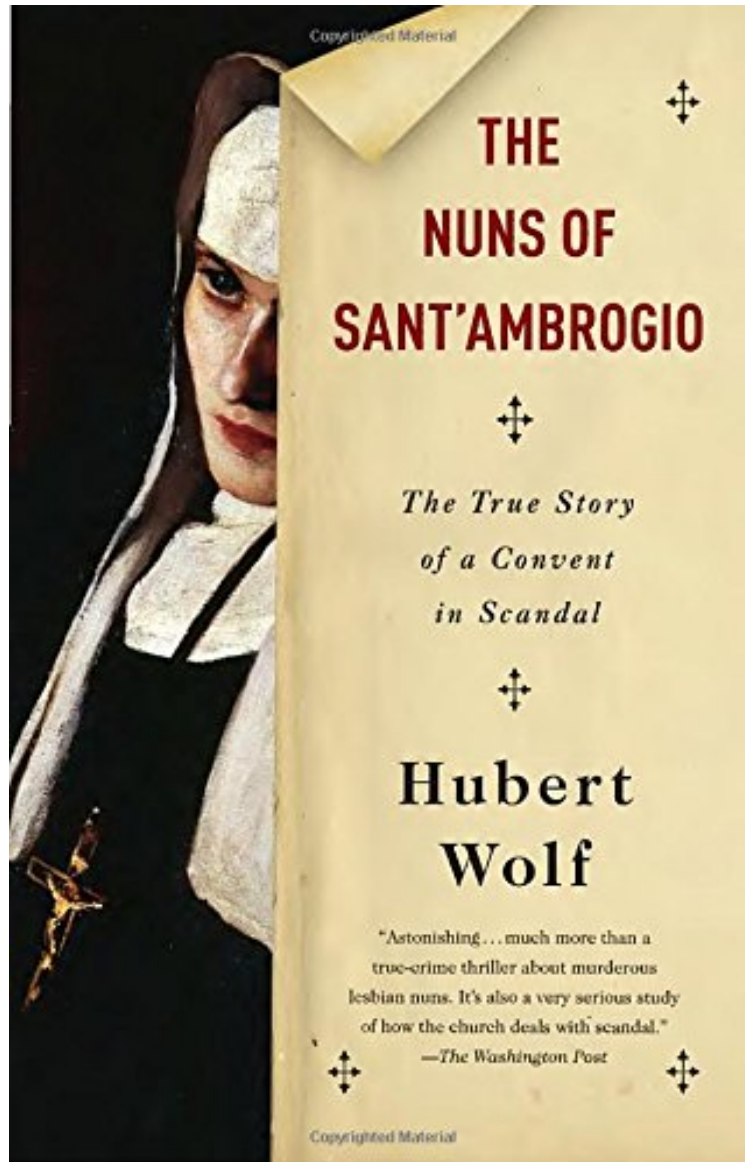


[FREE] The Nuns of Sant'Ambrogio: The True Story of a Convent in Scandal

The Nuns of Sant'Ambrogio: The True Story of a Convent in Scandal

Hubert Wolf

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Hubert Wolf : The Nuns of Sant'Ambrogio: The True Story of a Convent in Scandal before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *The Nuns of Sant'Ambrogio: The True Story of a Convent in Scandal*:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A Fascinating Read! By Mac McCormick III Awhile back, I was

looking for something different to read and I came across the Nuns of Sant'Ambrogio: The True Story of a Convent in Scandal." The title makes it sound like and description of the book make it sound like the sordid tale of a sex scandal in a convent, but it goes beyond that. It goes beyond the scandal to explore how it could happen and delves into the mechanics of the Vatican, Church politics, and theological conflicts. If you're interested in the history of the Catholic Church or of religion in general, you'll want to consider this book."The opening of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's archives by John Paul II in 1998 made the Holy Roman Inquisition's files accessible to researchers for the first time. The files from the Sant'Ambrogio trial, which had been hidden for a century and a half in the most secret of all Church archives, finally saw the light of day. At last, the secret could be revealed - and what had sounded like an outrageous fantasy turned out to be a true story of a convent in scandal."I won't give away the story, but mixing sex, deceit, religion, and politics, The Nuns of Sant'Ambrogio is a history that reads like a thriller novel. It's easy to see why author Hubert Wolf selected this scandal as a topic to write on. For the first almost 2/3 of the book, it reads like a salacious novel as Wolf describes what happened inside Sant'Ambrogio and the beginnings of the Vatican investigation and trial. There are more than enough twists and turns there to keep the reader interested. Then comes one of the biggest turns of the story; the reader learns that it's not just about the scandal within the convent but also about the struggle between schools of theology within the Catholic Church. It's about Church politics and a battle for influence within the Vatican and with the Pope himself. It would be very easy for the last 1/3 of this book to become dry and uninteresting and I'm sure that some readers (those who read it just for the juicy scandal) to find it so, but Wolf has done a great job at making the trial and politics keep the reader's attention. Sure, there are parts of it that explain why and how the Vatican works, bits on European History in the early to mid 1800s, and there are explanations of schools of thought within the Church but these are necessary to help the reader understand what's going on and place things within context. If you hang on to the end (and you should), you'll understand more about how some of Catholic theology got where it is today and about how the Vatican got to where it is today (and to be honest, understand why Pope Francis has such a huge job ahead of him now...)The Nuns of Sant'Ambrogio was a fascinating read. As someone who doesn't know much about the Catholic Church, I came away with some more understanding on the Church and the Vatican. As someone who grew up within the Southern Baptist Church and came to detest church politics, this book reinforced my opinions on church politics and my wariness of the motives of church leadership (regardless of faith or denomination). Don't let the tawdry details of the scandal make you think this is just a book and about sex and lies. It isn't. This is a well researched and well documented that is ultimately about Vatican politics and the fight for theological supremacy within the Catholic Church. After some thought, I'm willing to give it a 5 star review; it was not only an interesting read but an informative one as well, on a subject that many are not familiar with. If you are interested in the history of the Catholic Church, I think this is a must read.64 of 67 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating ReadingBy Sasha Q.This book is an amazing, behind the scenes look at the inner workings of an Italian convent during the 19th century. The author (and the translator) did a great job of giving the reader a thorough background of the political climate (secular and some non-secular) during this time period, which helped tremendously to put the story in context. The beginning of the book is a little dry, but given that this is historical non-fiction, I can understand the author's need to properly set the stage.I definitely encourage everyone to keep on reading, as once the German princess's story is told, the book reads like a true thriller, where fact is definitely stranger than fiction. An isolated, self-contained community like a convent or a monastery can lend itself to severe abuse of power and corruption, and unfortunately, Sant'Ambrogio Convent and its members fell victim to the psychopathic machinations of one particular nun in power. What makes this story so shocking is the setting, and that many of the nuns truly believed they were doing the right thing (in the name of heaven), as they had taken vows to strictly obey their superiors, without question, even though they were actually all on a journey to hell and real evil. Unbelievably, a nun, Maria Luisa, is certainly the equal to any notorious cult leader of our time. Especially those who use the power of faith and spirituality to control their followers (as most of them do).Anyone interested in the history of the Catholic Church would really enjoy this book, but it is written so well, I would also recommend it to those who enjoy true crime or even historical fiction thrillers. The book reads easy, like fiction, but is simply astounding because the story is actually true. A great read, all around.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. True StoryBy Kindle CustomerI wouldn't have missed this if I hadn't the free sample. WonderfullBook. A do not miss reading thisTrue story of things churches wouldGo through to cover mistakes.Decades of lies, how easy to tell the truth.Bravo Mr. Would like to read more ofYour works !

A Washington Post Notable BookIn 1858, a German princess, recently inducted into the convent of Sant'Ambrogio in Rome, wrote a frantic letter to her cousin, a confidant of the Pope, claiming that she feared for her life. A subsequent investigation by the Church's Inquisition uncovered the shocking secrets of a convent ruled by a beautiful young mistress, who coerced her novices into lesbian initiation rites and heresies, and who entered into an illicit relationship with a young theologian. Drawing upon written testimony and original documents discovered in a secret Vatican archive, The Nuns of Sant'Ambrogio is the never-before-told true story of how one woman was able to practice deception, heresy, seduction, and murder in the heart of the Catholic Church.

Astonishing . . . much more than a true-crime thriller about murderous lesbian nuns. Its also a very serious study of how the church deals with scandal. The Washington Post In 1998, Pope John Paul II opened the secret archives of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith better known to you as the Inquisition to outside researchers. The following year, German historian Hubert Wolf found something that, as they say on the Internet, will blow your mind. Lev Grossman, Time Deftly balances . . . juicy history with a raft of serious (yet accessible) research into the intricacies of Vatican bureaucracy, the underlying philosophical disputes among various key Roman Catholic figures, and the complex political landscape of mid-nineteenth century Italy. The Boston Globe A learned yet fascinating account. . . . [Wolf] has an enviable handle on the palace intrigues motivating all the players. Salon The scandal that Wolf discovered in a secret Vatican archive, in 1999, would have left a true-crime writer salivating. . . . [He] reconstructs what went on inside the convent based on transcripts from the trial and intercepted letters. . . . There is . . . something remarkable about a poor, uneducated nun who brings the Jesuits to their knees while remaking herself as a goddess. The New York Times Book A huge story of strange times. . . . Exciting reading. The Columbus Dispatch I learned more about the Catholic Church from this book than anything I had read previously. . . . That the author is also an ordained minister and professor of ecclesiastical history only lends support to his claims. . . . Wolf unravels a tale of religious madness and psycho-sexual power trips that is just waiting to be turned into a film by Milos Forman. Shyam K. Sriram, PopMatters The discovery of the century straight from the Vatican archives. An absorbing story of abuse, murder, and false morals. Kurier (Germany) This sordid tale of sexual indecency, false saints, and murder within a 19th-century convent in Rome has all the trappings of a good thriller. . . . [Wolf] adds detailed historical context and careful explanations to elevate this tale beyond sensationalism into a more serious study of a fascinating real-life melodrama. Publishers Weekly (starred) The gloomy intrigue that [Hubert Wolf] reveals in this extraordinary book, in which murders mingle with forbidden love in all the senses of the word, seems to verify the most overstretched commonplaces of the convent literature, from Diderot's La Religieuse to de Sade's Juliette. Le Monde (France) The true story of an Italian nunnery in the nineteenth century contains all the ingredients of a thriller: the Inquisition, sex, poisoning, conspiracy, and hypocrisy. Neue Zürcher Zeitung am Sonntag (Switzerland) An eye-opening story. . . . Wolf has expertly recovered and retold this scandalous tale in all its gory, as well as bureaucratic, detail. Kirkus s The way Hubert Wolf deduces insightful conclusions from the doubtlessly spectacular incidents in the nunnery is nothing but masterly. Die Zeit (Germany) Mysticism, sex, theology, murders It has all the ingredients of a good whodunit. La Vie (France) About the Author Hubert Wolf, born in 1959, is professor of Medieval and Modern Church History at the University of Muenster, Germany. He was honored with the Leibniz-Prize of the German Research Foundation (DFG), the Communicator Award, and the Gutenberg Prize, and he was fellow at the Historisches Kolleg in Munich. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Prologue Save, Save Me! Shortly after eight o'clock on Monday, July 25, the Archbishop of Edessa sent by the Lord finally came to me. There was no time for waiting; this was the one and only time to get saved. To him, I had to reveal everything and had to implore him to help me escape the convent as swiftly as possible. It all went well: my prayers were fulfilled, and I was understood. These dramatic words were set down by Princess Katharina von Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen in a complaint she submitted to the pope in summer 1859. They were written barely five weeks after her escape from the convent of Sant Ambrogio in Rome or rather, after her cousin, Archbishop Gustav Adolf zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, managed to secure her release and they describe the sensational conclusion to her adventure inside the walls of a Roman Catholic convent. It was an adventure for which she had narrowly avoided paying with her life. She had been humiliated, isolated from her fellow nuns, cut off from the outside world, and since she was party to the convent secrets and therefore regarded as a dangerous somebody had tried to silence her. They had even made several attempts to poison her. At half past three in the afternoon on July 26, 1859, after almost exactly fifteen months, she finally left Sant Ambrogio della Massima. Her life as Sister Luisa Maria of Saint Joseph, a nun in the Regulated Third Order of Holy Saint Francis in Rome, had begun so promisingly. And now here she was, being saved in the nick of time, rescued from imminent danger of death. In her written complaint, the princess gave her failure as a nun and her thrilling escape from the convent a typically pious interpretation, casting it as salvation by Christ the Lord. This somehow made the experience bearable for her. But the final dramatic episode, and the preceding months she had spent under the constant fear of death, would come to define her whole life. After July 26, 1859, nothing would ever be the same again. Her plight had been genuinely existential: her life really was threatened in Sant Ambrogio. Even years later, she was still traumatized by the attempts to poison her. This is all brought vividly to life in her Erlebnisse (Experiences), a book written by her close collaborator Christiane Gmeiner in 1870, more than a decade after the terrible events in Rome. According to this auto-biographical source, Katharina had managed to smuggle a letter out of the convent during the night of July 24, 1859. This was handed to Archbishop Hohenlohe in the Vatican. The princess waited in a state of great anxiety until she was called into the parlor at half past seven in the morning. Fearful and almost breathless, the princess hurried downstairs to the archbishop, to whom she called out in great agitation: save, save me! At first, he did not understand her, and was almost afraid his cousin had run mad, but by and by she managed to convince him that she was mistress of her senses, and that her fear was not unfounded. Now he understood her pleas to leave the convent, and he promised to do everything in his power to arrange this as soon as possible though the first appointment he was able to make was not until the following day. The

words are Christiane Gmeiners, recounting in the third person what the princess had told her in her own words. Katharina von Hohenzollern-Sigmaringens account sounds like a story from the depths of the Middle Ages, and confirms many of the common clichs and prejudices about life in Catholic convents and monasteries. But this story takes place in the modern world of the mid-nineteenth century. And the setting isnt a secluded mountain convent at the worlds edge, but the center of the capital city of Christianity, little more than half a mile from the Vaticanhome to the representative of Jesus Christ on earth. What really happened in SantAmbrogio? Were these poisonings simply the fantasy of a highly strung aristocrat, or were they genuine attempts on Katharinas life? She was a princess of the house of Hohenzollern and a close relative of Wilhelm I, the man who would later become king of Prussia and the German emperor. So how did Katharina come to take her vows in such a strict religious order in the first placeand why in Rome?Excerpted from *The Nuns of Sant'Ambrogio* by Hubert Wolf. Copyright 2015 by Hubert Wolf. Excerpted by permission of Knopf, a division of Random House LLC. All rights reserved. No part of this excerpt may be reproduced or reprinted without permission in writing from the publisher.