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# The Last Word of the *Correspondence*

Jacques DALARUN

“The *Correspondence* of Abelard and Heloise is made up of eight letters.” This apparently simple affirmation poses at least three questions. The most obvious one is: Were these letters written by Peter Abelard and Heloise? Paradoxically, we are not going to confront that question now, but start with the two other ones: Can we use the title “Correspondence?” Are there eight letters in it?<sup>1</sup>

Out of the twelve manuscripts which have preserved the famous epistolary exchange, not one includes the title “Correspondence.” Anyway, what would have been the Latin word? When John of Meun speaks of the couple in the *Romance of the Rose*, he uses the term “Life” for Peter Abelard’s first text and the term “Epistles” for

1 This text is mainly from the lecture I gave on March 7, 2005 at the Institute for Advanced Study of Princeton. On November 13, 2008, I presented the same matter in the framework of a seminar of research held at the Department of Western History of the School of Letters of the University of Nagoya. I thank warmly Prof. Caroline Bynum and Giles Constable for their kind invitation at Princeton, Prof. Shoichi Sato for his kind invitation at Nagoya, Doct. Roberta McKelvie for her attentive revision of my English text, Prof. Constant Mews for his friendly reading and his precious observations. The references are deliberately limited. For further information, see J. BARROW, C. BURNETT and D. LUSCOMBE, “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): 183–302; C. J. MEWS, *The Lost Love Letters of Heloise and Abelard* (New York: 1999), esp. 40–43; *Epistolario di Abelardo ed Eloisa*, ed. I. PAGANI (Torino: 2004); G. ORLANDI, “Considerazioni sulla trasmissione del testo,” *ibidem*, 55–66; C. J. MEWS, *Abelard and Heloise* (New York: 2005); G. LOBRICHON, *Héloïse. L’amour et le savoir* (Paris: 2005); C. WADDELL, “Heloise and the Abbey of the Paraclet”, in M. F. WILLIAMS (ed.), *The Making of Christian Communities in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (London: 2005), 103–116 and 178–181; J. DALARUN, “Nouveaux aperçus sur Abélard, Héloïse et le Paraclet,” *Francia. Forschungen zur westeuropäischen Geschichte*, 32 (2005): 19–66; *Lettres d’Abélard et d’Héloïse*, éd. É. HICKS and T. MOREAU (Paris: 2007); J.-Y. TILLIETTE, “Introduction,” *ibidem*, 9–32. See also the forthcoming article of S. PIRON, “Heloise’s literary self-fashioning and the *Epistolae duorum amantium*.”

Heloise's writings.<sup>2</sup> The title "Correspondence" appears long after the Middle Ages.<sup>3</sup> Out of the twelve manuscript witnesses, only seven contain eight letters and only one records entirely the last piece. So the first real question is: Are we certain that there were eight letters, including a long last one,<sup>4</sup> in the textual unity we call nowadays the *Correspondence*?

We can be sure of that because, in the sixth and seventh letters, there are clear references to the necessary existence of the long last one.<sup>5</sup> So, the only manuscript which has kept the entire exchange must be examined with specific attention. We are going now to focus almost exclusively on it.

We know that the manuscript which interests us is at present preserved at the Municipal Library of Troyes under the call number 802. Troyes is the diocese in which stood the Paraclete, the oratory founded by Peter Abelard and then given in 1129 to Heloise and her sisters. But it has ever been established with any certainty where the volume was produced. It is generally admitted that Troyes 802 is the oldest witness of the *Correspondence*. The catalog of 1855 prudently said: "thirteenth century."<sup>6</sup> In 1950, J. T. Muckle suggested: "The hand is a good gothic of the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century."<sup>7</sup> Everyone after him, included Jacques Monfrin in 1959,<sup>8</sup> repeated the same date, except Fabio Troncarelli who in 1992

2 GUILLAUME DE LORRIS et JEAN DE MEUN, *Le Roman de la Rose*, ed. F. LECOY, vol. 2 (Paris: 1973), 17 and 18, v. 8772 ("en sa Vie") and 8783 ("en ses espitres").

3 I did a very simple and certainly too superficial test, looking for the titles of Peter Abelard's works in the catalogue of the Bibliothèque nationale de France. The first book which bears the title "Correspondence" is *Correspondencia original de Abelardo y Eloisa. Nueva edicion* (Paris: 1826), whereas the editions and translations of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries systematically prefer the word "Letters." It's obvious that the term "Correspondence" could have appeared before in the title of an article or the content of some publication.

4 As Constant Mews rightly suggests to me, the existence of a "long last letter" must be criticized too. That we call in effect the "eighth letter" (I number the eight letters from *Ep.* 1 to *Ep.* 8, included the *History of my Calamities* as *Ep.* 1, and I indicate the subdivisions of *Epistolario*) is actually made up of two distinct pieces: a brief introductory letter addressed to Heloise and her sisters, which starts "Petitionis tuae" and ends, according to the epistolary style, "Valere in Christo, sponsae Christi;" then the plan of a rule ("quasi quamdam propositi vestri regulam") for a double monastery, that Peter Abelard himself calls a treatise ("Triperitum instructionis vestrae tractatum"); *Ep.* 8, 1–3, "Abelard's Rule for Religious Women," ed. T. P. MCLAUGHLIN, *Mediaeval Studies* 18 (1956): 241–292, esp. 242 and 243; *Epistolario*, 478 and 480.

5 *Ep.* 6, 3 and 32, and *Ep.* 7, 50, "The Letter of Heloise on Religious Life and Abelard's First Reply," ed. J. T. MUCKLE, *Mediaeval Studies* 17 (1955): 240–281, esp. 242, 253 and 281; *Epistolario*, 334 ("Alterum vero est, ut aliquam nobis regulam instituas"), 378 ("Tibi nunc, domine, dum vivis incumbit instituire de nobis quid in perpetuum tenendum sit nobis") and 476 ("Haec ad novissimarum petitionum tuarum primam, soror in Christo carissima, me satis rescripsisse arbitror...Nunc ut secundum quoque, Domino annuente, perficiam, vestris id meritis et orationibus obtineam"). And we can observe that these passages refer not to the brief introductory letter which opens the so-called "eighth letter," but to the treatise which follows in it.

6 *Catalogue général des manuscrits des bibliothèques publiques des Départements*, vol. 2 (Paris: 1855), 332.

7 J. T. MUCKLE, "Abelard's Letter of Consolation to a Friend (*Historia Calamitatum*)," *Mediaeval Studies* 12 (1950): 163–213, esp. 164.

8 J. MONFRIN (ed.), ABÉLARD, *Historia calamitatum. Texte critique avec une introduction* (Paris: 1959).

assigned it to 1250/1270.<sup>9</sup> The question of the dating is critical: If John Benton could claim in 1972 that the *Correspondence* was a forgery of the second half of the thirteenth century,<sup>10</sup> and if Hubert Silvestre could then uphold it was a forgery made by John of Meun,<sup>11</sup> this was only because we do not have (we believed not to have) a manuscript witness prior to 1300. Lastly, thanks to the critical editions of J. T. Muckle, T. P. McLaughlin and Jacques Monfrin as well as the studies of the late lamented Giovanni Orlandi,<sup>12</sup> we know that, if it is the oldest and the only complete manuscript of the *Correspondence*, the volume of Troyes, because of its specific faults, cannot be the archetype of the entire tradition.

Now, let's look at Manuscript 802. This is a heterogeneous volume which, in addition to the first part that interests us, includes also two Carolingian codicological units. The three parts were only gathered at the beginning of the eighteenth century. On the last folio of the first part, we find the mention: "Robert of Bardis, Parisian chancellor, bought this book in 1347....with four other books from the Parisian chapter."<sup>13</sup> So the oldest place which the witness was explicitly linked with is not Troyes, but Paris.

The one hundred three folios of the first part display the same rule on two columns, never described until now. On 84 % of the pages, the rule is made up of thirty one lines and the handwriting starts above the first line. On 16 % of them, the rule is made up of thirty two lines and the script starts below the first line. Above, below: These words recall to mind the study of Neil Ker, "From 'above Top Line' to 'below Top Line': A Change in Scribal Practice."<sup>14</sup>

The British scholar suggested that, before about 1230, the scribes wrote above the top line of the rule; after that, they wrote below it. So, this first part of the Troyes manuscript, where the scribe still hesitates between the two practices, cannot have been copied at the end of the thirteenth century. I asked six eminent paleographers for their advice. Four of them gave me the same answer: Before 1250. The most precise response came from Patricia Stirnemann: Paris, 1230. So, exit the forgery of the second half of the thirteenth century. In addition, we have now two clues for a Parisian production.

But the other discovery is: This is not a manuscript of the *Correspondence*. Let's start from a very simple principle: When one looks at a manuscript, one must always consider not only the text one is interested in, but the whole codicological unit where

9 F. TRONCARELLI, "Immoderatus amor. Abelardo, Eloisa e Andrea Cappellano," *Quaderni medievali* 24 (1992): 6–58.

10 J. BENTON, "Fraud, Fiction and Borrowing in the Correspondence of Abelard and Heloise," in *Pierre Abélard, Pierre le Vénéral. Les courants philosophiques, littéraires et artistiques en Occident au milieu du XI<sup>e</sup> siècle. Abbaye de Cluny, 2 au 9 juillet 1972* (Paris: 1975), 469–506.

11 H. SILVESTRE, "Réflexions sur la thèse de J. Benton relative au dossier 'Abélard-Héloïse,'" *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 34 (1977): 211–216.

12 See above n. 7, 4, 8 and 1.

13 "Hunc librum emit Robertus de Bardis, cancellarius Parisiensis, anno 1346, in die beati Benedicti abbatis [March 21, 1347 according to the new style] cum quatuor aliis libris a capitulo Parisiensi."

14 N. R. KER, *Books, Collectors and Libraries. Studies in the Medieval Heritage*, ed. A. G. WATSON (London-Ronceverte: 1985), 71–74.

this piece is included. The first one hundred three folios of the Troyes manuscript were copied by only two scribes and the change of hand intervenes in the middle of the seventh letter; two correctors revised these folios from the beginning to the end; the initial letters are always the same, drawn by the same hand, and we saw that the rule is everywhere identical, with only slight variations which do not correspond to a textual piece. So these first one hundred three folios really form a codicological unit.

In this material unit, there is not only the *Correspondence*, but there are actually six textual pieces: The collection of the eight letters (I); the *Institutiones nostrae* which are the statutes of the Paraclete (II); a chapter of the *Panormia* of Ivo of Chartres about widows, virgins and abbesses (III); three canons of a council of Rouen about nuns (IV); several articles of the Prémontré legislation dedicated to the sisters of the community (V);<sup>15</sup> finally the constitutions compiled in the Council of Aachen in 816 and known as *Rule for the nuns* (VI).<sup>16</sup>

The common topic of this anthology is obviously female religious life. Five pieces (II–VI) are exclusively normative. Only two (I–II) are linked by a common geographical origin: The *Correspondence* and the *Institutiones*. So, geometrically, the central piece of the compilation is the statutes of the Paraclete (II). Before them, the eight letters (I) sound like a historical prologue, the myth (a likely real myth) of the origins which establishes a “textual community,” like Brian Stock says.<sup>17</sup> After them, the four last pieces (III–VI) seem offered as simple elements of comparison with the Paraclete statutes.

Thanks to Patricia Stirnemann, we could date the codicological production: about 1230. Can we date also the compilation of the textual anthology? The *Correspondence* (I) is supposed to have been written in the 1130s. But John Benton noted that, in the same line of the first letter, there is a reference to the Bible where the chapter is quoted according to the traditional system prior to 1225 and there is another expressed according to the system of Stephen Langton, only diffused after 1225. All the witnesses of the *Correspondence* contain this anomaly. So, this is that we call a “fault of archetype” and this archetype is likely posterior to 1225. The *Institutiones nostrae* (II), marvelously published and introduced by Chrysogonus Waddell,<sup>18</sup> were surely written between 1142 and 1147, so—Chrysogonus Waddell deduces—by Heloise herself. Troyes 802 is the only preserved manuscript witness of this very important source. The *Panormia* of Ivo of Chartres (III) is datable 1095 and the reading of Troyes is better than that published in the *Patrologia Latina* among Ivo’s

15 Texts I–V are published in *Patrologia Latina* (henceforth *PL*) 178, 113–326, from the edition of 1616; see below n. 28.

16 Texts II, III and V were identified by D. VAN DEN EYNDE, “En marge des écrits d’Abélard: les *Excerpta ex regulis Paracletensis monasterii*,” *Analecta Praemonstratensia* 38 (1962): 70–84; text V by J. BENTON, “The Paraclet and the Council of Rouen of 1231,” *Bulletin of Medieval Canon Law* 4 (1974): 33–38; text VI by MONFRIN, *Historia calamitatum*, 12–13.

17 B. STOCK, *The Implications of Literacy. Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: 1983), 90–92.

18 C. WADDELL, *The Paraclete Statutes Institutiones nostrae, Troyes, Bibliothèque Municipale, Ms 802, ff. 89r–90v. Introduction, Edition, Commentary* (Gethsemani Abbey: 1987).

works.<sup>19</sup> As John Benton established, the canons of Rouen (IV) are only known by another manuscript of Avranches, formerly Mont-Saint-Michel, which begins with this rubric: “Provincial council celebrated at Rouen in 1231 under Maurice archbishop and his suffragans.”<sup>20</sup> For the two common canons it records, Troyes reading is better than Avranches one. The articles of the Prémontré legislation (V) were dated by Damien Van den Eynde: 1174–1236/1238.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, for the most recent ones, the content is similar to the big legislative revision which started at Prémontré in 1234 and ended between 1236 and 1238.<sup>22</sup> But it’s not exactly the same text: It sounds like a draft of the final redaction. My conclusion is: These articles were copied after the beginning of the works of revision at Prémontré, but before the final redaction, so between 1234 and 1238.

Thus, we can see that the likely date of the codicological production of the first part of the Troyes 802 and the likely date of the compilation of the textual anthology that it contains are very close: Decade 1230.<sup>23</sup>

Now, let’s resume the mathematical equation we just obtained: We need to find a person, active in the decade 1230, preferably in Paris and close to the cathedral chapter, interested by female religious life, who could know the two most recent and least diffused pieces of the textual anthology contained in the first codicological unit of Troyes 802, Canons of Rouen (IV) and internal works of the reform of Prémontré (V). There is a man who, in 1231, gave the new archbishop Maurice of Rouen the *pallium*; in 1237, was in charge, according to Gregory IX’s commandment, of reforming the discipline in the Prémontré order in company of Maurice’s successor; founded the monastery of Les Filles-Dieu in Paris and was very close to the cathedral chapter of the city, because he is William of Auvergne, bishop of Paris from 1228 to 1249, one of the greatest secular theologians of the thirteenth century.<sup>24</sup>

To whom was the anthology dedicated? Surely to Ermengarde, abbess of the Paraclete from 1209 to 1248. Who else would have been more interested than she was? Furthermore, only she was able to address to William of Auvergne the statutes of the monastery (II) and also, I presume, the original of the *Correspondence* (I), until then unpublished.<sup>25</sup> Why did William of Auvergne intervene? He was not the ordinary bishop of the monastery which, anyway, enjoyed a partial pontifical exemption. We can observe two things: firstly, if one looks at Gregory IX’s registers in these precise

19 IVO OF CHARTRES, *Panormia*, lib. III, cap. 187–215, in *PL* 161, 1175–1182.

20 Avranches, BM, 149, f. 148ra: “Concilium provinciale celebratum Rothomagi anno gratiae .mccexxi. sub Mauricio archiepiscopo et ejus suffraganeis.”

21 VAN DEN EYNDE, “En marge des écrits d’Abélard,” 70–75.

22 *Les statuts de Prémontré réformés sur les ordres de Grégoire IX et d’Innocent IV au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. P. F. LEFÈVRE (Louvain: 1946).

23 Likely after 1225 because of Text I; certainly after 1231 because of Text IV, after 1234 but before 1238 because of Text V.

24 N. VALOIS, *Guillaume d’Auvergne, évêque de Paris (1228–1249). Sa vie et ses ouvrages* (Paris: 1880). If some clues seem to indicate that the anthology was produced in the milieu of William of Auvergne, its real compiler might also have been some cleric of William’s entourage, for instance some canon of the cathedral chapter. Thus, each time I use the name of the bishop, I beg to consider he is only the convenient personalization of a social group.

25 I distinguish here the original, written or dictated by the author(s), from the archetype, a fair copy of the text which is the departure of its real “edition”.

years, one can find a lot of letters addressed to female monasteries, in particular to Agnes of Prague;<sup>26</sup> secondly, though he supports mainly the king, William of Auvergne was often used by Gregory IX such as a kind of temporary legate for the Northern part of the Kingdom. Female religious life was one of the great concerns of the pope. The bishop of Paris was usually an efficient agent of his. Even if the suggestion of the anthology came from the abbess of the Paraclete, canonically, only Gregory IX was in position to give to the bishop of Paris the order to compile it.

The anthology is focused on a solemn edition of the *Institutiones nostre* (II), with a long historical prologue (I) and a collection of similar normative texts (III–VI). The global composition claims the legitimacy of the Paraclete legislation. Why was such an operation necessary in the decade 1230? If one looks at the Paraclete cartulary, one can find interesting information. Firstly, Abbess Ermengarde's time in office is, simultaneously, at the peak of the abbey's prosperity and the beginning of an economic crisis. Secondly, one can read about a strange act, an association of prayers between Fontevraud and the Paraclete dated 1237.<sup>27</sup> It sounds strange, because this association doesn't resolve any *calumnia*. And the abbess of Fontevraud herself, Adele, was amazed by the initiative of Ermengarde of the Paraclete, who went to the monastery founded by Robert of Arbrissel with three priests and four sisters, whereas the *Institutiones nostre* strictly forbade the nuns to go out of the enclosure. Didn't the beginning of the economic crisis at the Paraclete provoke Ermengarde's will to reform her congregation? We know that any reformation is always a return to the origins.

But, if the anthology was dedicated to the abbess of the Paraclete, why did the Troyes manuscript remain until 1347 in Paris? That looks absurd. When François d'Amboise and André Duchesne published in 1616 the first printed edition of Peter Abelard's works,<sup>28</sup> they used a manuscript which was in that time kept at the Paraclete and that at least included the *Correspondence* (I), the *Institutiones* (II), the excerpt of the *Panormia* (III), the canons of Rouen (IV) and the articles of Prémontré (V). Jacques Monfrin presumed it was the twin brother of Troyes volume,<sup>29</sup> whereas Constant Mews thought that it was the same manuscript which is at present preserved in Troyes.<sup>30</sup> I am not able to resolve this delicate debate,<sup>31</sup> but it seems to me logical that William of Auvergne had produced two manuscripts: one he sent to the abbess and

26 *Les registres de Grégoire IX, recueil des bulles de ce pape publiées ou analysées d'après les manuscrits originaux du Vatican*, ed. L. AUVRAY (Paris: 1890–1955).

27 *Cartulaire de l'abbaye du Paraclet*, ed. C. LALORE (Paris: 1878), 196–197.

28 *Petri Abaelardi philosophi et theologi, abbatis Rayensis, et Heloisae conjugis ejus, primae Paracletensis abbatissae, Opera, nunc primum edita ex mms. codd. v. illust. Francisci Amboesii, equitis, regis in sanctiore consistorio consiliarii, baronis Chartrae, &c. cum ejusdem Praefatione apologetica, & censura doctorum Parisiensium* (Paris: 1616); or *Petri Abaelardi Sancti Gildasii in Britannia abbatis, et Heloisae conjugis ejus, quae postmodum prima coenobii Paracletensis abbatissa fuit Opera nunc primum ex mms. codd. eruta & in lucem edita, studio ac diligentia Andreae Quercetani, Turonensis* (Paris: 1616).

29 MONFRIN, *Historia calamitatum*, 16–18.

30 C. J. MEWS, "La bibliothèque du Paraclet du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle à la Révolution," *Studia Monastica* 27 (1985), 31–60, esp. 42–46.

31 Constant Mews' argument is: Troyes 802 includes, f. 102vb, the epitaphs of Peter Abelard and Heloise as well as Peter Abelard's absolution by Peter the Venerable, written by a hand of the fifteenth century. Where might the model of these brief texts have been found, except at the Paraclete?

another he kept in his chapter library.

We saw that all the manuscripts of the *Correspondence* include the same fault of biblical reference. So all of them do descend from an archetype likely posterior to 1225. However, on one hand, we know that the Troyes volume cannot be philologically the model of the other witnesses. On the other hand, it is hard to trust that a manuscript preserved at the Paraclete might have been the archetype of the textual tradition, for who would have gone to this remote monastery in order to copy the *Correspondence*? We must imagine that, beside the present Troyes manuscript, William of Auvergne kept the first version of his anthology, which thus became the archetype of the *Correspondence*:<sup>32</sup> first the model of the volumes produced for Paris and the Paraclete which included the entire anthology (I–VI), then the model for the chiefs of the different branches which selected the only epistolary exchange (I).

Now, from this new point of departure, which is made up of some solid observations but also a large part of hypothesis, we can start to study the specific problem of the *Correspondence*, with two questions: What happens after? What happened before?

After is quite simple. Never again were Peter Abelard and Heloise's letters copied with the Paraclete material. They lost any relationship with the local story of the monastery. Moreover, that we call the last letter of Peter Abelard actually contains a brief introductory letter followed by a long treatise, which exposes his normative proposal for an ideal Paraclete which never existed.<sup>33</sup> Since the Latin manuscript 2923 of the National Library of Paris that Petrarch owned, we can see that the treatise is absent. Then, the introductory letter is also forgotten in John of Meun's French translation.<sup>34</sup> This is a second very fast step that mainly cancels the elements which interest female religious life and focuses on the love story between the former husband and wife. Cut from the Paraclete regulations, the epistolary exchange has become a utopia, according to the etymological meaning. Here was born the *Correspondence* of John of Meun, Petrarch or Étienne Gilson;<sup>35</sup> the *Correspondence* that, legitimately, Peter von Moos claims to study in itself and for itself.<sup>36</sup> This new text is above all a testimony about the discovery and reception of the humanism of the first half of the twelfth century in the second half of the thirteenth century.

Obviously, the other question is more fascinating: What happened before 1230? To confront this topic, we have at present a big advantage: We know how William of Auvergne worked. Indeed we can see how he treated the five other texts (II–VI) he

32 In this archetype, the *Correspondence* might be whether a fair copy of the original come from the Paraclete, or whether the original itself only slightly corrected.

33 See above n. 4.

34 Paris, BnF, Fr. 920.

35 É. GILSON, *Héloïse et Abélard. Études sur le Moyen Âge et l'humanisme* (Paris: 1938).

36 P. VON MOOS, "Le silence d'Héloïse et les idéologies modernes," in *Pierre Abélard, Pierre le Vénérable*, 425–468; Id., "Palatini quaestio quasi peregrini. Ein gestriger Streitpunkt aus der Abaelard-Heloïse-Kontroverse nochmals überprüft," *Mittelalterliches Jahrbuch* 9 (1973): 124–158; Id., "Abaelard, Heloise ihr Paraklet: ein Kloster nach Mass. Zugleich eine Streischrift gegen die ewige Wiederkehr hermeneutischer Naivität," in G. MELVILLE and M. SCHÜRER (ed.), *Das Eigene und das Ganze. Zum Individuellen im mittelalterlichen Religiosentum* (Münster: 2002), 563–619.

inserted into his anthology. Chrysogonus Waddell summarizes his study on the *Institutiones nostre* (II) in this way: “Not one word in the *Institutiones* suggests an influence on the part of any thirteenth-century text or institution.”<sup>37</sup> So the compiler respected the central piece of his anthology. Among the *Panormia* of Ivo of Chartres (III), he decided to select the only chapter in relationship with his topic, about religious life of widows and virgins. We saw that his reading is excellent. For the canons of Rouen (IV) and the articles of the Prémontré legislation (V), the readings are good, too, and the compiler retained just the items dedicated to the nuns. In the long text of the constitutions of Aachen (VI), he rejected the first six chapters, which are a long patchwork of patristic citations, and kept only the very normative chapters. In the Troyes manuscript, the prologue and one of the remaining chapters of the Carolingian constitutions are slightly different from the reading published in the *Monumenta Germaniae historica*:<sup>38</sup> It is hard to guess here an intentional intervention; maybe William of Auvergne dispensed a different version of the constitutions. So, he globally is a faithful editor, who at the very most cuts the texts he has chosen, but never changes radically their content.

Let’s look now at the *Correspondence*. Correcting the original, which he received from the Paraclete according to my hypothesis, William of Auvergne likely either added a new biblical citation or only modified the reference to the chapter, introducing the system he was used to quoting. If we look for a cut, we can see that the logical chain from a letter to the following one is apparently correct. So, no cut inside. But, as Chrysogonus Waddell already noticed, the end of the last letter sounds unusual. In the last 13 % of the long treatise which offers a rule for an ideal Paraclete, Peter Abelard has stopped speaking of normative issues and is developing now a insistent plea in favor of the study of the Holy Writ,<sup>39</sup> with a quotation of Jerome which sounds like a motto: “Love the science of the letters and you will not love the vices of the flesh.”<sup>40</sup> And so we arrive to the end of the letter with a new allusion to Jerome, but without any real conclusion or greeting.<sup>41</sup>

Chrysogonus Waddell suggested that the ninth letter published in the *Patrologia Latina*, from the printed edition of 1616, might be the continuation of the treatise. This letter is entitled *De studio litterarum*.<sup>42</sup> It starts without any form of address or greeting, but with a reference to Jerome, who advised the virgins of Christ to study the Holy Writ. The whole letter is dedicated to this topic and is clearly addressed to a

37 WADDELL, *The Paraclete Statutes*, 201.

38 *Institutio sanctimonialium Aquisgranensis*, ed. A. WERMINGHOFF, in *Concilia aevi Karolini*, vol. 1 (Hannover-Leipzig: 1906, reprint. 1979 = *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Legum sectio III Concilia*, 2), 421–456.

39 *Ep.* 8, 105–117, “Abelard’s Rule”, 285–292; *Epistolario*, 634–656.

40 *Ep.* 8, 113, “Abelard’s Rule”, 289; *Epistolario*, 648 (“Ama scientiam litterarum et carnis vitia non amabis”).

41 *Ep.* 8, 117, “Abelard’s Rule”, 292; *Epistolario*, 656.

42 PETER ABELARD, *Letters IX–XIV. An Edition with an Introduction*, ed. E. R. SMITS (Groningen: 1983), 219–237; *Epistolario*, 666–696. In fact, the recent Italian edition of the *Correspondence* includes very rightly this letter.

female religious community,<sup>43</sup> like the eighth letter where *tu* disappears after the first sentence of the prologue and is replaced by *vos*.<sup>44</sup> The ninth letter is preserved today only in a manuscript witness: Paris, National Library, Latin 14511. In this medieval volume, written by the same scribe, there is another of Peter Abelard and Heloise's common works: The *Problemata*, which we know exclusively through this manuscript of this National Library. The *Problemata* are forty-two questions addressed by the nuns of the Paraclete to Peter Abelard, mainly in order to clear some obscurities of the Holy Writ.<sup>45</sup> They are introduced by a short letter of Heloise herself.<sup>46</sup> She reports there that Peter Abelard often exhorted them to study the Scriptures. Out of the four allusion or quotations extracted from Jerome and used in Heloise's letter,<sup>47</sup> three were already present in the ninth letter of Peter Abelard, *De studio litterarum*.<sup>48</sup> The same game still goes on. So I put forward the hypothesis that the *Correspondence* that William of Auvergne received from the Paraclete perhaps included also the ninth letter and the *Problemata*, the height of the intellectual dialogue of the couple.

Let's admit that these two more pieces were part of the folder that Abbess Ermengarde sent to the bishop. His goal was institutional and normative. He kept the beginning of the development about the study of the Scriptures. But after that, he realized it was too long, too far from his specific task. So he cut the end of the letter and, a fortiori, the *Problemata* which followed. Actually, according to this hypothesis, the manuscript of the National Library should preserve the remnants of the original, eliminated by William of Auvergne as he was used to doing with the parts of the texts he published which weren't in narrow relationship with his proposal.

Even if there are some codicological and philological clues in favor of such a hypothesis, there are no real evidences. It must be clear that this reconstitution of the original of the *Correspondence* transmitted to William of Auvergne by Ermengarde of the Paraclete is, more than ever, a speculation.

What about the step before? Now, we are absolutely deprived of codicological support. Fabio Troncarelli hoped he found some material indications still in the Troyes manuscript, when he realized that a lot of passages are scratched out and written again on the scratching.<sup>49</sup> Unfortunately, these corrections probably do not

43 Actually, this piece is addressed to the sisters more than to their "mother," who is cited three times for her knowledge of Hebrew, Greek and Latin languages; *Epistolario*, 684–686, 686 and 690.

44 *Ep.* 8, 1, "Abelard's Rule," 242; *Epistolario*, 478 ("Petitionis *tuae* parte iam aliqua prout potuimus absoluta, superest Domino annuente de illa quae restat parte tam *tuis* quam spiritualium *tuarum* filiarum desideriis complendis operam dare. Restat quippe iuxta praedictae *vestrae* postulationis ordinem aliquam *vobis* institutionem quasi quamdam propositi *vestri* regulam a nobis scribi et *vobis* tradi ut certius ex scripto quam ex consuetudine *habeatis* quid eos sequi conveniat").

45 *Petri Abaelardi Opera hactenus seorsim edita nunc primum in unum collegit textum ad fidem librorum editorum scriptorumque recensuit, notas, argumenta, indices adjecit Victor Cousin*, vol. 1 (Paris: 1849), 237–294.

46 *Epistolario*, 740–742.

47 *Epistolario*, 740 (JEROME, *Expositio in Epistolam ad Galatas*), 740 (JEROME, *Ep.* 127), 740 (JEROME, *Ep.* 65) and 742 (JEROME, *Ep.* 125).

48 *Epistolario*, 666 (JEROME, *Ep.* 125), 680 (JEROME, *Ep.* 127) and 680 (JEROME, *Expositio in Epistolam ad Galatas*).

49 TRONCARELLI, "Immoderatus amor," 10 and 18–20.

hide, like Fabio Troncarelli would have liked, the oldest *recensio* of the letters. They only permitted the first corrector to complete passages which were incomplete, mainly because of “jumps from the same to the same.”<sup>50</sup>

So, we can only reason on textual basis, external and internal. First, I would like to bring a new piece of evidence that the material of the *Correspondence* is material of the twelfth century. On one hand; we can be sure that Peter Abelard knew Robert of Arbrissel, since, in one of his letters, he defends Robert against Roscelin of Compiègne’s attacks.<sup>51</sup> On the other hand, everybody has noticed that, in the *History of my Calamities*, there is a clear, even if implicit, allusion against Fontevraud: Women, according to Peter Abelard, should not command other women and, even less, clerics inside a religious mixed community.<sup>52</sup> It’s not a contradiction. Peter Abelard admires sincerely Robert and he shares the same proposal: to organize a mixed community. But he disagrees with him on some dispositions. In the prologue of the eighth letter, Peter Abelard tells Heloise and her sisters he is going to offer them a new rule, relying “on the numerous writings of the holy Fathers or the best customs of the monasteries.”<sup>53</sup> What was the example which everybody was thinking of in this first half of the twelfth century, if not Fontevraud?

I recently discovered the oldest version of the statutes of Fontevraud. They were written by Robert of Arbrissel, completed by the abbess Petronilla of Chemillé, submitted to the pope, Calixtus II, in 1119. They were in force at Fontevraud until 1149.<sup>54</sup> If one compares these statutes and the eighth letter of the *Correspondence*, one can understand that the whole letter—and especially the long treatise on the rule of an ideal Paraclète which follows the prologue—is a kind of *disputatio pro et contra* with Robert of Arbrissel’s project: a monastic *Sic et non*. The main issue is “Who must command? Men or women?” “The *praepositus* or the *diaconissa*?” At the beginning,

50 DALARUN, “Nouveaux aperçus.”

51 PETER ABELARD, *Letters IX–XIV*, 280. For a complete reconstitution of Abelard’s relationship with Fontevraud, see C. J. MEWS, “Negotiating the Boundaries of Gender in Religious Life: Robert of Arbrissel and Hersende, Abelard and Heloise”, *Viator* 37 (2006): 113–148; “Testimonia minora,” ed. D. POIREL, in *Les deux Vies de Robert d’Arbrissel, fondateur de Fontevraud. Légendes, écrits et témoignages—The Two Lives of Robert of Arbrissel, Founder of Fontevraud: Legends, Writings, and Testimonies*, ed. J. DALARUN, G. GIORDANENGO, A. LE HUËROU, J. LONGÈRE, D. POIREL and B. L. VENARDE (Turnhout: 2006), 622–632. See also the forthcoming article of C. J. MEWS, “Robert d’Arbrissel, Roscelin et Abélard”, *Revue Mabillon*.

52 *Ep.* 1, 51, “Abelard’s Letter of Consolation,” 208–209; *Epistolario*, 224 (“Unde non mediocriter miror consuetudines has in monasteriis dudum inolevisse, quod, quemadmodum viris abbates, ita et feminis abbatissae praeponantur et eiusdem regulae professione tam feminae quam viri se astringant, in qua tamen pleraque continentur quae a feminis tam praelatis quam subiectis nullatenus possunt adimpleri. In plerisque etiam locis, ordine perturbato naturali, ipsas abbatissas atque moniales clericis quoque ipsis, quibus subest populus, dominari conspiciamus et, tanto facilius eos ad prava desideria inducere posse, quanto eis amplius habent praesesse, et iugum illud in eos gravissimum exercere”).

53 *Ep.* 8, 2, “Abelard’s Rule,” 243; *Epistolario*, 480 (“ex multis sanctorum patrum documentis vel consuetudinibus monasteriorum optimis”).

54 J. DALARUN, “Les plus anciens statuts de Fontevraud,” in ID. (ed.), *Robert d’Arbrissel et la vie religieuse dans l’Ouest de la France. Actes du colloque de Fontevraud, 13–16 décembre 2001* (Turnhout: 2004), 139–172; ID., “*Capitula regularia magistri Roberti*: de Fontevraud au Paraclète,” *Académie des Inscriptions & Belles-Lettres. Comptes rendus des séances de l’année 2003, novembre-décembre*, 1601–1636; “Les statuts de Fontevraud,” ed. ID., in *Les deux Vies de Robert d’Arbrissel*, 325–431.

Peter Abelard wants the man to lead and, at the end, he says that this male superior must actually be submissive to the female superior. And he comments: “The more one will have humiliated oneself, the more it’s certain one is glorified before God.”<sup>55</sup> So, eventually, he agrees with Robert of Arbrissel.

But he disagrees too about little details of the daily life. “All that infirmity would ask, food, baths or anything else, should be allowed.”<sup>56</sup> Peter Abelard’s permission looks deny two Robert of Arbrissel’s prohibitions: “They never must eat flesh, even the infirm ones” and “They never must use baths, except the girls.”<sup>57</sup> Another concern is expressed by Peter Abelard in the statement: “Nobody must be indignant if clothes or anything else are given to another sister who needs them more.”<sup>58</sup> This sentence sounds like a reply to Robert of Arbrissel’s article: “They must not exchange with each other their clothes.”<sup>59</sup> These three articles are present only in the oldest version of the statutes of Fontevraud. After 1149, they disappear. So, the material used in the last letter of the *Correspondence*—and especially in the long treatise summarized or removed by all the witnesses except the Troyes manuscript—is authentically material of the first half of the twelfth century.

And now, we are exclusively facing the text of the eight letters. Can we find some anomalies within them? Let’s distinguish between structural and isolated anomalies.

The *Correspondence* pretends to be an alternated exchange between two authors. Firstly, we know that we have preserved few epistolary collections of the twelfth century which respect such a disposition. Secondly, it is not an alternated exchange: Peter Abelard’s first letter is not addressed to Heloise, but to an anonymous friend he tries to relieve telling him his own calamities. The two last letters are really dedicated to Heloise, but both are written by Peter Abelard. This means that, out of the eight items, three only are Heloise’s works; and out of the five written by Peter Abelard, only two, the third and fifth, are inserted between two of Heloise’s letters.

It is hard to trust the pretense of the first letter, the so-called *History of my Calamities*, addressed to a friend that Heloise ultimately received. It sounds like a fiction. Who was this friend? Why haven’t we kept a manuscript recording only the *History of my Calamities*? How did Heloise know about the letter sent to another? That’s much too incredible, there are too many improbabilities. So, I wonder if this piece was not added after the original exchange. Since someone planned to “publish” the *Correspondence*—it means to present the epistolary exchange as a coherent work

55 *Ep.* 8, 43, “Abelard’s Rule,” 260; *Epistolario*, 542 (“Et quanto amplius hic humiliaverit se apud Deum amplius exaltari certum sit”).

56 *Ep.* 8, 46, “Abelard’s Rule,” 261; *Epistolario*, 544 (“Quidquid infirmitas postulerit tam de cibis quam de balneis vel quibuscumque aliis est eis indulgendum”).

57 “Les plus anciens statuts de Fontevraud,” 167–168: “Ut carnes et sanguinea nunquam comedant... Ut nullo tempore utantur balneis, exceptis puellulis.”

58 *Ep.* 8, 95, “Abelard’s Rule,” 282; *Epistolario*, 618 (“Nulla penitus indignari praesumat si vestes vel quaecumque alia sibi ab aliquibus transmissa alii quae amplius indiget concedantur sorori”).

59 “Les plus anciens statuts de Fontevraud,” 167: “Ut non mutentur ad invicem vestes suas.”

and offer it out of the private sphere—,<sup>60</sup> such a long historical introduction was necessary in order to respect the rhetorical rule of *expositio*. We cannot deny that only Peter Abelard was able to write this very detailed letter, including philosophical and theological points he knew better than anyone else. If we accept that, it suggests that Heloise could not write, at least could not have written in the original exchange: “Recently, dear, someone brought me by chance the letter you sent to a friend in order to relieve him.”<sup>61</sup> So this scenario means that Peter Abelard wasn’t afraid to add a new piece to the original exchange and intervene in one of Heloise’s original letters.

The two last letters of Peter Abelard are very long. And they were originally longer, if we trust that *De studio litterarum* was the logical end of the treatise included in the eighth letter. Anyhow, beginning with the *History of my Calamities* and ending by a huge dissertation, the general structure of the *Correspondence* is the perfect *exemplum* of an important law: The male must always have the first and the last words. If one wants to add the *Problemata* to the whole, it changes nothing: The male has still the first and the last words.

The study of that I called the isolated anomalies may fill an entire life. Let’s just cite one of them. In the treatise included in the eighth letter, Peter Abelard refers to a previously used quotation with the mention: “ut iam satis alibi meminimus,”<sup>62</sup> whereas the first quotation was in the sixth letter, which was written by Heloise.<sup>63</sup> Unless we consider that Peter Abelard refers to the collective author he forms with his former wife, it might suggest that there were internal slippages between his and her parts.

I accept indeed the old, comforting thesis according to which Peter Abelard was the re-writer of the *Correspondence*.<sup>64</sup> In my opinion, he transformed an original epistolary exchange into a novel, an initiatory way from the flesh to conversion, from the intuition to the institution and from daily government to intellectual life. As Georges Duby said, the *Correspondence*—not in the assertions of each one of the two authors, but through the general process of the whole work—could have been a treatise written by Bernard of Clairvaux himself: Carnal love is converted to divine

60 I believe that this operation was planned in the twelfth century, but this plan was not executed in that time.

61 *Ep.* 2, 1, “The Personal Letters between Abelard and Heloise,” ed. J. T. Muckle *Mediaeval Studies* 15 (1953): 47–94, esp. 68; *Epistolario*, 234 (“Missam ad amicum pro consolatione epistolam, dilectissime, vestram ad me forte quidam nuper attulit”). I willingly confess that this point is the most debatable in my reconstruction: in fact, one should imagine that all the references to the *History of my Calamities* in Heloise’s first letter were introduced afterwards by Abelard.

62 *Ep.* 8, 37, “Abelard’s Rule,” 258; *Epistolario*, 534.

63 *Ep.* 6, 27; “The Letter of Heloise,” 252; *Epistolario*, 374. In the same way, P. VON MOOS, “Le silence d’Héloïse,” 437, n. 21, noticed that in the fifth letter, when Peter Abelard wanted to recall a quotation he had already used, he wrote: “ut iam supra memini” (*Ep.* 5, 20, “The Personal Letters,” 91; *Epistolario*, 318), whereas the first quotation was in his previous letter (*Ep.* 3, 13, “The Personal Letters,” 77; *Epistolario*, 266). Actually, the same quotation is also present in the beginning of the fifth letter (*Ep.* 5, 2, “The Personal Letters,” 84; *Epistolario*, 294).

64 “Comforting,” for such a thesis may save Heloise from having written some of the misogynous sentences present in the letters attributed to her.

love.<sup>65</sup> But here, the allegoric significance was also a historical reality. The carnal love was real and the castration happened. The metaphor was made of flesh and blood. And here the strength of the *Correspondence*.

Several times, I have used the expression “the original exchange,” for I am convinced that the *Correspondence* is not entirely a literary fiction, far from it. If the *History of my Calamities* is an addition of the second step (which would be Peter Abelard’s re-writing), it was not in the original exchange. So the first message opening the original epistolary exchange was not a letter of Peter Abelard, but a letter of Heloise. We can observe that in the present fifth letter, which was written by Peter Abelard, there is a long quotation from the present second letter, which was written by Heloise.<sup>66</sup> This passage was surely hers. And he quotes her in order to reply angrily: “Please stop these words and these kinds of reproaches which are very far from charitable love!”<sup>67</sup>

I believe that the original exchange was born from Heloise’s question, more exactly from Heloise’s complaint and criticism preserved in her first letter. The reproach is: You gave us a land, planted us here (in French slang, it means to abandon someone), but after that, forgetful of the whole past, you kept silent and didn’t give us any rule of life nor a complete specific liturgy. Or: I always did what you told me, but you didn’t do the same. And eventually: You should rather excite me towards God now than towards lust in the past. If there is something Peter Abelard could not resist, it was a criticism or a challenge: See all his intellectual debates. So he reacted, first answering Heloise, then building with the material of this real exchange an epistolary novel: You complained that I kept silence; you will hear me now.

This means that Heloise had originally the first word. But she had the last too. Peter Abelard’s “quasi-rule” for the Paraclete<sup>68</sup> was only a plan for a mixed community which never existed. The *Institutiones nostre* were very likely written by Heloise in the first person of the plural: In the Middle Ages (and not only then), man says *ego* when woman says *nos*; one can observe the same thing with Francis and Clare of Assisi. The *Institutiones nostre* are not an ideal intellectual plan, they are the real norm of the real community of the Paraclete. Only Heloise projected Peter Abelard’s plan into the history, modifying it along the way. The statutes are datable 1142/1147. These dates are related to the foundations of the two first priories which emanated from the abbey. But we cannot forget that 1142 is also the year of Peter Abelard’s death.

In 1143, Heloise received a letter from Peter the Venerable where we are used to reading above all the announcement of Peter Abelard’s death. Actually, we must not forget that this letter is first an answer. And what does Peter reply? Yes, it can happen “that women command other women” (contrary to that Peter Abelard wrote very probably against Fontevraud); yes, the study of the letters is a good activity in a female monastery; yes, the *religio* of Heloise is admirable and the merit of her female

65 G. DUBY, *Dames du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, vol. 1 (Paris: 1995), 73–110.

66 *Ep.* 2, 4, “The Personal Letters,” 68; *Epistolario*, 236.

67 *Ep.* 5, 8–9, “The Personal Letters,” 86; *Epistolario*, 300–302 (“Quiesce, obsecro, ab his dictis, et huiusmodi querimonias comescere quae a visceribus caritatis absistunt longissime”).

68 *Ep.* 8, 1, “Abelard’s Rule,” 242; *Epistolario*, 478 (“quasi quamdam propositi vestri regulam”).

community is great, at least as great as Marcigny.<sup>69</sup> Wasn't the answer of Peter the Venerable also a help for Heloise's reflection about the institutional organization and intellectual life of the Paraclete? Without repeating here the old story of the liberated widow, we can yet note, through many other examples, that the spiritual children can start their own life only when the troublesome founder disappears. So did "the very wise Heloise." Thus she really had the last word of the story.

69 "Lettre de Pierre le Vénéralbe, abbé de Cluny, à Héloïse, abbesse du Paraclet, pour lui annoncer la mort d'Abélard," ed. G. CONSTABLE and M. ZINK, in *Pierre Abélard, Pierre le Vénéralbe*, 21–37; *Epistolario*, 756–770, esp. 762–764 ("Sed nec omnino apud mortales insolitum est feminas feminis principari.... Satiabis hoc exiguo vitae mortalis tempore, et beatas sorores aperta praedicatione.... Quae licet omnia et fortassis maiora, cum tibi datis a Deo collegis habeas, licet forte nihil ad sacrarum rerum studium pertinens tibi addi possit, augetur tamen augmento gratiarum tuarum, non parvis ut arbitror commodis, res publica nostra"). When Peter the Venerable mentions Heloise's *religio*, *ibidem*, 764, one can wonder if he thinks of her personal devotion or, according to the most usual meaning of the word in the Middle Ages, of the organization of her religious community.