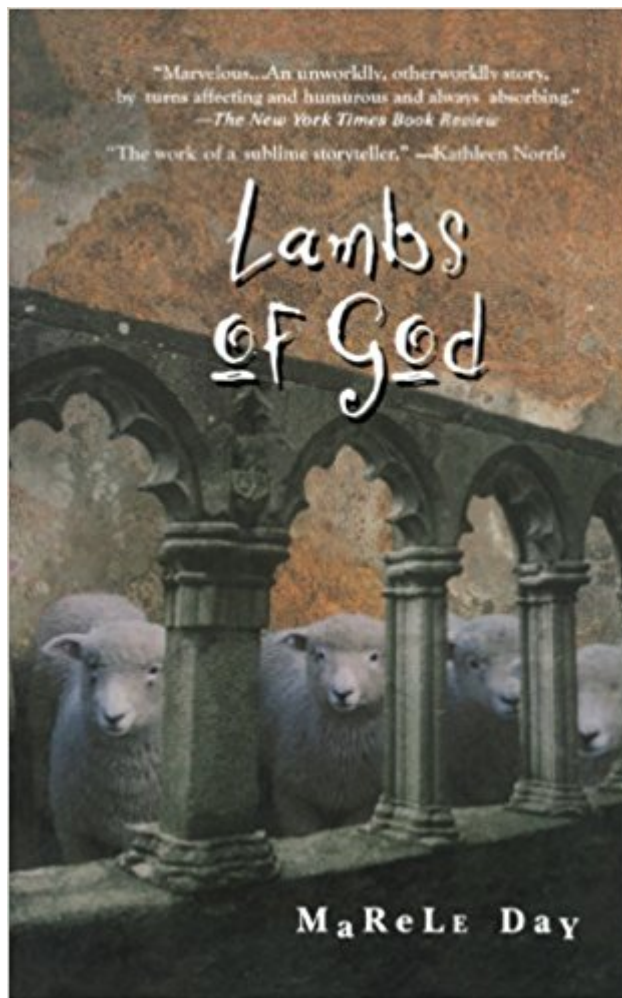


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# Lambs Of God



## Synopsis

Three eccentric, secluded nuns live on a remote island, forgotten by time and the Church—until a priest unwittingly happens upon them. Father Ignatius is as surprised to see the nuns as they are to see a flesh-and-blood man, and what follows is the strange, moving, and often hilarious story of their struggle—a struggle of wills, and of faith. *Lambs of God* is a charming, poignant page-turner from crime novelist Marele Day.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A man intrudes on an all but extinct order of pastoral nuns in this intriguing but heavy-handed parable from Australian crime-novelist Day. Sisters Iphigenia, Margarita and Carla live in a ruined monastery on a remote Australian island, tending their only flock: the Agnes sisters, sheep named for nuns who have died. The rhythm of life is seasonal and canonical: washing day, shearing day, Christmas, Lent. It's hard to say what year it is... until Father Ignatius arrives with a cellular phone to assess what he thought was abandoned property. A career churchman, Ignatius wants to turn a profit by transforming the forgotten nunnery into a luxury retreat for businessmen. The story takes a Stephen King turn when the nuns realize that the priest's plans threaten them. Ignatius is drugged with herbal tea, stripped, shaved and plastered up to the waist in a cast. Still, the priest's presence provokes different reactions from each nun, stirring up long-dormant secrets that threaten to tear apart their community. Ignatius himself undergoes something more than a physical transformation

as he is forced to reassess the meaning of his mission in the church. Although Day has undeniable storytelling gifts and weaves together an impressive number of storytelling traditions (classical, biblical, Celtic and fairy tale), the novel's rather kitschy setup and often gruesomely graphic feminist symbolism may force even sympathetic readers to share Ignatius's feeling that "There were parts of the story that even he was having trouble swallowing." BOMC, One Spirit Book Club and Quality Paperback Club featured alternate selections; foreign rights sold in the U.K. (Anchor), Australia (Allen & Unwin), Germany (Piper) and the Netherlands (Vassalecci). (Apr.) FYI: *Lambs of God* has been optioned by Fox 2000, with Winona Ryder as producer and costar. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

An odd and often disturbing story, *Lambs of God* mixes Christian symbolism and ritual, fairy tale, mythology, and a keen sense of nature in its juggled ethical conflicts. Sisters Iphigenia, Margarita, and Carla are the sole surviving members (besides the lambs they tend to) of an enclosed, isolated religious community whose monastic lives are disturbed by the appearance of Father Ignatius, who stumbles totally unaware into a timeless and often primitive world of faith and service. Much like Stephen King's *Misery*, the nuns hold this intruder captive as his plans for the monastery raise conflicts in world and spiritual views. Day's plot sways unevenly from the present crisis to the past lives of all four characters, and the sisters' stories are far more interesting, past and present. Her final revelations and attention to detail rise above a tendency to depend upon easy and possibly offensive stereotypes. Penelope Shelton's reading reinforces those stereotypes at first and may be too rapid as some chapters shift, but, ultimately, she gives life to each of these very different voices. Not for all audiences, this is recommended for larger collections. A Joyce Kessel, Villa Maria Coll., Buffalo, NY Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Both the premise and the narrative are quirky and imaginative. As others here have mentioned, the novel has elements of a fairy tale. For the first twenty or so pages, like a fairy tale, I couldn't place it in ordinary time and space. Only gradually does the author reveal that the setting is in the present time, on an island off the coast of Ireland. It is written in a very unique style. Some of the imagery stays with you, such as when the priest has an urge to "strangle his penis" when it refuses to submit to his will. The three main characters are cloistered nuns. Isolated for decades from the rest of the world, their religious sensibilities take on a decidedly pagan tone. I especially liked the way they evolved their own way of relating to the sheep in their care, with whom they share their island

sanctuary. Forgetting the reductionistic speceism of the outer world over time, they regard the sheep with great affection, even believing that the souls of departed nuns are now incarnated in them. The youngest of the trio of nuns has never lived outside the crumbling walls of the cloister, and her world is full of enchantment and innate connection to the natural world around her. Her nature is wild and untamed, some might even say uncivilized, though her days are rigidly structured around the prescribed daily rituals of monastic life. An ambitious young priest from the outside world shows up on their isolated, clifftop refuge, and threatens their way of life. How he is dealt with, and the tale of how all three women wound up living behind the cloistered convent walls is a fascinating literary journey. The novel makes one ponder just how much our assumptions and self-serving prejudices about other living beings, belief systems and attitude toward the natural world are a cultural overlay that can be easily cast aside once we are no longer corralled by societal reinforcements of them.

I picked this up in the airport in London on a whimsy a long time ago. I am so glad I did. It has become one of my favorite books of all time. *Lambs of God* is strange and beautiful. Utterly mesmerizing. The moment I finished reading it, it went on my keepers shelf. It has not left, other than to be reread. I won't even loan it out. The only negative is I can't find anything else written by Marele Day.

Initial a wee bit bewildering how this would evolve but after finishing this lovely story kept creeping up on my consciousness - it will be a long lived story of people ....

A delightfully weird and rich story of a small flock of forgotten cloistered nuns. Brilliant!

As promised!

Good book. Certainly different than anything I have read before. Surprising the ingenuity of nuns and the decisions they made.

Yes, it is well written and fast paced (I skipped the lengthy stories told by the priest) Erotic in a strange way. The story of several nuns, hidden in time and living on an uninhabited island, until one day, a priest arrives to totally disturb the pastoral scene. What the nuns do to silence the priest and preserve their lives is unsettling and more than a little disturbing, yet full of women's lib... Read this

book, scratch your head, wonder about the lives of secluded nuns, gone back to the earth.

This is a favorite. It is absolutely a delight to read and to think about. What a wonderful "family" of eccentric women who have found a way to survive. Almost a "lost tribe"...certainly a forgotten one. Many lessons to learn from this one.

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