



“...not as history, but...”: The Cistercian Abbot Aelred of Rievaulx (1110-1167), A Writer of History in Many Genres

“...não enquanto história, mas...”: o abade cisterciense Aelred de Rievaulx (1110-1167), um escritor de História em vários géneros

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ABSTRACT

What is a historical text, and what are the differences between such a text and other written genres? This question has occupied modern scholars of medieval Europe, medieval European authors themselves, and many others. Prompted by recent scholarship into the benefits, or otherwise, of trying to isolate distinct genres within what one scholar has referred to as "the whole mass of medieval historiography", this article examines the so-called "historical" texts composed by the medieval English Cistercian abbot Aelred of Rievaulx (1110-1167). None of these seven texts fits into the classic genre of the history, and yet the article argues that all are indeed historiographical texts. Aelred wrote all these works while he was abbot of Rievaulx Abbey in Yorkshire, and the article suggests that Aelred's experiences and responsibilities as abbot gave him both the skills to combine many literary genres – *vita*, genealogy, lament, *relatio*, *translatio*, *exemplum*, sermon, letter – when writing about the past as well as the desire to combine such genres so as to provide his readers with models of hope, and occasionally stern advice, from the past to use in the future.

Keywords: Aelred of Rievaulx; Genre; Middle Ages Historiography; Historians – England – History – to 1500; Literary Criticism – Medieval Europe.

RESUMO

O que é um texto historiográfico e o que é que o distingue dos outros géneros textuais? Estudiosos atuais da Europa medieval, os próprios autores europeus medievais e muitos outros têm-se ocupado desta questão. Incentivado por estudos recentes sobre os benefícios, ou não, de tentar isolar géneros distintos no quadro do que um académico designou como "toda o conjunto da historiografia medieval", este artigo examina os chamados textos "históricos" compostos pelo abade cisterciense inglês medieval Aelred de Rievaulx (1110-1167). Nenhum dos seus sete textos se enquadra no género clássico da História, mas o artigo argumenta que todos são, de facto, textos historiográficos. Aelred escreveu todas estas obras enquanto era abade da Abadia de Rievaulx, no Yorkshire, e o artigo sugere que as suas experiências e responsabilidades como abade lhe conferiram capacidades para combinar muitos géneros literários – *vita*, genealogia, lamento, *relatio*, *translatio*, *exemplum*, sermão, carta – ao escrever sobre o passado, bem como a vontade de combinar estes géneros a fim de fornecer aos seus leitores modelos de esperança e, ocasionalmente, conselhos severos sobre o passado, para uso no futuro.

Palavras-chave: Aelred of Rievaulx; Géneros literários; Historiografia medieval; Historiadores – Inglaterra – História – até 1500; Crítica Literária – Europa Medieval



Genre¹

“I have brought together in short form his [King David I of Scots’] life and character, not as history but as lamentation”². Aelred of Rievaulx, c.1153.

Aelred “published a life of David, king of Scotland, in the form of a lamentation, and added to it a genealogy of the king of England, the younger Henry [; in one book]”³. Walter Daniel, c. late 1160s.

“*Operum pars prima – Ascetica*”. “*Operum pars secunda – Historica*”⁴. Contents page for the 1855 *PL* edition of Aelred of Rievaulx’s writings.

“*Opera historica et hagiographica*”. Title of “the first critical edition [published 2017] of Aelred of Rievaulx’s historical and hagiographical texts”⁵, as advertised at publisher website.

As the quotes above indicate, and as readers of this *Medievalista* special issue on “Medieval Chronicles” will appreciate, the definition of such things as histories, chronicles, genealogies, hagiographies (and so on and so forth) is very much in the

¹ I presented an earlier version of this article at the “Our Aelred: Man, Monk and Saint” online conference, hosted by English Heritage and the British Archaeological Association, 11-12 Jan 2021. I thank the conference organisers and participants for their interest and helpful suggestions. Thank you to the editors of this special issue of *Medievalista* for encouraging me to submit my research to the journal. My thanks also to the anonymous *Medievalista* reviewers for engaging so deeply with my work and providing generous suggestions that have helped me further my thinking and research.

² AELRED OF RIEVAULX – *Opera Omnia VI. Opera historica et hagiographica*. Ed. Domenico Pezzini. Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis, 3. Turnhout: Brepols, 2017, “*Genealogia regum Anglorum*”, *Epistola*, p. 4: “...uitam eius et mores, [...] non historiando sed lamentando breui stilo collegi”. AELRED OF RIEVAULX – *Aelred of Rievaulx, The Historical Works*. Trans. Jane Patricia Freeland. Ed. Marsha L. Dutton. Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 2005, “The Genealogy of the Kings of the English”, “Epistle to Duke Henry”, p. 43. In this article I use the Cistercian Publications English translations.

³ WALTER DANIEL – *The Life of Ailred of Rievaulx*. Trans. F. M. Powicke. London: Nelson, 1950, ch. 32, p. 50: “...uitam David Regis Scocie sub specie lamentandi edidit cui genealogiam Regis Anglie Henrici iunioris uno libro comprehendens adiunxit”. WALTER DANIEL – *The Life of Aelred of Rievaulx by Walter Daniel*. Trans. F. M. Powicke. Intro. Marsha Dutton. Kalamazoo, MI and Spencer, MA: Cistercian Publications, 1994, ch. 32, pp. 120-121.

⁴ “*Aelredus abbas Rievallanensis in Anglia*”. *Patrologiae cursus completus, series latina*. Ed. J.-P. Migne, vol. 195. Paris, 1855.

⁵ AELRED OF RIEVAULX – *Opera Omnia VI. Opera historica et hagiographica*, at <https://www.brepols.net/products/IS-9782503552781-1> [accessed 16 Sept 2022].

eye of the beholder. In the 1150s, an author in a Cistercian abbey in Yorkshire (Aelred of Rievaulx, 1110-1167) informed his expected reader (Henry, the Duke of Normandy and Aquitaine and the Count of Anjou, and the presumptive King Henry II of England) that he was writing a lament of the recently deceased King David of Scots, but at the same time, Aelred hinted that the more usual kind of text for him to have written would have been a history⁶. About fifteen years later, the recently deceased Aelred was himself the subject of a *vita*, the *Vita Aelredi*, and here the *vita*'s author Walter Daniel described Aelred's lament for David as in fact not a lament but rather a *vita*. (It may well have been “*sub specie lamentandi*” but in Walter's view it still remained a *vita*.) Walter then pointed out that Aelred had actually combined that *vita* of David with a separate work, a genealogy for Henry⁷. In the 1650s, the Early Modern scholars Roger Twysden and John Selden referred to Aelred as a writer of English history⁸, and in being the first to commit some of his historical writing to print they established a categorisation of Aelred's writings into the spiritual and historical which gained pace among later editors. The 19th-century *Patrologia Latina*'s binary categorisation of Aelred's compositions as either ascetical or historical was continued in the 20th century, sometimes with the categories redefined as theological and historical⁹. In 2017 the so-called historical writings were now being described as “historical and hagiographical” by the publisher of the new critical editions. The attempts to classify Aelred of Rievaulx's oeuvre into distinct genres show no signs of abating.

In dividing Aelred's writings into different categories, and in believing that there is some value in identifying “history” as one of those categories, modern scholars are in good company. According to Cicero, history was both actual deeds remote from the memory of one's age and also the narration of those deeds¹⁰. (Of course, Cicero

⁶ See n. 2 above.

⁷ See n. 3 above.

⁸ *Historiae Anglicanae Scriptores Decem*. Ed. Roger Twysden and John Selden. London, 1652, cols. 333-422.

⁹ For the *PL* division see n. 4 above. HOSTE, Anselm – *Bibliotheca Aelrediana. A Survey of the Manuscripts, Old Catalogues, Editions and Studies concerning St. Aelred of Rievaulx*. Steenbrugge [Bruges]: Abbatia Sancti Petri, 1962. Hoste's influential study also referred to Aelred's writings as either ascetical or historical.

¹⁰ As discussed at DUMVILLE, David – “What is a Chronicle?”. In KOOPER, Erik (Ed.) – *The Medieval Chronicle 2*. Boston: Brill, 2002, pp. 1-27, at p. 4. For Cicero's statement that the *historia* narrative

also wrote other things about history, including the astute observation in *De oratore* – a text not well known in the Middle Ages – that, despite history’s importance, rhetoricians nowhere gave any clear advice on how to write it!¹¹) On the other hand, for Isidore of Seville history was not about events remote from one’s age but about events within one’s age¹². No doubt combining viewpoints from various texts that disagreed with each other, Isidore simultaneously wrote that annals were just another form of history and, later in the same paragraph, wrote that annals were different from history due to the fact that annals described events remote from one’s day¹³.

If we take some well-known examples from the 12th century, we see a move away from drawing distinctions based on time (whether within current memory or in far-distant times) to, variously, a focus on whether the text was written in Latin or the vernacular (witness William of Newburgh’s indignant response in the 1190s to Geoffrey of Monmouth’s history, in which William was outraged precisely because Geoffrey had dared to write in Latin; if Geoffrey had written in the vernacular then, presumably, William would not have thought that the text was pretending to be a history¹⁴), prose or verse (the suspicion – more or less overcome in the 13th century – of the allegedly “inherently mendacious” nature of histories written in verse¹⁵), or

(which, according to Cicero, never dealt with public issues of law but could nonetheless still provide useful training) discussed actual events remote from one’s age, see CICERO – *De inventione. De optimo genere oratorum. Topica*. Trans. H. M. Hubbell. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press and William Heinemann, 1949, “De inventione”, I, XIX, 27, pp. 54-55: “*Historia est gesta res, ab aetatis nostrae memoria remota*”. So too the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (popular in the Middle Ages, and believed then to have been Cicero’s work) makes the same point; CICERO – *Ad C. Herennium de ratione dicendi (Rhetorica ad Herennium)*. Trans. Harry Caplan. London and Cambridge, MA: William Heinemann and Harvard University Press, 1964, I, 13, pp. 22-25.

¹¹ CICERO – *De oratore*. Trans. E. W. Sutton and completed by H. Rackham. London and Cambridge, MA: William Heinemann and Harvard University Press, 1967, II, 15, pp. 242-247.

¹² DUMVILLE, David – “What is a Chronicle?”, p. 4. ISIDORE OF SEVILLE – *Isidori Hispalensis episcopi. Etymologiarum sive originum. Libri XX*, vol. 1. Ed. W. M. Lindsay. Oxford: Clarendon, 1911, I, 44.

¹³ Dumville notes this difference (not a contradiction as such), at DUMVILLE, David – “What is a Chronicle?”, p. 4. See also BURGESS, R. W. and KULIKOWSKI, Michael – “Medieval Historiographical Terminology”. In KOOPER, Erik; LEVELT, Sjoerd (Eds.) – *The Medieval Chronicle 13*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013, pp. 165-192, at p. 170.

¹⁴ WILLIAM OF NEWBURGH – *The History of English Affairs. Book I*. Ed. and trans. Patrick G. Walsh and Michael J. Kennedy. Oxford and Havertown, PA: Oxbow, 1988, “Prologue”, pp. 28-29. For William, “by embellishing them [old fictitious accounts] in the Latin tongue”, Geoffrey of Monmouth has “cloaked them with the honourable title of history” [“*honesto historiae nomine palliavit*”].

¹⁵ SPIEGEL, Gabrielle M. – *Romancing the Past. The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993, esp. pp. 55-69, and, for another case study, CLARK, Frederic – *The First Pagan Historian: The Fortunes of a*

a focus on the brevity or narrative elaboration of the text (Gervase of Canterbury’s now-famous distinction in his c.1190 *Chronica* between chronicles [synonym for annals] on the one hand, and history on the other; this distinction has gained a fame in the modern day that the medieval author would probably be pleasantly surprised at but which, we must suspect, grants too much weight to Gervase’s throwaway comment)¹⁶.

And, yet, even though classical definitions of history, or indeed any absolute definitions from any period, were not exact fits for historiographical compositional practices in the Middle Ages, some medieval authors continued to invoke them. This in itself tells us something about the urge to classify that seems to rise and fall and rise again through the centuries. This urge certainly rose in the 19th century, when nationalist editorial projects did so much to entrench our views of which medieval texts were to be categorised as histories and which were not. A half-century ago, Bernard Guenée’s work encouraged a more detailed examination of the variations in medieval historiographical definitions. Guenée focussed on the terminology used by the medieval authors themselves, especially terminology from the authors’ prefaces¹⁷. By examining prefaces, Guenée identified a period (from the 12th to 14th centuries) when the chronicle would surpass the history as the preferred genre¹⁸. Other scholars, however, noted that the terminology used by medieval writers to define the genres of their historiographical compositions told only part of the story (and, indeed, Guenée had already noted that medieval authors were not always internally consistent with respect to theory versus practice). In 1995 Elisabeth M. C.

Fraud from Antiquity to the Enlightenment. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020, ch. 3, “Dares Translated: Historical Veracity and Poetic Fiction”, pp. 117-168, and esp. pp. 125-126.

¹⁶ “*Forma tractandi varia, quia historicus diffuse et eleganter incedit, cronicus vero simpliciter graditur et breviter*”. GERVASE OF CANTERBURY – *The Historical Works of Gervase of Canterbury*. Ed. William Stubbs. Rolls Series 73, vol. 1. London: Longman, 1879, “Chronicle of Gervase”, p. 87. On Gervase’s comments as a “rhetorical construct” rather than “a serious discussion of the different genres of history and their uses”, see HAYWARD, Paul Antony – “Gervase of Canterbury”. In DUNPHY, Graeme *et al.* (Eds.) – *The Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010, pp. 691-692, at p. 691.

¹⁷ E.g. GUENÉE, Bernard – “Histoires, annales, chroniques: Essai sur les genres historiques au Moyen Age”. *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 28 (1973), pp. 997-1016. My thanks to the anonymous *Medievalista* reviewer whose comments and reading suggestions helped me strengthen my discussion of the modern historiography about medieval historiography.

¹⁸ GUENÉE, Bernard – “Histoire et chronique. Nouvelles réflexions sur les genres historique au Moyen Age”. In POIRION, Daniel (Ed.) – *La chronique et l’histoire au Moyen Age: Colloque des 24 et 25 mai 1982*. Paris: Presses de l’Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1984, pp. 3-12.

van Houts recognised that modern historians continued to disagree on “how the whole mass of medieval historiography is best subdivided into smaller sections, representing groups of texts having characteristics in common”, before going on to offer her own definitions of chronicle, local chronicle, and regional chronicle, notwithstanding her awareness that these definitions “may prove to be controversial”¹⁹. In 2001 Steven Vanderputten identified the history, chronicle, and annal as the main types of historiographic production of medieval monastic communities. At the same time, however, Vanderputten declared that, even within its separate genres of history, chronicle, and annal, medieval historiography was constantly evolving, with the result that “it will become less and less justifiable to make overviews of historiography as a genre in the Western world”²⁰. Vanderputten concluded that all the historiographical genres he examined – histories, chronicles, annals – “underwent so many different evolutions and adaptations in such a vast number of milieux, that we can no longer speak of a general type, to be described in other than very general terms”²¹.

In the last few years, scholars have returned to the issue of the generic divisions within, in van Houts’ memorable words, “the whole mass of medieval historiography”. In 2021 Felice Lifshitz reasserted her argument from the 1990s that the genre of “hagiography” is a modern construction and should be abandoned²². In the specific context of medieval England, Catherine Sanok argued similarly in 2019²³. Notably, Sanok’s chapter was published in an edited collection devoted to “medieval historical writing”; in other words, in this case, the “house of history” is considered large enough to include a mansion called “hagiography”. Also advocating a wide rather than restricted definition of “historical writing”, Thomas O’Donnell has recently advocated eschewing a focus on genre and instead

¹⁹ HOUTS, Elisabeth M. C. van – *Local and Regional Chronicles*. Turnhout: Brepols, 1995, pp. 7, 13-14.

²⁰ VANDERPUTTEN, Steven – “Typology of Medieval Historiography Reconsidered: A Social Re-interpretation of Monastic Annals, Chronicles and Gesta”. *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* 26 (2001), pp. 141-178, at p. 161.

²¹ VANDERPUTTEN, Steven – “Typology of Medieval Historiography Reconsidered”, p. 161.

²² LIFSHITZ, Felice – “Still Useless after all these Years. The Concept of ‘Hagiography’ in the Twenty-First Century”. In LIFSHITZ, Felice – *Writing Normandy: Studies of Saints and Rulers*. London and New York: Routledge, 2021, pp. 26-46.

²³ SANOK, Catherine – “Hagiography”. In JAHNER, Jennifer; STEINER, Emily; TYLER, Elizabeth M. (Eds.) – *Medieval Historical Writing. Britain and Ireland, 500-1500*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019, pp. 420-436.

concentrating on the meanings that texts both assumed and promoted, especially with reference to the tangible force of memory and memorial practices (local, personal, and universal memories), something which O’Donnell suggests can help scholars identify similarities across medieval cultural traditions and, in turn, perhaps “challenge some of the confident generalizations about monastic history-writing in England”²⁴. While O’Donnell takes medieval Britain and Ireland as a starting point, Ramunė Markevičiūtė has similarly addressed the issue of genre and history-writing in other contexts. Writing in 2020, Markevičiūtė argues that it is impossible to delineate clear generic categorisations of medieval historical texts, whether on the basis of content or of form, and suggests instead that scholars rethink genre to include the interactions of three elements, namely, a text’s context, the text’s form, and the literary tradition that informs the text²⁵. In the modern day, as in medieval times, each generation revisits the past and its own relationship to it.

Genre, memory, events remote from one’s age and events closer to one’s time, the purpose of history, and, importantly, the interconnections between different genres of historiographical compositions – writings by the 12th-century Cistercian abbot Aelred of Rievaulx can help us explore all these issues.

Born in 1110 in Hexham in northern England and known as Æthelred in his first language, Aelred was born into a context where both tradition and change were strongly present²⁶. The church at Hexham housed the relics of important early medieval saints. Aelred was immersed in this context since birth – he was the son of Hexham’s parish priest, and Aelred’s grandfather and great-grandfather had also been priests at Hexham. But, by the early 12th century, the days of married priests

²⁴ O’DONNELL, Thomas – “Monastic History-Writing and Memory in Britain and Ireland: A Methodological Reassessment”. *New Medieval Literatures* 19 (2019), pp. 43-88, and quote at p. 87.

²⁵ MARKEVIČIŪTĖ, Ramunė – “Rethinking the Chronicle: Modern Genre Theory Applied to Medieval Historiography”. In KOOPER, Erik; LEVELT, Sjoerd (Eds.) – *The Medieval Chronicle 13*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2020, pp. 182-200.

²⁶ The bibliography on Aelred and his life is immense. For a short survey, see BELL, David N. – “Ailred [Ælred, Æthelred] of Rievaulx”. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [23 Sept 2004], [Accessed 16 Sept 2022]. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/8916> For a more detailed survey, see DUTTON, Marsha L. – “Aelred of Rievaulx: Abbot, Teacher, and Author”. In DUTTON, Marsha L. (Ed.) – *A Companion to Aelred of Rievaulx (1110-1167)*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017, pp. 17-47. An important study that highlights Aelred’s political activities and connections with the world outside the monastery is TRUAX, Jean – *Aelred the Peacemaker: The Public Life of a Cistercian Abbot*. Collegeville, MN: Cistercian Publications, 2017.

were numbered, and Aelred’s life would not follow that of his ancestors. By his early teenage years, Aelred had received some education, at Hexham and probably at Durham. He then spent ten years living at the court of David I, King of Scots, before joining Rievaulx Abbey in Yorkshire in 1134 following a Damascene conversion of life. In the early 1140s, he was a novice master of Rievaulx. At this time he composed (at Bernard of Clairvaux’s request) his first treatise, *Speculum caritatis*, a treatise praised by Walter Daniel as “the best of all his works” and one which shows that Aelred’s skill at tailoring his texts to audience needs was already strong at the start of his writing career²⁷. Apart from a few years (1143-c.1147) as abbot of the new Cistercian abbey of Revesby in Lincolnshire, Aelred spent the rest of his life at Rievaulx. By 1147 he was abbot of Rievaulx, an office he would hold until his death in 1167. After *Speculum caritatis* he composed more “spiritual” treatises (*De Iesu Puero*, *De spirituali amicitia*, *De institutione inclusarum*, *De anima*, *Oratio pastoralis*); he composed the “historical” texts which will be examined below; he composed individual sermons and sermon collections (*Homelie de oneribus*; and about 200 surviving liturgical sermons); he also preached sermons, usually to his monks at Rievaulx, but he also preached occasionally to priests and bishops at synods²⁸; he wrote hundreds of now-lost letters to popes, kings, bishops, earls, and more; he was an active negotiator in political and ecclesiastical matters; and he oversaw the rapid expansion of Rievaulx Abbey’s community of monks, lay-brothers, and *famuli* as well as its building works and land-holdings. The *Vita Aelredi* depicts him as a man devoted to teaching, with his monks eager to learn from him.

Aelred of Rievaulx’s Historical Writings

A perennial question – why study history? Here is one reason:

It is not unprofitable, my brave men, for you young men to listen to an old man. Instructed by the changes of many seasons, the succession of kings, and the diverse outcomes of wars, I tell you that I have also learned to ponder the past,

²⁷ WALTER DANIEL – *The Life of Aelred of Rievaulx*, ch. 17, pp. 108-109. Aelred’s knowledge of novices comes through clearly in this work.

²⁸ In contrast, there is no undisputed evidence that Bernard of Clairvaux ever preached at synods; LÜTZELSCHWAB, Ralf – “*Vos de coelis originem ducitis* – Aelred of Rievaulx as Preacher at Synods”. *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 65 (2021), pp. 61-79, esp. p. 65.

to weigh the present, and to conjecture from the past to the present and from present to the future.²⁹

Aelred of Rievaulx wrote these words, in his historical account of the Battle of the Standard. Today we might describe that battle in August 1138 as one of the many conflicts in the civil war between supporters of Empress Matilda and King Stephen concerning the English succession (it was the third such battle in 1138 alone), although that is not how Aelred depicts it. For Aelred, the battle was a conflict between, on the one hand, David I, King of Scots, and his allies and, on the other hand, supporters of Stephen, and it was a conflict over control of the “northern part of England”³⁰, Aelred’s home. The battle had happened near Northallerton, north of Rievaulx Abbey. In 1138 Aelred had been a simple monk of Rievaulx, yet to travel as a diplomat representing the Cistercian Order, yet to assume his first internal leadership role of novice-master, and yet to compose his first written work, *Speculum caritatis*. After 1138, conflict and uncertainty did not end – the so-called “Anarchy” was only just beginning. The Battle of the Standard attracted the interest of various history writers in 12th-century England. Aelred was one of them. At some unknown date, probably/possibly in the early 1150s, when peace had still not arrived, Aelred sat down and wrote a history of the battle. The narrative is idiosyncratic. It covers about 20 modern pages which, on the one hand, is relatively short but, on the other hand, devoting a full 20 pages to just one battle is unusual³¹. Interestingly in terms of genre, the surviving 12th-century copy from Rievaulx Abbey refers to this text as a *relatio* – a report³² – i.e. *Relatio de standardo*.

In Aelred’s *Relatio de standardo*, who speaks these words about being instructed by the succession of kings and the varying outcomes of war, of having learned to project from the past to the present, and from the present to the future? The words are put in the mouth of Walter Espec. They are the opening words of his pre-battle motivational talk. Walter Espec was not only one of Anglo-Norman England’s most

²⁹ AELRED OF RIEVAULX – *Opera Omnia VI*, “Relatio de Standardo”, p. 62; AELRED OF RIEVAULX – *Aelred of Rievaulx, The Historical Works*, “The Battle of the Standard”, pp. 251-252.

³⁰ AELRED OF RIEVAULX – *Opera Omnia VI*, “Relatio de Standardo”, p. 59; AELRED OF RIEVAULX – *Aelred of Rievaulx, The Historical Works*, “The Battle of the Standard”, p. 247.

³¹ My thanks to the anonymous reviewer for *Medievalista* who pointed this out.

³² York, York Minster, Archives and Manuscripts, Ms. XVI/I/8, fols. 195r-199v.

significant noblemen but, more than this, he was the founder of Rievaulx Abbey (founded 1132). He had also played a formative role in Aelred's monastic life; the *Vita Aelredi* credits Walter with igniting Aelred's interest in joining the Rievaulx community in the first place³³. In *Relatio de standardo*, Walter speaks as the rousing leader of the pro-Stephen forces who will end out defeating the forces of King David of Scots and David's allegedly unworthy allies. But although Aelred places these words about history in the mouth of the layman Walter Espec³⁴, the words are also decidedly Aelred's.

We can see from the quote ascribed to Walter Espec that Aelred knew about medieval theories of good history; he knew that in the 12th century histories were meant to have a purpose³⁵. Later on, in *Relatio de standardo*, Aelred puts similar words in the mouth of another participant. Here Robert de Bruce reaches across enemy lines and tries to dissuade his old friend David from taking military action: "It is not wise, O king, to look only at the beginning of such matters and not also to their end, to neglect the memory of what is past and the thought of the future solely for the sake of the present."³⁶

Past, present, future – the message is that they are all connected. Think about them all, and act with respect to them all. The same logic appears in Aelred's three historical compositions directly addressed to royalty – first, Aelred's Lament on the death of King David I of Scots³⁷; second, the *Genealogia regum Anglorum*, which

³³ Aelred spent his last two nights before entering monastic life being welcomed and entertained by Walter Espec at Walter's castle at Helmsley, near Rievaulx. Here, Walter told Aelred things about the life of Rievaulx's monks that caused Aelred's spirit to "burn more and more with inexpressible joy", and, the following day, Walter personally accompanied Aelred on Aelred's visit to meet the monks, a visit which prompted Aelred to enter the community a day later; WALTER DANIEL – *The Life of Aelred of Rievaulx*, ch. 5, ch. 7, pp. 96-100.

³⁴ Walter Espec did have a personal interest in history; see discussion below.

³⁵ On various 12th-century historians' understandings of what that purpose might be, see STAUNTON, Michael – "Did the Purpose of History Change in England in the Twelfth Century?". In CLEAVER, Laura; WORM, Andrea (Eds.) – *Writing History in the Anglo-Norman World: Manuscripts, Makers and Readers, c.1066-c.1250*. Woodbridge and Rochester, NY: York Medieval Press, 2018, pp. 7-27.

³⁶ AELRED OF RIEVAULX – *Opera Omnia VI*, "Relatio de Standardo", p. 68; AELRED OF RIEVAULX – *Aelred of Rievaulx, The Historical Works*, "The Battle of the Standard", p. 261. A long-time friend of David, the influential baron Robert de Bruce nonetheless supported King Stephen in the civil war.

³⁷ Although some scholars refer to this as a *vita*, I use the term lament, since Aelred referred to it as a work brought together "not as history but as lamentation"; see n. 2 above. For the text see AELRED

rather than being a genealogy of the English kings is more correctly a genealogy tailored specifically to the 20-year old Duke/Count Henry as preparation for his intended future as King Henry II³⁸; and, third, Aelred's hagiography of Edward the Confessor, *Vita sancti Ædwardi Regis et Confessoris*, in which again Henry, who had now been King Henry II for almost a decade, was advised to learn from the past of Edward, and the present miracles of Edward, in order to perform his royal duties well in the future for "the consolation of all of us"³⁹.

Aelred wrote seven historical works⁴⁰. He seems to have begun writing them in the early 1150s, with a burst of energy in 1153-1155, but not all the dates are known. Or, perhaps he wrote only six histories, depending on whether or not we call his advice text about events at Watton monastery a history. Or, perhaps he wrote only five histories, depending on whether or not we call his lament of King David a history. (This semantics of counting how many of Aelred's historical texts are in fact "true" histories could go on! And, indeed, this goes to the heart of my argument, that is, that semantics are unhelpful. All seven works are historiographical productions, and I will examine all seven of the works.) Four have been mentioned already – *Relatio de standardo*, the Lament for King David, *Genealogia regum Anglorum*, and *Vita sancti Ædwardi Regis et Confessoris*. These share sufficient similarities that the Cistercian Publications English translation prints all four together⁴¹ – that similarity being the focus on political history and advice to secular leaders, mainly advice to Henry II. Here we can say that Aelred lived up to his birth name of Æthelred (noble

OF RIEVAULX – *Opera Omnia VI*, "Liber de vita religiosi David regis Scotie", pp. 5-21 and AELRED OF RIEVAULX – *Aelred of Rievaulx, The Historical Works*, "Lament for David, King of the Scots", pp. 45-70.

³⁸ The *Genealogia regum Anglorum* was written in 1153 or 1154, i.e. after the 1153 Treaty of Winchester had made it clear that Henry would eventually become King Henry II and before he actually did become king in late 1154. For political context, see HOLT, J. C. – "1153: The Treaty of Winchester". In KING, Edmund (Ed.) – *The Anarchy of King Stephen's Reign*. Oxford and New York: Clarendon, 1994, pp. 291-316.

³⁹ AELRED OF RIEVAULX – *Opera Omnia VII. Opera historica et hagiographica*. Ed. Francesco Marzella. Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis, 3A. Turnhout: Brepols, 2017, "Vita sancti Ædwardi Regis et Confessoris", pp. 85-181, at p. 88; AELRED OF RIEVAULX – *Aelred of Rievaulx, The Historical Works*, "The Life of Saint Edward, King and Confessor", p. 127.

⁴⁰ For a survey of Aelred's seven histories, their themes, and the publication histories and scholarly debates concerning them, see FREEMAN, Elizabeth – "Aelred as a Historian among Historians". In DUTTON, Marsha L. (Ed.) – *A Companion to Aelred of Rievaulx (1110-1167)*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017, pp. 113-146.

⁴¹ AELRED OF RIEVAULX – *Aelred of Rievaulx, The Historical Works*.

counsel). Aelred's other three historical writings are as follows⁴². There is *Vita sancti Niniani*, a hagiography of Ninian, the missionary saint of Scotland who had died more than half a millennium before Aelred's birth and for whom in the 12th century there was significant devotion yet few available facts from which to build a narrative. Aelred also composed *De sanctis Ecclesie Haugustaldensis et eorum miraculis*, an account of the miracles that the saints of Hexham were still performing at Hexham at the time of Aelred's composition (1154), centuries after their deaths⁴³. Finally, there is *De quodam miraculo mirabili*, a short text, in the guise of a letter, again focussing on miracles, which starts by referring to holy women at a nunnery in Bede's day centuries earlier but moves onto events at the same location in the present. That is, *De quodam miraculo mirabili* is Aelred's report on matters that he had been asked to examine at the Gilbertine double monastery of Watton in Yorkshire, dramatic events including emotional violence, a rape, a pregnancy, physical violence, a castration, and a miraculous delivery of the pregnancy, all intertwined with Aelred's own views on appropriate conduct in a monastery and appropriate leadership by the father abbot. Modern scholars have struggled to understand this text and the events it reports, but perhaps one way of looking at it is as a visitation report written before the genre of such reports had come into existence⁴⁴.

Generically, are all these seven works histories? No, and yes. We have hagiography, *relatio* (report), genealogy, lament, *translatio* of relics, aspects of the sermon, visitation report, letter, and *exemplum*, often all mixed together. That generic flexibility and combination is a hallmark of Aelred's historical works⁴⁵. Here, we may best refer to these works as historiographical narratives, or historiographical

⁴² These are translated in AELRED OF RIEVAULX – *Aelred of Rievaulx: The Lives of the Northern Saints*. Trans. Jane Patricia Freeland. Ed. Marsha L. Dutton. Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 2006.

⁴³ The best recent study is WHITNAH, Lauren L. – “Aelred of Rievaulx and the Saints of Hexham: Tradition, Innovation, and Devotion in Twelfth-Century Northern England”. *Church History* 87 (2018), pp. 1-30.

⁴⁴ For the interesting suggestion that this was a visitation report, a suggestion whose implications deserve more study, see DUTTON, Marsha L. – “Antiphonal Learning: Listening and Speaking in the Works of Aelred of Rievaulx”. *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 54 (2019), pp. 267-285, at p. 281.

⁴⁵ As Elias Dietz has perceptively noted, this is a hallmark of Aelred's oeuvre overall and is no doubt related to Aelred's commitment to examining ambivalence as well as attempts to reconcile apparent opposites; DIETZ, Elias – “Ambivalence Well Considered: An Interpretive Key to the Whole of Aelred's Works”. *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 47 (2012), pp. 71-85, esp. p. 72, and p. 81 for the mixture of genres in *De quodam miraculo mirabili*.

compositions – such terms allow us to recognise that the internal variety of genres is a characteristic feature of Aelred's historical writing. And, regardless of their mixture of genres, all Aelred's historiographical narratives are united by their inclusion of Aelred's explicit calls for his readers to learn from the virtuous, and unvirtuous, actions of people in the past.

Aelred was the first English Cistercian we know of who wrote historiographical narratives. Why did he take this initiative? In 1132 when Rievaulx was founded from Clairvaux, what historical interests did the founding French monks bring? The French Cistercians were not writing histories – they started doing that only later in the 12th century, and even then they did not write the royal or regional histories that Aelred would produce⁴⁶. On the other hand, between the 1120s and 1150s the French Cistercians wrote accounts of their origins in their *exordia* documents⁴⁷, and it is noteworthy that Aelred's *Relatio de standardo* includes a short section describing the origins of Rievaulx and Fountains abbeys (and, very briefly, the origin of England's first Cistercian foundation, Waverley Abbey)⁴⁸ – this is effectively an *exordium* for the Cistercians in England. And we know that Aelred had already been interested in history before he entered monastic life. While Aelred was still steward to King David of Scots, Laurence of Durham composed a hagiography of Saint Brigid and dedicated it to Aelred⁴⁹. I wonder if Aelred brought that copy of the Life of Brigid with him when he entered Rievaulx in 1134?

Born in 1110, Aelred reached adulthood at the very time that England witnessed a boom in history-writing. All over England, monks, canons, and secular clergy were

⁴⁶ On the (surprisingly few) 12th-century Cistercian chronicles and hagiographies, see TOCK, Benoît-Michel – "Les Cisterciens et l'écrit au XII^e siècle: considerations générales". In BAUDIN, Arnaud; MORELLE, Laurent (Eds.). *Les pratiques de l'écrit dans les abbayes cisterciennes (XII^e - milieu du XVI^e siècle)*. Paris: Somogy, 2016, pp. 15-29, esp. pp. 16-17.

⁴⁷ I refer here to the *Carta caritatis*, *Exordium parvum*, and *Exordium cistercii*. Modern scholarship on the dates, authors, and purposes of these documents has taken many twists and turns in the last century. For an excellent survey of stages in the debate, and a further contribution to it, see NEWMAN, Martha G. – "Reformed Monasticism and the Narrative of Cistercian Beginnings". *Church History* 90 (2021), pp. 537-556, esp. pp. 542-545.

⁴⁸ AELRED OF RIEVAULX – *Opera Omnia VI*, "Relatio de Standardo", p. 61; AELRED OF RIEVAULX – *Aelred of Rievaulx, The Historical Works*, "The Battle of the Standard", pp. 249-251.

⁴⁹ LAURENCE OF DURHAM – "Epistola Laurentii ad amicum suum Ethelredum". Ed. HOSTE, Dom A. – "A Survey of the Unedited Work of Laurence of Durham With an Edition of His Letter to Aelred of Rievaulx". *Sacris Erudiri* 11 (1960), pp. 263-265. Addressed to Aelred in Aelred's role as *dispensator* to King David of Scots, this letter must have been written before Aelred became a monk in 1134.

busy writing, re-writing, and disseminating new historical compositions, especially between the 1120s and 1150s⁵⁰. There was William of Malmesbury's *Gesta regum Anglorum*, available from the mid-1120s, and a copy of which William sent to King David while the teenaged Aelred was living at the Scottish king's court (perhaps Aelred became aware of this historical text even before he had joined monastic life)⁵¹. Another new composition was Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum*, which the author disseminated in updated editions between around 1140 and the mid-1150s⁵². Rievaulx's founder Walter Espec, at whose home Aelred had spent his last nights before entering Rievaulx, seems to have been a history enthusiast. At some stage before 1147 Walter had taken the initiative to seek out Geoffrey of Monmouth's patron Robert, Earl of Gloucester and procure from him a copy of Geoffrey's newly composed *De gestis Britonum* (i.e. *Historia regum Britanniae*). Walter then kept this borrowed book for an unknown time at his castle at Helmsley (within walking distance of Rievaulx Abbey), before he then lent it to a third party, probably before 1150⁵³. I can imagine Walter Espec and Aelred discussing history over the years⁵⁴. Walter may well have given history books to Rievaulx, which would be exactly the kind of support a founder might engage in.

⁵⁰ STAUNTON, Michael – *The Historians of Angevin England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, p. 23 for a list. There are about 20 known histories composed between the 1120s-1150s. Staunton includes two works by Aelred – *Relatio de standardo* and *Genealogia regum Anglorum*.

⁵¹ In 1125 or 1126, soon after its composition, the *Gesta regum Anglorum* was sent from Malmesbury to David's court, with the request that David present the text to the Empress Matilda. This was the start of the *Genealogia regum Anglorum*'s widespread dissemination; TAHKOKALLIO, Jaakko – *The Anglo-Norman Historical Canon: Publishing and Manuscript Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019, pp. 18-33, at pp. 18-22.

⁵² TAHKOKALLIO, Jaakko – *The Anglo-Norman Historical Canon*, ch. 3, “Henry of Huntingdon”, esp. pp. 39-42, 47. Henry of Huntingdon completed five versions of his history. The third version, which Henry released in around 1141/1142, was the first version to take the narrative up to 1138 and therefore the first version that included Henry's account of the Battle of the Standard. It was also the first version that was actively circulated (in fact, circulated by the author himself).

⁵³ On Walter's book ownership and lending, see GEFFREI GAIMAR – *Estoire des Engleis | History of the English*. Ed. and trans. Ian Short. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, vv 6436-6482, at 6445-6459. The date at which Robert of Gloucester lent Walter the copy of *De gestis Britonum* is debated (but it must have been before Robert's death in 1147), and has implications for the early circulation history of Geoffrey of Monmouth's text as well as for the composition date of Geffrei Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis*. For a reassessment of earlier dating estimates, see DALTON, Paul – “The Date of Geffrei Gaimar's 'Estoire des Engleis', The Connections of his Patrons, and the Politics of Stephen's Reign”. *Chaucer Review* 42 (2007), pp. 23-47. On the implications of this debate, see TAHKOKALLIO, Jaakko – *The Anglo-Norman Historical Canon*, p. 57, n. 153.

⁵⁴ On Walter Espec's ongoing connections with Rievaulx, including his visits to the abbey, see JAMROZIAK, Emilia – *Rievaulx Abbey and its Social Context, 1132-1300: Memory, Locality, and Networks*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2005, ch. 1, esp. p. 38.

Aelred's many contacts at Durham could also have given him access to books, either by sending texts to Rievaulx or by permitting Aelred to consult histories on-site at Durham. Aelred's father died at Durham, as a monk, and had long been interested in hagiography himself⁵⁵. Aelred was certainly at Durham's Benedictine monastery in December 1138 around the time of his father's death there⁵⁶, and at a time when the Durham monks were in the midst of a decades-long campaign of writing and copying histories⁵⁷. In late 1138 the recent events of the Battle of the Standard must have been on people's lips at Durham. Aelred knew about the long national histories that other historians were composing and distributing in the 1130s and 1140s. He did not write this type of long chronologically-focussed history that commenced the chronology way back in the 5th century – given his abbatial responsibilities, as well as chronic ill-health in his last decade of life, he probably did not have the time or opportunity to write long histories! – but he did use such material as sources in his own texts. Aelred's *Genealogia regum Anglorum*, in particular, is the product of wide reading and synthesis, and Aelred used Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum* as a base for his Battle of the Standard history⁵⁸.

⁵⁵ *The Durham 'Liber vitae': London, British Library, MS Cotton Domitian A.VII. Edition and Digital Facsimile with Introduction, Codicological, Prosopographical and Linguistic Commentary, and Indexes, Including the Biographical Register of Durham Cathedral Priory (1083-1539)* by A. J. Piper. Ed. David and Lynda Rollason, vol. 3. London: British Library, 2007, p. 100; and RICHARD OF HEXHAM – *The Priory of Hexham, its Chroniclers, Endowments, and Annals*, vol. 1. Durham: Surtees Society, 1864, “Prior Richard's History of the Church of Hexham” [*Ricardus prior Hagustaldensis et statu et episcopis Hagustaldensis Ecclesiae*], pp. 1-62, at ch. 10, p. 56; LAURENCE OF DURHAM – “*Epistola Laurentii ad amicum suum Ethelredum*”, p. 263, where we read that, although Laurence sent his *Vita Brigidae* to Aelred, Aelred's father had commissioned the *vita*.

⁵⁶ RICHARD OF HEXHAM – “Prior Richard's History”, ch. 9, pp. 55-56, where Aelred was a witness to his father's transfer of property from Hexham to Durham.

⁵⁷ On the explosion of interest in history texts at Durham at this time, see ROZIER, Charles C. – “Compiling Chronicles in Anglo-Norman Durham, c. 1100-30”. In CHURCH, S. D. (Ed.) – *Anglo-Norman Studies 42: Proceedings of the Battle Conference 2019*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2020, pp. 119-134.

⁵⁸ The textual similarities between Henry of Huntingdon's and Aelred's discussions of the Battle of the Standard provide important, but still not definitive, evidence for the composition date of Aelred's *Relatio de standardo*; there remains more research to do. As noted in n. 52 above, Henry of Huntingdon described the Battle of the Standard in the third and subsequent versions of his history (disseminated from 1141/42 onwards). I think it much more likely that Aelred would have used a copy of Henry's history rather than that Aelred would have written *Relatio* before 1141 and that Henry of Huntingdon could have somehow gained access to a copy of it and used it as a basis for his own description of the battle. The late 12th-century Rievaulx library catalogue lists a copy of “*Historia Henrici*”, and this may suggest that Rievaulx owned a copy of Henry's history in Aelred's day some decades earlier; HOSTE, Anselm – *Bibliotheca Aelrediana*, “Catalogue of Rievaulx. Critical Edition”, nr 114, p. 161.

Reconciliation, harmony, integration, unity, peace – modern scholars use all these words to describe the underlying goal of Aelred’s political histories⁵⁹. In *Relatio de standardo*, men who used to be friends are now torn apart by conflict, and the speeches Aelred puts in people’s mouths urge everyone: please, reconcile. In *Vita sancti Edwardi Regis et Confessoris*, Aelred stuck closely to his source, Osbert of Clare’s 1138 *Vita beati Eadwardi*. However, he changed Osbert’s interpretation of Edward’s deathbed vision. In the vision, Edward prophesied that England’s woes would end when a green tree, cut from its trunk and planted three yokes away from its root, was restored to its root and bore fruit. Osbert had written that the prophecy was yet to be fulfilled, but Aelred wrote that Henry II had in fact rejoined the tree and root, with Edward prophesying as such. Not once but twice, Aelred urges Henry II to live up to his happy genealogy and to serve as the “cornerstone” in whom “the two walls of the English and Norman people have met”⁶⁰. Aelred’s historical writings gave multiple messages at once. His *vita* of Saint Edward was certainly a hagiography of Edward, suitable for the task that Westminster’s abbot had commissioned Aelred to complete in preparation for Edward’s translation in 1163, and his hagiography of Edward was also a stirring call to King Henry II. Aelred’s *Relatio de standardo* was a vivid report on some select aspects⁶¹ of a notable battle that took place during the historical construct that historians call “The Anarchy”, and it was also a praise of friendship, a foundation history of English Cistercian houses, and an ode to Rievaulx’s founder, Walter Espec.

And then there is the Lament for David, king of Scots. Here we have clear evidence of Aelred knowing that the purposes of his historical compositions could both change and be changed, as future situations demanded. Both Aelred and his biographer Walter Daniel were clear that Aelred wrote the Lament for David as a

⁵⁹ Aelred’s call for reconciliation was identified in the path-breaking study by SQUIRE, Aelred – *Aelred of Rievaulx: A Study*. Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1981, pp. 92-97. However, the implications of these points remained unpursued by scholars until the research of Marsha Dutton, e.g. DUTTON, Marsha L. – “Ælred Historian: Two Portraits in Plantagenet Myth”. *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 28 (1993), pp. 112-143.

⁶⁰ AELRED OF RIEVAULX – *Opera Omnia VII*, “*Aelredi vita sancti Edwardi Regis*”, pp. 88-89 and pp. 154-155; AELRED OF RIEVAULX – *Aelred of Rievaulx, The Historical Works*, “The Life of Saint Edward, King and Confessor”, pp. 127, 207-209.

⁶¹ It actually paid very little attention to the fighting itself.

free-standing text in its own right, before he later effectively recycled it⁶². The Lament contains Aelred’s personal response to the death in 1153 of the “most gentle lord and friend” at whose court he had grown up, the man who had entrusted Aelred with the post of royal steward and who had “granted all my requests”⁶³ (although, interestingly, it has fewer personal recollections than one might imagine.) What the Lament also contains is an appeal to the people of “O desolate Scotland” to do something in the future to repay what the “holy and devout” David gave them. What they must do is put their trust in David’s grandsons: “Above all, may the peril of the English teach you to trust in kings and to preserve mutual concord among yourselves, lest strangers devour your country before your eyes”⁶⁴. In other words: people in Scotland, do not fall into the same mess that England has fallen into with its two decades of civil war – make sure you accept the legitimacy of legitimate kingship.

After completing the Lament for David, Aelred then re-used it. He must have done this recycling quickly; so his explanatory text to Henry indicates. David had died in May 1153, and the Lament for David would have been written soon after that. In November 1153 the Treaty of Winchester guaranteed (although at the time there was always the possibility that the treaty would be broken) that Henry would succeed Stephen as king. Between the end of 1153 and the end of 1154 (when Henry suddenly did become king) Aelred wrote his text for Henry. Specifically, at some stage over this approximately one-year period, Aelred incorporated the Lament into the genealogy he was writing for Henry in the lead-up to Henry’s expected elevation to the kingship. This combined work is the text eventually known as the *Genealogia regum Anglorum*, although Aelred does specify that it is Henry’s genealogy he is writing. And what a fortunate genealogy Henry possessed. The first thing Aelred mentions is Henry’s mother: “You then, good Sir, are the son of the most illustrious

⁶² AELRED OF RIEVAULX – *Opera Omnia VI*, “*Genealogia regum Anglorum*”, *Epistola*, p. 4; AELRED OF RIEVAULX – *Aelred of Rievaulx, The Historical Works*, “The Genealogy of the Kings of the English”, “Epistle to Duke Henry”, p. 43; and see n. 3 above.

⁶³ AELRED OF RIEVAULX – *Opera Omnia VI*, “*Liber de vita religiosi David regis Scotie*”, p. 21; AELRED OF RIEVAULX – *Aelred of Rievaulx, The Historical Works*, “Lament for David, King of the Scots”, pp. 69-70.

⁶⁴ AELRED OF RIEVAULX – *Opera Omnia VI*, “*Liber de vita religiosi David regis Scotie*”, p. 15; AELRED OF RIEVAULX – *Aelred of Rievaulx, The Historical Works*, “Lament for David, King of the Scots”, pp. 60-61.

Empress Matilda”⁶⁵. This was important to point out, since Henry’s maternal lineage gave Henry his royal legitimacy of descent. But, having established the maternal lineage, Aelred was more interested in giving examples of the moral rather than familial descent that Henry inherited from his royal forebears, that is, the descent of virtue. Aelred wrote that Henry’s ancestor King Alfred prospered for the very reason that “the Lord was with him and directed his deeds”⁶⁶. King Edgar was called the Peaceful, Aelred writes, and the first example Aelred includes is that there was peace for the church.

As Aelred also stressed, Henry must live up to all this inheritance of virtue. By learning about the past, Henry could learn about the future. The composite text directed at Henry still included within it the Lament’s appeal to the people of Scotland, but that was no problem. Aelred had re-purposed the Lament and redirected it to a new audience, but the overall message remained valid – kingdoms need legitimate, recognised, and stable kingship. And, very important in Aelred’s worldview, a collaboration between monarchs and church leaders was essential. So, when Aelred gave the Lament a second life by embedding it within Henry’s genealogy, he turned it from a lament into a more definitely historical work, one in which David’s example of guiding moral virtue and royal-ecclesiastical collaboration became a model for Henry to emulate.

In presuming to write Duke/Count Henry’s genealogy in late 1153/early 1154, at a time when no one knew how long it would be before Henry actually would, if ever, take the throne, Aelred asserted himself as another one of those guiding church men. Presuming to give a future king advice on how that king should learn from the past in order to facilitate a harmonious community in the future – Aelred’s genealogy for Henry is a confident intervention, by Aelred, in the future of the realm.

⁶⁵ AELRED OF RIEVAULX – *Opera Omnia VI*, “*Genealogia Regum Anglorum*”, pp. 22-23; AELRED OF RIEVAULX – *Aelred of Rievaulx, The Historical Works*, “The Genealogy of the Kings of the English”, p. 72.

⁶⁶ AELRED OF RIEVAULX – *Opera Omnia VI*, “*Genealogia Regum Anglorum*”, p. 31; AELRED OF RIEVAULX – *Aelred of Rievaulx, The Historical Works*, “The Genealogy of the Kings of the English”, p. 84, citing Genesis 39: 23.

Finally, a simple but important point is worth emphasising. When Aelred wrote his seven historical works, he was an abbot. This abbatial role helps us understand the pastoral imperative driving Aelred's history writing as well as the differences between his historiographical compositions and those of other 12th century historians. Many authors composed histories in 12th century England, but how many of them were abbots? Aelred, yes. No others spring to mind. As abbot, Aelred necessarily interacted with influential lay people; his monastic community was influenced by their needs, actions, and conflicts. As abbot, he acted as a shepherd for his monastic community members, he gave sermons to them, supervised the rebuilding campaign of Rievaulx's church, and more. And, while Walter Daniel emphasized the gentle side of abbot Aelred, we must not forget that Aelred was quite capable of giving stern advice when needed, as shown in his synodal sermons to prelates⁶⁷ as well as his exhortations to Duke/King Henry and other secular leaders in his historical writings. Why then should we be surprised that Aelred's historical writings are so clearly messages of abbatial pedagogy and hope, mixed with clear-eyed practicality; why be surprised that they contain elements of sermons and a deep devotion to holy church places; why be surprised that his account of the Hexham saints Aelred invokes personal knowledge from his youth to explain how a mix-up occurred in the labelling of relics⁶⁸; why be surprised that so often his histories counsel lay leaders to seek and maintain peace, especially since, for his first 20 years in monastic life, Aelred had never known a kingdom at peace? Overall, Aelred's historical writings offer much hope to their readers, and much hope for the future, and I think there is a connection here with his activities as abbot.

Genre Again

In proposing that no single generic criterion can capture the complexity of medieval history-writing, Ramunė Markevičiūtė advises that, among other things, the text's context be borne in mind, for example, the relationship of the text with its regional and literary environment. A benefit of this recognition is that it can help the scholar to identify a relationship between form and function. As Markevičiūtė notes: “Often

⁶⁷ LÜTZELSCHWAB, Ralf – “*Vos de coelis originem ducitis*”, pp. 72-73.

⁶⁸ AELRED OF RIEVAULX – *Opera Omnia VI*, “*De sanctis ecclesie Haugustaldensis*”, pp. 104-106; AELRED OF RIEVAULX – *Aelred of Rievaulx: The Lives of the Northern Saints*, “The Saints of the Church of Hexham and their Miracles”, p. 102.

it is the environment of a text's creation that determines its structure"⁶⁹. This point can fruitfully be extended beyond the text's creation to its reception. With Aelred's historical compositions, medieval manuscript compilations provide useful insights into the meanings these texts held for later medieval audiences. By the late 12th century Rievaulx Abbey owned a manuscript containing Aelred's *vitae* of Ninian and Edward, his *De sanctis Ecclesie Haugustaldensis et eorum miraculis*, and also his *Genealogia regum Anglorum*⁷⁰. The manuscript was copied out as an integrated whole, planned and written from the outset as a compilation of these four Aelredian texts. The manuscript compilation both reflected a sense that these four texts somehow belonged together and further perpetuated that sense for all the Rievallian monks who would have consulted the manuscript over the centuries until the abbey's dissolution in the 16th century. Part of the attraction would no doubt have been that these were texts written by Aelred, the most well-known English Cistercian of the Middle Ages and abbot of Rievaulx's own community. In addition to this, when Rievaulx's monks read this manuscript, they were connecting with Aelred as a historian. And the generic variety within Aelred's historiographical practice – genealogy, *vita*, sermon, *relatio*, letter, and more – was in keeping with Aelred's pastoral and public roles as abbot. Thus, in reading these historical works, Aelred's readers through the centuries were (and still are today) also connecting with Aelred the abbot and teacher.

⁶⁹ MARKEVIČIŪTĖ, Ramunė – "Rethinking the Chronicle", pp. 188-189, and quote at p. 188.

⁷⁰ HOSTE, Anselm – *Bibliotheca Aelrediana*, "Catalogue of Rievaulx. Critical Edition", nr 43, pp. 153-154. This manuscript dates from the second half of the 12th century and is now London, British Library, Cotton Ms. Vitellius F III. For Pezzini's editorial discussion, see AELRED OF RIEVAULX – *Opera Omnia VI*, "Philological Introduction", pp. 31*-32*.

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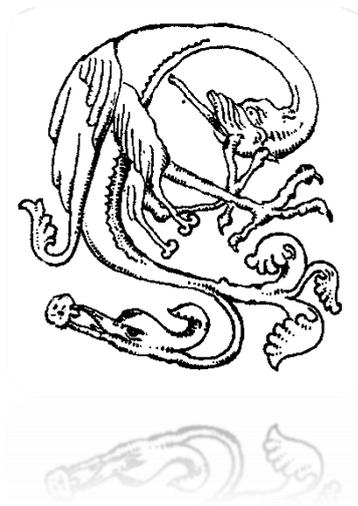
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