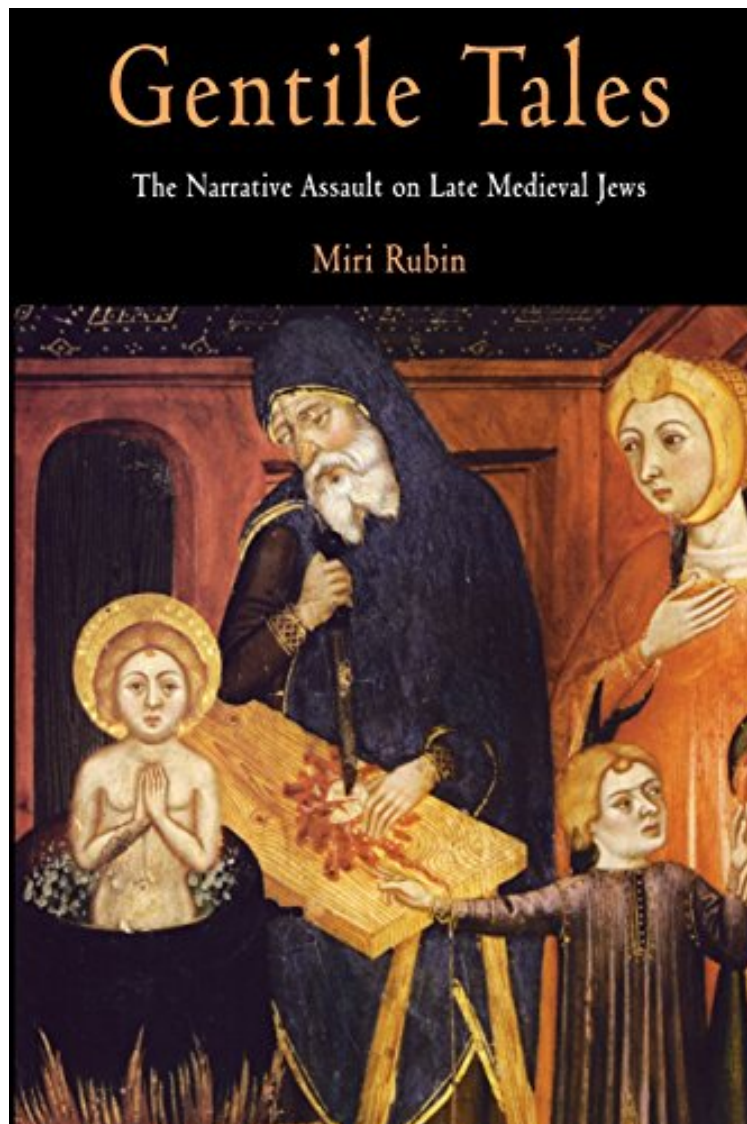


(Download free ebook) Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews (The Middle Ages Series)

Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews (The Middle Ages Series)

Miri Rubin

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Miri Rubin : Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews (The Middle Ages Series) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised **Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews (The Middle Ages Series)**:

17 of 20 people found the following review helpful. A Foundation of Jewish-Christian RelationsBy Rob HardyIn the

year 1290 in Paris, a poor Christian woman was tempted by a Jew to whom she owed money. The debt would be canceled if she would merely bring him from Easter communion the host, the sanctified bread. She may have simply kept the host in her mouth and removed it secretly. The Jew, once he had the host, applied to it various tests to see of what it was made. He knew that Christians of the time believed that it had quite literally transubstantiated into the body of Christ, but he wished to see "whether the insane things which Christians prattle about are true." He stabbed at it with his knife, but it remained uncut. Even so, it began to bleed. He tortured it in various ways, nailing it to a board, throwing it into a fire, and boiling it. The host remained whole and bleeding, until the boiling, when it turned into a crucifix above the pot. The Jew may have been amazed, but he was stubbornly unconvinced, although seeing such a spectacle immediately converted his wife and children. This is a legend told repeatedly with many variations in *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (Yale University Press) by Miri Rubin. Such stories were widespread throughout medieval Europe as a part of accepted folklore, and were held as true by even the educated in the priesthood. Not only were the stories believed, but they formed the incitement to action against Jews, resulting in torture, death, forfeiture of lands and goods, and banishment. The picture of Jews given in the various versions of the tales were of unredeemable brutality and greed, at least on the part of the male Jews; the females were less vicious and more tractable. Jews insisted on kidnapping little Christian children, for instance, to drink their blood in grotesque ceremonies in the synagogues. The stories reinforced themselves and made clear to medieval Christians what sort of people they were dealing with. It is perplexing to try to make sense of such things eight centuries later. Sometimes investigations of bleeding hosts did discover simple fraud; a priest could sprinkle a host with blood and hide it in the house of Jews he wished to betray. Usually, of course, no such fraud would be found, the wrath of Christians in a village would turn into a riot, and pious mobs would extract what they saw as justice. A mob in 1306 in St. Polten, near Vienna, was so violent and indignant, that it trampled some of its own members. Rubin shows how the story from Paris traveled around Europe like a spark lighting a series of fires, making trouble for Jews wherever it went. *Gentile Tales* shows the horror stories from contemporary plays and poems, but does special service in reproducing illustrations of the nasty Jews torturing the host from illustrated manuscripts, altar pictures, oil paintings, and stained glass windows, as a show of how nearly universal such tales were. The illustrations would be lovely, if they weren't so grotesque, but even so, Yale University Press has put out a good looking volume on glossy paper with many color plates. It is a good book for anyone with an interest in medieval times, but ought to be required reading for those who wish to see one of the lamentable foundations for the relations between Christians and Jews.

1 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Host desecration narrative in medieval europe
By Kindle Customer
Great introduction to the narrative, myth, vernacular literature and their application of the host desecration accusation against rural and urban Jews in Europe in the late medieval era. The host desecration revolved around a series of tropes that created a centralized myth with localized variations and power structures. Central to the myth was the belief in the Eucharist as the physical embodiment of Jesus as a child and in the care of his Virgin mother. The Jewish community was accused of secret acts of desecration against the host while in a parallel accusation they were seen as spiritually redeemable if they physically represented the feminine gender and their associated willingness to convert. Jewish men were deemed unworthy of mercy in the host desecration narrative. They were portrayed as instigators, devious merchants and in search of a host on which to perform experiments and eventually discard after finding it produces Christ child entities, visible signs of natural miracles and often brings attention to a virginal Christian or Jewish boy or woman. The myth is built on certain foundations that find sanctuary in their vernacular retelling over the course of the late medieval period. Localized versions ignite lower class passions in a bottom up drive towards persecution. In addition, tales of desecration involve real people seeking to describe religious experiences in state sponsored courts. Urban and rural levels of persecution varied depending on the centralized control of an elite seeking to maintain profitable ties with Jewish merchants. In the author's view the drive to persecute came from the rural lower classes indoctrinated in a mystical host narrative and a cultural system of persecution of the other.

Beginning in Paris in the year 1290, Jews were accused of abusing Christ by desecrating the eucharist the manifestation of Christ's body in the communion service. Over the next two centuries this tale of desecration spread throughout Europe and led to violent anti-Jewish activity in areas from Catalonia to Bohemia, particularly in some German-speaking regions, where at times it produced regionwide massacres and "cleansings." Drawing on sources ranging from religious tales and poems to Jews' confessions made under torture, Miri Rubin explores the frightening power of one of the most persistent anti-Jewish stories of the Middle Ages and the violence that it bred. She looks not just at the occasions on which massacres occurred but also at those times when the story failed to set off violence. She investigates as well the ways these tales were commemorated in rituals, altarpieces, and legends and were enshrined in local traditions. In exploring the character, nature, development, and eventual decay of this fantasy of host desecration, Rubin presents a vivid picture of the mental world of late medieval Europe and of the culture of anti-Judaism.

"What triggers landmark events in history, Rubin explains, is often fictions that people believe, rather than incidents that actually took place. . . . With the flair of the ethnographer, Rubin taps into those perennial transpositions and

transferences whereby groups of people are bonded together by invoking an alien other who arouses fear and dismay. . . A powerful and moving book."Lisa Jardine, *New Statesman*"Rubin raises . . . deep and disturbing questions about the nature of persecution and mass hysteria, and not least about the ways in which Christian beliefs have caused the deaths of Jews. . . . This is a courageous book, with implications far beyond medieval history."Michael Clanchy, *Times Literary Supplement*From the PublisherMiri Rubin is Professor of History at Queen Mary, University of London. She is the author of *Charity and Community in Medieval Cambridge* and *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture*.About the AuthorMiri Rubin is Professor of History at Queen Mary, University of London. She is the author of *Charity and Community in Medieval Cambridge* and *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture*.