

History 480: Research essay

From Anti-Judaism to Anti-Semitism? The Development of the Myth of Jewish Ritual Murder in England.

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ABSTRACT

Accusations of Jewish ritual murder have persisted into the modern era, but the medieval origins of the accusation reflect the society from which it emerged. Between 1066 and 1290 the perception and position of the Jewish population in England changed. This period also witnessed the origins of the ritual murder accusations. In 1144 the accusation was dismissed by a majority of the population; by 1255 it was accepted by the Christian community and the Jews were the first place they turned when the body of the child was found. By locating the changing position of the Jewish community, and then comparing the development of the ritual murder accusations between the case of William of Norwich and Hugh of Lincoln, it allows the Jewish community to be viewed from a different vantage point. This dissertation will also critique Gavin Langmuir's conception of medieval anti-Semitism, by exploring the alleged 'irrational' nature of the ritual murder accusation. The argument will be made, that they are also based in rational financial and societal concerns, and thus not the 'irrational' manifestations that Langmuir outlined. By the murder of Hugh in 1255, these accusations had passed into folk legend and taken on a more malevolent form but still had a rational financial underpinning. The accusation became part of the general perception of the Jews, and lasted long after the Jews were expelled. The development of the rituals, is key to understanding the way that the position of the Jews was changing in English society.

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INTRODUCTION

During Ariel Sharon's election campaign in 2003, the *Independent* newspaper published a cartoon by Dave Brown which depicted the Israeli leader consuming the flesh of a Palestinian child.¹ Despite condemnation from Jewish organisations in Europe, the cartoon was awarded the Political Cartoon of the Year award by the British Political Cartoon Society.² The ritual murder of Christian children, supposedly committed by Jewish communities, which is alluded to in this cartoon, has persisted in the western European imagination. However, the origin of the rhetoric can be traced to the city of Norwich in 1144, and the death of a twelve-year-old tanner's apprentice named William. Through understanding the society from which it evolved, and by tracing the development of the myth from the murder of William of Norwich in 1144, to the murder of the eight-year-old Hugh of Lincoln in 1255, it is possible to understand why the accusation emerged.

This dissertation will first locate the myth of ritual murder within the context of medieval English society, and then explore how the attitude towards the Jewish population changed between their admission to England in 1066 and their expulsion in 1290. This approach will aim to balance the emotive and controversial nature of the myth.

The change in the Jewish position was inextricably linked to the changing attitudes of English kings who were influenced by political, economic and religious motivations. The Jews had been encouraged to immigrate to England from the North of France, after the Norman invasion by William the Conqueror, they were eventually expelled from England on the orders of King Edward I in 1290. Jews were admitted in order to stimulate the economy. Their financial expertise, which was so valued at the time of their admission, increasingly became a cause for growing hostility on the part of the Christian community.

As the intolerance for the Jewish population increased, there were also more irrational and malevolent accusations against the Jewish population. Gavin Langmuir has argued that the

¹ Dave Brown, "Political Cartoon," *Independent*, 27 January, 2003.

²"'Independent' cartoonist wins award," *Independent*, 27 November, 2003.

change from anti-Judaism to anti-Semitism came when the dislike of the Jews became irrational.³ Instead of disliking a privileged 'other' group in society, the Christian population accused Jews of malevolent actions that were inherently irrational.⁴ The ritual murder accusations are according to Langmuir an example of these irrational manifestation. By comparing the process and construction of the ritual murders, and how they developed, it is possible to gain insight into the way the Christian perception of the Jewish population was changing.

Ritual murder was, according to Langmuir, defined where the murder is the central or the most important element of the Ritual. Current scholarship indicates that this definition is too 'artificial,' the body of a drowned child in France in 1171, was enough to inspire the accusation.⁵ In the context of medieval England and the cases of William and Hugh, took the ritual form of a symbolic crucifixion designed to mock the Passion of Christ. The development of this particular aspect of the myth is evident in the change that occurred between the two case studies. The myth of ritual murder has persisted in the western imagination, but in order to understand why it survived the early development and the society from which it originated need to be explored.

Methodology:

The changing position of the Jewish population will first be discussed, in a general survey of how and why their role changed in England, with a focus on the theological basis for their position in society. In order to understand this change in England two case studies will then be focused on. The murder of William of Norwich in 1144, was the first ritual murder accusation in England, and the first recorded case since antiquity. The second case study, Hugh of Lincoln, as well as being the most documented case in England, is also the most infamous, surviving in folk legends and ballads long after the Jews were expelled. The developments in the ritual, and the response to the accusations, illustrates the broader changes in the perception of the Jewish population that was occurring in England and Europe. This approach aims to compare the two cases, to analyse

³Gavin Langmuir, *History, Religion, and Anti-Semitism* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 275.

⁴ Ibid. 275.

⁵ Anna Sapir Abulafia, *Christian-Jewish Relations, 1000-1300: Jews in the Service of Medieval Christendom* (Harlow: Pearson, 2011), 179.

how the reaction to the murder of the boys developed between 1144 and 1255, and how this reflected the changing position and perception of the Jewish population in English society.

This approach will be used as a way of managing the complex nature of the surviving sources on the Jewish population. The Jewish community in medieval England is extremely well documented in terms of their legal and economic dealings. However, they are culturally and socially more silent. This is, in part, due to the Jewish expulsion and dispersal throughout Europe after 1290, which dismantled communities. Cecil Roth, one of the founding fathers of Anglo-Jewish history, stated that “never in the field of medieval history is it possible to know as much about so few as it is about the Jews of Angevin and Plantagenet England.”⁶ The primary sources relevant to this time are wide ranging and diverse, but the majority are legal and financial records with limited social and cultural documentation. The majority of the records, most importantly the records of the Exchequer of the Jews, were created and kept by Christian scribes in government archives. A significant portion carry a heavy bias, which disrupts attempts to accurately understand the Jewish population during this period. The approach adopted here will allow an analysis of a core section of source material which will lead to an understanding of the broader changes in society.

The vast number of documents that have survived from this period create a problem for anyone attempting to analyse concisely the situation in England up to the expulsion. Due to this, the issue as to what to include and what sources to exclude must be dealt with by each historian in their own particular area of research. By focusing on the flashpoints of ritual murder, and the changing position and perception of the Jews, the source base will be reduced to a manageable and analysable level. Many case studies could be used to illustrate changing perceptions of the Jewish population, but the focus on ritual murder provides two cases that are comparable. The case studies, highlight a development in the ritual itself between 1144 and 1255, which is a reflection of the broader changes that occurred in England during the Middle Ages.

⁶ Cecil Roth, Quoted in Robin R. Mundill, *The King's Jews: Money, Massacre and Exodus in Medieval England* (London: Continuum, 2010), xi.

Historiography:

It is impossible to look at Jewish lives in England during the Middle Ages, without looking at the Jews' position in the wider European community. Robert Chazan has taken a broad approach to understanding the Jewish communities in Europe.⁷ England was not unique in its treatment of the Jews or the role that Jews played in society. However, it is a very interesting case study. But in order to understand it fully, historians need to have a firm grasp of the wider historiography of European Jewry.

In the late nineteenth century, the Jewish Historical Society of England began to preserve public records on the English Jewry, and to encourage scholarship in the area. In 1960 H. G. Richardson published a book on *The English Jewry under Angevin Kings*, which is the foundation work of the modern discussion of medieval Jewish history.⁸ However, Gavin Langmuir has criticised Richardson's reliance on archival evidence and argued that he left out emotions, attitudes and prejudice which were vital to the understanding of the Jewish experience in medieval Britain.⁹ Gavin Langmuir's scholarship was a key cultural turning point in the study of Anglo-Jewish history. He identified the roots of anti-Semitism by focusing on the relationship between Judaism and Christianity.¹⁰ Since then two distinct threads in the historiography of English Jewry have emerged: the political and economic historians who dominate the scholarship on this community in England such as Robin Mundill,¹¹ and social and cultural historians such as Miri Rubin who have focused in on the development of the Jewish community in England.¹² Anna Sapir Abulafia and Israel Yuval have broadened the approach by focusing on of the Ashkenazi population in

⁷ Robert Chazan, *Church, State, and Jew in the Middle Ages* (New York: Behrman House, 1980); Robert Chazan, *Medieval Jewry in Northern France: A Political and Social History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973); Robert Chazan, *Medieval Stereotypes and Modern Anti-Semitism* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997).

⁸ H. G. Richardson, *The English Jewry under Angevin Kings* (London: Tanner & Butler Ltd., 1960).

⁹ Robert Stacey, "Recent work on Medieval English Jewish History," *Jewish History* vol. 2, no. 2 (1987): 63.

¹⁰ Langmuir, *History, Religion, and Anti-Semitism*; Gavin Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Anti-Semitism* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990).

¹¹ Robin Mundill, "Clandestine Crypto-Camouflaged Usurer or Legal Merchant? Edwardian Jewry, 1275–90," *Jewish Culture and History* vol. 3, no. 2 (2000): 73–97; Mundill, *The King's Jews*.

¹² Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

Europe, and their relationship with the Christian population.¹³ These scholars have developed a focus on the relationship between Christians and Jews and religious persecution during the period.

Gavin Langmuir, in his work on anti-Semitism has explored the cases of both William of Norwich and Hugh of Lincoln, his work has been the modern starting point for the debate on ritual murder in England.¹⁴ Gavin Langmuir, argued that there was no continuity from antiquity and that ritual murder was invented in the Middle Ages, this is still one of the major discussions in the historiography.¹⁵ The strongest critique of his argument has come from John McCulloch who has posited that Thomas of Monmouth did not create the accusation, and that there had been reference to the murder of an English boy called William in a book of Bavarian martyrology before Thomas created his hagiography.¹⁶ Israel Yuval has argued a different origin, for Yuval the accusation originated alongside heroic martyrdom which occurred in a response to the violence that led up to the crusades. Specifically, Yuval points to the supposed murder of a Christian, by a Jew in Würzburg in 1147.¹⁷ Miri Rubin has been one of the main academics since Langmuir to take an in-depth look at the ritual murders and host desecration in England, and has recently translated the hagiography of William of Norwich.¹⁸ Since then other scholars have sought to understand the ritual murder accusations, but have focused on the later medieval period in Europe. Due to this, there are still areas of the accusations that have been underexplored and neglected in the historiography.

By drawing together the different strands, which led to an increasing intolerance of the Jewish community. This dissertation will aim to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the role

¹³ Abulafia, *Christian-Jewish Relations*; Israel Jacob Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*. Translated by Barbara Harshav and Jonathan Chipman (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005).

¹⁴ Gavin Langmuir, "Thomas of Monmouth: Detector of Ritual Murder." *Speculum* 59 no. 4 (1984): 820-46; Gavin Langmuir, "The Knights Tale of Young Hugh of Lincoln." *Speculum* 47 no. 3 (1972): 459-82.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 214.

¹⁶ Abulafia, *Christian-Jewish Relations*, 169.

¹⁷ Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb*, 168.

¹⁸ Thomas of Monmouth, *The Life and Passion of William of Norwich*. Translated by Miri Rubin (London: Penguin, 2014).

that Jews played in English society between their admission and their expulsion, through the specific developments in the ritual murder accusations.

Structure of the research essay:

The first chapter of this dissertation will aim to locate the Jewish population and their specific position in medieval England. The concept of 'Jewish guilt' will be looked at as it is key to understanding Christian hostility to the Jews of the Middle Ages. The role of Jewish financiers will also be explored as it feed into the growing anti-Judaic feeling which came with indebtedness and also the furore which followed the troops leaving for the Crusades. These sentiments culminated in the massacre at York. The establishment of the Exchequer of the Jews and its role in safeguarding the Kings' financial interest in the community, illustrates the relationship and dependence that the community had on the Crown. This chapter will conclude by exploring the specific motivations behind the expulsion of the Jews from England in 1290.

The case study of William of Norwich is the main focus of the second chapter, and is a flashpoint in the broader changes that were occurring in English society. The accusation at Norwich was not spontaneous, it was influenced by many different elements from outside and within England. The description of ritual murder that was constructed by Thomas of Monmouth will be explored, and its transmission thought-out England will be highlighted. Finally the role that the Marian tales played in the development of the myth of ritual murder will be briefly discussed to illustrate the incorporation of different narratives in to the accusations.

The third chapter focuses on the case of Hugh of Lincoln and how the ritual had developed from the case of William of Norwich. By the accusation at Lincoln in 1255 the myth had been fully constructed. This accusation also led to the Crown sanctioned death of members of the Jewish community, the first record of this happening in England. There are three main accounts of the murder of Hugh: Matthew Paris, the Anglo-Norman ballad and the Annals of Burton-on-Trent. The differences between these accounts will be analysed in order to construct the ritual and the significance it held for the Christian community. The possible secular motivation for the

accusation will also be explored, and the role that King Henry III played in the escalation of the accusation will be focused on. The continuation of the narrative of Hugh after the expulsion of the Jews from England, and the concept of the 'virtual' Jew will be briefly explored to show the prevalence of the myth in the English imagination.

However, in order to explore the accusations of ritual murder the broader position of the Jews in medieval England must first be understood. By initially focusing on the broader picture of the Jewish presence, it will allow the proceeding case studies to be pursued in greater detail, the source material to be managed, and for the ritual murders to be understood in the context from which they emerged.

CHAPTER ONE: FINANCIAL INDEBTEDNESS, THEOLOGY AND THE YORK MASSACRE

The position that the Jewish population occupied in medieval England was one that was entirely dependent on the Christian population's perception of them. The correct Christian-Jewish relationship was a key factor in determining the perception of the Jews, and was often a motivating factor in violence which flared up against the Jewish population. The financial depletion of the Jewish population was a significant factor in the years leading up to the expulsion, and the relationship between it, and growing anti-Judaic sentiment will be explored. The massacre at York in 1190 will be focused on as an example of where both the correct Christian-Jewish relationship and financial depletion culminate in violent attacks against the Jewish community. This chapter will locate the Jewish population within the context of English society, focusing on how the position changed, in order to understand the society in which the ritual murder accusations developed.

The Jewish population in England was established by the Crown and depended on them for their survival. The first Jewish population in England was in all likelihood brought over from Rouen by William the Conqueror. This was on the basis that Jewish experience in money lending and trade in luxury items would, be useful in the King's operations, as a counterbalance to the established merchant community in England that was predominantly Anglo-Saxon.¹⁹ As the Jewish community became established in England, they spread outward from London during the middle and late twelfth century. As the communities moved throughout England, although local lords appear to have exercised rights over the community, it was clear that the Jews still belonged to the Crown. In his chronicle of 1201-02 Roger of Howden described this relationship:

Let it be known that all Jews, wherever they may be in the kingdom, must be under the guardianship and protection of the lord king, nor can anyone of them subject himself to any prominent person without the king's licence. Jews and all they have belong to the king. But if anyone will have detained [money] from them, the king may demand their money as his own.²⁰

¹⁹ Abulafia, *Christian-Jewish Relations*, 81.

²⁰ Roger of Howden, cited in, Abulafia, *Christian-Jewish Relations*, 82.

Jewish financiers had the backing of the Crown to collect the debts they were owed, but by the late twelfth century the king began to tax the Jews rather than borrowing from them. An example of the Crown's view can be seen in 1186, when the estate of Aaron of Lincoln was confiscated and the Crown then proceeded to collect all outstanding debts.²¹ The Jewish position in England was dependent entirely on the Crown in order to ensure their income and their protection. Although this position was secure at the beginning of their residence, it declined significantly, until the community had been effectively drained of their financial resources. Cecil Roth has described the Jews of this period as the 'royal milch cow' that was financially milked mercilessly by the Crown.²² However, Crown policy was not the only factor which determined Christian-Jewish relations.

The position that the Jews held in society was determined not only by policy and economics, but also by theological concepts. The Christian view remembered the Jews as the crucifiers of Christ. According to William of Newburgh, the Jews were allowed to reside among the Christians in England in order to remind the Christian population of Christ's Passion.²³ As part of this belief, and to account for their guilt and actions over the death of Christ, the Jewish population was meant to serve Christians, not be superior to them.²⁴ In the violence that followed Richard I's coronation, and the violence leading up to the Third Crusade, Jewries had been attacked in many cities in England.²⁵ William of Newburgh, although he did not advocate for the violence, thought that it was an attack on the inversion of the correct Christian-Jewish relations which had occurred through Christian indebtedness to the Jews.²⁶ This belief in Jewish guilt was established in the early doctrine of the western Latin Church and is one of the main strands of anti-Judaism.²⁷ It was believed that, "Jews had rejected Christ. They had not only rejected him, but they had killed him,

²¹ Reva Berman Brown and Sean McCartney, "The Exchequer of the Jews Revisited: The Operation and Effect of the *Scaccarium Judeorum*," *The Medieval History Journal* vol. 8, no. 2 (2005): 307.

²² Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews in England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941), 38.

²³ Abulafia, *Christian-Jewish Relations*, 85.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 86.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 85.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 85.

²⁷ Bernard Lewis, *Semites and Anti-Semites* (London: Phoenix, 1997), 100.

and since Christ was God, they had killed God.”²⁸ In 1234 Pope Gregory IX incorporated this doctrine into canon law in his *Decretales*.²⁹ This belief had become established in the Christian religion and during the medieval period, it was a central factor in governing the Christian-Jewish relationship and also the position and perception of Jews within that society.

Although theological factors established the guidelines for Christian-Jewish interactions, some prominent Jews and communities were able to forge successful businesses and networks. For these relationship to have existed Jews and Christians would have had to live side by side and cooperated during the Jewish residence in England.³⁰ Jews were also not simply financiers or merchants: there were also scribes, doctors and teachers, as well as those who fulfilled roles required by the Jewish community, such as butchers, bakers and other traders.³¹ One of the wealthiest Jews during this period, or at least, the one who was the most documented was Aaron of Lincoln. His business was not only on a local basis but also on a national one, and his debtors were notable earls, priors, abbots, towns, sheriffs. They even included the kings of England and Scotland as well as the archbishop of Canterbury.³² When he died in 1186, his bonds were confiscated by the Crown and amounted to over £15,000.³³ Prominent Jewish women also managed to carve out successful businesses. There has been significant scholarship on the role of female Jewish money lenders during this time, including Lictoria of Winchester, who was considered to be on the financial level as Aaron of Lincoln until her murder.³⁴ In the thirteenth century, due to increasing taxation and legislation which reduced their ability to conduct business, the financial position of the Jewish community declined. Despite theological ideas influencing the governance of the Christian-Jewish relationship, in England the growing anti-

²⁸ Ibid. 100.

²⁹ Mundill, *The King's Jew*, 146.

³⁰ Abulafia, *Christian-Jewish Relations*, 86.

³¹ Robin Mundill, “England: The Island’s Jews and Their Economic Pursuits,” in *The Jews of Europe in the Middle Ages, Tenth to Fifteenth Centuries*, editor Christopher Cluse, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 227-228.

³² Mundill, *The King's Jew*, 20.

³³ Ibid. 20.

³⁴ Suzanne Bartlet, *Licoricia of Winchester: Marriage, Motherhood and Murder in the Medieval Anglo-Jewish Community* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2009); Victoria Hoyle, “The Bonds That Bind: Money Lending between Anglo-Jewish and Christian Women in the Plea Rolls of the Exchequer of the Jews, 1218-1280,” *Journal of Medieval History* vol. 34, no. 2 (2008): 119-29.

Judaic sentiment, was also based on a rational financial dislike of a group that the Christian community was often indebted too.

The Jewish financial position depended entirely on the Crown. This relationship was often precarious and based on the views of individual kings. Significant flashpoints occurred during the Jewish residence in England, which highlighted their vulnerable position, as well as the conflict over the role which Jews played in society. There had been other flashpoints in the relationship, notably the murder of William of Norwich in 1144, but the violence of 1189 was the first case which led to deaths of Jews. In 1189, a group of Jews had been presented at Westminster, where there had been a misunderstanding of protocol. This led to an anti-Jewish riot, and the burning of the nearby Jewish quarter.³⁵ As Richard I set out on Crusade the following year, there was another popular outburst of anti-Jewish violence, which took place in many English towns, the most significant occurring in York.³⁶ In York it was not simply the fervour of the crusaders that led to the violence, but also hostility at the growing Christian indebtedness to the Jews. The violence began with attacks on the residence of prominent and wealthy Jews.³⁷ Many of the rioters had a clear motive for the attacks: Richard Malevisse, also known as Richard the Evil Beast, had been heavily indebted to Aaron of Lincoln.³⁸ Many other rioter were also in the same financial situation as Richard, and they insured that in the process of the violence, they burned all the bonds and records of the debts that were owed to the Jewish money lenders.³⁹ As the violence progressed, a large part of the Jewish community fled to York castle where they had previously received protection.⁴⁰ They were gathered in Clifford's Tower when the Sheriff ordered them to leave.⁴¹ Instead of facing the crowd a large part of the group ritually killed themselves in the way of traditional heroic martyrdom, or *Kiddush ha-Shem*.⁴² Those who chose the route of baptism

³⁵ Robert Chazan, *The Jews of Medieval Western Christendom 1000-1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 160.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 160.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 160.

³⁸ Mundill, *The King's Jews*, 81.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 81.

⁴⁰ Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews in England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), 23.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 23.

⁴² Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb*, 162.

instead of suicide, were then killed by the crowd instead of being allowed to convert.⁴³ The chronicler Ephraim of Bonn, stated that 150 Jews died at Clifford's Tower.⁴⁴ This violence was a manifestation of anti-Jewish sentiment, which had played a role in the crusading movements since the eleventh century, and of the growing indebtedness of some sectors of society. However, the actions of the crowd did not go unpunished, and royal troops were deployed to stop the violence and to preserve the 'royal milch cow'.

The massacre at York played an important role in determining the financial position of the Jewry for the remainder of their residence. The establishment of the Exchequer of the Jews, a subsection of the Great Exchequer, is thought to have been developed in response to the death of Aaron of Lincoln in 1186.⁴⁵ His estate was confiscated on his death and passed on to the Great Exchequer. Another prominent theory is that the establishment of the Exchequer of the Jews, was a response to the anti-Jewish violence of 1189-1190.⁴⁶ During the violence, Jewish bonds became a target of the crowd, which highlighted the need to have a check or a double record of Jewish business. This would safeguard the financial interests of the King, who would get tax from these debts. The Exchequer would also protect Jewish subjects who were wealthy but who were also incredibly vulnerable.⁴⁷ The Exchequer protected the Jews from popular riots, but it was also an 'engine of extortion' utilized by the Crown when it needed funds.⁴⁸ The Exchequer of the Jews regulated, legalised and systematised Jewish financial dealings.⁴⁹ But, it also had a purely functional purpose: it allowed the Crown to effectively tax Jewish debt.⁵⁰ This in turn led to a greater hostility towards the Jewish community, as during the thirteenth century the pressure put on the Jewish population filtered through to the Christian borrowers.⁵¹

⁴³ Robert Chazan, *Reassessing Jewish Life in Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 120.

⁴⁴ Mundill, *The King's Jews*, 81.

⁴⁵ Berman Brown and McCartney, "The Exchequer of the Jews Revisited," 307.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 307-308.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 308.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 319.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 319.

⁵⁰ Mark Koyama, "The Political Economy of Expulsion: The Regulation of Jewish Money Lending in Medieval England," *Constitutional Political Economy* vol. 21 (2010): 382.

⁵¹ Berman Brown and McCartney, "The Exchequer of the Jews Revisited," 320.

There has been an argument made by scholars such as Sophia Menache, that the ritual murder accusations and blood libel myths played an important role in the deterioration of the Jewish position in England.⁵² This cannot be denied, and the effect of this on the Jewish position will be explored in the following chapters, but this alone does not explain the political and legal changes imposed on the community and the policies of Edward I.⁵³ The eventual expulsion was conducted at the hand of the King and not the mob, and as such the political and economic argument plays a role in their expulsion. The debate around the motive for expulsion continues and builds upon the work in the 1960s of H. G. Richardson, but there had been no general consensus on the reason for the expulsion, with scholars such as Robin Mundill carrying on the debate.⁵⁴ However, the changing financial position of the English Jewry is considered by many historians to be a key factor in the expulsion. The Jews had simply ceased to be of financial use to the Crown and by expelling them, the Crown could seize their wealth.

Although, there was a rise in anti-Judaic feeling and persecution of the Jewish population, the expulsion was not due to this but rather to economic necessity on the part of King Edward I. The expulsion of the Jews was not entirely unexpected. Edward I had expelled the Jews from his continental lands in Gascony in 1288 and moved in 1290 to expel them from England, becoming the first monarch to completely expel a Jewish population.⁵⁵ In an edict of 5 November, Edward I outlines the banishment of the Jews under the pretext that he had been unable to outlaw usury and that their exile is the only option.⁵⁶ However this edict is concerned with the Crown takeover of the debts owed to the Jews.⁵⁷ The financial motive of the King was more than likely the central issue, when the banishment was being conceptualised.⁵⁸ Expulsions like this were not uncommon in England: in 1240 Henry III had expelled the Cahorsins, but had then readmitted them in

⁵² Sophia Menache, "Faith, Myth, and Politics: The Stereotype of the Jew and Their Expulsion from England and France," *Jewish Quarterly Review* vol. 75, no. 4 (1985): 357.

⁵³ Koyama, "The Political Economy of Expulsion," 399

⁵⁴ Robin Mundill, *England's Jewish Solution: Experiment and Expulsion, 1262-1290* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁵⁵ Robert Chazan, *Church, State, and Jew in the Middle Ages* (New York: Behrman House, 1980), 318.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 318.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 318.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 318.

1250.⁵⁹ There are many reasons given for the expulsion of the Jews, but all of them have at their heart an economic or a financial motive.⁶⁰ According to a London scribe the Jews were, “a fugitive people exiled from England for all time, always a wretched people to wander anywhere in the world”.⁶¹ The Jews of England became exiles and wandering Jews. Meir of Norwich, argued that England had “become a hell without a light” for the Jewish population.⁶² The Jews would not return to England as residents until 1660, when they were again admitted for their financial expertise.⁶³

Intolerance of the Jewish population increased during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, both in England and in mainland Europe. The strong financial position and relationship with the Norman nobility, which had characterised the initial years after their admission, deteriorated to such an extent that in the years leading up to their expulsion they were financially depleted through taxation and increasing persecution. The Jewish population faced both institutional and popular violence, on the part of the Crown and the English population. However, the basis for the growing intolerance of the Jewish community was rational and based on financial hostilities. Deciding factors in shaping the attitudes towards the Jews were perceptions of the correct Christian-Jewish relationship, the concept of Jewish guilt and an ideology that influenced the infamous ritual murder accusations that targeted Jewish communities and created a myth that spread far beyond England and indeed far beyond the end of the twelfth century. The massacre at York was an example of the manifestation of anti-Jewish feeling and the indebtedness of society. The murder of William of Norwich was another flashpoint that was based on more than financial indebtedness. It has been considered to be an irrational manifestation of anti-Jewish sentiment which is considered by Langmuir to constitute a medieval form of anti-Semitism, but it was also based on rational societal concerns.

⁵⁹ Mundill, *The King's Jews*, 145.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 159.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 166.

⁶² *Ibid.* 165.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 165-6.

CHAPTER TWO: WILLIAM OF NORWICH: CONTINUITY OR INVENTION?

The murder of William of Norwich, was the first recorded ritual murder accusation in medieval Europe. It was also the embryonic form of an accusation that within several decades would take hold in the popular imagination of English society. In order to understand how the ritual murder accusation developed, and spread throughout Europe, the ritual construction of the accusation and folklore aspect of the murder needs to be analysed.

The allegation of ritual murder that appeared in the Middle Ages was not a spontaneous development. There had been several instances in antiquity where Jews had been accused of ritual murder and cannibalism. In the late nineteenth century the idea was put forward that the accusations in antiquity may have influenced the accusation at Norwich in 1144.⁶⁴ However one of the leading scholars of the development of anti-Semitism, Gavin Langmuir, has argued that the accusation was created by Thomas of Monmouth, and it was an independent and isolated development.⁶⁵ One account from antiquity, recounted by Posidonius during the second century B.C.E, tells of Antiochus IV Epiphanes invading and desecrating a Jewish temple in 168. In this account the Greeks soldiers find a man who is being held captive and he tells them of a Jewish practice where:

They would kidnap a Greek foreigner, fatten him up for a year, and then convey him to a wood, where they slew him, sacrificed his body with their customary ritual, partook in his flesh, and, while immolating the Greek, swore an oath of hostility to the Greeks.⁶⁶

Of the accounts of this incident that were recorded, *Against Apion* was the one that would most likely have circulated in the medieval period, but it was a very rare manuscript, and of very little interest in medieval England.⁶⁷ It is impossible to know definitively that the manuscript was not read by anyone who played a role in the ritual allegations, and the similarity of the descriptions cannot be entirely discounted. This debate should focus on why the accusations were created or

⁶⁴ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life and Miracles of St William of Norwich*. Translated by Augustus Jessop and Montague Rhodes James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1893), xiii-ixiv.

⁶⁵ Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Anti-Semitism*, 212.

⁶⁶ Menahem Stern, ed. *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, Volume One, From Herodotus to Plutarch (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1976), 146-7.

⁶⁷ Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Anti-Semitism*, 214.

re-emerged in Norwich in 1144. The factors that gave rise to the accusation is vital in understanding Christian-Jewish relations in England.

William of Norwich was a twelve-year-old tanner's apprentice who was taken by the Jewish community over Easter. He was ritually murdered before his body was buried in Thorpe wood, according to the account of Thomas of Monmouth. During Passover the Jews proceeded to torture him, they "shaved his head, they stabbed it with countless thorn-points, and made the blood come horribly from the wounds they made."⁶⁸ The Jews, Thomas describes, made efforts to hide that it was a Jewish crime, "instead of a cross a post set up between two other posts, and a beam stretched across the midmost point and attached to the other on each side was used."⁶⁹ The boy's right hand and foot were tied and not pierced with nails like his left so that, "in case at any time he should be found, when the fastenings of the nails were discovered it might not be supposed that he had been killed by Jews rather than by Christians."⁷⁰ Thomas does not explicitly state that William was crucified, but he alludes to such a death at the hands of those who had also killed Christ. This concept of a ritual crucifixion formed the basis for accusations which followed and it can be seen clearly in the murder of Hugh of Lincoln in 1255, where it had developed into a performance that re-enacted the Passion of Christ.

Thomas of Monmouth started writing *The Life and Miracles of Saint William of Norwich* in 1149 and completed it in 1173.⁷¹ This work gives a very interesting insight into attitudes towards the Jewish population in medieval England. The version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle that was composed around 1155 in Peterborough recounts the events in Norwich which led to the death of William:

⁶⁸ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life and Miracles of St William of Norwich*, 21.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 22.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 22.

⁷¹ Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Anti-Semitism*, 209.

The Jews of Norwich brought a Christian child before Easter and tortured him with all the torture that our Lord was tortured with; and on Good Friday hanged him on a cross on account of our Lord, and then buried him.⁷²

This description of the events is not accurate evidence, but it does provide evidence that the accusation of ritual crucifixion had been made by 1155.⁷³ Langmuir's opinion is that Thomas publicised the murder, and that "the fantasy that Jews ritually murdered Christians by Crucifixion was created and contributed to western culture by Thomas of Monmouth about 1150."⁷⁴ A child martyr was a source of revenue for a cathedral, and one who had been crucified during the Easter period was especially valuable.⁷⁵ This secular motivation cannot be overlooked when considering the origin of the accusation in Norwich during this period, as it is a rational foundation from which the ritual murder myth could develop. This would explain the why the accusation emerged in Norwich, although, historians can never know for certain that Thomas had not heard a rumour about ritual murder or indeed been influenced by events on the continent.

The development of this ritual accusation in 1144, if it was not linked to the allegations in antiquity, is a significant occurrence in the relationship between Christians and Jews in the twelfth century. There had been seven centuries where there is documentation of ritual murder accusations, and for scholars like Langmuir, the twelfth century was crucial in this development. The Marian narratives were increasing in popularity and they were incorporated into ritual murder accusations.⁷⁶ Significant events and movements during the Middle Ages affected the deterioration of Christian-Jewish relations, the most notable being the crusades. The crusader movement led to an 'explosive outburst' in religious fervour which, had a detrimental effect of the European Jewry.⁷⁷ This fervour was not only directed at reclaiming the Holy Land, it was also

⁷² Peterborough Manuscript. sub. An. MCXXXVI, in Joseph Jacobs, *The Jews of Angevin England; Documents and Records from Latin and Hebrew Sources, Printed and Manuscript, for the First Time Collected and Translated* (London: David Nutt, 1893), 19.

⁷³ Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Anti-Semitism*, 209.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 232.

⁷⁵ Cecil Roth, *History of the Jews in England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941), 269.

⁷⁶ Anna Sapir Abulafia, *Christians and Jews in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance*, (London: Routledge, 1996), 5.

⁷⁷ Robert Chazan, *European Jewry and the First Crusade* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 1.

directed at the Jewish populations that the crusaders encountered on the way to Jerusalem.⁷⁸ The message of revenge on Jews, who were considered to have killed Christ, was taken up by the Crusaders when they left for the Holy Land.⁷⁹ Jews in the Crusaders path, who refused to be baptised was murdered, and when Jews were outnumbered they often took their own lives rather than convert to Christianity. They chose to sanctify God's name through suicide and heroic martyrdom, a practice known as *Kiddush ha-shem*.⁸⁰ These attacks against the Jewry and the growing religious fervour inspired by the crusades, led to a stronger anti-Judaic sentiment and a significant change in the perception and position of the Jews in the Medieval Latin Europe.

In 1147 a body was discovered in Würzburg, and the murder was blamed on the Jews; the Crusaders traveling through the city, then went into a killing frenzy and those who would not convert were murdered.⁸¹ Israel Yuval argues that the charge of ritual murder came over from Germany during the Second Crusade.⁸² Yuval's belief is that the Würzburg incident occurred after William's murder but before Thomas began writing his *Life*, which he sees as evidence that the idea of ritual murder came over from the continent and did not originate in England.⁸³ However, the accusations' emergence in England and the way it took hold in the popular imagination of the society reflects the growing anti-Judaic sentiment of the Middle Ages and the underlying financial hostility towards the Jewish community in England.

The use of blood is very significant in both Christian and Judaic traditions: blood had an immense power ascribed to it, and Jews were forbidden from consuming blood, as it was believed to contain the spirit of the living.⁸⁴ As the ritual murder accusations developed, the blood libel emerged and took hold in Europe. The accusation of ritual murder in Norwich is defined by the central act of the ritual being the torture and the eventual murder of the child, rather than the use

⁷⁸ Ibid. 2.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 59.

⁸⁰ Ibid. 72.

⁸¹ Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb*, 168-9.

⁸² John M. McCulloh, "Jewish Ritual Murder: William of Norwich, Thomas of Monmouth, and the Early Dissemination of the Myth," *Speculum* vol. 72, no. 3 (1997): 700.

⁸³ Ibid. 700.

⁸⁴ R. Po-chia Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder: Jews and Magic in Reformation Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 8.

of the blood for ritual purposes which is the basis of the blood libel accusation. For Gavin Langmuir irrational allegations, such as ritual murder and blood libel, are the difference between anti-Judaism that was prevalent during the early Middle Ages and the more dangerous anti-Semitism he believed developed.⁸⁵ In Germany in particular there were narratives in the late medieval period of witches, the devil and werewolves kidnapping and killing children: Jews were not the only perpetrators of child murders.⁸⁶ The accusations provide insight into the role that religion was playing in the development of anti-Jewish feeling. The established church during the thirteenth century demonstrate little belief in the accusation. In 1247 Pope Innocent IV issued a warrant prohibiting the accusations against the Jewish population:

Nor shall anyone accuse them of using Christian blood in their religious rites, since in the Old Testament they are instructed not to use blood of any kind, let alone human blood. But since in Fulda and in several other places many Jews were killed because of such a suspicion, we, by the authority of these letters, strictly forbid the recurrence of such an occurrence in the future.⁸⁷

The official view of the established church was at times very different to the views of the public, and the individual monasteries and monks who in several cases, facilitated the development of the legend fed into the accusations and folk legends that followed.

The ritual murder of William was not an isolated event. Many similar accusations took place both in England and on the continent, the first being the allegation at Blois in France in the May of 1171. Miri Rubin's recent inquiries into the manuscript tradition of *The Life and Passion of Saint William* indicate that manuscripts moved within the Cistercian monastic order, due to this it could have travelled onto the continent, and may even have influenced the accusation at Blois.⁸⁸ It had been posited previously that when Bishop Eborard moved from Norwich to the Abbey of Fontenay in France, he or one of his entourage brought the story of William of Norwich with them and introduced the accusation into France.⁸⁹ Ephraim of Bonn described eleven anti-Jewish

⁸⁵ Abulafia, *The Twelfth-Century Renaissance*, 135.

⁸⁶ Po-chia Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder*, 13.

⁸⁷ Pope Innocent IV, *Constitutio pro iudicis*, quoted in, Chazan, *Medieval Stereotypes and Modern Anti-Semitism*, 99.

⁸⁸ Rubin, Introduction in, *The Life and Passion of William of Norwich*, xix.

⁸⁹ James, Introduction in, *Life and Miracles of St William of Norwich*, ixvii.

persecutions between 1171 and 1196, including the incident at Blois.⁹⁰ This accusation was significant as there was no crucifixion allegation as no body was found, it was merely the suspicion that a Jew had placed the body of a Christian child in the River Loire, that led to the accusation of ritual murder.⁹¹ Ephraim of Bonn described the questionable testimony of the witness in his chronicle:

As I rode behind him toward the river in order to give your horses a drink, I saw him throw a little Christian child, whom the Jews have killed, into the water.⁹²

This narrative lacks the ritualised crucifixion that was in the William of Norwich legend, but it does show how the idea of the malevolent and evil Jew was spreading during the Middle Ages and being incorporated into myths of child murders. The myth that Jews conducted rituals that involved the murder of Christian children which was first recorded, or indeed invented, by Thomas of Monmouth, spread to the continent and continued to develop over the following centuries. However, the way that Christian communities understood and were willing to accept the accusations, demonstrates the way their perception of Jews was deteriorating during the Middle Ages.

As the accusation of ritual murder developed it was also incorporated into or with existing narratives including Marian miracles. The story of the 'Jewish boy', which originated in Constantinople, is a key example of a Marian miracle that was incorporated into the ritual murder of Adam of Bristol, who was allegedly murdered by the Jews in 1183.⁹³ The Jewish boy was thrown into a furnace by his father for entering the church of Hagia Sophia, and consuming the communion bread that was offered to him.⁹⁴ When the boy was later saved from the fire by his mother and Christians, he explained that "a woman dressed in purple came to me and gave me

⁹⁰ Robert Chazan, "Ephraim ben Jacob's Compilation of Twelfth Century Persecutions," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, vol. 84, no. 4 (1994): 397-416.

⁹¹ Chazan, *Medieval Stereotypes and Modern Anti-Semitism*, 54.

⁹² Ephraim ben Jacob, A book of Historical Records, in Marcus, Jacob R., *The Jew in the Medieval World: A Source Book 315-1791* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1975), 127.

⁹³ McCulloh, "Jewish Ritual Murder," 712.

⁹⁴ Miri Rubin, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 74.

water and told me not to be afraid.”⁹⁵ This narrative spread westward from Constantinople and was recounted by Gregory of Tours in his *De Gloria Martyrum* in the sixth century.⁹⁶ It was also circulated in England and was collected by Anslem, a monk at Bury St Edmunds, with forty other Marian tales in 1125 and then developed by William of Malmesbury before his death in 1143.⁹⁷ It also has a connection to Norwich as it was used in a Christmas Day sermon by Herbert Losinga, Bishop of Norwich.⁹⁸ The Jewish boy narrative is an early example of the role that Marian miracles played in Christian narratives, and its influence can be seen in England during the twelfth century.

Adam of Bristol was killed by the Jew Samuel and even after the boy was dead he called out to ‘Santa Maria,’ Samuel’s son and wife were horrified by what he had done and to silence them Samuel killed them.⁹⁹ The role of Mary in this account shows the boys ‘saintly’ nature and the broader trends in English society. Adam’s death was recorded by an anonymous author who could possibly have had access to Thomas of Monmouth’s manuscript but the difference in the style of composition lead to a conclusion that if the author knew of this work he made little use of it as a template for a ritual.¹⁰⁰ Accusations of ritual murder were not only the product of recent events such as the murder of William of Norwich, they were also influenced by older narratives such as the ‘Jewish boy’ and by the developments in religious practices and the rise of Marian devotion. Ritual accusations in England did not emerge solely as a response to the financial indebtedness of society and a growing anti-Judaic feeling; they were also influenced by many elements of religious development and tradition. However, the financial situation in England that gave rise to growing anti-Judaism, also provided the catalyst for the ritual murder accusations to emerge and develop.

William of Norwich, the first accusation of ritual murder in England, was recorded by Thomas of Monmouth but not necessarily invented by him. Thomas could have been as McCulloh or Yuval

⁹⁵ Ibid.74.

⁹⁶ Rubin, *Gentile Tales* Press, 8.

⁹⁷ Ibid. 10.

⁹⁸ McCulloh, “Jewish Ritual Murder,” 738.

⁹⁹ Rubin, *Mother of God*, 234.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 712.

have argued, inspired by events or rumours from the continent but, the ritual process and ritualised crucifixion that he developed in his hagiography formed the basis for the accusation to develop. The wider developments in Europe influenced the accusations and other narratives, such as the 'Jewish boy' and the Marian miracles fed into it. The ritual accusation at Norwich was not met popular support and no Jews were arrested or punished for the crime, but it did establish the grounds for later accusations which led to repercussions against the Jewish population. By 1255 and the murder of Hugh of Lincoln, the accusation was understood by the Christian community and had it become more than a ritual crucifixion, it was a performance and a manifestation of the religious tensions of the Middle Ages. Through comparing the murders of William and Hugh, it is possible to trace the development of anti-Jewish feeling and intolerance in English society.

CHAPTER THREE: HUGH OF LINCOLN: THE CREATION AND INFLUENCE OF A FOLK LEGEND

During the thirteenth century, the accusations of ritual murder against the Jewish population had developed into a popular understanding and folk legend. The incidents increase in frequency, and the rituals that surrounded them became more elaborate. The case of Hugh of Lincoln is the most infamous case of ritual murder in medieval England, and it survived in the popular imagination well into the nineteenth century. Hugh of Lincoln is an interesting example of a secular motivation or concern behind the way the accusation was pursued by the Crown. A dispute between King Henry III and his brother the Earl of Cornwall, was played out over the death of Hugh and the trial and execution of the Jews. The view and position of the Jews in English society had changed by the thirteenth century, this can be seen in the way the accusations of ritual murder had developed into a fear based on an irrational accusation, while retaining a financial and religious basis that was rational. By tracing the development of the ritual accusation this chapter will explore how Christian attitudes towards the Jews evolved and how the accusation was understood by the Christian community.

In 1244 the body of a boy was found in a cemetery in London with marks on his flesh believed to be Hebrew characters.¹⁰¹ Matthew Paris described how the body was found and how the accusation was levelled at the Jewish community in his chronicle:

They also thought and not without reason, that the Jews had, as a taunt and insult to Jesus Christ, either crucified this little boy (a circumstance stated to have often happened), or had tortured him in various ways previous to crucifying him, and, as he had died under their tortures, thinking him not worthy of the cross, had thrown his body where it was found.¹⁰²

This follows the structure of the accusation in Norwich in 1144, but it demonstrates how the ritual crucifixion has been fully incorporated into the accusation. It also illustrates that these accusations were becoming common and passing into folk legends. The accusations of ritual murder in the thirteenth century were understood and more frequent: four shrines to the victims

¹⁰¹ Langmuir, "The Knights Tale of Young Hugh of Lincoln," 463.

¹⁰² Matthew Paris, *English History from the year 1235 to 1273*. Volume III, Translated by J. A. Giles (London: Bohn, 1854), 21.

of ritual murders existed by the mid thirteenth century.¹⁰³ However despite the development and general understanding of the accusation, there had been no secular investigation or intervention in the allegations that had carried any weight or punishment for the Jewish community.¹⁰⁴ The accusation Matthew reported was a relatively minor one in terms of the development of the myth, but it shows how the accusation was being constructed and it is important as it is a precursor to the more infamous murder of Hugh of Lincoln a decade later.

In 1255 an eight-year-old boy, Hugh of Lincoln, was murdered, allegedly by the Jewish community. This narrative was the inspiration for Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale*, and was passed throughout the British Isles and areas of Europe by a ballad.¹⁰⁵ If the tradition of ritual murder had not been established by this time, Hugh would simply have been one of thousands of victims of foul play.¹⁰⁶ This was also not the first accusation of ritual murder against the Jewish population of Lincoln: in the early thirteenth century a child's body was found outside the city walls and Jews were duly accused of the murder.¹⁰⁷ In 1255, according to Matthew Paris, Hugh was stolen by the Jews, and after several days his mother went searching for him and found his body down a well shaft.¹⁰⁸ A Jew called Copin was tortured and eventually confessed that the Jews had killed the child but could not dispose of the body, the earth would not accept it, so they threw it down a well.¹⁰⁹ Copin along with 91 members of the Jewish community were arrested and a significant number were executed. Interestingly, Matthew describes those executed as, "the richer and higher order of Jews of the city of Lincoln."¹¹⁰ This could allude to a financial motive behind the accusations and due fact notably wealthy Jews were the first to be executed.

The Annals of Burton-on-Trent recorded a slightly different version of the narrative. In this version the child was starved for 26 days before a council of the Jewish community from

¹⁰³ Mundill, *The King's Jews*, 84.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 84.

¹⁰⁵ Langmuir, "The Knights Tale of Young Hugh of Lincoln," 460.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 461.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 463.

¹⁰⁸ Matthew Paris, *English History from the year 1235 to 1273*. Volume III, 139.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. 139-140.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. 141.

throughout England, sentenced him to death.¹¹¹ The Anglo–Norman ballad again contains a slightly different version of the narrative. There are various versions of this ballad, but they follow the same general pattern and are closely linked to the version put forward by Matthew Paris and the Burton-on-Trent narrative. Hugh in this version, was kidnapped by the Jews during a gathering in the city of Lincoln.¹¹² These three versions of the murder, are interesting in their individual descriptions and are important in understanding the development and transmission of the accusation in medieval England. Unlike the murder of William where there is only one main source recounting the ritual, the case of Hugh demonstrates the way the tale was spreading and changing as it did so.

One constant between the three accounts of Hugh’s death is the ritualistic element of his murder, the alleged mocking of the Passion of Christ. The myth of ritual murder developed in Europe at the same time as the cult of the Virgin Mary was reaching new heights.¹¹³ The relationship between the accusations and the establishment of religious practices such as the Marian devotion cannot be overlooked and can be clearly seen in other accusations such as Adam of Bristol. The murder of Hugh also had a strong religious influence. In Matthew Paris’s account, the Burton Annals and the Anglo-Norman ballad the murder of Hugh is played out almost as a play or pantomime re-enacting the death of Christ. In the chronicle of Matthew Paris, a Jew was cast in the role of Pontius Pilate and directs the torture and crucifixion of the boy, following the biblical narrative which would have been well known at the time:¹¹⁴

They at once appointed a Jew of Lincoln as Judge, to take the place of Pilate, by whose sentence, and with the occurrence of all, the body was subjected to divine tortures. They beat him till blood flowed and he was quite livid, they crowned him with thorns, derided him and spat upon him. Moreover, he was pierced by each of them with a wooden knife, was made to drink gall, was overwhelmed with approaches and blasphemies, and was repeatedly called Jesus the false prophet by his

¹¹¹ Langmuir, “The Knights Tale of Young Hugh of Lincoln,” 466.

¹¹² Ibid. 85.

¹¹³ Richard Utz, “The Medieval Myth of Jewish Ritual Murder: Toward a History of Literary Reception,” *The Years Work in Medievalism* vol. 14 (1999): 34.

¹¹⁴ Mundill, *The King’s Jews*, 84.

tormenters, who surrounded him, grinding and gnashing their teeth. After tormenting him in divers ways, they crucified him, and pierced his heart with a lance.¹¹⁵

In the Burton Annals, the boy was condemned by a council, but was killed using a different method than in Matthew Paris's version.¹¹⁶ The boy is stripped naked, spat on, flogged and mutilated before being thrown down a well.¹¹⁷ This version follows more closely the Passion of Christ, mimicking the days leading up to Christ's crucifixion. The Anglo-Norman ballad follows a similar ritual process, but interestingly the child is auctioned for thirty silver pennies. After this the boy is killed with a single stab to the heart.¹¹⁸ This account is not as close to the biblical version of Christ's death but the sale of the child for thirty pieces of silver could allude to Judas Iscariot betraying Christ for thirty pieces of silver. William of Norwich was also 'brought' or his mother was at least bribed with money in a similar fashion and the Jew who was sent to collect William was referred to as Judas.¹¹⁹ As William's mother was begging to keep her son in her house until after Easter, the 'Judas' who was sent to collect him "swore he would not wait three days, not for thirty pieces of silver."¹²⁰ The theological position of the Jews in the Middle Ages, is closely associated with the role of Judas, the 'evil Jew' who betrayed Christ for thirty pieces of silver.¹²¹ The accusation that Jews mocked Christ, and re-enacted his Passion with the ritual murder of Christian children, reflects not only how Jews were perceived in the Christian imagination, but also the religious developments that were happening within Christianity. The construction of the ritual murder accusation, can be seen as a manifestation of religious practices and theology which aimed to demonize Jews though exploiting their position as the 'other' in English society.¹²² In the murder of Hugh, the Jews role as the murder of Christ and the 'Judas' who betrayed him, can be interpreted as reinforcing the Jews position as the 'other' in society, and indeed as reinforcing the correct Christian-Jewish relationship.

¹¹⁵ Matthew Paris, *English History from the year 1235 to 1273*. Volume III, 138.

¹¹⁶ Mundill, *The King's Jews*, 84.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* 84.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* 85.

¹¹⁹ Thomas of Monmouth, *The Life and Passion of William of Norwich*, 19.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* 18.

¹²¹ Hyam Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot and the Myth of Jewish Evil* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 2.

¹²² Haya Bar-Itzhak, 'Women and Blood Libel: The Legend of Adil Kikinesh of Drohobycz,' *Western Folklore* vol. 71, (2012): 280.

Like the earlier case of William of Norwich, in Lincoln in 1255 there was an underlying secular motivation which led to the escalation in the accusation and eventually led to the death of 18 members of the Jewish population. The murder of Hugh was the first accusation to be pursued and culminate in the punishment of the Jews by a secular power. The Emperor Frederick II had perused a case in the German lands of the Empire but had concluded that the charges were false and forbade anyone in his lands from making any further charges of that nature against the Jews.¹²³ Henry III had sold the right to tax the Jewish population to his brother Richard, Earl of Cornwall, for financial gain.¹²⁴ Matthew Paris describes this transaction in his chronicle, “He [Henry] sold the Jews for some years to his brother Earl Richard, that the earl might disembowel those whom the king had skinned,” through financial exploitation.¹²⁵ Although this was a purely financial arrangement, Richard did have a good relationship with some members of the Jewish community. A 1250 case of a Jew defecating on a statue of the Virgin Mary led to the imprisonment of the Jew in the Tower of London.¹²⁶ Richard spoke on behalf of the Jew and eventually secured his release.¹²⁷ The differences in Henry and Richards’s views can be seen clearly in the case of Hugh of Lincoln.

By giving right to tax the Jews to his brother, Henry was deprived of a valuable source of income. Henry had in 1250 taken a crusading vow, although he never went on crusade; instead he turned his attention to the Kingdom of Sicily and Pope Innocent IV’s mission to remove the Hohenstaufen dynasty, Henry aimed to replace the dynasty with his son Edmund.¹²⁸ With these expensive endeavours, and the cost of ruling a realm such as England, Henry’s financial situation would have been critical. With the accusation in Lincoln in 1255, Henry had the perfect opportunity to imprison and execute members of the Jewish community, and then to seize their wealth legitimately. Richard of Cornwall, intervened on the Jews behalf as he was, by this time,

¹²³Thomas Curtis Van Cleve, *The Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen Immutator Mundi* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 386.

¹²⁴Anthony Julius, *Trials of the Diaspora: A History of Anti-Semitism in England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 105.

¹²⁵ Matthew Paris, *English History from the year 1235 to 1273*. Volume III, 115.

¹²⁶ Matthew Paris, *English History from the year 1235 to 1273*. Volume II, 341.

¹²⁷ Ibid. 341.

¹²⁸ Sir Maurice Powicke, *The Thirteenth Century 1216-1307*. Second Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 106.

invested in the economic situation of the Jews. In all likelihood Richard would not have challenged his brother if he thought that the Jews were guilty.¹²⁹ Once the initial furore around the accusation had died down, Henry's belief in their guilt must also have died, or the intervention of his brother and others must have swayed him, for the remaining Jews were released from prison.¹³⁰ The secular motivation is more than likely to have been the reason for Henry's actions rather than an ardent belief in the Jews' guilt. It was unusual at the time for highly educated men, in positions of authority, to believe the accusations against the Jews.¹³¹ Henry became the first king in Europe, to execute members of the Jewish population on accusations of ritual murder. Frederick II and Pope Innocent IV had refuted the idea of ritual murder and blood libel and had both ordered protection of the Jewish population.¹³² However, the expulsion of the Jews from England occurred within forty-five-years of the murder of Hugh of Lincoln, and this accusation was detrimental in the deterioration in the position of the Jews in England.

The survival and dissemination of the accusation of ritual murder in England can be seen in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale*.¹³³ Although Jews disappeared from England after their expulsion, the virtual stereotype of the Jew did not.¹³⁴ The *Prioress's Tale* is set in an unnamed city in Asia Minor, and could be a reaction to the absence of the Jews in England.¹³⁵ The tale is based on the murder of Hugh of Lincoln, but certain aspects such as the fact that the boy continued to sing after he was dead allude to the earlier murder of Adam of Bristol. The different accusations seem to have merged, and been incorporated into one overarching myth of Jewish evil and ritual murder, rather than being distinctly separate events. Chaucer's depiction of ritual murder is interesting, not only for its depiction of ritual murder, but also for the fact it was written almost one hundred years after the death of Hugh. Recipients of that tale would have still

¹²⁹ Langmuir, "The Knights Tale of Young Hugh of Lincoln," 479.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* 479.

¹³¹ *Ibid.* 479.

¹³² *Ibid.* 479.

¹³³ Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*. Translated by Nevill Coghill (London: Allen Lane, 1977).

¹³⁴ Utz, "The Medieval Myth of Jewish Ritual Murder," 32.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.* 33.

had an understanding of the concept of Jewish ritual murder for Chaucer to write it.¹³⁶ This demonstrates the survival and prevalence of the accusation in the imagination of the English population, long after the Jews had left and the continuing animosity towards the ‘virtual’ Jew.

Little Saint Hugh, as he became known, was buried in Lincoln cathedral and a shrine to him was erected. The shrine did not survive the Reformation, and in 1791 his coffin was opened.¹³⁷ Several of the skeleton’s hand bones were broken but the body did not reflect any of the violent assaults which he was alleged to have received at the hand of the Jews. In 1955 an apology was erected over the place where the shrine had stood:

Trumped up stories of 'ritual murders' of Christian boys by Jewish communities were common throughout Europe during the Middle Ages and even much later. These fictions cost many innocent Jews their lives.¹³⁸

The Jews of Lincoln never fully recovered from this accusation, and up until their expulsion the memory of the accusation lingered in Lincoln and “wreaked a vengeance on the Jews.”¹³⁹ The accusations of ritual murder and especially the case of Hugh of Lincoln, show how attitudes towards the Jewish population had changed dramatically since their arrival, and how they were used as pawns by the Church, the general population, and ultimately by the Crown.

¹³⁶ Ibid. 34.

¹³⁷ Mundill, *The King’s Jews*, 87.

¹³⁸ “Little Saint Hugh,” last modified 23 September, 2009,

<http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/residents/archives/events-gallery-and-document-of-the-month/on-line-exhibitions/legacy-of-lincolnshire-songs/03-little-saint-hugh/79578.article>

¹³⁹ Mundill, *The King’s Jews*, 87.

CONCLUSION.

The position which the Jewish community held in medieval England was one that developed alongside English society. The anti-Judaic feeling, which was fuelled by theology and financial indebtedness, led to incidents like the York massacre of 1190 and outbursts of violence against the Jewish population. The ritual murder accusations are key examples of the way anti-Judaic feeling developed during the Middle Ages. Although the debate around the origin of the ritual murder accusation continues, its emergence in England can be considered as a manifestation of religious, economic and social concerns that the Christian community had.

There were many elements that fed into the development of the medieval accusations. The cult of the Virgin Mary and the biblical narrative of the Passion and the crucifixion of Christ played an important role in the development of the accusation. The case study of William of Norwich, is vital in understanding how the accusation was seen by the population and by the Crown, as there were no arrests or executions of members of the Jewish population. The extent to which the Christian community believed the accusation, is also crucial in understanding the way the Christian community viewed the Jewish population.

This perception of the Jewish population had changed significantly by the time Hugh of Lincoln was murdered. Instead of the population failing to be convinced that the Jews were responsible, the Jews were the first place that the Christian population turned when the body was found. Numerous other accusations of ritual murder occurred both in England and Europe, the rhetoric that spread eventually led to the Christian population believing that Jews annually killed Christian children. Instead of dismissing the accusation the Jewish community was subjected to arrest by the Crown and a significant number were executed. Instead of being viewed as an 'other' in society and being disliked for rational, financial or religious reasons they were accused of malevolent acts such as ritualised child killing. The perception held by the Christian population developed from normal anti-Judaic views of the time, to what a modern audience would consider to be anti-Semitic in nature. The case of Hugh, however, still had a strong rational and financial basis which places it within the definition of anti-Judaism and not anti-

Semitism. Langmuir's conception of medieval anti-Semitism does not account for the complexities of the situation in England or the motivations of rulers such as Henry III.

This dissertation has focused on the development of the accusation in England. In order to expand this research, comparing the development in England with the way that the accusations developed on the continent would provide insight into the wider development of anti-Semitism during the Middle Ages. On the continent the accusations, quickly become what Langmuir would consider to be irrational and anti-Semitic. In England the rituals take on a different form and become focused on the performance of the re-enactment of the crucifixion. The difference in the way that the accusations developed would give historians valuable insight into the tumultuous Christian-Jewish relationship in the Middle Ages and how it changed.

The allegations of ritual murder spread eastward through France and Germany, where they were prevalent during the sixteenth century. In England and France, the accusations disappeared as the Jews were expelled, but the fear and narrative that surrounded them did not. The accusation of ritual murder is still prevalent in areas of Eastern Europe, and has been appropriated in different narratives in the Middle East. The rhetoric which has grown up around these accusations has become ingrained in western society. When Dave Brown published his cartoon in the *Independent*, his audience understood the connotations of the image they were viewing. The ritual murder accusations have become intertwined with modern anti-Semitism, and the western audience can recognise the rhetoric even though they may not fully understand the historic events that gave rise to it.

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