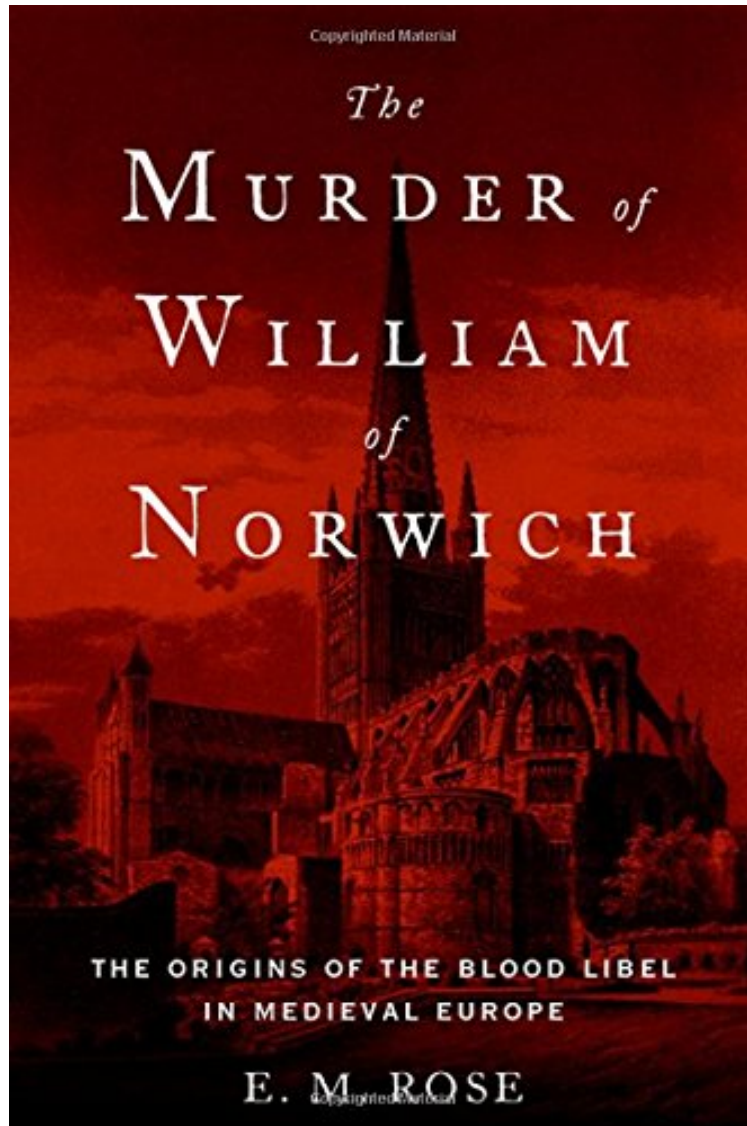


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The Murder of William of Norwich: The Origins of the Blood Libel in Medieval Europe

E. M. Rose

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E. M. Rose : The Murder of William of Norwich: The Origins of the Blood Libel in Medieval Europe before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Murder of William of Norwich: The Origins of the Blood Libel in Medieval Europe:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A work of historical research that -- at its best -- reads like a

novel. By Robert Gorchov
E.M. Rose's "The Murder of William of Norwich: The Origins of the Blood Libel in Medieval Europe" is a work of scrupulous historical research that -- at its best -- reads like a novel. Rose has amassed a great number of relevant facts but interwoven throughout these facts is the story of a murdered young apprentice leatherworker, William, who later was made a saint, William of Norwich, whose murder was blamed on local Jews. Rose traces the subsequent influence of what might be called the "cult" of William of Norwich and the idea of the "blood libel" in other areas of England and in France. Behind the religious spectacle, Rose has discovered economic, social, and political factors. If you have the patience to navigate the maze of historical fact, which is supported by extensive footnotes and a 36 page bibliography, you will find this story very interesting. It opens a window onto medieval European life.
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Highly Recommended
By Christine
This was an excellent history of the murder of William of Norwich and the rise of blood libel in Western culture. E. M. Rose is very detailed in her history, but the book is never boring because her writing is so engaging. The book is a surprisingly quick read and I highly recommend it.
2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. The surprising roots of the blood libel
By Van Dorn
A carefully researched, dispassionate look at the origins of an enduring antisemitic myth. Serious history.

In 1144, the mutilated body of William of Norwich, a young apprentice leatherworker, was found abandoned outside the city's walls. The boy bore disturbing signs of torture, and a story spread that it was a ritual murder, performed by Jews in imitation of the Crucifixion as a mockery of Christianity. The outline of William's tale eventually gained currency far beyond Norwich, and the idea that Jews engaged in ritual murder became firmly rooted in the European imagination.
E.M. Rose's engaging book delves into the story of William's murder and the notorious trial that followed to uncover the origin of the ritual murder accusation - known as the "blood libel" - in western Europe in the Middle Ages. Focusing on the specific historical context - 12th-century ecclesiastical politics, the position of Jews in England, the Second Crusade, and the cult of saints - and suspensefully unraveling the facts of the case, Rose makes a powerful argument for why the Norwich Jews (and particularly one Jewish banker) were accused of killing the youth, and how the malevolent blood libel accusation managed to take hold. She also considers four "copycat" cases, in which Jews were similarly blamed for the death of young Christians, and traces the adaptations of the story over time.
In the centuries after its appearance, the ritual murder accusation provoked instances of torture, death and expulsion of thousands of Jews and the extermination of hundreds of communities. Although no charge of ritual murder has withstood historical scrutiny, the concept of the blood libel is so emotionally charged and deeply rooted in cultural memory that it endures even today. Rose's groundbreaking work, driven by fascinating characters, a gripping narrative, and impressive scholarship, provides clear answers as to why the blood libel emerged when it did and how it was able to gain such widespread acceptance, laying the foundations for enduring antisemitic myths that continue to present.

"The excellently written and interesting book by E.M. Rose fills an important gap in a vast body of work on this subject that was, quite astonishingly, not filled before....Anti-Semitic allegations of ritual murder must be seen from the point of view of the history of the locality, but also in a wide perspective that includes political, economic and religious developments, never isolated from the context of historical event. That is precisely what E.M. Rose achieves."--Hanna Zaremska, *Kwartalnik Historyczny* [translated from Polish]
"Emily Rose provides us with an accessible, interesting, often challenging, and elegantly written book. This is the most comprehensive study of the first known accusation of 'ritual murder' in its specific historical context. Emily Rose's very challenging monograph is certainly worth reading as it is thought-provoking and original. Her exhaustive analysis of Thomas of Monmouth's *The Life and Passion of William of Norwich* as the source of the ritual murder accusation (a legend that has caused much Jewish suffering) deserves to have a wide audience of general and Jewish history readers alike."--Myriam Greilsammer, *Antisemitism Studies*
"The Murder of William of Norwich is a sweeping revision of an influential scholarly story. Anyone who works on twelfth-century England, Anglo-Jewish history, or medieval and later antisemitisms will have to contend with this book. It is a significant accomplishment."--Adrienne Williams Boyarin, *American Historical*
"Rose has carefully re-evaluated Thomas' story, contextualizing its events in light of East Anglia's contemporary social and economic perturbations...The Murder of William of Norwich is a well-written, carefully researched, provocative, and supremely important book, offering a new and necessary starting point for anyone interested in the origins of medieval Christian violence against Jews."--*Journal of Interdisciplinary History*
"A landmark of historical research into the grotesque 800-year history of blood-libel accusations."--*Wall Street Journal*
"Lucid and exhaustively researched..."--*The Times Literary Supplement*
"A tremendous book. This is forensic historical reasoning allied to hugely readable storytelling: part murder mystery, part masterly thesis exploring a deeply unpleasant and sinister aspect of medieval culture, which is still of immense significance today. The Murder of William of Norwich is one the most stimulating pieces of serious historical storytelling I have read all year."--*The Sunday Times*
"Our explanation for Jewish creativity is that Jews have learned from experience that the entire world can believe something that is demonstrably false, such as the blood libel. This fine book takes us back in time to what

may have been the first false accusation that a Jew (or 'the Jews') killed a Christian to obtain his blood for ritual purposes. It explains, without justifying, how so many could be so wrong for so long."--Alan Dershowitz, author of *Abraham: The World's First (But Certainly Not Last) Jewish Lawyer*"E.M. Rose's book on the murder of William of Norwich is a breathtaking work of revision that addresses one of the central questions in the history of Christian/Jewish relations in the Middle Ages, a topic of enormous relevance in the contemporary world and one around which there is considerable scholarly contestation. The book is a brilliant piece of historical investigation and a marvelous read as well."--Gabrielle Spiegel, Krieger-Eisenhower Professor of History, Johns Hopkins University"The storytelling by this first-time author is quite voluble, with the pen of a master narrator. The text is never boring, picking up new lines just when the old ones had run their course. A brilliant entry by this author, leaving us wanting a next book soon."--Huffington Post

About the Author E.M. Rose is a historian who has taught at Johns Hopkins University, Villanova University, Princeton University, Rutgers University, and Baruch/CUNY.