



## Letters of Peter Abelard, Beyond the Personal (Medieval Texts in Translation)

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The romantic tale of Peter Abelard and Heloise has been widely known for centuries. The legend relates in part to the letters exchanged between the two, years after Abelard had been castrated at the behest of Heloise's vindictive uncle, Fulbert.

These "personal" letters form the basis for bestselling compilations of works by Abelard and Heloise in translation, such as the recently revised Penguin *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise* or the new Hackett *Abelard and Heloise, The Letters and Other Writings*. They hold fascination for the light they shed on the relationship between the man and woman, as teacher and student, lovers, husband and wife, monk and nun, abbot and mother superior, and much more.

The popularity of the "personal" letters has generated considerable fanfare for the publication of another set of correspondence printed under the title *The Lost Love Letters of Heloise and Abelard*. The authorship of all these letters has been contested repeatedly, with the last-mentioned collection being the center of a present firestorm.

Generally ignored have been nearly a dozen other letters or letter-like texts, unassailably the work of Peter Abelard. Jan M. Ziolkowski's comprehensive and learned translation of these texts affords insight into Abelard's thinking over a much longer sweep of time and offers snapshots of the great twelfth-century philosopher and theologian in a variety of contexts. One group shows him engaging with Heloise and nuns of the Paraclete, another with Bernard of Clairvaux, and a third with four entirely different addressees on four entirely different topics. Broadening our panorama of the twelfth-century Renaissance, the picture presented by these texts complements, complicates, and enriches Abelard's autobiographical letter of consolation and his personal letters to Heloise.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Jan M. Ziolkowski is Arthur Kingsley Porter Professor of Medieval Latin at Harvard University and director of Dumbarton Oaks. His publications include thirteen books, nearly one hundred articles and essays, and more than fifty book reviews. The books encompass critical editions of Medieval Latin texts (such as *The Cambridge Songs*; *Jezebel: A Norman Latin Poem of the Early Eleventh Century*; and two of poetry by Nigel of Canterbury), as well as literary histories such as Alan of Lille's *Grammar of Sex* and *Talking Animals: Medieval Latin Beast Poetry*.

## PRAISE FOR THE BOOK

"No comparable book brings together this entire range of materials. Ziolkowski's book is an impressive addition to Abelardian scholarship and will be welcomed enthusiastically." Peter Dronke, professor emeritus, University of Cambridge

"There is no volume like this one. Ziolkowski's collection makes a powerful supporting portfolio of fascinating Abelard materials for use by both students and scholars."?Paul Edward Dutton, Simon Fraser University

"The most important thing about this new collection of Abelard letters is that they are not the ones with which people are most familiar. Ziolkowski, a noted translator who is professor of medieval Latin at Harvard, has turned his skills to a group of twelve other "non-personal letters" or "letter-like texts" for this new volume. . . . This book will add additional details to the portrait of this extraordinary man. It provides a different perspective and range than the more common writings." - *Magistra*

"This helpful and appropriately revisionist collection will be warmly welcomed by scholars, teachers, and students. Ziolkowski's translation is elegant and readable while remaining faithful to Abelard's characteristic style. The letters themselves, spanning some twenty years of Abelard's career, provide important insights into the spiritual and intellectual context of northern France in the early-twelfth century. All are authentic. Together with t

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