

# Jews, monks and martyred children: the development of ritual murder narratives in twelfth and thirteenth-century England.

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## Jews, monks and martyred children : the development of ritual murder narratives in twelfth and thirteenth-century England.



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### Thesis Discipline

History

### Degree Grantor

University of Canterbury

**Degree Level**

Masters

**Degree Name**

Master of Arts

This thesis will explore the emergence and development of the narrative that Jews ritually killed Christian children in twelfth and thirteenth century England. The role that these accusations played in 'demonising' Jews did not diminish during the following centuries but instead grew in popularity. The accusations that gave rise to these narratives have their origin in the specific social, cultural, and religious environment of twelfth century England. Historians have long treated the accusations of ritual murder as separate events and analysed them as such. However, the power of these accusations lies in their ability to be constructed as narratives and to spread through adaption into different communities and societies. This adaption is due to the ability that these narratives have to incorporate other narratives that are popular in different communities. Hagiographical elements, Marian tales, and biblical stories that manipulation of the innocence of children were incorporated into the narratives of ritual murder which served to elicit a specific emotive response and engagement with their audience. This development in the nature of the ritual murder narratives is a reflection of both English society and the changing nature of the Anglo-Jewish relationship during the central Middle Ages. This thesis will add to the evolving discussions surrounding the emergence of ritual murder and the subsequent spread of the blood libel accusation. By tracing the accusations back to their origin in England, and analysing how it evolved during the space of two centuries, an increasingly comprehensive understanding of the narratives can be constructed. By utilising hagiographical material, chronicle accounts, and literature created in post-expulsion England, this thesis aims to present a cohesive analysis of different narrative strands that were woven together to construct and develop the accusations of ritual murder.

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