

Lost and Not Yet Found: Heloise, Abelard, and the *Epistolae duorum amantium*

by Jan M. Ziolkowski

Abelard and Heloise hold a prominent place in legend as tragic lovers. The affair that they had while he was her tutor and she his tutee was discovered by her uncle, probably long after it had become common knowledge to many others. The aftermath of the secret marriage that was meant to assuage the uncle's anger only inflamed it further, to the extent that he had hoodlums castrate Abelard. Heloise, who had borne a child by Abelard, entered a nunnery at the bidding of her former lover and husband, whereupon Abelard himself became a monk. All of this happened around 1116–1117. Abelard would have been in his mid-thirties. Heloise's age has been fixed variously. Until recently it was assumed that she was in her teens, "about seventeen," but lately there have been efforts to recalibrate the chronology so that she would have been in even her mid-twenties.¹

The main texts on which information about the affair and the relationship between Heloise and Abelard rests are an extensive sketch of his life that Peter Abelard wrote (known generally as the *Historia calamitatum*), in the form of a letter of consolation to an unidentified male friend, and the correspondence (three letters from Heloise and four from Abelard) that Heloise initiated after she had read the letter of consolation. The dating of the letters and the ages of Abelard and Heloise when they were written have not been pinpointed exactly, but Abelard seems to have composed the *Historia calamitatum* in 1132. He would have been in his early fifties, while Heloise (if we follow the traditional chronology) would have been

¹ For the younger age, see *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, trans. Betty Radice (London, 1974), p. 16. For the more advanced, see John O. Ward and Neville Chiavaroli, "The Young Heloise and Latin Rhetoric: Some Preliminary Comments on the 'Lost' Love Letters and Their Significance," in *Listening to Heloise: The Voice of a Twelfth-Century Woman*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler (New York, 2000), pp. 53–119, at 58.

somewhere in her thirties. The other letters would have followed from around 1133 to around 1138.²

The matter of their ages seems trifling next to that of authenticity, since the authorship of the letters has been notoriously debated. Indeed, even J.T. Muckle, whose edition of the correspondence between Heloise and Abelard remains a standard, had qualms about ascribing the letters to them.³ The conflict came to a head in the 1970s, when it was argued by one scholar (whose views were shared, *mutatis mutandis*, by others) that the letters allegedly by her in the main correspondence were the work of Abelard himself; by another that Heloise's letters and Abelard's were the compositions of two different forgers; and by a third that both sides of the correspondence were forgeries by Jean de Meun (who died before 1305), who not only translated the *Historia calamitatum* and letters into French but also fabricated the Latin texts of both.⁴

Yet since the end of the 1970s, after a flurry of publications against the authenticity resulted in the rejection and recantation of those very books and articles, a consensus has prevailed that the letters are genuine, with the ones attributed to Abelard and the ones to Heloise having been written by none other than Abelard and Heloise. The consensus manifests itself not just in scholarly lists of all Heloise's and Abelard's known surviving works but also popularly in the title of the Penguin Classics edition of *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*.⁵ This agreement happens to be undergirded by the manuscript evidence, since of the nine copies which survive from the thirteenth or early fourteenth century through the sixteenth or early seventeenth, seven contain headings of some sort to associate the letters with Heloise and Abelard.⁶

² These dates are found in M.T. Clanchy, "Chronology," in *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, trans. Betty Radice, rev. M.T. Clanchy (London, 2003), pp. ix–xi.

³ J.T. Muckle, "The Personal Letters Between Abelard and Heloise," *Mediaeval Studies* 15 (1953), 47–94, at pp. 59 and 67, cited and considered by Peter Dronke, *Abelard and Heloise in Medieval Testimonies*, The Twenty-Sixth W.P. Ker Memorial Lecture delivered in the University of Glasgow 29 October, 1976 (Glasgow: University of Glasgow Press, 1976), pp. 8–9, repr. in Peter Dronke, *Intellectuals and Poets in Medieval Europe*, *Storia e letteratura* 183 (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1992), pp. 247–94, at 249–50.

⁴ For a lucid assessment of the different stands, see John Marenbon, "Authenticity Revisited," in *Listening to Heloise*, ed. Wheeler (New York, 2000), pp. 19–33.

⁵ For the acceptance of the letters as authentic in lists of Abelard's writings, see for example M.T. Clanchy, *Abelard: A Medieval Life* (Oxford, 1997), p. 346, and John Marenbon, *The Philosophy of Peter Abelard* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. xvii–xviii. For Heloise, see Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages: A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua (†203) to Marguerite Porete (†1310)* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 326.

⁶ See *Abélard, Historia calamitatum*, ed. Jacques Monfrin, (Paris, 1959), pp. 9–28 (MSS T, B, D, Y, C, E, and F).

Now that the once-volcanic controversy over the genuineness of *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise* has settled into a dormancy that may even betoken extinction, the study of the two has been shaken by a new eruption from a different quarter. Heloise, in her first letter to Abelard (which is often numbered 2 in Abelard's correspondence, with *Historia calamitatum* being 1), referred to her erstwhile lover's solicitousness as a correspondent when he was still interested in and capable of having sexual relations with her. She wrote, "When you sought me out formerly for base pleasures, you would frequent me in repeated letters..."⁷ These "repeated letters," love letters that are from approximately 1116–1117, and not the later personal correspondence, from 1132 or thereabouts and afterward, are at issue in the present debate.

In 1999 Constant J. Mews reprinted the Latin text of what had been known as the *Epistolae duorum amantium* (henceforth *Epistolae*) along with an English translation (pp. 179–289), produced in collaboration with Neville Chiavaroli, and a hefty introductory monograph (pp. 3–177, with notes on pp. 291–361). He brought out the resultant volume in the New Middle Ages series of St. Martin's Press (New York, 1999) under the title of *The Lost Love Letters of Heloise and Abelard: Perceptions of Dialogue in Twelfth-Century France* (henceforth *The Lost Love Letters*). Within two years the book was reprinted in paperback (New York, 2001).

The outstanding *editio princeps* of the *Epistolae* had been published thirty years ago by Ewald Könsgen. The *Epistolae*, amounting to 113 items in Könsgen's edition, are extant in a unique manuscript, Troyes, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 1452, with the incipit "Ex epistolis duorum amantium." MS 1452 is a paper manuscript, written in the second half of the fifteenth century by a monk named Johannes de Vepria (also known as Jean de la Vèprie and as Jean de Woëvre, ca. 1445–ca. 1518) when he was roughly twenty-five years old, long before he became prior of Clairvaux (1480–1499). The last element in his name is the Latin for La Voire or La Woëvre, near Verdun.

At the instance of Karl Langosch (1903–1992), the editor in whose series (*Mittellateinische Studien und Texte*, through E.J. Brill in Leiden) the 1974 edition appeared as volume 8, the title page bore beneath the three Latin words the subtitle *Briefe Abaelards und Heloises*. Könsgen stood fast for capping the subtitle with a question mark.⁸ That quizzical punctuation

⁷ Ed. J.T. Muckle, "The Personal Letters Between Abelard and Heloise," p. 73, "Cum me ad turpes olim voluptates expeteres, crebris me epistolis visitabas..."

⁸ An account of the negotiation over the subtitle with the series editor will be found in an article by Ewald Könsgen, "'Der Nordstern scheint auf den Pol.' Baudolinos Liebesbriefe

remained in the subsequent Italian and French translations, although with the names of the two personages in different order: *Abelardo e Eloisa?* and *Héloïse et Abélard?*, respectively.⁹ The importance of the step Mews took in excising the interrogative cannot be underestimated. If the initial eight words on the spine of the 1999 book had ended in a question mark rather than a colon, and if the contents of the book had been correspondingly tentative, the controversy that has been raging over the past five years would not have occurred.¹⁰

To carry further this parsing of the title, I would posit that the reception of *The Lost Love Letters of Heloise and Abelard* has differed from what would otherwise have been the case not only because of the missing squiggle and dot, but also because of word order. In English the norm has been to name the lovers in the sequence *Abelard and Heloise*, in contrast (whether originally accidental or deliberate) to the French *Héloïse et Abélard*. This disparity can be verified in the titles of books about the pair in English.¹¹ The

an Beatrix, die Kaiserin – oder ‘Ex epistolis duorum amantium,’” in *Nova de veteribus. Mittel- und neulateinische Studien für Paul Gerhard Schmidt*, ed. Andreas Bihrer und Elisabeth Stein (Munich and Leipzig, 2004), pp. 1113–21, at 1114. I appreciate greatly Ewald Könsgen’s correspondence with me, as well as his sending me in typescript the article (which is essential reading for anyone interested in fine points of the *Epistolae* and their reception).

⁹ *Un Epistolario d’amore del XII secolo (Abelardo e Eloisa?)*, trans. Graziella Ballanti, (Rome, 1988), and *La Lettre d’amour au moyen âge: Boncompagno da Signa, La Roue de Venus; Baudri de Bourgueil, Poésies; Manuscrit de Tegernsee, Lettres d’amours; Manuscrit de Troyes, Lettres de deux amants (Héloïse et Abélard?)*, trans. Étienne Wolff (Paris, 1996), pp. 117–51. Sylvain Piron has reported to me that he has a new French translation and study of the letters, to be entitled *Lettres des deux amants. Héloïse et Abélard?* and to be published in 2005 in Paris by Gallimard. Piron indicated that although he retains the question mark in the title, he concludes unequivocally in an appendix that the identification of the letter writers with Abelard and Heloise is the most plausible scientific theory. (I am beholden to him for having sent me a pre-publication draft of the appendix, “Enquête sur un texte.”)

¹⁰ The controversy continues to boil: see Jan Rüdiger, “Abaelard und Héloïse: Echt gefunden,” in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 12 May 2004, nr. 110, p. 3. For the latest thinking of Constant J. Mews on the *Epistolae* as well as upon the correspondence now nearly universally ascribed to the famous duo, we will soon be able to consult his *Abelard and Heloise* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

¹¹ In the electronic catalogue of the various collections that compose the Harvard College Library, I located only three instances of books in English entitled *Heloise and Abelard*, two of them translations from the French (one by Étienne Gilson [1884–1978], *Heloise and Abelard*, trans. L.K. Shook [Chicago: H. Regnery Co., 1951], and the other by Régine Pernoud [1909–1999]), *Heloise and Abelard*, trans. Peter Wiles [London: Collins, 1973], the third (by George Moore [1852–1933]), *Héloïse and Abélard* [New York: Privately printed for subscribers only by Boni and Liveright, 1921], making its French inspiration apparent by spelling the name of Heloise with an *accent aigu* and diaeresis mark. All three belong to a lineage, including the originals of Gilson’s and Pernoud’s, entitled *Héloïse et Abailard* that acquired critical mass in the mid-nineteenth century, with books by Alphonse

different sequences of the two names in the two languages may have stemmed from French *politesse* (a kind of verbal “ladies first”), Anglo-American paternalism, or subtle differences between French and English in which order of names was felt to be euphonious. Whatever the explanation for the divergent sequencing, the reversal in the title of Constant J. Mews’s book may well have affected the reception of *The Lost Love Letters*. Although the ordering of the names was meant to distinguish the book from the Penguin translation of the letters conventionally ascribed to the famous lovers,¹² the decision could have been construed, by both those who have accepted and those who have rejected the ascription, as not a Gallicizing gesture, but rather a pointed move to redress the suppression and distortion Heloise had suffered in centuries of sexist scholarship, and it accorded with ending the monograph in a subsection on “The Voice of Heloise” (pp. 145–77), while not naming Abelard anywhere on the table of contents.¹³

The decision to foreground Heloise may have affected the response that has greeted *The Lost Love Letters*, particularly in the Anglophone world, where more than elsewhere there abound courses, programmes, professors, and institutes in women’s studies and gender studies.¹⁴ Those who reject or question the attribution of *The Lost Love Letters* to Heloise and Abelard (or Abelard and Heloise) place themselves willy-nilly in the patriarchal lineage of both past anti-feminist males (from Fulbert and Abelard on down), who have mistreated her, and modern scholars, who have sought to silence her by

de Lamartine (1790–1869: 1853) and Eugène Scribe (1791–1861: 1850). It continued into the twentieth with one by Roger Vailland (1907–1965). Outweighing those three *Heloise and Abelards* are more than ten *Abelard and Heloises*, none of them a translation. Authors with years of publication include John Baldwin Buckstone (1837), Willis Vernon Cole (1923), Peter Dronke (1976), Donald Ericson (1990), Leonard Melling (1970), Ronald Millar (1969), Abby Sage Richardson (1895), D.W. Robertson, Jr. (1972), and Ridgely Torrence (1907). Further information – not limited to publications in French or English – on stage or film productions can be found at www.abaelard.de/abaelard/091000buehne.htm

¹² Personal communication to the author from Constant J. Mews, Sunday, 24 October 2004.

¹³ In a radio interview very shortly after the publication of *The Lost Love Letters*, Mews reported that his wrestling with the letters had enabled him to confront “how so much of the Western, certainly the Latin and certainly the religious tradition, has been built on the exclusion of a woman’s voice” (Radio National interview with Rachel Kohn on Sunday, 13 February 2000, transcript available at <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/relig/spirit/stories/s99224.htm>). It should be stressed that in the interview Mews takes a firm stand against making simple generalisations on the basis of this recognition.

¹⁴ The dust jacket of the original hardback encouraged the misimpression that Constant Mews himself works in such an institute, since it identified him as “teach[ing] in the School of Historical and Gender Studies at Monash University, in Australia.” This wording is not the present name for the School of Historical Studies.

avowing that the correspondence was a literary fiction or that Abelard composed both sides of the exchange.¹⁵ To repudiate the ascription to Heloise and Abelard is to mute the former once again, depriving her of what would now constitute most of her extant writings, and to replicate the injustice attempted against her in the last *furor* over authenticity in which her name was involved, namely, the one in the 1970s.

The tendency to equate objections to the ascription of *The Lost Love Letters* with an anti-feminist attack on Heloise was cemented a year after the book came out, when a medley of fifteen chapters by eighteen contributors appeared under the banner *Listening to Heloise: The Voice of a Twelfth-Century Woman*, edited by Bonnie Wheeler (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000). It was published in the same series, the New Middle Ages, in which *The Lost Love Letters* had been printed. Two chapters, amounting to nearly a quarter of the text in the book, delved into *The Lost Love Letters*. The shorter of these two is on "Philosophical Themes in the *Epistolae duorum amantium*: The First Letters of Heloise and Abelard" (pp. 35–52) by Constant J. Mews. The longer, by John O. Ward (a professor at the University of Sydney in Australia) and Neville Chiavaroli (who wrote his dissertation under Mews), is on "The Young Heloise and Latin Rhetoric: Some Preliminary Comments on the 'Lost' Love Letters and Their Significance" (pp. 53–119). The latter essay takes as its premise that the ascription of the *Epistolae* to Abelard and Heloise is a given. Not entirely by the by, four chapter titles mention both the protagonists; the two that follow the order of Heloise first, Abelard second are the aforementioned piece by Constant J. Mews and "*Quae maternae immemor naturae*: The Rhetorical Struggle over the meaning of Motherhood in the Writings of Heloise and Abelard" by Juanita Feros Ruys (pp. 323–39). Ruys, who completed her doctorate at the University of Sydney in Australia, is thanked in the introduction to *The Lost Love Letters* (p. xiii).¹⁶

¹⁵ For this argument, see Barbara Newman, "Authority, Authenticity, and the Repression of Heloise," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 22 (1992), 121–57, repr. in *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist: Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature* (Philadelphia, 1995), pp. 46–75.

¹⁶ Juanita Feros Ruys has also published another article, the title of which uses the Heloise-first sequence: "*Eloquencie vultum depingere*: Eloquence and *Dictamen* in the Love Letters of Heloise and Abelard," in *Rhetoric and Renewal in the Latin West 1100–1540: Essays in Honour of John O. Ward*, ed. Constant J. Mews, Cary J. Nederman, and Rodney M. Thomson, *Disputatio* 2 (Turnhout, 2003), pp. 99–112."

Before concluding this consideration, I should mention a short note that was published elsewhere and that echoed in its title both the earlier-mentioned, crucial subsection title of Mews's book ("The Voice of Heloise") and subtitle of *Listening to Heloise*. But this other piece, although inclining towards accepting the authorship of Heloise and Abelard, makes

All kinds of circumstances have rendered unusual and even unique the reception of *The Lost Love Letters*. One phenomenon that deserves to be remarked is the disjunction between the fanfare that the recent reprint with an English translation and study has received and the relative neglect that the original Latin edition with accompanying German study and elaborate apparatus has endured. After Könsgen's edition of the *Epistolae* appeared, it elicited a scant seven book reviews.¹⁷ Although many factors contributed to this circumstance, the distribution of the reviews, written exclusively in German, French, and Italian, is related to the geographical locations of those who accept the newly argued ascription of the *Epistolae* and those who question or reject it. By and large, the supporters have been Anglophone, preponderantly in the United States of America and Australia, to a lesser extent in England. In contrast, the sceptics have been prevalently European.

This breakdown is related to the classification of reactions by fields. Despite the absence of an absolute divide, the fact remains that Latinists have been far more reserved in their response than others. Two Medieval Latinists in particular have spoken out, with vehement rejection and pronounced scepticism, respectively. Peter von Moos took a stand firmly against the ascription of the letters to Heloise and Abelard already in 1976, and he has written prolifically and emphatically in the recent uproar.¹⁸ Also

clear that the ascription remains a hypothesis rather than a proven fact. See Anne E. Lester, "Une autre voix d'Héloïse? La femme dans les *Epistolae duorum amantium*," in *Très sage Héloïse, La Vie en Champagne, hors série* (n.p., 2001), pp. 22–25. My warm thanks to Professor Anne Lester for sending me an offprint of her piece.

¹⁷ These were listed by Giles Constable, "The Authorship of the *Epistolae duorum amantium*: A Reconsideration," to appear in *Voices in Dialogue: New Problems in Reading Women's Cultural History*, ed. Linda Olson and Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, (South Bend, IL, forthcoming). The same article has appeared already in a revised French version: Giles Constable, "Sur l'Attribution des *Epistolae duorum amantium*," *Académie des Inscriptions & Belles-Lettres, Comptes rendus des séances de l'année 2001, novembre-décembre*, pp. 1679–1693. I am very grateful to Giles Constable for having sent me these two texts.

In alphabetical order, those who reviewed the *Epistolae* were Gioachino Chiarini, in *Maia* 33 (1981), 245–46; Edward Little, in *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 19 (1976), 181–82; Anke Paravicini, in *Francia* 4 (1976), 844–47; Adrien Pattin, in *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* 41 (1979), 521; Gabriel Silagi, in *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 32 (1976), 266–67; Hubert Silvestre, in *Scriptorium* 31 (1977), 130–31; Arnulf Stefenelli, in *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 93 (1977), 118–19.

¹⁸ "Die Bekehrung Heloises," *MJ* 11 (1976), 95–125 (here: 120). His two salvos in the current debate have been "Abaelard, Heloise und ihr Paraklet: ein Kloster nach Mass. Zugleich eine Streitschrift gegen die ewige Wiederkehr hermeneutischer Naivität," in *Das Eigene und das Ganze. Zum Individuelle im mittelalterlichen Religiosentum*, ed. Gert Melville and Markus Schürer, *Vita regularis* 16 (Münster, 2003), pp. 563–619, and "Die *Epistolae duorum amantium* und die säkulare Religion der Liebe. Methodenkritische Vorüberlegungen zu einem einmaligen Werk mittellateinischer Briefliteratur," *SM* 3rd ser. 44 (2003), 1–115.

in 1976, Peter Dronke wrote that he had to “respond to the question-mark [at the end of the subtitle to Könsgen’s edition] with scepticism.”¹⁹ When he revisited the *Epistolae* less than a decade later, he “indicate[d] some elements in these letters that seem[ed] to [him] distinct from all that medieval sources can tell us about Abelard and Heloise.”²⁰ Furthermore, he too has participated in the debate since 1999, in a published review and forthcoming article, both of which give sharper utterance to the clear doubts he had already voiced in the past.²¹

The adjective “reserved” is far too mild to characterize the polemic against *The Lost Love Letters* in a letter (most definitely not lost) that Peter Godman sent to the *Times Literary Supplement* in reaction to a hapless review of a biography of Abelard and Heloise:

The ascription of these letters to Abelard and Heloise has been rejected by experts, perhaps most effectively by Peter von Moos... His arguments convince. I, for one, am in no doubt that these letters were not written by the most famous lovers of the twelfth century, on whom they have been foisted by a combination of wishful thinking, a feeble command of medieval Latin, and a strong desire to shine.²²

Godman’s letter is irate, to say the least, and the final sentence quoted is capped by a phrase famous from a denunciation of incompetence in an earlier scholar by the poet and philologist, A.E. Housman (1859–1936)²³ – but can we discount it as a manifestation of “Hell hath no fury like a philologist spurned?” Does primitive territoriality underlie the caustic tricolon? Did he and his namesakes turn their wrath upon Mews *et al.* because they were vexed to have been outshone by an outsider and because they did not recognize on their own the Heloisian and Abelardian

¹⁹ *Abelard and Heloise in Medieval Testimonies*, p. 25, repr. in Peter Dronke, *Intellectuals and Poets in Medieval Europe*, p. 270.

²⁰ Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages*, p. 93.

²¹ The review appeared in *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 8 (2001), 134–39. The article, being produced in collaboration with Giovanni Orlandi, will consider several texts that have been treated wrongly or, at the very least, disputably as the works of Abelard. My own initial reactions, which I characterized as being sceptical or agnostic, can be found in the review that appeared in *Medievalia et Humanistica*, n.s. 30 (2004), 152–56.

²² *Times Literary Supplement*, 23 January 2004, p. 15. Although this letter contains no information or arguments to affect the debate one way or another, it is important (especially because of the wide circulation that the *TLS* attains) for what it reveals about the heated atmosphere that now envelops the authorship question.

²³ The phrase, “a strong desire to shine,” appeared in *M. Manilii Astronomicum*, ed. A.E. Housman, 5 vols. (London: G. Richards, 1903–1930), vol. 5, p. xxv, in reference to H.W. Garrod (1878–1960), ed. and trans., *Astronomicum, Liber 2* (Oxford, 1911).

provenance of these texts? Or are they genuinely affronted at having to dispute an ascription that they regard as unproven, unlikely, or contradicted by the evidence? If the last question is to be answered in the affirmative, then we need to ponder whether or not they demand a certainty of proof unattainable in a case in which the best to be achieved is plausibility. If they are not labouring under an exaggerated positivism, an alternative explanation for their reactions could be that they come to the *Epistolae* with a knowledge of Abelard's Latin writing style that renders them unable to accept the letters as the products of his pen or stylus.

The first book review of *The Lost Love Letters* to appear anywhere, and probably the most influential in North America, is the one by Barbara Newman, released on 25 January 2000 by the e-journal, *The Medieval Review*.²⁴ The reviewer hazarded an explanation for why the true identity of the *Epistolae* had gone unremarked for a quarter century. She reasoned that amid the controversy over the authenticity of the main correspondence which raged in the early 1970s, "no scholar could have been expected to stake his credibility on the anonymous love letters discovered by Könsgen." She continued: "Even Peter Dronke, the staunchest defender of Heloise's writing, did not want to connect the famous lovers with this newly edited correspondence." Yet Peter Dronke has never been known to shrink from non-conformist positions, if his readings and instincts led him to them. Indeed, C. Stephen Jaeger referred rightly to Dronke's 1976 study of *Abelard and Heloise in Medieval Testimonies* as being "courageous."²⁵ Similarly, John F. Benton (1931–1988), hardly bashful himself when it came to controversy about authorship in the case of Heloise and Abelard, confessed that he had "serious doubts" about "whether the *Epistolae* ... were actually written by Abelard and Heloise."²⁶ Most of those who perused the *Epistolae* in the first decade following their publication were not intimidated or distracted from attributing them to Heloise and Abelard; rather, they failed to find data that supplied them the conviction to do so.

It is also worth attending to the timing of Ewald Könsgen's own exhaustive toils. The late Medieval Latin philologist Dieter Schaller came upon the collection of love letters in 1967, had a microfilm made, and then

²⁴ The website of *The Medieval Review* is <http://www.hti.umich.edu/t/tmr>, and the identification number for this particular review is TMR ID: 00.01.06.

²⁵ *Ennobling Love: In Search of a Lost Sensibility* (Philadelphia, 1999), p. 170.

²⁶ "Philology's Search for Abelard in the *Metamorphosis Goliae*," *Speculum* 50 (1975), 199–217, at pp. 199–200, n. 1: "Whether the *Epistolae* ... were actually written by Abelard and Heloise early in their relationship – and on this question I have serious doubts – these newly edited letters do not help to establish the authenticity of the primary and long-known correspondence."

entrusted the editing to his graduate student Könsgen.²⁷ Thus Könsgen toiled over the *Epistolae* as his dissertation from 1968 through 1972, that is, *before* the incendiary situation provoked by Benton and D.W. Robertson, Jr. He entitled the dissertation straightforwardly “Eine lateinische Liebesbriefsammlung des Hochmittelalters – Troyes BM 1452 (Clairvaux O b XIII).” Könsgen’s years of close engagement with this text can be appreciated readily in the indispensable identifications of sources and parallels in his notes (pp. 3–63) as well as in the word index that concludes his volume (pp. 113–137).²⁸ Despite all his labours, he was never able (and has not been able since) to find the “smoking gun” that would have resolved the case for him, and us, definitively. Later I shall come back to the absence of conclusive evidence.

Apart from Mews’s book itself, Newman’s review, and the volume entitled *Listening to Heloise*, the fourth cornerstone in the construction of *The Lost Love Letters* ascribed to Heloise and Abelard out of the anonymous *Epistolae* was C. Stephen Jaeger’s *Ennobling Love: In Search of a Lost Sensibility*, which was brought out by the University of Pennsylvania Press in near simultaneity with Mews’s book (Philadelphia, 1999). In his chapter on the *Epistolae* (pp. 157–73) he does not advance arguments in favour of the attribution, but rather states in its first sentence that “We can now accept [this set of love letters] as letters exchanged between Abelard and Heloise in the early days of their love affair, not literary exercises” (p. 160). The relevant endnote explains that “Both Dronke and Könsgen cautiously avoid an ascription to Abelard and Heloise” and that on the question of authorship Jaeger defers to Mews’s book “which places the ascription to Heloise and Abelard beyond question” (p. 275).²⁹

But the *fait accompli* has come undone, as questions *have* been raised, and insistently. The first major outpouring came in an exhaustive document equivalent to nearly fifty single-spaced pages copyrighted April 2000 and posted on the web on a marvellous Abelard site constructed by an independent scholar in Germany named Werner Robl. Some of the findings in Robl’s tract have been incorporated into broadsides that have circulated on both sides of the debate. I use the word *circulated* very deliberately, since many of the longest documents became available to interested parties long before they have found their way into print. Chief items in the dossier (full

²⁷ Könsgen, ““Der Nordstern scheint auf den Pol,”” p. 1113.

²⁸ Further information on sources and parallels may be found now in von Moos, “Die *Epistolae duorum amantium* und die säkulare Religion der Liebe,” pp. 104–11.

²⁹ Jaeger, who has since modified his position, now holds that there is not decisive evidence either pro or con, but that the ascribers tend to have stronger arguments to support them than do the deniers.

references to which will be found in the notes to the present article) would now include C. Stephen Jaeger's "The *Epistolae duorum amantium* and the Ascription to Heloise and Abelard"; Giles Constable's response to it; C. Stephen Jaeger's reply to Constable's response; Peter von Moos's two articles; and the retrospective portion of Ewald Könsgen's essay. At the writing of this text, four of these six pieces remain "forthcoming."

On what bases have the proponents of Heloise and Abelard's authorship built their case, and their opponents rebuffed it? In her review Newman summarized the three foundations upon which the ascription rests. First, that "learned women did exchange Latin poems and letters with their male admirers in the early twelfth century." Second, that "the fragmentary narrative that emerges from the recently discovered letters is consistent in all particulars with what we know of Abelard and Heloise." And third, "most important, the philosophical vocabulary, literary style, classical allusions, and contrasting positions on love apparent in Könsgen's letters are so thoroughly consistent with the known writings of Heloise and Abelard that the supposition of their authorship is simpler than any alternative hypothesis."

The first argument I shall take for a given, since fully twenty years ago Dronke assembled all the major evidence known to us that affords insight into exchanges of poetry and letters (among them the *Epistolae*) between women and men in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries.³⁰ As regards the second argument, Mews asserts (p. 6) that "If these love letters were written by a couple other than Abelard and Heloise, the question remains as to who these individuals could be. I argue for the simplest solution, that they are indeed written by Abelard and Heloise." I would take issue immediately with the logic underlying this assertion, in that our inability to surmise who the authors might have been if they were not Heloise and Abelard is not sufficient reason to attribute them to these two personages. Guibert of Nogent (1053–1124), a slightly older contemporary of Peter Abelard, claimed that in France everyone, even the peasants, was afire with zeal for *grammatica* (the skills of speaking and writing correctly and of interpreting literature).³¹ Maybe Guibert exaggerated, but it would be an equal but opposite overstatement to posit that the only men and women writing Latin were the relatively few whose names and works have come down to us. Although males outnumbered females vastly among those who could read and write Latin, there were women who wrote Latin that has survived.

³⁰ Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages*, pp. 84–106.

³¹ *Recueil des historiens des croisades: Historiens occidentaux*, vol. 4 (Paris, 1879), pp. 117–18.

Furthermore, Abelard was undoubtedly a teacher, but he was hardly unique in France. To take examples close to home, we do not know the names of any of the schoolmasters (or schoolmistresses) who gave either Abelard or Heloise their basic training in Latin.³² If Heloise was herself a successful role model for the nuns in the Paraclete, what are the names and where are the texts of the young protégées she nurtured? Should we assume they never existed because we do not know them? A whole book has been written on the literary motif of nuns who had affairs.³³ Were such affairs merely a topos of fiction, or were there in reality nuns other than Heloise who had men in their pasts or presents? Must we presume that no other women and men who wrote Latin had affairs or that no others produced letters in the course of them? Would not all involved in such affairs have had cause to keep silent their names? And is it not within the nature of love for lovers to praise each other extravagantly? All of this is merely to suggest why, even if we accept the *Epistolae* as being genuine letters from the early twelfth century (or earlier), there could have been many candidates for their authorship whose names are not and will never be known.

For those of us who crave certitude, it is agonizing that the most prolific authors of the Middle Ages remain the close colleagues Anonymus and Pseudo, but we cannot relieve our frustration by attaching anonymous and pseudonymous texts to known authors unless we can provide solid evidence for doing so.³⁴ The onus does not rest on sceptics of the attribution to Heloise and Abelard to track down another couple of lovers whose names are known and who could have composed the letters. The *horror vacui* that is understandable in nature must be avoided in the world of learning, where a principle comparable to “innocent until proven guilty” obtains: a text must be anonymous until the authorship has been firmly established. Otherwise our understandable *horror anonymitatis*, even some three decades after Roland Barthes (1915–1980) proclaimed the death of the author and after deconstructionists drove a wedge between *authors* and *works* to create *texts*,

³² The possible exception in the case of Abelard is Roscelin of Compiègne (ca. 1050–ca. 1125), of Heloise, Abelard himself.

³³ Graciela S. Daichman, *Wayward Nuns in Medieval Literature* (Syracuse, NY, 1986).

³⁴ The whole process of identification is central in the work of philology and essential to that of history. This helps to explain the utility of Jacques Berlioz and others, *Identifier sources et citations*, L’Atelier du médiéviste 1 (Turnhout, 1994); the *In principio* database; and Richard Sharpe, *Titulus: Identifying Medieval Latin Texts. An Evidence-Based Approach* (Turnhout, 2003). But no matter how refined identificatory skills may become, Medieval Latinists will still have to accept that many texts will remain anonymous. On the question of anonymity in Medieval Latin literature, see Paul Gerhard Schmidt, “Perché tanti anonimi nel medioevo? Il problema della personalità dell’autore nella filologia mediolatina,” *FM* 6–7 (1999–2000), 1–8.

will transport us back to the Middle Ages, where poems were taken with abandon and attributed to Ovid, Walter Map, or other prestigious authors or legends.³⁵

Of the medievalists who disbelieve the ascription, some root their resistance in contextual discrepancies of biography or psychology between, on the one hand, the *Epistolae* and, on the other, the *Historia calamitatum* and letters customarily assigned to Heloise and Abelard. They hold that the characters of the two correspondents and the relationship between them fail to match what they understand about Abelard and Heloise on the basis of what could be tagged the “unlost correspondence.” Even more of the deniers find in the language and style of the letters the chief stumbling block. The paramount question in confronting these letters should not be a prosopographic *faute de mieux*, but rather whether or not they resemble sufficiently the known writings of the Heloise and Abelard in style and content to warrant ascribing the *Epistolae* to the famous lovers. I have focused my own efforts on the third category of Mews’s supporting evidence in Newman’s taxonomy, namely, matters of vocabulary, prose rhythm and prosody, and allusion. This category has been singled out as a particularly convincing component of his argument.³⁶

Despite my fascination with many other topics pertaining to the *Epistolae*, I have not endeavoured to determine when or where they were written, whether or not the missives labelled *V<ir>* and *M<ulier>* were composed by different people, or whether the correspondence is a rhetorical exercise or the record of a real-life romance. Instead, I have set for myself one main objective in sifting the evidence: to figure out whether or not the

³⁵ On the phenomenon of the pseudo-antique, see Paul Lehmann, *Pseudo-antike Literatur des Mittelalters* (1927, repr. Darmstadt, 1964), and Paul Gerhard Schmidt, “Pseudoantike Literatur als philologisches Problem in Mittelalter und Renaissance,” in *Medieval and Renaissance Scholarship: Proceedings of the Second European Science Foundation Workshop on the Classical Tradition in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (London, Warburg Institute, 27–28 November 1992), ed. Nicholas Mann and Birger Munk Olsen, *Mittellateinische Studien und Texte* 21 (Leiden, 1997), pp. 187–95. On the related phenomenon of false attributions to real or legendary medieval authors, see A.G. Rigg, “Goliath and Other Pseudonyms,” *SM*, 3rd ser. 18 (1977), 65–109.

³⁶ Christine Caldwell, review of Mews, in *The History Teacher*, vol. 35, no. 3 (May 2002), no page number: “Mews’ case for authorship rests most firmly on textual grounds. His presentation of common language, ideas, and references in the anonymous and ascribed letters is persuasive.”

author who wrote the letters identified as being by the man in the *Epistolae* is likely to have been Peter Abelard.³⁷

The restriction to one party in the exchange of letters demands an immediate explanation. The number of words in known texts that have been ascribed to Abelard amounts to a total far more than ten times greater than in those attributed to Heloise, which means that the grounds for any sort of statistical or quantitative analysis are much more substantial in a comparison geared to his writings rather than to hers. In other words, the data available for a comparison of the man's texts in the *Epistolae* with Abelard are considerably richer. Accordingly, I have privileged Abelard in my own samplings, *not* because I like him more than Heloise, and *not* because I take pleasure in stifling a woman's voice, but rather for simple statistical reasons.

Let me commence with vocabulary. Mews avers that the lexical parallels between the known letters and the Troyes ones are so striking that it "stretches plausibility to argue that the letters were written by any one other than Abelard and Heloise." The difficulty is that he hangs his case on a very small set of words and expressions, most importantly *indifferenter*, *res universalis*, *scibilitas*, *affectus*, and *animus*.³⁸ Even Michael Clanchy, a defender of the case for the ascription to Heloise and Abelard, asks, "Is the coincidental use of a few words really significant?"³⁹ Indeed, four of these

³⁷ Only one risk of this procedure has occurred to me: in theory, the V<ir> could have been a man other than Abelard and the M<ulier> could still turn out to have been Heloise, but in practice this possibility seems extremely remote.

³⁸ To convey an idea of how widespread most of these words are, I shall provide information on their appearance in major databases, the *Library of Latin Texts CLCLT-5* (henceforth *CLCLT-5*), ed. Paul Tombeur (Turnhout, 2002), of which the texts in the *Corpus Christianorum* are the main constituent and of which the results are divided into three "volumes" (with the first being the earliest texts, the third being the latest); the *Patrologia Latina Database* (henceforth *PLD*), produced by Chadwyck-Healey Inc., and available both on CD and online; the *Packard Humanities Institute CD-ROM 5* (henceforth *PHI 5*), which contains virtually all Latin literature to 200 C.E.; and *Poetria Nova: A CD-ROM of Latin Medieval Poetry (650–1250 A.D.), with a Gateway to Classical and Late Antiquity Texts* (henceforth *PN*), by Paolo Mastandrea and Luigi Tassarolo (Florence: SISMEL, Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2001). Omission of a result indicates that it was null.

Indifferenter: 118 hits in *CLCLT-5*, vol. 1; 55 in vol. 2; 310 in vol. 3; 1,198 in *PLD*; 27 in *PHI 5*. *Res universalis*: 5 in *CLCLT-5*, vol. 2; 3 in vol. 3; *rem universalem*: 5 in *CLCLT-5*, vol. 2; 3 in vol. 3; *rerum universalium*, 1 hit in vol. 3. The hits in vol. 2 are all Boethius, while those in vol. 3 are distributed among William of Ockham, John of Salisbury, and Sedulius Scottus, in order of declining frequency. *Re* universal**: 154 hits in *PLD*. *Scibil**: 4 in *CLCLT-5*, vol. 1, 43 in vol. 2, 257 in vol. 3; 144 in *PLD*; 6 in *PN*. *Scibilit**: 34 in *CLCLT-5*, vol. 3, all in Raimundus Lullus. *Affectu**: 2,255 in *CLCLT-5*, vol. 1, 1074 in vol. 2, 6009 in vol. 3; 23,246 in *PLD*; 557 in *PN* (209 ancient, 348 medieval).

³⁹ M.T. Clanchy, "The Letters of Abelard and Heloise in Today's Scholarship," in *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, trans. Radice, rev. Clanchy, pp. lviii–lxxxiv (here: lxxvii). On

words and phrases are so widely used across many centuries of Latin as to make them by themselves unlikely determinants of authorship.

Of the words singled out by Mews, the only one that struck me (and other assessors) as potentially powerful is *scibilitas*, but a few problems emerge. The most troubling is that the formation *scibilitas* could occur naturally to a Latin-user engaged in philosophizing in almost any period.⁴⁰ A look at the history of *unknowableness* and *unknowability* in English (*Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v.) suggests that these words were used recurrently by authors who were probably not reading each other and certainly were not each other, but rather independently devised the same words according to the basic principles of word formation in the language. The same held true in Medieval Latin. Peter Dronke pointed out that when *scibilitas* recurs twice in Albert the Great (ca. 1193–1280), it was likelier an independent coinage than a borrowing from Abelard: “It is not hard to see how a term such as *scibilitas* (‘knowability’) might have been needed and formed.”⁴¹ The same supposition holds for the use of the word by Raimund Lull (1232/33–1315/16). If later scholastic authors could have coined or recoined the abstract noun independently, then there is no impediment to hypothesizing that more than one twelfth-century writer could have had the notion of creating the word.

Consideration of *scibilitas* leads to a larger observation. The tendency in attribution studies has moved away from the old qualitative model of scientific connoisseurship towards a more quantitative model – from *Sprachgefühl* towards statistics. By the old model I have in mind the proficiencies that Giovanni Morelli (1816–1891) and countless later art historians developed, or claimed to have developed, in recognizing painters by the earlobes, fingers, and toes of human figures, clouds, or other specific

the same page, he responds that “The answer is ‘Yes’” (p. lxxvii) and, at the end of the subsection on the *Epistolae*, reaffirms with only modest qualification that “The evidence is strong for concluding that the de Vepria letters were originally composed by Abelard and Heloise” (p. lxxx). Nonetheless, between the two pages, he reveals himself prey to some doubts.

⁴⁰ On this topic, see Peter Stotz, *Handbuch zur lateinischen Sprache des Mittelalters*, vol. 2 “Bedeutungswandel und Wortbildung” (Munich, 2000), p. 293: “Im HMA [= Hochmittelalter] setzte ein Schub zu massenhafter Bildung von – oft recht sperrigen – Abstrakta auf *-(i)tas* ein, hervorgerufen durch die Tendenz der scholastischen und der naturwissenschaftlichen Sprache zu einem ausgesprochenen Nominalstil.” As his final example of such words that begin with the letter *a*, Stotz lists *assumptibilitas*.

⁴¹ Review of *Listening to Heloise*, ed. Wheeler, p. 136.

aspects of compositions.⁴² On the whole I am not unsympathetic to a qualitative approach, even if it is deemed old-fashioned right now, but I do wonder just how open-minded and thoroughgoing the word-based connoisseurship has been in this case, particularly with regard to the assessment of the man who is understood to be Abelard.

Databases are wonderful, but they do not constitute a sure panacea. Like Constant J. Mews and C. Stephen Jaeger, I have tested many words in the *Epistolae* against digital text corpora.⁴³ On numerous occasions I lighted upon correspondences that quickened my pulse initially, but upon rummaging further, I discovered both an underlying late antique source (such as Augustine or the Vulgate) and a much higher incidence of the word or usage in authors from the eleventh and twelfth centuries (such as Peter Damian and Bernard of Clairvaux). Moreover, I discerned other patterns that run counter to an ascription to Abelard. To take one example, no. 22 (by the man) contains the phrase “Fateri solent physici” (*Epistolae*, p. 10; *The Lost Love Letters*, p. 202). Although Abelard uses the adjective *physicus* at least five times and twice in the phrase *physicae* [sc. *artis*] *scriptores*, he never resorts to the construction *physici dicunt*. Yet such constructions occur fifty-four times in *CLCLT-5* vol. 3 and, indeed, Rupert of Deutz uses the phrases *numerare solent physici* and *praedicare solent physici*, which confirms that the formulation was not only possible but was indeed favoured by other authors of the period.

Könsgen acknowledged in his edition (p. 101) that the audacity Abelard claimed in the *Historia calamitatum* to have displayed in his love letters cannot be detected in the Clairvaux collection. Far from being bold, the man’s share of the *Epistolae* does not seem more than barely competent. In a lengthy study, “The *Epistolae duorum amantium* and the Ascription to Heloise and Abelard,” C. Stephen Jaeger takes things a long stride further by contrasting the styles of the man and woman in the *Epistolae*, saying that her poetic style is “more learned, more elegant, more classical, more complex” than Abelard’s, many of whose lines are “in contrast yeomanly products of verse-making.”⁴⁴ A line by the man in the *Epistolae*, cited by way of example, resembles “the work of a schoolboy or apprentice poet,”

⁴² Carlo Ginzburg, *Myths, Emblems, Clues*, trans. John and Anne C. Tedeschi (London, 1990), “Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm,” pp. 96–125 and 200–14. They developed a feel for brush strokes, colour, and other such features.

⁴³ The databases have been identified already in n. 38, above.

⁴⁴ Forthcoming in *Voices in Dialogue*, ed. Olson and Kerby-Fulton. I wish to thank C. Stephen Jaeger for having graciously provided me copies of both his original piece for the volume and the reply he wrote to the corresponding piece by Giles Constable. All three items will appear in the book.

“carpentered with all the sophistication of two sticks nailed together.” Further, Jaeger states that “the man’s poems never call on techniques of assonance and musical language other than the internal rhyme of leonine hexameters.” Can such descriptions apply to writing by Peter Abelard?

Abelard’s known works include a goodly range of poetry, with the *Carmen ad Astralabium*, *Carmen figuratum*, *Hymnarius Paraclitensis*, and *Planctus*. The last two cycles in particular more than suffice to establish Abelard as a poet and musician on the highest plane. To quote the late hymnologist Joseph Szövérfy (1920–2001), “Abelard’s surviving hymns prove his extraordinary ability to compose poems in such a great variety of forms that even in the absence of identifiable lyric poems Abelard appears to have been one of the most noteworthy poets of the twelfth century.”⁴⁵ Or to cite the more restrained, but still strong praise in the most recent version of the *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises*, “Ces textes sont d’une belle tenue, la valeur lyrique et le contenu intellectuel en sont riches.”⁴⁶ Last but not least, the translator of Abelard’s hymns into English observed that “Abelard was as exact in his choice and position of words as he was in meter.”⁴⁷

If we accept the conventional chronology, Heloise and Abelard would have written the *Epistolae* (perhaps giving or taking a year at either end) around 1116–1117.⁴⁸ If Abelard was born about 1079, he would have been roughly thirty-seven and thirty-eight years old when the *Epistolae* were composed. How do we account for the qualitative difference between the man’s verse in the *Epistolae* and Abelard’s known poems? One possibility is that in the intimate communication of personal love letters he took less time and care over the quality of his thought and expression than would have been the case in more public or formal compositions. Yet even though I

⁴⁵ *Secular Latin Lyrics and Minor Poetic Forms of the Middle Ages: A Historical Survey and Literary Repertory from the Tenth to the Late Fifteenth Century*, vol. 2 (Concord, NH, 1993), p. 273.

⁴⁶ *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises: Le Moyen Age*, revised edition by Geneviève Hasneohr and Michel Zink (Paris, 1992), p. 1155.

⁴⁷ *The Hymns of Abelard in English Verse*, trans. Sister Jane Patricia (Lanham, MD, New York, and London, 1986), p. 27. Among those who support the ascription of the *Epistolae* to Abelard, John O. Ward and Neville Chiavaroli, “The Young Heloise and Latin Rhetoric,” p. 80, see Abelard as being “prosaic in prose, less interested in rhythmic prose, good at verse using classical meters, and a positive genius at accentual verse.” The theory of “compartmentalization” that they proceed to elaborate would mark Abelard apart from other twelfth-century authors, such as Hugh Primas, the Archpoet, Walter of Châtillon, and Alan of Lille, who wrote with comparable proficiency in both quantitative and accentual forms.

⁴⁸ Constable fixes this dating in “The Authorship.” In “The *Epistolae duorum amantium* and the Ascription,” Jaeger refers to “ca. 1115–1117.” Ward and Chiavaroli set as dates “1116 to 1118.”

would lean strongly towards the reasoning that the *Epistolae* were written more casually and with less revision than Abelard's theological or philosophical treatises or his other poems, I find it hard to accept that his love letters would diverge so starkly in thought and expression from his other writings. Could Abelard have revealed his hidden pedestrian side, an inner poetaster that he kept hidden from the world at large, only on the wax tablets he dispatched to his paramour?

Another hypothesis is that Abelard made a sudden transition from being prosaic in *billets doux* written when he was deep into his thirties to becoming a true poet in poems he wrote later for the Paraclete and for his oddly named son, Peter Astralabe. Yet such late blooming would seem unusual to the extent of being almost unimaginable, especially since the now undisputed correspondence tells us that during the affair Abelard composed songs that became almost immediate popular successes.⁴⁹ And if he did undergo this kind of transformation, the question arises of what (or who) would have influenced him to alter and improve his verse. If Heloise had been not just his muse but actually his *magistra* in matters poetic, I would expect her style as attested in the *Epistolae* not merely to surpass his, but additionally to reveal the particular traits of poetic style that come to the fore in his later poetry. This is not the case.

Not long ago, when deploying the image of the "smoking gun," I had in mind a level of definitive proof that eludes us in the present imbroglio: we shall not come close to catching the letter-writers *in flagrante* unless a manuscript comes to light which has a superscription to Abelard and Heloise, which offers full texts of the letters in which their names appear, or which records an interjection such as "Oh no! I had better hide the stylus and tablet; Fulbert just walked in the door."⁵⁰ Such a *trouvée* is unlikely to come our way: it was already extraordinary that a later paper manuscript of the

⁴⁹ Heloise, First Letter to Abelard, ed. Muckle, "The Personal Letters," pp. 71–72 "Duo autem fateor tibi specialiter inerant quibus feminarum quarumlibet animos statim allicere poterat, dictanti videlicet et cantandi gratia quae ceteros minime philosophos assecutos esse novimus. Quibus quidem quasi ludo quodam laborem exercitii recreans philosophici pleraque amatorio metro vel rhythmocomposita relinquisti carmina quae prae nimia suavitate tam dictaminis quam cantus saepius frequentata tuum in ore omnium nomen incessanter tenebant ut etiam illitteratos melodiae dulcedo tui non sineret immemores esse. Atque hinc maxime in amorem tui feminae suspirabant. Et cum horum pars maxima carminum nostros decantaret amores, multis me regionibus brevi tempore nuntiavit et multarum in me feminarum accendit invidiam," and p. 73 "frequenti carmine tuam in ore omnium Heloisam ponebas. Me plateae omnes, me domus singulae resonabant."

⁵⁰ Giles Constable, in "The Authorship," referred to the fact that historians tend "to look for factual proof, such as a reference to Fulbert or your uncle, which would put the matter beyond reasonable doubt."

letters in their excerpted forms happened to survive, and it would be hoping for a miracle now to recover whatever earlier manuscript Johannes de Vepria relied upon in his transcription.

If we cannot apprehend the letter-writers in the act, we have to engage in stylistic detection equivalent to crime-scene analysis. Nineteenth-century philologists aspired to the scientificity of Darwinism, as one can see in the stemmata of Lachmannian textual analysis or the historical-geographical distribution of tale in the Finnish-American method of folktale analysis that was propagated by Antti Aarne, Stith Thompson, and innumerable others. *Mutatis mutandis*, early twenty-first-century textual detectives have sought accuracy in stylistic analysis on a par with the results achievable through analysis of deoxyribonucleic acid (known more commonly as DNA). Donald W. Foster, whose *Author Unknown: Tales of a Literary Detective* ascended to bestseller status, has gone so far as to draw a comparison between DNA and literary style:

The scientific analysis of a text – how the mind and a hand conspire to commit acts of writing – can reveal features as sharp and telling as anything this side of fingerprints and DNA. Although we disguise our writing voice, it can never be fully masked. After the crime, the words remain. Like fingerprints and DNA.⁵¹

More congenial to me is the description of style by John Burrows as resembling software as opposed to hardware, particularly since he allows for radical shifts in response to special circumstances:

As you will see, my own small attempt and my comments both reflect my tendency to regard our personal stylistic propensities as akin rather to software than to hardware. Even our firmest stylistic habits are responsive, I believe, to radical changes in personal situation.⁵²

That flexibility is a human and humane touch, particularly germane when the potential human beings in question are as vehemently human as were Heloise and Abelard. In his article Burrows sets forth a measurement for using the relative frequencies of very common words in comparing written texts in order to gauge their likely authorship. Yet even while doing so, he admits that the measure “works least well with texts of a genre uncharacteristic of their author and ... with texts far separated in time across

⁵¹ Originally entitled *Author Unknown: On the Trail of Anonymous* (New York, 2000), p. 4.

⁵² John Burrows, “Questions of Authorship: Attribution and Beyond,” *Computers and the Humanities* 37 (2003), 5–32, at p. 28.

a long literary career.”⁵³ Both of these caveats would apply to a comparison of the *Epistolae* with the rest of Abelard’s oeuvre.

Whatever analogy seems more appropriate, computational philologists, and there are Medieval Latinists among them, aim not at pinpointing tell-tale individual words (peculiar ones that would be an immediate giveaway of authorship) but rather at graphing the commonness of more mundane words and constructions.⁵⁴ Indeed, there are even those who see the relative frequency of different vowels as being a credible symptom of individual style. Making the building blocks slightly larger, other analysts declare that in English the frequency of *the*, *a*, or *of* can prove one person’s authorship and disprove another’s. Even if such a principle could be proven (and I remain unconvinced), the situation in Latin differs markedly. In the first place, the classical language lacks words corresponding to *the*, *a*, or *of*. Consequently, frequency studies of Latin texts have targeted such words as *a*, *ab*, *ac*, *ad*, *an*, *at*, *atque*, *aut*, *au*, *cum*, *cur*, *de*, *donec*, and so forth *ad infinitum* (or even beyond *ad infinitum*).⁵⁵

Any stylometry of the *Epistolae* will be constrained by two limitations. The first is that the texts are short and formulaic, while the second is that many are excerpts which are concentrated upon salutations and valedictions.⁵⁶ The latter circumstance either rules out or at least limits in value scrutiny of such measures beloved of computational analysts as sentence length, vocabulary spread, and number of verbs. Yet despite these serious restrictions, matters are not altogether hopeless. Altogether 116 items exist, 67 from the man, 49 from the woman. The man’s and the woman’s each amount to around 5,500 words.

Performing tests on the man’s contributions to the *Epistolae* and on all of Abelard’s writings as available in the most exhaustive databases that have

⁵³ John Burrows, “‘Delta’: A Measure of Stylistic Difference and a Guide to Likely Authorship,” *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 17.3 (September, 2002), 267–87, at p. 267.

⁵⁴ “Le Latin dans le texte,” ed. Monique Goullet and Nathalie Bouloux, special issue, *Médiévales* 42 (spring, 2002). The two most useful articles for the present purposes are Monique Goullet, “Avant-propos,” pp. 5–12, and Sylvie Mellet, “La Lemmatisation et l’encodage grammatical permettent-ils de reconnaître l’auteur d’un texte?,” pp. 13–26.

⁵⁵ A detailed demonstration of such analytic techniques and their possible utilities is to be found in Bernard Frischer, *Shifting Paradigms: New Approaches to Horace’s “Ars Poetica,”* American Philological Association American Classical Studies 27 (Atlanta, GA, 1991).

⁵⁶ Könsgen, ed., *Epistolae*, p. 100 “Durch einen Stilvergleich zu einer Entscheidung zu kommen ist wegen der zum Teil sehr kurzen formelhaften Texte und ihres eindeutigen Exzerptcharakters so gut wie aussichtslos” and “Welchen Irrwegen eine Echtheitskritik auf sprachlicher Grundlage ausgesetzt ist, wenn nicht ganz evidente Befunde Vorliegen, haben gerade im Falle von Abaelard und Heloise die Arbeiten von B. Schmeidler gezeigt.”

been released as of now (to wit, the *CLCLT-5* and *PLD*) can lead to misleading results, since Abelard's oeuvre comprises such heterogeneous works. There are obvious shortcomings to the idea of comparing love letters with hymns, logical treatises, or theological writings. Furthermore, one of Abelard's longest and best-known works, the *Sic et non*, is a florilegium of extracts from other authors: "hits" deriving from it must be discounted, since they reflect the style and usage of the texts Abelard quotes rather than his own. What is suggestive is to compare the man's *Epistolae* (5,618 words) with those of Abelard's works which are closest in the topics they cover, such as the *Historia calamitatum* (11,697 words), and with those of the later letters to Heloise that contain personal elements, such as letters 3 and 5 (for a total of 6,782 words). Granted, one and the same person might use in love letters idioms and expressions not employed in more formal letters. That is to be expected. But it is conceivable to progress beyond such phrases to find adverbs and conjunctions that would not necessarily fluctuate between one register of writing and another. Take the following examples:

	<i>Historia calamitatum</i>	Letters 3+5	<i>Epistolae (Vir)</i>
<i>autem</i>	77	22	1
<i>igitur</i>	9	4	5
<i>ergo</i>	2	1	14
<i>ita(que)</i>	21 (never initial)	16 (never initial)	23 (3 times initial)
<i>quia</i>	12	22	42
<i>quippe</i>	14	14	0

Juxtaposing the use of such words brings to light striking disparities. It could be argued persuasively that the language a man will employ in love letters will differ from that in his other writings, but how do we explain why one and the same man would evince such a predilection in his love letters for one conjunction (such as *quia*) over others or one Latin word for "therefore" over another (such as the conjunction *igitur* over the particle *ergo*); why he would refrain almost entirely from a particle (*autem*) that he elsewhere favours; or why he would place an adverb (*ita*) in a position in the sentence that he otherwise regularly shunned? Finally, why should he in his love letters alone avoid completely a simple word for *certainly* for which he elsewhere displays a great fondness? These differences do not reflect modulations in formality and informality or in public and private manners of self-expression. Instead, they point to different authors with distinct ways of structuring thoughts and conveying them in words.

The doubts raised by habits of word selection and word placement are only intensified if we turn our focus to prosody and prose rhyme. In a review

of *Listening to Heloise: The Voice of a Twelfth-Century Woman* Dronke contrasted the style of the woman in the *Epistolae* with that of Heloise, insofar as the very restricted corpus of texts surely ascribed to her allows generalization:

The 49 excerpts attributed to M in the Veprian collection include poems in leonine hexameters (38 b, 49, 66), in unrhymed Classical distichs (82) and in leonine distichs (69, 73). Her prose passages tend towards consistent rhyming (mainly half-rhymes and assonances) of pairs of phrases. Many of the longer excerpts from her letters leave no pairs of phrases unrhymed. By contrast, the known writings of Heloise include no verse, leonine or Classical, and their rhyming is of a different kind: passages that rhyme abundantly, not just in simple pairings, alternate with long stretches that have no rhymes at all. It was this contrast that led me to suggest in 1976 that in its use of language the Veprian collection “is nearest to the letters from Tegernsee; it is stylistically much further from the Abelard-Heloise collection.”⁵⁷

To say that Dronke concluded that there were major differences in prosody and prose rhyme would be a gross understatement.

It has been recognized for a long time that the stylistic device of *cursus* featured commonly in Latin prose writing throughout the Middle Ages. As delineated in the work of Tore Janson, *cursus* refers to the presence of particular rhythmic patterns of accented and unaccented syllables at the end of clauses in Latin prose.⁵⁸ In comparing the distributions of such cadences in the *Historia calamitatum* with the *Epistolae*, Giovanni Orlandi, who is credited with great expertise among *cursus* analysts today, has arrived at the meticulous calculations recorded in the two tables below.⁵⁹ All the figures

⁵⁷ *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 8 (2001), 134–39, at p. 137.

⁵⁸ Tore Janson, *Prose Rhythm in Medieval Latin from the 9th to the 13th Century*, Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis: Studia Latina Stockholmiensia 20 (Stockholm, 1975), and idem, “Schools of Cursus in the Twelfth Century and the Letters of Heloise and Abelard,” in *Retorica et poetica tra i secoli XII e XIV. Atti del secondo Convegno internazionale di studi dell’Associazione per il Medioevo e l’Umanesimo latini (AMUL) in onore e memoria di Ezio Franceschini, Trento e Rovereto 3–5 ottobre 1985*, ed. Claudio Leonardi and Enrico Menestò (Regione dell’Umbria, 1988), pp. 171–200.

For discussion of the effort to achieve computer-assisted analysis of *cursus*, see Philippe Verkerk and Anne-Marie Turcan-Verkerk, “Un Programme informatique pour l’étude de la prose rimée e rythmée,” *Le Médiéviste e l’Ordinateur* 33 (Spring, 1996), 41–48. The article is accessible online at <http://lemo.irht.cnrs.fr/33/mo3319.htm>

⁵⁹ For an overview of problems in Janson’s system and developments since its appearance, see Giovanni Orlandi, “Le Statistiche sulle clausole della prose: Problemi e proposte,” *FM* 5 (1998), 1–35. Later he wrote more broadly on “Metrica e statistica

are his, except for those within parentheses, which were reported earlier by Matilde Cupiccia.⁶⁰ In both of his tables, the column marked % presents the percentage out of the total 100 per cent that is represented by the occurrences of the given prose rhythm. The column headed o offers a tabulation of “observed frequency,” which means in how many instances a given prose rhythm appears in the text in question. (For example, in the first table, these instances amount to a total of 363, in the second to 554.) After column o follows column e, which records what the frequency of these rhythms would be expected to be in Latin – the “expected frequency.” In each table the final column is designated χ^2 , which refers to a specific chi-square test in statistics known as Pearson’s chi-square. Pearson’s chi-square is used to test a null hypothesis (a hypothesis that is presumed true until statistical evidence in a hypothesis test indicates otherwise) that the relative frequencies of occurrence of observed features follow a specified frequency distribution. It offers a statistically accepted means of extracting significant occurrences from what might otherwise appear to be chance.

Rhythmic *Clausulae* in the *Historia calamitatum*

	%	o	e	χ^2
1. p 4p	13.50	49 (58)	54.01	.046
2. p 4pp	11.85	43 (46)	34.54	2.07
3. p 3pp	10.74	39 (32)	35.80	0.29
4. pp 4p	10.19	37 (30)	31.82	0.84
5. p 3p	6.89	25 (26)	25.12	0.00
6. pp 3pp	4.96	18 (15)	21.09	0.45
7. p 5p	4.68	17 (13)	17.58	0.02
8. pp 2	4.68	17 (16)	9.99	<u>4.92</u>
9. pp 3p	4.13	15 (15)	14.80	0.00

linguistica come strumenti nel metodo attributivo,” *FM* 6–7 (1999–2000), 9–31. I am deeply grateful to Giovanni Orlandi for having shared with me his tabulations and for having allowed me to include them here.

⁶⁰ Studies by different scholars of *cursus* in one and the same text have led to different results, as has been quite apparent in the case of Abelard (whose prose has commanded the attention of numerous analysts over the years). These discrepancies do not indicate flaws in the notion of using *cursus* as a stylometric measure, but rather in the original formulation and in subsequent application of the system. Although even now there might be slight variation from one analysis of *cursus* to another, I believe that when performed properly, the analysis has reached the point of being a very reliable indicator.

The study in question here is Matilde Cupiccia, “Progressi nello studio del *cursus*: I metodi statistici e il caso di Eloisa e Abelardo,” *FM* 5 (1998), 37–48 (followed by 21 unnumbered pages of tables for Abelard and Heloise). Peter von Moos, “Die *Epistolae duorum amantium*,” p. 103, provides a table with his own calculations.

10.	p 5pp	3.31	12 (6)	8.79	1.17
11.	pp 4pp	3.31	12 (13)	20.35	3.43
12.	pp 5p	3.03	11 (10)	10.36	0.04
13.	p 2	2.75	10 (12)	16.96	2.86
14.	others	15.98	58 (50)	61.79	0.23
	Totals	100	363 (342)	363	16.78

The tabulation of rhythmic *clausulae* in the *Historia calamitatum* leads to only one significant outcome in the final column, and at that only by rounding up slightly, in the 4.92 for pp 2 (here indicated by boldfacing and underlining). In Janson's system, the cadence pp 2 is the heterotomous variant of the *cursus* called *planus*. It may be exemplified by the words *vineam nostram*.

Rhythmic *Clausulae* in the *Epistolae duorum amantium*

	%	o	e	χ^2	
1.	p 4pp	12.8	71	61.06	1.62
2.	p 3p	12.8	71	66.74	0.27
3.	p 4p	8.3	46	45.44	0.01
4.	p 3pp	8.1	45	44.73	0.00
5.	pp 2	7.4	41	22.33	<u>15.61</u>
6.	p 2	6.5	36	54.67	6.38 (-)
7.	p 1 3pp	5.4	30	24.85	1.07
8.	pp 3p	4.2	23	27.26	0.67 (-)
9.	p 1 2	4	22	17.75	1.02
10.	pp 4p	3.2	18	18.56	0.02 (-)
11.	pp 3pp	3.2	18	18.27	0.00 (-)
12.	p 5p	2.9	16	14.2	0.23
13.	pp 4pp	2.7	15	24.94	3.96 (-)
14.	p 2 2	2.5	14	14.91	0.06 (-)
15.	p 1 3p	1.6	9	11.36	0.49 (-)
16.	pp 2 2	1.3	7	6.09	0.14
17.	p 5pp	1.3	7	7.81	0.08 (-)
18.	p 1 4pp	1.1	6	7.1	0.17 (-)
19.	pp 1 3pp	0.9	5	10.15	2.61 (-)
20.	pp 5p	0.7	4	5.8	0.56 (-)
21.	pp 1 2	0.5	3	7.25	2.49 (-)
22.	others	8.5	47	42.73	0.45
	Totals	99.9	554	554	37.91

Whereas the *Historia calamitatum* produced only the barely sufficient 4.92 for pp 2, the *Epistolae* offer the very pronounced 15.61 for pp 2 (also indicated by boldfacing and underlining). For the rest the two collections show little accord.

In prosody it behooves us to attend closely to Abelard's *Carmen ad Astralabium*. Although not a love lyric addressed by a man to a woman, the *Carmen* is a poem composed by Abelard for a family member, his son Astralabe, in the same metrical form (elegiac couplets) in which most of the poetry in the *Epistolae* is written. In places the *Carmen* is a very intimate work, as for instance in the passage in which Abelard discusses in six lines (379–84, four of which are presented as direct speech) the frequent complaint of “our Heloise.” Josepha Marie Annaïs Rubingh-Bosscher, who furnished us with the critical edition of the *Carmen*, established among other things that the *Carmen* is devoid of intentional rhyme: “According to the nature of Latin there is casual occurrence of rhyme, but there is no indication that we should suppose rhyme to have been used purposely.”⁶¹ (The translator of the hymns makes a similar observation: “Abelard uses little assonance and less alliteration.”⁶²) Contrast the man's verse in the *Epistolae*, which relies heavily, even monotonously, on rhyme and assonance:

Epistolae, p. 51 (*Vir*) 87.35–41 (*The Lost Love Letters*, p. 268)

Non hoc consilio, non hoc egi ratione.

Qui male consuluit, impetus ipse fuit.

Emissam vocem si quis revocare valeret,

Hanc, fateor, vocem quod revocasse velim.

Quando tuas animo lacrimas, dilecta, reduco,

Non possum lacrimas ipse tenere meas.

Sucipias igitur, sua qui delicta fatetur.

By itself the difference between the man's verse in the *Epistolae* and Abelard's other dactylic poetry would possibly but not conclusively point to the notion that the two authors were distinct people, since at least one other Latin poet chronologically close to Abelard comes to mind who late in life renounced the predilection for rhymed verse he had displayed in his earlier versification: Marbod of Rennes (ca. 1035–1123).⁶³

⁶¹ Rubingh-Bosscher, *Peter Abelard. Carmen ad Astralabium. A Critical Edition* (Groningen, 1987), p. 102.

⁶² *The Hymns of Abelard*, trans Sister Jane Patricia, pp. 26–27.

⁶³ *Liber decem capitulorum* 1.16–35, in *Marbodo di Rennes, De ornamentis verborum. Liber decem capitulorum*, ed. Rosario Leotta, *Per verba 10* (Florence, 1998), pp. 29–30. For context, see Janet Martin, “Classicism and Style in Latin Literature,” in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, ed. Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable, (Cambridge, MA, 1982), pp. 537–68, at 558–59.

Besides the disjunction in regard to rhyme, the man of the *Epistolae* and Abelard differ markedly in their approaches to assembling dactylic verse, particularly the pentameters. In the pentameters of the man in the *Epistolae* the first half line sometimes ends with a short syllable, as happens twice in the following pair of couplets:

Epistolae, p. 62 (*Vir*) 113.21–24 (*The Lost Love Letters*, p. 288)

Tu me vicisti, potuit quem vincere nulla.

Fortius hinc **uror**, est quia primus amor;

Nam non ante meas penetravit flamma medullas.

Si quis amor fuerat, ante fui tepidus.

In the *Carmen* Abelard never fills this metrical position with a *brevis in longo*, only with a long. Indeed, Rubingh-Bosscher avers as a principle that “Though the first half of the medieval pentameter may also end with a syllaba anceps, in the *Carmen* this syllable is always long...” (p. 100). Contrarily, the man in the *Epistolae* never elides, whereas, as the Dutch editor rightly observes, in Abelard’s *Carmen*: “Elision and aphaeresis are regularly practised” (p. 101). The discrepancies that I have isolated here cannot be explained on the basis of the greater informality in one set of texts as opposed to another. On the contrary, they speak to a difference in prosodic training and practices. If other authors can be located who went through similar changes in their principles of versification during the same period of time, then the problem is solved. Until then, these opposing habits constitute a substantial stumbling block to assuming that the man of the *Epistolae* and Abelard are one and the same.

Beyond vocabulary, prose rhythm, and prosody, I promised to speak of allusion. Put very elementarily, an important ingredient of style is language drawn from preceding authors which a given author has read. The interplay between reading and writing stood out even more saliently in the Medieval Latin tradition, partly because the Latin literary tradition was highly reflexive from the very beginning, but even more because Medieval Latin authors relied in their styles more heavily upon imitation of authoritative authors. In addition, reading was slower and connected more intimately with the goal of remembrance. All of these qualities mean that individual styles of writing in the Middle Ages were mediated vigorously through the readings of the same authors. This situation can be a blessing as well as a bane in the analysis of a given text. In the present case, the essential question to pose is: How do the reading habits evident in the *Epistolae* compare with those in Abelard’s writings? The tastes in earlier poetry that Abelard manifests in his allusions maintain stable contours across time and to a lesser extent even across genres. Thus John Marenbon and Giovanni Orlandi close the subsection on sources in their edition and translation of the *Collationes* with

three noteworthy sentences that stress Abelard's tendency to resort to the same classical poets and even to the same lines within them:

Abelard also uses his wider reading of classical Latin for incidental quotations. From Lucan, an author he knew very well, he takes the description of Cato, the exemplar of someone who acts entirely for the good of the state as a whole. And he uses lines from Horace and Ovid, which he also quotes elsewhere in his writings.⁶⁴

Abelard evidences the same proclivity to quote and requote prose texts as he does verse. For instance, the preface to the *Expositio in Hexameron* (a promising text for comparison, since it is addressed to Heloise) incorporates both a citation from Aristotle's *Categoriae vel praedicamenta*, which Abelard also quotes in the prologue to the *Sic et non* and elsewhere in his logical writings, and one from Augustine's *Retractationes* that he also uses in the prologue to the *Sic et non*.⁶⁵

The far greater prominence of Ovid in the *Epistolae* could be explicated as reflecting the genre of love letters, except that half of the phraseology comes not from the love lyrics but rather from the *Metamorphoses* and exilic poems.⁶⁶ If Abelard had had such familiarity with and affection for so much of Ovid, we would be prepared to see this poet reappear in the *Carmen*, which is also dactylic – but the opposite holds true. By the same token, the *Carmen* contains no allusions to Boethius, whose *Consolatio* figures a half dozen times among the sources and parallels of the *Epistolae* and who would not be at all out of place in a gnomic poem. Conversely, Lucan, who appears in the *Carmen*, *Historia*, *Collationes*, and elsewhere, is absent from the *Epistolae* except in one proverbial line and maybe two trite turns of phrase.⁶⁷ This dearth is all the more surprising, since the citations of Lucan in the personal correspondence suggest to me the possibility that Heloise and Abelard may well have read the *Bellum civile* together and used references to it as a kind of private shorthand.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ *Collationes*, ed. and trans. John Marenbon and Giovanni Orlandi, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 2001), p. xlv.

⁶⁵ Mary Foster Romig, "A Critical Edition of Peter Abelard's *Expositio in Hexameron*," Ph.D. dissertation (University of Southern California, 1981), vol. 2, p. 6, at lines 4–7 and 9–12 (text), and p. 136 (apparatus fontium).

⁶⁶ I follow the lists of sources in Könsgen and von Moos, already cited above in the text and at n. 15.

⁶⁷ Contrast Könsgen, ed., *Epistolae V20.2* (verse) (Lucan 1.662 "sidus hebet"); V26 (Lucan 2.657: proverbial); V108.17 (verse) (Lucan 8.160 "Titan ... exerit orbem"), and von Moos, who in the "Bereinigtes Stellenverzeichnis" in "Die *Epistolae duorum amantium* und die säkulare Religion der Liebe," p. 109, lists only V26.

⁶⁸ On the importance of Lucan to Heloise and Abelard, detailed and solid analysis is to be had in two studies by Peter von Moos: "Cornelia und Heloise," *Latomus* 34 (1975),

To be more systematic in measuring the pattern of allusions in the *Epistolae* against those in the *Carmen*, I can point out the following: none of the passages from Cicero's *De amicitia* in the *Epistolae* match those in the *Carmen*. No lines of Horace, Ovid, Seneca, Terence, or Vergil referenced in the two bodies of poetry (namely, the *Epistolae* and the *Carmen*) match. None of the Bible passages quoted is the same. The *Carmen* makes no use of Marbod, who has been identified as appearing in the *Epistolae*, although exclusively in the woman's letters.⁶⁹ In sum, the texts to which the man of the *Epistolae* and Abelard allude or in which their language is imbued differ in their sources of literary and intellectual inspiration. That circumstance would not be surprising, if the texts to which the man had recourse were ones that lent themselves especially well to amorous discourse – and yet such is not the case. On the whole the texts and particularly the passages upon which the man draws are no less learned and no more love-related than are the ones on which Abelard relies, but they do not overlap with his predilections elsewhere. This disjunction is particularly noteworthy since Abelard reveals a very pronounced tendency in many of his writings to reuse the same quotations.

Where do these comparisons between the *Epistolae* and Abelard in lexicon, prose rhythm and prosody, and allusion, leave me? I admire both Constant J. Mews and C. Stephen Jaeger, the former for his signal contributions to Abelardian scholarship in particular and to our understanding of the twelfth century in general, the latter for his foundational tomes on court- and school-centred culture from the tenth through the twelfth century. But honesty forces me to disagree with both about the attribution of the *Epistolae*. It delights me that a Latin correspondence from the Middle Ages should have captured the imagination of a broad public, and not solely medievalists. Considering how often Medieval Latin studies languishes in neglect, I am hardly averse to having the field attract attention through another *cause célèbre* implicating Heloise and Abelard. At the same time it pains me to think how much confusion will prevail until this debate has been resolved.

For the uncertainty to be resolved, the burden of proof now rests upon the proponents of the ascription to Abelard and Heloise. They need to find an analogy for Abelard's apparent change in attitude about the placement of

1024–59 and “Lucan und Abaelard,” *Hommages à André Boutemy*, ed. Guy Cambier, Collection Latomus 145 (Brussels, 1976), pp. 413–43.

⁶⁹ *Epistolae*, ed. Könsgen, pp. 94–95 and 97; Mews, *The Lost Love Letters*, pp. 94–97 (and see index for other mentions of Marbod); and von Moos, “Die *Epistolae duorum amantium* und die säkulare Religion der Liebe,” pp. 60 and 61.

ita and in predilection about the choice of various other words. They need to find other authors from the early twelfth century whose habits in rhythmic *clausulae* varied as much as appears to be the case between the *Historia calamitatum* and the man in the *Epistolae*. They need to find poets of dactylic pentameters who evolved from allowing a *syllaba anceps* at the end of the first half line to permitting only a long syllable in that metrical position, and who never elide at one point in their careers but who regularly practise elision later. Finally, they need to give further thought to the question of the very different tastes in allusion between the man in the *Epistolae* and Peter Abelard in his corpus. The divergences between the writing of the man in the *Epistolae* and Abelard in his texts (most relevantly, the *Historia calamitatum*, the personal letters to Heloise, and the poem he wrote for his son) cannot be brushed aside without careful scrutiny. The differences that have emerged do not signal the same person writing at different junctures in a single life or the same person composing for different audiences and under the influence of different emotions. In the former case we would expect to find writing in the man's letters that attested to some of the same reading as the later Abelard. We would also be ready to find changes in what was favoured or eschewed in word choice as well as in prosody that corresponded to tastes evident in other poets of the two different times: the vocabulary in vogue in one decade may differ from that which is popular in another, and likewise the type of poetry (or song) that is preferred may change. In the latter case we would perhaps see a departure from the author's stylistic norms through a different vocabulary, perhaps with less formality of syntax. In contrast, the writing of the man in the *Epistolae* is no less formal in its syntax – but it is different. His vocabulary contains a few usages that seem almost colloquial, but in my reading it smacks more often of rhetoric rather than of logic. Unless we accept that Abelard's style as a writer in both prose and verse underwent a stark shift in its basic operations after his late thirties, the disparities between the *Epistolae* and Abelard's writings indicate two different authors, with two different arrays of texts they had perused and liked to invoke, and two individual canons of style.

In the meantime I hope that Constant J. Mews, C. Stephen Jaeger, Barbara Newman, and others who have sided with them in their judgement of the authorship will not take as disrespect my dissent, which has evolved out of what began as agnosticism. I would be sad to have it said that after the brouhaha of *The Lost Love Letters* there was no love lost among us. But on the outcome will hinge much in the development of Heloisian and Abelardian studies.

Abelard and Heloise belong to the tiny elite of personages from the Latin Middle Ages who have infiltrated mass culture. They have been the protagonists of the 1989 feature-length film, “Stealing Heaven” (directed by Clive Donner), itself based upon an identically entitled novel by Marion Meade (1979), and their affair has been made the framework for a self-help book of Jungian psychology on tragic romances.⁷⁰ The two lovers make a memorable appearance in a puppet show included in the 1999 movie “Being John Malkovich” (directed by Spike Jonze). Discussion of their story was even prominent in a recent episode of the popular cable series about a New Jersey Mafioso and his family, “The Sopranos.”⁷¹

The *Epistolae* have also had their day in the sun, although in a particularly fanciful setting that conceals even their identity as truly medieval texts, let alone as possibly by Heloise and Abelard: Excerpts from them have been incorporated by Umberto Eco into his novel about a twelfth-century picaresque, *Baudolino* (2000). Although to my knowledge *The Lost Love Letters* have not yet been passed off in mass culture as works of Heloise and Abelard, that moment may soon arrive. After all, they have been accepted widely in journalistic writing (both printed and web-based), in the random but influential network of customer comments on commercial websites, and in course syllabuses that are viewable online. An extreme symptom of the widespread popular and commercial acceptance of the authorship can be found in a list of “top picks” for reading about Abelard and Heloise, where *The Lost Love Letters* come out on top, ahead of the Penguin translation of Abelard and Heloise and the *Cambridge Companion to Abelard*.⁷² To move from the web to print, both of the most recent biographies to appear – the French translation of *Abelard: A Medieval Life* by Michael Clanchy and the English-language account of the affair by James Burge – accept the ascription to Heloise and Abelard.⁷³ Even if the ascription is wrong, it is

⁷⁰ Jan Bauer, *Impossible Love – or Why the Heart Must Go Wrong* (Woodstock, CT, 1993).

⁷¹ Season 5 (2003–2004), Episode 6 (= Episode 58 if counted continuously), “Sentimental Education,” directed by Peter Bogdanovich, written by Matthew Weiner.

⁷² classiclit.about.com/cs/toppicks/tp/aatp_abelard.htm

⁷³ Burge had expressed his acceptance of the ascription in “Love’s Labours Found,” *The Scotsman*, Tuesday, 11 November 2003. *The Lost Love Letters* appear without any indication of doubt in the brief bibliography at the end of his *Heloise & Abelard: A Twelfth-Century Love Story* (London, 2003), p. 286.

Michael Clanchy published a review of *The Lost Love Letters* in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 25 February 2000, pp. 24–25. His biography of Abelard was translated as *Abélard* (Paris: Flammarion, 2000). This French translation is reported to contain a note that refers acceptingly to the ascription to Heloise and Abelard.

likely to have a greater influence on the general public than are any countervailing reservations about it.

Taking an image derived from Peter von Moos, C. Stephen Jaeger maintained that “If the line of argument begun by Mews is a soap bubble, then it will be easy to burst.”⁷⁴ I am not as optimistic as he that the assertion of Abelardian authorship will be easily dispelled, even in the face of compelling evidence to the contrary. Yet it is also possible that if the attribution is wrong, the accumulation of arguments against it will gradually prevail. Perhaps a slow but steady process of peer review will lead ultimately to a consensus even in the mass markets that as engrossing as *The Lost Love Letters* may be, they are, at best, not definitely of *Heloise and Abelard* and, quite possibly, definitely not of *Heloise and Abelard*.

Nearly thirty years ago a judicious reviewer of the *Epistolae* commended the equally judicious presentation of the evidence pro and con by Könsgen:

Les humanistes peuvent être soit des artistes, soit des savants. Les artistes tentent de découvrir des possibilités là où les savants réclament des preuves. On peut réagir de l’une ou de l’autre façon devant cet ouvrage, comme d’ailleurs devant bien d’autres portant sur Héloïse et Abélard. On voudra toujours en savoir plus long qu’on en sait effectivement. Peut-être le plus important pour nous est-il d’accepter comme tels à la fois ce qui est conjecture et ce qui est certitude, en ayant soin par ailleurs de les bien distinguer.⁷⁵

The standards for what constitutes conjecture and what certitude seem to have changed notably in the interim. My sense is that professional Latinists remain unconvinced that sufficient proofs on behalf of the ascription to Heloise and Abelard have been presented. I place myself squarely among those who believe that Könsgen went as far as due caution would allow in printing the *Epistolae* with the subtitle (and the punctuation thereof) he used, and that Mews and his supporters have gone too far.⁷⁶ Once again, the study of Abelard and Heloise is embroiled in controversy.

⁷⁴ “A Reply to Giles Constable,” drawing upon Peter von Moos, “Abaelard, Heloise und ihr Paraklet,” as well as upon Giles Constable, “The Authorship,” who also adverted to the very durable and well-travelled soap bubble.

⁷⁵ Little, review of *Epistolae*, ed. Könsgen, p. 182.

⁷⁶ On the punctuation, I can do no better than repeat the words of Jean Jolivet more than twenty-five years ago in appraisal of Könsgen’s edition: “Le point d’interrogation du sous-titre a toute sa valeur. Quoi qu’il en soit ce texte mérite d’être lu pour lui-même.” See Jean Jolivet, “Abélard entre chien et loup,” *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale, Xe–XIIIe siècles* 20 (1977), 307–22, at p. 312, n. 20.

Whatever comes to pass in the world at large, Medieval Latinists have an obligation to investigate and to disseminate their findings. In this instance, any unanimity that develops in the long run within Medieval Studies may depend, and will certainly reflect, upon the information we amass and judgements we reach. Belonging to the all too small group of experts worldwide who have the linguistic wherewithal to read the Latin texts of the Middle Ages and who are conversant with the lexicographic, stylometric, and other resources of learning that help in evaluating them, the readers of the *Journal of Medieval Latin* have a duty to arrive at individual verdicts in this matter and to act upon them in their teaching, professional activities, research, and writing.⁷⁷

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⁷⁷ I would like to thank Michael McCormick, who gave me an opportunity to venture my thoughts on this topic informally when they were in their earliest gestation, and Michael Curley, who orchestrated a session of the Medieval Academy of America meeting (Seattle, 3 April 2004) where I participated in a panel with Constant Mews and C. Stephen Jaeger.