visit. As splintered fragments of the man beneath the façade reveal a charming yet guarded individual, Nurse Consuela can't avoid the inappropriate longings she begins to feel. Something terrible caused his break with reality and she can only listen and wait as Columbus spins his tale to the very end.

In the tradition of *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle* and *The Dogs of Babel*, this unforgettable novel mines the darkest recesses of loss and the extraordinary capacity of the human spirit. It is an immensely satisfying novel that will introduce Thomas Trofimuk to readers who will want to hear his voice again and again.

## Waiting for Columbus Details

Date : Published August 25th 2009 by Doubleday (first published January 1st 2009)

ISBN : 9780385529136

Author : Thomas Trofimuk

Format : Hardcover 336 pages

Genre : Fiction, Historical, Historical Fiction, Mystery, Cultural, Canada, Spain

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## From Reader Review Waiting for Columbus for online ebook

### AM says

I don't think I'd have ever picked this book up except for the intriguing review that Books on the Nightstand gave it. They made it sound a bit like that movie Don Juan Demarco with Johnny Depp and Charlton Heston. I decided I'd give it a try. I am very glad that I did. This is a wonderful story, part adventure, part romance, part tragedy. I didn't quite know what was going on, but I didn't mind being lead down the path the author had sketched out. This was a good story and beautifully written. I really recommend it. For me it was new and different. A fresh and beautifully story to clear the mind after too many mediocre books of late.

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### Reader57 says

An absolutely marvelous story. A man washes up on the shore in Spain and is ultimately taken to an asylum as he believes he is Christopher Columbus. He is a great story teller and his assigned nurse, needy in her own way, finds his stories mesmerizing, though clearly they are confused as to time since he is telling them as being Columbus, but there are such things as ringing telephones in the stories. Meanwhile, an Interpol Agent is looking for a missing person, but we (the readers) don't really know why. Is he dangerous? The writer manages to entertain with this book's storyline while also entertaining with Columbus' stories. I highly recommend this one.

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### Melanie says

Some of the language in this book is quite poetic. The idea of a man so traumatised that he retreats into a fantasy of being Columbus is very interesting. Unfortunately I do not like the execution of the idea.

Niggles: 1) All that talk of women drove me insane. I understood it was going to lead up to some real-life girlfriend, or wife at some point, but that did not make those little stories less annoying, or more relevant. I felt I was wasting precious time reading those bits.  
2) Consuela seemed rather flat to me. I was given a few statements about her here and there and that was it. From those titbits I really did not feel like I was getting to know her at all. This is what I got: nurse, divorced, sad love life, drinks too much, occasionally reads a book. Please do not tell me someone is evolving; show me.  
3) What on earth was that Emile guy doing in the story? Yes, he found out who Columbus was. To me it seems, however, that this could have been solved in the story in a way that did not necessitate the introduction of yet another flat character.  
4) The writer can not decide between soft and quite crude language when he talks about lovemaking. Perhaps this is supposed to symbolise the dichotomy of Columbus and the real man who thinks he is Columbus. I just found it irritating. I hate crude language, but this shuttling back and forth did nothing for me either.  
5) Unfortunately, I could go on with my list of niggles. I won't, however.

A beautiful idea; a flawed execution. I hate to give this book only two stars. I feel it was on the brink of greatness and did not quite make it. I can't give it three stars. There were times when I struggled to keep on reading. I wanted to love this book, but it did not quite happen. I am very interested to see what the author's

next book will be. Perhaps that will be one even I can love.

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### **Leslie says**

I found this book interesting, but difficult to get through. Everytime I sat down with the book, I found myself falling asleep. Even in the middle of the afternoon.

The premise: A man is brought to a Seville institute for the mentally ill. he is convinced that he is Christopher Columbus. As we uncover the terrible tragedy that pushed him to escape his modern-day life into the life of Christopher Columbus.

Consuela was an intriguing character, but she left me a bit empty. I didn't feel that I could really understand many of her motivations. Although, that said, her voice is pure and almost innocent--although her character is not.

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### **Sophie Narey (Bookreview- aholic) says**

Author: Thomas Trofimuk

Published: 03/09/2010

Recommended for: fans of historical fiction/romance

When I started reading this book it immediately caught hold of my attention and just wouldn't let it go at all! This book was extremely addictive I just wouldn't put the book down. This is the first book that I have read by this author and it really showed how amazingly talented the writer is.

This book is set in an insane asylum (which is what first drew me into this book), where there is a man who is claiming that he is Christopher Columbus, and is taken care by a caring nurse called Consuela. It is a very intriguing book to read and it is very easy to get wrapped upto it as you hear 'Christoper Columbus' telling his life story, you look forward to reading more of what he believes is happening in his life. It shows a nice caring side of the nurses that worked in insane asylum at that time.

All of the characters are very vividly described and they make the book all that bit more exciting and realistic. The author has done an amazing job in describing the characters, the setting in such a way that it makes the reader feel like you are actually there. I also loved how the author manages to tie up all of the loose ends so that it nicely finishes the book. The character of Consuela was my favourite one I found her easy to get along with and easy to read about, she was a character that could easily have been a real people, her feelings toward 'Christopher Columbus' are totally believable and relatable. A truly excellent read and one that I could happily read over and over again without getting tired of it.

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### **Thomas Trofimuk says**

Well, of course, I think it's brilliant. I wrote it.

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## **Jo Barton says**

To set a novel about Christopher Columbus in a modern day mental institution is ambitious, as not only does it heighten awareness of the reality of mental confusion, it also gives an insight into the life of one of the most enigmatic of adventurers. When a man is found, alleging to be Christopher Columbus, we are led by the author into a world of delusion and mystery, which is bravely narrated in three separate story strands.

Whilst acknowledging that the book is intricately written, I didn't feel any rapport with the main characters. I found the narrative confusing in places, so much so, I skipped pieces of the book in order to get to the end. This may be one of those stories made more interesting when read as part of a book group, as a personal read, the book just didn't feed my imagination and left me uninspired.

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## **Carol says**

Here's another book that defies the star system for me. It's somewhere between a 4 "I really liked this and a 5, "it was awesome". Early on, I wasn't quite certain how I felt about this book. I found myself confused initially, perhaps because I was reading a few pages at a time. Over the weekend I was finally able to get down dirty and read!

I had first heard about Waiting for Columbus on a *Booksonthenightstand* podcast. Ann Kingman raved about it not only once but at least two other times that I recall. I respect Ann's opinion so knew this would be on my list. But what really sealed the deal was reading a listener's comments posted by Ann. Tanya talks about this book in a post titled *A Story Too Good to Stay Buried in the Comments*.

You can read the post at <http://booksonthenightstand.com/2009/...>, I'm also going to copy it in its entirety here at the end of my comments. I really don't want you to miss this one.

Simply put it is a novel about a psychiatric patient in a hospital in contemporary Spain who claims he is Christopher Columbus, and the nurse who listens to his stories in an attempt to understand him. But don't let the simplicity fool you. The tale winds back and forth in time and over continents and oceans like a cresting and sometimes crashing wave. This Columbus is not the Columbus of my school books. Here, he is a man with many desires, not only the quest for adventure and finding the new world but also a voracious lover of women. I felt like a voyeur listening in as he relates his story to Consulea, his nurse.

Be certain to set aside some time to get into it. It merits a few more pages than usual to get hooked. My sincere thanks to both Ann and Tanya for leading me to this book. It is one beautiful story.

### **A Story Too Good to Stay Buried in the Comments**

By Ann Kingman

If you've ever blogged, you know that it can sometimes feel like a lot of work. I confess that there are many times when I'd rather be reading a book than blogging about reading a book. But then, every so often, I am

reminded of the incredible community that has sprung up here, and I realize that I get so much from your participation that it could never really be just “work”.

I had an experience like that just recently. It happened in the comments of Josh Christie’s post Bring on the Tears. Tanya’s comments, and subsequent expansion on those comments, were so powerful that I had to pull them out and give them their own space.

In his post, Josh asked, “What book made you cry?”. Tanya, who works for an audiobook publisher, answered:

*This year I read WAITING FOR COLUMBUS (by Thomas Trofimuk) which had such a powerful denouement that I broke down, as did my husband who narrated it (in fact, you can hear him break down on the recording. He wanted to go back and “fix” it, but it was such an honest reading that when he tried to “pull back” it ended up sounded fake! So, the original reading stands...)*

*I feel like I’ve known Tanya for a long time, thanks to her interaction with us here at Books on the Nightstand, but I had no idea that her husband was an audiobook narrator, and had no inkling that he narrated this book that I loved so much. Of course, I needed to know more, so I asked Tanya to tell us the whole story.*

*Here it is:*

*“Last April you mentioned WAITING FOR COLUMBUS in a blog/podcast. That’s all you did, mention it, but for some reason I became obsessed with it. I literally couldn’t wait until August to read the book, but I had no way to legitimately, personally, request an Advance Reading Copy from the publisher, so... I asked my boss to look into getting a galley. I was shocked when he came back and told me that our company had acquired the audiobook rights for the book!*

*The manuscript came to Blackstone and I was so excited, but I was soon thwarted in my attempts to pre-read it! My husband, Grover Gardner, who is the studio director for the company, always vets the galleys in order to make casting choices. He got the first crack at Waiting For Columbus and after reading the first chapter, insisted that he himself was going to narrate! He pre-read the whole of the book and finished right before dinner one night. Fork midway between plate and mouth, he stopped, started crying and left the table. He walked the dog for an hour and a half. All because of Waiting For Columbus. Of all the books he has narrated, this had never happened before. When he came back from his “time-out” I suspiciously queried him as to whether the book was that maudlin. He shook his head and only said “You’ll see.”*

*I insisted on being the recording engineer for the book. We were in the booth. The first “land mine” hit and I was affected, but okay. The second land mine hit and I could barely hold it together. Grover, even though he had already read the book, fell apart again. It is not maudlin, but beautifully and powerfully written. The book has become a very personal experience for each of us and both of us.*

*Even now, months after we cut the master, I can quote certain passages and there is one passage in particular which still sends me into a paroxysm of emotion. The book had another impact on me in a much more general way: I now search out books written by poet-novelists. I’ve come to appreciate Ondaatje’s and Margaret Atwater’s word crafting in particular, but it was Thomas Trofimuk’s words that found their way to my heart first.*

Anyway, that’s probably way more than you wanted to know, but there it is.

For those who may be interested in the audiobook, you can listen to a sample at the Blackstone Audiobooks page for the title.

Tanya, thank you so very much for sharing your story. It’s amazing, and moving, and I can’t wait to listen to

the audio with your and Grover's experience in mind.

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### **caitlin says**

The star system is very odd. One compares apples and oranges and they both can have the same amount of stars, though they satisfy completely different needs. So to clarify my grading, I am going to employee meals - some books are snacks, others appetizers. There are amuse bouches and there are entrees and desserts. There are lunch entrees and dinner entrees. Janet Evanovich is a snack. Sue Grafton an appetizer. Thomas Trofimuk's Waiting for Columbus is an entree. An entree at a 4 star restaurant, paired with the perfect wine. Each bite is delicious, tantalizing and satisfying; yet still leaves you wanting more. Wonderful prose, an intriguing story. Even as you discover where it is going you yearn for each bite.

In the 21st century a man washes up on shore with the absolute knowledge that he is 15th century navigator Christopher Columbus. He is sent to a mental hospital where he is put under the care of Nurse Consuela, who listens to his stories and guides him back to reality. Through a series of tales, he tells his and Columbus's stories, gradually coming to terms with the truth that shattered him into his beautiful illusion.

Trofimuk's prose is effortless and his story beguiling.

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### **Mike Smith says**

This was a very enjoyable novel. A violent, agitated man is brought to a mental institution in Seville claiming to be Christopher Columbus. Columbus begins to tell stories to one his nurses, Consuela. Stories about how he, Columbus, has been struggling to raise funds and get royal permission to set sail across the Western Sea to find a shorter route to Japan and the Indies. Yet his tales of the 15th century are rife with anachronisms such as stereos, cars, and phones. Consuela and Columbus's doctor begin to suspect that the stories are a way for Columbus to come to terms with whatever trauma has shattered his identity. But Consuela also finds herself being drawn to Columbus...

The novel alternates between the present-day narrative in the institution and Columbus's stories of the 15th century (there is also a sub-plot involving a French Interpol agent searching for a missing "person of interest"). Yet both types of scene are told in the present tense using the same third-person perspective and tone. There is a very lyrical, almost poetical rhythm to the prose that is quite soothing and seductive. The use of the present tense give the entire story a sense of timelessness. It is always now; there is no past and the future is unknown, waiting to be discovered. The tension slowly grows as Consuela waits for Columbus to finish his story, which may restore to him his true identity. Yet Consuela fears that she will lose the Columbus she has come to know, that he will become someone else.

This is a story about fear and hope, and about discovery and loss, and about love and life. Don't wait any longer; read it.

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### **Marti says**

It's not very often I dedicate time to a book when I don't know what's happening in its pages. With this story, you don't get clarity until the last chapter, so you must trust the author to take you on the journey with absolutely no map or landmarks - ironic or fitting for a tale about a navigator?

I enjoyed the journey through a man's quest for his identity - he fervently believes himself to be Christopher Columbus but the story is set in modern times. He is an incredible storyteller and I kind of enjoyed trying to help the other characters (crusty, scarred investigator and sexy psychiatric nurse) piece together his true identity.

My disappointment was deep, however, with the ending. I won't give it away, but I felt like the author should have spent a bit more time on that since it was the grand payoff for our winding road together.

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### **Kathy says**

TRITE!

Can you imagine *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* meeting Mills and Boon? Well, it happened in this book. This terrible, mawkish sentimental story is set in an insane asylum where the nurse falls in love with the patient, who, if he wasn't insane, you would have to conclude is the most extravagant bullshitter on the face of the earth.

I blame the author. It is basically cheating to put a large part of the story into the mouth of a character who is insane because then you can abdicate all responsibility for the fact that it doesn't make any sense. It is further cheating to abandon any notion of 'point of view' so that the character telling the story - about himself - is also telling you things that he could not possibly know - like what other characters are thinking. Furthermore, it is ridiculous to suggest that a SPANISH doctor could not work out (from his accent alone) that his patient is CANADIAN. It is ridiculous to suggest that a female nurse would be swimming naked while her patient watched. It is ridiculous to suggest that a psychiatric nurse would be so baffled by all the patient's mumbo-jumbo that she begins to attribute some sort of magical powers to him. I mean, how did he manage to get Federica to make him a cup of coffee every day? Wow. Spooky.

Please, I beg you, don't read this book if you know ANYTHING about psychiatry. Or literature. Or, for that matter, reality. Because you will probably hate this book as much as I did.

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### **Sarah says**

It took me a couple of chapters to get into this book but once I did I was hooked onto every word. I found

myself wanting to know more about this Christopher Columbus character and who he really is.

The novel was very well written and I loved the way the novel contained elements from both modern age Spain and the 15th century. However I felt that the book was all over the place and didn't really feel the novel fitted into real life where it be in the mental asylum or modern day Spain.

I didn't like the Interpol investigation I felt it didn't really fit into the plot of the novel and I did feel the only reason it was there was to find out Christopher Columbus real identity.

Overall it was a well written novel but I just didn't feel that certain elements of the plot fitted in with the novel.

This review was published on <http://everybookhasasoul.wordpress.com>

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### **Jennifer says**

Book Description from Shelfari: A man arrives at an insane asylum in contemporary Spain claiming to be the legendary navigator Christopher Columbus. Who he really is, and the events that led him to break with reality, lie at the center of this novel. Found in the treacherous Strait of Gibraltar, the mysterious man who calls himself Columbus appears to be just another delirious mental patient, until he begins to tell the "true" story of how he famously obtained three ships from Spanish royalty. It's Nurse Consuela who listens to these fantastical tales of adventure and romance and tries desperately to make sense of why this seemingly intelligent man has been locked up, and why no one has come to visit. As splintered fragments of the man beneath the facade reveal a charming yet guarded individual, Nurse Consuela can't avoid the inappropriate longings she begins to feel. Something terrible caused his break with reality, and she can only listen and wait as Columbus spins his tale to the very end.

### **My Thoughts**

The closest analogy I can come up with to describe this book is watching a photograph develop in a darkroom. At first, you see nothing but a few shades of gray here and there. Then the borders come into focus. Then the full picture begins to fill in ... becoming clearer and clearer until you are looking at the fully formed photograph.

In this book, the "photograph" being developed is the man claiming to be Christopher Columbus. Of course, since it is 2004, we know he isn't the real Christopher Columbus. But who is he and why is he claiming to be Columbus? We join Nurse Consuela in listening to Columbus's fanciful and detailed accounts of his adventures. Yet his tales are filled with anachronisms that bring into focus, little by little, who this man really is in the present day and what happened to cause his break with reality.

Trofimuk does a brilliant job in creating the atmosphere and rhythm of Columbus's stories. You know how you read books and you can just visualize everything that is happening as if you are watching a movie? I felt like this throughout this book, and I'm not even sure how Trofimuk pulled this off. When I was reading, I just felt very present in the story, as if I was there watching it happen. So when Columbus is telling one his tales of his explorations and suddenly a cell phone rings in his story, it is jarring as if you were watching a movie set in the Middle Ages and suddenly a car drove by in the background.

I think this is the brilliance of the book. Like Nurse Consuela, you begin to fall in love a little bit with Columbus and his outsized personality and adventures. So when you are shockingly and repeatedly reminded that he is NOT Columbus and instead a man who has had a break with reality, you are jerked back into the real world. And as the book moves ever closer to revealing the man behind Columbus and why he took on this persona, you begin to mourn the loss of Columbus, just as Nurse Consuela must deal with her feelings of losing her patient as he begins to heal.

This was a beautifully written book that works its way under your skin. At its heart, this is a story of love, loss, grief, heartbreak, loneliness and how our minds cope with these emotions. It is a book meant to be read slowly and savored, and I suspect it will leave its mark on you like it did me. If you like literary fiction with a melancholy bent, this book is a must read.

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### **Zoran says**

I feel cheated by this novel. The question is—does the wonderfully touchy and tragic ending justify the long toil the story took us through, to reach the end? I was, actually, so very close never to reach it, because the first 350 pages made me so agitated, I wanted to leave the book unfinished on a few occasions. Even now, when I turned the last page, I'm still not sure if it was worth it.

At first I liked the idea of a mental patient who thinks he's Christopher Columbus, and tells the stories, mixing history and present time, to his nurse. However, as the book progresses, it doesn't go anywhere, the plot stalls, and Columbus' stories drag on, without sense. There are way too many of those confused story-episodes, unsorted and out of chronological, or any other logical order. On top of it, the nurse develops emotional attachment to Columbus, but that was explained in a very superficial and unbelievable way. There was no courting, or subtle changing of feelings from the care for a patient into something deeper. No, one day the good nurse realized that she's in love. Snap. Just like that. For a reader who likes his books well done, this one was absolutely rare.

It also seems that all the female characters in the book get naked at some point, mostly without any particular reason other than, perhaps, to spice up a terribly bland story. There's lust and sex. There's author's documented intention to describe a great romantic with absolute adoration of his women's body, and, yes, the soul, too. Which begs the question whether the author ever experienced the kind of romance he was trying to attribute to this 'Columbus,' because if he did, he isn't capable to translate it in writing. Rather, the romantic escapades in the book are half-baked, clumsy and neither detailed enough to be taken seriously, nor funny enough to be taken as comedy.

Two stars, only because of the ending.

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