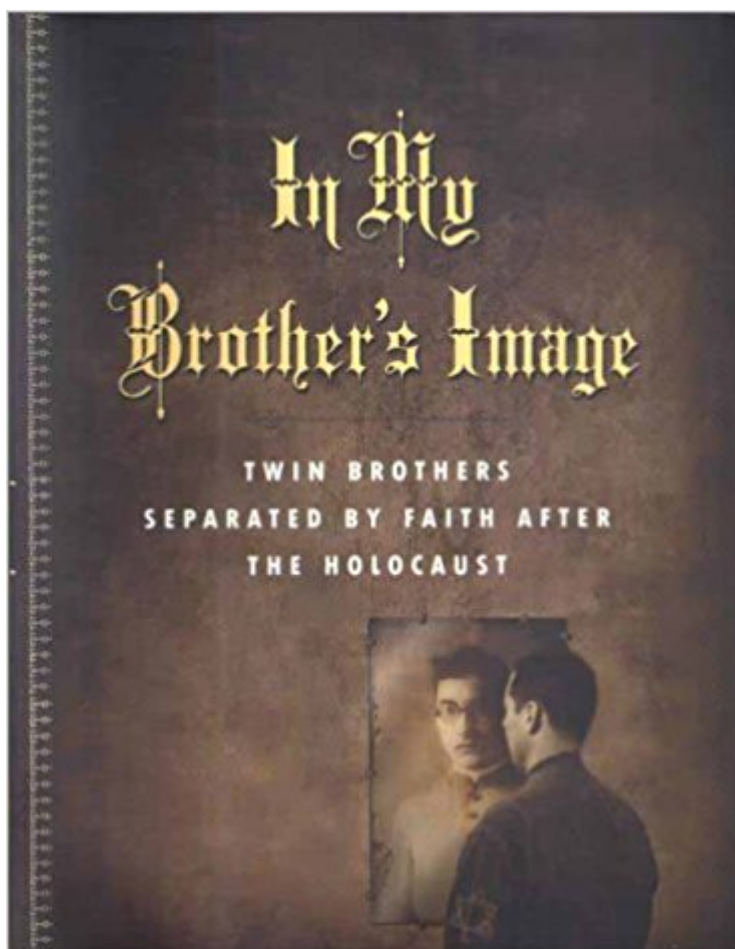


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# In My Brother's Image



## Synopsis

Eugene Pogany's father and uncle, identical twins, were born in Hungary of Jewish parents but raised by them as devout Catholic converts until World War II unraveled their family. Miklos, the author's father, was sent to Bergen-Belsen, a hell that led him to denounce Christian passivity in the face of the Holocaust and return to the Judaism of his birth. Gyorgy, a Catholic priest, was sheltered from the war in an Italian monastery by the renowned and saintly friar Padre Pio. Their mother, also interned as a Jew, walked into the Auschwitz gas chamber holding a crucifix to her breast. In *My Brother's Image* eloquently portrays how the Holocaust destroyed these brothers' close childhood bond. Each believing the other a traitor to their family's faith, they remained estranged even after emigrating to America, where they lived and worked only miles from each other. Filled with extraordinary scenes such as Miklos's Passover celebration with fellow prisoners in the camp, this tragic memoir encapsulates the drama of a family torn apart by the historical rupture between Jews and Catholics--even as it trains a wider, impartial lens on its causes and on the history of Hungary's Jews.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 304 pages

Publisher: Viking Adult (October 2, 2000)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 067088538X

ISBN-13: 978-0670885381

Product Dimensions: 6.3 x 1.1 x 9.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars 7 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,035,438 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #73 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Holocaust](#) #831 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Ethnic & National > Jewish](#) #5832 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Europe](#)

## Customer Reviews

Here is an eloquent memoir of a family ripped apart by the Holocaust. Born into a Jewish family, Pogany's grandfather, Bela, converted to Roman Catholicism before WWI so he could work in the Hungarian civil service. A few years later, his wife, Gabriella, and their six-year-old twin sons, Miklos (the author's father) and Gyuri, were also baptized as Catholics. Gabriella took her new religion more seriously than her husband and was delighted when Gyuri became a priest. At the outbreak of

WWII, he was in Italy living with Padre Poi, a noted Catholic mystic, and he remained there for the duration of the war. Initially, their status as converts protected Gabriella and Miklós (Béla died in 1943) from the Nazis, but not for long. Miklós was interned in Bergen-Belsen and Gabriella died at Auschwitz. After the war, Miklós settled with his wife in the U.S., where, revolted by the passivity of Christians during the Holocaust, he returned to Judaism. A few years later, his brother also arrived in the U.S. and became a parish priest in New Jersey. But as Pogony, a clinical psychologist, movingly explains, the war created an unbridgeable emotional gulf between the brothers: Miklós couldn't forgive Gyuri, who could not, or would not, acknowledge the savageness of the persecution of the Jews, not only by the Nazis, but by Hungarian Christians as well. Gyuri, in turn, considered Miklós's return to Judaism to be a betrayal. Pogony deftly conveys the power of the brothers' feelings as he relates this tragic story. Author tour. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Primarily an account of the author's Hungarian grandparents between 1910 and 1945, this Holocaust survivors' story brings the profound emotional effects of the trauma to life. Although from secular Jewish families, they converted to Roman Catholicism and raised their three children in that faith. Nevertheless, they were all regarded by their neighbors as Jews during the 1930s and 1940s and were treated accordingly. The couple's twin sons had very different experiences of the Holocaust. One, who had been ordained a priest, was sheltered in a southern Italian friary during the war and always refused to believe that the leaders of his Church could have failed to combat the horror. The other (the author's father) had remained in Hungary and saw most of his family transported to concentration camps; he later turned to secular Judaism. Both brothers immigrated to America, but their different experiences of the Holocaust drove a permanent wedge between them. This is also the story of the author's attempts to learn about his family, since much was not discussed when he was a child. Based primarily on interviews and conversations, this moving tale of faith and acceptance belongs in most general collections. Marcia L. Sprules, Council on Foreign Relations Lib., New York Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This book is riveting in a way that a novel never could be. We follow a real family's struggle to survive the appalling hostilities and unspeakable tragedies to which Hungary's Jewish citizens were subjected in the years prior to and during World War II. Pogony's unique work is a sensitive and insightful portrayal of ordinary people caught up in extraordinary times. It is also a moving account of a child's desire to understand the people and events that shaped the lives of his grandparents, his parents, his uncle, his brother and sister and himself. Conversion to Catholicism was chosen by

some Jewish people as a means to circumvent their surrounding atrocities. (This ultimately proved otherwise and Jews who converted were treated as brutally as those who did not.) Pogany's father and uncle (identical twins) followed their parents' route to the Catholic church, with one brother becoming a priest and the other eventually rediscovering his Jewish roots. The psychological interplay of these identical twins is marvelously revealed. The striking similarities, amazing differences and social connection of these twins will captivate and challenge everyone. Their life histories cannot help but deepen our fascination with how we come to be who we are.

I recommend it to people who are interested in history, religion and humanity. It is incredible to read even twins could end up adopting completely different lives.

What an amazing story! It was a well-written fascinating read! Pogany is able to communicate so well the feelings of all the characters that every page was real; the story very touching and heartbreaking in places. I highly recommend it!

great

While probably every survivor of the Holocaust has a unique and compelling story to tell about the experience of the Holocaust, the author of *In My Brother's Image*, who is the son of a survivor, has written a fascinating account about the impact of the Holocaust on the relationship between his father, and uncle, a Jew who became a priest. From the outset of the book, I was connected with the characters on an emotional level, notwithstanding the fact that the book is not a work of fiction. The historical backdrop of Jewish life in Hungary from the early 20th century through the Holocaust was enlightening in many respects. While there is no shortage of books about the Jewish community in Germany and Jews in Poland prior to World War II, this book captures the life of the Hungarian Jewish community in particular. Until I read this book, I had no idea about the significant number of Hungarian Jews who converted to Catholicism. The Jews of Berlin were not unlike the Jews of Budapest, highly assimilated, non-observant, etc. The book is so powerful because it deals with so many emotional issues through the very real lives of the author's family: the silence of the Catholic church in Hungary during the Holocaust, the relationship between the Jews who converted to Catholicism and their fellow Jews, the "lesson" from the Holocaust that it is impossible for a Jew to take on another religion or identity, no matter what efforts a Jew may take to do so, how can one believe in God after experiencing the Holocaust, etc. There is a personal and human element to this

book that sets it apart. It is a literary "docudrama," if you will, that I could not put down reading; I found it to be compelling on so many different levels.

I hate to disagree with 3 5-star evaluations, but I thought the story was insightful and interesting but I did not find the reading process as easy as another critique stated. If the book was decreased by about 50 pages, I believe it would be even more compelling than it is. I have read a number of holocaust books and this family did not have it as bad as others, but I assure you all of them were near death except the Catholic Father. I particularly liked the beginning and end when the author was talking in the first person. A fine read.

A very thoughtful and sensitive family story. Very insightful. It helped me to understand my own parents better. It is very well written, easy to read and I couldn't put it down.

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