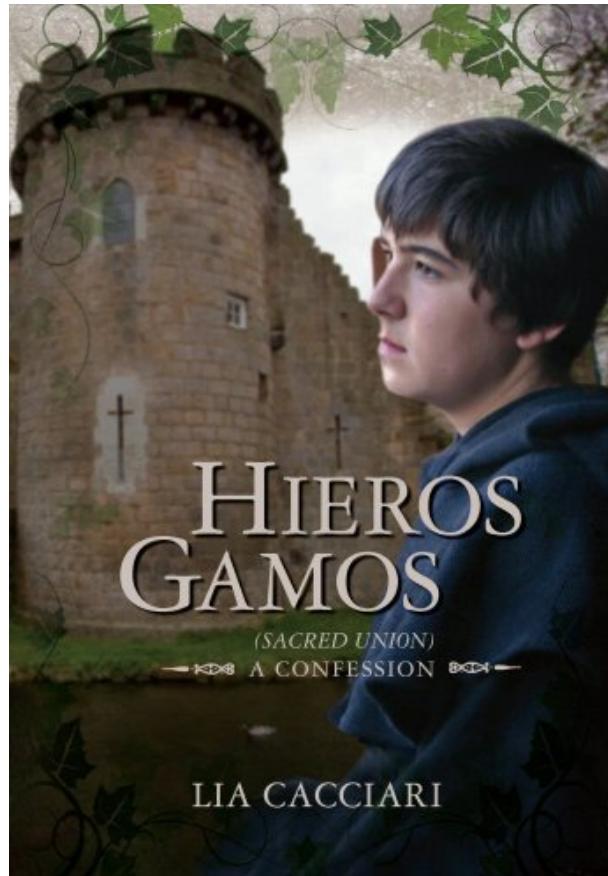
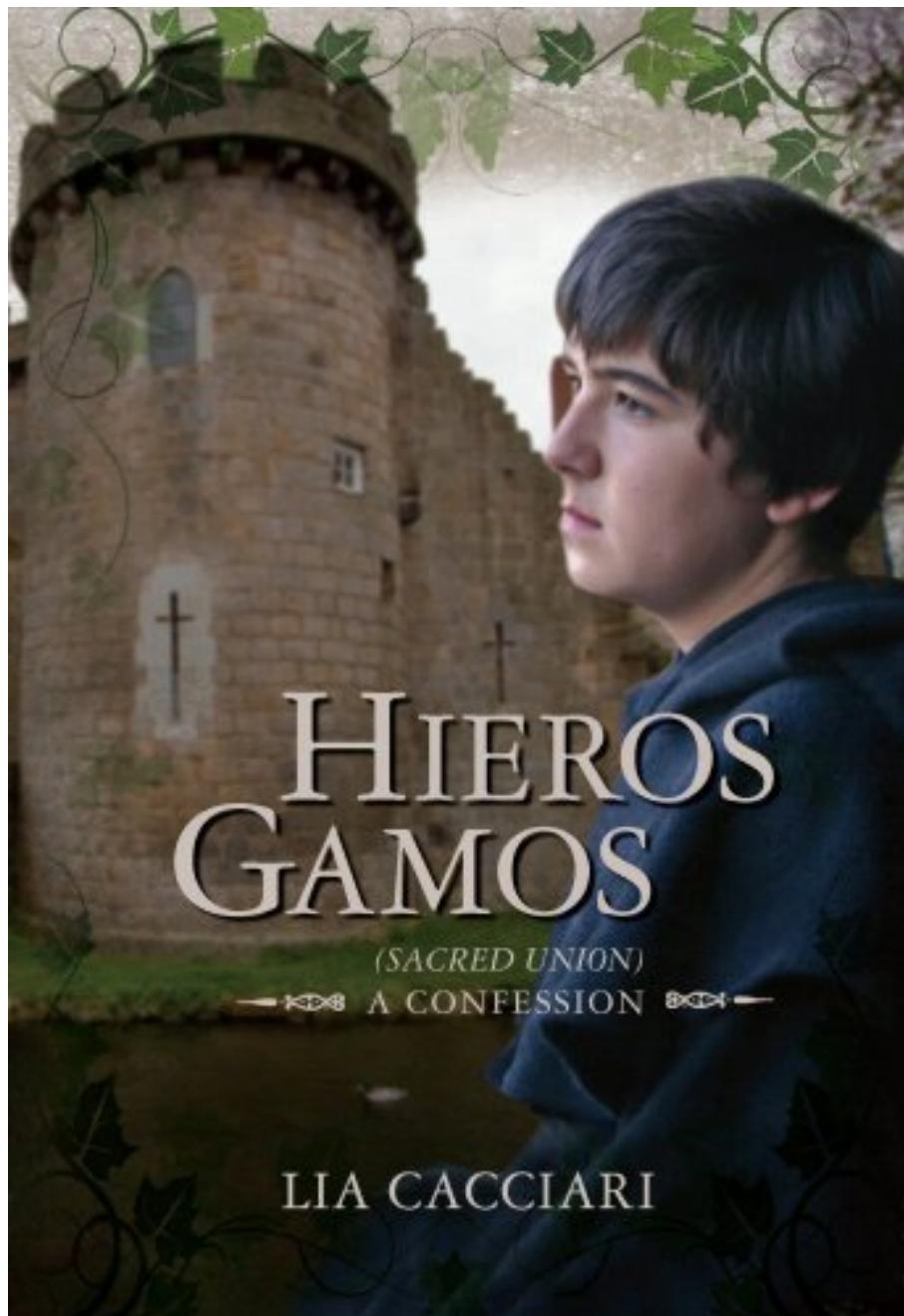


HIEROS GAMOS: (SACRED UNION) A CONFESSON BY LIA CACCIARI



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From Kirkus Reviews

In Cacciari's debut medieval drama, a lord's impending death ignites a volatile relationship between a brother and sister. In the early 12th century, Reiner d'Ivry leaves the monastery, where he's spent the better half of his childhood, to see to his dying father, the Lord of Sundorgate. Reiner soon learns that he's been presumed dead and that his sister, Drusiana, is their father's heir. She says she'll relinquish her inheritance if Reiner leaves the cloister and stays in Sundorgate. Reiner, however, is determined to marry Drusiana off to a son of their father's comrade-in-arms. The novel doesn't offer a magical medieval tale with dragons, knights and clanking swords but a more realistic story of feuding siblings. Readers may find it much easier to sympathize with Drusiana, despite Reiner's first-person perspective (presented as a confession to a fellow monk). Her reluctance to wed comes across as practical and almost endearing, as she cuts her hair short and dresses as a male. Her brother, meanwhile, is desperate to prove that Drusiana is insane or has a lover, and he slowly becomes deranged himself. His fierce account is often unnerving, as when he breaks into laughter when kneeling to pray and, at his lowest point, drops a rat into a pie that someone later eats. Readers may find it a challenge to follow such a frantic protagonist, but there's a short reprieve when Reiner returns to the monastery. He soon learns why Drusiana hasn't sought a potential husband, and the story takes a gleefully dark turn. Cacciari steeps the narrative in the language of its era, so readers with a fear of medieval dialect may want to steer clear, but others will appreciate how the dialogue shuns modernization. Others will be swayed by Reiner's haunting, ominous moments ("I had shut my eyes as a child and awakened an old man."). The novel also includes glossaries with Latin translations. An ambitious, intricately composed novel of medieval siblings.

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Reiner d'Ivry, a knight's son in the north of England is an oblate, committed for life to the Benedictine priory of Wrenthorpe at the age of seven. Reiner learns that his dispossession is bound up with a long-rumored curse on the house of d'Ivry, incurred by his father while he was a knight of the Crusade, and grows up embittered and vengeful. Reiner returns home after eleven years to an unsettling encounter with his sister Drusiana, now his father's only heir, whom he has long despised for all she has gained in his place. As this reunion between the brother and sister turns into a war of wills, an unforeseen threat gathers against them both. It will lead Reiner to the mysterious texts on alchemy brought back from the Crusade, now in his sister's possession, and toward an unimaginable fate.

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- Format: Kindle eBook

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4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

An older order of things

By Carlos R Seligo

Lia Cacciari's *Heiros Gamos* is not like any historical fiction I have ever read, particularly of the medieval period. The main protagonist, Reiner d'Ivry, has got the short end of the stick in life: his father dispossesses him by giving him to the benedictine monks as a child, in order to absolve a family curse. But Reiner is no Dickensian hero, innocently suffering a social disease: rather, he is a sort of immature Arthur Dimmesdale, who passionately condemns the sins of his own family while (only too late) learning about his own corrupt motives. He is a particularly harsh judge of his own sister, Drusiana, who will inherit the family lands instead of him: Reiner condemns her for riding horseback alone in the countryside and for rebuffing suitors by retreating into a tower filled with the books her father collected during the Crusades. Although the suitors are in fact more interested in her inheritance, Reiner follows his sister into the tower for even more morally questionable reasons. Nonetheless, this is precisely when we feel the sympathy of Drusiana for her brother (and Lia Cacciari for her tortured character.)

Reiner's vivisection of his own soul is rendered in gory detail. The fear of falling into a moral abyss leads to much moral hypocrisy but also to belated compassion, even in the longest run, wisdom--but he is not a modern hero of introspection who "finds himself" after taste-testing his every whim and weakness. Admittedly, I found myself liking Drusiana more than her brother; yet, even though she is adventurous, independent and self-educated, his sister is not the heroine we associate with these modern virtues. She could not be played by Kristen Stewart, because she would resist the vampire's toothy smile and would ride back home alone at dusk. She respects her father, even though he is responsible for her family's recent decline.

Like these characters, every detail of 12th Century Northumbria seems to defy modern expectations. Whereas we are all made ornery by the demand to flout the greater good in pursuit of personal ambition, Reiner and Drusiana are ornery because they must put aside personal ambition in order to pursue the greater good...not surprisingly, Cacciari yearns nostalgically for this older order of things.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Epic historical page turner, wonderful work!

By William F. Abrams

This carefully researched epic is completely engaging and beautifully written. I could not put it down. The characters and plot are extraordinarily compelling and engrossing. Very original, this work completely engrossed me.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

Brilliant!

By Cece

This book, was one of the most intriguing, beautiful stories I have ever read. Reiner's astonishing and passionate confession is as deeply moving as it is richly humorous. An authentic, original literary work.

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