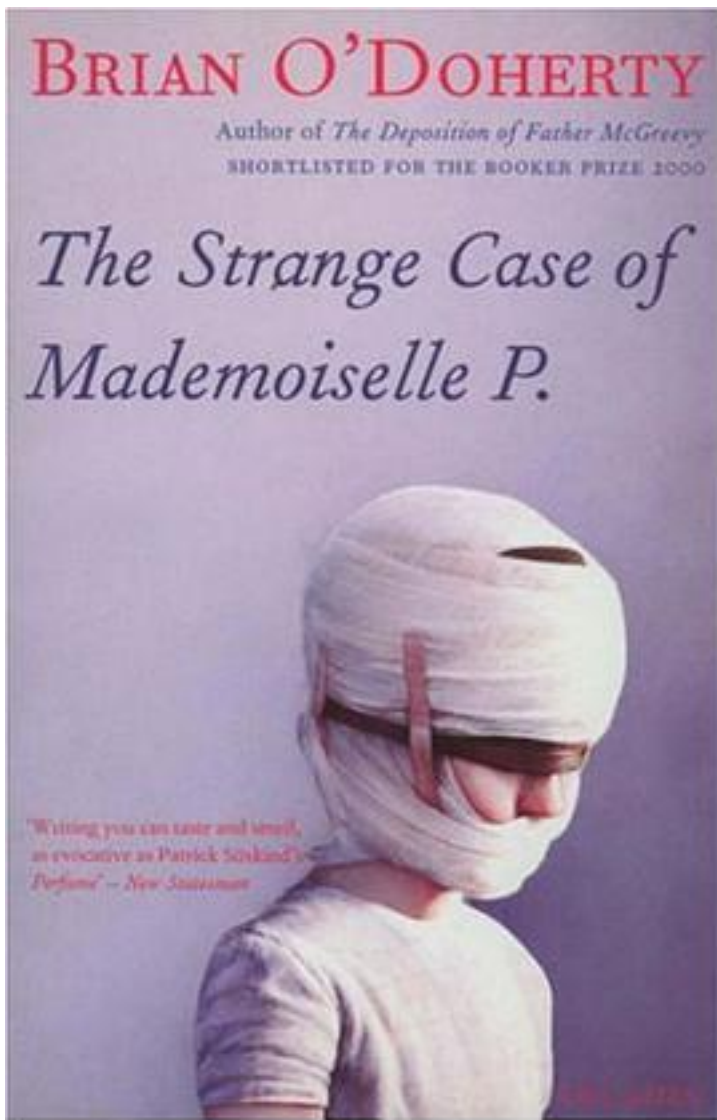


The Strange Case of Mademoiselle P.



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From Publishers Weekly Five monologues constitute this slight first novel, which begins promisingly but grows fussy and pedantic as it traces the methods of 18th-century physician Franz Anton Mesmer, father of hypnosis. In three of the novel's sections, Mesmer ruminates on his theories of animal magnetism and the scorn of rivals who charge him with quackery. He discourses on his healing practices, conducted in shrouded rooms where he strokes the thighs of patients to coax out their "universal fluid" while hired musicians (here, young Mozart) soothingly play. Mesmer grows entranced, even sexually obsessed, with his 18-year-old patient Marie-Therese Paradies, a skilled pianist suffering from blindness and melancholia whose cure he claims to effect. The remaining monologues belong to Marie-Therese and her father. The patient muses on her affliction, her trust in her doctor and her friendship with Mozart; Josef Paradies expresses concern for his daughter and fumes at the "fakery and nonsense" of "the pernicious Dr. M." Drawing on Mesmer's own treatise, the novel opens a window on a narrow vista of Viennese life but lacks the action and dramatic tension needed to excite the reader. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title. From Library Journal In the Viennese imperial court at the end of the 18th century, a young blind woman undergoes treatment by Dr. Anton Mesmer, discoverer and promoter of the new science of "animal magnetism" (hypnotism). The patient's father, jealous of Mesmer, sets out to destroy the doctor but in the process ruins his daughter as well. Intriguingly conceived and exceptionally well written, this first novel compares favorably with Allen Kurzweil's *A Case of Curiosities* (LJ 11/1/91). Both describe the same period, but they differ in their literary affiliations: Kurzweil's novel is picaresque, stepchild to Diderot and Restif; O'Doherty's is an odd hybrid of gothic romance and Enlightenment memoir. It's also extremely good, filled with strikingly beautiful synesthetic images in which light, memory, reality, imagination, new and old mingle as one domain of experience.- David Keymer, SUNY Inst. of Technology, Utica Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title. See all Editorial Reviews

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