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"Wholly Guilty, Wholly Innocent" Self-Definition in Héloïse's Letters to Abélard

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The correspondence between Abélard and Héloïse has often and justifiably been studied as the continuation of one of the great love stories of the Middle Ages. Yet it also continued one of its great experiments in self-definition, the *Historia calamitatum*, broadening the enterprise to include Héloïse herself. Just as Abélard "turned inward in search of an explanation for his current state of affairs,"¹ so Héloïse was brought to the same point in her letters. Shaped by the *confessio peccatorum* and epistolary genres such as the *epistolae consolatoriae*, Héloïse's letters not only investigate and reinterpret Abélard's story but also help reveal the components of, and pressures surrounding, a twelfth-century woman's self-definition.

Such a claim assumes of course that Héloïse herself is responsible for at least some of the correspondence. Beginning with Orelli's 1841 edition of the *Historia calamitatum*, scholars have advanced various theories of forgery, most convincingly rejected by Étienne Gilson in 1938.² Despite recent arguments of several aspects of the case, many scholars today agree with Gilson. The collection may well be a redaction, as medieval letters often are, but even if we cannot prove their complete authenticity, we also have no compelling reason to doubt that the letters are Abélard's and Héloïse's. It seems prudent, then, to turn from investigations of authenticity to look at the letters themselves, a change in critical dialogue first recommended by Gilson and Peter von Moos and recently enacted in the work of Peter Dronke, Peggy Kamuf, and Linda Georgianna.³ At the very least, such a change sheds light on one of the "two opposing and irreducible psycho-dynamisms" that dominate the letters."⁴

In connection with Héloïse, such an approach is rich in promise. Numerous studies exist of Abélard as autobiographer, but very few have studied the autobiographical impulse in Héloïse's letters.⁵ Yet her first

epistle describes a crisis of identity partly prompted by the *Historia calamitatum*, a consolation that, as Héloïse puts it, is no consolation at all.⁶ Such a disparity between form and content foreshadows Héloïse's self-perceived disparity between herself as abbess and wife, one of the impulses behind her letters. Although the conflict remains unvoiced in the first letter, her position as the abbess of the Paraclete makes a discordant background for much of what she has to say.

Letter One

In all the letters Héloïse switches between her roles as abbess and lover by switching the number of the speaking pronoun. First person singular indicates her private role as Abélard's wife; first person plural speaks as the more public abbess. The first epistle begins in the private first person singular but modulates subtly into a more public first person plural as Héloïse records responses to Abélard's autobiographical consolation. No person can read the story "dry-eyed" (110) ("cum siccis oculis" 68).⁷ Héloïse's sorrows are renewed by "the detail" (110) ("singula" 68); likewise, the community—"all of us"—"are driven to fear and despair" (110) ("ut omnes . . . desperare cogamur" 68). The private Héloïse will often associate herself with the detail, the individual, the particular as she does here, leaving the more public role to the plural, the general, or, as in letter five, the species.⁸ In her first transpositions between singular and plural, the levels do not apparently conflict as they do later.

Letter one's superscription testifies that while Abélard may regard the past as dead Héloïse experiences her life as a continuum. The address—"To her master, or rather her father, husband, or rather brother; his handmaid, or rather his daughter, wife, or rather sister; to Abélard, Héloïse" (109) ("Domino suo immo patri, coniugi suo immo fratri, ancilla sua immo filia, epsius uxor immo soror, Abaelardo Heloisa" 68)—embraces the whole history of their acquaintance, as Peter Dronke has noted.⁹ The rapid changes in terms indicate her difficulties in defining their connection and her need to include all its aspects. Significantly, the inscription is not without a pattern. She moves from a public relationship where she is clearly the underling (master-handmaiden) to relationships progressively more familial and equitable (brother-sister).¹⁰ By ending simply Héloïse and Abélard, Héloïse implies that all titles are needed to describe their connection, thus linking for the first of many times public roles such as pupil and

abbess to private ones such as wife and lover. Indeed, as letter one amply demonstrates, the connections between public and private are important to Héloïse and bespeak the different circumstances surrounding her entry and life in orders.

For Héloïse, the past, unmitigated by any experience of conversion such as Abélard claims to have had, colors the present and helps shape her life. This convergence is conspicuously suggested by her similar descriptions of herself and her community, the most eloquent of which occur in spatial metaphors. Such references to self are reiterated and modified throughout the correspondence.¹¹ Tied to classical rhetoric's science of memory, which taught students to remember famous personages by placing them in elaborate buildings, these metaphors also imply a concern with public reputation.¹² When Héloïse says Abélard is the "sole founder of this place" (III) ("*huius . . . loci . . . solus es fundator*" 69), she suggests both the Paraclete and herself, metaphorically claiming what she later says more explicitly, that her sense of identity remains rooted in him and their past. Perhaps most shocking, however, Héloïse reiterates the comparison by referring to the community as a "plantation" (III) ("*plantatio*" 70) in need of Abélard's irrigation, uniting not simply herself and the community but also a Biblical allusion (to 1 Corinthians 3:6) and a sexual connotation first noted by Dronke.¹³ This sexual overtone is precisely what Héloïse's first letter memorializes and struggles to revive because, as the correspondence makes clear, her sexual past is still a key to her identity.

As she makes the letter's second shift from plural to singular, Héloïse evokes a sexual love "beyond all bounds" (113) ("*immoderato amore*" 70) that is responsible for both her loss of identity in Abélard and his corresponding debt to her. Of course, "debt" (113) ("*debito*" 70) would have implied marital coitus to a twelfth-century reader—the Pauline marriage debt that Abélard can no longer pay.¹⁴ But while Héloïse cannot exact this debt, she models her request on its operation, claiming that a "deeper" (113) ("*maiore*" 70) and more endless debt of love *can* be called upon. This insistence echoes the superscription's move toward equality, for in canon law the sexual domain was unique in its accordance of equal rights to men and women. Characteristically, however, Héloïse bases the debt not only on the "marriage sacrament" (113) ("*nuptialis . . . sacramenti*" 70) but also on the "love I have always borne you" (113) ("*quo te semper . . . immoderato amore complexa sum*" 70), an affection whose nature is freer and whose consequences the letter now explores.

Around the letter's second, crucial change from "we" to "I," Héloïse

clusters accusations that Abélard has misremembered his obligations as well as their history. Disingenuously arguing that his debt to the community can be discharged by repaying the greater debt he owes her (a claim also underlying letter five), she continues to merge the present and the past. Moreover, the convergence of public nun and private lover stems in part from Abélard himself. His songs had once publicized their private affair; although the *Historia calamitatum* was ostensibly addressed to an anonymous friend, Héloïse would have had every reason to suspect, as have generations of commentators, that it was intended for a wider audience.¹⁵ As she notes several times, the "whole world" (113) ("omnes," 70) knows his interpretation of the story. But her role there and Abélard's misrepresentation of her arguments against marriage—he "kept silent about most of them" (114) ("plerisque tacitis" 71)—trouble her. Even more important, the affair and its aftermath have generated a personal crisis for Héloïse equal in magnitude to Abélard's but neglected and possibly unnoticed by him.

In letter three Héloïse calls this crisis her hypocrisy, but in letter one it is clearly expressed as a loss of identity. She has been bereft not just of Abélard or their love, but of herself. Everyone knows how Fortune's stroke "robbed me of my very self in robbing me of you" (113) ("me ipsam quoque mihi tecum abstulerit" 70). She in fact "destroyed" herself ("perdere" 70), her love rising "to such heights of madness that it robbed itself of what it most desired" ("amor insaniam . . . hoc ipse sibi sine spe recuperationis auferret" 70) when she changed "clothing along with . . . mind . . . to prove . . . [Abélard] the sole possessor of . . . body and will alike" ("habitu ipsa quam animum immutarem ut . . . tam corporis mei quam animi unicum possessorem ostenderem" 70). This emphasis on her willingness to undergo self-destruction confirms her love's disinterested nature, which letter one is at pains to prove.¹⁶ But the self-destruction has also generated an aimlessness for which Abélard must bear partial responsibility, as the letter implies.

Héloïse's confession lies at the heart of letter one's self-analysis, yet, despite its importance, its wording is intriguingly vague. On one level, Héloïse is undoubtedly lamenting her loss of Abélard, but she does not specify exactly *when* she committed her act of self-destruction, of *what* she was depriving herself, or *whose* treachery occasioned the losses. Other interpretations are suggested, and these interpretations imply that Abélard not only overlooked but occasioned her losses. The letters indicate that he twice ordered her to do things against her wishes—on their marriage and on her entry into orders. Héloïse may well be referring to both in referring

to her calamities, thus equating them with each other and possibly with Abélard's castration. Moreover, the starting point for her catastrophe, the "flagrant treachery" (113) ("nota proditio" 70), can be located in two different events. Abélard's castration is suggested by the words "one wretched stroke" (113) ("miserabili casu" 70) and "supreme act of flagrant treachery" (113) ("summa et ubique nota proditio" 70). But logically Héloïse can also be referring to Abélard's treachery against herself, an interpretation supported by ensuing charges that he is the "sole cause" of her sorrow (113) ("solus es in causa" 70) and that he never loved her at all.

Her reference to changing clothing also points to Abélard's, not Fulbert's, treachery. Héloïse changes clothing three important times in the letters—when she flees to Abélard's family in Brittany (precipitating the marriage), when she goes to live at Argenteuil (precipitating the castration), and when she takes the veil (sealing her entry into orders). But if she robs herself on these occasions, what does she lose? The castration, not Héloïse, has already taken or will soon take Abélard away in the last two instances. And how does she lose Abélard in marriage? Obviously, something else is displaced. From Abélard's own letters we know that his decision to marry Héloïse rose from his jealous possessiveness.¹⁷ His distrust and his betrayal of *gratia*—a love freely given and based on chastity of the spirit—certainly constitute a treachery from Héloïse's point of view, for the marriage substitutes a love obligated by external constraint for one born of internal volition. What Héloïse loses thereby is more than simply Abélard. It is also her sense of dignity and self-worth, a sense that her relationship with him had conferred but that her marriage and entrance into orders had destroyed.

The "manner" (113) ("modo" 70) in which the loss occurred—a manner that she implies grieved her more than the loss itself—has a private and a public consequence for that sense of self. Gilson remarked in his magisterial study of the letters that Héloïse is especially tormented by her role as the causal agent of Abélard's downfall.¹⁸ The implications of this role for her public reputation would not have been lost on a scholar such as Héloïse. Arguments attributed to her in *Historia calamitatum* demonstrate a deep acquaintance with the misogynous tradition, especially St. Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum* and its excerpt from Theophrastus's *Aureolus liber de nuptiis*.¹⁹ One of the most distinctive features of that text, a catalog of wicked wives, does not appear in Abélard's narrative, perhaps because, as Katharina Wilson and Elizabeth Makowski note, "Abélard was unlikely to put an inventory of female misbehavior in the mouth of his wise and responsible Héloïse."²⁰ But the catalog *does* surface in Héloïse's second

letter, and her concern at joining Delilah, Eve, and others in the ranks of infamous spouses.

As she examines Abélard's memory of her disuasion against marriage, Héloïse uses her private judgment to refute this public assessment of herself. She bluntly tells Abélard he missed her main arguments against marriage. Her love's value was based on its disinterestedness, an equation modeled on the Ciceronian ideal of friendship described in *De amicitia*, which both lovers knew. Her self-disenfranchisement proves her love boundless, cognizant of neither the limits of self-interest nor the boundaries of self-hood. Love for Héloïse is thus "freedom" not "chains" (114) ("libertatem . . . vinculo" 77) and, in fact, constitutes a self-realization. For this reason "concubine" (113) ("concubinae" 71) or the even more shocking title of "whore" (113) ("scorti" 71) is sweeter than "wife" (113) ("uxoris" 71) because love freely given is innocent by Abélardian standards of pure intent. It can therefore serve as the basis of Héloïse's positive sense of herself, both in the past and present.

This vindication runs throughout letter one and apparently arises from Héloïse's reading of Abélard's *Historia*. Her first epistle demonstrates a concern not simply for her lost love but also for her lost self. She had argued the marriage would destroy *both* of them; Abélard, however, presents only the arguments concerned with his reputation.²¹ While the *Historia*'s Héloïse claims that the title of mistress is dearer to her and more honorable to Abélard, the Héloïse of the letters neither hedges her terms nor leaves herself out. She was Abélard's "whore" (113) ("meretrix" 71), a title "dearer and more honorable" (114) to her ("carius . . . et dignius" 71) because of its integrity with her will. She enforces this paradoxical judgment with a reference to Aspasia, antiquity's famous courtesan, who advised Xenophon and his wife that people are never happy in their unions unless they believe they have the best of spouses. For Héloïse, these "saintly words" (114) ("sancta . . . sententia" 71) and their emphasis on internal judgment accord with the ideal of the chaste spirit which St. Augustine describes in *De bono coniugali*. And such *sententia* authorize Héloïse's former sense of identity and rectitude.²²

In the past, public judgment accorded with this private estimate. The "world in general" (115) ("mundus universus" 71) acknowledged Abélard the most worthy of men in public and private spheres. His reputation exceeded that of kings and other philosophers (public power); "every young girl . . . queens and great ladies" (115) ("quae virgo . . . regina vel praepotens femina" 71) desired him in bed (private passion). Since Abélard publicized their love through songs, his reputation and hers rose together,

bestowing an equal fame on Héloïse and arousing the envy of other women. In loving Abélard, then, Héloïse's actions were condoned by both interior and exterior sources; the public and private aspects of her identity were united.

Marriage divided this once seamless and whole self. "Wholly guilty though I am," she says, "I am also, as you know, wholly innocent" (115) ("quae plurimum nocens, plurimum, ut nosti sum innocens" 72). The repetition of "plurimum" emphasizes a signal move from singular to plural; Héloïse no longer has one self but two—public and private, guilty and innocent. The letters' associations between plural and species add other overtones. Héloïse lost the concreteness of her individual self in marriage, merging instead into the general species of wives, who always prove detrimental to the scholar. If she judges correctly—by inner intent (*affectus*) instead of outer effect (*effectus*)—she believes she is innocent. But it is precisely her inner intentions and her particular individuality that her marriage has obliterated and *Historia calamitatum* has neglected. This dilemma Héloïse asks Abélard to help resolve.

She presents her case logically, linguistically committing the public side to an Abélard who will judge "all" and "in everything" (116) ("cuncta . . . per omnia" 72). She also appeals to him as his private wife. To him who "alone . . . can judge" (116) ("solus . . . iudicare potes" 72), she sends the whole of the story, which she dares him to reinterpret. But she asks for something in return. Since she has given him all—the public stage—Abélard must tell her "one thing" (110) ("unum" 72) and so return her private estimate to herself. Why has he neglected her? This *omnia-unum* contrast, building on earlier public-private, singular-plural parallels, indicates a new conflict between public and private poles that letter three will explore in detail. In asking for one thing, Héloïse asks for the earlier selfimage she claims was replaced by an estimate with "nothing personal or private about it" (116) ("non tam privata quam publica" 72). Many commentators have noted that although Héloïse asks Abélard to summon her to God at the end of the epistle, in letter one she seeks Abélard. But in seeking him she also seeks her own claim to her memories and a lost self.

Letter Two

Abélard's reply avoids the renewal Héloïse demands, but does so at the price of ignoring her crisis. Its opening superscription acknowledges only

the monastic titles in Héloïse's opening, thus limiting the relationship to present, spiritual contexts. Héloïse is the "dearly beloved sister in Christ" (119) ("dilectissimae sorori suae in Christo" 73); Abélard is her "brother" (119) ("frater" 73) who will reply only "in matters pertaining to God" (119) ("in iis etiam quae ad Deum pertinent" 73). He entreats her prayers for "our many great aberrations" (120) ("nostris magnis et multis excessibus" 74) and thus insists upon their past as a defiled and defiling history. He also reiterates that he is in great danger and makes plans for his burial at the Paraclete, details that certainly provided Héloïse with nothing of what she sought.

But while Abélard gives no specific reply to Héloïse's questions, he surely noticed them, for in his pleas, he elaborates on her points with *exempla* of wifely concern. Applied to Héloïse, these *exempla* refute her identification as a wicked wife even while they misread her arguments against legally obligated obedience, the wifely system of debt in which women had no equal rights. In the most obvious of these *exempla* Abélard argues for the efficacy of wifely prayer by noting that Abigail successfully prayed for King David's mercy on her husband Nabal. She also married David, however, when God struck Nabal down, an aspect of the story that implies Héloïse should be content. She too wed a worthier husband—Christ—on the downfall of a less worthy one—Abélard himself. These Biblical *exempla*, allusions to texts such as the description of a good wife in Proverbs 31, and Abélard's editing of Héloïse's superscription Christianize the pagan, philosophical argument of Héloïse's own letter and call on her to focus on the present in continued and wifely obedience to Abélard.

Interestingly, the spatial metaphor applied to Héloïse and her community is similarly reworked. Instead of a place in need of irrigation, Abélard describes the Paraclete as "safe and salutary . . . fitting for Christian burial" (125) ("tutorem ac salubriorem . . . Christianae sepulturae . . . rectius" 77). Refusing to address the differences Héloïse notes between his memories and hers, Abélard insists on the superiority of their present lives.

Letter Three

Still connected to the past, Héloïse responds in the only way she can. She never again reanalyzes her actions, but she does insist on the differences in her situation. Abélard assumes she has experienced the same conversion as he; her superscription emphasizes she has not. He is her "only one" (127)

("unico suo" 77) *after* Christ, but she can only be his "unica sua" (77) *in* Christ. For Abélard, Héloïse's past has been obliterated and Héloïse's present absorbed into the love of Christ, but Héloïse's private love for Abélard continues to impinge on her public role as the bride of Christ. In letter one, Héloïse explores her lost integrity and Abélard's past hypocrisy; in letter three, however, she explores her present hypocrisy and its connection to the integrity Abélard claims to have found. Such inversions thematically and structurally dominate Héloïse's second epistle where she describes her situation as a *mundus inversus* (world upside down).²³ She thus plays on the Latin word for conversion—*conversio* or *conversatio*, which translates literally as about face or inversion.²⁴ As letter three demonstrates, Abélard's conversion, which Héloïse has not experienced, has turned her world inside out, creating an existence of freakish impossibilities. Against the figure of the redeeming conversion, Héloïse invokes the random motions of Fortune's wheel as an emblem of her plight.

She begins by attacking not Abélard's editing of her salutation but his rhetorical reversals of it. In placing her name before his, he accords her undeservedly and unnaturally the superior position. A polemical element lurks in this reproach. In letter one, Héloïse bases her appeal to Abélard on her voluntary self-abnegation. Her complaints against a rhetorical transgression again use a claim to inferiority to press her case.²⁵ But the reversal also stresses Héloïse's sense of dilemma.

The continued use of sexually empowered language in letter three serves to define this dilemma. She asks for wise words, sharp as "nails driven home" which "cannot touch wounds gently but only pierce through" (135) ("clavi in altum defixi . . . vulnera nesciunt palpare, sed pungere" 82). The sayings are neither spiritual nor Christ-like, despite their evocations of the crucifixion; they have a broad, vivid, and Ovidian carnality suggested by the images of nails, wound, and piercing. Héloïse ties such injuries to her sexuality and lost identity, two aspects of self which have become linked for her. When she depicts herself as a mass of gaping wounds, she suggests both sexual longing and emptiness. A body so full of holes that "there is . . . no place left to take" another (129) ("nec . . . locum in me inveniret" 78) is scarcely a body at all. Moreover, the image of the wound itself destroys a distinction between public (exterior) and private (interior) dimensions. A wound pierces the exterior skin and reveals what's underneath, thus obliterating any difference between the two. Abélard's reversal of the *rectus ordo* thus has its corollary in her life. Because of love, she is living onedimensionally, like a woman whose interior has suddenly become exteriorized.

This daring self-appropriation of the *mundus inversus topos* (and by extension its application to a God she describes as *crudelis*) illuminates her own experiences; she feels "all the laws of equity . . . were reversed" for her and Abélard (130) ("omnia . . . aequitatis iura pariter sunt perversa," 79). When guilty of "fornication" (130) ("fornicationi" 79), they were publicly spared. But once wed, they were publicly chastised. Chastity not unchastity, marriage not adultery, one not two were thus punished, and equality suggested by the word *aequitatis* was destroyed.

Now Héloïse feels she lives in a perpetual and unjust reversal. Because of the ruin their marriage has wrought, she appears as guilty as the wicked wives she goes on to cite in the third letter. But she knows herself innocent since "the tempter did not prevail on [her] to do wrong of [her] own consent" (131) ("quod . . . ille ut . . . in culpam ex consensu non traxit" 80). This claim had been the focus of letter one; here in letter three Héloïse expands it to her present situation. The same standard that exonerates her as Abélard's wife condemns her as Christ's bride, for she cannot give what she owes to God.²⁶ The abbess, not the whore, is culpable; Héloïse, not Abélard, is the delinquent debtor; the world appears random, ungoverned, without equity. While Abélard's individual "single wound" (133) ("una . . . plaga" 81) may have cured him, *all* her public wounds have paradoxically left her nothing—not Abélard, not her former identity, not even her present role, which is a hypocrisy.

In light of this inversion, Héloïse's catalog of wicked wives suggests an interesting interweaving of innocence and guilt in her self-concept. While Héloïse's *exempla* are dictated by tradition (although she does choose Biblical rather than pagan heroines), her treatment of these women is often quite original, as Dronke has noted.²⁷ Ostensibly, the catalog responds to Abélard's Biblical citations by aligning Héloïse with infamous Biblical wives. Her situation, however, often seems closer to the husbands', as her wording suggests. Like Adam, she was lured from paradise by her helpmate. Like Samson, she was led to self-destruction. Wise like Solomon, she was also driven "to . . . a pitch of madness" (131) ("in . . . tantam . . . insaniam," 79) that ended in a sort of idolatry, the substitution of Abélard for God as the object of her worship. Finally, like Job with whom she later equates herself in this letter, she is fighting her "last and hardest battle" (131) ("novissimam atque gravissimam . . . pugnam" 80) against her spouse who continually distracts her from God. In this marriage, Héloïse claims, she too was destroyed.

Throughout letter three and especially in letter five, Héloïse seeks some way to reassemble her parts into a new whole. She ends with another

twist on the recurrent spatial metaphor which suggests new directions to this search. In letter three, she also imparts a sense of boundaries sharply antithetical to the boundless love implicated in her old sense of self-worth. She doesn't need a martyr's crown; she will be satisfied "in whatever corner of heaven God shall place" her (136) ("quocumque me angulo coeli Deus colloce" 82).

Letter Four

Abélard's reply in letter four, longer and more thoughtful than the one in letter two, partly seeks to give Héloïse a sense of her role as nun. But in doing so he draws solely on the nun's metaphorical position as the bride of Christ. Héloïse is thus retained in the innermost recesses of the metaphorical divine house—more specifically, the bedchamber.²⁸ The metaphor—carnal and yet not carnal—not only redefines Abélard's relationship with Héloïse but also impoverishes both public and private aspects of her identity, thus reenacting the circumstances of her marriage.

The movement is mediated through Christ, Abélard's lord and Héloïse's husband, who now divides and unites them both. As usual, the salutation sets the stage for the argument. Héloïse is "sponsae Christi" (82); Abélard is "servus eiusdem" (83). Héloïse's earlier claims to Abélard's attention had rested on her protests of inferiority; they must be invalidated. While as Christ's servant he is obligated to Héloïse, Christ's bride, and while she as the wife of his Lord is indeed his lady, that relationship does not exist in the sense that Héloïse longs for. The result is a diminished role for both the nun and Héloïse.

In the ensuing letter, as Abélard compares Héloïse to the black bride of *Canticum Canticorum*, the limits of being a bride of Christ become quite clear.²⁹ Drawing not so much on dialectics as on biblical exegesis, Abélard reverses Héloïse's complaint. Where she had claimed her outer appearance did not correspond to her inner defiance, Abélard's reply differentiates between the bride's outer and "less lovely" (138) ("deformior," 84) appearance and the "lovelier" (138) ("formosior" 84) because virtuous interior. Literally divested of flesh, it is compared to the whiteness of bones and teeth.

Oddly, this spiritual metaphor is the most erotic passage in Abélard's letters, but as in other passages it strongly suggests Abélard's rather than Héloïse's experiences. As Peggy Kamuf has remarked, the secret and hidden

relationship between Christ and the bride resembles Abélard's and Héloïse's clandestine marriage.³⁰ Moreover, the bride longs for the private world because of the "disfigurement of the blackness" (140) ("nigredinis deformitas" 85), a comparison that recalls Abélard's reaction to his castration more forcefully than Héloïse's feelings on entering the convent. Finally, the metaphor recenters Héloïse's life through the very marriage model she had resisted before, compromising any personal autonomy by relegating her to a private existence.

In the details of his explication, Abélard also modulates and transforms Héloïse's references to wounds. The afflictions that blacken the bride's skin make it softer and "more suitable for private than public enjoyment" (140) ("earum voluptas secretis gaudiis quam publicis gravior" 83). As Kamuf has pointed out, this detail brings what is inside (virtue) to the surface of the skin, making both the exterior and interior subject to the bridegroom's touch.³¹ But while Héloïse also evoked this blurring between outer and inner, she associated it with the loss and pain of a wound. Abélard endows it with a positive, spiritual value resident in Christ's ownership of the bride, an ownership that in turn recalls the mystical absorption of the soul into the Godhead.

Abélard's spiritual ambitions for Héloïse are thus great, but they leave Héloïse with little room for herself. Yet she should be content, Abélard argues. Picking up the spatial metaphor again, he reminds her that while at the convent of Argenteuil they made use of a "corner of the refectory" (146) ("parte . . . refectorii" 88) to satiate their lust. This "shameful business" (146) ("impudentissime" 88) refutes Héloïse's claim they had lived chastely and apart after the wedding. The emphasis on corner and small, reminiscent of the small bedchamber of the king as well as Héloïse's hoped for corner of heaven, responds to her modest hopes for salvation. Size does not correspond to importance, as her last letter implied. A small and constricted space can be the site of great sin as well as great virtue.

Letter Five

No denial of the past could have been firmer or more absolute, as Héloïse understood. Her fifth letter and the *Problemata* she later sent Abélard come from Abélard's spiritual daughter or disciple rather than his wife. Yet, as several critics have noted, these documents continue themes expressed in the earlier letters.³² Héloïse not only clings vigorously to the importance of

her inner voice but also continues to seek a public context for its growth. In this project she may well be responding to a phrase in Abélard's second letter. There, immediately after the bridal metaphor, he defines the true hypocrite as one who lives not by "rule" but by "custom" (142) ("regula," "consuetudinem" 85). Within the monastic context, *regulus* and *consuetudo* carry very specific meanings derived from Augustine's affirmation that Christ said he was the truth, not the custom. The rule, as Abélard understood it, concerned matters of spiritual principle; customs are things of outward observances. In fact, the *consuetudines* of the Paraclete clashed with Abélard's rule in many particulars; Abélard in making this distinction is thus referring to an extant and honored monastic rhetoric. However, his observation carries other shades of meaning, especially in consideration of the marital metaphor of his letter. Custom was the ruling agency of the private family; rule or law, however, belonged to the public sphere.³³

For Héloïse, public existence is related to her vocation, the subject of letter five. Her last, cryptic, and richly suggestive superscription has helped fuel a continuing debate on whether or not she experienced a true conversion to this vocation.³⁴ But the superscription itself can perhaps best be seen as both a salutation and self-definition, one implying relationships with Abélard and God and defining Héloïse as both individual and species, private and public being. The relationships thus defined are problematic to say the least: "Domino specialiter, sua singulariter" (241) can be translated two ways, as the translations of Betty Radice and Peter Dronke show. To begin with, the word *dominus* can take on three meanings: the Lord (that is, God), one's feudal lord, or one's husband. All three are appropriate to the context of the letter. If taken to mean "God's own in species, his own as individual" (155), Héloïse's last self-identification links her to both God and Abélard, continuing the letters' association between the singular and the private wife and the plural and the public abbess. But if translated "To him who is especially her lord, she who is uniquely his" (155), Héloïse insists on the primacy, even exclusivity, of her relationship to Abélard. God is not mentioned and, despite the elaborate bridegroom metaphor, she affirms she is Abélard's alone.

Even if one takes the first translation as definitive, the salutation clearly accords Abélard an important and insisted-upon place. The word "specialiter" bears a philosophic meaning perhaps pertinent to the question of universals, a keenly debated topic in the twelfth century concerning the degree of reality or significance adherent in the individual as opposed to the species.³⁵ Abélard played an important part in this debate, arguing against

William of Champeaux, who maintained that the nature of a being (its species) was "essentially and wholly present at one and the same time in every individual." ³⁶ Such a position destroyed the individual, Abélard maintained, by eliminating particularity; he proposed instead that both the individual and the universal hold reality and significance but that reality is more distinctive in the individual. While the word for the universal bears meaning, only individuals objectively exist in Abélardian dialectics.

Héloïse's association between her role as wife and her existence as an individual is thus telling. As a concrete, physical individual, she belongs to Abélard and not to God. Such a gesture is richly ironic since, as Georgianna has pointed out, Abélard has been denying Héloïse's particularity throughout the correspondence.³⁷ Yet only in the less specific sense of species—a nun—is she the Lord's.³⁸ As demonstrated by the parallel structure of the superscription's two parts, these two levels are not unconnected, however.

Whichever meaning the author intended—she may well have intended both—each stresses a continuing, definitive allegiance to Abélard and a need to define the connection. Indeed, the interactions possible between Héloïse and her respective *domini* are precisely the areas letter five addresses. Her reform of the Rule of St. Benedict uses Abélard's own ethics to ground love of God in the *affectus* of the individual, the same source as her early love of Abélard. The nature of that new love differs, however, in the degree of personal autonomy it provides both to the nuns and to Héloïse personally. Indeed, in letter five, Héloïse seeks the freedom of the Gospels ("evangelicae libertati" 251) just as she based her love of Abélard on her free intention. Her proposed love of God is not the selfless love Abélard describes, a self-absorption into the Godhead. Nor is it a spiritualized version of her passion for Abélard. Rather, it is an experience of self-realization that Héloïse wants but has yet to find, a self-realization that preserves her individual self and yet implicates love.

While the bulk of letter five is devoted to speculations on the Rule, love is still Héloïse's subject. In the opening passage she continues to speak of her private love of Abélard. Because she never again adopts the tones of letters one and three, some have read her opening words as proof that she underwent a true conversion. The salutation suggests not, and nothing in Héloïse's ensuing discussion explicitly supports such an interpretation.³⁹ Indeed, the alternations between "I" and "we" in this opening paragraph express Héloïse's continuing connection to her private love. On one hand, she won't be "disobedient" (155) ("inobedientia" 241), but the heart isn't "under our control" (159) ("in nostra . . . potestate," 241) and "we are

forced to obey it" (159) ("eique . . . obedire cogimur" 241), a plural that may indicate Héloïse the abbess, Héloïse and Abélard, the community of nuns, or the species of humankind. The conflicts between hand and tongue, heart and hand reinforce the gap between "I" and "we." The individual "I" moves to obey, but the more general "we" cannot control the heart. Indeed, as her reforms demonstrate, Héloïse will obey Abélard as wife but must respect her inner judgment in matters pertaining to her profession as nun.

The shift from personal to spiritual matters is presented as a remedy for grief, even though the change will not "entirely remove" the problem (159) ("non hunc omnino possis auferre" 241–42). In a simile from Cicero, ⁴⁰ Héloïse explains that the new subject will drive out the old as "one nail drives out another hammered in" (155) ("enim insertum clavum alius expellit" 242). This pagan source implicitly challenges Abélard, whose last letter had used only two passages from pagan authors, Virgil and Lucan, and then only to exemplify inappropriate behavior.⁴¹ In contrast, Héloïse's letter also cites only two pagans, Cicero and Persius, but both support her most important points. Cicero refers to the change of subject; the quotation from Persius's *Satires*, "Do not look outside yourself" (176) ("Ne te quaesiveris extra" 251), sums up her reform's emphasis on the individual. Finally, the image of the hammered nail, besides recalling the earlier sexual nuances of Héloïse's metaphors, also recalls letter three, in which she had compared a nail to wise words and linked these words to her wounds. Paradoxically, the nails seal that wound and thus restore integrity to the body's structure, if not without pain. Clearly just as the past lingers in the abbess, so it will shape her responses.

Using the first person plural, Héloïse goes on to make two requests which echo her preceding letters. The first, historical in nature, asks Abélard to "teach us how the order of nuns began" (159) ("nos instruere velis unde sanctimonialium ordo coeperit" 242), a parallel to her opening investigation of her personal history. The second request for a new rule roughly recalls her plea that Abélard summon her to God. Rather disingenuously, however, Héloïse, proceeds to outline the reform herself, going far beyond her original brief to present a general Rule applicable to both sexes.

Her complaints against the Rule of St. Benedict often resemble her earlier personal disagreements with Abélard. To show how unsuitable the Rule is for women, she adduces a wealth of concrete, supporting detail that emphasizes precisely the sort of individual difference Abélard ignored when giving her advice.⁴² She explores a vast range of social, physical, and sexual details. Because they menstruate, women find it more difficult than men to

wear wool close to the skin. Likewise, men do not face the same conflict or public scandal that Héloïse and her sisters face in having a male abbot come to read the Gospel to them. In letter four, Abélard had specifically designated the bride's place as the bedroom, not the table. Should an abbess then offer pilgrims and guests the hospitality of her table "where gluttony and drunkenness are rife"? (160) ("ubi crapula dominatur et ebrietas" 242). And how shall nuns preserve their chastity but not offend men whose services are needed? These practical concerns revolve around individual situations, but taken together they indict the Rule as a whole.

The theological point that Héloïse raises from the Epistle of James and raised again in her *Problemata*, strikes to the heart of this relationship between part and whole, singular and plural. It also echoes the origin of her conflict between personal self and public persona and reaffirms her connections between singular and plural, species and individual. If one breaks "one single point" (161) ("uno factus," 243) of the law, does one not break "all of it" (161) ("omnium reus," 243)? To illustrate the problem, she points to James's own examples. One can be innocent of adultery and yet guilty of murder and thus a law-breaker. She too has been faithful to Abélard and thus wholly innocent of adultery, but her self-destruction has made her live the wholly guilty life of a nun not devoted to God. The problem, directly related to her hypocrisy, differs from letter three's discussion only in its situation within the public context of the Rule rather than the private one of Héloïse's marriage.

As the point from the Epistle of James suggests, the new rule would restore internal struggle as the focus of Héloïse's and the monastic life. For Héloïse ". . . those who are true Christians are wholly occupied with the inner man, so that they may adorn him with virtues and purify him of vices. . . they have little or no concern for the outer man" (174) ("quicumque sunt vere Christiani sic toti circa interiorem hominem sunt occupati ut eum scilicet virtutibus ornet et vitiis mundent, ut de exteriori nullam vel minimam assumant curam" 250). The Rule as it now stands pays excessive attention to this outer man just as Abélard pays excessive attention to Héloïse's outer semblance. She feels the law governing a religious community should free the mind from excessive attention to such "indifferent matters" (170) ("indifferentia" 248) and give the nuns a public order within which inner nature is respected and may thrive. She argues that any monk or nun "who adds the virtue of continence to the precepts of the Gospel will achieve monastic perfection" (164) ("quisquis evangelicis praeceptis continentiae virtutem addiderit, monasticam perfectionem implebit" 245).

As Georgianna has pointed out, this questioning of the Rule sympathizes with other reform movements of the time, movements that frequently called for a return to the Gospel.⁴³ Interestingly, however, Héloïse's reform also returns to an earlier Christian egalitarianism subverted by such notions as the marriage model Abélard uses. In letter five, she begins her examination of the Rule by protesting that it overlooks women's frailty and infirmity. Yet she not only elaborates on past concessions to men's frailty in the Rule, but she also reiterates that those who are "equal in virtue . . . deserve equally of him [that is, God]" (174) ("*quicumque vertutibus pares sunt . . . aequaliter ab ipso promereri*" 250). Finally, the Rule she advocates applies to both sexes. It accords nuns equal participation in the Abélardian doctrine of pure intention and thus helps to restore the laws of equity she saw reversed in her affairs.

In essence, then, Héloïse's review of past and present leads her to a love that offers individuals the choices which for medieval men and women were self-defining. Both of Héloïse's two roles are grounded in love; however, the love proposed as the goal of monastic life differs significantly from her boundless passion for Abélard. This love Héloïse rejects by agreeing with St. Jerome: "virtues which exceed all bounds and measures are . . . to be counted among the vices" (162) ("*virtutes excedentes modum atque mensuram . . . inter vitia reputari convenit*" 243). Like the small corner of heaven envied by no one, the love of God that Héloïse seeks is not immoderate and not without boundaries. Indeed, Héloïse presents it as dependent on a defined, individual self. Subject to reason, this love isn't likely to reach the heights of madness and self-destruction that her other passion did. So Christ the bridegroom, who controls the bride's bedchamber and owns her virtue through his caress, has no place in letter five. Here the love of God springs only from the heart which "we are forced to obey" (159) ("*obedire cogimur*" 241).

To see this dialectic between inner and outer, singular and plural, as an interaction between public and private, one should take into account what the terms "public" and "private" might have implied in the twelfth-century. Among others, historian Georges Duby has equated the latter with "family life," noting that the "cement that held the group together" was "friendship."⁴⁴ This is the model Héloïse uses for her love affair with Abélard. Public power, on the other hand, was much more diffuse since "feudalization should also . . . be seen as a fragmentation" of that power.⁴⁵ Duby maintains a public-private distinction existed throughout the Middle Ages even if the line between the two was fluid, and he associates the public side

with law, the area most often evoked in Héloïse's descriptions of her religious life.

While medieval men and women usually saw monastic life as a "res familiaris," ⁴⁶ for Héloïse, the private family is Abélard while her family in Christ is her more public role. The private family was typically governed by custom, not law. Abélard himself, who brings up the question of custom in letter four, discards it as an unacceptable standard for the Christian. Héloïse builds on this gesture. In asking for a history of nuns, she asks what "authority there is for our profession" (159) ("nostrae sit professionis auctoritas" 242), and thus seeks some public roots for her vocation. In asking for a rule for the community, she seeks to avoid custom and define the public sphere thus authorized. The letters themselves support such an association. Her own references to the monastic life make little use of familial parallels such as Abélard's. She depicts God juridically, as a "witness" ("testem" 71), or a judge who "searches our hearts and loins and sees in our darkness" (133) ("cordis et renum probator est, et in abscondito videt" 81). As Héloïse creates her Rule, however, she takes care to define a public order that does not invalidate, dominate, or appropriate her sense of interior self. The self's primacy she religiously maintains, and its importance she jealously guards as the font of her public, monastic life.

It is thus significant that at the end of letter five, Héloïse once more takes up the recurring spatial metaphor for self. Echoing her own words from letter one, Héloïse notes Abélard is "after God . . . the founder of this place, through God . . . the creator of our community, with God . . . the director of our religious life" (178) ("post Deum huius loci fundator, tu per Deum nostrae congregationes es plantator, tu cum Deo nostrae sis religionis institutor" 253). The ending "with" equates God and Abélard as codirectors just as the superscription makes them the twin poles of Héloïse's life. Moreover, the description invokes a well-known Trinitarian formula that heightens the identification between Abélard and God. But the "solus" used with these phrases in letter one is now missing. Héloïse still owes obedience to Abélard and God, but here, unlike the other letters, she reserves some room for herself and ascribes the singular "solus" to neither of her *domini*. Paradoxically, she thus constructs a private space by asserting her place within a public one.

As might be expected in the twelfth century, Héloïse's sense of individuality expresses itself as a conflict between competing networks of allegiance: one to God and one to Abélard, one public and one private. The dominance of the private aspect is entirely consonant with the privatization

of life in the feudal epoch. Conducted through letters, Héloïse's self-fashioning occurs through a unique, open-ended dialectic with her *dominus*, whose authority Héloïse is able to challenge from within her vows of obedience. In her desire for wholeness, she proves herself a child of her century. Her unflinching need to exclude nothing—not past experiences, not present difficulties, not public duties, not private doubts—testifies to her integrity. But the letters also show that for Héloïse, integrity was an enterprise that balanced, even depended upon, an acknowledged duality. Beginning in a search for personal autonomy, her letters inexorably end in a definition of public boundaries. As the image of the wound demonstrates, the integrity of self required defining both an inner and outer, a public and private domain.

Notes

1. Chris Ferguson, "Autobiography as Therapy: Guibert de Nogent, Peter Abelard, and the Making of Medieval Autobiography," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 13 (1983): 199.
2. See Étienne Gilson, *Héloïse et Abélard*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1948), esp. pp. 150–71. The authenticity of the correspondence has never been conclusively established, but neither has its forgery, despite frequent, often fierce, debate. The principal arguments against authenticity are found in Ludovic Lalanne, "Quelques doutes sur l'authenticité de la correspondance amoureuse d'Héloïse et d'Abélard," *La correspondance littéraire* 1 (1856): 27–33; Bernhard Schmeidler, "Der Briefwechsel zwischen Abaelard und Heloise: eine Fälschung," *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 11 (1913): 1–30; Schmeidler, "Der Briefwechsel zwischen Abaelard und Heloise dennoch eine literarische Fiction Abaelards," *Revue bénédictine* 52 (1940): 85–95; and Charlotte Charrier, *Héloïse dans l'histoire et dans la légende* (Paris: Champion, 1933). For the most recent forgery theories see John Benton, "Fraud, Fiction, and Borrowing in the Correspondence of Abélard and Héloïse," in *Pierre Abélard—Pierre le Vénérable: Les courants philosophique, littéraires et artistiques en occident au milieu du XIIe siècle*, Colloques Internationaux du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, no. 546 (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1975), pp. 469–512 and the ensuing discussion on pages 507–11. Benton retracted this theory and proposed a much more elaborate one suggesting Abélard wrote Héloïse's letters. See "A Reconsideration of the Authenticity of the Correspondence of Abelard and Heloise" in *Petrus Abaelardus (1079–1142): Person, Werk und Wirkung*, ed. Rudolf Thomas et al., Trierer Theologische Studien, no. 38 (Trier: Paulinus-Verlag, 1980), pp. 41–52. (This last volume will hereafter be referred to as *Trierer 1980*.) The most important rebuttals are found not only in Gilson but more recently in Peter Dronke, *Abelard and Heloise in Medieval Testimonies*, W. P. Kerr Memorial Lecture, no. 26 (Glasgow: University of Glasgow Press, 1976) and

- "Excursus: Did Abelard Write Heloise's Third Letter?" in *Women Writers of the Middle Ages: A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua (**203) to Marguerite Porete (**1310)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 140–43. Although not concerned directly with the correspondence, another rebuttal to Benton is to be found in S. Jaeger, "The Prologue to the *Historia calamitatum* and the 'Authenticity Question,'" *Euphorion* 74 (1980): 1–15.
3. Linda Georgianna, "Any Corner of Heaven: Heloise's Critique of Monasticism," *Mediaeval Studies* 49 (1986): 221–53; Peggy Kamuf, "Marriage Contracts: The Letters of Heloise and Abelard" in *Fictions of Feminine Desire: Disclosures of Heloise* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982); and Peter Dronke, "Heloise," in *Women Writers of the Middle Ages* have followed the advice given by Gilson and by Peter von Moos, who discussed this problem in "Was kommt nach der Authentizitätsdebatte über die Briefe Abaelards und Heloises?" *Trier* 1980, pp. 19–39.
 4. Jean Leclercq, "Modern Psychology and the Interpretation of Medieval Texts," *Speculum* 48 (1973): 484.
 5. On the subject of Abélard as autobiographer, see, for example, Chris Ferguson, "Autobiography as Therapy" (note 1); Jean Leclercq, "Modern Psychology and the Interpretation of Medieval Texts," *Speculum* 48 (1973): 476–90; and Mary McLaughlin, "Abelard as Autobiographer," *Speculum* 42 (1967): 463–88.
 6. See Ferguson, "Autobiography as Therapy," pp. 200–201.
 7. For this essay, I have used J. T. Muckle's edition of the Latin letters found in "The Personal Letters between Abelard and Heloise," *Mediaeval Studies* 15 (1953): 47–94, and "The Letter of Heloise on Religious Life and Abelard's First Reply," *Mediaeval Studies* 17 (1955): 240–81. Translations are from Betty Radice, *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1974). Further references to these editions appear solely in the text. Heloise's letter to Abelard is numbered letter 1 in these comments; the numbers do not include, as is sometimes the case, the *Historia calamitatum*.
 8. For a sensitive and perceptive commentary on this distinction see Georgianna, "Any Corner of Heaven" (note 3) pp. 239–40. Georgianna's commentary is rich in stimulating and insightful perspectives on Héloïse's letters. One should note, however, that *species* also carries other meanings than the antonym of individual (*singularis*). It can also refer to the genus and commonly has the meaning of appearance as opposed to substance, and even pretense. In these latter usages, it obviously supports Héloïse's confessions that her life is hypocritical.
 9. Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages*, p. 112.
 10. In her discerning exploration of the imagery of these letters, Kamuf also notes a shift from "hierarchical terms . . . to terms in which only the masculine/feminine distinction is pertinent." See Kamuf, "Marriage Contracts," p. 9.
 11. Danielle Régnier-Bohler discusses this spatialization of the self through the later Middle Ages in "Imagining the Self: Exploring Literature" in *Revelations of the Medieval World*, vol. 2 of *A History of Private Life*, ed. Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 311–94. While she limits her discussion to the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, the use of space to express individual states of being also occurs

earlier. An interesting example of the metaphor in another medium is Abbé Suger's use of the Gothic cathedral to spatialize an inner experience of God.

12. For a discussion of this science, see Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966).

13. Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages*, (note 2) p. 116.

14. For a discussion of the Pauline debt see James Brundage, "Sexual Equality in Medieval Canon Law" in *Medieval Women and the Sources of Medieval History*, ed. Joel Rosenthal (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), pp. 66–79; Elizabeth Makowski, "The Conjugal Debt and Medieval Canon Law," *Journal of Medieval History* 3 (1977): 99–114; and John T. Noonan, "Marital Affection in the Canonist," *Studia Gratiana* 12 (1967): 479–509.

15. See, for example, McLaughlin, who argues that *Historia calamitatum* was primarily a public letter in "Abelard as Autobiographer" (note 5), p. 468.

16. Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages* (note 2), p. 117; Radice, Introduction to *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, p. 18; and Étienne Gilson, *Héloïse et Abélard* (note 1), p. 62 all discuss this point.

17. He wrote that "I desired to keep you whom I loved beyond measure for myself alone" (149) ("cuperem te mihi supra modum dilectam in perpetuum retinere" 90). This same jealous possessiveness may well have lain behind his command that Héloïse enter orders, as Radice notes in her Introduction, *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, pp. 22–23.

18. Gilson, *Héloïse et Abélard* (note 2), p. 73.

19. For a discussion of this tradition see Katharina M. Wilson and Elizabeth Makowski, *Wykked Wyves and the Woes of Marriage: Misogamous Literature from Juvenal to Chaucer*, SUNY Series in Medieval Studies 1 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990). On *Adversus Jovinianum* and its long legacy, see Philippe Delhay, "Le Dossier anti-matrimonial de l'*Adversus Jovinianum* et son influence sur quelques écrits Latins du XIIe siècle," *Mediaeval Studies* 12 (1951): 65–86.

20. *Wykked Wyves and the Woes of Marriage*, p. 80.

21. Kamuf also discusses this misrepresentation of Héloïse's remarks with a different emphasis. See "Marriage Contracts" (note 3), pp. 14–15. In a more general review, LeClercq remarks that Abelard has "a narcissism which continues to be naive and childish . . . [.] . . . he speaks of hardly anything but his own person." See LeClercq, "Modern Psychology and the Interpretation of Medieval Texts," (note 5), p. 484.

22. Both Abélard and Héloïse quote from Augustine's book—Abélard in letter six, Héloïse in letter five.

23. Dronke speaks of this inversion in "Heloise's *Problemata* and *Letters*: Some Questions of Form and Content" in *Trier 1980*, pp. 53–73. He connects the reversals with the "human reversals, in the *ordo naturalis rerum*" (p. 59). For a discussion of the *mundus inversus topos*, which was most frequently used in satiric verse, see Ernst Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, Bollingen Series, no. 36, trans. Willard Trask (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 94–98.

24. Both Abélard and Héloïse use these two terms for conversion interchangeably in the letters. Georgianna, "Any Corner of Heaven" (note 3), p. 228 n. 24, discusses the different types of conversion—one a dramatic change of heart, the other simply the entry into the monastic life.

25. For a detailed discussion of this battle for second place among the lovers see Peggy Kamuf, "Marriage Contracts," pp. 9–10.
26. This standard of pure intent that pervades Héloïse's arguments comes from Abélard's *Ethica*, written around the same time as the *Historia calamitatum*. See *Peter Abelard's Ethics: An Edition with Introduction*, D. E. Luscombe (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), especially pp. 44–46.
27. See Dronke's discussion in *Poetic Individuality in the Middle Ages: New Departures in Poetry 1000–1150* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 123–39, where he deals in detail with Héloïse's treatment of Samson. He shows how her view of Samson's destruction of the Temple (presented as a self-destruction) is especially innovative.
28. In literary texts, this "chamber was a place for isolating and protecting women," as noted by Danielle Régner-Bohler in "Imagining the Self," (note 11), p. 140. Abélard's own letter draws a private/public contrast between the world of the bedchamber and the more public world of the table, which would have been situated in the hall. Héloïse is thus confined to the areas of the metaphorical house linked to the lord's private existence.
29. Many exegetical interpretations of the *Canticum Canticorum* were produced in this century, often associating the bride with the Virgin, the soul, or the Church. Among those who composed such glosses are Honorius Augustodunensis, Rupert of Deutz, and Alain de Lille. Bernard of Clairvaux in his homilies to the Virgin, "Super Missus est," also draws heavily on this biblical book as he compares the bride to the Virgin Mary. See E. Ann Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved: The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990) and Ann Astell, *The Song of Songs in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990).
30. Kamuf, "Marriage Contracts," p. 30.
31. Kamuf, "Marriage Contracts," p. 30.
32. The continuation of themes has been discussed by Georgianna, "Any Corner of Heaven," 221–53; Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages*, and "Heloise's Problemata and Letters in Trier 1980; and Peter von Moos in "Le Silence d'Héloïse et les idéologies modernes" in *Pierre Abélard—Pierre le Venerable*, pp. 425–68.
33. For a discussion of this association, see Georges Duby, "Private Power, Public Power" in *Revelations of the Medieval World*, (note 11), esp. pp. 7–8.
34. On the subject of whether Héloïse truly converted there have been many opinions. D. W. Robertson in *Abelard and Heloise* (New York: Dial Press, 1972) proposes that the work is an *exemplum* of conversion, an argument attacked very persuasively by Dronke in *Abelard and Heloise in Medieval Testimonies* (note 2). For a good review of various readings of Héloïse's silence and its relationship to the question of her conversion, see von Moos, "Le Silence d'Héloïse et les idéologies modernes," *Colloques*, pp. 425–30.
35. Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages*, pp. 127–28 also notes this possible implication, as does Georgianna, "Any Corner of Heaven" (note 3).
36. David Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought*, p. 112.
37. "Any Corner of Heaven" (note 3), p. 240.
38. Gilson interprets the last superscription in this way in *Héloïse et Abélard*

(note 2), pp. 110–11. For other interpretations, see Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages* (note 3), pp. 122–28; Radice, Introduction to *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise* (note 17), p. 159 n. 1; and Georgianna, "Any Corner of Heaven," pp. 238–39, who suggests some fascinating implications from Héloïse's associations between herself and the particular.

39. Georgianna suggests that while this letter "does not offer evidence of a conversion in any conventional sense," it does suggest that she is seeking a conversion which is ". . . an intellectual, emotional, and spiritual process, slow and painful at times, whose success is always reversible and always in doubt." See "Any Corner of Heaven," p. 229.

40. Muckle identifies the source as Cicero in "The Letter of Heloise on Religious Life and Abelard's First Reply," *Mediaeval Studies* 17 (1955): 242 n.12, but Dronke has suggested Jerome's *Epistulae* 125.14 in *Women Writers of the Middle Ages*, p. 305 n. 39.

41. Both passages rebuke Héloïse for aspects of her behavior toward Abélard. The first comes from Virgil's *Eclogues* and erects a pseudo-comparison between Héloïse and the nymph Galatea who seeks to attract her lover by fleeing from him. The second comes from Lucan's *Pharsalia* and suggests that if she continues to lament Abélard will think she loved his fortune more than him. See Kamuf, "Marriage Contracts," pp. 33–35 for a discussion of the comparison with Galatea.

42. Georgianna, "Any Corner of Heaven," pp. 238–40.

43. Georgianna, "Any Corner of Heaven," pp. 232–33.

44. Duby, "Private Power, Public Power," p. 8.

45. "Private Power, Public Power," p. 9.

46. "Private Power, Public Power," p. 7.