An Afterword on Medieval Studies, Or the Future of Abelard and Heloise

JOHN VAN ENGSEN

"God granted it to me to serve the greatest people of France." So reads the will of Jean de Meun, famed continuator of the Romance of the Rose. About 1302, presenting one of his works to King Philip the Fair, Jean explained that he had served the great of the land by providing vernacular translations of Vegetius, the Marvels of Ireland, Ailred's Spiritual Friendship, Boethius' Consolation, and The Life and Letters of Pierre Abelard and Heloise his Wife.¹ What Jean de Meun looked back upon as his life's work medievalists might well take up as matter fit for an afterword on Medieval Studies. A medievalist would want to ask, among other things, why the nobility of France in the later thirteenth century patronized this combination of imaginative fiction, military strategy, fantastic travelogue, spiritual counsel, philosophy, and letters. An essayist on Medieval Studies in turn would ask where these six works get studied in the modern academy and how, and whether they ever fit into the same course of study. Such an essay, perhaps the more interesting one, will not be attempted here—or rather, will be left to the imagination of readers. This essay will take as its point of departure just one of the translated works. For while the other four had already circulated widely in Latin, the letters of Abelard and Heloise remained, so far as scholars can determine, unknown before Jean de Meun translated them around 1290.

He worked from a Latin manuscript, now lost, judged comparable in quality and content to two others copied in Jean's lifetime, the earliest extant witnesses to the letters. One (A) came into the hands of Petrarch around 1337, who made a number of textual an-
notations; another (T) belonged to the chapter at Notre Dame in Paris and was sold in 1347 to the chancellor of the university. Two more can be dated to the generation after 1300. After five generations of neglect stretching to 150 years, in other words, this correspondence suddenly came into vogue among Latin intellectuals, and that vogue persisted, attested by five more Latin manuscripts and evidences of another fourteen, one ordered up by Coluccio Salutati, the humanist chancellor of Florence. Jean de Meun’s vernacular version, by contrast, survived in a single poor copy made approximately a century after his original translation.

So what is a medievalist to make of these late manuscripts, this newfound interest? Jean’s work may represent unique vernacular testimony to wider enthusiasm for a recently recovered work, including a new and more general receptiveness to the rhetoric of these letters; or Jean may have initiated that recovery by retrieving a Latin manuscript from the Paraclete; or he might himself have authored the Latin correspondence. Scholars have reached no agreement. In the larger perspective of medieval studies, however, one thing seems certain: in Paris, about 1290, fascination with the lives, loves, and letters of Abelard and Heloise, attested earlier only in glancing references to their affair, first began, and was never again wholly to abate. In some larger sense, modern medievalists are the heirs to this work of reinscribing, translating, and interpreting.

But disruption and discontinuity are as much a part of the story as continuity and inheritance. This holds true for the Paraclete itself, the presumed source or repository of any authentic correspondence. Only two generations after Jean de Meun, war with the English brought destruction, possibly leveling the cloister in 1356 (the reference is vague) and emptying the house for a decade. More than a century later, on 2 May 1497, the abbess of the Paraclete had the bodies of Abelard and Heloise translated from their original burial site in Abelard’s oratory (a place called le Petit-Moustier, located alongside the river Arduisson on convent property near the cloister) and entombed on either side of the high altar in the convent church.

Discontinuity holds as well for access to copies of these letters. The first edition appeared a full 150 years after Gutenberg. In 1616 François d’Amboise, a lawyer and royal counselor, initiated the first edition of Abelard and Heloise’s Opera Omnia, inspired to do so by reading a manuscript copy of their letters. Heloise received almost equal billing on the title page (a difference only in type size: et Heloisae contigis eius praeceps paracleteus abbatissae). But d’Amboise apparently found, or was given, no copy of the correspondence at the Paraclete, though he was given and he included in his edition copies of Abelard’s liturgical and philosophical works. The edition promptly landed on the Index, even though he had taken care to print the medieval censures of Abelard’s thought at the beginning. One generation before this edition and d’Amboise’s request for everything the Paraclete had on Abelard and Heloise, the convent itself had been occupied by a Protestant abbess during the wars of religion. She, it was rumored, had seized and sent to England all of Abelard’s works.

For its last two centuries the convent was ruled by abbesses from the La Rochefoucauld family; the first of them patronized d’Amboise. It was not their social acclaim, however, but a poem written in English by Alexander Pope, a century after the first edition (1717), that attracted new attention to the letters, and made sentimental depictions of Heloise all the rage:

Soon as thy letters trembling I unclose,
That well-known name awakens all my woes.
Oh name for ever sad! for ever dear!
Still breathed in sighs, still usher’d with a tear.
I tremble too, where’er my own I find,
Some dire misfortune follows close behind.
Line after line my gushing eyes o’erflow,
Led through a sad variety of woe;

When at the close of each sad, sorrowing day,
Fancy restores what vengeance snatch’d away,
Then conscience sleeps, and leaving Nature free,
All my loose soul unbounded springs to thee.

Provoking demons all restraint remove;
And stir within me ev’ry source of love.
I hear thee, view thee, gaze o’er all thy charms,
And round thy phantom glue my clasping arms.
Sudden you mount, you beckon from the skies;
Clouds interpose, waves roar, and winds arise.
I shriek, start up, the same sad prospect find,
And wake to all the griefs I left behind.

Come, Abelard! for what hast thou to dread?
The torch of Venus burns not for the dead.
Nature stands check'd; religion disapproves:
Ev'n thou art cold—yet Eloisa loves.\(^7\)

For the following century, romantic images of Abelard and Heloise, as represented in sculpture and painting, in poems and plays, rendered them an unavoidable presence in aristocratic and bourgeois culture. After the Revolution, the dismantling of cloister and church resulted in the removal of their bodies to a Parisian cemetery (Père-Lachaise).\(^8\) The cult of Abelard and Heloise, as the martyrs of romantic love, peaked in the mid-nineteenth century. Almost all of it rested, in that age of letters, upon their letters, reproduced in nearly a hundred editions, translations, and versions over about seventy-five years. In the midst of the cult's popularity, in the year 1857, there appeared, in a new journal devoted to literary correspondence, the first scholarly article questioning the authenticity of those same letters.\(^9\) And in the succeeding one hundred years scholarly and other reconstructions have enlivened each succeeding generation, becoming the occasion in this last generation for new editions (one still in progress), for learned disputes over authenticity, and for nude scenes of love-making and violation on stage and screen.

The letters of Abelard and Heloise, and the corresponding images, cults, and reconstructions over the past centuries, may stand as emblematic for a pattern that could be traced out for many other medieval figures. In the case of Abelard's equally famous adversary, Bernard of Clairvaux, Gilles Constable has pointed out a remarkably intense recopying of his works (and those of many other twelfth-century spiritual writers) two centuries later by the so-called Modern Devout and the Observants,\(^10\) a pattern of reappropriation which could be followed into the reading of Bernard by John Calvin or by seventeenth-century Trappists or by nineteenth-century restorers of the religious life or indeed by nineteenth-century secular humanists, down to the reading and re-editing undertaken by Jean

Leclercq’s work which played such a significant role in the flowering of monastic studies. Patterns of recovery and transmission have been manifestly themselves differently in the cases of Bernard and Abelard, betraying differing avenues and purposes at work in the preserving and appropriating. Real differences in the medieval materials being preserved or appropriated are also disclosed.

Medievalists have generally left it to “medievalism” to study the patterns of transmission, those framing images of the Middle Ages, while Medieval Studies has gone after that on which such reconstructions rest. But medievalists must be reminded from time to time of their intellectual debt to medievalism: what they are attempting to recall or represent or reconstruct is not so easily or naively separated from that framework, which is to say, from their overarching purposes (“why”) or their chosen means (“how”). Popular, even vulgar, forms of medievalism may often occasion serious scholarly study, either to clarify or to disabuse, and the scholarly interpretations of one generation may well persist, in attenuated or fancified forms, as the popular images of the next. It is not so easy to separate out and describe in some ideal way, uncluttered by past or present purposes, the presumptive original content (“what”) of medieval studies.

Medieval Studies\(^11\) is said to be interdisciplinary, a relatively new word in the educator’s vocabulary, as Roberta Frank has taught us.\(^12\) A discipline is an acquired body of learning which, as its name suggests, shapes the mind. The disciplines, as educators use the word in university jargon today, represent intellectual conventions for the dividing up of human knowledge and expression. With the professionalization of higher education over the past century those conventions have acquired institutional form and interests as departments. The disciplining inherent in these disciplines comes quickly to light when two differently disciplined scholars discuss the same matter. What one, say a person disciplined in history, finds insightful or persuasive or helpful may well leave the other, say a person disciplined in philosophy, largely unmoved or unconvinced. What one sees, say a person disciplined in art history, is invisible to or has no persuasive effect upon someone otherwise disciplined. And when one enters the sphere of another, say literary critics working out a philosophy-like conceptual apparatus, those
disciplined in the sphere encroached upon, say philosophers, can prove quick to dismiss the others as amateurs or not clear-headed. To break out of or transcend these disciplinary mind-sets, in other words, requires a difficult and risky undertaking, both intellectually and institutionally.

A long view of the history of education may well disclose near constant motion between disciplining, the shaping of the mind and the affections toward certain ends, and the discipline, understood as the *scientia* or body of knowledge which is to be conveyed—with the emphasis tending toward one or the other in differing eras and circumstances. Except for a few remarkable figures like Dilthey or Weber or Durkheim at the turn of the century, humanists, until recently and for the most part, have waxed eloquent about the ends of their disciplining and largely presupposed as self-evident the object of their discipline: to shape literate or sensitive people, to form good or thoughtful citizens, historians treat the past, philosophers treat thought, musicologists treat music, English teachers treat grammar or composition or literature written in the English language, and so on. Each of these recognized “disciplines” appears to carve out or claim for itself, even “name,” some particular facet of human experience or expression or cognition in which its professors claim expertise.

But to what does a medievalist lay claim? What object does he or she name and to what end? Medieval Studies was not conceived in its origins as a discipline or a department. It arose as a challenge to existing or newly forming intellectual conventions, an alternative way to hold together bodies of knowledge becoming separated or to pursue matters being neglected. Though individual champions of Medieval Studies certainly had particular subject-matters in mind, the proffered rationale intentionally did not specify any one aspect of human experience and expression across time and space, as did other disciplines. The first bulletin for Notre Dame’s Medieval Institute declared its intent in 1947 as “to acquire exact information about, and accurate knowledge of, Mediaeval life, thought and history by utilizing every method and device known to modern scholarship.” Stated generically, then, Medieval Studies is—potentially—the study of any and all peoples, societies, languages, cultures, and material artifacts found on one continent (Europe) during the course of one-thousand years (500–1500). As an ideal conception or as annually embodied at the Kalamazoo Congress, Medieval Studies takes in all aspects of human thought and experience and expression, literally everything, as the student of past Kalamazoo programs knows, from theology to scatology.

The act of segmenting off those thousand years, moreover, was not inspired by the perception of some internal dynamic or manifest feature. It was born rather of nostalgia and contempt, nostalgia on the part of European humanists and reformers for an earlier and better time, Antique or Early Christian, and an accompanying contempt for what separated them from that lost age. The temporal divider, that is, came first, segmenting off as “middle” all the years that divided humanists and reformers from a presumed better time, what unified those Middle Ages was not some essential internal characteristic—though several were soon ascribed to it—but rather the perception that they had intervened or disrupted. An exact reversal of this interplay of nostalgia and contempt came later, especially following the French Revolution, and it inspired another generation to repudiate reason, industrialization, democracy, or secularization in order to seek again all that had been lost, or an image of what had been lost. For these people the temporal divider was explicitly assumed to have encompassed an age possessing thematic unity—a time of faith, social order, courtesy, closeness to nature, simpler human relations—which they desired to reclaim, in spirit or in deed.

The spatial divider was largely fineshed, for while the first reformers looked back mainly to Rome, Athens, and Jerusalem (also at times to, say, the Africa of Augustine), they presupposed as the locus of their endeavors the lands in which they lived. The spatial boundaries represented a still living cultural reality, a product in fact of those Middle Ages. For that cultural unit they had many particular and few general names. They increasingly substituted the classicizing “Europe” for the widespread but—to the good Latinist—embarrassing “Christianitas.” Christendom, a complex term common in medieval sources and common still in the nineteenth century, referred essentially to the peoples, cultures, and lands of Latin Christianity, effectively overlooking or repudiating the Jews within and the Muslims or non-Christians beyond its borders. The “Europa” of ancient and medieval cartography took as its boundaries the Mediterranean and the rivers of Russia. But cartographers
and humanists endowed that geographical space initially with the cultural force of "christianitas," and latterly with overtones of scientific technology or state building or political expansion. The "West," a much vaguer term found occasionally in ancient sources, inevitably took its meaning from an explicit or implied contrast with the "East." Other terms, "gothic" in particular, occasionally transformed a cultural smear into a spatial reality, as in "the gothic North."

In recent years, the dividers have increasingly been dissolved. Late Antiquity (250–650) has acquired an epochal life of its own, neither medieval nor antique but with features reminiscent of what came before and what came after. Renaissance and Reformation have been drawn back into the Middle Ages, or the late Middle Ages forward into the early modern. Students of the long view have inteposed new dividers (1000/1200–1800) and a new name (Old Europe), arguing that social and economic relations in particular retained medieval features into the nineteenth century. Students of culture, both high and low, have preferred to emphasize continuous appropriations and reappropriations, with persisting patterns or predispositions rather than the sharp breaks suggested by terms like "renaissance," "reformation," or "enlightenment." All this is justified by greater attention to medieval peoples' own sense of living on the cusp between the "ancient" and the "modern" (meaning, their own day), protected by the authority of "tradition" and carried forward by the force of "innovation" or "reform."

There is then no neutral or self-evident term for this thousand-year segment of European history and culture, for the object of the medievalist's discipline, since each term comes laden with meaning implicit in the dividers or imposed by cultural appropriations, including our own. Abelard, too, repudiated essentializing universals, though he held that the matter (res) was prior to a concept of it (intellectus) expressed by the voice in words (vox). For the modern scholar, difficulties persist in using any word whose past cultural overtones may be perceived, for instance, to exclude Islam or the Jewish peoples from medieval studies or indeed the eastern Christian peoples and cultures. Yet arguing terms apart from investigating peoples and cultures, a grave temptation at times, will not resolve the difficulty. And, again following Abelard, both the words and the concepts presuppose social patterns and cultural unities necessary to render individual items from the medieval past intelligible, patterns which, though widely varying, remain distinguishable from those of antiquity and modern Europe. The "Middle Ages," used in the plural and without singular thematic attributions, may prove, however artificial in origin, the most capacious term for the object of our study. But is that not simply to return to our starting-point?

The point in creating an all-encompassing definition is not to posit a meaningless general term but an object of study full of materials potentially productive of meaning. One volume entitled Medieval Studies has divided its subject-matter into 137 bibliographic subfields, each in itself capacious ("canon law" or "social history"). The true nominalist would be required to list each of the possible items for inclusion; here a rhetorical gesture must suffice. Medieval Studies must equip scholars to teach and write about Beowulf, Dante, and Chaucer but also about writings not recognized as literary set texts; about Christendom but also about a Middle Ages not limited to Latin Christians; about kings and lords and peasants but also about a range of events and social relations with no direct connections to the modern state or parliaments; about Anselm and Aquinas and Ockham but also about thinkers not accounted anticipatory of modern thoughts; about Sutton Hoo or the Mystical Lamb but also about innumerable objects not idolized in modern museum or museum-like settings. The object of Medieval Studies is then as large and as pluralistic as the writings and artifacts of the Middle Ages themselves—and so conceived it allows, even encourages, medievalists to disrupt or to combine patterns that may elsewhere have hardened into disciplines or departments.

This may sound too platitudinous or self-evident, until working medievalists apply it to cases they know. Since about 1290 Europeans and their cultural heirs have known about, and have given various meanings to, the Abelard and Heloise of the letters, above all, the first letter, titled in manuscripts a "consolatory [letter] to a friend," together with Heloise's "deprecatory" reply (both rhetorical categories), and the double exchange that followed. Medieval Studies must continue to make ample room in its teaching and study for those first six letters. But there is as well the complicated letter of spiritual guidance, a virtual rule for nuns, which has gained more careful attention in the debates of the last generation (and
was in fact translated into medieval French, though not included in Monfrin’s widely used “standard edition” in 1595). There is Heloise the abbess, said at her death to be “outstanding in letters and religion” (prima abbatissa documentis et religione clarissima) and “equal to her Peter in sensibility, moral action, and intellectual skill and without equal in her knowledge of Scripture” (illa suo Petro par sensu, moribus, arte, Scripturas omnes noverat absque pare). whose work establishing the institutions, prayer-life, and properties of the Paraclete can be partially reconstructed from letters, rules and cartularies. That prayer-life elicited from Abelard 129 strikingly original hymns for the Paraclete, several of them translated into French by the later thirteenth century. There is Abelard the musician, of whom at least one melody has survived intact. There is Abelard the homilist; to Heloise, notably, Abelard explained in his prefatory letter that he was not an orator and that she would find the rhetorical style plain. There is, as Abelard’s letter presupposes, Heloise the master of Latin letters, who could cite ancient florilegia to express modern emotion. There remains throughout Abelard the arrogant master whose presumed self-depiction has governed most historical reconstructions of the early universit. At the same time there is Abelard the Benedictine monk, who castigated the self-righteousness of the canons regular and the White Monks, likened contemporary monks to ancient philosophers, and died at Cluny. There is Abelard the scriptural exegete, provoked to some of his most intriguing interpretations not by students in Laon and Paris (famous scenes in the correspondence) but by “problems posed by Heloise.” Heloise, the student of exegesis, seems to have compiled the forty-two “problems” and “solutions” in their extant form, complete with a rhetorically sophisticated prefatory letter declaring that she and the sisters were following his exhortations in attempting to understand Scripture. It was for them, too, that he interpreted the opening of Genesis, providing in effect reflections on cosmogony. There is Abelard the Christian who self-consciously raised in a “soliloquy” and in a “conversation” the question of his faith stand alongside that of a Jew and a “philosopher” (Arabic/Aristotelian natural philosophy). There is Abelard the ethicist who wrote the first medieval Latin book on ethics as such, choosing for his title the Socratic “know yourself” (Scito teipsum), treating not the intricacies of love but—among other things—the nature of penance, an issue raised with respect to Heloise in his poem to their son Astrolabe. There is Abelard the thinker whose investigations into the nature of words and things were, it now seems, the product of his own original reflection, not of access to more Aristotelian sources. There is Abelard the theologian, whose attempts to rethink the central mystery of the Christian faith, to construe the Trinity in terms of concepts drawn from fresh philosophical reading (the Holy Spirit likened to Plato’s world soul, and so on), drew down the ire and condemnation of those who had never heard or conceived such thoughts and felt compelled to protect the received language. And there is the human couple who wrote nearly all their extant works as castrated master and monk, as willing student but less than willing nun. The forms of address in their other letters intriguingly mirrored the contrasting personae of the correspondence, she addressing him as “beloved to many but most beloved to me” (dilecte multis sed dilectissime nobis) and he her as “dear in the world but most dear in Christ” (soror Heloissa, in saeculo quondam cara, nun in Christo carissima). All these differing images of Abelard and Heloise, all the sources and disciplines required to reconstruct them—that is the Middle Ages envisioned by Medieval Studies.

No single discipline in the modern university would accommodate all that is required to approach Abelard and Heloise as letter-writers, much less as poets, philosophers, liturgists, and ethicists; and therein remains the foundational justification for pursuing Medieval Studies, whether as a degree-granting program, a curricular arrangement, a gathering of like-minded people, or a personal scholarly ideal. But such differing images depend in part upon the range of sources, or our means of access to them, the factors recent medievalists have tended to emphasize (and to which this essay will return). They depend as well upon our purposes, some conscious, some arising unconsciously from cultural or social givens. It is essential, but not enough, to say that we intend to understand Abelard and Heloise in the fullness of their own world. For, colloquially put, what we find has much to do with what, and especially why, we are seeking. Dronke noted tellingly that opinions about the authenticity of the letters rested importantly upon whether scholars imagined such a love affair, such a troubled, even unrepentant, Heloise, as possible in the Middle Ages—or rather
dismissed it all as some rhetorician’s naughty exercise, some celibate cleric’s erotic fantasy.24

All scholarship, we have been told repeatedly in the last years, is driven as much by the “why” as the “what” questions, the disciplining intent as much as the disciplinary content. Here too, Abelard and Heloise offer rich illustration.25 A century ago scholars sought and found in Heloise the champion of “free love,” in Abelard the champion of “free thinking,” a half-century ago in them both “Christian humanism” or in their ordered letters mutual movement from physical love to spiritual care.26 In our own generation Le Goff has seen in Abelard “the first professor,” Droncek in Heloise a “woman writer”; Brooke in their letters an early theology of love and marriage; Nichols in Heloise the first woman to articulate an anthropology that credited sensual perception by way of the body;27 and so on.

It may well be that in those areas of the academic enterprise which we Americans call “studies” the “why” questions play an even larger role in giving shape to the “what.” Where the subject matter is by definition capacious and amorphous, with no long tradition of set texts or set questions or set paths of pedagogy, the purposes that animate study will inevitably serve even more to structure the materials and matters studied. In our day, accordingly, questions animated by feminist concerns, by efforts to deal justly with Judaism and Islam, by sympathies with the “people,” by curiosity about non-Christian religious practices, by fascination with hermeneutic issues or linguistic interactions have done as much as new sources or new disciplinary approaches to enlarge our sense of the “what” of the Middle Ages.

The declared goal of Medieval Studies was at its origins to pursue a disinterested or “scientific” approach to Europe’s medieval past. Such declarations were (and are) sincerely made and to a degree truly practiced. Some students of neo-scholastic philosophy and theology hold, for instance, that the undoing of their modern forms came in part from the careful historical laying bare of their scholastic beginnings, even as the philologists and new critics who prepared editions opened the way for wholly opposing approaches to those same texts. Yet in the work of most scholars there have also pulsed deeper purposes, usefully distinguished as personal, public, and academic.

Personal purposes are as various as we are. We cannot escape ourselves as interpreters, though we may strive for a certain reflective or ironic distance. Our sources do not discover or interpret themselves. Some scholars therefore have taken up a more confessional mode, saying upfront what they are seeking and why. Sixty years ago Carl Becker coined the slogan “every man his own historian,” and we might similarly encourage everyone to become their own medievalist, in effect to construct their own Middle Ages. But for all the reality of these personal purposes, and their effect upon our reconstructions, our teaching, writing, and intellectual exchange also presuppose common material, common language, common questions, even common conclusions. For the personal questions often merge, to greater or lesser degrees, into public questions; audiences require and expect that they will. For a generation or two medievalists, together with their students and readers, were interested, perhaps disproportionately, in the self as spirit, particularly as thinking or questing spirit, now increasingly in the self as body, especially engendered body; for many years in the self as bound up in political and social collectivities, now increasingly in the self as material agent; for many years in the self as giving expression in words or images to larger perceived realities, now more to the self as verbal signifier or image-maker creating realities; for many years to the self as absorbed into a comprehensive culture, now more to the self as participating in competing or overlapping cultures.

This way of putting it takes the orientations of the self, individual or collective, as the point of departure, as shaping the framing interpretive structures we bring to bear upon our medieval materials. Another approach presupposes a public medieval culture with which individual medievalists become engaged. In the realm of politics, positions were argued by way of medieval precedents, adjudged good or bad, well into the nineteenth century, past the French Revolution’s repudiation of “feudalism” and the English Reform Bill’s revision of county privileges, with the search for, say, representative government or constitutional precedents or women’s legal status in the Middle Ages continuing into our day. In the realm of religion, down into the 1960s members of the Catholic church, and most outside it, saw in her Latin liturgy, Gregorian chant, devotional art, religious orders in their varied habits, canon
law, Thomistic theology, Aristotelian philosophy, and devotional practice a living edition of the medieval past. In the realm of culture, many early twentieth-century educators saw in the monuments of the European past the foundations of a high culture they were concerned to pass on, whether in the field of national literatures, or philosophical reflection, or artistic monuments, or universities, or medieval Latin literature, the avowed purpose for the founding of the Medieval Academy of America. To engage in medieval studies was one way of understanding, participating in, even influencing, that public culture.

In North America, however, Protestant, enlightened, and revolutionary founders sowed serious doubt early on about the “culture” to be found in medieval Europe. A century ago Henry Adams (and others) rethought those doubts and embraced new visions of medieval culture; waves of European immigrants—ironically, from the vantage point of Adams’s class—strengthened the sense of connection, and in 1949 Curtius believed he saw in American medievalists a conscious effort to reappropriate that culture. Then in 1958 Lynn White in turn rethought Henry Adams and rewrote medieval culture to approximate American dynamism. But, for all these impulses to distance or to reappropriate, it remains true that Americans call medieval culture theirs only at several removes: removed in time, as it also is for modern Europeans; removed in space, present to us only in books or museums; still farther removed, if our familial or cultural roots are not European. Even Americans with familial or cultural roots in Europe sprang themselves mostly from among peasants, the unfree or dispossessed, those holding little personal stake in the old European order. The sting of that removal was real: asked why he had left, my grandfather, landless in the Dutch village of Kampernieuwstad, his only ambition and desire to work the land, replied brusquely that he had no land; so he left, never to see his native land again. But what such European immigrants carried to America was no less real: language and food, social behaviors and expectations, cultural commitments, religious beliefs. The heirs to those immigrants have never been able to decide whether they should spitefully keep their distance, avoiding that old corruption, or return to Europe with pent-up intensity, reclaiming or making space for all that was once denied them. The study of the European Middle Ages remains for Americans a con-

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continuing dialectic between connection and disjunction, the tug of social and cultural features still influential among us and the shimmer of something totally and yet perceptibly other.

The sense of distance has its advantages. Call it the outsider’s or the peasant’s perspective. We can raise any question, pursue any subject-matter, without regard for party or religious affiliation, for regional or national loyalties, for school networks or university patronage. For some Americans, it is true, the European Middle Ages have functioned mostly as the Happy Isles, the totally (but appreciably) other. Others have exercised benign neglect or sharp critique or focused upon that which fell outside the Old Order, the peasants, the marginalized, the Jews, the dissidents, the heretics—evident, for instance, in the work of Henry Charles Lea. But the issue for our generation—given changing demographic patterns, a deeper embedding of distinctly American social and cultural patterns, and access to a variety of cultures around the world—is whether medieval Europe has still the compelling quality of connectedness, of something worth studying and quarreling about, whether indeed it has any noteworthy function in public culture, or is merely one possible “origin,” one possible figure of the distantly “other,” among many from which Americans could choose. Despairing medievalists can easily summon up numerous arguments on the negative side. Yet it is worth noting all the work that rests upon a conviction of something worth recalling or representing differently: feminist scholars tracing back into the Middle Ages the dilemmas faced by women in their social roles and self-understanding, students of Jewish history tracing back into Christendom the social and cultural position of that people, scholars of sexuality tracing back into the Middle Ages moral expectations and surprising possibilities; students of philosophy tracing logical and metaphysical foundations back into a rewritten history of medieval philosophy; and much more.

Whatever medievalists may understand to be their personal and public purposes and however those may influence their sense of what the Middle Ages encompass, their work is carried out in the world of the academy. Their representations of the Middle Ages must intersect and shape those of students. As late twentieth-century Americans, students too are alternately fascinated and put off by the European Middle Ages. The reasons are easily stated: peo-
ple reared in mass democracies have little taste or understanding for monarchical or lordly institutions; a materialistic age finds the preoccupations of a religious age hardly intelligible; an “updated” church finds its medieval past mostly embarrassing; popular culture finds the artifacts of noble courts or the elitist culture of Latin clerics incomprehensible. Or students may be drawn precisely to that which was configured so differently, and by other equally plausible attractions, including a concern to understand the sources of their own culture and the nature of the world’s “Europeanization.” In either case the teacher is left with a challenge, to render more intelligible what seems at first a wholly other world populated by wholly other people, or to render more complex what has been too comfortably and superficially appropriated. But this is only to state for Medieval Studies the tasks peculiar to good pedagogy.

The more appropriate questions may be those we put to ourselves as professionals: have we exaggerated our own scruples about what we are doing as medievalists and why, and in effect foisted them upon our audiences? Patent dangers loom at either extreme. If the formative stage in the making of European culture and society is studied only as the distant past, and for its own sake, the learning has no power of disciplining, little or no formative meaning for the present-day student or reader. But if the European past is rendered only through the framing lens of present-day questions, making it largely an additional tool or weapon in contemporary cultural or social disputes, the learning loses much or most of its disciplinary content, becoming thereby, ironically, equally dispensable or irrelevant. To justify our enterprise in the world of higher education, our approach to the Middle Ages must proceed in tension, must make its way through a kind of magnetized force-field, with the past “in its own right” as one imaginary pole and the present in its own right as the other.

As professionals, medievalists must address not only questions of content and purpose but also questions of technique (the “how”), of the expertise appropriate to their intellectual labors. This essay will conclude by saying something about five marks found, it seems to me, in professional medievalists, though not all necessarily in the same scholar.

There is, first, expertise in the materials remaining to us from medieval cultures and societies. Virtually all those materials were hand-made, from the codices containing written works (manuscripts) to the visual images, from the buildings to the furrowed fields. Medievalists, oriented early on toward philology, have virtually transformed their subject by focusing ever greater attention on the material transmitters of medieval cultural and social life: the manuscripts themselves in codicology, their scripts in paleography, documents in diplomatics, material remains in archeology, seals in sphragology, coins in numismatics, images in catalogues and iconographic indices, and so on through an ever longer list. Out of this arose, in the minds of some, notions of the medievalist as a high-powered technician, a person whose claim to scientia rests upon an acquired expertise in handling materials as arcane to most people as quantum physics.

Medievalists forego acquiring such skills at their peril, at the risk indeed of laying any foundation for their interpretive endeavors. This is not to sacrifice the intellect to technique, or meaning to method. For most medievalists it remains clear that the materials, however fascinating in themselves, are not the end, neither for our students nor for our readers, that the foundation is not the building. Just as importantly, careful attention to medieval materials renders the act of interpretation more complex, not less, makes it palpably plain that ordered photographs or printed editions may radically foreshorten contextual realities and possibilities. This holds true for major and oft-edited literary monuments like Beowulf or the Canterbury Tales, as it does for the notes taken by schoolmen, the lists kept by stewards and merchants, the images fabricated for churches, the tapestries woven for castle walls. Scholarly productions too far abstracted from the material realities have regularly created “works” or “units” or “languages” or “cultural intentions” or “social groups” that never existed as such. On the other hand, to yield entirely to the particular, to make as many editions as there are manuscripts, or to make no edition at all—the temptation of our age—is no less an act of interpretation, albeit a despairing one. Rendering medieval cultures and societies more complex—if you prefer, “problematizing” its literary works or social configurations—has arisen, in short, as much from more careful attention to the materials as from latter-day questions.

Expertise in medieval materials must comprise more than a pious sentiment, a rhetorical flourish, a quick glance at a manu-
script, image, or charter "in the original" before publishing. It must be born of practice: tracing out the scripts of more than one manuscript, reading visually the textures and lines of more than one local image, reconstructing more than one manuscript from loose quires or leaves to bound codex, choosing among several variants to construct a text. Only at that point does the medievalist come face to face with the nature of the medieval materials in which he or she claims expertise. This requires that medievalists have opportunities to learn, extending to the equivalent of apprenticeships in classrooms or less formal settings. It means too that the profession must continue to make space for those whose life’s work consists in developing, teaching, or applying such skills. Most medievalists can attain, with effort and practice, at least artisan levels of skill; those who achieve, or are gifted with, truly genial expertise remain few. Moreover, few medievalists will attain multiple such competences—a reality brought home painfully when a child or friend asks about some object in a museum or book, and we know only as much as the curators or editors have explained to us.

At the risk of overstating the point, and making this essay too long, the general claim may be tested again on Abelard and Heloise. For all the attention paid to their letters and love life, serious research into the manuscript transmission has been undertaken only in the last generation. It was twenty years ago, in 1972, that John Benson first asked pointedly why, if they were authentic, Abelard and Heloise’s letters had remained hidden for 160 years (from 1130–1290)? Where had the original pieces gone (none survive)? And who made of them an ordered correspondence?³⁰ Is not Heloise, in the Paraclete, the most likely keeper and the most likely editorial hand—quite the opposite of arguments a generation ago from printed text that Abelard had composed hers, or even Benton’s notion of the correspondence as a celibate’s fantasy? But what purposes, private or public, should be read in this rhetorical exchange? What signs of editing—of her editing—remain? Should it be compared to her editing of the forty-two questions and answers on scriptural interpretation,³¹ of which we have still no critical edition?

The questions are no less basic about Abelard’s production. His philosophical and theological works have survived mostly in one to four manuscripts. Why? Do they represent the fragments of a restless teacher who never properly wrote out his teaching? Scraps copied on the run by students in different times and places? The inevitable aftermath of heresy charges? Or the lack of a religious order interested enough to preserve and transmit his works? The works of Bernard of Clairvaux and Hugh of St. Victor have come down to us in the hundreds of manuscripts. Should we conclude that Abelard’s influence and personage have been wholly exaggerated by modern interpreters reading only printed editions and his own arrogant accounts?³² Is it significant that Abelard’s “apology” (the public defense of his faith) has come down in the most copies (14), with his poem to his son Astrolabe, his challenging repository of Sic et Non authorities, and one version of his theology all tied for second (12 each)? Does this transmission tell us about Abelard, his times and his influence, or about the avenues of transmission, also an aspect of medieval culture? Careful attention to the materials, in short, offers no way out, and certainly no end in itself. It necessarily forms the basis, however, for whatever representations medievalists may choose in the future to make of Abelard and Heloise.

The second mark of medievalists is attentiveness to language. Inherited from earlier philologically oriented scholars, it has been sustained by necessity. Whatever medievalists choose to study, they must deal with materials written in languages that are not modern, whether medieval Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, or the medieval vernaculars. This is not peculiar to the literary scholar; the economic historian dealing with financial records, the art historian pursuing patronage, the musicologist reading lyrics, the philosopher interpreting thought in its original formulation—all must deal with medieval languages simply to do their work. And since medieval societies and cultures were at once international and local, modern studies appear in all the European languages.

This, too, has required a degree of specialization that may make the medievalist look more like a technician than a scholar. All the learned multi-volume dictionaries and glossaries contain indispensable scholarship, which may appear to be more enabling than interpretive and enticing. American institutions in particular may struggle to justify expensive enterprises which have no apparent bearing upon the national language. The Medieval Academy of America, ironically, was founded precisely to protect learning in the
language fundamental to western medieval culture, medieval Latin, which now has no obvious heir or protector. Each medievalist must additionally find ways to achieve competence in the particular subfields, whatever the languages, in which he or she works. Thus the social historian must know the vocabulary for farm implements or positions at court, the musicologist the words for musical instruments and styles, the historian of medicine the language of bodies and herbs, the legal historian the nuances of law and the courts, and the literary historian more capacious all the language’s possibilities.

Increasing mastery, once again, is not a matter of technique alone but of gaining an interpretive capacity essential for access to medieval cultures and societies. Echoes and reminiscences from the Scriptures, rhetoric patterned on schoolbook or classical models, divisions drawn from legal or economic records, and much more must become recognizable to the medievalist, for these were the presumed framework, at times the unconscious givens, of medieval cultural expression. But for the medievalist working backwards through the language toward those social and cultural givens, rather than outward from them, the language presents an additional problem. It is the fundamental question about whether and how social and cultural realities can be reconstructed by way of linguistic expression. To a degree all scholarly work presupposes it.33 Already in medieval times, when the Word was the presumed access to or expression of Ultimate Reality, differing philosophical views developed—Abelard was himself a contributor—on the relations between words and things. The pendulum has swung steadily, also in our own day, between notions of the text as disclosing only the text or relations with other texts and the text as disclosing realities beyond. While there may be general disciplinary inclinations—broadly speaking, historians to infer social and cultural realities, literary scholars to infer internal or intertextual references—all scholars incline one way or the other not just according to mood or conviction but, it must be conceded, according to what proves useful to a given argument. Both extremes remain in high fashion, to read realities directly out of the words, even as being shaped by the words, and to read the words mostly as words, as intertextual play. Even if medievalists temper extreme claims in practice, the evidence they cite to elicit a more contextualized reading itself rests on readings of medieval language.

Language in the Middle Ages also had an interactive social function. Medieval societies were necessarily multi-lingual and multi-cultural. The language of religion, often of the state and of institutions, of higher learning, of medicine, and more was at one remove at least from the language of the home, the street, and the field, a lesser remove in the case of the romance-speaking countries, a near total remove in the case of Germanic, Slavic, or Celtic countries. But the vernacular language of the courts or the cities, and eventually of the written literatures, was itself at some remove from the countless regional and local dialects of village and home. Medievalists must therefore sort out not only the written and the oral languages, with the varying social and cultural roles assigned to each, but must also attempt to reconstruct various layers of understanding or comprehension in the interaction of all these languages—with their own conclusions drawn from the reading of extant written texts and without forgetting that medieval Latin was itself a spoken language. Here too, some simple social division or univocal linguistic theory will not do the job. Careful and thoughtful reading in more than one medieval language will help. Analogies from multi-lingual, multi-cultural America may prove helpful, if discerningly applied.

From Abelard and Heloise we have only Latin works, though Abelard was originally from Brittany and Heloise from Paris. Was their love-making conducted in the Latin which the master taught his student, or in the Old French of the Parisian streets? Initially their exchanges were more brazen in writing than in speaking (pleraque audacius scribere quam colloqui = et moult de choses plus bardiment escrire que de bouche dire). But when Abelard teasingly recalled the seduction (assuming he wrote this), should we think it in his labored Latin or Jean de Meun’s French? With the books lying open, he tells us, more words were exchanged about love than about the reading, more kisses than learned sayings; hands reached more for breasts than for books, and eyes mirrored love more than they were directed to the reading.34 But how should we reconstruct intentions out of these words? Abelard introduced it all as a conquest born of the pride that leads to a fall; Heloise described it as a love that emptied itself and transcended all forms to gain the beloved. But when she declared the name “friend,” even “concubine” or “courtesan,” dearer to her than “wife,” was she thinking those words in the schoolmen’s Latin or
the Parisians' Old French. Whichever the case, Abelard thought that Héloïse, amidst the love-making, learned her Latin rhetoric well: he introduces her as not the least in beauty but the best in letters (Quæcum per faciænam non esset infima, per babundantium litterarum erat suprema = El comme ceste ne feust pas bassé par beauté, par babundance de lettres estoit la souveraine). He assumed that she had also learned her technical theology well. To reassure him in the midst of troubling charges about her husband’s heterodoxy—or as he ambiguously put it, so that all worry and shadow might be driven from the white splendor of her breast (a candore tai fectoris explodantur = soient déploies de la beauté de ton courage)—Abelard set out for her his confession of faith, a technical statement requiring real theological understanding to read, let alone to grasp. The future of Abelard and Héloïse, in short, as theologians or as lovers, rests upon our ability to grasp their language in all its nuances.

The third mark of medievalists is interdisciplinarity. If the first two marks suggested something of the technically learned, the mastery of materials and languages, the third must reclaim all the intellectual liberty originally associated with the notion of not being bound, intellectually or institutionally, by the conventions or orthodoxies of a single discipline. This is much easier to say than to do, either in the classroom or in research or in the disciplining of one’s own mind and sensitivities. The temptation is to reach for face-saving shortcuts, a little poetry thrown into a work of history, a little history into a study of literature, and inevitably these days an exemplary image or two.

The most general temptation of late is to combine disciplinary work with one or another framing conceptual apparatus called generically “theory.” The principle is clear and not unwelcome to an interdisciplinary medievalist: to address the larger question of knowing, interpreting, and perceiving which help scholars escape the traps of disciplinary conventions. In practice, however, “theory” has become virtually another discipline with its own canons of authors, its own sets of assumptions and intellectual conventions (generally present-minded in the extreme), and its own discourses. At best it becomes thus another discipline with which multidisciplinary medievalists might choose to intersect; at worst another set of strictures to escape or rise above. To speak the language of Beowulf and of Foucault, of the Anglo-Saxon chronicle and Derrida, is indeed to speak two languages, and thus perhaps one form of interdisciplinarity. By acting as a kind of leaven in the academic dough, by raising fundamental questions about how texts mean, what can be inferred from them, and the like, theoretical discourse may form some kind of useful preamble, putting questions into play—not just about language, but about social configurations, and the like—that might otherwise get overlooked. The exercise has missed something, however, if the confrontation is not tense, even explosive, for the presuppositions about the nature and ends of human life in medieval texts and in contemporary theories are frequently, perhaps mostly, in tension or even directly at odds.

Interdisciplinarity cannot be reduced to a single definition, or it would mark the beginning of a new discipline. It cannot mean without discipline, the opportune seizing upon one or another image or representation that happens to suit or to please. It must mean mastering, or at least moving comfortably, in more than one discipline. The habits of mind, the tenor of questions, the method of thought, associated with a given discipline must be acquired, and yet worn lightly enough to make room for those of another, if not several others. An interdisciplinary scholar refuses to be trapped by the modes of a single discipline but draws appreciably, not superficially, upon several. Curricular programs may help, but finally this must be a personal achievement. It requires double duty in the mastery of materials and paths of pedagogy. More than that, it requires living with honest intellectual tension. The literary scholar, the historian, and the art historian will not think or see the same objects in the same way. To reproduce that tension in a classroom is most instructive for students (and for the instructors). To reproduce that tension in a single mind, to interpret and to write intelligibly in the midst of that tension, is another matter and a far greater challenge.

One crucial element in medieval interdisciplinarity is the effort to contextualize, or as Lee Patterson has argued “to historicize.” The latter term has come to assume many meanings, particularly in the work of literary scholars. In this context, however, while allowing for all the complexities of historical understanding and reconstruction, it means that whatever habits of mind are brought to bear upon the materials and languages of the Euro-
Abelard’s concept of moderate realism unless one has been formed in the deeper and longer traditions of Latin literature or western philosophy. Moreover, if medievalists expect to be heard, they must also listen: they must be open, horizontally and diachronically, to the questions and observations of their disciplinary colleagues. Of late, however, this argument has become somewhat one-sided, exhorting medievalists to take over and apply the questions, the method, or the jargon which other colleagues find compelling. Medievalists certainly should not be afraid to confront such questions; it was in many cases the Middle Ages that first laid the philosophical or literary foundations that made possible the asking of such questions in modern western culture. But by the same token, medievalists should not fear to take on their colleagues, ancient or modern, on the basis of questions, cultural concerns, and social configurations peculiar to medieval Europe. The intellectual exchange must go both ways, within and beyond the disciplines, if Abelard and Heloise are in the future to be taken seriously both in their own right and in contemporary culture.

The fifth mark of a medievalist, lastly and also briefly, is that he or she is, by instinct, a comparativist. The same impulse of mind that makes someone unsatisfied with the conventions or strictures of a single discipline will also incline them to seek points of comparison, a means to triangulate on the subject-matter they are attempting to understand and communicate. This instinct has at times been channeled off too quickly into set paths, the legal historian turning to comparative constitutions (when “constitution” may require a wholly different sense in a medieval context), the literary or religious historian manipulating indo-germanic myths. But the instinct remains an important one, which, soundly practiced, medievalists must encourage in one another.

The difficulty in making comparisons, as in developing interdisciplinarity, is to get beyond the superficial fix, the all too easy likening of one motif or rhetorical pattern or folkloric story to another. A self-conscious comparativist must seek to grasp genuine differences in mental or cultural patterns, while allowing for, say, transferences between the vernacular of the court and the Latin of the cleric. The same applies to philosophers: it is one thing to note the role of Jewish and Arabic thinkers in shaping the conceptual apparatus Latin Christians brought to Aristotle; it is another to high-
light the differences that persisted, and to seek out their sources in larger cultural or religious predispositions. Self-conscious comparativists must choose points of comparison apt for medieval studies. Anthropological studies of non-literate societies on the edge of modernity, viewed through the lens of modern examiners, have inspired medievalists to reexamine the cultural and ritual histories of medieval Europe’s non-literate peoples, often quite fruitfully. But it may be that comparisons to a society such as that in Hindu India may be more apt, there too was a relatively common sacred text, protected and interpreted by a sacred caste, producing a relatively common veneer of culture, beneath which there developed a congeries of differing peoples, languages, and societies. The tensions in such a society between the sacred and the profane, the literate and the non-literate, the socially privileged and the unprivileged, may offer far more fitting points of comparison for the situation in medieval Christendom. To make such comparisons meaningfully will require more than seizing upon some neat structure provided by Geertz or Turner; it would require stepping one’s self in another language and culture. But that should be the impulse of a medievalist, sensitive to the distinct cultural worlds that competed or blended in the making of Europe. The movement of modern Americans and Europeans onto a global stage represents no threat as such to the study of Europe in its formative stage. Danger lies more in the direction of that homogenization of all cultures promoted by the popular media and encountered by Americans mostly in the comfort of their couches or their theater seats. Where the full reality of cultural and social difference becomes manifest, with their consequences for peoples’ lives, questions about the origins of various western societies in the European Middle Ages will, if properly dealt with, only become more interesting.

Medievalists, to conclude, must find their way through—to return to an earlier image—a kind of forcefield: constrained by medieval materials, by medieval words, and no less by modern-day questions and assumptions, drawn by interpretive questions from multiple perspectives, no less by comparative questions that put early Europe into comparative settings. At the center of this imaginary forcefield there must be scholars and teachers who are imaginative, thoughtful, and critical. For in the end no amount of expertise or methodology, interdisciplinary or otherwise, directed.

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at sources or at interpretation, will yield compelling insights. That comes only from the quality of mind and imagination, however dependent upon fundamental skills. The ends to which those qualities of mind are directed must likewise arise from subjective powers of judgment and discernment. For many those ends remain the pleasure of scholarly work, the scientia, of acquiring multidisciplinary learning, about the medieval European past. For many it is the self-conscious pursuit of a particular political, cultural, or religious agenda. For some academics, more openly stated these days, it is the pursuit of power and influence (Abelard’s own self-confessed aims). And for some it is sapientia, wisdom or insight into the human condition, born of thoughtful multidisciplinary reflection on the achievements, dilemmas, and perceptions of human beings in medieval Europe. Those methods and ends have to do not only with ourselves and our students and our readers; they have to do as well with the future of Abelard and Heloise.

NOTES

In memory of Lynn White, Jr., and Michael Sheehan


2. For the manuscripts, see Jacques Monfrin, Abéard, Historia calamitatum (Paris, 1959), 9–31; David Luscombe, Julia Barrow, and Charles Burnett, “A Checklist of the Manuscripts Containing the Writings of Peter Abelard and Heloise and Other Works Closely Associated with Abelard and His School,” Revue d’histoire des Textes 14–15 (1984–1985): 244–245; and Hicks, La Vie et les Epistres, xliv–liv. On fourteenth-century humanist readers of the correspondence, see Peter Dronke, Abelard and Heloise in Medieval Testimonies, W. F. Ker Lecture 26 (Glasgow, 1976), 55–60. Because this is not an essay on Abelard and Heloise as such, I will cite literature only for illustrative purposes.


4. For the arguments, which have taken many twists and turns, see John Benton, “Fraud, Fiction, and Borrowing in the Correspondence of


6. Ibid., 403–406, with a reproduction of the title page.


8. The story of their various sepulchral monuments is a long and interesting one, well told by Charrier, *Héloïse*, 309–365.


11. In this essay I try to maintain a distinction between "medieval studies" (lower case), meaning any and all possible study of the European Middle Ages, and "Medieval Studies" (upper case), meaning some curricular or degree-granting arrangement. The latter is obviously some specific or institutionalized form of the former: But in my experience nearly every institutional arrangement of Medieval Studies varies, depending upon the local constellation of departments, colleges, programs, and budgets, even the force of local personalities and patrons.


14. From a necrology, still in manuscript (Troyes 2450), cited in Charrier, *Héloïse*, 301.

15. This epitaph edited and discussed in Dronke, *Abelard and Héloïse*, 21–22, 49.


17. PL 178,379–80

18. Essential, for instance, to Jacques Le Goff, "How Did the Medieval University Conceive of Itself?" in his *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages* (Chicago, 1980), 122–134; but likewise to most other depictions.


20. PL 178,677–78, 731–32. Eileen Kearney is preparing an edition of this text.

21. *Collationes* or *Dialogus inter philosophum, Iudeum et Christianum*, ed. Rudolf Thomas (Stuttgart, 1970). In the opening of the dialogue he could also label Christians, from the philosopher's stance, as "insane."


24. Dronke, *Abelard and Héloïse*, whose entire lecture, with its various partial editions, aimed to establish what contemporaries and near contemporaries held to be believable about Abelard and Héloïse.

25. Besides Charrier, *Héloïse*, see Peter von Moos, *Mittelalterforschung und Ideologiekritik: Die Gelehrtenstreit um Héloïse* (Munich, 1974), which perceptively reviews the interpretive attitudes scholars have brought to their philological discussions of authenticity. His 138 pages all treat the controversy before Benton, "Fiction, Fraud, and Borrowing," set it in motion anew!

26. E. Gilson, *Héloïse and Abelard* (Ann Arbor, 1968), which grew out of a course at the Collège de France in 1936–37 on "The Medieval Origins of Humanism." The notion of the ordered correspondence as illustrating a spiritual progression was suggested by Richard Southern, *Me-
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35. "Et si uxoris nomen sanctius ac validius videtur, dulcius michi semper extitit amice vocabulum, aut—si non indigneris—concubine vel scorti..." = "Et se li noms d’estre appellee ta femme me semblast plus sains et mielx vaillans, li noms d’amie me fust tousjours plus dous, ou se tu n’en as desdaign, le nom de meschene ou de ta soignante...." (Hicks, La Vie et les Epistres, 49. My italics.)
36. Ibid., 10.
37. Ibid., 149–150. It is disputed whether the French translation of this confesso and of two other pieces came from Jean de Meun.
38. See the interesting examples in Allen Franzen’s Speaking Two Languages: Traditional Disciplines and Contemporary Theory in Medieval Studies (Albany, 1991), particularly Franzen’s own “Prologue: Documents and Monuments: Difference and Interdisciplinarity in the Study of Medieval Culture” and Martin Irvine’s “Medieval Textuality and the Archaeology of Textual Culture,” 1–33, and 181–210.