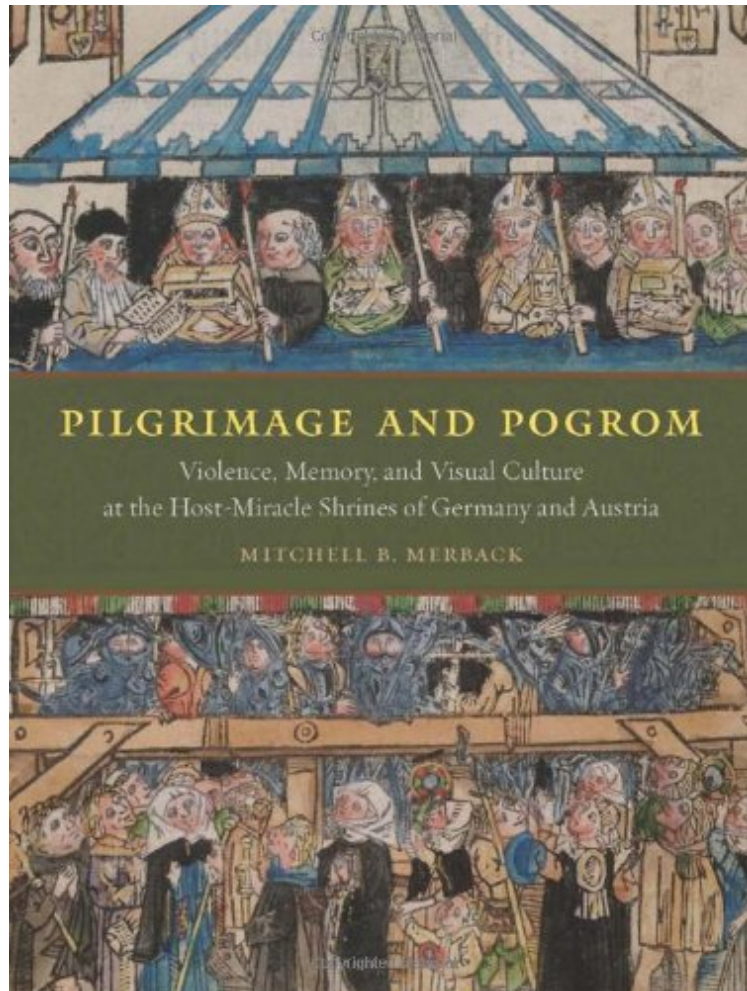


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## Pilgrimage and Pogrom: Violence, Memory, and Visual Culture at the Host-Miracle Shrines of Germany and Austria

*Mitchell B. Merback*

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**Mitchell B. Merback : Pilgrimage and Pogrom: Violence, Memory, and Visual Culture at the Host-Miracle Shrines of Germany and Austria** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Pilgrimage and Pogrom: Violence, Memory, and Visual Culture at the Host-Miracle Shrines of Germany and Austria:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Profound, but patience requiredBy GDPThis book entered my radar as a result of having read Prof. Merback's earlier book The Thief, the Cross and the Wheel: Pain and the Spectacle of Punishment in Medieval and Renaissance Europe and being very impressed (five stars). So without any particular interest in the specific subject matter of 'Pilgrimage and Pogrom' I read the book, and was left with mixed reactions,

but on balance quite positively impressed. In fact, the longer I contemplate the content (and the more distant the hard work of reading it becomes) the more impressed I am. First, the caveats: This book reads like a detailed and lengthy museum exhibit catalogue. In this case, the 'museum' is the southern region of the German empire of c.1300-1500 and the 'exhibit' focuses upon various 'Blood-Host' ('Heilig-Blut') shrines established therein. A Blood-Host is a Christian eucharistic host ('Corpus Christi') that is allegedly abused and bleeds as a result. There are a variety of examples of such legends (like the knight who attempts to take Communion with offensive arrogance), but the most frequent and prominent involve abuses that Jewish people allegedly committed. The pilgrimages of the title relate to the journeys taken to the shrines (that were claimed to have curative and other miraculous powers), and the pogroms relate to the violence visited upon the various minority Jewish communities in retribution for the alleged abuses. OK, in case you're still reading: The content is profound to the extent it presents history and historic artifacts as the product of complex and intertwined elements, driven by a variety of forces. In the case of the Blood-Host shrines, the forces are cross-cultural and religious enmities, the monetization of 'salvation' through the sale of indulgences (which draw upon the Church's stockpile of 'merit' and depended heavily upon the concept of purgatory), the use of state-sponsored religion as an exercise in power (the 'Stiftskirche'), the shift in post-Crusade pilgrimages from Jerusalem to more accessible locations (which necessitated an object to revere), etc., etc. Relics and shrines are artifacts of a broad state/religion economy. The European Reformation might have addressed some of these elements, but, sadly, not all. This is more than a book about Blood-Host shrines and oft difficult Christian-Jewish relationships, it is also a template for approaching history as the result of sometimes unfathomable complexity, where human desires and motives (both good and bad, if one can still think in those terms) intersect and emerge. It is also about how history survives in artifacts and how those artifacts animate our collective memories, sometimes subconsciously. It is, in short, a sophisticated approach to history that is often missing in much of what passes for history books.

In the late Middle Ages, Europe saw the rise of one of its most virulent myths: that Jews abused the eucharistic bread as a form of anti-Christian blasphemy, causing it to bleed miraculously. The allegation fostered tensions between Christians and Jews that would explode into violence across Germany and Austria. And pilgrimage shrines were built on the sites where supposed desecrations had led to miracles or to anti-Semitic persecutions. Exploring the legends, cult forms, imagery, and architecture of these host-miracle shrines, *Pilgrimage and Pogrom* reveals how they not only reflected but also actively shaped Christian anti-Judaism in the two centuries before the Reformation.

"A profound, captivating, eloquently written study of the material culture of the most disturbing manifestation of late medieval pilgrimage piety."