

Aelred of Rievaulx and the Saints of Hexham: Tradition, Innovation, and Devotion in Twelfth-Century Northern England

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*This article examines a little-studied work by Aelred of Rievaulx (d. 1167): his tractate on the miracles of the saints of Hexham—referred to here as *Miracula*—composed for the feast of the saints’ translation in 1154/1155. While *Miracula* has been incidental to the prolific scholarship on Aelred, this article brings it back to the center of Aelred’s life and thought. It describes *Miracula* in some detail, putting to rest any speculation that Aelred was not the text’s author through a careful treatment of the surviving manuscripts. It then explores Aelred’s sophisticated notions of who the saints were, how they inhabited Hexham, and what he and his audience expected the saints to do on their behalf. Finally, it demonstrates that Aelred intentionally combined local traditions about the saints with his own modern Cistercian concerns about spiritual life to produce an innovative meditation on saints, miracles, and veneration. *Miracula* allows scholars to see Aelred not only as a preeminent reformed Cistercian thinker but also as someone formed by and committed to the ongoing cult of the local saints.*

IN 1138, the last married priest of Hexham gave up his property. Eilaf II, who had inherited his clerical position and the property that accompanied it from his father and grandfather, surrendered his claim to the living of Hexham and confirmed his donation by handing over “a silver cross, in which the relics of the holy confessors and bishops Acca and Alchmund were contained”¹ to the prior of the new foundation of Augustinian canons. Eilaf II’s sons witnessed his donation, renouncing their own claims to the property

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¹Richard of Hexham, *Brevis annotatio*, as *Historia Hagustaldensis ecclesiae*, in *The Priory of Hexham*, ed. James Raine, Surtees Society 44 (London: Surtees Society, 1864) (hereafter cited as *Brevis annotatio*), 55. All translations of *Brevis annotatio* are my own.

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and position. The canons who received the donation, the Cistercians who witnessed the grant, and the reformed Benedictines at Durham who welcomed Eilaf into their midst were all part of a new world of changing monastic orders in the twelfth century.² The old world of hereditary priesthood was passing away, marked in this case by the symbolic donation of a reliquary containing bits of ancient local saints.

Seventeen years later, the canons decided to hold a formal ceremonial translation of the relics of the local saints at Hexham: the same saints whose relics had confirmed Eilaf II's grant, as well as several others. To mark the occasion, they asked one of Eilaf II's sons to return to his hometown and preach a sermon on the merits and miracles of the saints. Æthelred agreed, wrote a sermon for the occasion, preached it on March 3, 1154/1155, and revised the sermon into a brief tractate on the saints of Hexham and their miracles. Æthelred is most commonly known today by the Latinized version of his name and his monastery: that is, Eilaf II's son was Aelred of Rievaulx, the Cistercian monk famous for his treatises on monastic life (*De spirituali amicitia* and *Speculum caritatis*), his histories (*Relatio de standardo* and *De genealogia regum Anglorum*), and hagiographies (vitae of Edward the Confessor and Ninian, bishop of Whithorn).³ Yet in Aelred's discussion of the saints of Hexham, referred to here as *Miracula*,⁴ we can see him working through his own family history and local tradition, navigating carefully between personal commitments and monastic concerns.

²Richard of Hexham says those present included Cistercians (William, abbot of Rievaulx, and Æthelred, one of Eilaf's sons [that is, Aelred of Rievaulx]); Benedictines (Maurice the subprior, Aldred the *secretarius*, and Henry, a monk, all of Durham); Augustinians (a canon of Hexham named Richard, presumably the author); and Eilaf's two other sons, Samuel and Ethelwold: *Brevis annotatio*, 55. Eilaf was commemorated by the Benedictine monks at Durham in two of their memorial books: the Durham *Liber Vitae* (London, British Library, MS Cotton Domitian A.VII, fol. 46r) and the Durham Cantor's Book (Durham, Chapter Library, MS B.IV.24, fol. 38v). For the Durham *Liber Vitae*, which mentions three different Eilafs (although only one is indicated as *presbiter*), see David Rollason and Lynda Rollason, *The Durham "Liber Vitae": London, British Library, MS Cotton Domitian A.VII*, 3 vols. (London: British Library, 2007), 3:100. For the Durham Cantor's Book and the identification of Eilaf, see A. J. Piper, "Early Lists and Obits of the Durham Monks," in *Symeon: Historian of Durham and the North*, ed. David Rollason (Stamford: Shaun Tyas, 1998), 169. For developments in monastic life in the twelfth century generally, see Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

³For Aelred's works, see Anselm Hoste, *Bibliotheca Aelrediana: A Survey of the Manuscripts, Old Catalogues, Editions, and Studies Concerning St. Aelred of Rievaulx* (Steenbrugge: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962); Pierre-André Burton, *Bibliotheca Aelrediana Secunda: Une bibliographie cumulative (1962–1996)*, Textes et études du moyen âge 7 (Louvain-la-neuve: Fédération International des Institutes d'Études Médiévales, 1997); and Richard Sharpe, *A Handlist of the Latin Writers of Great Britain and Ireland Before 1540* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 28–30.

⁴The text has been edited and printed with a variety of titles. I discuss my choice of *Miracula* below on p. 6.

Miracula reveals an Aelred caught between the demands of past and present, between the old world and the new. Devotion to the ancient local saints remained an important element of Aelred's spiritual life and of the vibrant religious practices of the reformed canons and lay people of Hexham. I will first discuss *Miracula*, treating the evidence for Aelred's authorship (particularly the surviving manuscripts of the text) and its content. I will then turn to a detailed examination of the cult of the Hexham saints itself, particularly as *Miracula* reveals it. I will end by suggesting how this text complicates the image of Aelred as a reformed Cistercian, arguing that *Miracula* reveals its author's deep commitment to the local past and the local saints even as he remained the preeminent regional figure for the new monasticism. The local saints of the distant past remained a dynamic spiritual force in Aelred's life.

Aelred's work on the saints of Hexham has been largely incidental to the prolific scholarship on his life and writings that has emerged in the past fifty years. An interest in Aelred's "spiritual" writings and sermons has dominated Aelredian scholarship.⁵ Many scholars have been interested in Aelred as a Cistercian and as a representative figure of Cistercian spirituality; these questions have been the domain largely, although not exclusively, of scholars who are themselves professed Cistercians. Other scholars have been interested in Aelred's historical writing, examining Aelred's works as sources for twelfth-century events in light of his political context.⁶ Finally, some

⁵Much of this scholarly work has appeared in such journals as *Collectanea Cisterciensia* and *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*, which have particular interests in Cistercian religious life and thought, both historically and contemporaneously. See, among others: Pierre-André Burton, "Aux origines de l'expansion anglaise de Cîteaux (I)," *Collectanea Cisterciensia* 61, no. 3 (1999): 186–214; republished as Burton, "The Beginnings of Cistercian Expansion in England: The Socio-Historical Context of the Foundation of Rievaulx," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (2007): 151–182; 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); Elias Dietz, "Ælred on the Capital Vices: A Unique Voice among the Cistercians," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 43, no. 3 (2008): 271–293; Dietz "L'ambivalence bien réfléchie: Une clé de lecture pour l'ensemble des oeuvres d'Aelred," *Collectanea Cisterciensia* 73, no. 1 (2011): 13–26; Amédée Hallier, *The Monastic Theology of Aelred of Rievaulx*, trans. Columban Heaney, *Cistercian Studies Series 2* (Spencer, Mass.: Cistercian, 1969); David Knowles, *Saints and Scholars: Twenty-five Medieval Portraits* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 34–50; Aelred Squire, *Aelred of Rievaulx: A Study* (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian, 1981); and Chrysgonus Waddell, "The Hidden Years of Ælred of Rievaulx: The Formation of a Spiritual Master," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (2006): 51–63.

⁶See Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England, c. 550–1307* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1974), 212–216; Elizabeth Freeman, *Narratives of a New Order: Cistercian Historical Writing in England, 1150–1220*, *Medieval Church Studies 2* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 19–87; and Marsha Dutton, "A Historian's Historian: The Place of Bede in Aelred's Contributions to the New History of His Age," in *Truth as Gift: Studies in Medieval Cistercian History in Honor of John R. Sommerfeldt*, ed. Marsha Dutton, Daniel M. LaCorte, and Paul Lockey, *Cistercian Studies Series 204* (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian, 2004), 407–448. For contextualizing Aelred's writing in a Yorkshire Cistercian context, see also Janet Burton, *The*

scholars have taken a psychoanalytic and psychosexual approach to Aelred's writing, speculating about his family relationships and his sexual identity.⁷ These different approaches have, unsurprisingly, focused on different texts in Aelred's corpus. However, despite wide-ranging scholarly interest in Aelred, *Miracula* remains remarkably understudied.

We might expect that scholars in each of the three streams of Aelredian historiography would find the text useful for their purposes. *Miracula* reveals Aelred's sophisticated and affective thought about the role of the saints in personal devotion, highly relevant material for those interested in spirituality. He describes events of the eleventh and early twelfth centuries in some detail, valuable for historians interested in the events of Aelred's own lifetime. He gives information about his family and his own early life not attested by his hagiographer, Walter Daniel, as he describes miraculous events in the distant past and in his own present. Thus, *Miracula* expands our knowledge of Aelred's own biography.

Yet the gap in scholarly attention toward *Miracula*—to which Brian Patrick McGuire drew attention twenty years ago⁸—has still not been addressed for several reasons. Among the few scholars who have dealt with the text, there has been widespread disparagement of its style. For instance, James Raine, the nineteenth-century editor of *Miracula* for the Surtees Society, complained that “the arrangement is faulty and confusing; the style often turgid and weak; and the whole work is perhaps the writer's poorest effort,”⁹ an opinion that has been shared, albeit often with more moderation, by numerous scholars interested in Aelred.¹⁰

Monastic Order in Yorkshire, 1069–1215, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 277–306.

⁷See especially John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 221–226; and the response of Marsha Dutton, “Ælred of Rievaulx on Friendship, Chastity, and Sex: The Sources,” *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (1994): 121–196. See also Brian Patrick McGuire, *Brother and Lover: Aelred of Rievaulx* (New York: Crossroad, 1994); and McGuire, “Sexual Awareness and Identity in Aelred of Rievaulx (1110–1167),” *American Benedictine Review* 45, no. 2 (June 1994): 184–226.

⁸Aelred's goals in *Miracula* “emphasize a part of his mental universe that is usually ignored or considered only in passing”: McGuire, *Brother and Lover*, 83. For example, a recent volume “Intentio cordis: Temps, histoire, mémoire chez Aelred de Rievaulx,” ed. Sophie Vaujour and Pierre-André Burton, special issue, *Collectanea Cisterciensia* 73, no. 1 (2011) dedicated to Aelred's thought and work contained only two cursory references to *Miracula*. The only comprehensive scholarly treatment of the text to date is Aelred Squire, “Aelred and the Northern Saints,” *Collectanea Ordinis Cisterciensium Reformatorum* 23 (1961): 58–69.

⁹Raine, *Priory of Hexham*, lxxv.

¹⁰Aelred Squire describes the contents as “folk tales with all their vivid crudeness and violence” in *Aelred of Rievaulx*, 113; Pierre-André Burton identifies “nombreuses imperfections littéraires” in *Ælred de Rievaulx 1110–1167*, 494; and Marsha Dutton notes its “curiously old-fashioned air” in *Aelred of Rievaulx: The Lives of the Northern Saints*, Cistercian Fathers Series 71 (Kalamazoo,

Moreover, the attribution of *Miracula* to Aelred has not always been secure; Aelred's authorship has been disputed particularly since *Miracula* is not in Walter Daniel's list of Aelred's works.¹¹ Furthermore, *Miracula* begins with the remark that "this festival is particularly ours"¹² which could certainly suggest that it was written by one of the Augustinian canons resident at Hexham rather than by a Cistercian abbot from Yorkshire. However, there is ample evidence to support the attribution of the text to Aelred. Raine astutely pointed out that since the text was intended to be read on subsequent celebrations of the feast, the author would necessarily consider the lector of the text; Aelred could certainly have spoken of "our festival" without any incongruity.¹³ Furthermore, Aelred's own biographical connections to Hexham, discussed below, would have been enough to merit this language of strong association and even ownership of the place. Despite the shifts in political regime, tenurial status, and form of religious life at Hexham over the previous century, Aelred could still identify with the place and was still active in devotion to its saints. However, the most persuasive argument for Aelred's authorship comes from the three surviving manuscripts of the text; the manuscript evidence can put concerns about Aelred's authorship to rest.

I. AELRED'S AUTHORSHIP OF *MIRACULA*

The limited scholarship on Aelred's work on the saints of Hexham cites the text using the title printed by James Raine, *De sanctis ecclesiae Haugustaldensis*, although Raine admitted that this title came from Jean Mabillon's printing for the *Acta sanctorum* in the seventeenth century.¹⁴ In the three surviving

Mich.: Cistercian, 2006), 16. Maurice Powicke, however, called *Miracula* "a skillful and attractive bit of writing": F. M. Powicke, trans., introduction to *The Life of Ailred of Rievaulx by Walter Daniel* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1950), xxxviii.

¹¹Walter Daniel, *Vita Ailredi*, in *The Life of Ailred of Rievaulx*, trans. Powicke, 41–42.

¹²My translation. Aelred of Rievaulx, *Miracula sanctorum patrum qui in ecclesia Hagustaldensis requiescunt* (hereafter cited as *Miracula*), as *De sanctis ecclesiae Haugustaldensis et eorum miraculis libellus in Priory of Hexham*, ed. Raine, 173–174: "Nostra namque, nostra specialiter est ista festivitas, qui in his sacratissimis locis sub eorum patroncinio vivimus, quorum honori diei hujus gaudia dedicavimus."

¹³Raine, *Priory of Hexham*, 174, note d: "We must look upon the author as considering the reader of this Prologue, and not himself, and we must regard him as choosing words which the canon who recited them to his brethren could use with the most perfect propriety on each recurring anniversary of their festive day."

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 173, note a. Mabillon called the work "De sanctis ecclesiae Haugustaldensis et eorum miraculis liber auctore anonymo canonico regulari, medio saeculo 12 ex ms Bibliotheca Bodlejana Oxoniae in Anglia": *Acta Sanctorum Ordinis S. Benedictis*, saec. 3, pars 1 (Venice, 1668), 204.

manuscripts, only one contains a title: the rubric “Here begin the miracles of the holy fathers who rest in the holy church of Hexham, dictated by venerable abbot Æthelred.”¹⁵ An early library catalog from Rievaulx lists among its contents “On the miracles of the church of Hexham,” clearly referring to this text and almost certainly describing a surviving manuscript discussed in more detail below.¹⁶ As the early evidence for the text suggests that the miracles were its primary identifying feature, I will follow the manuscript evidence in calling it *Miracula* here.¹⁷ Internal evidence makes clear that part of the text was preached at Hexham on the occasion of the saints’ translation on March 3, 1154/1155. Because it also contains a narrative description of that translation liturgy, it is evident that Aelred revised the text after he preached it and before his death in 1167, a reasonably narrow window for composition and revision.

The manuscript evidence for Aelred’s authorship is compelling. *Miracula* survives in its most complete form in three manuscripts, all of which seem to have been copied before the end of the twelfth century and have a northern English provenance.¹⁸ These manuscripts are: (1) London, British Library, MS Additional 38816, folios 1r–17v, hereafter referred to as *A*; (2) London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius F.iii, folios 77r–93v, hereafter referred to as *F*; and (3) Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 668, folios 62r–78r, hereafter referred to as *L*.

¹⁵London, British Library, MS Add. 38816, fol. 1r: “Incipiunt miracula sanctorum patrum qui in sancta Hagustaldensis ecclesiae requiescunt, dictata a uenerabili Hethelredo abbate.”

¹⁶The catalog is found in Cambridge, Jesus College, MS 34 [Q.B.17], fols. 1r–5r. This particular volume is mentioned on fol.1v–2r. This volume is almost certainly London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius F.iii (hereafter referred to as *F*).

¹⁷*Bibliotheca hagiographica Latina antiquae et mediae aetatis* (hereafter cited as *BHL*) (Brussels: Société de bollandistes, 1986), 3747, under the title *Libellus de sanctis ecclesiae Hagustaldensis et eorum miraculis* (auctore Aelredo abbate Rievallensi?).

¹⁸*Miracula* was also epitomized in London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius A.xx, fols. 239v–241r [Tynemouth, s. xiii] which summarizes the events incident by incident, following the structure of *Miracula*. Confusingly, the epitome in Vitellius A.xx was printed by Raine with almost exactly the same *capitulum* that is found in manuscripts of the full text: “Miracula sanctorum patrum qui in ecclesia Hagustaldensi requiescunt”: *Priory of Hexham*, 216–219. For the manuscript, see Colin Tite, ed. *Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Cottonian Library* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1984), 84; and N. R. Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain: A List of Surviving Books*, 2nd ed. (London: Royal Historical Society, 1964), 191. There is another summary of miracles of the Hexham saints in York, Minster Library, MS XVII.I.12, fol. 12v [Durham, s. xiv]. However, this extract is in fact a summary of Richard of Hexham’s *De gestis regis Stephani*, as it relates the saints’ protection of Hexham, not from the raids of Malcolm but from those of David in 1138, an event which Aelred does not discuss in *Miracula*. The manuscript also contains the *Vita Eatae* discussed below. See N. R. Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, vol. 4, *Paisley-York* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 720–722. See also Raine, *Priory of Hexham*, 79–80, note j; and David Rollason, introduction to *Libellus de exordio atque procursu istius hoc est Dunhelmensis ecclesie*, by Symeon of Durham, ed. and trans. Rollason (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000), xxxiv–xxxvii.

A is a twelfth-century manuscript containing material relating to Saint Mary's York.¹⁹ In fact, *Miracula* is the only non-York text in the manuscript, although it may have been inserted into the book as a way to bolster York's tenurial claim to the property at Hexham, which was disputed in the twelfth century.²⁰ It seems clear that the bulk of the manuscript was copied and compiled at York.²¹ *Miracula* was copied in two quires of four bifolia each, with a seventeenth-century insertion at folio 6 to supply a missing folio and with an insertion from Symeon of Durham's *Libellus de exordio* at folio 12. Differences between *A*, *F*, and *L* suggest that *A* may be a different recension of the text than that which survives in *F* and *L*. First, *A* is the only manuscript that explicitly attributes *Miracula* to Aelred; it was, according to the rubric, "dictated by venerable abbot Æthelred."²² Second, it contains several sets of lection marks, indicating that this copy was intended to be read in a liturgical context and was in fact used in that way. Third, its final list of the specific saints who rest in Hexham differs from the lists in *F* and *L*. Fourth and finally, *A* is the only witness to three additional miracles which seem to have occurred in the late twelfth century and were copied into the existing manuscript no later than the early thirteenth century.²³ *A* was thus being used, updated, and revised after it was first copied by a Yorkshire scribe who explicitly said the text was by Aelred within a generation of Aelred's death.

F and *L* seem to be from a slightly different textual tradition than *A*. *F* was damaged in the Ashburnham House fire of 1731.²⁴ It is almost exclusively a collection of Aelredian texts, containing his *Vita Edwardi regis et confessoris*, his *Vita Davidis Scotorum regis* (the first chapter of his *De genealogia regum Anglorum*), and his *Vita S. Niniani episcopi*, along with an

¹⁹*Catalogue of Additions to the Manuscripts in the British Museum in the Years 1911–1915*, Part 1 (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1925), 251–253; Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain*, 217; and Anne Lawrence-Mathers, *Manuscripts in Northumbria in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2003), 121, 125, 212. Ker also noted, however, that fols. 18r–20r originated at Byland; Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain*, 22.

²⁰Both York and Durham claimed tenurial privileges over Hexham. See Ralph Waltersperger, *The Foundation of Hexham Priory, 1070–1170*, Papers in North Eastern History 11 (Middlesbrough: University of Teesside, 2002).

²¹Hoste, *Bibliotheca Aelrediana*, 127. Lawrence-Mathers thought that fols. 21r–39r originated at St. Mary's, although she did not make any claim about the provenance of the rest of the manuscript: *Manuscripts in Northumbria*, 125.

²²London, British Library, MS Add. 38816, fol. 1r: "Incipiunt miracula sanctorum patrum qui in sancta Hagustaldensis ecclesiae requiescunt, dictata a uenerabili Hethelredo abbate."

²³Transcribed in Squire, "Aelred and the Northern Saints," 68–69. See also C. J. Bates, "Three Additional Miracles Attributed to Saint Acca of Hexham," *Archaeologia Aeliana* 2nd ser., 20 (1898): 289–294.

²⁴See Thomas Smith, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Cottonian Library, 1696*, ed. C. G. C. Tite (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1984), 103; Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain*, 159; and Hoste, *Bibliotheca Aelrediana*, 127. Lawrence-Mathers makes no mention of *F*.

anonymous early *Vita S. Agathe*.²⁵ The *Vita S. Agathe* aside, *F* is a collection of Aelred's hagiography, and the *Vita Davidis* starts "here begins the preface of Aelred, abbot of Rievaulx."²⁶ In their descriptions of the manuscript, both N. R. Ker and Anselm Hoste argued it originated at Rievaulx,²⁷ and it almost certainly corresponds with a manuscript described in the Rievaulx library catalog as "Ailred on the life of saint Edward. On the nobility and customs and death of king David. On the life of saint Ninian, bishop. On the miracles of the church of Hexham in one volume."²⁸ The catalog includes *F* in its class of volumes containing works of Bernard of Clairvaux, Anselm, and Aelred.²⁹ It seems unlikely that the Rievaulx library cataloger, working circa 1190–1200,³⁰ would have included *Miracula* among Aelred's works if he had known it to be composed by an anonymous Augustinian canon instead of Aelred.³¹ The cataloger would probably have simply omitted *Miracula* from his list, as he omitted the anonymous *Vita S. Agathe*. Thus, *F* contains a version of *Miracula* copied at Rievaulx within a generation of Aelred's death, if not within his own lifetime, in a manuscript that almost exclusively comprises texts securely attributed to him.

Raine made no mention of *F* in his edition. He knew of the existence of *A*, but did not have access to it.³² Rather, he followed Mabillon in using *L* as the basis of his edition.³³ *L* contains a blank space for a title or *capitulum*, but none survives: there is only a later marginal note next to the blank space that reads

²⁵See *BHL*, 2423, 6239, 133. See Chrysogonus Waddell, ed. *The Primitive Cistercian Breviary* (Fribourg: Academic, 2007), 453–455.

²⁶London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius F.iii, fol. 44r: "Incipit prefacio Aelredi abbatis riuallis."

²⁷See Hoste, *Bibliotheca Aelrediana*, 153–154; and Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain*, 159.

²⁸Cambridge, Jesus College MS 34 [Q.B.17], fols. 1r–5r at fols. 1v–2r: "Ailredus de uita sancti Eduardi. De generositate et moribus et morte regis Dauid. De uita sancti Niniani episcopi. De miraculis Haugustaldensis ecclesie in 1^o. uol." See David N. Bell, ed. *The Libraries of the Cistercians, Gilbertines, and Premonstratensians* (London: British Library, 1992), 97. *F* has a sixteenth-century cursive title inserted on fol. 80r (which was partially damaged both in the fire and by later mounting of the leaf on paper) that calls our text "translation of the holy fathers of the church of Hexham on the fifth ides of March" (*Translatio sanctorum ecclesiae v idus martii Haugustaldensis patrum*).

²⁹Bell, *Libraries of the Cistercians*, 89.

³⁰Bell has persuasively argued that the thirteenth-century list of Rievaulx books in Cambridge, Jesus College, MS 34 [Q.B.17] was a copy of a list originally compiled in the "last decade of the 12th century": *Libraries of the Cistercians*, 88.

³¹Where a manuscript contains works by multiple authors, the Rievaulx library cataloger is generally careful to note that fact. For examples, see Bell, *Libraries of the Cistercians*, 93 (Z19.25); 95 (Z19.35); and 96 (Z19.38).

³²Raine, *Priory of Hexham*, 173, note c.

³³Raine, *Priory of Hexham*, 173; Mabillon, *Acta Sanctorum*, 204; and H. O. Coxe, *Bodleian Library Quarto Catalogues*, vol. 2, *Laudian Manuscripts*, corrected by ed. R. W. Hunt (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 1973), 482–483. Neither Ker nor Lawrence-Mathers mentions *L*.

“the miracles of Eata.”³⁴ *L*’s place of origin and early provenance remain obscure, but catalogers have argued that both the contents and a note suggest a northeastern English provenance for the manuscript.³⁵ The words “W Boynton” in a fifteenth-century hand appear amid sketches and pen trials on folio 152r. The Boyntons had been established in Yorkshire in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, and at least one member of the family held land from the bishop of Durham.³⁶ Several W. Boyntons were active in fifteenth-century east Yorkshire, and there is a place with the name of Boynton near Bridlington as well.³⁷ William Laud gave the manuscript to the Bodleian Library in 1633; although it is not clear where Laud obtained *L*, a number of the manuscripts he donated to the Bodleian in that year came from Durham. It is therefore reasonable to suspect that *L* had its origins in northeast England.³⁸ Like *F*, *L* contains the same core of Aelredian hagiographic material: the *Vita Edwardi*, *Vita Davidis* (here called *de genealogia*), and the *Vita Niniani* (incorrectly identified as anonymous in the Bodleian Library’s quarto catalog).³⁹

The contents of the manuscripts and the versions of *Miracula* suggest, therefore, that *F* and *L* derive from a slightly different exemplar than *A*. However, all three manuscripts demonstrate that the text was copied frequently enough to exist in different recensions within forty-five years of its composition. Two of the three surviving manuscripts, *A* and *F*, were certainly produced at or near houses with which Aelred was affiliated within a generation of his death; whether by their contents or by explicit attribution, all three manuscripts support the case for Aelred’s authorship and suggest that interest in the text was concentrated in northeastern England.

The contents of *Miracula* are not entirely straightforward. None of the manuscripts preserve *capitula*, although all three contain colored initials to divide the text into sections. Raine followed Mabillon in dividing the text into chapters, although he divided some of the chapters differently than Mabillon and the chapter divisions in both editions do not always

³⁴Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 668, fol. 62r: “Miracula eatae.”

³⁵Falconer Madan and H. H. E. Craster, *A Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford*, vol. 2, part 1, Nos. 1–3490 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1922), 45; see also Carleton M. Sage, “The Manuscripts of St. Aelred,” *The Catholic Historical Review*, 34, no. 2 (January 1949): 442–444.

³⁶A “Thom[a]s de Boynton” (d. 1402) was commemorated in the Durham *Liber Vitae* on fol. 72v. See Rollason and Rollason, *The Durham “Liber Vitae,”* 3:467–468.

³⁷See K. J. Allison, *A History of the County of York, East Riding* (London: Institute of Historical Research, 1974), 2:21–29.

³⁸Bruce Barker-Benfield, email message to author, 23 November 2015; and Coxe, *Bodleian Library Quarto Catalogues*, vol. 2, *Laudian Manuscripts*, x–xi.

³⁹In a different quire, with a new hand and ruling pattern, it also contains an account of the martyrdom of Thomas Becket and Laurence of Durham’s *Vita Brigittae*.

correspond with the divisions in the manuscripts.⁴⁰ Although I reference Raine's chapter divisions here for convenience, I must emphasize that these divisions are not authorial, nor are they found in the manuscripts.

The text has five main sections, unequal in length.⁴¹ The first is a homiletic prologue, beginning with Aelred's direct address to his audience: "Today's reverent festival, dearest brothers, we should undertake faithfully and celebrate joyously, in as much as our consolation, our hope, and above all our glory are especially commended in it. For certainly this celebration is ours, particularly ours who live in these holiest places under the protection of those in whose honor we have dedicated the joys of this day."⁴² It seems clear that this section was in fact part of the homily given on the occasion of the translation of the relics of the saints on March 3, 1154/1155.

The homiletic prologue is followed by a series of miracle stories that either take place at Hexham or detail miracles worked by the saints of Hexham at another location. This is the core of the miracle collection. Throughout this second section, Aelred continues to address his audience, usually as "dearest brothers," so clearly not only the prologue was delivered orally on March 3. Relating the miracle stories seems to have been both part of the sermon as it was originally delivered at the feast of the translation and an indication that Aelred anticipated the subsequent liturgical reading of the miracles. This second section of miracles corresponds with Raine's chapters one through ten. Although miracle collections are often a hodgepodge, the disunity in *Miracula* is particularly striking; the text lacks internal unity of situation, context, chronology, and even location and which particular saint or saints effect the miracle.⁴³ The miracles describe the way the saints protect the

⁴⁰A contains at least two systems of lection marks, but these occur only in the first half of the text, and so are not especially useful for modern editorial purposes. In their translation of *Miracula*, Jane Patricia Freeland and Marsha L. Dutton follow Mabillon's divisions: Freeland, trans., and Dutton, ed., *Aelred of Rievaulx: The Lives of the Northern Saints*, Cistercian Fathers Series 71 (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian, 2006), 65–107 (hereafter cited as *Northern Saints*).

⁴¹I differ here in my analysis from Michael Lapidge and Rosalind Love, who rely on Raine to identify three main sections: an account of miracles effected by all the saints of Hexham, the miracles worked by Acca and Alchmund, and an account of the events of 1154/1155. While these three sections accurately describe the content, they do not take the organization of the text into account: Lapidge and Love, "The Latin Hagiography of England and Wales (600–1550)" in *Hagiographies: Histoire internationale de la littérature hagiographique latine et vernaculaire en Occident des origines à 1500*, ed. Guy Philippart (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 3:261; and Raine, *Priory of Hexham*, 173–174, note b.

⁴²My translation. Aelred, *Miracula*, 173–174: "Præsentis diei veneranda festivitas, fratres karissimi, tanto nobis est suscipienda devotius, et festivius celebranda, quanto in ea specialius consolatio nostra, spes nostra, nostra insuper gloria commendatur. Nostra namque, nostra specialiter est ista festivitas, qui in his sacratissimis locis sub eorum patrocinio vivimus, quorum honori diei hujus gaudia dedicavimus."

⁴³For miracle collections generally, see Robert Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead do Such Great Things? Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2013), 558–567. For miracle collections in twelfth-century England, see

town, church, and people from the raids of Malcolm (in chapter two) and David (in chapter five). Malefactors are punished (in chapters three and five) or spared when they ask the saints for help (in chapter one). Peasants or *conversi* are healed (in chapters four and seven) as are a blind woman (in chapter eight), a craftsman (in chapter nine), and a doubting cleric on a pilgrimage (in chapter ten). The miraculous events range in chronology from the late eleventh century (during the raids of Malcolm, King of Scots, who died in 1093) to the mid-twelfth century, since Aelred describes a miracle occurring “in our own times.”⁴⁴ The miracles are not arranged in chronological order, which may be a sign of Aelred’s own editorial process; he may have added additional miracles while revising the text after he had preached the sermon.

The third main section of the text, Raine’s chapter eleven, is a history of Hexham, of the care taken by Aelred’s ancestors (who had the church in their possession and undertook various restoration projects there), and of the earlier translations of Saints Acca and Alchmund. Placed here in the text’s third section, the information about Hexham’s history is chronologically out of order. This section shares many similarities with other narrative histories of Hexham, particularly interpolations in the *Historia regum* and Richard of Hexham’s *Brevis annotatio*.⁴⁵ Aelred did not simply rely on his own knowledge of local lore, but had access to and used recent scholarly works as well.

The fourth section of the text, a description of the ceremony of 1154/1155 and the translation of the relics on that occasion, also occurs in chapter eleven. The description was clearly not part of the sermon delivered on March 3 but part of the revision of the text after the translation. Chapter twelve returns to an account of an eleventh-century translation of Alchmund and contains a miracle in which Alchmund rescued a young man from drowning; its reference to the eleventh-century translation means that chapter twelve is also out of chronological order. Chapter thirteen returns to the description of the translation of 1154/1155, the relics of Saints Frethbert and Tilbert, and a description of the enshrinement of the all the saints’ relics in the church at Hexham.

The fifth and final section, chapters fourteen and fifteen, are an abbreviated account of the life of Bishop Eata: a summary of Eata’s life (drawn from Bede) and a description of the abortive attempt of Thurstan of York to translate his

Rachel Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate: Miracle Stories and Miracle Collecting in High Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

⁴⁴Aelred, *Miracula*, 183: “his nostris temporibus.”

⁴⁵*Historia regum*, in *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia*, ed. Thomas Arnold, *Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores* (Rolls Series) 75 (London: Longmans, 1885), 2:1–283; and Richard of Hexham, *Brevis annotatio*, 1–62.

relics from Hexham to York in the early twelfth century. The text ends abruptly in all three manuscripts, although it is not clear if Aelred simply never finished his revisions of *Miracula* or if his original ending was lost and thus unknown to the three scribes.

Miracula thus contains elements of a sermon, a miracle collection, a history, a translation narrative, and a vita, all out of chronological order. They are not discrete elements, nor does the text move in a linear or tightly organized, thematic way. Rather, the text as it survives incorporates all these elements. It was clearly created in stages, and Aelred had access to preexisting miracle stories, both written and oral. He updated these older stories for a public address on a specific occasion and then revised his address to include a discussion of that event. That is, he brought the text together piece by piece, composing some of it before 1154/1155 and some of it after as he incorporated a description of the translation ceremony itself. Aelred's process of composition and revision in *Miracula* is consistent with the process outlined by Michael Casey in his discussion of Aelred's discourses on the rule of Benedict. *Miracula*, like Aelred's chapter discourses, contains multiple themes, interactive direct remarks to the audience, moments of humor, references to the particular situation of delivery, and lacks a systematic organization of contents.⁴⁶

The similarity to his chapter discourses reminds us that, although scholars tend to characterize *Miracula* as one of Aelred's historical works,⁴⁷ it is of a different genre entirely. Instead of seeing *Miracula* as a defective history, plagued by the folkloric elements that so irritated its editor, or as an unpublished sermon in need of further revision, we should instead consider it as a narrative *translatio*, an account of the movement of relics.⁴⁸ As a *translatio*, *Miracula* is a mix of history, hagiography, tractate, and sermon: a "hybrid" of vitae and chronicles written to extol the powerful virtue of the saint and to describe a particular event, the movement of a saint's body.⁴⁹ In this case, multiple movements of multiple saints make the text even more

⁴⁶Michael Casey, "An Introduction to Ælred's Chapter Discourses," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 45, no. 3 (2010): 283–302.

⁴⁷For instance, the text is grouped in Aelred's "œuvres historiques" in the bibliography of *Collectanea Cisterciensia* 73, no. 1 (2011): 8–12; in the "opera historica" in Pierre-André Burton, *Bibliotheca Aelrediana Secunda*, 162; and in Anselm Hoste, *Bibliotheca Aelrediana*, 127–128. Marsha Dutton identified it as one of Aelred's seven historical works in "A Historian's Historian," 426–430, while Burton classifies it as one of three "œuvres historiques, concernant cette fois davantage l'histoire ancienne ou recent de l'Église," in *Ælred de Rievaulx*, 479.

⁴⁸See Patrick Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), 11–16; and Martin Heinzelmann, *Translationsberichte und andere Quellen des Reliquienkultes*, Typologie des Sources du Moyen Âge Occidental 33 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1979).

⁴⁹Geary, *Furta Sacra*, 11–12.

complex, but it is quite clear that Aelred did not intend to write a work that was merely historiographical or even hagiographical: rather he intended to retell old stories that celebrated the power of the saints of Hexham, revising those stories and bringing them up to date not only for the particular celebration on March 3, 1154/1155, but in such a way that the canons of Hexham would continue to tell them. Moreover, these old stories were personal for Aelred, as his own family was intimately connected to the movement of the relics.

Aelred's process of composition relied both on local oral stories and on written sources. Hexham in the twelfth century was a relative hotbed both of interest in and composition of historical narratives, and the surviving chronicles and historical compilations reveal much about devotion to the local saints and about Aelred's own sources for *Miracula*. Some were written at Durham about Hexham and some were written at Hexham itself. Two anonymous sources from Durham deal explicitly with Hexham: the annals composed before 1083 (reconstructed by Edmund Craster as the *Cronica monasterii Dunelmensis*) and a brief history composed between 1083 and 1127 (surviving only in a manuscript famous for its elaborate illustrations of the life of Saint Cuthbert) which James Raine called *An account of the early provosts of Hexham*.⁵⁰ The sources composed at Hexham include two interpolations inserted into the historical compilation attributed to Symeon of Durham called the *Historia regum*, Richard of Hexham's *Brevis annotatio* (called the *Historia Hagustaldensis ecclesie* by its editor), and Aelred's *Miracula*.

Miracula and the historical sources reveal a vibrant cult at Hexham, so we might expect vitae of the Hexham saints to have been written, copied, and read in the process of commemoration, then used by Aelred in composing *Miracula*. Yet only one short vita survives.⁵¹ Devotion to the saints in a monastic context also would have required liturgical production, yet no Hexham liturgical material has been identified; we do not have surviving offices, mass propers, or even calendars. This paucity of hagiographical and liturgical sources may be due in part to the small number of manuscripts of

⁵⁰H. H. E. Craster, "The Red Book of Durham," *English Historical Review* 40, no. 160 (October 1925): 504–532; London, British Library, MS Yates Thompson 26, fols. 149r–150v, printed as "Appendix IV," in *Priory of Hexham*, ed. Raine, vii–viii.

⁵¹This is the *Vita S. Eatae*, printed by James Raine in *Miscellanea Biographica*, Surtees Society 8 (London: J. B. Nichols, 1838), 121–125. Raine printed the text from York, Minster Library, MS XLVI.12, fols. 10r–12v. See N. R. Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, 4:720–722. Raine apparently did not know that the same text is preserved in Oxford Bodleian Library, MS Fairfax 6, fols. 162r–163r [Durham, s. xiv]. See Falconer Madan, H. H. E. Craster, and N. Denholm-Young, *A Summary Catalogue of the Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford*, vol. 2, part 2 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1937), 773–775. It is possible that Aelred had access to other vitae, perhaps of Acca and Alchmund, of which no trace now survives.

any kind with an identifiable Hexham provenance.⁵² Yet the canons at Hexham surely must have had books for the commemoration of their saints.⁵³ However, despite the scarcity of surviving hagiographical and liturgical sources, the richness of the surviving texts, especially of *Miracula*, allows us to see devotion to the saints of Hexham in both belief and practice. Moreover, as the manuscript evidence demonstrates that Aelred was indeed the author, *Miracula* thus reveals what a reformed monk thought about local saints: that they endured and had continuing relevance in his changing world.

II. AELRED'S SAINTS

As the most extensive of the surviving twelfth-century texts dealing with Hexham's saints, Aelred's *Miracula* reveals both what people—whether a local layperson in Hexham or a widely-traveled Cistercian abbot of international repute—believed about the saints and how those beliefs were put into practice. We can see both belief and practice at work by pursuing deceptively simple questions: who, precisely, were the saints of Hexham? And what, precisely, could and would they do for the people devoted to them? *Miracula* provides surprisingly complex answers that illuminate its author's view of devotion in novel ways. It reveals Aelred's sophisticated understanding of the enduring power of ancient local saints' cults in a world marked by political and religious upheaval.

At first glance, it is easy enough to identify the saints of Hexham. The relics of four bishops were translated on March 3, 1154/1155, and thus the core group of saints appears to be composed of those four: Acca (d. 740), Frethbert (d. 766), Alchmund (d. 781), and Tilbert (d. 789). As these are the four whose translation was celebrated both in the event and in the textual commemoration of the event, *Miracula*, they are the obvious answer to the question of who, precisely, could be called the saints of Hexham.

However, *Miracula* begins not with the four bishops whose relics Aelred says everyone knows rest in the church⁵⁴ (that is, not with the saints whose relics were being translated), but with Wilfrid (d. 710), Hexham's founder, whose activities were described by Bede in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Even

⁵²Ker identified six Hexham manuscripts; Lawrence disputed Ker's identification of one manuscript, thus committing to a Hexham provenance for only five. See Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain*, 101; and Anne Lawrence, "The Artistic Influence of Durham Manuscripts," in *Anglo-Norman Durham, 1093–1193*, ed. David Rollason, Margaret Harvey, and Michael Prestwich (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1994), 457–458.

⁵³Aelred describes the common of confessors being used at the translation liturgy itself (*Miracula*, 194), but it is not unreasonable to suppose that specific collects and hymns would have been composed and used after 1154/1155.

⁵⁴Aelred, *Miracula*, 185.

long after Wilfrid's death, Aelred declares, "all of the people had recourse to him in this church, as if to someone who was alive,"⁵⁵ a moving description of the kind of deep personal connection inhabitants of Hexham felt with their saints and of the ongoing relationship between saint and devotee.⁵⁶ Even though Wilfrid's relics were not, in fact, present at Hexham—a fact which Aelred clearly knew and never disputed—Aelred is emphatic from the outset: Wilfrid belongs with the rest of the bishops whose relics rest at Hexham as a patron of the place and the community. This is a surprising assertion with which to open a sermon on the occasion of a translation of relics in a specific church.

Yet the needy can seek Wilfrid for assistance "in this church," and so Aelred begins his account of the Hexham miracles with a story of Wilfrid's intervention in the case of a young criminal who had been imprisoned for theft. Unable to find anyone to provide surety for him, the thief was led to execution. The moment before the executioner struck, the boy looked at the church of Hexham and cried out, with dark humor, "Help me now, Wilfrid, because if you don't now, soon you won't be able to!"⁵⁷ In Aelred's recounting of the story, everyone burst out laughing, and the executioner found the remark so hilarious that he had to take a moment to recover himself before he could land the fatal blow. In that instant, the saints of Hexham worked their miracle: two young men galloped up to provide the required surety, and the criminal was spared. The mere fact of beginning a *translatio* with a discussion of a saint whose relics are elsewhere suggests that in this story, the presence (or absence) of bones does not matter as much as the reputation of the powerful founder. Wilfrid, Aelred says, "was always present to those who called on him . . . to such an extent that after his bodily presence was gone his spiritual grace flowed forth to them the more richly."⁵⁸ The Bedan scholarly tradition of Wilfrid's role as founder finds its confirmation in local lore in the story of the criminal's plea to Wilfrid.

⁵⁵*Northern Saints*, 67; and Aelred, *Miracula*, 176: "Accidit ut post mortem quoque ejus plebs universa ita ad eum in hac ecclesia, quasi ad viventem, confugerent, in omnibus necessitatibus suis quasi praesentem consulerent, in tribulationibus et angustiis ejus auxilium non tam peterent quam exigerent."

⁵⁶This deeply personal and proprietary relationship is described for a different context in Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 50–68; and Robert Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?*, 95–112.

⁵⁷Aelred, *Miracula*, 177: "Ille, levatis paullulum oculis, et ecclesiam intuens: 'Adjuva,' inquit, 'nunc, Wilfride, quia si modo nolueris, paullo post non poteris.'"

⁵⁸*Northern Saints*, 67–68; and Aelred, *Miracula*, 176: "Quorum devotioni ac fidei favens praesul sanctissimus, semper invocantibus praesto fuit, petentibus largiens, maestos consolans, subveniens laborantibus, opem ferens miseris: adeo ut subtracta praesentia corporali, uberius illis gratia profluerat spiritalis."

Aelred knew both the scholarly and the popular, and he brought both to bear in his retelling of the Hexham saints' miracles.

Even more importantly, Aelred uses the story of the criminal to emphasize that, for a resident of Hexham in need, to call on one saint was to call on all. Aelred is explicit that *all* the saints of Hexham were responsible for this miracle; even though the young man “had named only the most blessed Wilfrid in the hour of his death, no one supposed that the other saints who rest in this present church were not co-workers in this miracle, since he had invoked all of them in his heart, hoped in them all, and in respectful trust lifted his eyes to them all.”⁵⁹ The interior act of devotion—invoking a saint in one's heart—is just as efficacious as the exterior act—calling the saint's name aloud. Moreover, Aelred says that everyone knows that the saints work together. No one (*nemo*) thought Wilfrid was acting on his own. All the saints, those whose relics were present and about to be ceremonially translated when Aelred was preaching and those whose relics were elsewhere, worked the miracle.

Aelred claims elsewhere in *Miracula* that multiple saints protected the region and multiple saints could be called upon for help in a pick-and-mix approach to saintly protection. In a time of crisis, when the Scots were threatening Hexham, some of the local people “appealed with groans and outcries to Wilfrid, some to Cuthbert, some to Acca, and not a few to Alchmund.”⁶⁰ Of the four saints Aelred names in this instance, only the relics of Acca and Alchmund were present at Hexham, yet Wilfrid and Cuthbert could both be called upon for aid. It was an incontrovertible fact that Wilfrid's and Cuthbert's relics were elsewhere, but for Aelred, there were clearly other ways of being associated with the church or inhabiting the place—and thus being able to help local people in their time of need—than the mere physical presence of relics. Being a founder, as Wilfrid was, or being a bishop of the see only for a matter of months, as Cuthbert was before he became bishop of Lindisfarne,⁶¹ was enough to establish an ongoing connection with the place. History, popular and scholarly, was just as relevant to Aelred as presence of relics when it came to providing saintly benefits.

In Aelred's narrative description of the events of the translation liturgy on March 3, 1154/1155, we see again the same concern with which saints are

⁵⁹*Northern Saints*, 69; and Aelred, *Miracula*, 177: “Qui licet beatissimum Wilfridum in ipso mortis articulo solum nominaverit, nemo tamen cæteros, qui in præsentī ecclesia requiescunt, Sanctos miraculi hujus cooperatores existimet non fuisse, cum ipse in corde omnes invocaverit, speraverit in omnibus, ad omnes oculos pia fide erexerit.”

⁶⁰*Northern Saints*, 71; and Aelred, *Miracula*, 179: “Alii Wilfridum, alii Cuthbertum, Accam alii, nonnulli Alchmundum cum gemitu et vociferatione congeminant.”

⁶¹Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* 4.28, in *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), 438.

present at Hexham and Aelred's sophisticated notions about saintly presence. It is necessary to describe what happened at the ceremony, as Aelred reports it, in some detail. Before the translation, the canons prepared three containers (*thecae*): a large one covered in silver and gold and decorated with precious stones and two smaller ones.⁶² Three containers for the relics of *four* saints is perhaps a little unexpected. On the chosen day, the brothers gathered in the church in the morning: "Barefoot, they prostrated themselves before the holy altar."⁶³ They prayed the penitential psalms and the responsory for confessors, and then processed, still barefoot, in albs.⁶⁴ They set out the relics, with the container in which they had been stored, in front of the altar steps. They placed a cloth on the floor and spread the relics on it. There were, Aelred says, the relics of four saints wrapped in beautiful coverings.⁶⁵ The canons examined the relics and discovered a "wonderful fragrance," a sign that "God's saints had bestowed on their holy relics this gift from the odors of paradise that they forever enjoy."⁶⁶

Not only were the relics marked by this particular fragrance, but they were also identified by documents in the coverings. The relics of three of the saints (Acca, Alchmund, and Frethbert) had labels (*schedula*) with the saints' names and death dates written at an earlier translation, "lest posterity should have any doubt concerning the name of the holy confessor."⁶⁷ However, the canons discovered that the fourth bundle had no label. Aelred admits he does not know why this particular set of relics did not have a label, but this lack of written verification of one saint's identity is not a problem for Aelred or

⁶²Aelred, *Miracula*, 194: "Paratur theca congruæ magnitudinis, argentoque et auro vestitur. Inseruntur locis convenientibus gemmæ, et pro artificis industria opus summo decore variatur. Compinguntur etiam duæ minores non parvi decoris, quamvis non ejusdem pretii."

⁶³Aelred, *Miracula*, 194: "Ante sanctum altare nudis pedibus prosternuntur."

⁶⁴Aelred, *Miracula*, 194: "Finita vero post cantum oratio sollempni, procedunt fratres albis induti et discalciati, reverendasque reliquias cum loculo in quo hactenus servabantur ante gradum altaris exponentes, extractis inde sacrosanctis pignoribus, substratis honeste palliis in pavimento cum summa reverentia collocarunt." Presumably they processed *around* the church, not to the altar (as Freeman suggests in her translation in *Northern Saints*) because they were already at the altar. For processions with relics, see Cynthia Hahn, *Strange Beauty: Issues in the Making and Meaning of Reliquaries, 400–circa 1204* (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 2012), 147–149; and Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?*, 296–303.

⁶⁵Aelred, *Miracula*, 194: "Erant autem quatuor Sanctorum ossa singillatim a se divisa, et venustissimis palliis involuta."

⁶⁶*Northern Saints*, 94; and Aelred, *Miracula*, 194: "Quæ cum cœpissent evolvere, occurrit miri odoris fragantia, quæ omnium perstringeret nares, omnium corda mulceret. . . . intellexerunt Sanctos Dei ex odoribus paradisi, quibus fruuntur in æternum, suis sanctis reliquiis hanc gratiam indidisse."

⁶⁷*Northern Saints*, 94; and Aelred, *Miracula*, 194: "Et ne esset posteris de nomine sancti confessoris cunctatio, is qui considerat scripti attestazione scrupulum omne purgaverat." For the use of labels to identify saints' relics, see Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead do Such Great Things?*, 331–332.

presumably for his audience. Aelred speculates that the omission occurred “perhaps because the people all knew that there were four bishops whose names had not been a secret at all”⁶⁸ and seems unworried by the discrepancy. The labels were only confirming what everybody, including Aelred, already knew.⁶⁹ Aelred also gives no indication as to when the labels might have been originally adhered.⁷⁰ The canons replaced the labels with lead plates affixed to the relics.⁷¹ Curiously, Aelred only describes this replacement of the labels for Acca’s relics, although when describing Frethbert he says that the canons “restored the testimony of his identity,” so we can perhaps infer that the lead plates were attached to the relics of all four saints.⁷² The relics of all four were rewrapped, and just as they had been discovered together, they were replaced together in the larger container.⁷³

However, this was not the end of the translation ceremony. The canons then opened a reliquary (*scrinium*) containing the relics of Eata, about whom Aelred had made no previous mention. Neither the saint—also an early bishop of Hexham—nor his relics figured in the text or the translation liturgy as Aelred described it until this point. Yet the bones gave off a “heavenly fragrance,”⁷⁴ and more than that, the container held portions of the relics of one of the original four bishops: Frethbert. These relics were in a small lead *theca* and emitted the same fragrance.⁷⁵ Aelred makes no mention of labels in this context, and it is not clear how the canons were able to identify the relics of Frethbert or even of Eata. Perhaps we should imagine that the canons were able to identify the relics by the “same fragrance”; that is, that the odor of sanctity was individual to each saint and that the canons were identifying the relics by smell. Regardless, the canons put the relics of Eata and those of Frethbert (still in their lead container) into one of the two smaller decorated boxes. Into the other, they put some of the relics of

⁶⁸My translation. Aelred, *Miracula*, 200: “Forte autem quia vulgus omne sciebat quattuor ibi fuisse episcopos quorum eos nomina minime latuerunt.”

⁶⁹See below, p. 27.

⁷⁰This is an interesting omission on Aelred’s part. The relics were translated or elevated at least three times in the century before March 3, 1154/1155. If the *schedulae* had been attached by Aelred’s family members, we might have expected him to mention it. If they had been affixed at the elevation of the relics in 1113 by the canon Etric, presumably the canons in Aelred’s audience would have informed him of that fact.

⁷¹Aelred, *Miracula*, 195: “Et ne temporum futurorum deficiente scedula, Sancti nomen et meritum subduceretur memoriae; in membrana simul et plumbi lamina eadem scribentes et sculpsentes, reliquiis apposuerunt.”

⁷²*Northern Saints*, 102; and Aelred, *Miracula*, 200: “Renovata igitur ut in prioribus ipsa attestatione.”

⁷³*Northern Saints*, 102; and Aelred, *Miracula*, 200: “Hos quattuor cum summa devotione palliis pretiosissimis involutos, sicut simul inventi sunt, simul in majori loculo collocarunt.”

⁷⁴*Northern Saints*, 103; and Aelred, *Miracula*, 200: “Coelestem odorem.”

⁷⁵Aelred, *Miracula*, 200: “Invenerunt in eadem theca vas plumbeum minutias quasdam ex beati Fredeberti continens, et ejusdem odoris fragrantiam redolens.”

Babyllas (a third-century martyr whose relics Aelred had also not previously mentioned) along with some of the dust from the relics of Acca (which is surprising, considering that Acca's bones had already been put in the larger *theca*).⁷⁶ All three containers were placed on a decorated table (*tabula*) near the altar; mass was celebrated, the translation liturgy was completed, and all the people went away, leaving the canons in peace and quiet.⁷⁷

The mixing of relics—that is, finding and keeping Frethbert's relics with Eata's and placing a bit of the dust of Acca's relics with the otherwise-unknown Babyllas—suggests again that the central group of four Hexham saints (Acca, Alchmund, Frethbert, and Tilbert) were the holy patrons. By putting a bit of two of that coterie in with others, the others (Eata and Babyllas) are brought into the central group and made more holy by their incorporation with Hexham's patrons. Curiously, Aelred is completely silent about the relics of Andrew in the translation ceremony. Hexham was dedicated to Andrew at its founding, yet there is no direct evidence that Andrew's relics were in the church before the twelfth century.⁷⁸ Aelred only mentions Andrew's relics when he says that the first Augustinian prior, Ansketil, “embellished the church with precious ornaments and enriched it with the relics of Saint Andrew and other saints, increasing the devotion of both visitors and inhabitants.”⁷⁹ If Ansketil was in fact the first to put relics of Andrew in the church, as Aelred implies, then the dedicatory saint's relics had been on the site for only about forty years before the translation of the other saints. Still, one might expect that, for maximum impact, all the relics should be brought together with those of the dedicatory apostle, but this is

⁷⁶Aelred, *Miracula*, 200: “At interna similiter ornata, cum Sancti Babillae episcopi et martyris sacris reliquiis quamdam partem pulveris de corpore Sancti Accae episcopi posuerunt.” A has a different reading and lists additional saints whose relics were present: “At in tercia similiter ornate, cum sancti Babille episcopi et martyris sacris reliquiis et sanctorum martyrum Marci et Marcelliani de legione theborum, felicissimi martiris, Yrenei martiris et cuiusdam socii eius, sancti Germani autisiodorensis episcopi, sancte Fidis uirginis et martyris, sancte Felicitatis martyris, partem pulueris de corpore Acee episcopi posuerunt”: London, British Library, MS Additional 38816, fol. 15r–15v.

⁷⁷Aelred, *Miracula*, 200: “Quibus rite peractis, et Missarum sollempniis cum debito gaudio celebratis, populus dimittitur, plebs fratrum solitae paci redditur ac quieti.”

⁷⁸Wilfrid apparently dedicated the church at Hexham to Andrew because of his visit to a Roman oratory dedicated to Andrew: Stephen of Ripon, *Vita Wilfridi episcopi*, in *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus*, ed. Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 12, 44–46. Bede says that Acca, Wilfrid's successor as bishop of Hexham, obtained relics but does not mention Andrew's relics specifically, although he does mention the dedication: Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.20, in *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, 530. Richard of Hexham perpetuates the tradition of Wilfrid's devotion to Andrew in *Brevis annotatio*, 10–11.

⁷⁹*Northern Saints*, 92; and Aelred, *Miracula*, 193: “Ipsa insuper ecclesia pretiosis decorata ornamentis, et Sancti Andreae aliorumque Sanctorum ditata reliquiis, tam aduentium quam inhabitantium devotionem adauxit.”

clearly not Aelred's view.⁸⁰ Andrew, the dedicatory saint, is virtually a nonentity in the entire proceeding.

When Aelred talks about the "miracles of the saints who rest in the holy church of Hexham,"⁸¹ he seems to mean Acca, Alchmund, Frethbert, and Tilbert, but also Eata and Babylas, even though they are never explicitly credited with a miracle, and also Wilfrid and Cuthbert, who work miracles at Hexham on behalf of its inhabitants even though their relics rest elsewhere. Aelred claims at the outset of *Miracula* that the absence of Wilfrid's relics is totally immaterial when considering Wilfrid's presence at Hexham; Wilfrid's role as founder, as Bede had described it, was enough to guarantee his patronage. Yet Aelred goes on to argue the opposite where Acca is concerned: the relics present at Hexham are more important even than Bede's testimony about Acca's holiness. As "speaking signs" (*signa loquentia*), the relics proclaim Acca's sanctity.⁸² Relics do matter as an indication of presence and of power. The canons, Aelred says, knew the saints were present not only because their relics were there but because of the miracles they worked: "They sensed their presence not only in their relics but also in their miracles."⁸³ Yet saints whose relics are not at Hexham (such as Wilfrid) can still be powerful patrons, and the inverse is also true: saints whose relics do rest at Hexham (such as Babylas) are not necessarily active protectors of the place and the community. Aelred is making a sophisticated argument for sanctity and power in Hexham because of its saintly bishops' lives and deaths, independent of where their bones actually rest.

Aelred continues this nuanced treatment when he discusses what the saints do, that is the miracles themselves. Regardless of which particular saint effects a miracle, Aelred is explicit about the purpose of miracles: they "commend the holiness of this place, increase the faith of those who live here, and arouse their devotion."⁸⁴ The first purpose of a miracle has to do not with the human beneficiaries but with the place itself, and the place is imbued with the power of the saints. *Miracula* addresses multiple audiences: as the content of the miracle stories makes clear, "this place" is sometimes the single church, sometimes the whole monastic complex, sometimes the

⁸⁰For the role of relics in church dedications generally, see Bartlett, *Why Can the Saints Do Such Great Things?*, 444–454. Richard of Hexham gives Andrew more prominence than Aelred does, referring to the "terram Sancti Andreae de Hetsaldasham-scyre,": *De gestis regis Stephani et de bello standardii*, in *Priory of Hexham*, ed. Raine, 106.

⁸¹*Northern Saints*, 79; and Aelred, *Miracula*, 184.

⁸²My translation. Aelred, *Miracula*, 185.

⁸³*Northern Saints*, 92; and Aelred, *Miracula*, 193: "Sentiebant eos non solum in reliquiis suis, sed etiam in miraculis esse praesentes."

⁸⁴*Northern Saints*, 77; and Aelred, *Miracula*, 183: "Quibus loci hujus sanctitas commendatur, quibus inhabitantium augeatur fides, et devotio excitetur."

city, and sometimes the region around the city.⁸⁵ “Those who live here” are, of course, the Augustinian canons, but they are also the laypeople of the city and may even also be members of Aelred’s own family still resident there. Aelred’s broad definitions of place and people make his remarks applicable to diverse audiences.

Miracula describes miracles of punishment and of healing, and Aelred mentions in general terms that the blind and lame were healed, but protection seems to be the primary benefit the people of Hexham expected from their saints.⁸⁶ If there was a widespread expectation that the saints of Hexham could heal everyday ailments, as some of their fellow saints in Northumbria could,⁸⁷ no evidence seems to have survived in the sources. Aelred insists that the material benefits of miracles—the protection or vengeance or healing that the saints bestow—are secondary to the spiritual benefits they provide. “Our holy fathers,” Aelred says, “the presence of whose relics we boast, never cease to heap new miracles on old, so as always to increase the devotion of those serving here, to assure their hope, to nourish their love, and by the sight of present gifts to confirm their expectation of future ones.”⁸⁸ The primary purpose of miracles is a spiritual one. Aelred does not diminish the physical benefits of the miracles but encourages his audience of both laypeople and canons that “from physical, temporal, and earthly benefits we may be led to hope for those that are spiritual, eternal, and heavenly.”⁸⁹ Just as the people of Hexham were protected by the saints from the marauding Scots, so those devoted to the saints can be rescued from spiritual attacks. Just as the young criminal was snatched from death, so those who are overwhelmed with sins will be saved, “knowing that the same goodness that rescued a man condemned to death from the hand of his executioner will likewise immediately rescue us who

⁸⁵Richard of Hexham expresses a similar idea about zones of holiness radiating out from the church in his discussion of the legal rights of sanctuary found at Hexham: *Brevis annotatio*, 19–21, 61–62.

⁸⁶Aelred, *Miracula*, 175, 186.

⁸⁷For instance, the miracle collections for the cults of Cuthbert at Durham and Æbbe at Coldingham have numerous accounts of healings. See Reginald of Durham, *Libellus de admirandis beati Cuthberti virtutibus quæ novellis patratæ sunt temporibus*, in *Reginaldi monachi Dunelmensis Libellus de admirandis beati Cuthberti virtutibus quæ novellis patratæ sunt temporibus*, ed. James Raine, Surtees Society 1 (London: J. B. Nichols, 1835); and *Vita et miracula S. Ebbe virginis*, in *The Miracles of Saint Æbbe of Coldingham and Saint Margaret of Scotland*, ed. Robert Bartlett (Oxford: Clarendon, 2003), 3–67.

⁸⁸*Northern Saints*, 66; and Aelred, *Miracula*, 174–175: “Hinc est quod sancti patres nostri, quorum reliquiarum præsentia gloriamur, antiqua miracula novis cumulare non cessant, ut ibi servientium semper augeatur devotio, spes certificetur, caritas nutriatur, et de perceptione præsentium munerum firma sit exspectatio futurorum.”

⁸⁹*Northern Saints*, 66; and Aelred, *Miracula*, 175: “Ut ex corporalibus beneficiis spiritalia, ex temporalibus æterna ex terrenis speremus cælestia.”

are overwhelmed with sins if summoned with tears and prayers.”⁹⁰ Aelred is attempting to persuade his audience to move from an expectation of material benefits from the saints to a desire for spiritual benefits. He never says that the saints do not provide practical help, just that material assistance ought not to be as important as spiritual aid.

The association of the saints with protection was not unique to Aelred.⁹¹ Yet Aelred’s insistence on the supremacy of the spiritual significance of miracles over the material significance is unusual when compared with other Hexham sources. For instance, Aelred and the author of the *Historia regum* both include a story of Acca’s miraculous healing of a blind woman.⁹² However, Aelred’s interpretation in *Miracula* differs notably from the interpretation in the *Historia regum*. Where the *Historia regum* simply says that the woman “recovered her sight through the merits and intercession of Saint Acca,”⁹³ Aelred notes that the canon who witnessed the miracle and the woman both rejoiced equally: “She because of bodily benefit, he because he experienced the effect of spiritual fruit.”⁹⁴ Aelred places the spiritual benefit and the material benefit on the same plane. Similarly, where the *Historia regum* describes Malcolm’s retreat from Hexham, the author simply observes that “everyone who had fled from [Malcolm’s] cruelty to the aforesaid church of Hexham was rescued by the merits of the saints who rested in it.”⁹⁵ Aelred tells the same story, but adds a moralizing lesson after Malcolm’s defeat, reminding his audience that they have more to fear from the devil than from an invading king. He addresses the canons:

As for us, dearest brothers, whose duty it is to care for souls rather than for bodies and to guard ourselves against the powers of the air rather than those of earth, how many times has he, the king of all the children of pride, armed the minions of his wicked strength to endanger our salvation? How often has the dread host of vices rushed in bands upon us? Let us approach with

⁹⁰My translation. Aelred, *Miracula*, 175: “Scientes quod ea pietas, quæ hominem adjudicatum morti de sub manu ferientis eripuit, etiam nos jam jamque vitis absorbendos lacrymis ac precibus provocata eripiet.”

⁹¹Richard of Hexham also declared that the church was still protected by the merits of the saints there, although he gave a different list of the protecting saints than Aelred. Richard of Hexham, *De gestis regis Stephani*, 80: “Tamen ob declaranda merita Sanctorum Andreae Apostoli, et Wilfridi episcopi et confessoris, advocatorum ejus, et caeterorum patronorum, scilicet Sanctorum Accae, et Almundi, et Eatae, episcoporum et confessorum, et aliorum Sanctorum in eadem ecclesia quiescentium, Deo auxiliante, suis et omnibus ad illam refugientibus pacem firmissimam exhibuit, et omnibus illis contra omnes hostiles impetus tutissimum asylum extitit.”

⁹²*Historia regum*, 35–36; and Aelred, *Miracula*, 187–188.

⁹³My translation. *Historia regum*, 36: “Per merita et intercessionem sancti Accæ visum recepit.”

⁹⁴*Northern Saints*, 84; and Aelred, *Miracula*, 188: “Exultat uterque: illa quia commodi corporalis, ille quia fructus spiritalis experiebatur effectum.”

⁹⁵My translation. *Historia regum*, 38: “Sicque ab ejus crudelitate omnes qui ad præfatam Hagustaldensem ecclesiam confugerant, meritis sanctorum in illa quiescentium erepti sunt.”

confidence to the protection of these saints, begging with deep sighs that, like Elisha the prophet, they may strike all our enemies with blindness and, when the eyes of our heart have been opened, show us that there are more with us than with them.⁹⁶

The moral of the story is less that the saints will protect their people from military threats, as the *Historia regum* claims, than that the saints will protect their devotees from looming spiritual attacks.

However, Aelred does not think that the spiritual benefits are only for the canons. Although he most frequently advises the canons about how they should interpret the miracles, he also responds to the knowledge and the needs of his lay audience. Aelred mentions local liturgical practices of devotion that predated the canons, observing that Acca's feast day was "a day celebrated by the inhabitants of the region with great honor every year"⁹⁷ and that an earlier translation of Alchmund was "celebrated every year by the people."⁹⁸ Lay liturgical participation continued in the translation of 1154/1155. At the end of his description of the translation, Aelred wrote that "when the rites had been performed and Mass celebrated with the appropriate joy, the populace was sent away, and all the brothers returned to their usual peace and quiet."⁹⁹ The inhabitants of Hexham were present and participating in the translation ceremony.

Aelred is careful to include miracle stories with lay beneficiaries in *Miracula*, and often those are stories his lay audience at the translation would already have known. For instance, in relating how the young thief is saved after crying out to Wilfrid, Aelred remarks: "This miracle became known to so many that the youth's words, proven effective in so great an extremity, became a common adage among all the people."¹⁰⁰ Aelred also includes stories about lay beneficiaries of the saints' miracles not found in other Hexham sources: a man named Raven,

⁹⁶*Northern Saints*, 73–74; and Aelred, *Miracula*, 180: "Sed nos, fratres charissimi, quibus magis incumbit animas curare quam corpora, et aërias magis quam terrenas potestates cavere, quotiens ille, qui est rex super omnes filios superbiæ impiæ virtutis satellites in periculum nostræ salutis amaverit, et terribilis vitiorum exercitus in nos globatim irruerit, accedamus cum fiducia ad horum Sanctorum patrocini(jum), cum imis suspiriis supplicantes, ut, instar Helisei prophetæ, omnes hostes nostros percutiant cæcitate, et, reseratis oculis cordis, ostendant nobis, quod plures nobiscum sunt quam cum illis."

⁹⁷*Northern Saints*, 82; and Aelred, *Miracula*, 186: "Qui a regionis hujus incolis singulis annis cum magno celebratur honore."

⁹⁸*Northern Saints*, 100; and Aelred, *Miracula*, 198: "Dies iste omnibus annis celebris habebatur a populo."

⁹⁹*Northern Saints*, 103; and Aelred, *Miracula*, 200: "Quibus rite peractis, et Missarum sollempniis cum debito gaudio celebratis, populous dimittitur, plebs fratrum solitæ paci redditur ac quieti."

¹⁰⁰*Northern Saints*, 69; and Aelred, *Miracula*, 177: "Hoc sane miraculum ad tantorum pervenit notitiam, ut verbum adolescentis in tanta necessitudine probatum, versum sit in commune totius plebis proverbium."

“who lived an ordinary life under a certain extremely rich nobleman,”¹⁰¹ was healed from blindness after he had gone “to my Acca”¹⁰² and prayed at the saint’s shrine. Raven was subsequently freed by his master who wanted to stay on the right side of Acca: “He—wishing to gain favor with the saint—gave the man [that is, Raven], whom he freed, and all his money to the saint and directed the man to serve the church as long as he lived.”¹⁰³ When he interprets this miracle, Aelred again addresses the canons directly as “dearest brothers” (*fratres karissimi*), stressing its spiritual import and pleading that we “might in dangers to our souls implore his aid with the same faith, equal devotion, and no less hope, mindful of the tears and the constancy in prayer by which a man of the flesh obtained help for his flesh.”¹⁰⁴ Yet there is also an implied lesson for a lay audience here: generous giving—of money to the saint and of labor to the church—is an effective way to gain favor with a powerful saint. *Miracula* thus reveals not only practical details about clerical and lay devotional practices, but also Aelred’s sophisticated understanding of who the saints were and what they could do for their devotees, both clerical and lay.

III. AELRED’S PAST AND PRESENT

In *Miracula*, we see an author and also a cult in tension: not in a deep antagonism, but a tension between a commitment to the past and a concern with innovation. The old world is visible here, a devotional world marked by veneration of the long-dead local bishops by the common people of Hexham and a family of priests committed to the celebration of the saints over multiple generations. However, Aelred shows us a new world as well: veneration of these same saints by monks in new orders at refounded and reformed monastic centers. In fact, this tension is apparent both personally in Aelred himself, son of a family of priests and Cistercian monk, and textually, as it pervades *Miracula*. Devotion to the local saints endured across changing social and religious landscapes.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹*Northern Saints*, 81; and Aelred, *Miracula*, 186: “Qui mediocrem sub nobili quodam ac prædivite agebat vitam.”

¹⁰²*Northern Saints*, 81; and Aelred, *Miracula*, 186: “Ad Accam meum.”

¹⁰³*Northern Saints*, 82–83; and Aelred, *Miracula*, 187: “Qui volens se gratum Sancto præbere, virum ipsum emancipatum cum omni peccunia sua Sancto tradidit, ipsiusque ecclesiæ obsequiis quoad viveret deputavit.”

¹⁰⁴*Northern Saints*, 83; and Aelred, *Miracula*, 187: “Utinam, fratres karissimi, eadem fide, pari devotione, nec impari spe, in animæ periculis ejus imploremus auxilium, considerantes in quibus lacrymis, qua precum instantia homo carnalis carnalem obtinuit sospitem.”

¹⁰⁵Richard of Hexham is emphatic about this idea as well. Despite losing everything else, Hexham never lost its saints. Richard of Hexham, *Brevis annotatio*, 48–49: “Although the surrounding region was often despoiled and depopulated and had remained deserted for a long

When Aelred returned to his hometown to preach in 1154/1155, he was returning to a church that had been the personal possession of his family for several generations. His great-grandfather, Aelfred Westou, was a sacristan of Durham who had traveled all over Northumbria gathering saints' relics in the eleventh century.¹⁰⁶ He was also priest of Hexham, and positions in Durham and Hexham were held by his son (Eilaf I) and grandson (Eilaf II, Aelred's father). As Ralph Walterspercher points out, while the clerical positions at Hexham can be traced through several families, they were not strictly hereditary; Hexham was a valuable commodity in both spiritual and material respects, and the bishops of Durham could use it "to reward important laymen and Durham clerks of their choice."¹⁰⁷ Aelred's father, grandfather, and great-grandfather had received that reward. When the Norman bishop of Durham, William of Saint Calais, established the Benedictine rule and celibate clergy there in 1083,¹⁰⁸ Aelfred Westou's son, the married treasurer of Durham, Eilaf I, retreated from Durham to the property under his control at Hexham, and sought to put Hexham under the jurisdiction of the archbishop of York rather than Durham.¹⁰⁹ In *Miracula*,

time, never, I say, never was it deprived of the holy relics of its patrons, the bishops of that church, that is of Saints Eata and Acca and Alchmund and the rest of the venerable protectors, Frethbert and Tilbert." (Nam cum, multis antea annorum curriculis, cum circumjacente regione sæpius deprædata, et depopulata, et diu deserta mansisset, nunquam tamen patronorum suorum, ejusdem ecclesiæ episcoporum, scilicet Sanctorum Eatæ et Accæ et Alchmundi et cæterorum venerabilium præsulum, Fredberti et Tilberti, Divina pietate protegente, nunquam, inquam, eorum sacris reliquiis destituta est.)

¹⁰⁶Symeon of Durham, *Libellus de exordio* 3.7. Symeon says Aelfred Westou lived until the time of Bishop Æthelwine (1056–1071). See the family tree printed in Raine, *Priory of Hexham*, li–lii and reprinted in McGuire, *Brother and Lover*, 12.

¹⁰⁷Walterspercher, *Foundation of Hexham Priory*, 5.

¹⁰⁸Symeon says that all the clerks, save one, decided to leave rather than embrace the new way of life: *Libellus de exordio* 4.3; and Rollason, ed., *Libellus de exordio*, 230–231n20. However, William Aird has called into question Symeon's assertion of near-total discontinuity between the clerks and the monks. See Aird, *Cuthbert and the Normans* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1998), 126–131, 137–138; and Rollason, "The Political Context of the *Libellus de exordio*" in *Symeon of Durham: Historian of Durham and the North*, ed. Rollason (Stamford: Shaun Tyas, 1998), 32–45.

¹⁰⁹Aelred says that Eilaf I turned to York because he had received no compensation from William of Saint Calais: Aelred, *Miracula*, 191. See Symeon of Durham, *Libellus de exordio* 4.3; and Rollason, introduction to *Libellus de exordio*, lxxxix. See also A. J. Piper, "The First Generations of Durham Monks and the Cult of St Cuthbert," in *St Cuthbert, His Cult, and His Community to AD 1200*, ed. Gerald Bonner, David Rollason, and Clare Stancliffe (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1989) 437–446; Meryl Foster, "Custodians of St Cuthbert: The Durham Monks' Views of their Predecessors, 1083–c.1200," in *Anglo-Norman Durham*, ed. Rollason, Harvey, and Prestwich, 53–65; and W. M. Aird, "An Absent Friend: The Career of Bishop William of St Calais," in *Anglo-Norman Durham*, ed. Rollason, Harvey, and Prestwich, 283–297. Richard notes that Hexham was given to a canon of Beverley, Richard de Maton, and that Eilaf was subordinate to him, but neither Symeon nor Aelred mentions this detail: Richard of Hexham, *Brevis annotatio*, 50.

Aelred describes Eilaf I's restoration of the church property at Hexham, noting that it had fallen into significant disrepair.¹¹⁰ "He found everything desolate, the walls of the roofless church overgrown with grass and overrun by the encroaching forest. Defaced by rain and ravaged by storms, it retained nothing of its former beauty. The land was so desolate that for almost two years he sustained himself and his family only by hunting and fowling."¹¹¹ Eilaf I's son and Aelred's father, Eilaf II, also priest of Hexham, continued the restoration after Eilaf I's death: "Directing all his attention and care to restoring the Hexham church, he cut down the encroaching forest, cleared the overgrown walls, roofed the whole church with tiles, and, when the walls had been plastered inside and out, decorated the church with an ancient painting of great beauty."¹¹² As part of the rebuilding project, Eilaf II elevated the relics and put his brother Aldred in charge of the shrine.¹¹³

Just as reform had come to Durham, necessitating Eilaf I's move to Hexham, so reform came to Hexham, necessitating a change of life for Eilaf II and his sons, that is, for Aelred and his brothers. The archbishop of York changed the pattern of religious life at Hexham by establishing regular canons there, effectively eliminating the possibility of Hexham continuing as a possession of the family of priests. As Walterspercher points out, "history repeated itself" for Aelred's family; one generation after the introduction of Benedictine monasticism ousted the family from Durham, the introduction of regular canons at Hexham changed their fortunes again.¹¹⁴ Eilaf II's handover to the

¹¹⁰This may have been a consequence of William the Conqueror's harrying of the region. Orderic Vitalis mentions that William went through Hexham in January of 1070. See Orderic Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, bk. 4, vol. 2, in *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 234–235; and Walterspercher, *Foundation of Hexham Priory*, 6.

¹¹¹*Northern Saints*, 89; and Aelred, *Miracula*, 191: "Veniens ad locum homo invenit omnia desolata, muros ecclesiae sine tegmine, sordere feno, silvis supercrescentibus horrere; litura, imbribus, et tempestate dejecta, nihil pristini retinuisse decoris. Erat autem talis terrae illius desolatio, ut fere biennio ex solo venatu et aucupio se suamque familiam sustineret."

¹¹²*Northern Saints*, 89–90; and Aelred, *Miracula*, 191: "Hic itaque ecclesiae Haugustaldensi renovandae totum animum curamque impendens, succisa quae supercreverat silva, purgatis ab omni sorde parietibus, totam ecclesiam tegulis textit, et, litis intus et extra parietibus, antiqua eam pictura et venustate decoravit."

¹¹³Aelred, *Miracula*, 191–192.

¹¹⁴Walterspercher, *Foundation of Hexham Priory*, 7. Aelred says that the initiative for reform came not from the archbishop, but from his own father, who sought out Thomas II of York and "humbly asked that he commit the church to the canons regular and that he hand over to them himself and his property." *Northern Saints*, 91; and Aelred, *Miracula*, 192: "Zelo domus Dei succensus, ad virum venerabilem juniorem Thomam Eboracensem archiepiscopum adiit, et ut canonicis regularibus ecclesiam committeret, illisque se et sua contraderet, suppliciter postulavit." It may be that Aelred was smoothing a bumpy recent past in Hexham by assigning the handover to his father's initiative rather than the archbishop's, but the story also reveals that Aelred was not the first member of his family to seek out a new religious order.

Augustinian canons was arranged in 1113,¹¹⁵ and Thurstan of York appointed Ansketil to be prior in 1114, although Eilaf II remained vicar of the church.¹¹⁶ As we have seen, Eilaf II finally handed over the rest of the property at Hexham to the canons in 1138 and joined the Benedictines at Durham.¹¹⁷

Aelred grew up in Hexham, in the shadow of the church and its saints, clearly aware both of his family's traditions and of clerical precariousness in a new context of religious life. The old career options of proceeding in the family occupation had evaporated by the time Aelred came of age. Yet, he came from a line of men whose professional and personal lives were devoted to the care of saints at major centers in Northumbria, both Durham and Hexham, and Aelred continued this family tradition of devotion to the local saints in his own context and in his own way. Although he ultimately adopted a new mode of religious life, Aelred neither forgot nor abandoned his heritage of priestly dedication to saints' shrines.

When describing devotion to the saints in *Miracula*, Aelred includes his own personal knowledge as a child born and raised at Hexham. He knows precisely which relics are being translated, independent of any labels, because he heard everyone name the four saints during his childhood. "Many years before this translation," he says, "when I was still a boy, the whole populace unhesitatingly claimed that Acca, Alchmund, Frethbert, and Tilbert were resting there [at Hexham] together."¹¹⁸ The local knowledge of the *vulgus* enables him to identify the saints at the translation with confidence. As we have seen, Aelred also knew about long-standing lay devotional practices. He augments the canons' knowledge with his own. When he describes the elevation and translation of Alchmund, Aelred observes that the canons were surprised to find Alchmund's body intact.

¹¹⁵For all the friendly relationships between Thomas II and Eilaf II that Aelred describes in *Miracula*, it is worth remembering that Thomas II is the archbishop about whom Aelred had a prophecy as a small boy, according to Walter Daniel. The child Aelred prophesied that Thomas had died, and his father quipped, "Truly, he is dead who has lived an evil life," suggesting some animosity between the two: Walter Daniel, *Vita Ailredi*, in *The Life of Ailred of Rievaulx*, trans. Powicke, 72.

¹¹⁶For a biography of Thurstan, see Donald Nicholl, *Thurstan, Archbishop of York 1114–1140* (York: Stonegate, 1964); see also Janet Burton, "The Regular Canons and Diocesan Reform in Northern England," in *The Regular Canons in the Medieval British Isles*, ed. Janet Burton and Karen Stöber (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 46–48; and Anne Mathers-Lawrence, "The Augustinian Canons in Northumbria: Region, Tradition, and Textuality in a Colonizing Order," in *The Regular Canons in the Medieval British Isles*, ed. Burton and Stöber, 59–78.

¹¹⁷The same year, Eilaf II also gave the vill of Cocken in Houghton-le-Spring (near Finchale) to the monks of Durham: H. S. Offler, *Durham Episcopal Charters 1071–1152*, Surtees Society 179 (London: Surtees Society, 1968), 119–122.

¹¹⁸*Northern Saints*, 102; and Aelred, *Miracula*, 200: "Nam ante hanc translationem multis annis cum adhuc puerulus essem, Accam, Alchmundum, Fredenbertum, Tilbertum, ibi simul requiescere nichil [h]aesitans populus totus clamabat."

The brothers stood around the heavenly treasure; intently examining everything, they found every part of the human body. And because those who had once buried the saints had taken some bits of the bones of blessed Acca for their devotions, they marveled that no such thing had been done to the remains of blessed Alchmund. Why this had not occurred, some had forgotten and others had not heard. So I am not at all reluctant to add an account of his former translation to his new one and to explain the reason for his integrity.¹¹⁹

Aelred knew more than the canons did and could answer their queries with information of his own about a translation undertaken by members of his own family.

However, Aelred's personal knowledge of a local oral tradition was mediated by his scholarly knowledge of written sources and by his own sophisticated spiritual thought. Aelred did not simply repeat what he knew from popular report or from his own personal memories or from his written sources. He adapted the stories both for the specific occasion of the translation and for his own concerns as a Cistercian monk speaking to a group of Augustinian canons. He argued for the continuing relevance and significance of the ancient local saints in a newly reformed world. Despite the discontinuity in the veneration of the saints, the power of the saints still worked miracles to the spiritual benefit of the canons and people: "Even their dead bones burgeon with frequent miracles and by clear signs continue to perpetuate their memory, which time had hidden or neglect destroyed."¹²⁰ Thus Aelred carefully modernizes the information he has gathered from his own family lore, local oral stories, and written sources, reinterpreting the ancient miracle stories in his reformed context.

Personally, Aelred was at this fulcrum between past and present as well. An ongoing devotion to Anglo-Saxon saints marked Aelred's life. He heard stories of the Hexham saints as a boy, and the family tradition of working as custodians of saints' shrines did not end with Aelred's own entry into religious life.¹²¹ The local saintly past remained present for Aelred, and that is evident both in Aelred's own writing in *Miracula* and in other twelfth-century works about Aelred. Walter Daniel's *vita* and other sources provide tantalizing clues about the depth of Aelred's devotion to the saints in general and to the

¹¹⁹*Northern Saints*, 95; and Aelred, *Miracula*, 195: "Stabant autem fratres circa thesaurum illud caeleste, intenteque scrutantes omnia, omnia quibus corpus humanum compingitur indumenta repperunt. Et quia hi qui quondam Sanctos condiderant, aliquas minutias ex ossibus beati Accae pro devotione sustulerunt, nichil tale circa beati Alchmundi reliquias factum mirabantur. Cur enim hoc acciderit, aliis [sic] exciderat, alii nec audierant."

¹²⁰*Northern Saints*, 66; and Aelred, *Miracula*, 174: "Quorum plerumque etiam ossa mortua crebris miraculis pullulant de loco suo; et eorum memoriam quam vetustas absconderat, vel aboleverat negligentia, manifestis non desinunt perpetuare indicis."

¹²¹See also Powicke's remarks in *Life of Ailred of Rievaulx*, xxxvii.

Anglo-Saxon saints in particular. Walter Daniel hints Aelred imitated Cuthbert's devotional practices in some particulars; Aelred's nighttime immersion in freezing water is reminiscent of Cuthbert's own ascetic practice.¹²² Aelred's devotion to Cuthbert was known outside Rievaulx as well. In his collection of the shrine miracles of Cuthbert at Durham, the hagiographer Reginald of Durham not only says that he has received stories from Aelred¹²³ but in fact goes further and addresses his collection of Cuthbert's miracles at Durham to Aelred.¹²⁴ Aelred also, according to Reginald, took care to celebrate Cuthbert's feast on March 20, 1164 at Kirkcudbright, the village named for the saint on the coast of the Solway Firth.¹²⁵ On his deathbed, he asked for the relics of the saints to be brought to him, along with the Gospel of John.¹²⁶ Walter Daniel does not specify which relics Aelred requested, but it is not at all improbable that the relics were those of Anglo-Saxon saints, perhaps even some of the saints of Hexham that his father had not given to the canons when he surrendered his property.¹²⁷ Aelred's repeated cry "festinate [hasten] for crist luvē" on his deathbed reminds us of his deep identification with the language and culture of his youth.¹²⁸

¹²²Bede, *Vita Cuthberti*, in *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert*, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), 188–189; and Walter Daniel, *Vita Ailredi*, in *The Life of Ailred of Rievaulx*, trans. Powicke, 60. For Aelred's practice of immersion, see Constance I. Smith, "Aelred's Immersion," *Harvard Theological Review* 62, no. 4 (October 1969): 429; and Roger G. Cooper, "New Light on Aelred's Immersion," *Harvard Theological Review* 69, nos. 3/4 (July–October 1976): 416–419. Pierre-André Burton has argued that Aelred's asceticism is modeled along biblical lines, as well it might be, but the Anglo-Saxon, particularly Bedan, similarities are striking, although unnoticed by him: Burton, "Aelred, tel un second Noé: L'abbé de Rievaulx, un bâtisseur à la recherche de la coudeé unique. Un commentaire du chapitre 40 de la Vita Aelred," *Cîteaux: Commentarii cistercienses* 52, nos. 3–4 (2001): 231–318.

¹²³Reginald of Durham, *Libellus de admirandis*, 32: "Haec omnia, quae descripsimus, sicut a venerabili patre nostro Ætheldredo [*sic*] Abbate Rievallensium audivimus, ita, ipsius testimonio, membranulis inseruimus." See also 4, 176, 188.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*, 1.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*, 178. See also Victoria Tudor, "The Cult of St Cuthbert in the Twelfth Century: The Evidence of Reginald of Durham" in *St Cuthbert, His Cult, and His Community*, ed. Bonner, Rollason, and Stancliffe, 448.

¹²⁶Walter Daniel reports that Aelred said he had kept these possessions in his oratory and "had delighted [*delectabar*] in them": Walter Daniel, *Vita Ailredi*, in *The Life of Ailred of Rievaulx*, trans. Powicke, 58. The Gospel of John was of particular concern to Bede, Cuthbert, and others in the seventh and eighth centuries. Bede was translating John from Latin into English on his deathbed. See *Epistola de obitu Bedae*, in *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and trans. R. A. B. Mynors and Bertram Colgrave (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 582–583. An early eighth-century copy of the Gospel of John (London, British Library, MS Additional 89000) was found in Cuthbert's coffin when his body was elevated at Durham in 1104, which Aelred certainly knew, and the book remained important in Cuthbert's cult throughout the twelfth century. See Claire Breay and Bernard Meehan, eds. *The Saint Cuthbert Gospel: Studies on the Insular Manuscript of the Gospel of John* (London: British Library, 2015).

¹²⁷Walter Daniel, *Vita Ailredi*, in *The Life of Ailred of Rievaulx*, trans. Powicke, 58. See also Pierre-André Burton, "The Beginnings of Cistercian Expansion in England," 167n39.

¹²⁸Walter Daniel, *Vita Ailredi*, in *The Life of Ailred of Rievaulx*, trans. Powicke, 60.

Conversion to Cistercian life did not totally supplant Aelred's other religious traditions, interests, and practices as we might expect and indeed as some scholars have argued.¹²⁹ Certainly, there was concern in the twelfth century at Clairvaux that devotion to saints would interfere with the appropriate practice of monastic life. In a particularly dramatic example, the abbot of Clairvaux forbade Bernard himself from working posthumous miracles,¹³⁰ and all Cistercian monasteries were dedicated not to local saints, or even to apostles, but to the Virgin Mary.¹³¹ Nevertheless, despite what we may see as anti-saint sentiment among the broader Cistercian community, devotion to ancient local saints remained an important part of Aelred's religious life and experience.

Miracula shows how the local saintly past of one small Northumbrian town was personal to one of the great Cistercian thinkers of the twelfth century. Moreover, as William Faulkner observed: "The past is never dead. It's not even past."¹³² Although the religious world had changed irreversibly, the past was neither dead nor past for Aelred. In spite of political regime change, in spite of religious reform, commemoration of the local saints endured at Hexham, and that commemoration mattered to a reform-minded monk. Aelred was particularly well situated to update the traditions and the devotional practices for a new era; he could modernize an understanding of miracles without jettisoning the past, and *Miracula* shows him maneuvering through these competing commitments to past and present. A Cistercian monk who was committed to reform was convinced that the saints of his youth continued to be relevant. Although his father had handed over relics of the Hexham saints, the family saints never really left Aelred; devotion to the ancient local saints was a constant in Aelred's changing world.

¹²⁹I differ in my interpretation from Pierre-André Burton who has argued that Aelred's entry into Cistercian life marked a complete break with the religious traditions of his family: Burton, "Beginnings of Cistercian Expansion in England," 154, 157, 181.

¹³⁰Conrad of Eberbach, *Exordium magnum*, in *The Great Beginning of Cîteaux: A Narrative of the Beginning of the Cistercian Order: The "Exordium Magnum" of Conrad of Eberbach*, ed. E. Rozanne Elder, trans. Benedicta Ward and Paul Savage (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian, 2012), 156–158; Conrad of Eberbach, *Exordium magnum*, in *Exordium magnum cisterciense sive narratio de initio cisterciensis ordinis*, ed. Bruno Griesser, *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis* 138 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 97–98. See also Adriaan Bredero, *Bernard of Clairvaux: Between Cult and History* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 69–72.

¹³¹See Chrysogonus Waddell, *Narrative and Legislative Texts from Early Cîteaux* (Cîteaux: Commentarii cistercienses, 1999), 462–463.

¹³²William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun* (New York: Vintage, 2011), 73.