But Was He Really Gay?

An Analysis of Modern Responses to Medieval Sexuality and Desire

MA Thesis

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Date: 26-04-2021

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INTRODUCTION

In the modern, Western world, we use terms such as queer, gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, or straight to describe ourselves and others. We use these terms because we see sexuality as an integral part of identity. These terms pertain not only to sexual behaviour (i.e. who a person does or does not have sex with), but also to desire and attraction. A woman can thus view, and label, herself as a lesbian, and be viewed that way by others, even if she has never had sex with another woman, because she experiences attraction and desire towards women. In the West, we typically do not consider the sex act itself the defining feature of someone's sexual orientation. However, the way we view sexuality now is not the way it has always been viewed.

In the Middle Ages, terms such as gay, straight or pansexual did not exist as they do today; nor did many of the attitudes regarding sexuality that feel so natural and familiar to us. Of course, people had sex during the Middle Ages, and there existed a range of sexual behaviours, but we cannot easily apply our modern frameworks to a society, or a set of behaviours, that existed centuries ago. This raises an important question: how is it possible that certain scholars have identified certain medieval individuals as 'gay', or 'homosexual', and on the basis of which sources are these claims being made? In this thesis, I will aim to explore scholarly research on the topic of medieval 'homosexuality', and the attitudes towards such scholarship. My aim is not so much to provide a definitive answer regarding whether or not certain medieval individuals might have been 'gay', but instead to explore how we approach the subject of historical sexuality within the study of English literature (and history). How do we study medieval sexuality? What approaches and theoretical frameworks are used, and how is such research regarded and engaged with by scholars?

The field has changed rapidly over the past fifty years. While scholars of the early and middle of the twentieth century tended to ignore the topic of sexual desire between men in medieval literature and history, a growing interest emerged in the latter half of the 1970's. Key to this change was the publication of Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* in 1976, which radically changed the way scholars approached pre-modern sexuality. Foucault's book introduced the theory that before the Victorian era, people did not identify themselves through sexuality. Sex was an act one could participate in, or chose not to, but it was not used as grounds for labelling oneself or other people.

In the 80s, the influence of Foucault's theory started to develop. While this theory was not incorporated into John Boswell's groundbreaking book on medieval 'homosexuality', *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality*, it is often incorporated, or at least taken into account in later works on the topic. Boswell's book, published in 1980, aims to uncover the history of 'homosexuality' from the beginning of the Christian era in the West up until the end of the Middle Ages, arguing that the incompatibility that is often associated nowadays with Christianity and homosexuality was not something that was always a part of the religion from its conception. Foucault's theory of pre-modern sexuality does play a major part in the work of Brian Patrick McGuire. McGuire's 1988 book *Friendship and Community: The Monastic Experience 350-1250* explores friendship within the monastic communities throughout the Middle Ages, and also analyses a particular historical figure that Boswell labels as 'gay' in his book.

In the 90s, the topic of same-sex desire and sexuality was explored in several key works. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's book *The Epistemology of the Closet* was published in 1990, and although its case studies are focused on much more modern literary texts, her theory on historical and literary scholarship on the topic of homosexuality are very influential. In her book Sedgwick argues that a major problem of modern Western culture is that it "does not incorporate a critical analysis of modern homo/heterosexual definition", and that this analysis should be made, at least in the beginning, from the perspective of gay theory (1).

The 90s also saw a wave of scholarship reacting to discussions of medieval sexuality. John Gillingham, Marsha Dutton and Stephen Jaeger's works, all published between 1994 and 1999, are examples of the reactionary scholarship prompted by the inquiry into historical sexuality I will extensively discuss in this thesis. Both Gillingham and Dutton see an inherent problem with asking questions on the topic of medieval 'homosexuality', and do not engage with Foucault's theory. Jaeger does take Foucault's theory into consideration in his book *Ennobling Love*, yet seems to think it impossible to see any type of continuity between feelings or expressions of male-male desire in the Middle Ages and the current age.

The most recent scholarly works analysed in this thesis are by Jean Flori and William Burgwinkle. Jean Flori's book *Richard the Lionheart* was translated and published in English in 2006, but originally released in French in 1999. In this book, Flori explores many aspects and facets of Richard's life, including his sexuality. Burgwinkle's book *Sodomy, Masculinity and Law in Medieval Literature* is similar, in the sense that it uses Richard as an example in its analysis of medieval 'homosexuality'. Yet unlike Gillingham, Dutton and Jaeger, Burgwinkle

thinks it possible to see some continuity between sexual and romantic relationships between men in the Middle Ages and nowadays.

In order to explore approaches to medieval sexuality of the past fifty years, I will explore the scholarly debate surrounding two medieval men whose 'homosexuality' has been a topic of fervent discussion. These two individuals are the monk and abbot Aelred of Rievaulx, and the king and crusader Richard Lionheart. These men are both twelfth-century figures. I have chosen to focus on the twelfth century in particular because it was an era in which several important changes took place: the language of erotic passion regained popularity, and it was a period of drastic monastic reform and intellectual advancement--so much so that it is often referred to as the twelfth century renaissance (Boswell 209-210).

I chose to focus on Aelred and Richard in particular because they had different roles in society, but also because of the differences in the sources that exist about them. As king of England, Richard Lionheart is a secular figure, and the sources that we have about him are all chronicles and historical accounts written about him by others. By contrast, Aelred of Rievaulx is a religious man, and the sources we have about him are first-hand accounts, written by Aelred himself, about himself and his (spiritual) life.Since the two figures differ significantly in terms of societal status, they offer insight into two very different social milieus and therefore ensure that I am not drawing conclusions on the basis of an overly narrow cross-section of medieval society. Furthermore, examining two individuals instead of one helps us see recurring patterns when it comes to studies of medieval sexuality--patterns that can help shed light on broader social attitudes to sexuality and desire.

One of these important patterns is in the nature of the questions that get asked. Within literary studies, when an author is said to be gay, or to have desired members of the opposite sex, scholars will typically raise questions about this identification. In fact, I would argue that every student of English literature deals with this question at least once during their education, namely when it comes to William Shakespeare. Shakespeare is arguably at the very heart of the English canon, and his works can be found in almost every university or college curriculum on English literature. Considering the fact that homoerotic or male-male desire features regularly in Shakespeare's works, including the *Merchant of Venice* and several of his sonnets, it is crucial to explore how we deal with such questions, and how we regard scholarship on the subject of historical (homo)sexuality as a whole. Furthermore, not only is the question of historical 'homosexuality' one that merits being raised, it is a question that comes up often, especially in popular discourse, but also within the English canon at large.

Turning to Shakespeare, we can see a variety of approaches to scholarship on historical (homo)sexuality. Historically, editors and critics would erase the homoerotic desire in Shakespeare's works. For example, the male pronouns were changed to female ones in his Sonnet 20 (Charles 42). Scholars and editors often worked under the assumption "that any reference to the genitals must allude to a male phallus and a female vagina, thus yielding a heterosexual coupling" and would remove homoerotic scenes from Shakespeare's plays to shorten the length of the production (Traub 144). In the case of these homoerotic scenes, this erasure might not always be because of the homoeroticism, but because the value and importance of these scenes is deemed less than other aspects of the plays. So, it seems that we should first acknowledge that it has not always been possible to even ask these questions, let alone try to formulate an answer or compare different approaches and opinions.

When questions regarding the same-sex desire expressed in Shakespeare's works, and the sexuality of Shakespeare himself, started being expressed and researched, the initial response was often one of immediate pushback and rejection. Van Watson writes that,"[f]or the better part of four centuries, the same Shakespearean scholars who have praised the bard for his almost universal understanding of human psychology have been intent on straightjacketing his concept of human sexuality into a limited and conformist heterosexual polarity" (van Watson 1). During the twentieth century, some scholars tried to argue that Shakespeare himself might have felt desire towards other men on the basis of the homoerotic sonnets written by Shakespeare. Other scholars claimed that the speaker in the sonnets and Shakespeare as a historical figure cannot be conflated (Charney 159), and that the sonnets therefore offer us no 'proof' that Shakespeare himself experienced same-sex desire. In addition, the argument was often made that male friendships were very different in the Early Modern period, (or any other historical period, for that matter) and that expressions and descriptions in Shakespeare that may seem homoerotic on the surface should not be taken as erotic or sexual desire, but merely as expressions of an intimate type of male friendship that is unfamiliar to us now. The mere fact that intimate male friendships existed in the Renaissance period, "does not mean homosexual male relationships did not" (van Watson 2).

When it comes to Shakespeare the individual, scholars are often quick to point out that we have no 'evidence' that he was attracted to men in his personal life. Shakespeare married young and had several children with his wife. But here too, the argument is not particularly convincing; evidence of 'heterosexual' attachment does not discount same-sex desire or sexuality. Furthermore, what remains always out in the open, yet always unquestioned are the expressions of 'heterosexual' desire in Shakespeare's sonnets. It seems to be a pattern that

critics are quick to criticise and question claims regarding 'homosexuality', or any type of queerness, while claims regarding 'heterosexuality' typically go unquestioned. We can see this dichotomy perfectly in Sarker's analysis of desire in Shakespeare's sonnets: "[c]ertainly Shakespeare had no homosexual relation with the Fair Youth, in the carnal sense, for otherwise, he would not have felt carnal attraction the Dark Lady" (Sarker 67). The phrasing of this statement makes it very clear that Sarker recognises the expression of desire toward both the man and the woman. Yet Sarker here assigns more validity to the expression of 'heterosexual' desire--the unquestioned standard--as opposed to the 'homosexual' desire. For many scholars of early modern literature, any 'proof' of 'homosexual' desire does not hold the same weight as 'proof' of 'heterosexual' desire.

The study of medieval 'homosexuality' is riddled with similar issues. As discussed at length in this thesis, the question of medieval 'homosexuality' is not taken seriously by scholars, or it is dismissed. Scholars will state that male friendships were simply different in the medieval period. We often encounter the (usually implicit) assumption that someone was 'straight' until proven otherwise. However, it often seems like no 'proof' that is accessible to us nowadays through literature and historical accounts will ever be enough. In this thesis, I aim to explore these attitudes towards scholarship on medieval sexuality and engage with some of these prevalent arguments and attitudes.

Before I do that, however, I would like to briefly discuss the terminology that will be used in this thesis. As is perhaps already clear, I have adopted the habit of employing scare quotes around such terms as 'homosexual', and 'gay'--and even the word 'proof'. This is because, as will be explained in more detail in the discussion of the theoretical framework, these terms are very modern in origin and meaning and can therefore not be used to describe medieval people in a straightforward manner. The term sodomite is used without such scare quotes, as it is a term that was used in the Middle Ages to describe contemporary individuals, and therefore is not inherently anachronistic when used to describe a medieval person. It is important to keep in mind though, that the term sodomite is a pejorative term in English, due to the biblical and 'sinful' connotations of the word. In this thesis the term sodomite is used solely to describe a person who engages in sexual acts with a person of the same gender. In addition, I also use terms such as male-male desire, same-sex desire, or even more lengthy phrases such as 'sexual or romantic desire towards other men' to describe the behaviour of Aelred and Richard without defaulting to anachronistic terms. As each scholar mentioned in this thesis has their own theoretical framework, and therefore their own way of using these

terms, I will specify each scholar's framework when discussing that scholar's work; this approach will help clarify how each scholar uses these terms.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

First of all, we need to be aware that how we view, approach and think about sexuality in the twenty-first century has not always been the same throughout history. When examining the subject of medieval sexuality, it is important to be aware of the fact that categories of homosexual, and heterosexual, that feel so familiar to us now, did not yet exist in medieval times. In fact, preceding the Victorian era, sexuality was approached in a very different way, as Michel Foucault explains in his *History of Sexuality*.

According to Foucault, in the West we tend to think of sexuality as a repressed, or taboo, subject, not fit for public discussion (4-5). Something that is actively repressed and regulated by governments and institutions, whether they are our own of those of other countries or continents. "Sexuality was carefully confined; it moved into the home. [...] On the subject of sex, silence became the rule" (3). This is what Foucault describes as the repressive hypothesis. This theory sees power, and how it behaves, as something negative, meaning that it is restrictive in nature and therefore enforces boundaries that are not to be crossed. "Not only did it not exist, it had no right to exist and would be made to disappear upon its least manifestation--whether in acts or in words. [...] These are the characteristic features attributed to repression, which serve to distinguish it from the prohibitions maintained by penal law: repression operated as a sentence to disappear, but also as an injunction to silence, an affirmation of nonexistence, and, by implication, and admission that there was nothing to say about such things, nothing to see, and nothing to know" (4).

However, Foucault disagrees with this repressive hypothesis, because he argues that this negative, repressive form of power is not the only one. Foucault explains that there is also a productive aspect of power, which the repressive hypothesis fails to take into account. This productive form of power is key to Foucault's understanding of the history of sexuality, because, as he explains, sex did not just become a taboo topic through the negative aspect of power. Instead, it became the subject of increasingly specialised discourses. "More than the old taboos, this form of power demanded constant, attentive, and curious presences for its exercise; it presupposed proximities; it proceeded through examination and insistent observation; it required an exchange of discourses, through questions that extorted admissions, and confidences that went beyond the questions that were asked" (Foucault 44).

Foucault writes that "[t]he medicalization of the sexually peculiar was both the effect and the instrument of this. Imbedded in bodies, becoming deeply characteristic of individuals, the oddities of sex relied on a technology of health and pathology" (44). These specialised

discourses on the subject of sexuality led to the creation of new terms, words, concepts and attitudes towards sexuality as "new persecution of the peripheral sexualities entailed an *incorporation of perversions* and a new *specification of individuals*" (Foucault 42-43). The homosexual, according to Foucault, was one of these creations. "Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species" (Foucault 43).

According to Foucault, it was thus in the Victorian era that homosexuality became identifiable as a type of person, or personality, instead of being a type of behaviour. The behaviour, meaning the sexual acts, remain the same before and after the Victorian era, but the way in which this behaviour was perceived changed drastically. This means that before this discursive and cultural shift, 'homosexuals' simply did not exist. Therefore, even if we can identify men who practiced 'homosexual' behaviour in the middle ages, we will not be able to identify any of these men as homosexuals. If we do in fact conflate these two categories, we will be victim to anachronism.

Anachronism is, at its core, the inability to grasp the historical context, and the subsequent failure to adjust the research question accordingly on the basis of that historical context. By conducting scholarship in this way, we do not actually come any closer to understanding the period we intend to study, but instead we are just projecting our own views and values onto that period (Dascal 111).

Foucault thus argues that we cannot apply modern terms and ways of thinking to the past. This might cause us to think that we cannot study the past at all, because we can never fully escape our modern points of view. However, Donna Haraway's concept of situated knowledge offers one potential approach to this issue. Haraway is a self-described feminist scholar who witnessed some of her fellow feminist scholars struggle with the concept of objectivity, especially when trying to balance activism and research. In order to navigate this problem of objectivity, Haraway developed the concept of situated knowledge. The concept of situated knowledge acknowledges that each scholar approaches their research from a clearly visible position and perspective.

Perspective is a key word here, since Haraway characterises "Western scientific and philosophical discourse" as centered around vision (587). According to Harraway, the way we study objects, concepts and even people entails making certain things visible, either in a literal or metaphorical sense. However, according to Haraway there is no passive or unmediated way of seeing, even if Western scholarship often pretends to stem from such an dislocated,

impartial, and transcendent perspective (583). Haraway takes an issue with the idea of an impartial form of knowledge production; because it claims to be transcendent, it refuses accountability for the perspective from which it originates. She thus describes such an approach as leading to "unlocatable, and so irresponsible, knowledge claims" (583).

Haraway presents the concept of situated knowledge as a solution to this problem, because "only partial perspective promises objective vision" (583). This is because "[f]eminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. It allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see" (Haraway 583). Only when a perspective is clearly visible and locatable, can it be criticised and held accountable for the knowledge it produces. Claims of transcendence and impartiality are thus "denial of responsibility and critical inquiry" (Haraway 584). Therefore, according to Haraway "objectivity turns out to be about particular and specific embodiment and definitely not about the false vision promising transcendence of all limits and responsibility" (582-583). This concept of situated knowledge will be important to the analysis here, especially with respect to questions, and even accusations, of (il)legitimate scholarship. Using this concept, we can call certain arguments and conclusions into question, and even seek to hold them accountable.

AELRED OF RIEVAULX

In the following chapters I will be exploring two particular individuals from the twelfth century. One, Aelred of Rievaulx, lived a primarily monastic life; the other, Richard Lionheart, a primarily secular one. I will examine why some scholars have identified these men as sodomites, and on the basis of which sources these claims have been made. Subsequently, I will explore the reactionary scholarship that was brought about by the claims about the sexuality of these men, and analyse the criticism on the research into their sexuality.

Aelred the Sodomite

In this chapter I will be discussing Aelred of Rievaulx. Aelred was a twelfth-century Cistercian monk and later abbot at the monastery of Rievaulx, located in what is now North Yorkshire. He wrote several spiritual treatises, such as the *Speculum caritatis* (*Mirror of Charity*) and *De spirituali amicitia* (*Spiritual Friendshi*p), and scholars have taken these, and other works by Aelred, as proof of his sexuality. I will start this section with the examination of the scholars who have identified him as a sodomite, and analyse the sources they give to support this claim.

Aelred was first identified as a man who harboured romantic and sexual feelings for other men by prominent scholar of pre-modern 'homosexuality' John Boswell. In his ground-breaking book *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, which was published in 1980, Boswell describes Aelred as follows: "[t]here can be little question that Aelred was gay and that his erotic attraction to men was a dominant force in his life. This was true, by his own account, from the beginning of his emotional life" (222).

What is notable, besides Boswell's absolute confidence in his identification of Aelred as a 'gay' man, is his use of the term 'gay' itself. As discussed in the theoretical framework, and as argued by Foucault, pre-modern attitudes and perceptions towards sexuality are wholly different from our own, and so I would argue that we cannot use modern categories of sexual identity to describe medieval people in any simple way. In light of this, it seems strange that Boswell would use such a modern word to describe a twelfth-century individual. However, in his book Boswell does not take Foucault's theory about pre-modern sexuality into account.

Nevertheless, Boswell does explain his use of the term 'gay' to some degree, stating that he prefers using it in this context instead of 'homosexual' or sodomite. This is because he finds the term 'homosexual' to be rather inadequate. His reasons are notable: "what is a 'homosexual' person? Is this someone 'of one sex'? By extension, one supposes, a

‘homosexual’ person is one given to ‘homosexual’ acts. But in just how many such acts must one indulge before becoming ‘homosexual’--one, two, ten, four hundred? And what of the person who only dreams of committing the act but never realizes the ambition? Is he or she ‘homosexual’?” (Boswell 41).

Boswell thus finds the term ‘homosexual’ inadequate as it does not account for romantic, or even sexual desire--as long as sexual acts have not been performed. Of the term sodomite Boswell declares that the English employed it “to describe those who engaged in homosexual acts, but this word did not suggest erotic preference, a concept largely unknown when it was coined” (43). Once again, Boswell takes issue with the fact that this term only describes the act of ‘homosexual’ sex, instead of sexual or romantic preference, and awareness of that preference (43). But for Bosewell, the term ‘gay’, does account for preference, and is most often used “to describe persons who are conscious of erotic preference for their own gender” (Boswell 43). Furthermore, Boswell points out that “gay people appear to prefer the term ‘gay’, which they have chosen to apply to themselves, to ‘homosexual’” (45). Therefore, he argues that we should use the term ‘gay’ as opposed to ‘homosexual’ or sodomite, and explains why he consistently uses the term ‘gay’ in his book.

So, what makes Boswell so confident that Aelred was ‘gay’? The answer to this is Aelred’s own writings, and especially his treatises on friendship. Immediately after his bold statement about Aelred’s sexuality, Boswell quotes the following from Aelred’s treatise *De spirituali amicitia*:

> When I was still a schoolboy, I delighted in the pleasure of being with my friends more than in anything else; and among the habits and faults to which the young are accustomed to endanger themselves, my mind gave itself totally to passionate attachment, and devoted itself to love. The result was that to me nothing was more pleasant or more delightful or more useful than to seem to be loved and to love in return. (27)

Boswell clearly takes this as evidence of the fact that Aelred’s “erotic attraction to men” started at an early age, and also claims that during his youth “[f]or a period, at least, Aelred even gave himself over to casual sexuality; he later referred to it as the time when ‘a cloud of desire arose from the lower drives of the flesh and the gushing spring of adolescence’ and ‘the sweetness of love and the impurity of lust combined to take advantage of the inexperience of my youth’. That these experiences involved overt sexuality is unquestionable: in writing to his sister Aelred speaks of this as the time when she held on to her virtue and he lost his” (222).

Boswell points out, in Aelred's own description of his transition to monastic life, he refers to the bonds that tied him to his old life, in particular mentioning that "above all the knot of a certain friendship was dearer to me than all the delights of my life" (*Mirror of Charity* 134). According to Boswell, Aelred eventually chose his relationship with God above his earthly relationships "not because they were less good or satisfying but because they could not last forever, whereas his relationship with God could" (223). When Aelred thus took up monastic life, he also took the vow of celibacy, but Boswell argues that this vow "did not alter Aelred's emotional life" and states that Aelred "fell in love with two monks of his order" (223). Boswell finds evidence for these two loves of Aelred in his two most famous spiritual treatises. First, Boswell quotes from *Speculum caritatis*, in which Aelred describes his love for fellow monk Simon. Boswell argues that "their friendship was the mainstay of his life until Simon's death" (223).

When reading *Speculum caritatis* it is easy to see why Boswell draws this conclusion about Aelred and Simon's friendship. Aelred refers to Simon as "my most beloved friend" and "the one-in-heart with me" (147, 152). Aelred states that "our Order forbade conversation" but that Simon's "appearance spoke to me, his walk spoke to me, his very silence spoke to me" (*Mirror of Charity* 153). Aelred also seems to describe a special relationship between himself and Simon; he writes, for example, that Simon showed himself "more familiar with me than with the others" (*Mirror of Charity* 154).

Aelred also discusses the passing of Simon, and very clearly and passionately laments the loss of his friend in passages as: "how have you been torn from my embrace, withdrawn from my kisses, removed from before my eyes?" and "[f]or who would not be astonished that Aelred goes on living without Simon, except someone who does not know how sweet it was to live together" (154, 148). Besides pouring out his grief, Aelred also acknowledges the jealousy he experienced when Simon called not Aelred, but another monk to join him in his last moments. "Why then did you pass away while I was not there? Why did you not want me present at your departure [...]?" (*Mirror of Charity* 154). Furthermore, Aelred is aware that other monks might judge him for his intense grief over Simon's passing, stating: "perhaps some stalwart persons at this moment are passing judgement on my tears, considering my love too human" (*Mirror of Charity* 157).

Boswell argues that Aelred fell in love with another monk, named Ivo, after Simon's death. In *De spirituali amicitia,* Aelred describes his developing friendship with Ivo as follows: "I began then to reveal to him the secrets of my counsels, and he proved himself faithful. So love increased between us, our affection grew warmer, and our charity was strengthened until

it got to the point that there was in us 'one heart and one mind, agreement in likes and dislikes'" (88). According to Boswell, Aelred's friendship with Ivo thus developed slowly, and was based more on reason than affection, while Aelred himself acknowledges that his friendship with Simon was based much more on affection than reason (*Spiritual Friendship* 86, Boswell 224).

In his treatise on friendship, Aelred distinguishes several types of friendship, such as carnal friendship, wordly friendship, and spiritual friendship. Boswell sees both Aelred's friendship with Ivo, and his friendship with Simon as evidence for Aelred's sexual orientation because both friendships seem to be either based on, or contain elements that Aelred himself considers part of, a carnal friendship. Aelred describes carnal friendship as a relationship that begins through the senses "that is--through the eyes and the ears--the image of beautiful and desirable objects is brought all the way into the mind itself [...]. Then by gesture, nod, words, and indulgence, one spirit is made captive by another, and one is enkindled by the other, and they catch fire together as one" (*Spiritual Friendship* 35-36). As already noted, Aelred wrote that his initial attraction to Simon began through the senses: "his appearance spoke to me, his walk spoke to me" (*Mirror of Charity* 153).

Aelred explains that his friendship with Ivo started in a different manner than his friendship with Simon. Aelred describes that he tested Ivo in various ways before taking him "into the highest friendship" (*Spiritual Friendship* 86). However, Aelred's description of Ivo does seem to hint at a carnal element in their friendship. This is because Aelred's description of Ivo focuses on his physical characteristics, such as "his pious visage" and "his laughing eyes." Even Ivo's "pleasant conversation," while not a physical attribute, is still something that can be observed through the senses--namely the ears--and Aelred explicitly mentions the ears in his description of carnal friendship (*Spiritual Friendship* 43).

In his definition of carnal friendship, Aelred also includes the fact that "this sort of friendship is not undertaken with forethought, nor approved by judgement, nor ruled by reason; rather it follows the impetus of emotion" (*Spiritual Friendship* 36). As previously mentioned, Aelred's relationship with Ivo was based more on reason than emotion. However, for Aelred's friendship with Simon this was clearly the other way around, confirming through Aelred's own assessment that this was a carnal friendship. Lastly, a key component to carnal friendship is the fact that "both partners think that nothing is sweeter than their friendship, and that nothing is more just" (*Spiritual Friendship* 36). This special quality of carnal friendship that Aelred describes is plainly visible in his friendship with Simon. Aelred writes that he and Simon were closer to each other than they were to other monks. Aelred also writes that if Simon were to die, Aelred could not fathom to go on (*Mirror of Charity* 148, 154). Yet, we can also see this

carnal aspect in the friendships Aelred describes from his youth, during which he experienced a friendship that "was dearer to me than all the delights of my life" (*Mirror of Charity* 134). On the basis of this definition of carnal friendship, and the anecdotes Aelred gives of his personal life, it is easy to see why Boswell concludes that Aelred was 'gay' and that "his erotic attraction to men was a dominant force in his life" (222).

Brian Patrick McGuire, although less bold in his claims than Boswell, also views Aelred as a man who experienced romantic and sexual attraction towards other men. Like Boswell, McGuire relies upon Aelred's own work as a source of information regarding Aelred's sexuality. McGuire acknowledges his debt to Boswell directly, writing that there was a "traditional silence among scholars before John Boswell about this side of Aelred" (McGuire 306). However, unlike Boswell, McGuire does not ascribe to the theory that Aelred "put homosexual relationships on the same level as heterosexual" (McGuire 303). According to McGuire, "Aelred at no point is 'modern' in accepting homosexual love. He maintained the traditional view of medieval theology that sexual contact among men is morally more reprehensible than between men and women" (303).

Furthermore, McGuire also disagrees with Boswell about applying the term 'gay' to medieval individuals. McGuire writes that "[d]espite the efforts of the historian John Boswell to anchor the term in medieval literature, this is also a word from our times and not one that helps explain any medieval phenomenon" (331). McGuire dismisses the use of the word 'homosexual' for this same reason, arguing that "this word did not exist in [Aelred's] age and is of modern coinage" (331). At the same time, however, McGuire also finds issue with the term sodomite, since it "deals only with sexual activity and was used exclusively in terms of sin" (331). Apparently, McGuire considers this to be too narrow of a definition to be directly applicable to Aelred.

Yet McGuire does seem to consider Aelred to be something like what we would nowadays consider to be a 'gay' or 'homosexual' man, even if McGuire acknowledges that such a label did not exist at the time. Indeed, McGuire writes that "absence of the name does not in itself rule out the activities covered by it" (331). My sense is that McGuire hopes to avoid many of the pitfalls inherent to labelling medieval sexuality, such as anachronism and the innate exclusionary character of labels, by simply offering a description of what he encounters in the specific case of Aelred. McGuire asks if we cannot "assert in all simplicity that Aelred at some point in his youth became aware that he was sexually drawn to attachments with other men?" and that Aelred "gave his heart and perhaps also his body to other youths" (332).

Despite his reservations about the specific terms that can be used to describe Aelred, McGuire states that "Aelred lets himself appear to us regularly and consistently as a human being who wanted and needed the companionship of other men and who was not particularly interested in women" (300). Like Boswell, McGuire uses passages from the Aelred's literary works to prove that Aelred engaged in what the monk himself considered deviant sexual activity as a young man. McGuire even argues that in *De institutione inclusarum* "Aelred admits as openly as he could in the language of his time and social position that he had physical experience of sex in loves that were considered to be grossly impure" (301). Aelred also clearly refers to a grave sin in a 'certain friendship' which was very dear to him in *Speculum caritatis*:

> The chain of my worst habits bound me, love of my kinsmen conquered me, the fetters of gracious company pressed upon me tightly; above all the knot of a certain friendship was dearer to me than all the delights of my life. I relished the others, the others were pleasing to me, but you more than any. Weighing these one by one, I recognised that sweetness was mixed with bitterness, sadness with joy, adversity with prosperity. The charming bond of friendship gratified me, though I always feared being hurt and inevitable separation some day in our future. I pondered the joy at their beginning, I observed their progress, and I foresaw their end. Now I saw that their beginnings could not escape blame, nor their midpoint offense, nor their end condemnation. The specter of death was terrifying, because after death inevitable punishment awaited such a soul. Observing certain things about me, but ignorant of what was going on inside me, people kept saying: 'O how well things are going for him! Yes, how well!' They had no idea that things were going badly for me there, where alone they could go well. Very deep within me was my wound, crucifying, terrifying, and corrupting everything within me with an intolerable stench. (134-135)

McGuire is more cautious in his claims than Boswell here too. McGuire states that "[a]t no point does Aelred say outright: I slept with another man. His autobiographical passage, however, points to a sexual element in the friendship he mentions" (302). However, McGuire does agree with Boswell about Aelred's love for Simon; McGuire argues that Aelred "makes it clear that he found Simon attractive in every way," and points out that Aelred himself admits to the relationship being "the result more of impulse than reason" (311). As Aelred and Simon had "limited opportunity for talking together" at Rievaulx, and since Simon died young, McGuire claims that their relationship seems very youthful and "might for us suggest a teenage romance in which boy and girl almost never dare to speak to one another and yet are in love" (312). While McGuire thus agrees with Boswell on Aelred's attraction to, and feelings for, Simon, he does not point out or mention that Aelred had similar feelings for Ivo. When McGuire mentions Ivo, he does so in a manner that indicates no special relationship between

them whatsoever, comparing Aelred's relationship with Ivo to his relationships with Walter and Gratian, the other monks that feature in *De spirituali amicitia* (319-320).

Despite McGuire's more cautionary approach, he still firmly holds the opinion that "Aelred loved other men" (332). Furthermore, McGuire argues that Aelred "spent much of his life in converting his sexual drive into a spiritual embrace of other men" (332). He did this by denouncing any sexual activity, and focusing his energy on friendship instead. His belief was that human friendship could lead to spiritual and divine friendship, and that therefore it "was a goal worth pursuing" (McGuire 307-308). This in contrast to the Desert Fathers, who were also aware of the possibility of friendship leading to sexual activity, and therefore warned "against all forms of bonding among men" (McGuire 307). Of the different forms of friendship that Aelred distinguishes in his treatise *De spirituali amicitia*, carnal, worldly and spiritual, only spiritual friendship is the type that Aelred recognises as 'true' friendship (*Spiritual Friendship* 37). As Aelred's definition of this true friendship was a human relationship that was not concerned with "physical desire or hope of gain", but instead "remained untouched by the sins of the world" it could function as a stepping stone towards a greater love of God, instead of being a hindrance to it (McGuire 307). Through this pursuit of true, spiritual friendship Aelred was able to transform his attraction towards other men into love for them, and ultimately into the love of God (McGuire 327).

Aelred and the Reactionary Scholarship

On the other side of this debate we find scholars who disagree with Boswell and McGuire and argue that Aelred did not experience sexual attraction towards other men. One of these scholars is Marsha Dutton, who is prominent in the field of Aelredian studies--so much so that she is the editor of *A Companion to Aelred of Rievaulx (1110-1167)*. In this book, comprised of twelve chapters by numerous scholars (including Dutton herself), Aelred's sexuality is only mentioned twice. One of these mentions is by Elizabeth Freeman, who takes the "pointless debate over his alleged homosexuality" as proof that Aelredian scholarship spends "exessive attention to Aelred's personal history" and wastes no further words on the subject (134). The second mention is by Dutton herself, who laments the fact that "the question of Aelred's sexual orientation and experience has received extensive attention" since the 1980's ("Abbot, Teacher" 26). Yet it seems strange to me that a subject clearly given so much attention, deemed excessive even, is not addressed in a meaningful way in a publication claiming to explore his

life, works, and thought. Out of the more than 300 pages on Aelred, only two of them are dedicated to discussing the scholarship around his sexuality.

Of course, it could very well be that because Dutton believes that the topic has been studied too excessively already, and wanted to avoid that pitfall when editing this book so did not include any chapters on it. However, from the few words she uses to discuss the subject, I would argue that a different type of reasoning emerges. First of all, Dutton takes issue with the fact that scholars interested in Aelred's sexuality use his literary works as sources on Aelred's personal life. This is mostly the case for his treatises, even though none of these works are defined by Aelred as autobiographies, and none of the treatises provide us with a clear answer to the question of Aelred's sexuality ("Abbot, Teacher" 28). What Dutton is saying here, is that because the material that we have on Aelred is not autobiographical and cannot provide an answer to the question about his sexuality, we cannot claim to know anything about it. Furthermore, Dutton asserts that the answer to this question regarding Aelred's sexuality "is not only unknowable but essentially irrelevant, a distraction from a search for insight into his thought and teaching" and that therefore she will not spare it any more attention ("Abbot, Teacher" 28).

However, despite not discussing the topic further in *A Companion to Aelred of Rievaulx (1110-1167)*, Dutton has written an extensive article on Aelred's sexuality. In "Aelred of Rievaulx on Friendship, Chastity and Sex: The Sources", Dutton addresses a number of problems with the sources McGuire, Boswell and other scholars interested in Aelred's sexuality use for their claims that he experienced sexual attraction towards other men. She opens the article immediately with the assertion that studying "the sexual orientation of people dead centuries ago" is "[o]ne of the least productive questions explored by scholars today" and that it is a question "not only unanswerable but anachronistic" ("The Sources" 121). Dutton aptly points out that since people during the medieval period "did not identify themselves as heterosexual or homosexual, straight or gay, an answer to the question is not to be found even in conciously autobiographical writing" ("The Sources" 121).

However, as she also argues in *A Companion to Aelred of Rievaulx (1110-1167)*, Dutton considers Aelred's religious treatises non-autobiographical works, and thinks that they cannot be used to answer questions about Aelred's sexuality ("The Sources" 121). Nevertheless, Dutton does analyse these sources, since Boswell and McGuire rely on them. Dutton argues against Boswell's and McGuire's conclusions on the basis of Aelred's spiritual treatises. She points out that Aelred never states which gender his childhood friends were, therefore "in his passages apparently recording his own youthful friendships, the friends in question may as well

be women as men" ("The Sources" 184). Interestingly, Dutton argues that we have no historical or literary evidence that Aelred experienced sexual attraction towards other men, but that there is also no evidence to the contrary. "There is simply no evidence on the question" ("The Sources" 189).

Dutton also points out that Aelred's writing on sexuality is very strict, especially when it concerns relations between men, and that this is often ignored or overlooked by scholars claiming he was 'gay' ("The Sources" 188). In fact, Dutton feels very strongly about what she regards as other scholars "incorporating their own life experiences or wishes into [Aelred's] words" instead of "trying to understand his meaning, his explicit intent" ("The Sources" 187-188). She accuses these scholars, such as McGuire and Boswell, of having personal stakes in their research, and therefore "reaching for what they desperately want to find" and "abandoning scholarly rigor and detachment to do so" ("The Sources" 196).

Dutton especially dislikes the fact that Aelred is now being sanctified as "the reigning patron of medieval homosexuality" because according to Dutton this "obsession" with Aelred's sexuality has "created an illusion that the question and the answer matter" (195). What Dutton is trying to say here is that presenting Aelred as a medieval monk who approved of 'homosexuality' should not be used as a justification so that "twentieth-century men and women can feel good about their own sexuality" (195). She argues that it "suggests that the value of a person's life and behaviour depends on finding an exterior model--any exterior model-whose personal experience was or may be believed to have been like one's own" ("The Sources" 195). Furthermore, Dutton disapproves of this "remythologizing of the life of Aelred" on the basis of his sexuality, because it centers "the personal agenda of a few writers" and thereby takes away Aelred's agency to define the meaning of his own life, but also because Dutton believes it "denies to all readers except the select few--specifically, gay men--the meaning and power of his spiritual direction" ("The Sources" 195).

Aside from these criticisms, Dutton returns to the point she would later also make in *A Companion to Aelred of Rievaulx (1110-1167)*, namely that "the question about Aelred's sexuality is the wrong question" to ask because it is "simply irrelevant", it diverts "readers and scholars away from what is important" and it is asked with the wrong purpose ("The Sources" 194, 196). Instead, what Dutton considers to be the right question is "what Aelred had to say, and has to say, about spiritual friendship and the love of God" because "that is a question of real meaning, importance, and personal value for all of us" ("The Sources" 196).

Interestingly, Dutton never uses the word sodomite in her article or the book chapter; she sticks to the terms 'homosexual', 'heterosexual', 'gay' and 'straight' to describe Aelred's sexuality instead. This is especially notable because she does seem to show an awareness of Foucault's theory of pre-modern sexuality when she states that "before the modern age people did not identify themselves as heterosexual or homosexual, straight or gay" ("The Sources" 121). Yet, she does not acknowledge the existence of a term, namely sodomite, used during the middle ages to describe at least some of the behaviour that we associate with terms such as 'homosexual' or 'gay'. Dutton states that the question of Aelred's sexuality is anachronistic, but does not seem to distinguish between the anachronism of the question itself and that of the terms and concepts we are using to answer that question. In addition, Dutton does not give any indication that she is using terms such as 'homosexual' and 'gay' with altered definitions. In fact, she does not give a definition at all, which leads me to believe she is simply using the modern-day Western terms for a medieval individual, without considering the anachronism inherent in using these terms.

Analysis of Reactionary Scholarship

Even though Dutton clearly has multiple problems with the scholarship on Aelred's sexuality, I think it is important to note that several counter arguments to her criticism can be, and have been, made. I think it is especially crucial to point out that Dutton's comments on the autobiographical nature of Aelred's spiritual works have contradictory elements. In *A Companion to Aelred of Rievaulx (1110-1167),* Dutton actually acknowledges that "[p]assages within Aelred's treatises also provide biographical insight" and states that Aelred's works provide an "essential source for his life" ("Abbot, Teacher" 19-20). These statements seem very much at odds with her comments that Aelred's spiritual treatises are "non-autobiographical works" and that they should not be used as sources when it comes to Aelred's sexuality ("The Sources" 121). It thus seems to me that Dutton agrees that Aelred's spiritual works can also inform us about Aelred's personal life, but not about Aelred's sexuality. Yet, other than her argument that the question on Aelred's sexuality being anachronistic, Dutton does not give any arguments as to why she thinks his treatises can be used as biographical sources for some parts of Aelred's life, but not for his sexuality. Furthermore, both Dutton ("The Sources" 123) and McGuire (299) point out that Augustine's *Confessions* is one of the

central models and influences on Aelred's *De spirituali amicitia*, and *Confessions* is often recognised as one of the first Western autobiographies (Olney 4-5).

In addition, Dutton's outright dismissal, and clear disapproval, of scholarly inquiry into Aelred's sexuality by stating that it is the "wrong question" because it is "simply irrelevant" is a problem. This approach is one that has been described by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. Sedgwick writes that "in most scholarship and most curricula" these questions regarding sexuality are dealt with in this similar, swift manner of "you shouldn't know" or even just "[d]on't ask" (52). Sedgwick points out that this is a type of censorship. It tells students, or even fellow scholars that "[i]t didn't happen; it doesn't make any difference; it didn't mean anything; it doesn't have interpretive consequences. Stop asking just here; stop asking just now" (53). This attitude at its very core sends the message that the question and the answer do not matter, with the aim to repress and censor the subject at hand.

However, Sedgwick points out that there are plenty of figures in the conservative Western canon, including Plato, Milton, Shakespeare and Michelangelo, "about whom one might think to ask these questions" regarding sexuality (53). Sedgwick argues that these questions do in fact matter very much, as "[t]he very centrality of this list and its seemingly almost infinite elasticity suggest that no one *can* know *in advance* where the limits of a gay-centered inquiry are to be drawn, or where a gay theorizing of and through even the hegemonic high culture of the Euro-American tradition may need to be able to lead" (53). Therefore, I would argue that it is not appropriate to dismiss research on the topic of historical sexuality, just because you personally do not find it relevant, as Dutton clearly does. It is perfectly fine to have a personal opinion on what scholarly research holds value for you, but I do not think you should see this personal value judgement as a universal truth for which topics of research are 'right', 'relevant' or 'important'.

Continuing on the topic of personal opinions, what I find striking about Dutton's line of argument when it comes to research into historical sexuality, is the dismissal of research done by McGuire, but especially Boswell, on the basis of personal involvement with the subject matter. As Boswell himself is gay, Dutton accuses him of having a personal stake in his research into historical sexuality, and argues that he is not objective or detached enough from his subject matter ("The Sources" 196). Yet I would argue, in keeping with a trend in cultural and intectually history of the past few decades, that scholarship about a given issue can never be truly objective; all of us bring our experiences, values and ideologies to our work.

In making this argument, I draw on Donna Haraway's theory of situated knowledge, which pertains to issues surrounding objectivity versus subjectivity. One such issue is the fact that we often associate subjectivity with others, while we tend to think of ourselves as objective and neutral. This is something that Paul Halsall has commented on with respect to Boswell's groundbreaking book on medieval 'homosexuality'. Halsall created a web page which lists both critics and supporters of Boswell's work. Halsall states that "[w]hat has been striking about the attacks on Boswell because of his religious beliefs, or because of his sexuality (both openly announced), is that the critics often adopt an Olympian position that **they** are not subject to such subjectivity. In fact many of the critics have perhaps stronger and stricter ideological commitments tha[n] Boswell". Halsall's list of scholars engaging with Boswell's work quickly squashes the notion that Boswell's subjectivity is an anomaly in the world of scholarly research.

I would argue that Dutton's views reflect the tendency described by Halsall. Dutton's view that the 'right' question to ask regarding Aelred is "what [he] had to say, and has to say, about spiritual friendship and the love of God" ("The Sources" 196), is undoubtedly informed by her position as a Christian woman and in that sense is no less based on her position and experiences than Boswell's view of the 'right' question, which Dutton claims is informed by Boswell's sexual orientation. Dutton and Boswell are thus both personally involved with the subject matter they are studying, or arguing against, yet it seems that Dutton does not recognise that her opinion is just as subjective as Boswell's.

As Haraway points out, this pretense of objectivity, detachment and neutrality is a problem, because the knowledge that is produced in this way cannot be held accountable, as it pretends to be universal (583). The solution to this problem is not to tell both Boswell and Dutton that they should sever themselves completely from all their attachments in this world, whether religious, political or otherwise, but to acknowledge the perspective from which their research, and knowledge, is produced. Only in this way can scholarly research be held accountable, and can we rise above and move forward from value judgements on the validity or relevance of certain types of research. By embracing subjectivity, and acknowledging its existence in all knowledge that is produced, we can no longer dismiss research as wrong or irrelevant just because we characterise it as subjective, and therefore of no value.

RICHARD THE LIONHEART

This chapter explores the discussion that surrounds Richard I of England. I will first examine why some scholars have considered Richard a sodomite, and on the basis of which sources these claims have been made. Then, I will explore the reactionary scholarship that was brought about by these claims about Richard's sexuality, and analyse the arguments made against the characterisation of Richard as a sodomite.

Richard the Sodomite

Richard was the king of England from 1189 until his death in 1199. In 1191 he married Berengia of Navarre, who thus became queen of England. Their marriage remained childless, although he had one bastard son. He was considered a great military leader, and was also one of the leaders of the Third Crusade to the Holy Land.

The first modern scholar to draw a link between Richard and sodomy was John Harvey in his 1948 book *The Plantagenets*. This book traces the lineage of Richard's family. Although Harvey is willing to explore Richard's sexuality, Harvey's perspective on sexual relations between men is clearly very outdated; Harvey refers to Richard's relations as reflecting "a darker side of Richard's character", for example. Harvey explains how he has come to this conclusion about Richard's sexuality; he states that in December 1190 Richard "did penance for vice" and in the spring of 1195 "a hermit warned him to be mindful of the fate of Sodom and put away his unlawful deeds" (33). After this warning, Richard became "violently ill, confessed, and again did penance" after which he was cured (Harvey 33).

Even though Harvey boldly claims that he is "breaking the conspiracy of silence" surrounding Richard's sexuality, he spends little more than a page on the topic, and gives no more evidence than what I have just related above. We do, however, still get some sense of Harvey's approach to the history of sexual relations between men. First of all, he does not make a distinction between 'homosexuality' and sodomy, and refers to Richard as "the victim of homosexuality" (33). It makes sense for Harvey to not be aware of the difference between terms such as sodomite or 'homosexual', since Foucault's theory on the differences between pre-modern and modern attitudes towards sexuality was published almost thirty years after Harvey's book. It seems logical that to Harvey, sodomy and 'homosexuality' pointed towards the same behaviour, and he does not take the origin of these terms, and the perspectives they encompass into account when using them to describe Richard. Harvey does make an interesting

distinction between people with “erotic emotions” directed at their own sex, and people that actually act upon these emotions and practice sodomy (33).

In his book *Richard the Lionheart* Jean Flori also discusses Richard’s sexual behaviour. Flori describes the two occasions, briefly mentioned by Harvey, in which Richard did penance. The first of these two was in Sicily, preceding his marriage to Berengaria (Flori 387). Flori goes on to state that Richard clearly realised the graveness of his sin, and that he was “impelled to repent” (387). After this confession Richard “had himself solemnly whipped by the bishops” (Flori 387). Flori argues that, as the chronicler, Roger of Howden, does not refer to multiple sins but instead insists “on using the singular --‘his sin’, ‘his iniquity’, ‘his lust’ - makes it clear that he was referring to a moral failing of a sexual nature that was specific to Richard and habitual” (387). Flori then goes on to state that this sexual sin was probably not the fathering of bastards, or sex outside of marriage, as these were fairly common for an unmarried king. Richard’s father, Henry II, apparently had a “justified and proven reputation as a lecherous adulterer and probable paedophile” while he was a married man and the father of a family, while, as Flori points out, his chroniclers were “relatively discreet on the subject” (387).

So, as Richard did not violate the terms of his marriage (he had none at this point), nor do we “know of no liaisons on his part with women”, but had clearly committed sins of a sexual nature, Flori argues that it is tempting to think that Richard’s sin might have been sodomy, and that this is supported by the account of the second time Richard did penance (388).

This is the same account also described by Harvey, where a hermit tells Richard to “[r]emember the destruction of Sodom and abstain from illicit acts” or otherwise he would be punished by God (Flori 388). However, Richard did not immediately seek repentance for his sins, and subsequently became very ill. Richard then confessed his sins, did penance and “[r]ejecting illicit couplings he joined with his wife” after which he regained his health again (Flori 388). Flori points out that the stress placed on the fact that he then had sex with his wife again, in combination with the reference to Sodom in the hermit’s warning seem to indicate that Richard’s sin was sodomy (388).

At the same time, Flori states that Richard did not “disdain sexual relations with women” and even fathered a son (392). According to Flori, Richard even had a reputation as a “heterosexual seducer” while he was alive, but also points out that at the time other reputations were not exactly possible (393). Taking into account both Richard’s reputation as a womaniser and the evidence of sodomy discussed above, Flori thus comes to the conclusion that Richard was “probably bisexual” (393).

A few comments regarding Flori's theoretical framework are helpful here. First, Flori does not seem to distinguish between homosexuality, as part of a person's identity, and the act of sodomy. At one point Flori describes Richard's "sexual behaviour" (387) and "homosexual practices" (389), but he also uses terms such as "Richard's homosexuality" (388) and sets out to answer the question whether Richard was a 'homosexual' (380). This seems to indicate that Flori does indeed not distinguish between the act of sodomy and the identity marker of homosexuality. As Flori's book was published in 1999, he could have been aware of Foucault's theory, but at least in this case he does not seem to have incorporated it into his analysis of Richard's sexuality. The fact that Flori labels Richard as "probably bisexual", however much accurate it might seem to us in the 21st century, is a very anachronistic label for a twelfth-century king. If we agree with Flori's argument that Richard felt sexual desire for both men and women, the modern term that would describe that behaviour is likely the term 'bisexual'. However, the term 'bisexual', just as 'homosexual', is modern, and applying these modern terms directly to the past is exactly what Foucault argued against in his *History of Sexuality*. This does not mean that people who felt sexual desire for both men and women did not exist at the time, but that this is perhaps not the ideal term to use for a medieval king.

William Burgwinkle also supports the claim that Richard practiced sodomy. He discusss this claim in his book *Sodomy, Masculinity, and Law in Medieval Literature*. Unlike Flori, Burgwinkle does take Foucault's theory of pre-modern sexuality into account, but Burgwinkle adds more nuance to Foucault's argument, stating that we "should be careful about making facile generalizations about our 'gay' predecessors, but no more careful than when dealing with other issues that should be flagged for eraspecific connotations" (13). Burgwinkle argues that if we cannot perceive any continuity between sex and sexuality in the Middle Ages and today, then we can also not claim to understand other aspects of medieval society or identity (14). Burgwinkle thus acknowledges that sex and sexuality functioned in a different way in medieval society than it does today, and that we should be aware of that when studying it, but that we should not regard medieval sexuality vastly more 'other' than other aspects of medieval society. Throughout the rest of his book, Burgwinkle is careful not to impose the modern label of 'homosexual' on any of the men he studies, including Richard, although he does use the term when it is used by other scholars, or when comparing medieval ideas about sexuality to how the West regards sexuality nowadays.

Burgwinkle's claim about Richard's sexual behaviour is mainly based on Richard's relationship with Philip II of France, also known as Philip Augustus. Burgwinkle explains that Richard's chroniclers concern themselves little with Richard's personal life, except for his

relationship with Philip (75-76). Apparently, Richard's feelings about Philip were described as swinging "from love to hate, never settling on indifference" and even Richard's last hours on earth were "marred by thoughts of him" (76). When Richard received holy communion on his deathbed, something he had not received in seven years time, he explained that "[h]aving carried for years in his heart a deep hatred for the King of France, he chose not to profane the host by allowing it contact with his imperfect soul" (Burgwinkle 76). Burgwinkle points out that such a long break from religious ceremony would have certainly attracted negative attention, and ponders "whether Richard would have risked public criticism and eternal damnation over what any contemporary would have recognized as simple political antagonism. Feelings as strong as his seem, at the very least, to point in multiple directions" (76).

Burgwinkle points out that Philip and Richard knew each other their whole lives, and were educated together. Even in 1187 the two were still very close, and, as described by the chronicle of Roger of Howden (once attributed, as in Burgwinkle's study, to Benedict of Peterborough), eating from the same plate and sleeping in the same bed (Burgwinkle 76). However, soon thereafter their relationship soured as Richard refused to marry his betrothed, Philip's sister Aelis. Richard and Aelis had been promised to one another for a very long time, but several chroniclers describe that "Aelis had been his father's mistress and had borne him a son" (Burgwinkle 77). Burgwinkle postulates that if Philip followed through with his threat of becoming Richard's enemy if he indeed did not marry Aelis, the last friendly meeting between Richard and Philip occurred in Messina in 1190 (77). According to several chroniclers that Burgwinkle quotes, this meeting was proof of the intensity of their friendship. "Benedict of Peterborough says only that they were so close that one could not imagine anything breaking their love or coming between them" (Burgwinkle 77). Whereas Richard of Devizes, in a letter to his prior, suggests there might be more between Philip and Richard than just friendship:

> He also stresses the great affection in which they held one another and says that the Kings parted after the festivities "exhausted but not satisfied." This expression is a citation from Juvenal's sixth satire (l. 130) in which it applies to the wife of the Emperor Claudius, "the imperial harlot," who left her bed each evening to take up a cell in a whorehouse[.] (Burgwinkle 77)

The expression 'exhausted but not satisfied' is thus used to describe Emperor Claudius's wife as she vacates the whorehouse and returns home at the end of the night. She has been exhausted, but not satisfied by her clients. The use of this expression is therefore highly suggestive in the context of Richard and Philip's friendship. Burgwinkle is almost certain that the reader would have recognised the reference, since the prior was "a highly educated man, anxious for gossip"

and Devizes was writing in a period "when citations from classical texts were common and valued" (77). What Burgwinkle points out is interesting about Devizes's account though, is that even though he suggests that Richard and Phillip might be more than just friends "Richard's role in the rest of the account is in no way tainted with suggestions of femininity, lasciviousness, or decadence, characteristics that generally accompany any suggestion of sexual activity between men in the earlier twelfth-century chronicles of John of Salisbury, Orderic Vitalis, and Walter Map" (77-78).

After refusing to marry Aelis, Richard goes on to marry Berengia of Navarre. Burgwinkle describes this marriage as "essentially one of convenience" and notes that Richard and Berengia saw each other "only very infrequently" (78). Roger of Howden's account of the marriage, after which Richard immediately departed for war, is described by Burgwinkle as "rather flat"; Burgwinkle states that it "speaks volumes about the passion behind" the marriage (78). Apparently, Richard only married Berengia at the "at the instigation and insistence of his mother" and that she "seems not to have played any significant role in his life" (Burgwinkle 78).

Burgwinkle, much like Flori, points out that there are accounts of Richard raping women. However, Burgwinkle explains that "while some historians have seen these rapes as an indication of affectional preference, I would maintain that rape is not an indication of sexual desire at all but a desire to impose one's will, in this instance a political will" (78). Burgwinkle argues that, apart from the accounts we have of Richard's affection for Philip, there is "nothing in the chronicles to indicate that he loved anyone or felt impelled to procreate" (78). This is also because, as Burgwinkle points out, chroniclers usually did not concern themselves with sexual activity, unless it was to condemn irregular behaviour (78). Therefore, Burgwinkle marks the inclusion of the hermit's warning, also described by Harvey and Flori, as significant (79). Burgwinkle notes that Richard chooses to ignore this warning at first, after which he falls ill. Only then does Richard repent for his sins, has sex with his wife, and becomes healthy once more. Burgwinkle states that the conclusions we are able to draw from these sources are that Richard's behaviour was considered shameful by Richard himself and others, and that sex with his wife was seen as a part of the solution (80).

Burgwinkle also points out that Gerald of Wales described Richard as a 'new Caesar'. According to Burgwinkle, such "[r]eferences to Caesar in the twelfth century operated like references to Trojans, an encouragement to double readings" (80). This is because, besides Caesar's reputation as a great military man, there were also several literary references to Caesar as a sodomite during this period, such as in Dante's *Divina Commedia* (Burgwinkle 80).

Furthermore, Burgwinkle argues that "[t]hough the chroniclers couched their comments in vague formulae such as 'contradictions in character,' it is certainly within the range of 'reasonable doubt' to assume that they are suggesting unmentionable sexual desires for, and relations with, other men" (80). Burgwinkle goes on to explain that he does not think these descriptions are an attempt at political slander, although they are often interpreted that way by modern historians. This is because accusations of sodomy were "used selectively" and actually had "some currency" during this period, and we can see this from the fact "no one accuses Henry II or any of Richard's brothers of sodomy" even though they were "far from popular" (Burgwinkle 81). Burgwinkle thus concludes that it could very well be that these comments, however vaguely described, are alluding to Richard's desire for, and sexual relations with other men.

Richard and the Reactionary Scholarship

As with Aelred, there are scholars who have argued against the identification of Richard as a sodomite. John Gillingham is one of those scholars. In his book *Richard Coeur de Lion* Gillingham explains why he disagrees with this characterisation of Richard. First, Gillingham states that "[w]e still shape Richard not according to the realities of the past, but according to our own preoccupations" (188). In its very essence, Gillingham thus sees our focus on and identification of Richard's sexual behaviour as anachronistic.

Gillingham also points out that Harvey was in fact not the first historian to identify Richard as a sodomite, but that the eighteenth-century historian Paul de Rapin-Thoyras "may have also seen [Richard] in that light," given how Rapin paints the relationship between Richard and Philip (189). However, as Gillingham indicates, "it is remarkable how little notice was taken of Rapin's opinion in the subsequent two centuries", while Harvey's claim about Richard's sexuality "almost immediately became generally accepted as the truth" when it was published in 1948 (189). According to Gillingham, this was because Western society was ready to accept such a characterisation by this time. If this is true, our own values and perceptions are thus the deciding factor on how we view historical figures, such as Richard.

Subsequently, Gillingham examines all of the evidence that is often given to support the identification of Richard as a sodomite. He starts with the hermit's infamous warning. Once again, we get a description of the warning: "a hermit came to the king and rebuked him for his sins, telling him to remember the destruction of Sodom and abstain from illicit acts, for if he did not God would punish him in a fitting manner" (Gillingham 133). As we already know,

Richard first ignores this warning, but then falls ill, does penance for his sins and recovers. Gillingham also states that according to chronicler Roger of Howden, Richard tried to "lead a better life". For example, Richard would visit church more often, be more charitable and avoid "illicit intercourse; instead he was to sleep with his wife" (133).

Gillingham goes on to argue that since the 1970s it apparently became "impossible to read the word 'Sodom' without assuming that it refers to homosexuality" but that "more often than not, this phrase carries no homosexual implications" when used by Old Testament prophets (134). Gillingham explains that references to Sodom in the Old Testament usually refers to the terrible punishment God bestows upon the sinners, but "not so much to the nature of the offences" (134). However, since people nowadays do no longer "read their Bible all the way through" and no longer "appreciate the value of a good sermon" people automatically assume the hermit's reference to Sodom means that Richard was a sodomite (Gillingham 134). Therefore, according to Gillingham, one of the main pieces of evidence on which the claim of Richard's sexual behaviour rests, is simply a misinterpretation of a reference to Sodom.

Another piece of evidence that is often used in order to prove Richard was a sodomite is the aforementioned friendship between Richard and Philip. Gillingham describes the same intimacy between Richard and Philip as described by Burgwinkle: the men eat from the same plate and sleep in the same bed. Philip is even described as having loved Richard "as his own soul" (Gillingham 135). Gillingham also states that Richard's father, Henry II "was stupefied" by "their mutual love" (135). However, even though we as modern readers may be quick to interpret such descriptions of friendship as romance, Gillingham argues that "to assume that ritual gestures such as kisses or sleeping in the same bed, retain a uniform meaning in all ages" (135). Instead, Gillingham explains that the action of sleeping in the same bed was, in the case of Richard and Philip, "not making love but making a political gesture, a demonstration of an alliance" towards Richard's father (135).

Gillingham points out, in a phrase that resembles the argument of Flori, that "[t]hirteenth-century opinion was in no doubt that his interests were heterosexual" (136). In order to provide evidence for this view of Richard, Gillingham gives several accounts from chroniclers that center around Richard's lust and need for women. For example, he had women brought to him on his death-bed, even against the wish of his doctor, he had sex with the daughter of the king of Almain, and desired a nun so greatly that she cut out her eyes in order to preserve her virginity and her abbey (Gillingham 136). Considering this great lust for women, it seems rather odd that Richard's marriage to Berengia remained childless, especially since "heirs were very much [on] Richard's mind" (Gillingham 136). However, Gillingham

argues that, besides the fact that Richard and Berengia might not have been physically able to conceive a child, there is a political explanation as to why the marriage remained childless. Gillingham claims that the alliance with Navarre might have "outlived its usefulness" by the late 1190s. Sancho of Navarre, Berengia's father, lost his alliance with Aragon against Castille and Toulouse. This was because Aragon and Castille made peace with each other once Alfonso II of Aragon died, and in 1196 a peace treaty was signed with Toulouse. Therefore, as Gillingham puts it, "the Navarre alliance lost its *raison d'etre"* (137-138). Gillingham clearly sees this, or perhaps the fact that Richard and Berengia might have been physically incapable of conceiving a child, as the more likely reason the marriage remained childless, rather than the fact Richard might have engaged in sodomy and had no sexual interest in his wife.

Gillingham concludes his disputes of these pieces of evidence of Richard's sodomy by stating that "the idea that Richard was homosexual is based on a mistaken interpetation of the language of contemporary commentators" which involved "reading sexual meanings where none was intended" (189). Rather, Gillingham aruges, "what the chroniclers were in fact alluding to was his political rather than his sexual orientation" (189).

As is probably obvious from the arguments and excerpts I have given of Gillingham, his theoretical framework does not take into account that our modern perception of sexuality, with terms as 'homosexual', 'bisexual' and 'heterosexual' cannot be projected onto medieval sexuality without any problems. At no point does Gillingham demonstrate an awareness of the difference between sodomy and 'homosexuality', and even states that contemporaries were of the opinion that Richard was 'heterosexual' (136). Considering the book was published in 1994, Gillingham could have been aware of Foucault's theory on pre-modern sexuality, but even if he was, he does not mention it. I think Gillingham's blatant anachronism and his lack of awareness of this anachronism is rather ironic, considering the fact that he criticises the fact that "[w]e still shape Richard not according to the realities of the past, but according to our own preoccupations" (188).

Like Gillingham, Stephen Jaeger also concerns himself with the description of Richard and Philip's relationship given by chronicler Roger Howden. Jaeger provides the following translation of the passage:

> Richard, Duke of Aquitaine, son of the King of England, remained with Philip, the King of France, who so honored him for so long that they ate ever)' day at the same table and from the same dish, and at night their beds did not separate them. And the King of France loved him as his own soul; and they loved each other so much that the King of England was absolutely astonished at the vehement love between them and marveled at what it could mean. (Howden qtd in Jaeger 11)

In his book *Ennobling Love* Jaeger states that "[t]his passage poses the problems of understanding passionate male friendship and the love of kings in dramatic clarity" (11). This is because the immediate and obvious implication of the passage seems to be a romantic or erotic relationship between the two men. However, Jaeger argues that there is an obvious problem with this kind of interpretation, as it seems to take for granted the fact that this 'homosexual' relationship existed without inviting comment or criticism. Jaeger claims that this description by Roger Howden actually "contains a few warnings against reading it as the mode of loving we call 'homosexual'" (11).

The first of these warnings that Jaeger identifies is the reaction of Richard's father, Henry II. According to Jaeger what Howden describes in this passage is "the reaction of a betrayed general, not an outraged father" (12). Jaeger argues that Henry II was concerned with his military campaign, and not with the possibility that his son might be in a sexual relationship with Philip, to which his only reaction is "a change in his travel plans" (12). Furthermore, Roger Howden himself does nothing to imply that anything morally unsavory, by twelfth-century standards, is going on here. Jaeger points out that "[i]f these emotions and gestures had any power to indict, then [Howden] would have given us some nods, winks, or critical comments", especially considering the fact that Howden does not refrain from criticising Richard elsewhere in his writings (12). Lastly, Jaeger states that the text itself conveys no moral disapproval, but that we, the modern-day audience, are merely looking for it. According to Jaeger "[a]stonishment is neutral" and it "takes its moral coloring from its context" (12). In this case, that context is Howden's description of Philip's love 'honouring' Richard. Therefore, Jaeger concludes that Howden views the relationship between Richard and Philip as a kind of moral good, and that his words "do not convey, imply or suggest homosexuality" (13).

Jaeger then goes on to explain what this type of relationship, which he calls passionate male friendship, looked like and how it functioned. Jaeger claims that an honouring love between two men, such as we see with Richard and Philip, was actually quite common in aristocratic and monastic circles, and was often described in fiery, passionate or even erotic language (13-14). However, Jaeger argues that an actual erotic of romantic context does not exist in these situations, because the correspondents are simply employing "a language that may be called upon to describe favor relationships, peace arrangements, and genuine passionate friendships" (14). Therefore, none of the declarations of love and desire made in these public letters between clergymen or royal courtiers were "received as an indication of an illicit erotic attachment" (Jaeger 15). Jaeger points out that we do not have adequate language to describe

such forms of love and friendship, since terms such as ‘homoerotic’ or ‘male friendship’ all focus on the erotic element of such a relationship. While the texts that Jaeger examines in his book are clearly “grounded in male desire”, he posits that “there is something in the discourse that screens off or remains oblivious to a sexual element in this desire” and terms it nonsexual male-male desire (15).

Jaeger also claims that we assume nowadays that certain relationships have a sexual motive or nature--an assumption that has emerged by way of an entwinement of Freudian and Foucauldian theories on human sexuality. According to Jaeger, “[s]igns and signals on the surface of a text or of human actions that point to a hidden sexual motive answer all questions and place the inference of a libidinous source beyond refutation” (16). However, the description given by Howden, and other texts discussed by Jaeger, “contain no subtle signals at all” but are instead “perfectly direct and open” about the desire they contain, because they do not exist in the Freudian mode we perceive them in, but instead in a medieval mode of public expression and ‘honouring’ love (17-18). In order to mitigate this modern-day Freudian framework, Jaeger explains that we should “imagine the love of kings as first and foremost a way of behaving” (18). This is because this behaviour is “a social and political gesture”, and not an intimate and private expression of love (Jaeger 18). According to Jaeger, the concept of private life did not yet exist during the Middle Ages, and in fact all life was in the public realm. In order to study public expressions of emotion, Jaeger distinguishes between experienced emotion and social gesture (18) “Social gesture is the fundamental act of a nonprivate love; it is the public manifestation of a sanctioned, idealized way of feeling. [...] It demonstrates worth, raises status, and coalesces political support. ” (Jaeger 18-19). However, social gesture must be perceived to stem from genuine experienced emotion, otherwise it is hollow and actually shaming because of its insincerity (Jaeger 19).

Jaeger argues that the initial response to a king’s presence is “awe and reverence, but one of the by-products of charisma is desire” (22). Therefore, it is not strange that such emotions would produce social gestures of desire, such as “embracing, kissing, sleeping together, [and] sharing clothes” (Jaeger 22). Yet the “motive of favor and advancement” within court circles is inseparable from such social gestures of love and desire, especially as the king has no private persona, but only a public one and therefore “[h]is feelings and his policies, his person and the state, become one and the same thing” (Jaeger 23). Jaeger goes on to state that “the moral hesitations, the taboos, the circumscriptions and proscriptions” between men in the Middle Ages “relate to sexual intercourse, and not to the choice of gender in friendship and love relationships” (25). According to Jaeger, the honouring love that is described between

Richard and Philip thus falls into the favourable category of male-male love, and not in the dishonourable category of male-male sexuality (25-26).

As we can see from the distinction that Jaeger makes between male-male love and male-male sexuality, Jaeger is aware that there was a difference between the two in the Middle Ages, and that this difference is crucial. It is the difference between what Jaeger himself describes as an honouring love and a sinful one. However, Jaeger rarely uses the term sodomy, and instead uses the term 'homosexuality' when referring to Richard's sexual behaviour and historical accounts. This, to me, seems rather strange. On the one hand, Jaeger thus demonstrates an awareness of the difference between relationships that included sexual acts, and relationships that did not include those, and how crucial this distinction was in the Middle Ages. At the same time, however, Jaeger continues to use the term 'homosexuality' when referring to Richard, without acknowledging the blatant anachronism of applying this term to Richard. Only at the end of his chapter on Richard and Philip, Jaeger states:

> Male lovers are very much an issue in this book, but not homosexuality. Nor is the question whether Aelred, Anselm, and others who loved men were homosexuals. It is a bit like asking whether they were liberals, Jacobites, or Unitarians. The category did not exist and using it thrusts an alien set of values onto a sensibility which is delicate and wants reconstruction on its own terms. But I hope that this study also contributes to a history of homosexuality in the Middle Ages —by moving the texts on the ennobling love of men beyond the question of sexual practice. (26)

Here, once again, we see a dichotomy in Jaeger's theoretical framework. On the one hand, he is clearly aware of what Foucault pointed out as the anachronism of applying modern terms, such as 'homosexual', to medieval individuals. However, at the same time Jaeger is arguing that there is a history of 'homosexuality' to be found in the Middle Ages, which does not include sex but male-male love instead.

Analysis of Reactionary Scholarship

Of course, this reactionary scholarship that aims to 'set the record straight' when it comes to Richard's sexuality has generated even more discourse. For example, Flori has, in my opinion, convincingly argued against the claim made by Gillingham that the word 'Sodom' did not refer to sodomy. As explained above, in Gillingham's opinion, the reference to Sodom in the hermit's warning was a reference to a terrible punishment from God, and not to the sin of sodomy (134). Flori agrees that a reference to Sodom could be a reference to the sin, or the subsequent punishment by God, but Flori also argues that the reason for the destruction of

Sodom and Gomorrah remains well-known, even to people with little knowledge of the bible, "And these reasons are explicit, unarguably linked to sexual relations considered unnatural" (Flori 389).

Flori points out that even within the Bible itself, there are several prominent references to the sexual sin of the men of Sodom. For example, Flori notes that, "The Second Epistle of Peter quotes the destruction of Sodom as prefiguring the final destruction" and in the Epistle of Jude the sexual sin of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah and the divine punishment that followed was used as "'an example for all to see', so they would not be imitated" (Flori 391). Flori thus argues that these references to the destruction of Sodom were not mere examples of divine punishment, but that the sin of sodomy itself was clearly indicated as in these references (391). Flori also points out that the connection between Sodom and the sexual sin of sodomy was well-established in the twelfth century (391).

Furthermore, the account given by Roger of Howden is that the hermit says to Richard "[r]emember the destruction of Sodom and abstain from illicit acts" (Howden qtd in Flori 388). This clearly shows that the part of the tale of Sodom that the hermit is trying to reference is the sin (i.e. illicit acts), and not the punishment. If, as Gillingham claims, the reference to Sodom was a reference to God's punishment of sinners, would it not make more sense for the account of the hermit's warning to read something along the lines of 'remember Sodom and the terrible punishment that followed'? Even if the link between the destruction of Sodom and the sin of sodomy was not as well-established as Flori's examples show, I would argue that the fact that the hermit explicitly warns Richard to "abstain from illicit acts" in combination with mentioning Sodom shows that the hermit is clearly referencing the sin of sodomy.

Another argument against the characterisation of Richard as a sodomite is also based on the account given by Roger of Howden. In this case, Jaeger claims that Howden does not make any subtle hints or references when describing the intimate relationship between Richard and Philip, which Jaeger takes as evidence that there is nothing morally reprehensible about their relationship or behaviour. However, as has been pointed out by Burgwinkle, Richard and Philip's relationship did incite some subtle comments from others. As I have mentioned above, Burgwinkle mentions chronicler Gerald of Wales describes Richard as a 'new Caesar', which carried a connotation of sodomy (80). Furthermore, Richard of Devizes also described the meeting between Richard and Philip in Messina and added that "the Kings parted after the festivities 'exhausted but not satisfied'" (Burgwinkle 77). This is a reference to Juvenal's sixth satire, in which the wife of Emperor Claudius engages in sex work each night, yet she leaves the whorehouse 'exhausted but not satisfied'. Burgwinkle argues that the use of this phrase in

the context of Richard and Philip's relationship is highly suggestive, and I would argue that this definitely falls under Jaeger's category of "nods, winks or critical comments" (12). Since Jaeger uses the absence of such comments by Howden to argue that the relationship between Richard and Philip carried no implications of sodomy, the fact that other contemporaries did make such comments about their relationship calls Jaeger's assessment into question.

In addition, Jaeger also makes a clear distinction between male-male love and affection, and male-male sexuality. As mentioned previously, Jaeger states that when it comes to relationships between men "the moral hesitations, the taboos, the circumscriptions and proscriptions relate to sexual intercourse, and not to the choice of gender in friendship and love relationships" (25). The sin is clearly identified as the act of sodomy between two men, and not as love, affection, friendship or even desire between two men. However, if introduced, sexuality "polluted and destroyed" these otherwise unproblematic relationships between men (Jaeger 26). This means that sexuality, in this case sodomy, is seen as separate from the relationship that exists between two men. Love between men existed, both platonic and romantic, but sex was not necessarily a part of these relationships. According to Jaeger, these male-male relationships only became to be regarded as morally unsavory when the sin of sodomy played a part in the relationship. This seems to confirm the theory laid out by Foucault, in which he argues that we did not view sexuality as part of a person's identity before the Victorian era. In the Middle Ages sodomy was a type of behaviour, and sinful behaviour at that, but it was not a specific type of person, nor was it regarded as part of someone's identity.

This major issue surrounding the anachronism inherent in looking for 'homosexuals' in the Middle Ages also arises in Burgwinkle's text. Burgwinkle argues that we are often warned against applying modern terms such as 'homosexual' to medieval individuals, as it is anachronistic to do so. However, Burgwinkle points out that although we are constantly reminded to avoid anachronism, "our equally time-warped notions of heterosexuality are spread, thick and unilateral, across centuries of critical commentary" (74). I argee with Burgwinkle that it is crucial that we recognise that our notion of heterosexuality is just as anachronistic as that of homosexuality. However, we tend not to recognise the anachronism and implicit default status of heterosexuality when studying medieval sexuality. Burgwinkle uses Gillingham's scholarship as a prime example of this. According to Burgwinkle, Gillingham actually approaches Richard's sexuality using a process of elimination, in which he takes each 'charge' against Richard and tries to disprove it. After all charges have been addressed, Gillingham reaches the conclusion that Richard was in fact not 'homosexual', but 'heterosexual'. This conclusion can only be drawn when 'heterosexuality' is taken as the status

quo, and all ‘evidence’ against this status can be negated, which is exactly what Gillingham does when discussing Richard’s sexuality. Burgwinkle wonders if, when we are not presented with conclusive ‘evidence’ for Richard’s ‘homosexuality’, “our only option [is] therefore to assume a chaste and ennobling friendship between the two men?” (74).

Flori and Gillingham also argue that contemporary opinion was that Richard was ‘heterosexual’. This claim further indicates that these scholars are not aware of the anachronism involved in applying the term ‘heterosexual’ to a twelfth-century individual. This is especially ironic considering Gillingham’s concern that “[w]e still shape Richard not according to the realities of the past, but according to our own preoccupations” (188). Moreover, Gillingham’s reasoning seems incoherent even within his own theoretical framework. When it comes to the extensively discussed passages in this chapter that seem to indicate Richard practiced sodomy and/or had romantic feelings for other men, Gillingham argues that we are “reading sexual meanings where none [were] intended” (189). However, when it comes to historical accounts that describe Richard’s sexual activity with women, Gillingham suddenly feels confident to extrapolate that Richard was definitely ‘heterosexual’, and that his contemporaries even shared this opinion (136). All in all, Gillingham seems to set much store by trying to interpret “the realities of the past” without any interference from today’s preoccupations. As I have tried to show, however, unknowingly to Gillingham himself, our modern-day Western notion of heterosexuality seems to have skewed his interpretation of Richard. I would argue that, just as we cannot completely escape our modern-day perspective when looking at the past, historical accounts also come to us tainted by the preoccupations of their times, and we are unlikely to find the one true ‘reality of the past’ in any historical account.

CONCLUSION

This thesis aimed to explore scholarly research on the topic of medieval 'homosexuality' and the attitudes towards such scholarship. In order to accomplish this, I have used both Aelred of Rievaulx and Richard Lionheart as case studies, and tried to show both sides of the scholarly debate around the sexuality of these medieval men. My aim in doing this research was not to provide a definitive answer as to whether or not these men were what we would nowadays consider 'gay', but instead to explore how we approach research on the topic of historical sexuality within the fields of English literature and history.

It is very important to recognise that we cannot simply use the modern, Western terms and concepts that we have for sexuality and apply them to these medieval men. For this reason, I drew on Foucault's theory of pre-modern sexuality, which posits that our modern-day view of sexuality is radically different from the way we viewed sexuality before the Victorian era. This theory states that before pre-modern times people did not identify their sexuality as part of their identity. Sex was something that you did, an act, but not an identity, or something that you were (Foucault 43). When studying medieval sexuality, it is thus very important to keep this in mind.

When analysing the scholarship surrounding Aelred of Rievaulx, we immediately encounter this problem of terminology. While John Boswell and Brian Patrick McGuire both agree that Aelred experienced sexual and romantic desire for other men, they each have very different opinions on what terms should be used to describe Aelred's desires. Where McGuire struggles to give a specific term to this behaviour and inclination of Aelred, Boswell has no qualms about simply using the word 'gay'. Boswell and McGuire both use Aelred's spiritual treatises as sources for their claims that Aelred felt sexually attracted towards other men. However, Marsha Dutton harshly criticised this research on Aelred's sexuality, arguing that his spiritual treatises cannot be used as a source of autobiographical material, and even that we should not be concerned with Aelred's sexuality at all since it is "the wrong question" to ask, as it is "simply irrelevant" ("The Sources" 194).

As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has argued, this type of repressive and censorious attitude towards questions on sexuality is actually very common, and sends the message that the answers to these questions do not matter (53). Sedgwick explains that these questions do in fact matter very much, as we cannot "know *in advance* where the limits of a gay-centered inquiry are to be drawn, or where a gay theorizing of and through even the hegemonic high

culture of the Euro-American tradition may need to be able to lead" (53). Furthermore, with the help of Donna Haraway's theory on situated knowledge I was able to show that Dutton's view on what scholarly questions are 'right' and 'wrong' stems from the very human idea that we ourselves are neutral and objective, while we tend to think of others as subjective. It seems to me that by acknowledging the fact that we are all subjective, Dutton just as much as Boswell, McGuire or myself, we can actually be held accountable for the knowledge we produce, instead of presenting it as a universal truth, which is what Dutton does when discussing which scholarship is of value and which is not. By actually embracing subjectivity, and acknowledging its existence in all knowledge that is produced, we can no longer dismiss research as wrong or irrelevant just because we characterise it as subjective, and therefore of no value.

Moving on to the scholarly debate around Richard Lionheart's sexuality, we see that scholars rely on very different sources for Richard than they do for Aelred. Whereas claims about Aelred's desire for other men is based on his own writing, the main sources for claims about Richard's sexuality are historical accounts written by others about him. John Harvey, Jean Flori and William Burgwinkle all argue that Richard felt sexual attraction towards other men. Yet, Harvey and Flori mainly rely on the accounts of Richard's penance for sexual sins, and Burgwinkle's claim about Richard's sexual behaviour is mainly based on Richard's relationship with Philip II of France.

Some of the same types of arguments that are used against the notion that Aelred desired other men are also used against the notion that Richard loved and desired other men. So, for example, John Gillingham argues that in its very essence, our focus on Richard's sexual behaviour is anachronistic. Yet Gillingham goes further; he also disputes the fact that the hermit's warning, used as evidence of sodomy by both Harvey and Flori, is based on a misinterpretation of a reference to the biblical story of Sodom. Gillingham also argues that the close relationship between Richard and Philip had none of the romantic connotations that we associate with it nowadays, and that Richard was actually known at the time to have 'heterosexual' interests. Jaeger, like Burgwinkle, also focuses on Richard's relationship with Philip, stating that accounts from them sleeping and eating together seem to unambiguously imply sexual and romantic elements in their relationship, but follows largely the same reasoning as Gillingham in stating that these behaviours had very different meanings and connotations in the twelfth century.

What seems to emerge throughout this thesis are two different approaches to studying medieval sexuality. On the one hand we see scholars argue in favour of seeing continuity between medieval and modern sexuality. Burgwinkle, for example, shows a clear understanding of Foucault's theory of modern versus pre-modern sexuality, and thinks that we should be careful of making generalisations, or using certain modern terms where they are not appropriate. However, Burgwinkle also points out that if we cannot perceive any continuity between sex and sexuality in the Middle Ages and today, then we can also not claim to understand other aspects of medieval society or identity (14). Therefore, medieval sexuality should not be regarded as more 'other' than other aspects of medieval society. Furthermore, Burgwinkle also questions the straightforward application of our equally anachronistic notion of 'heterosexuality' to medieval individuals, which goes unquestioned.

On the other hand we have scholars such as Dutton and Gillingham, who see the study of this topic as inherently anachronistic. Dutton frames the research on the topic of Aelred's sexuality as anachronistic in its entirety, not just the terms we might be using to describe his sexual inclinations or behaviours. Like Dutton, Gillingham also thinks that studying Richard's sexuality is inherently anachronistic, stating that "[w]e still shape Richard not according to the realities of the past, but according to our own preoccupations" (188). Interestingly, neither Gillingham nor Dutton demonstrate an awareness of the anachronism of the terms they use to describe medieval sexuality. Scholars as Boswell, McGuire and Burgwinkle demonstrate a clear awareness of the anachronism present in using modern terms for medieval individuals, either by not using these modern terms, or by giving a clear definition of the term and thorough explanation of why they are using it. Gillingham and Dutton however, do simply use modern-day terms for medieval individuals, but argue against what they believe is the anachronism inherent in studying medieval sexuality. This idea that the very nature of the question is anachronistic, and therefore unanswerable, quickly leads to the opinion that there is no point in studying the subject. Dutton makes it very clear that she finds research into medieval sexuality "[o]ne of the least productive questions explored by scholars today" ("The Sources" 121). While milder than Dutton, Gillingham also argues that our modern preoccupations cloud our vision when it comes to Richard, making us unable to actually see "the real Richard", and therefore unable to produce any worthwhile research about him (191). Once again, this relies on the idea that there are two different types of research: one which aims to find the 'objective' and 'neutral' truth, and the other type which is subjective. As I have already argued, with the help of Haraway's theory, no one can ever be truly objective about anything, medieval

sexuality included. However, actually acknowledging our subjectivity helps us not to dismiss scholarship on this topic as subjective, and therefore 'wrong' or irrelevant.

Instead of arguing that this type of research is anachronistic, and therefore should not be done, I feel it would actually be more anachronistic to avoid this topic altogether. Clearly, people in the Middle Ages had sex, just as modern-day people have sex. While Foucault's theory posits a crucial divide between modern and pre-modern sexuality, Foucault also points out that attitudes towards sex and perceptions of sexuality can reveal very much about a society (43-44). Therefore, studying medieval sexuality may help us to come to a closer understanding of the Middle Ages, instead of completely ignoring an important part of it. While we should be aware of the differences between modern-day Western and medieval sexuality, I would argue that we should also be able to see continuity. If the past is so radically 'other' that it can never be completely understood by us (or anyone who comes after us, for that matter) then is there any point to studying it at all? The study of history in its very essence is a study of our own history; who are we, and where do we come from? These are questions medieval chronicles and histories are also trying to answer, because the answer matters. Dutton argues that we shouldn't have to find examples of same-sex desire in the past to ascribe validity to it today, and I agree. However, medieval 'homosexuality' is still worth studying because representation matters, and only by making it visible, can we show where it has been erased.

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