

“In this readable and informative book, Jean Truax paints an unforgettable picture of Aelred of Rievaulx as an important player in the tumultuous public affairs of his day, a counsellor to kings and bishops, and a moderator in legal disputes. This context shows Aelred’s historical writings—his *Report of the Battle of the Standard*, *Lament for David I of Scotland*, *Genealogy of the Kings of England*—to be integrally related to his public sermons, hagiographies, and correspondence. Drawing out the implications of passing comments and puzzling omissions in Walter Daniel’s *Life of Aelred of Rievaulx*, Truax builds a persuasive case that Aelred’s reputation among his fellow monks fell under a shadow due to his political activities outside the monastery’s walls and, most especially, to his support of Henry II in his quarrel with Thomas Becket who, four years after Aelred’s death, became England’s most famous saint and martyr.”

—Ann W. Astell
University of Notre Dame

“Aelred is eminent for his monastic teaching and spiritual doctrine on friendship. Presenting Aelred as politician and peacemaker, this book offers a brilliant perspective into a previously neglected feature in the life of the most distinguished abbot of Rievaulx. Jean Truax has accomplished a mammoth service by organizing an incredible amount of resources so as to create and evaluate the influential public life of this Cistercian abbot. Aelred is presented in his contemporary setting moving among friends and rivals as spiritual *abba*, abbatial administrator, historian, builder, mediator, and counselor to kings and to St. Thomas Becket.”

—Abbot Thomas X. Davis, OCSO
Abbey of New Clairvaux

“This meticulously researched, thoroughly documented study describes fully for the first time Aelred of Rievaulx’s political career. Most scholars focus on Aelred’s spirituality, friendships, or monasticism. Truax reconstructs his patronage networks that financially supported his abbey and ensured its survival during the anarchy of Stephen’s reign, his influence on neighboring Celtic rulers, and his advisory roles to two kings, Scotland’s David I and England’s Henry II. Uniquely, she uncovers his friendships for and support of cloistered women, which he saw as equal to monks, and his opposition to Archbishop Thomas Becket, which shaped Aelred’s posthumous reputation. This important new perspective enriches the massive scholarship on Aelred.”

—Sally N. Vaughn, PhD
Professor, Department of History
University of Houston

“With an abundance of well-documented detail, Jean Truax portrays Aelred as a man of exceptional energy, who remained actively engaged in monastic and public affairs up to the end of his life. By sticking to the historical record and avoiding sterile discussions of Aelred’s personality or motivations, she brings out the rich texture of the abbot’s life within the context of Rievaulx, the wider church, and the Anglo-Norman world. This book offers the fullest portrayal to date of his role as a mediator in all of these areas. Although Jean Truax does not claim to have unraveled all the complexities of Aelred’s biography, her study gently loosens some of its most resistant knots.”

—Elias Dietz, OCSO
Abbey of Gethsemani

CISTERCIAN STUDIES SERIES: NUMBER TWO HUNDRED FIFTY-ONE

Aelred *the Peacemaker*

The Public Life of a Cistercian Abbot

Jean Truax



α

Cistercian Publications
www.cistercianpublications.org

LITURGICAL PRESS
Collegeville, Minnesota
www.litpress.org

A Cistercian Publications title published by Liturgical Press

Cistercian Publications
Editorial Offices
161 Grosvenor Street
Athens, Ohio 54701
www.cistercianpublications.org

Scriptural translations are those of the author of the volume and the translators of the appendices.

© 2017 by Order of Saint Benedict, Collegeville, Minnesota. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form, by print, microfilm, microfiche, mechanical recording, photocopying, translation, or any other means, known or yet unknown, for any purpose except brief quotations in reviews, without the previous written permission of Liturgical Press, Saint John's Abbey, PO Box 7500, Collegeville, Minnesota 56321-7500. Printed in the United States of America.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Truax, Jean, 1947– author.

Title: Aelred the peacemaker : the public life of a Cistercian abbot / Jean Truax.

Description: Collegeville, Minnesota : Cistercian Publications, 2017. | Series: Cistercian studies series ; number two hundred fifty-one | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016036691 (print) | LCCN 2016039604 (ebook) | ISBN 9780879072513 | ISBN 9780879070533 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Aelred, of Rievaulx, Saint, 1110–1167. | Christian saints—England—Biography.

Classification: LCC BX4700.E7 T78 2017 (print) | LCC BX4700.E7 (ebook) | DDC 271/.1202 [B]—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2016036691>

For the Cistercians at Kalamazoo, with thanks

Contents

List of Abbreviations ix

Acknowledgments xiii

- Chapter 1 Introduction: The Three Lives of Aelred of Rievaulx 1
- Chapter 2 Precedents: In the Footsteps of Saint Bernard 14
- Chapter 3 Son of the North: Aelred in Context 34
- Chapter 4 Friends and Rivals: Aelred and His Neighbors 64
- Chapter 5 Brothers and Sisters in Christ: Aelred and the Care of Women 96
- Chapter 6 A Time for Peace: Aelred of Rievaulx and the End of the Anglo-Norman Civil War 130
- Chapter 7 Behind the Scenes: Aelred of Rievaulx, the Lords of Galloway, and the Kings of Scotland 149
- Chapter 8 Trusted Counselor: Aelred of Rievaulx and King Henry II 172
- Chapter 9 The Wrong Side of History: Aelred, Rievaulx, and Thomas Becket 194
- Chapter 10 Conclusion: Aelred of Rievaulx: Politician and Peacemaker 223
- Appendix 1 Chronological Table 236

- Appendix 2 Abbot Aelred of Rievaulx's Letter to Gilbert,
Venerable Bishop of London 242
Translated by R. Jacob McDonie
- Appendix 3 Aelred's Homily for the Feast of Saint Katherine
of Alexandria 250
Translated by Marie Anne Mayeski
- Appendix 4 Sermon for the Translation of the Relics
of Edward the Confessor 260
Translated by Tom Licence
- Appendix 5 A Letter from Rievaulx to
Archbishop Thomas Becket 274
Translated by Jean Truax
- Bibliography 282
- Index 313

Abbreviations

CAR	<i>Cartularium Abbathiae de Rievallae ordinis Cisterciensis fundatae anno MCXXXII</i> . Edited by J. C. Atkinson. Surtees Society 83. Durham: Andrews and Co., 1889.
CCCM	Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis
CF	Cistercian Fathers Series
CS	Cistercian Studies Series
CSQ	<i>Cistercian Studies Quarterly</i>
CTB	Becket, Thomas. <i>The Correspondence of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury 1162–1170</i> . Edited and translated by Anne J. Duggan. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000.
DNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. http://www.oxforddnb.com .
EEA	<i>English Episcopal Acta</i>
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i>
Ep(p)	Epistle(s)
Historical Works	Aelred of Rievaulx. <i>The Historical Works</i> . Translated by Jane Patricia Freeland. Edited by Marsha L. Dutton. CF 56. Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2005.
J	<i>The Letters of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux</i> . Translated by Bruno Scott James. London: Burns and Oates, 1953.
MGH	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i>
MTB	<i>Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury</i> . Edited by James Craigie Robertson. 7 vols. RS 67. London: Longmans, 1875–1885.

Northern Saints	Aelred of Rievaulx. <i>The Lives of the Northern Saints</i> . Translated by Jane Patricia Freeland. Edited by Marsha L. Dutton. CF 71. Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2006.
PG	Patrologiae cursus completus, series Graeca
PL	Patrologiae cursus completus, series Latina
RB	The Rule of Saint Benedict: <i>RB 1980: The Rule of St. Benedict in English</i> . Edited by Timothy Fry. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1982.
RS	Rolls Series
SBOp	<i>Sancti Bernardi Opera</i> . Edited by Jean Leclercq, Charles H. Talbot, and H. M. Rochais. 8 vols. Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1957–1977.
S(S)	Sermon, Sermons
Vita A	Walter Daniel. <i>The Life of Ailred of Rievaulx by Walter Daniel</i> . Edited and translated by Frederick M. Powicke. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.
Vita Bern	William of Saint-Thierry, Arnold of Bonneval, and Geoffrey of Auxerre. <i>Vita Prima Claraevallis Abbatis</i> : PL 185:221–466. Edited by Paul Verdeyen, CCCM 89B.

Aelred's Works

Editions and translations of Aelred's works are listed in the Bibliography, 282–84 below.

Latin Abbreviations

Anima	<i>De anima</i>
Gen Angl	<i>Genealogia regum Anglorum</i>
Iesu	<i>De Iesu puero duodenni</i>
Inst incl	<i>De institutione inclusarum</i>
Lam D	<i>Lamentatio Davidis Regis Scotorum</i>
Mira	<i>De quodam miraculum mirabile; De sanctimoniali de Watton</i>
Oner	<i>Homiliae de Oneribus Propheticis Isaiae</i>

Spec car	<i>Speculum caritatis</i>
Spir amic	<i>De spirituali amicitia</i>
SS Hag	<i>De sanctis ecclesiae Hagulstadensis</i>
Stand	<i>Relatio de Bello Standardii</i>
Vita E	<i>Vita Sancti Edwardi</i>
Vita N	<i>Vita Sancti Niniani</i>

English Abbreviations

Battle	<i>Report on the Battle of the Standard</i> (=Stand)
Dialogue	<i>Dialogue on the Soul</i> (=Anima)
Formation	<i>On the Formation of Anchoresses</i> (=Inst incl)
Friendship	<i>Spiritual Friendship</i> (=Spir amic)
Genealogy	<i>Genealogy of the Kings of the English</i> (=Gen Angl)
Hexham	<i>The Saints of the Church of Hexham and Their Miracles</i> (=SS Hag)
Lament	<i>Lament for King David I of Scotland</i> (=Lam D)
Life of Edward	<i>Life of Saint Edward, King and Confessor</i> (=Vita E)
Life of Ninian	<i>Life of Saint Ninian</i> (=Vita N)
Miracle	<i>A Certain Wonderful Miracle; The Nun of Watton</i> (=Mira)
Mirror	<i>Mirror of Charity</i> (=Spec car)

Bernard's Works

Editions and translations of Bernard's works are listed in the Bibliography, 284–85 below.

Csi	<i>De consideratione</i>
Ep(p)	<i>Epistola(e)</i>
SC	<i>Sermones super Cantica canticorum</i>
Tpl	<i>Liber ad milites templi (De laude novae militia)</i>
V Mal	<i>Vita sancti Malachiae</i>

Titles, abbreviations, and textual divisions for the historical works follow those used in Cistercian Publications books because the

Pezzini critical edition (CCCM 3) was not available when this book was written. Thanks to the generosity of Brepols Publishers and Bart Janssens, page references to the forthcoming critical edition have been added.

Acknowledgments

When I first stumbled into a Cistercian session at the International Congress on Medieval Studies at the University of Western Michigan in Kalamazoo, I was an older, part-time graduate student. After the session I asked a question of the presenter, who took me by the hand and led me to the Cistercian Publications table in the exhibit hall, where she showed me where to find a translation of the text about which she had spoken, along with everything else I ever wanted to know about Saint Bernard of Clairvaux. Over the years I continued to attend the group's sessions, but I never found a topic to present until I started working on a study of Count Theobald IV of Blois-Chartres. Before long, in what I am now convinced was an act of divine intervention, I found myself writing instead about Saint Bernard and his life-changing influence on the count. The welcome that I received, the thoughtful comments on my presentation, and the other opportunities that soon came my way ultimately convinced me to write this book. Of all the people who welcomed me to the joys of Cistercian scholarship, I would especially like to thank Marsha Dutton and Father Mark Scott, OCSO.

Today all of us stand on the shoulders of the devoted editors and translators who have made so many of the works of the early Cistercians accessible under the imprint of Cistercian Publications. I owe a special debt to the scholars who have allowed me to publish their translations of some of Aelred's writings as appendices to this book. R. Jacob McDonie contributed a letter written by Aelred of Rievaulx to Bishop Gilbert Foliot of London, and Peter Jackson and Tom Licence provided Aelred's sermon for the translation of the relics of Edward the Confessor in 1163. Both of these originally appeared in *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*. Marie Anne

Mayeski has graciously allowed me to include her previously unpublished translation of a sermon by Aelred for the feast of Saint Katherine of Alexandria. I also owe a great deal to the army of unknown readers who commented so thoughtfully not only on this book but also on my original proposal and on my articles that have appeared in *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*.

I also want to thank Patricia Torpis, Patricia Orr, and Sandra Worth for reading and commenting on early drafts of this work. Marie Anne Mayeski, Martha Krieg, and Sandra Worth helped me refine my tortured translation of the letter from Rievaulx to Archbishop Thomas Becket that appears as appendix 5, and I hope it now somewhat resembles modern English. I am also grateful to the Rev. Elias L. Rafaj for his original icon of Aelred, which appears as the frontispiece of this book.

I am especially grateful to the editor of this book, Marsha Dutton, who has suggested new approaches, refined my thinking, and turned me into a devotee of the Oxford comma.

As always, I must especially thank Professor Sally Vaughn of the University of Houston, who supervised my graduate work and has remained a friend and mentor ever since. Her continued attention to the work of a former student is much appreciated.

And finally, special thanks are due to my husband Greg, who not only tolerates but encourages my obsession with the Middle Ages.

Jean Truax

Chapter 1

Introduction

The Three Lives of Aelred of Rievaulx

Most historians consider Aelred of Rievaulx the greatest of the early English Cistercians, second only to Saint Bernard of Clairvaux himself as the foremost of the twelfth-century Cistercian fathers. Information about his life and works can be easily found in the excellent biographies by Aelred Squire, Brian Patrick McGuire, and Pierre-Andre Burton and in Marsha Dutton's introductions to the English translations of his works in the Cistercian Fathers series.¹ So why produce yet another book, particularly one like this, which will focus on only certain aspects of Aelred's life? There are several reasons for this effort, the first of which is simply better to appreciate the true volume and scope of this early Cistercian's accomplishments. Throughout his tenure as abbot of Rievaulx, Aelred played three roles: as author, monastic administrator, and political operative. As an author, he produced spiritual treatises,

¹ Aelred Squire, *Aelred of Rievaulx: A Study*, CS 50 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1981); Brian Patrick McGuire, *Brother and Lover: Aelred of Rievaulx* (New York: Crossroad, 1994); Pierre-André Burton, *Aelred de Rievaulx 1110–1167: De l'homme éclaté à l'être unifié, Essai de biographie existentielle et spirituelle* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2010); Marsha L. Dutton, Introduction to *The Life of Aelred of Rievaulx and the Letter to Maurice*, ed. and trans. Frederick M. Powicke, CF 57 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1994), 19–40; Introduction to *Aelred of Rievaulx: The Historical Works*, trans. Jane Patricia Freeland, ed. Marsha L. Dutton, CF 56 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2005), 1–35; Introduction to *The Lives of the Northern Saints*, trans. Jane Patricia Freeland, ed. Marsha L. Dutton, CF 71 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2006), 1–31.

works of history, and numerous sermons delivered both inside and outside the abbey, most of which are available in English translation and have been extensively analyzed. As an administrator, he was responsible not only for Rievaulx itself but also for five daughter houses: Warden, Melrose, Dundrennan, Revesby, and Rufford. Calculating the net worth of this monastic empire is probably impossible given the availability and quality of the records, but masterful studies of Rievaulx by Janet Burton and Emilia Jamroziak make it possible to understand the complexity of assembling the abbey's sizable holdings piecemeal from the donations of its neighbors and protecting those lands and rights in times of political uncertainty.²

Aelred's role in the public affairs of his day, however, is the area that has received the least attention from modern historians. As several of them have ruefully observed, Aelred's close friend and biographer Walter Daniel was simply not interested in his subject's public life. He wrote as a hagiographer and emphasized his subject's role as abbot of Rievaulx, his sanctity and good example, and his concern for the monks committed to his care.³ History's view of Aelred might be more balanced if his personal letters had survived, but without these we know him largely from his own writings, which contain little autobiographical information, and from Walter

²Janet Burton, "The Estates and Economy of Rievaulx Abbey in Yorkshire," *Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses* 49 (1998): 29–93; Emilia Jamroziak, *Rievaulx Abbey and its Social Context, 1132–1300*, *Medieval Church Studies* 8 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005).

³Maurice Powicke, Introduction to *Vita A*, li–liiii; Maurice Powicke, *Aelred of Rievaulx and His Biographer Walter Daniel* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1922), 32, 42; Dom Alberic Stacpoole, "The Public Face of Aelred," *Downside Review* 85 (1967): 196–97; Marsha L. Dutton, "The Conversion and Vocation of Aelred of Rievaulx: A Historical Hypothesis," in *England in the Twelfth Century: Proceedings of the 1988 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Daniel Williams (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1990), 31; Dutton, Introduction to *Life of Aelred*, 49–66; Pierre-André Burton, "Aelred face à l'histoire et à ses historiens: Autour de l'actualité Aelrédiennne," *Collectanea Cisterciensia* 58 (1996): 161–63; Marjory E. Lange, "Walter Daniel: The Eyes through Which We First See Aelred," unpublished paper presented at the Cistercian Studies Conference held within the 45th International Congress on Medieval Studies, May 2010.

Daniel's incomplete biography. An attempt to recover what can be known about Aelred's public life will help to redress the balance and show the true scope of the abbot's accomplishments.

A second reason for focusing on Aelred's life outside Rievaulx is to place his historical writings in context. It is evident that he wrote on multiple levels, and it is possible, for example, to read *The Report on the Battle of the Standard* as at the same time a tribute to Rievaulx's founder, Walter Espec, an allegory on the struggles of the monastic life, and an admonition to Henry II to learn from history how to build a civil society based on law and justice.⁴ Any battle would have sufficed as a symbol of struggle, monastic or otherwise, but this battle was especially significant to Aelred since it took place only a few miles from Rievaulx and involved the founder and patrons of the abbey and other personal friends.⁵ It is also interesting and valuable to understand that this work, and two others, were written at a critical stage during the peace negotiations that finally ended the Anglo-Norman civil war between King Stephen and the Empress Matilda in 1154. In the same way, his *Life of Edward the Confessor* and the companion sermon probably preached at the translation of the Confessor's relics in 1163 were composed just as the deadly quarrel between Archbishop Thomas Becket and King Henry II reached a critical stage.

As the years have gone by, it is natural that Aelred's historical writings have come to be valued for their spiritual lessons and

⁴Mariann Garrity, " 'Hidden Honey': The Many Meanings of Saint Aelred of Rievaulx's *De bello standardii*," CSQ 44, no. 1 (2009): 57–64; Elizabeth A. Freeman, "Aelred of Rievaulx's *De Bello Standardii*: Cistercian Hagiography and the Creation of Community Memories," *Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses* 49 (1998): 9, 27; Pierre-André Burton, "Le récit de la *Bataille de l'Étendard* par Aelred de Rievaulx: Présentation et traduction," *Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses* 58 (2007): 7–41; Marsha L. Dutton, "This Ministry of Letters: Aelred of Rievaulx's Attempt to Anglicize England's King Henry II," in *Monasticism Between Culture and Cultures: Acts of the Third International Symposium, Rome, June 8–11, 2011*, ed. Philippe Nouzille and Michaela Pfeifer, *Analecta Monastica* 14 (2013): 190–91; Elias Dietz, "Ambivalence Well Considered: An Interpretive Key to the Whole of Aelred's Works," CSQ 47, no. 1 (2012): 71–79; Pierre-André Burton, *Aelred de Rievaulx*, 421–25.

⁵See below, chap. 6:132–34.

historical insights and for the sheer power of his prose more than for the political value they had at one time. But an understanding of that political value is essential for us to fully appreciate Aelred's genius. I make little attempt here to analyze the multiple levels on which Aelred wrote, and I ignore spiritual and allegorical interpretations of his works in favor of their practical application to events of the day. Indeed there is nothing that I can add to the insights of people like Pierre-André Burton, who live the monastic life as Aelred himself did. What a secular historian can do is to place Aelred in context and perhaps in so doing deepen the understanding of his work and cast additional light on his underappreciated third role as politician, mediator, and negotiator outside his abbey's walls.

A third reason for focusing on Aelred's public life is that it may clarify what might be termed the mystery of Aelred's reputation. It is clear from the preface to Walter Daniel's biography, addressed to the unknown Abbot H, that Aelred was somewhat under a cloud at the time of his death and that Walter Daniel wrote at least in part to ward off criticism and polish his subject's tarnished reputation. Evidently there were detractors ready and waiting, for Walter hoped that the prayers of Abbot H and his monks would "make truth prevail over the opinion of many."⁶ Aelred's enemies occasionally appear in the *Vita*. When Aelred was elected the third abbot of Rievaulx in 1147, Walter reported that some said that ambition had brought him to the position, exclaiming, "how many jealous busybodies this man of peace had to endure," and bemoaning the "malignant and misguided men who rose up against him."⁷

Walter also recorded the story of the unnamed abbot of a daughter house who visited Rievaulx and violently attacked Aelred with

⁶ Walter Daniel, *The Life of Ailred of Rievaulx* [Vita A], ed. and trans. Maurice Powicke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 1; Walter Daniel, *The Life of Aelred of Rievaulx*, trans. F. M. Powicke, CF 57 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1994), 89 (hereafter CF 57). Abbot H was probably either Hugh of Revesby or Henry of Waverly (Powicke, Introduction to Vita A, xxix–xxx).

⁷ Vita A 26, pp. 33–34; CF 57:115; Dutton, Introduction to *Life of Aelred*, CF 57:30–31.

curses and blasphemies. In response Aelred prayed, “Lord King of everlasting glory, may this man, I beseech thee, speedily suffer an end to his malice, for you know false are the things which, in his angry folly, he ascribes to me.” The visiting abbot left without being reconciled to Aelred, and seven days later he was dead.⁸ The hint of enemies’ troubling Aelred’s career resurfaces at the end of the *Vita*, in Aelred’s last speech to his monks: “My soul calls God to witness that, since I received this habit of religion, the malice, detraction or quarrel of no man has ever kindled any feeling in me against him which has been strong enough to last the day in the domicile of my heart.”⁹

Occasionally the tone of the *Vita* seems defensive, as when Walter Daniel described the gifts heaped upon the new monastery at Revesby, where Aelred became the first abbot in 1143. Walter hastened, almost too quickly, to explain that Aelred accepted the donations only because of the chaotic conditions of the civil war, saying that the donations to Revesby “helped the possessors of goods to their salvation, and that if they did not give, they might well lose both life and goods without any payment in return.”¹⁰

At times Walter implies that Rievaulx may have suffered a reputation for laxity. A long passage describes how prospective monks whom no other house would accept came from all over Europe to find a compassionate home with Aelred and his brethren. The abbot often left the decision to admit an applicant to the brothers themselves, with the result that many were received whom he did not even know. In discussing Aelred’s reason for his policy, Walter provides a unique insight into Aelred’s character: “He was very diffident and indulgent to the feebleness of everyone, and would never disappoint anyone who appealed to him in the cause of charity.”¹¹ In return, Walter shows, Aelred’s monks adored their abbot, clustering around him in the quarters constructed for him when his physical infirmities required special consideration: “He

⁸ Vita A 37, pp. 44–45; CF 57:123–24.

⁹ Vita A 50, pp. 57–58; CF 57:134–35.

¹⁰ Vita A 20, p. 28; CF 57:111; Dutton, Introduction to *Life of Aelred*, CF 57:28–29.

¹¹ Vita A 30, p. 39; CF 57:119.

did not treat them with the pedantic imbecility habitual in some silly abbots who, if a monk takes a brother's hand in his own, or says anything that they do not like, demand his cowl, strip and expel him."¹² Walter portrays Rievaulx during Aelred's abbacy as a loving, supportive community that welcomed all who approached its gates. But it is possible that some of those "silly abbots" considered those conditions too permissive for a proper monastic life.

Walter was right to suspect that critics lay in wait, for he was soon forced to compose a letter directed to a Lord Maurice, probably the prior of the Augustinian house of Kirkham, answering criticisms of the *Vita* made by two unnamed prelates.¹³ Abbot Maurice had suggested that Walter respond to what was apparently the main complaint by revising the *Vita* to include the names of the eyewitnesses to Aelred's miracles. Walter replied with a separate letter listing the names of the witnesses to the miracles and adding several new ones. He suggested that it be placed at the front of the *Vita*, to serve as a table of contents.¹⁴

He also responded to two other charges. The prelates had criticized him for saying that Aelred had lived as a monk at the court of David I of Scotland before he entered Rievaulx. Walter could scarcely maintain that his subject had been a virgin, since Aelred himself had admitted in his *On the Formation of Anchoresses* that he had failed to preserve his own virginity in the praiseworthy manner of his sister. Walter, however, brushed aside the criticism, saying that in speaking thus he had been referring to Aelred's charity, not to his chastity.¹⁵ The unknown critics had also objected to Walter's description of Aelred's body prepared for burial as

¹² Vita A 31, p. 40; CF 57:120.

¹³ "Walter Daniel's *Letter to Maurice*," in Vita A, p. 66; CF 57:147. For the identification of Lord Maurice as the prior of Kirkham see Dutton, Introduction to *Life of Aelred*, CF 57:66–67; Powicke, Introduction to *Life of Ailred*, xxx–xxxi. On the letter in general, see Thomas J. Heffernan, *Sacred Biography: Saints and Their Biographers in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 103–13.

¹⁴ *Letter to Maurice* 4, p. 81; CF 57:158.

¹⁵ *Letter to Maurice* 4, pp. 75–76; CF 57:154–55; Aelred, Inst incl 3.32; CCCM 1:674–77; CF 2:93–96; Dutton, Introduction to *Life of Aelred*, CF 57:25–26. See Vita A 2, p. 4; CF 57:91 for the original passage.

“glowing like a carbuncle and smelling like incense,” maintaining that Walter had written without proper caution. But he explained that he had been indulging in the permissible rhetorical device of hyperbole and mocked his detractors for being ignorant of such techniques.¹⁶ The *Letter to Maurice* makes explicit what Walter had hinted at throughout the *Vita*: that Aelred had made enemies during his career who did not scruple to attack his reputation even after death.

Modern historians have not been blind to this question, and two suggestions as to the cause of this animosity have been advanced. John Boswell stated categorically in 1980, “There can be little question that Aelred was gay and that his erotic attraction to men was a dominant force in his life.”¹⁷ He did not specifically address the issue of Aelred’s reputation, but Brian Patrick McGuire, who generally agreed with Boswell’s analysis, has argued that Aelred developed a circle of intimate friends who enjoyed greater access to him than did the larger community at Rievaulx and that this access was resented by those who did not enjoy the privilege, leading to criticism after the abbot’s death.¹⁸ A second, and more likely explanation, advanced by Marsha L. Dutton and others, is that Aelred was simply too talented, too well liked, and too ambitious for his own good. He spent too much time away from the monastery, resolving quarrels, giving advice, preaching, and generally mingling with the great and near-great of society, which perhaps contributed to dissatisfaction among his monks, laxity within the monastery, and jealousy among those less in demand.

¹⁶ *Letter to Maurice* 4, pp. 76–77; CF 57:155–56; Dutton, Introduction to *Life of Aelred*, CF 57:14. See *Vita A* 58, p. 62; CF 57:138 for the original passage.

¹⁷ John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 222.

¹⁸ Brian Patrick McGuire, “The Cistercians and Friendship: An Opening to Women,” in *Hidden Springs: Cistercian Monastic Women*, ed. John A. Nichols and Lillian Thomas Shank, *Medieval Religious Women*, 3 vols. CS 113 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1995), vol. 3, bk.1, 174–75; McGuire, *Brother and Lover*, 93–94; McGuire, “Sexual Awareness and Identity in Aelred of Rievaulx (1111–1167),” *The American Benedictine Review* 45 (1994): 190, 222.

Furthermore, this theory would also explain the bias in the *Vita* toward Aelred's sanctity and miracles and the neglect of his public career.¹⁹ This study will return to the question of Aelred's reputation later. Although Walter's *Vita* has numerous shortcomings, it does offer some insights into Aelred's public life.

Walter Daniel's View

Despite a general lack of enthusiasm for life outside Rievaulx, Walter Daniel's few references to Aelred's public life make it plain that the abbot corresponded with a wide circle of acquaintances, that he was much in demand as a guest speaker, and that he often traveled away from Rievaulx on the business of his abbey, his order, and the church in general. Walter wrote that Aelred "was sending letters to the lord Pope, to the King of France, the King of England, the King of Scotland, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and nearly every bishop in England, also the most distinguished men in the Kingdom of England and especially to the Earl of Leicester."²⁰ Supporting this statement is only the testimony of surviving library catalogues from Glamorgan, Cirencester, Norwich, Coggeshall, and Rievaulx itself, which at least prove that Aelred's correspondence was esteemed enough to be collected and circulated after his death.²¹

Aelred was also in demand as a public speaker while he was still abbot of Revesby, for Walter Daniel recorded that the local bishop invited him to preach to the clergy in synod. He later wrote that, in total, Aelred preached some two hundred sermons to the monks of Rievaulx, the English clergy, and the laypeople.²² Today,

¹⁹ Dutton, Introduction to *Life of Aelred*, CF 57:8, 72–79; Powicke, Introduction to *Life of Ailred*, lxiv–lxvi; P.-A. Burton, "Aelred face à l'histoire," 162–63.

²⁰ *Vita* A 32, p. 42; CF 57:121.

²¹ Anselm Hoste, *Bibliotheca Aelrediana, A Survey of the Manuscripts, Old Catalogues, Editions and Studies Concerning St. Aelred of Rievaulx*, *Instrumenta Patristica* 2 (Steenbrugis: Abbey of St. Peter, 1962), 137–38. For the listing in the Rievaulx catalogue see 154.

²² *Vita* A 20, 32; pp. 28, 42; CF 57:111, 121–22.

however, it is possible to identify only a handful of Aelred's sermons preached outside the abbey. Two would have been delivered at major public occasions: the translation of the relics of the saints of Hexham on March 3, 1155, and the translation of the relics of Saint Edward the Confessor to the new shrine in Westminster Abbey on October 13, 1163.²³ In addition, one sermon indicates that it was preached at an episcopal synod at Troyes,²⁴ while two others are labeled *in Synodo* without any indication of the location or occasion.²⁵ Two sermons were directed to abbots and one to nuns, but again they do not identify the particular monasteries addressed and the events that occasioned Aelred's visit.²⁶ Marie Anne Mayeski has further suggested that Aelred preached his homily on Saint Katherine of Alexandria at the consecration ceremony of a religious woman, perhaps an anchoress.²⁷

Walter had only slightly more to say about his abbot's travels away from Rievaulx. He recorded a statement that Aelred made to his monks as he lay on his deathbed: "Often I have begged your permission when I had to cross the sea, or it was my duty to haste to some distant region, or I had occasion to seek the King's court; and now by your leave and with the help of your prayers I

²³ Dutton, Introduction to Northern Saints, CF 71, 14–20; Peter Jackson, "In translacione sancti Edwardi confessoris: The Lost Sermon by Aelred of Rievaulx Found," CSQ 40, no. 1 (2005): 45–64; App. 4:260–73.

²⁴ Aelred, S 28; CCCM 2A:229–38; Aelred of Rievaulx, *The Liturgical Sermons: The First Clairvaux Collection, Advent-All Saints*, trans. Theodore Berkeley and Basil Pennington, CF 58 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2001), 380–94; Aelred Squire, "Two Unpublished Sermons of Aelred of Rievaulx," *Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses* 11 (1960): 104–16. Ralf Lützelshwab has suggested that Troyes was a scribal error for the Council of Tours in 1163: "Vox de coelis originem ducitis: Aelred of Rievaulx as Preacher at Synods," unpublished paper presented at the Cistercian Studies Conference, held within the 49th International Congress on Medieval Studies at the University of Western Michigan, Kalamazoo, MI, May 8–11, 2014. See below, chap. 9:200–201.

²⁵ Aelred, SS 63–64; CCCM 2B:152–69; CF 80; Hoste, *Bibliotheca*, 87.

²⁶ Aelred, SS 143–44, to abbots; CCCM 2C:376–89; S 179, to nuns; CCCM 2C:608–15.

²⁷ Marie Anne Mayeski, "The Right Occasion for the Words': Situating Aelred's Homily on St. Katherine," CSQ 33, no. 1 (1998): 45–60. For a discussion of this sermon see below, chap. 5:110–13.

go hence, from exile to the fatherland."²⁸ Aside from this general statement, Walter reported only two specific trips that Aelred made outside the monastery, both to Rievaulx's daughter house at Dundrennan in Galloway.²⁹ While Walter gives unfortunately few details about Aelred's correspondence and his activities away from Rievaulx, the few hints that he drops indicate that the abbot had a large circle of acquaintances and that he traveled widely outside the monastery.

Similarly Aelred himself dropped only a few hints about his travels. In his *Dialogue on the Soul*, written toward the end of his life, he and his partner in the *Dialogue*, a monk named John, reminisced about visiting London. Aelred asked, "Do you remember London and how vast it is? Do you call to mind how the river Thames flows past it, how Westminster Abbey beautifies its western side, how the enormous Tower stands guard over the east and how Saint Paul's Cathedral rises majestically in the middle?"³⁰ But there is no information given about the number of visits, the timing, or the reasons for them. In the *Lament for David I*, Aelred described a visit to the Scottish court in which he observed the king living as a monk, keeping the monastic hours, and performing manual labor in the gardens. He noted that the visit took place during the last Lent of the king's life, which would place it in the spring of 1153, but gave no details of his mission, stating only that it concerned "some urgent need of our house."³¹

Since Walter Daniel and Aelred himself were so maddeningly reticent about the abbot's activities outside the monastery, one might hope that the documentary record would help to fill in the blanks and allow construction of a more complete picture of Aelred's travels. Anyone who works with Anglo-Norman charters soon realizes that it is possible to construct itineraries for major figures by listing the dates and locations of the charters that they

²⁸ Vita A 50, p. 57; CF 57:134.

²⁹ Vita A 38–39, *Letter to Maurice*, 4, pp. 45–46, 74–75; CF 57:124–26, 153–54.

³⁰ Aelred, *Anima* 2.1; CCCM 1:708; CF 22:73.

³¹ Aelred, *Lam D VI*; CCCM 3:10; CF 56:58–59.

witnessed. Most often these documents record property transactions, and the attesters frequently have no obvious ties to any of the parties to the transaction or to the property itself; they apparently witnessed the charters simply because they happened to be present for the occasion. Some twelfth-century English churchmen witnessed royal charters so frequently that the historian wonders how they ever had time to fulfill their ecclesiastical responsibilities at home. This, however, is not the case with Aelred; charters bearing his attestation are relatively rare. One interesting fact does emerge from this collection of documents, however. When Aelred did witness a charter, it often recorded the resolution of a dispute rather than a property exchange. This pattern suggests that while Aelred may not have been a frequent visitor to any royal, noble, or ecclesiastical household, a talent for mediation and conflict resolution caused people to call on him to help in times of trouble.

Conflict Resolution in the Middle Ages

Disputes were often settled in the Middle Ages in a way quite different from today. Cases that today would usually be definitively resolved in a court of law, with one party winning and the other losing, were often settled during the medieval period by mediation and compromise, with solutions favored in which both parties came away with some positive gain.³² Thus in a property dispute between a monastery and a layman, the layman might

³² Frederic Cheyette, "Suum cuique tribuere," *French Historical Studies* 6 (1970): 287–99; Stephen D. White, "Pactum . . . Legem Vincit et Amor Iudicium: The Settlement of Disputes by Compromise in Eleventh-century Western France," *American Journal of Legal History* 22 (1978): 281–301; Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre, *The Settlement of Disputes in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 233–36; Patrick Geary, "Living with Conflicts in Stateless France: A Typology of Conflict Management Mechanisms 1050–1200," in *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 125–60; Geary, "Moral Obligations and Peer Pressure: Conflict Resolution in the Medieval Aristocracy," in *Georges Duby: L'écriture de l'histoire*, ed. Claudie Duhamel-Amado and Guy Lobrichon (Brussels: DeBoeck Université, 1996), 217–22; Emily Zack Tabuteau, "Punishments in Eleventh-century Normandy," in *Conflict in Medieval Europe*, ed. Warren C. Brown and Piotr Górecki (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 131–49; Geoffrey

receive the land in question only to turn it over to the religious institution in return for spiritual benefits. Alternatively the monastery might receive the property, with the layman who had contested its ownership agreeing to hold it in fief. Disputes between two lay parties might end in a marriage alliance between the contending families. Naturally, in some cases lack of documentary evidence, inadequate or conflicting rules, or the inability of the court to enforce its decisions, caused the parties to a dispute to seek a mediated compromise.

In addition, ties of kinship and friendship were complex and interlocking, and a dispute between two individuals might easily spiral out of control, drawing an entire community into the conflict. A resolution that publicly humiliated one party might lead to more trouble later on. On the other hand, a compromise in which everyone came away with something might prevent claims from being reopened, especially if benefits continued into the future, as would be the case in which a monastery granted ongoing spiritual benefits to a former opponent and his family. The emphasis in medieval conflict resolution was first of all on restoring peace between the contending parties and their wider kinship groups rather than imposing a preordained solution to be enforced by the court. Perhaps the *Leges Henrici Primi*, itself a document concerned with the rules and niceties of court procedure, said it best: "For an agreement supersedes the law and amicable settlement a court judgment."³³

It is clear that the services of a mediator would be crucial in this type of dispute resolution, and who would be a better candidate to help in these circumstances than a respected monk or other churchman who had no obvious interest in the outcome of a case and whose asceticism made him the ultimate disinterested outsider? Not only did his detachment from the world fit him to

Koziol, "Baldwin VII of Flanders and the Toll of Saint-Vast (1111): Judgment as Ritual," in Brown and Gorecki, *Conflict*, 151–61.

³³*Leges Henrici Primi*, ed. and trans. L. J. Downer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), C. 49, 5a, 164–65.

act as an unbiased mediator, but also his holiness might seem to give him special access to God and allow him to determine the divine will in each case. A respected cleric was often the one person who could be trusted to offer impartial advice and settle disputes according to justice and God's will.³⁴

As one of the oldest, strictest, and most successful of the new religious orders, the Cistercians earned their fair share of the public's veneration. They were besieged at various times with requests from other religious communities for advice on the conduct of their affairs and even for incorporation into the Cistercian Order itself. And given the high level of respect that they enjoyed, what could be more natural than for the believing public to turn to them for advice, comfort, and mediation in times of trouble and confusion? Under these circumstances, it would have been strange indeed if Aelred, as abbot of the foremost Cistercian abbey in England, had not had a role to play on the public stage.

³⁴ Henry Mayr-Harting, "Functions of a Twelfth-Century Recluse," *History* 60, no. 200 (1975): 337–52; Susan J. Ridyard, "Functions of a Twelfth-Century Recluse Revisited: The Case of Godric of Finchale," in *Belief and Culture in the Middle Ages: Studies Presented to Henry Mayr-Harting*, ed. Richard Gameson and Henrietta Leyser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 236–50; Christopher Holdsworth, "Hermits and the Power of the Frontier," *Reading Medieval Studies* 16 (1990): 59–62, 70–71; Tom Licence, *Hermits and Recluses in English Society, 950–1200* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3–6, 49–52, 150–72; Patricia J. F. Rosof, "The anchoress in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," in *Peace Weavers*, ed. John A. Nichols and Lillian Thomas Shank, *Medieval Religious Women*, 3 vols., CS 72 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1987), 2:135–36; Jean Leclercq, "Solitude and Solidarity: Medieval Women Recluses," in *Peace Weavers*, 2:77–79.