



The Pilgrim of Hate

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The fourth anniversary of the transfer of Saint Winifred's bones to the Abbey at Shrewsbury is a time of celebration for the 12th-century pilgrims gathering from far and wide. In distant Winchester, however, a knight has been murdered. Could it be because he was a supporter of the Empress Maud, one of numerous pretenders to the throne? It's up to herbalist, sleuth, and Benedictine monk Brother Cadfael to track down the killer in the pious throng.

The Pilgrim of Hate Details

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Yibbie says

It wasn't quite what I was expecting. There was more mysticism than mystery too this one. What little bit of mystery there was, wasn't hard to figure out. Actually, there were too many convenient coincidences to make a good mystery.

St. Winifred is the most prominent character in this book. It was really very sad to see the veneration and worship wasted on a long dead human, instead of being directed toward God. I know it's a fiction book, but people did live and die trusting their eternity to such empty hope. It was heartbreaking. It's a strange mix of legend, facts, and fiction. In this story she sets up a celebration to honor the 'saint' the Abbot has imported for the glory of his house. Then to vindicate Cadfael for a deception perpetrated in another book, she has this long dead and completely absent 'saint' pull off several 'miracles'. There isn't even a brief mention of God, His righteousness, forgiveness, grace, and mercy. All of this is based on her virtue. Like I said, it was very sad.

Now these 'miracles' have nothing to do with the mystery. It was almost like two story lines that just happen to be playing out at the same time. Oh, and there's a love story thrown in for good measure. It's just as weak as the mystery. I've like some of her other works better. They had less mysticism and more mystery to them. Not that it was completely absent; after all, the main character is a rather pragmatic monk. It does fill in few more facts about Cadfael's past life, so it helped in the flow of the series. I probably won't reread this one.

Cornerofmadness says

I found this Brother Cadfael in an old box and couldn't remember rereading it. Growing up in the 80s, this was one of my favorite series. Cadfael holds a special place in my heart. It's amazing though how styles have changed over the decades. This was less than 160 pages and the word perspicacity appears in the blurb (I doubt we'd see much of that these days). But to be honest I'm hoping this was merely a less than stellar volume because I wouldn't mind rereading the series (and I'm always afraid to reread the faves of my youth because far too often it's like 'wow, what was I thinking').

If I read this (and I think maybe I had) almost none of it stuck with me. As a historical story, this is good with the exception of a rather slow beginning. As a mystery, it's poor. In fact, Cadfael is a secondary character in many ways in this one and there really isn't a crime. The novel opens with the report of one of Empress Maude's men being killed after trying to get an important bishop to swing his support from King Stephen to Maude. Then this doesn't get mentioned again until Olivier (a young knight) shows up to talk to Hugh (the sheriff) about finding a young man, Luc, who has run off and was the clerk and potential heir to the murdered man and then dropped again until the last couple of chapters. There's no detecting, there's no nothing as far as a mystery is concerned.

Much of the story is about St. Winifred's day, a Welsh saint associated with healing. Most of Cadfael's scenes are his thoughts about where her bones truly are (and it's not at his monastery though they think they are which happened in an earlier novel) and treating the wounded pilgrims to the site: especially two sets of pilgrims. There is Alice Weaver who has brought her nephew, Rhun, who has a shriveled, twisted painful leg and his sister, Melangell, with the hopes that Rhun will be cured. On the way Melangell has fallen in love with Matthew, a young educated man who is the companion to Ciaran, who claims to be dying and wants to get home to Wales, thinking Winifred won't cure him. He has taken a strange vow to walk barefoot and wear a huge galling cross the whole way, something even the pious Cadfael thinks is strange and stupid.

The pilgrims command a good deal of the scenes. There is a reliance on the unreliable narrator (which I don't really like). As I said, as a mystery it fails but as a historical story, complete with the mystical, it is good. I am glad though that this wasn't my first Cadfael read because I would have been much more disappointed.

Vicky "phenkos" says

I didn't enjoy this book as much as some others from the Brother Cadfael series. I thought there were several confusing subplots (e.g. the gamesters) that did come together eventually but not before some serious head-scratching about their purpose in the story. I also found St. Winifred's 'two deaths' story confusing as told by Ellis Peters and had to look the saint up in Wikipedia to understand what was going on. If there is such a thing as 'too much of a happy ending' then this book has it. Not only is everything resolved in the end but a sickly and sweet joy overpowers everyone and everything. Seemed rather unreal!

Bill says

The Pilgrim Of Hate is the 10th book in the Cadfael historical / mystery series by Ellis Peters. If you've not ever tried one, it was also a very successful, popular TV series starring Derek Jacoby. (Excellent books and TV series)

Cadfael is a Benedictine monk, ex soldier in the Crusades who came back to find a new life in the Abbey in Shrewsbury during the wars of succession between Empress Maud and King Stephen. Cadfael is responsible for growing and making medicines for the monks and for people visiting the Abbey.

In this story, the Abbey is preparing for the anniversary of the translation of the bones of Saint Winifred (the recovery of her bones from Wales is part of a previous story) from her place of rest to the Abbey. Pilgrims from all over England are coming for the celebration in the hope of a miracle.

Coincident with this celebration, is the murder of a knight in Winchester, during meetings there to try and stop the civil war.

As always, the story is interesting, giving an excellent picture of life during the 12th Century. Cadfael is a very sympathetic, interesting character and the mystery of the murder is developed very nicely in the context of the story of the celebration. While I had an idea of who was who and how the mystery might resolve itself, there were still some surprises (especially the last sentence) and it's just a gentle, fun read. I always enjoy entering this series and wandering around in the 12th Century. (3.5 stars)

Hope says

Another wonderful Brother Cadfael story! This one is less about the mystery itself, and more about the people it distantly touches on. By the end of the book, I was glad to learn the solution to the mystery, but was much more interested in what happened to the people. This would be a great mystery novel for folks who aren't normally fans of mysteries.

Ron says

If you've had the misfortune of seeing Mystery's video, you must cleanse your mind of it. This is an entirely different--better--story. (I noticed an unfortunate trend toward conflict and negativity as that series progressed which ran contrary to the current of Peter's series.)

Cadfael series: excellent historical fiction. Ellis Peters draws the reader into the twelfth century with modern story telling but holds us there with a richness of detail which evokes a time and place which might as well be fictional. Though the foreground of each chronicle is a murder mystery, behind it a nation and a culture are woven in a wondrous tapestry.

Lance says

"It was not one man's death, it was a bitter symbol of the abandonment of law and the rejection of hop and reconciliation."

In the tenth book of the *Brother Cadfael* series, Ellis Peters brings together many of the themes which have been slowly escalating through the earlier novels for a mid-point climax. The English civil war has taken a decisive turn, placing the cunning vindictive Empress Maud within a few months of coronation at King Stephen's expense. *"A better general, that she is."* And the king's own half-brother, an oily politician revealed as a conniving man of the world rather than of God is behind it all. *"When Bishop Henry of Blois shifts, all men shift with him, like starvelings huddled in one bed."* Although everything looks decided at the outset in this book, the volatile personalities of those involved hint towards even more serious reverses to come. *"Put the crown in her hands and she may, not so much drop it, as hurl it at someone against whom she has a score to settle."*

During Bishop Henry's own conference to smooth over his previous affiliation with his half-brother Stephen, a knight is murdered in the act of protecting a petitioner for King Stephen. Thus tragic event seems far off in time and place from Shrewsbury Abbey, but with the anniversary of Saint Winnifred's translation to the abbey fast approaching, Cadfael may find the mystery coming to him after all. *"It grows customary to sigh and forget. At which, as I know, you are a very poor hand."*

A strange pair of pilgrims, one who has mutilated his feet in a vow to travel barefoot to Wales, and a dark silent young man of the same age come to haunt the abbey during the celebrations. *"The barefoot traveller, and his keeper and worshipper."* Cadfael is suspicious of the offering of self-inflicted pain where Ciaran could have been using his good health to help others. *"A strange piety it seems to me to take upon oneself ostentatious pain."* But even he needs all not only his great detective skills but also his spiritual insights to separate between the two which is the murderer and which is the avenger.

The Pilgrim of Hate also sees a beautiful exploration of a number of Peters' minor themes. There is the teenage boy Rhun who has come from far south on the hopes of his family that his wasted lame leg will be cured when all he really wants is for them to be happy and free. Rhun's disability is treated sensitively and he is a complete complex human being both despite and because of it, a really heart-warming depiction.

"Cadfael saw that the boy was beautiful, the planes of his face as suave and graceful as any girl's, the curving of his fair hair round ears and cheeks angelically pure and chaste." Peters also explores the tragedy of forbidden love, *"They were pale as lillies, bright as stars, and solemn as the grave."*, and Cadfael's prayers to meet once more with his elusive half-Syrian son are met with customary wit and whimsy, *"By the grace of God and a goat-herd."*

Final words to Brother Adam of Reading:

"I suppose rogues will make their way everywhere, even among the saints."

Stephen says

This novel is the tenth installment in the Cadfael series and like many of the others was adapted for television.

While the story here revolves around a Holy Day in Shrewsbury in honor of their Saint Winifred, the book pulls together threads from several of it's precursors. Hugh Berringer is finally let in on the secret of St Winifred as we learned it in A Morbid Taste for Bones and he meets, Olivier de Bretaine, the mysterious dark woodsman who wore a sword in The Virgin in the Ice

While I found these the hilights of the book, they were left out of the TV adaptation which concentrated more on a theme of vengeance and vain self imposed suffering.

While the TV episode was watchable it was a bit muddled in spots and I looked forward to the book clearing up those aspects. However it didn't because the aspects in question had been inserted (and apparently not completely thought out) for television consumption.

I also object to the meaner, more worldly, more dishonest aspect that the TV characters were given, particularly the role of Ruhl a young lame boy who comes to the Holy Day to be cured of his lameness.

Whether or not you saw and enjoyed the television series, I recommend the book. It's a pleasure to spend a bit of time in Merry Old England even at the time of civil war between King Stephen and the Empress Maude. Cadfael and Berringer make amiable companions and Abbot Adolfous is as always a pleasure. Even Brother Jerome and Prior Robert are somewhat muted in this one.

Kevin Goodrich says

One of her best. Very touching. I really resent the way the BBC/PBS version twisted it.

Jane Jago says

This is Ellis Peters. It's Cadfael.

What else is there to say?

If you haven't discovered this series give it a go...

Deborah Ideiosepius says

Brother Cadfael, happily pursuing his later years in the Abbey at Shrewsbury. In the wider world of England The Empress Maud is pressuring the city of London to let her in and crown her but the great excitement in Shrewsbury the the festival and pilgrims surrounding the anniversary of the translation of Saint Winifred, she who's bones came to rest there during a previous adventure of Brother Cadfael.

This is part of an ongoing series of Brother Cadfael and though they are marketed as 'mediaeval whodunnits' with some justice, I think that they are much more than that. For a start the writing is beautiful, a real delight to read. Ellis has the happy ability to describe a scene so that one can see, hear and smell it coming to life around you. They 'whodunnit' element is always complex and deeply human with all the compassion one would wish to believe common among men who have dedicated their life to their religion.

This story was fascinating, with references to previous books in the series, but not leaning on previous reading too much; it is entirely possible to enjoy these books out of sequence, as I have been doing.

Lady Clementina ffynch-ffarowmore says

This is I think the tenth of the mystery series featuring the Benedictine monk Brother Cadfael. In this one, Shrewsbury Abbey is preparing to celebrate the anniversary of the transcription of St Winifred's bones to the abbey. In the background, the political scenario is changing as King Stephen has been imprisoned and Empress Maud is attempting to get herself crowned, though not going about it quite the right way. Many pilgrims are arriving at the abbey for the ceremony. Before they arrive, news comes in of a murder that took place far away, to do with the differences between the two factions, but this seems to have no connection with events at the Abbey. Among the pilgrims are various people who arouse Brother Cadfael's interest, even suspicion, and before long he realises there is more to many of them than first meets the eye.

This was another very enjoyable instalment in the series for me. The story refers back to events in two previous Cadfael books, the first one, and the Virgin in the Ice, and it does have a bit of a spoiler for the first book, so may be one should pick this one up only after reading the first. It was interesting for me however to 'meet' some of the characters we've encountered in previous books, learn what became of some of them. The various pilgrims who come to the Abbey present more than one puzzle and it was fun watching Brother Cadfael work them out, and also use some of his skills from his days as a crusader. The stories of the characters we meet are far from straightforward (though may be not like say, The Sanctuary Sparrow where the in relationships and power equations between the characters were really complex) and draw one in, and one is interested to see how things pan out for them.

Mary says

I just love Brother Cadfael! Takes place in 1140 near Wales. I recommend that you briefly go to Wikipedia to get a rough idea of the politics of King Stephen's reign.

May says

Not my favorite of the Brother Cadfael series, so more of a 3.5?? rounded up. I have grown to enjoy the people of the Abbey & the town of Shrewsbury. The backdrop of the Cousins War contributes to the context of time & place. I do look forward to the next one!

Ikonopeiston says

This is one of the more poetic and mystical of the Cadfael stories. It twists and turns and reveals the answers with patience and skill. However, not all answers are possible. A lovely book.
