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Exegesis to support

HELOISE

A screenplay submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the degree

DOCTOR OF CREATIVE ARTS

from

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

RIE NATALENKO, BA (Hons), Dip Ed, M Ed (hons), MCA

FACULTY OF CREATIVE ARTS

2005

CERTIFICATION

I, Rie Natalenko, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Creative Arts, in the Faculty of Creative Arts, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Rie Natalenko

15 September 2005

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ABSTRACT

Heloise

Heloise is a screenplay based on the true story of Heloise and Abelard, who lived in Paris in the twelfth century. It spans the period of their lives from the time they met until they were parted when Abelard was castrated and Heloise entered a convent. It is told in flashback from 1142, the year of Abelard's death.

The accompanying exegesis addresses the research comprised in writing the screenplay. It explores the background information essential in establishing the historical context of the action. This includes the characteristics of the historical personages, which were extrapolated from their own writings and from what was written about them. Using this as a foundation, the requisite auxiliary characters could be created. The contemporaneous societal conditions, social attitudes and the philosophical beliefs of the time were studied in order for the background of the screenplay to be accurate in its historical contextualisation.

The genre of the screenplay was determined by the nature of the story — it is a historical romantic drama. However, comedic elements have been included in order to lighten the mood of the piece and create a contrast with the inevitable tragic ending.

The second half of the exegesis explores current thinking on the craft of screenwriting, and discusses and clarifies my choices of approach and the process of writing. I then analyse the development of selected scenes in terms of traditional screenwriting strategies and the modern developments in the techniques of screenwriting.

Acknowledgments

Sincere thanks is due to Shady Cosgrove for her academic guidance, to Gillian Leahy for her support and to Hal Croasmun for his unfailing professional enthusiasm and consistently accurate observations and subtle direction in my learning process.

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Heloise

A screenplay by Rie Natalenko

SECTION ONE: SYNOPSIS OF HELOISE (as required by producers)¹

One-sentence pitch

The true but tragic story of the greatest romance of the 12th century.

Logline

In Twelfth Century Paris, a fifteen-year-old girl and the world's foremost teacher are drawn together by forces of intellect and desire, but their forbidden love is destined to end in tragedy.

Two paragraph synopsis

The true story of a love that never should have been.

The year is 1117. Heloise is fifteen, Abelard is thirty-seven. He is the greatest philosopher alive, a superstar, the most sought after teacher at Notre Dame, but he meets his match in the beautiful, witty and brilliant Heloise when she contrives to become his student.

Their lessons become nights of unbridled passion... until they are discovered... and he is brutally castrated.

One-page synopsis²

The true story of a love that never should have been.

In Medieval France, few women were educated. But at fifteen, the beautiful, witty and intelligent Heloise allows nothing to deter her when she makes up her mind to be taught by Peter Abelard, the most celebrated and charismatic teacher of his time.

¹ It is important to note that this section comprises the marketing materials for Heloise **as required by producers**. The language used is that which would have the maximum marketing impact, and not necessarily the language of a doctoral exegesis.

² This formats as one page in screenplay industry standard.

She disguises herself as a boy and, with her friend Jacques' help, sneaks into the Notre Dame cathedral school. There she does more than just learn from Abelard – she falls in love with him.

She skilfully convinces her uncle, the Canon Fulbert, to allow Abelard to live with them in exchange for tutoring her. So begins one of the most romantic liaisons in history. In Heloise, Abelard has met his equal in wit, intellect and brilliance, and in spite of the twenty-two-year age difference, their lessons soon develop into wild nights of unbridled passion... until...

...Fulbert discovers them. He banishes Abelard from the house and locks up Heloise before sending her away to be married. With Heloise's cleverness and Jacques' help, Abelard kidnaps Heloise and takes her to his sister's house in Brittany, where their son Astralabe is born, and where they are secretly married.

Why secretly? Well, Abelard can only advance his career by taking holy orders, so marriage is not an option.

And that's how a furious Fulbert decides to get his revenge. He convinces the church to promote Abelard and, when Abelard accepts, exposes him as a liar by revealing that he is married.

For the sake of Abelard's career, Heloise denies their marriage before the church court and so puts herself right back into her uncle's clutches. This time he locks her up, starves and beats her, and it is with great difficulty that Jacques and Abelard are able to rescue her and hide her in a convent.

But Jacques feels that Abelard has treated Heloise very badly by denying their marriage, so the moment she is safe, he betrays Abelard's whereabouts to Fulbert.

Enraged, Fulbert sends his men to find Abelard. They attack and castrate him – cutting off everything. And Heloise? She seals her destiny forever. Unaware of her lover's fate, she frees him from their marriage vows by becoming a nun.

As Jacques relates the story to Astralabe, twenty-three years later, how can he explain his part in this tragedy?

SECTION 2 - BACKGROUND RESEARCH

This supporting statement examines the origins of the idea for writing the work, looks at the major characters, then briefly outlines the necessary historical research before contextualising the screenplay in the body of screenwriting theory which governs modern screenwriting craft.

A. The Lure of the Subject Matter

Preliminary comments

In 1976 when I studied French at University, one of our “cultural studies” texts was *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*. I was captivated and fascinated. Here was a story of a love affair that was timeless, of a young woman who dared to defy the conventions of her time, the disapproval of her family and the condemnation of the church to get the man she wanted. And what a man – the greatest teacher and philosopher of the age. A superstar of the twelfth century. Here was someone whose students flocked to see him wherever he spoke, who was revered by his followers in an almost fanatical manner. He was good looking, he sang, he lectured, he was irreverent and his examples were bawdy – and he was put on a pedestal by all his students. His teachings and his manner polarised the clergy – some loved him, some despised him, but none were indifferent.³

There are many fifteen-year-old groupies today who would go to any length to sleep with the film star of their dreams. And that is precisely what Heloise did. Although the social framework of the twelfth century, the beliefs and customs, differ significantly from those nearly nine hundred years later, the resonances with today’s society are compelling. What attracted me to Heloise was that she actively pursued Abelard, despite the difference in their ages, and that he was her teacher, and that she was a female who would not normally be learning anything like philosophy in the first place⁴. None of that stopped her. I wanted to make this into a movie. I was compelled to write this story and to tell it in a way which would appeal to a modern audience. My aim was, as McKee is so fond of reiterating, a “good story, well told.”⁵ I had found the good story, but the act of subcreation⁶ was still ahead of me.

³ See Abelard, “*Historia Calamitatum*,” in Radice.

⁴ See Amt *et al.*

⁵ See McKee (11-28) This is his catch-phrase which he mentions many times throughout his classes. He claims that although it is the aim of every writer, few take the trouble to study the craft of telling a story well, or they waste their craft on stories that nobody wants to hear.

⁶ See an excellent discussion on subcreation in Tolkien’s *Tree and Leaf*.

The letters

The starting place for research into the lives of Heloise and Abelard were the letters which have been published in English, translated by Betty Radice. In the first of these letters, Abelard writes to an unnamed friend and tells the story of his life. This is referred to as *Historia Calamitatum* or *The Story of My Misfortunes*. There are also four personal letters which Abelard and Heloise wrote to one another – two from Heloise and two from Abelard. Contained in Radice's book are also letters of direction which Abelard wrote to Heloise after an initial request by Heloise, and some additional correspondence between Peter the Venerable and Heloise. While the letters of direction do not add to the story, they provide an insight into the temperaments of Abelard and Heloise and an appreciation of the enormous intellect that both possessed as they argued over philosophical, ethical and theological problems. The main ingredients for the story of their love affair, which is the focus of the screenplay, come from Abelard's *Historia Calamitatum* and the personal letters. It is clear from Heloise's letters that after

Abelard wrote the *Historia Calamitatum*, revealing intimate details

about his personal life with Heloise, it was then published, or in some other way came into Heloise's hands. This happened when they were both in holy orders, long after their affair was over. Heloise writes to Abelard about his story – objecting to some of the things that he says about her motivation, her reasons for acting in certain ways, and her feelings about what happened – rejecting his interpretation of events, and providing her own interpretation of what happened. She refutes, for example, his assertion that he took advantage of her, claiming that it was as much her desire as his (letter 1). These letters were all the primary sources that were available when I began to write in 2002⁷. There was a conscious decision made to work from the letters rather than from secondary accounts of the lives of Heloise and Abelard. This would allow an interpretation of their characters in as original a way as possible, uninfluenced by the various scholastic interpretations of their lives. Each scholar is influenced, perhaps inevitably, by his or her own social mores and the prevailing contemporaneous limits of acceptability. If the Heloise and Abelard of my screenplay were to speak directly to the twenty-first century, then I felt it was most appropriate to reinterpret their own words in the present social context.

⁷ There has recently been published Constance Mews' volume of *The Lost Love Letters of Heloise and Abelard*, but this was not available when I wrote the screenplay. Having read the volume, it is gratifying to realise that my interpretation of neither Abelard nor Heloise is discrepant with what is there, even if these new letters are indeed by Abelard and Heloise, the evidence for which is compelling (3-27).

I have kept the details of the story very close to those of the historical account. There are times when (for the purposes of structure) I have collapsed two events into one – for example, Heloise travelled to Paris to marry, then returned to Brittany and eventually to Paris, while I have her marrying in Brittany and travelling to Paris only once – but for the most part the historical events are painstakingly accurate.⁸ Being accurate to the ideas of the time causes problems in some cases, especially in certain arguments which Heloise presents against marriage. The philosophical ramifications of some of these arguments are counter to modern sensibilities, and others in alignment with modern sensibilities to such an extent that it may seem incredible that Heloise was voicing these in the twelfth century. The popular impression of what a girl would think in the twelfth century is often incongruent with the ideas of Heloise.⁹

The letters not only provide the basis of the story – and many of the details – they also give a very clear idea of the protagonists' characters and attitudes to one another. Their conflicts and arguments, lively disagreements, and Heloise's ability to sway Abelard's opinion, were evident from the letters. From the outset, I determined I would concentrate on the letters as the source of my information, and, to maintain a freshness of interpretation, refer only to the letters for the basic structure of the screenplay and the characterisation of my principals. The letters are, indeed, the main source of everything on which later scholars such as Brower and Guilfooy, for example, base their ideas of Abelard and Heloise's personalities. Although Abelard's philosophical works remain¹⁰, they do not reflect much of the personality of the author.

⁸ See the later detailed discussion on historical accuracy, p 23.

⁹ See Power for an excellent socio-historical overview of the position of medieval women.

¹⁰ Marenbon (1997) provides a particularly good overview of Abelard's philosophical works.

B. Developing the Characters for the Screenplay

Notes on Characterisation

In this section, I discuss the concepts of characterisation which govern the writing of characters for this screenplay, then examine the characters from a historical perspective.

Characters are one of the most important aspects of a screenplay. Heloise and Abelard emerged as characters that I could develop in interesting ways, and could write as characters that actors would want to play. That may seem rather mercenary, but the bottom line with screenwriting is that it is writing for the screen. If it is never produced and never seen, it will not have achieved the medium for which it was written. A novel, a poem and a short story are written to be read. Even a play can be published and available to a textual audience, even though it is written originally for the stage. A screenplay is rarely published, and never published unless it has first been seen on a screen. To do that, the writer must woo producers, directors and actors. As Croasmun, a screenwriting teacher, says,

A screenwriter has a unique set of audiences (readers, agents, actors, producers, directors, movie-goers) and all of them want to become engrossed in compelling characters who are fighting the odds to accomplish some impossible goal (Why Scripts get Turned Down).

Jennifer Lerch also approaches the creation of characters from this same perspective (Lerch 67). But the problem for a screenwriter is how to create such characters. Linda Seeger, in her books *Creating Unforgettable Characters* and *Making a Good Script Great*, discusses the research required for characters, creating consistencies and paradoxes, backstory, and understanding character psychology before a screenwriter can write. She emphasises character development, inter-character relationships and the functions of characters within the story as well as creating multidimensional characters. All these aspects of character must be addressed if characters are to be attractive to actors.

There are many approaches to creating characters and understanding their psychology. I use a character profile sheet for each of my main characters. I refer to this constantly throughout the writing process when searching for a unique slant on a piece of dialogue for a particular character. The key with the character profile sheet is to reach the essence of the character. Some writers suggest writing huge backstories and histories for their characters. I prefer a one-page profile which I can keep as a

constant character focus.¹¹ The character profile covers basic character traits, the character's wants and needs, their paradoxes, a secret, a flaw and details that make that character unique.

1. Basic character traits.

Each character has three or four basic traits that their normal dialogue and actions come from. For Heloise, I selected: intelligent/witty, passionate, hedonistic and nonconformist. Abelard's traits were: brilliant, sexual, arrogant and ambitious. For Jacques, loyal, ambitious, opportunistic and irreverent. It is not the case that more traits are better. A screenplay is a relatively short work in which to know the characters. A character with twenty traits will confuse the audience. Maybe it works in a book, but not on screen. There simply is not enough time to empathise with a character so complex.

2. Characters' wants and needs

Each character wants something, but needs something different. This can be interpreted as external/internal goals. There is something that they are aiming for – their external goal – which they actively pursue throughout the movie. It's important to them and it shows in their actions. But, there's also a need, often an internal goal that may be hidden from them. It may be the reason why they are pursuing their external goal in the first place. In Rocky, for example, Rocky WANTS to fight the world champ and be standing at the end. Rocky NEEDS to be respected. The want directs the action but the need permeates every scene in some way. Heloise wants Abelard, but she needs to find peace and happiness in her life. In Rocky's case, he had both the want and need fulfilled. Heloise gets what she needs, but not what she wants. The want that a character expresses often arises from the person trying to change something in their life to meet the need.

3. Paradoxes

The paradoxes within a character create complexity.

Paradoxes do not negate the consistencies, they simply add to them.

Characters are more interesting if they are made up of mixed stuff, if they have warring elements. To create these warring elements, you begin by establishing one and asking 'Given this element, what other elements might there be in the same person that would create conflict?' (Seeger, 1990 32).

¹¹ See appendix A: original character profiles.

Heloise's paradoxes include that she studies theology and ethics, but that she is hedonistic in her morality. She is also willing to subjugate her free spirit to Abelard. Abelard's chief paradox is even clearer – his desire for Heloise is inconsistent with his ambition.

4. Secrets that make characters vulnerable.

A character with a secret is often a more interesting character. The secret provides opportunities for subtext, suspense, and surprise. Heloise hides her gender from the cathedral authorities and Abelard, she hides her affair from her uncle, she hides her pregnancy from Abelard, and she hides her marriage from the church leaders. She also hides her identity from her son.

5. Flaws that make characters human.

Most great characters have a flaw that they must overcome to achieve their goal. A flaw might be the thing that keeps others from co-operating with the character. It may be the one thing they are most afraid of. Heloise's flaw is her overconfidence, her sense of her own immortality (a common teenage flaw). Abelard's is his arrogance.

6. Details that make characters unique.

Two people could have the same goals, work in the same office, even have similar traits, but the details of their daily lives and the way they live them will always be different. For my characters, I selected a few details that could be mentioned in the script. Heloise loves learning, reads her uncle's books, likes to playact, and her favourite flower is the lily. Abelard wastes his money and he writes and sings love songs. Sometimes, the traits do not end up in the script. I originally wrote that Jacques was afraid of dogs, but the times I used it in the first draft didn't seem to have a really satisfying payoff, so I cut it completely. It did not serve a function for the character.

Using a Character Profile also provides another benefit. During rewrites, these one-page profiles can be used to ensure each character comes across as they should. There is another tool I have found useful in creating characters, and I use this while constructing a character profile. As my characters "emerge" I try to get inside their heads and answer the Briggs-Meyers questionnaire as if I were my characters.¹² The results of the questionnaire lead to a Briggs-Meyers character type, which can be studied and more insights obtained as to the character type. I find this extremely useful. When doing this for my three main characters in this screenplay, Heloise's results

¹² This questionnaire is discussed in detail in Keirse (1998).

showed her to be the “healer” character type, Abelard the “fieldmarshal” and Jacques, the “protector.” From there I was able to achieve further insights into the ways that such characters would interact and develop (see appendix B: Briggs-Meyers questionnaires).

The character of Abelard

Abelard was a very intelligent, extremely learned and revered man. He was a brilliant thinker, teacher and philosopher (Brower and Guilfooy 6), a much admired singer and a poet (Marenbon, 2004 13), an intensely sexual man, magnetically attractive – and he was fully aware of this (Abelard HC 64). He was also arrogant, intolerant of opposition, ambitious and proud.¹³ His very high opinion of himself comes out very clearly in all his letters and especially his story of his own life *Historia Calamitatum*¹⁴, and one wonders at first glance what Heloise could possibly have seen in him. However, his character is not far removed from some of the prima donna “stars” of today, who demand the large trailers on sets, who see themselves as the most important people around and demand to be treated like royalty¹⁵. And hundreds of thousands of young girls all over the world still have their pictures on their walls and save for months to go to see them in person. The evidence for Abelard’s character is to be found in his letters and in Heloise’s letters to him. He does not show any modesty when speaking about himself and his seduction of Heloise. He claims he was confident he would have “an easy success.” He says, “For at that time I had youth and exceptional good looks as well as my great reputation to recommend me, and feared no rebuff from any woman that I might choose to honour with my love” (Abelard HC 66).

It does seem, though, that Abelard was not the only one who thought this. Heloise claims that everyone loved Abelard.

What king or philosopher could match your fame? What district, town or village did not long to see you? When you appeared in public, who did not hurry to catch a glimpse of you, or crane his neck and strain his eyes to follow your departure? Every wife, every young girl desired you in absence and was on fire in your presence; queens and great ladies envied my joys and my bed (Heloise, Letter 1 115).

This sounds very much like the actions of fan girls following a superstar actor or a popular singer today. Fans today are in awe of ‘fame’, rush to see their idol should he appear in a venue close to them, “crane their necks” and “strain their eyes” to see him, and make him the object of their sexual fantasies just as they did in Heloise’s time. It appears that our culture of star worship is not an exclusively modern phenomenon. It

¹³ The tone of *Historia Calamitatum* reflects this clearly.

¹⁴ For an excellent discussion of *Historia Calamitatum*, see McLaughlin 463-488.

¹⁵ See, for example, the discussion of the antics of Marlon Brando, discussed by Bart, Peter and Peter Guber, “The Trouble With Stars”, *The Guardian* (film features) May 2, 2003.

may seem odd that these women (and men) followed a teacher and philosopher, but as Heloise reveals, his attraction of the masses had a cause which was much more accessible to modern sensibilities.

You had besides... two special gifts wherewith to win at once the heart of any woman – your gifts for composing verse and song... you left many love songs and verses which won wide popularity for the charm of their words and tunes and kept your name continually on everyone's lips. The beauty of the airs ensured that even the unlettered did not forget you; more than anything this made women sigh for love of you. And as most of these songs told of our love, they soon made me widely known and roused the envy of many women against me. For your manhood was adorned with every grace of mind and body (Heloise, Letter 1 115).

Abelard's twelfth century fans loved his songs, his music, his fame. Women "sighed" with love for him and the medieval "fangirls" envied his girlfriend and dreamed of sleeping with an attractive man. Abelard was well aware of his charms, and his self assurance and general egotism shows through in many places in his letters – not only in his confidence about his appeal to others, but also in other spheres. The very reason for his writing the *Historia Calamitatum* shows this arrogance. As he says to his friend,

I propose to follow up the words of consolation I gave you in person with the history of my own misfortunes, hoping thereby to give you comfort in absence. In comparison with my trials you will see that your own are nothing, or only slight, and will find them easier to bear. (Abelard, HC 57)

The letter speaks of his prowess in philosophy, which, while undoubtedly true, shows the reader no humility. Abelard's very evident pleasure about causing the downfall of one of his teachers who thought he was not traditional enough suggests enormous self-esteem and lack of intellectual modesty (Abelard HC 58-60). When creating the character of Abelard for the screenplay, I took the basic elements which could be gleaned from his writing and from the letters of Heloise, and added dimensions of my own. I interpreted his actions as stemming from the desire to be known and recognised as the greatest philosopher of the age, but his love for Heloise and his eventual decisions about their love, I attributed to a need to be accepted for who he really was – his private rather than his public persona. I felt that this would be comprehensible to a modern audience, and not incongruous with our knowledge of his historical self.¹⁶

From Abelard's own writings it is evident there are internal paradoxes within his character, all of which create layers of characterisation when developing a screenplay. Firstly, Abelard's affair with Heloise actually violates his religious principles, but he

¹⁶ An excellent dissection of his character in relation to his writings can be found throughout Clanchy, M T, *Abelard: a Medieval Life*, Mass, Blackwell, 1997.

felt himself powerless to fight against his love. It overwhelmed him¹⁷. Secondly, Abelard gives subservience to the church, but thinks himself superior to it. What is more, he recognises this “fault” in himself. Thirdly, his desire for a traditional family life with Heloise is incompatible with his ambition – a driving force in his life. Finally, his sexuality is at odds with the asceticism of his religion.

The character of Heloise

Through the letters, Heloise emerges as a character with many dimensions. If all one read were Abelard’s *Historia Calamitatum*, then one would get the idea that Heloise was a reasonably attractive, intelligent young girl who had little to say about being seduced. But this view says more about Abelard than it does about Heloise. When one reads Heloise’s letters, a very different character shines through. The Heloise who wrote the letters to Abelard is sharply intelligent and witty, passionate and hedonistic and nonconformist. She is ahead of her time in terms of ideas of the place of women and accepted mores (Power 1995)¹⁸, and can twist an argument around to her point of view while remaining polite and respectful, even though one suspects that a lot of the respect might be a little ironic. I did not change the character of Heloise for the screenplay, but on occasion I did change her motivations¹⁹. This was because, as the protagonist of the story, she needed to be strong and proactive at all times²⁰. I felt that extrapolation of the force of her character into incidents where it is not evident in the text of the letters would strengthen the characterisation of Heloise in the screenplay.

The first instance of this extrapolation of character occurs when, in the script, she persuades her uncle to let Abelard stay with them. In the letters, Abelard claims it was his idea, and Heloise says nothing to deny this. However, one can easily imagine that she would actively encourage this course of action. It is clear that she was easily able to persuade her uncle in other regards. Hence, it is not such a stretch of the imagination to have Heloise twist her loving uncle around her finger to allow Abelard, a teacher he much admired, live under their roof and become her tutor. The second

¹⁷ Abelard himself discusses all of these throughout *Historia Calamitatum* and in his letters to Heloise.

¹⁸ In summary, women were the possessions of men. They were ‘owned’ either by their fathers or guardians or their husbands. Furthermore, it was not common for young women to be educated, or if they were, to flaunt that education.

¹⁹ For example, according to Abelard, she takes the veil at the end at Abelard’s suggestion, an assertion which Heloise does not contradict in her letters. However, for the purposes of the screenplay it is a much more powerful action if the decision to break with Abelard and join the church was her own.

²⁰ This is the currently accepted viewpoint in screenwriting theory. For example, “A protagonist is a wilful character.” (McKee 137), “The protagonist usually drives the actions and makes the decisions.” (Aronson 63), “The hero should be the one to act in [the] climactic moment.” (Vogler 206).

incident is far more pivotal to the story. In the letters, both Heloise and Abelard claim it was Abelard's idea that Heloise take the veil. Now historically, this may be so, but it is far more powerful in terms of the screenplay's structure²¹ for Heloise to make that decision on her own – for her to renounce her marriage – as she had already done, in fact, and set her husband free to pursue his ambitions. I have her making that choice simultaneously with Abelard's castration, and this has permitted the development of an extremely powerful dramatic moment²². In fact, she took the veil afterwards, when Abelard told her to, probably to avoid being placed once more into Fulbert's power. Certainly this was a cause of contention between them in the letters, where Heloise shows herself to be intensely frustrated in her role as nun, even though she is the picture of devotion. This writing provides enormous insight into her feelings, and is intensely modern in its openness about sexuality. She writes of how the memories of making love to Abelard keep her awake at night, "betrayed in a movement of my body" and even consume her thoughts during Mass.

In my case, the pleasures of lovers which we shared have been too sweet – they can never displease me, and can scarcely be banished from my thoughts. Wherever I turn, they are always there before my eyes, bringing with them awakened longings and fantasies which will not even let me sleep. Even in the celebration of the Mass, when our prayers should be purer, lewd visions of those pleasures take such a hold on my unhappy soul that my thoughts are on their wantonness instead of on prayers. I should be groaning over the sins I have committed, but I can only sigh for what I have lost. Everything we did and also the times and places are stamped on my heart along with your image, so that I live through it all again with you. Even in sleep I know no respite. Sometimes my thoughts are betrayed in a movement of my body, or they break out in an unguarded word. (Heloise Letter 3 113)

Heloise's enjoyment of the sexual exploits which she and Abelard shared is in no question whatsoever, and her impassioned letters to her former lover are explicit. She deeply regrets having to give them up.

For me, youth and passion and experience of pleasures that were so delightful intensify the torments of the flesh and longings of desire, and the assault is the more overwhelming as the nature they attack is the weaker. (Heloise Letter 3 113)

Heloise's use of the word 'delightful' for the pleasures of the flesh, and her fantasies about lovemaking which stop her from sleeping and which torment her with "lewd visions" even during the "celebration of the Mass" leave no doubt as to her enjoyment of what she has forfeited by entering the convent.

Heloise is remembered as a philosopher in her own right, an educated woman who could hold her own in a debate at a time in history when few women were educated

²¹ See the discussion of the structure on p 58.

²² see the discussion and analysis of this scene on p 91.

(Power 2000 46). It was her mind which attracted Abelard to her in the first place. As he says in *Historia Calamitatum* (66), “In looks she did not rank lowest, while in the extent of her learning she stood supreme. A gift for letters is so rare in women that it added greatly to her charm and had won her renown throughout the realm.” This comment described Heloise before Abelard had taken her as a lover, proving that as a young adolescent she would have been a true prodigy. Indeed, based on her ability and her learning, she was made mother superior of a convent when she was just thirty.

For the purposes of the screenplay, I have made the young Heloise masquerade as a boy in order to attend the lectures at the Cathedral school. Only boys were allowed to attend the formal schools at the time and one can imagine this would be a source of great frustration to a young woman who wanted to learn. I did not feel this was so far from her personality that it would be implausible, especially since she did not hesitate to dress up in order to escape from her uncle later. (Abelard, letter 4 146)

There is one more aspect to Heloise’s personality that is without question, and that is her unwavering love for Abelard. She adores him to distraction, and even years later in her letter refers to him as “beloved” (Heloise, letter 1 109) and does not hide how passionate her feelings for him still are. Even though she is bound to the church she tells Abelard she is his alone (Heloise, letter 3 128). She calls him “my only love”(Heloise, letter 1 118), and claims that,

I would have had no hesitation, God knows, in following you or going ahead at your bidding to the flames of Hell. My heart was not in me but with you, and now, even more, if it is not with you it is nowhere; truly, without you, it cannot exist. (Heloise, letter 1 117)

When he writes to her that his life may be in danger from his enemies, she replies,

But if I lose you, what is left for me to hope for? What reason for continuing on life’s pilgrimage, for which I have no support but you, and none in you save knowledge that you are alive, now that I am forbidden all other pleasures in you and denied even the joy of your presence which from time to time could restore me to myself? (Heloise, letter 3 129)

I have assumed for the purposes of the screenplay that this deep-seated love is one of the main motivations for all of her actions. She, above all things, wants Abelard, but she loves him so deeply she is willing to give up her own ambitions so that he can be successful. In the screenplay, she needs to be accepted and valued and loved for herself, and Abelard does that as much as he can, but he is ambitious, and to a certain extent he is tempted to accept Heloise’s sacrifice.

The paradoxes which inform her personality in the screenplay follow from the evidence of her traits in the letters. Although she studies theology, and is adept in its intricacies,

she is rather amoral. She feels a certain amount of guilt that she has seduced Abelard, but is not at all sorry that it happened – in fact she relishes it with hedonistic pleasure and is proud that “queens and great ladies envied [her] joys and [her] bed” (Heloise, Letter 1 115). She is a free spirit, a nonconformist in the twelfth century, but she is willing to subjugate this to Abelard’s wishes when she feels she cannot talk him round.

The Character of Fulbert.

Fulbert is an historical character, and Abelard provides an insight into his personality in the letters. “Fulbert dearly loved money... [and was] ambitious to further his niece’s education” (Abelard, HC 67). Abelard also states he was the last to believe the rumours about Abelard and Heloise. Abelard’s own writings assert that as a Canon in Paris, Fulbert was influential in the church. From these snippets in *Historia Calamitatum* and the other letters, I have constructed a character who loved his niece, but wanted to benefit from her marriage in some way. Her liaison with Abelard would have been acceptable in terms of prestige, but Abelard would have no chance to be promoted within the church if he were married. Heloise’s pregnancy, and indeed, her affair, would have put paid to any financially beneficial marriage, which Fulbert would have been hoping for. I believe that Fulbert loved and indulged his niece, especially in her desire for knowledge, since he does employ Abelard as her tutor. Heloise also understands Fulbert. She recalls, in her second letter to Abelard, how she tried to tell Abelard that a secret marriage would not satisfy Fulbert, and she was right. Fulbert encouraged Heloise’s education (Abelard, HC 67), and this was very rare in the twelfth century. The education of women was viewed as unnecessary and often undesirable (Amt 74). However, there is no doubt that he was strict with her in her upbringing. He tells Abelard to punish her “severely” if she is not a good pupil (Abelard, HC 67). At one point Abelard claims he was afraid Fulbert would kill him or do him personal injury, but did not because Heloise was with Abelard’s family in Brittany. Abelard also claims that “he [Fulbert] would not hesitate to assault” him (Abelard, HC 69). When Heloise returned to Paris, and was under her uncle’s care, “he heaped abuse on her on several occasions” (Abelard, HC 74). And, of course, he eventually had Abelard brutally castrated, not only removing the testicles, but also the penis. There is a certain satisfaction in writing such a villain, especially one who acted in the first instance out of love for his niece.

The character of Astralabe

When creating the character for Astrolabe, it was necessary to move even further from historical fact and into the realm of fiction. Astralabe was a historical character, of

course, since he was Heloise and Abelard's son. However, very little is known about him. He is mentioned in biographies of Abelard and Heloise, for example those by Glison and Moore, but none cite any evidence to suggest that Heloise saw him after she returned to Paris while he was a baby. It can be assumed he was brought up by Abelard's sister, Denise, in Brittany, where Heloise left him. For the purposes of the screenplay, and to increase dramatic tension, I have created the scenario that Astralabe had no contact with Heloise throughout his childhood, and while he must have known that his Father was Peter Abelard, there is no reason to suppose that he would have been granted access to his mother, who was a nun for most of his life²³. To increase the dramatic tension, Astralabe arrives at the Paraclete, where Heloise is Mother Superior²⁴, to collect his father's effects after Abelard's death. It is there that he learns that the Mother Superior he meets is, in fact, Heloise, his mother. Since the historical Heloise does, in fact, mention Astralabe in a letter written after Abelard's death (Heloise 1144 285), and this is the first time she mentions him as an adult in her letters, this would not be contradicted by any of the historical evidence, although it can hardly be said to corroborate the supposition – simply, there is no evidence available.

The character of Jacques

Jacques is the only one of the four major characters who is not based on a historical character. For the purposes of the screenplay I needed a voice, a perspective through which I could show both Heloise and Abelard, so I devised the idea of a friend for Heloise. At first, the character was merely a tool, someone to whom Heloise could express her opinions. However, Jacques' character became increasingly complex and fun to write, and at one point I seriously considered making him the protagonist. To give Jacques a view into both camps, I also made him Abelard's valet, and eventually decided to make him the servant of whom Abelard writes in his *Historia calamitatum*.

When Abelard speaks of his castration, he says,

Wild with indignation they plotted against me, and one night as I slept peacefully in an inner room in my lodgings, they bribed one of my servants to admit them and there took cruel vengeance on me of such appalling barbarity as to shock the whole world; they cut off the parts of my body whereby I had committed the wrong of which they complained. Then they fled, but the two who could be caught were blinded and mutilated as I had been, one of them being the servant who had been led by greed while in my service to betray his master (Abelard, HC 75).

Originally, it was my intention to mould Jacques' personality so that he could be this servant as well as Heloise's best friend. However, because of Jacques' character

²³ Most convents limited access to men; only priests were permitted access (Power 1995).

²⁴ The Mother Superior of some convents was allowed to meet with men (Johnson 92+).

development, I felt that for him to betray Abelard because of greed would not be in keeping with the character that Jacques had become – empathetic and loyal. I felt he had to betray Abelard because of loyalty to Heloise, and this motivation certainly makes sense in the screenplay. The extent of Jacques' injuries, I also changed. I felt that blinding him would have been excessive. A blind man would not be much use in a convent, although a eunuch may have been permitted to work there on a daily basis.²⁵

Jacques developed into a character who was compelling to write. He is a young lad – sixteen in the main part of the story – whose mother was Heloise's nurse. He has grown up with Heloise, and is her only real friend. He loves the finer things in life although he is of lowly birth, and he is ambitious. At the same time, he is fiercely protective of Heloise. I decided very early in the writing process to make him homosexual. In this way, he is never seen as a rival for Heloise's affections except in the role of friend. Having made that decision, it opened up opportunities to explore the role he could play within the church at that time. It also allowed him to use the fact that men find him attractive to achieve his ambitions within the church. As well, Jacques provided a platform to introduce a subtle comment on the attitude of the church towards homosexuality – an attitude which existed both in the twelfth century and today, which is to condemn it on the surface while what is, in fact, occurring is common knowledge (Bejczy 365-384). Incidentally, it became possible to portray a view of homosexuality which is personally compelling – that of total acceptance of the person irrespective of their sexuality. Heloise accepts Jacques unequivocally for who he is, supporting his sexuality and using his unique knowledge for her own ends at one point, where she asks him to teach her to please a man. Abelard, though fully aware of Jacques' preferences, never condemns him for them, and accepts them simply as part of Jacques' character. This is an attitude I wish society would embrace today. If this screenplay is made into a film, it is one aspect I will strongly resist changing in the rewrites.

Jacques has a wicked sense of humour and is, to a large extent, part of the comic relief in the screenplay. He was by far the most joyous character to write – quirky and intelligent, with depths and pains with which the others are not presented. He is irreverent and fun and has little real respect for authority, even as he tries to conform. In the hero's journey,²⁶ he is the trickster, but he is also a shapeshifter – he appears at one point to change sides. Although his actions make it appear to the audience that this has occurred,

²⁵ see Beech for a well-documented discussion of twelfth century monastic and convent life.

²⁶ See discussions of the Hero's Journey in Campbell, and a more easily accessible discussion in terms of screenplay in Vogler's *The Writer's Journey*.

an understanding of his motives, and his unwavering loyalty to Heloise, ensures that his actions are understood within the context of his character.

C. Historical Research

Homosexuality in 12th century France.

The choice to make Jacques a homosexual necessitated an understanding of societal attitudes towards homosexuality in medieval France. Historian John Boswell's²⁷ thorough research presents a picture of the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries in Europe, a time in European history when a recognisable gay subculture was emerging. A great deal of homoerotic literature has survived from this period, most of it written by churchmen²⁸. This is not to say, of course, that churchmen were more likely to be gay than any other part of society, merely that more churchmen were literate.

Homosexuality was recognised throughout the various strata of twelfth century Europe. In fact, Hildebert of Lavardin says that "no walk of life escapes it." (Boswell 228) In this time, there was a renaissance of learning, which included familiarity with Ovid, Virgil and Plato, hence familiarity with their discussion of and respect for gay passions and sentiments. It is clear, according to Boswell, there were two distinctly opposing opinions about homosexuality. A few churchmen claimed that homosexual acts were a grave sin, and wrote many letters and treatises on the subject. However, in spite of their loud cries for punishment for homosexual acts (Bejczy 372), little was done about it. "...ecclesiastical authorities categorically and repeatedly refused to impose penalties for homosexual behaviour or even enforce those already in effect" (Boswell 210). In 1051, Saint Peter Damian describes in vituperative and lurid detail several forms of homosexual intercourse, claiming that these were "extremely

common" especially among the clergy (Boswell 211). Peter received a famous reply from Pope Leo IX which commended him for his enthusiasm, but declined to accede to Saint Peter's request that such men be removed from office.²⁹ But Peter had a great deal of success in convincing the church of his other ideas and reforms³⁰, so it cannot be said that he was not influential. Only on the matter of homosexuality was he unable to convince the church of his position. Boswell (366) suggests that this points to an underlying reluctance to stir up pervasive problems which were known to exist at the time in the church, and in the attitudes of society at that time.³¹ This form of tolerance

²⁷ Boswell's book, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality: Gay people in Western Europe from the beginning of the Christian Era to the fourteenth century* is fascinating in its entirety, but two chapters are of particular relevance to this study. "The Urban Revival" and "The Triumph of Ganymede".

²⁸ For an interesting discussion of this literature, see Holsinger and Townsend (389-423).

²⁹ The letter is translated in full in Boswell 365.

³⁰ Even such 'reforms' as the church-sanctioned enslavement of prostitutes who serviced priests (Boswell 212).

³¹ This attitude is also noted and discussed by Holsinger and Townsend (392+) and by Foucault (58-65).

lasted throughout the twelfth century. Indeed, fifty years later, another Pope, Urban II, was informed of the activities of a certain bishop, John, who called himself “Flora,” was the archbishop’s lover, and who had slept with the King of France and boasted about it. Urban came to France, interviewed everyone, and then did nothing at all about Bishop John (Boswell 213). In one manuscript, where the argument was made for married clergy, the following comment appeared about a certain bishop who opposed such marriage: “The man who occupies this seat is Ganymedier than Ganymede. Consider why he excludes the married from the clergy: He does not care for the pleasures of a wife” (Boswell 217). It is clear that this bishop’s sexual preference was no secret, and that while people may have commented upon it, his behaviour was accepted.

The word “ganymede” was used in the same way that the word “gay” is used today. A “ganymede” was a homosexual – not necessarily effeminate. It refers to the beautiful son of the King of Troy who was carried away by Jove to be his lover.

During this period in history, a great deal of literature³² extolled the delights of Ganymede, and many homosexual love letters, poetry and other pieces of literature have survived. Boswell notes that this evidence of a gay subculture disappeared almost completely after the end of the twelfth century, when there was a huge backlash against all minorities – Jews, women, Muslims and those of a different race, as well as gays (Boswell 244). However, for just over one hundred years, between the middle of the eleventh century and towards the end of the twelfth, gays were acknowledged, tolerated and homoerotic love was celebrated in literature.³³

This attitude is important for the screenplay, as it allows Jacques to be open about his sexuality and still be faithful to historical fact. Homosexuality was accepted by Abelard. Indeed, Abelard himself wrote a very famous homoerotic poem about David and Jonathan (qtd. in Boswell 238) and one of his pupils, Hilary the Englishman wrote some very explicit gay poetry (qtd. in Boswell 225+). What is certain is that even an avowed and renowned heterosexual such as Abelard felt comfortable expressing and reading homosexual sentiments in poetry. I considered calling “Gaston” (one of Abelard’s

³² Much of this is anonymous, but Boswell includes the texts, excerpts and translations (355-402). For discussion of these texts, see also Baldwin, Allen and Jordan.

³³ Although there has been much scholarship which critiques Boswell’s work, notably by the Gay Academic Union, Frantzen (129) and Dinshaw (esp. 22-34), it is interesting, as Holsinger and Townsend note, that there has been “hardly a dent” on his interpretation of the attitudes of the twelfth century.

“Even as scholars have challenged the book’s interpretations of Biblical and patristic passages, its treatment of tolerance and intolerance in the early church, its suppression of primary sources relevant to its subject, and, most of all, its so-called essentialist positing of a history of “gay people,” Boswell’s reconstruction of a male homoerotic literary tradition spanning the twelfth century remains largely unchallenged (390).”

students) Hilary; and in the first couple of drafts, I did. However, the name sounds feminine rather than just English, and I felt it may confuse the reader to have a male called Hilary, especially if he were expressing homosexual affections. In many ways, the attitude towards homosexuality both in society at large and within the church was as liberal in the eleventh and twelfth century as it is, in fact, today (Halperin 87-123), and this suited my purposes well. Jacques could easily have played upon his incredible androgynous beauty to make his way in the church.

The underpinnings of Abelard and Heloise's philosophical positions.

1. General overview of the philosophy in 11th and 12th century Europe.

In researching the philosophical underpinnings of Abelard's beliefs in order to incorporate these into the script, it was first necessary to understand the major directions of philosophical thought at the time of Abelard, and then position his arguments. In my view, however, it is of secondary importance that various objections could be raised against Abelard's arguments. My main interest is in the dexterity of thinking that he displays and his witty approach to challenging the accepted philosophical positions. Furthermore, an understanding of his wit, mental dexterity and at times irreverent explanations of philosophical tenets proved an essential key to rendering his character.

Abelard was situated firmly in the "scholastic" movement in philosophical history. Historians of philosophy generally regard scholasticism as beginning in the early part of the twelfth century and remaining as the dominant philosophy of Europe until the fifteenth century.³⁴ However, its origins can be clearly traced to the latter part of the 11th century, where it was propagated by the schools which flourished throughout many European centres³⁵. The schools were the precursors of the great medieval universities. They were generally established and run by monasteries and cathedrals, although the most widely acclaimed teachers often founded their own schools. Schools provided for the education of monks and priests, as well as laymen and even full fee-paying external students. The subjects studied comprised the "Trivium" of grammar, logic and rhetoric, together with the "Quadrivium" of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music. Students versed in these "liberal arts" often went on to further studies in theology and sometimes became teachers themselves³⁶. The scholastic movement in

³⁴ For example, Bertrand Russell (428).

³⁵ For thorough discussions of scholasticism, see also Pieper, and Kretzmann.

³⁶ Wieruszowski explores the major traditions of the various Universities, including Notre Dame.

philosophy is characterised by a number of features. Firstly, it is orthodox in manner. Writers risked condemnation by church councils if their work was perceived to be heretical in any way³⁷. This discouraged originality and contentiousness in philosophical discourse. Secondly, there was a substantial reliance on dialectic, which emphasised the making of verbal distinctions and analysing linguistic subtleties (Pieper 14).

There are three areas of Abelard's philosophy which are included in the screenplay, notably, Universals and Particulars, his position in the contemporaneous thinking on the philosophy of religion, and his view on the philosophy of ethics. These will be examined in more detail, in order to clarify the inclusion of particular arguments in the screenplay.

2. The Problem of Universals and Particulars

The first notable philosopher of a clearly "scholastic" kind (i.e. followed the basic forms of thinking of scholasticism) was Roscelin, who had as one of his pupils, Peter Abelard. Medieval philosophy relied heavily upon the ideas of Plato and Aristotle, particularly with regard to the question of Universals and Particulars and it is in relation to this question that the only surviving writing of Roscelin refers (Turner ch XXIX). It is of interest here because of its influence on Abelard's later work.

Plato attempted to account for or explain what it is about each particular member of a certain species of things that determines its membership. What is it about each particular table that makes it a table? His answer was that a timeless and immutable form or idea of table existed and that rational beings recognised this ideal form as the template to which particular tables conformed, despite the limitations of their actual condition. This view was referred to as Realism, but many medieval scholars at the time quite quickly discerned that the two great philosophers of antiquity, significantly Plato and Aristotle, differed significantly over Universals.³⁸ Aristotle took a position which was, in Abelard's time, known as Nominalism, whereby the thing that various particular tables have in common is not some mysterious form of "tablehood" but simply membership of the class of things which are properly referred to as tables. It was the ability of people to recognise correctly the membership conditions, rather than an inherent common property, that the various members of a class exemplified. Abelard explains the way universals signify things by denoting singulars among which

³⁷ Several examples are cited by Constable (28+).

³⁸ Coplestone provides an accessible discussion of the major positions of both Plato and Aristotle.

there is a resemblance, as being attributable to a permanent source of signification deriving from a common conception found in the mind. Thus in simplest terms, Realists held that 'Universals are Real [things]' whereas Nominalists held that 'Universals are Names' (Marenbon 1997 84).

Roscelin's views, which are known primarily from the writings of Anselm and Abelard (Turner ch XXX) are still somewhat cryptic. He held that universals are but verbal utterances. So the reality of Universals consists in their being sensible – that is, capable of being perceived by the senses. Furthermore, he espoused an atomistic view in his belief that a whole which has parts lacks a reality of its own, but inherits a reality by virtue of the reality of its parts. This view led to his apparently heretical claim (Mews 2002 p 46), which he was forced to recant, that the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity were distinct substances. Roscelin's student, Abelard, was clearly attracted to the radical nature of his teacher's views and when he moved to Paris and studied under William of Champeaux it was not long before he challenged Champeaux's realist position and, according to Abelard himself, forced Champeaux to abandon one thesis and later, a revised one. Abelard relates such intellectual victories in his *Historia Calamitatum*.

I undertook to refute certain of his opinions, not infrequently attacking him in disputation, and now and then in these debates I was adjudged victor. Now this, to those among my fellow students who were ranked foremost, seemed all the more insufferable because of my youth and the brief duration of my studies. (Abelard HC 68)

Abelard was extremely clever, but also vain, argumentative, arrogant, contemptuous, irreverent and iconoclastic.³⁹ He clearly delighted in the process of disputation and it is understandable that the way he could tie up his opponent in logical knots would be extremely irksome to some and a delight to others⁴⁰. For example, in response to Champeaux's⁴¹ assertion that the Universal is wholly and essentially present in each individual (Turner ch XXXI), Abelard includes as part of his objection, that if the essence of humanity is wholly and essentially present in Socrates, it is not where Socrates is not. But it is also wholly and essentially present in Plato; therefore Socrates must always be where Plato is. This is in fact a thinly disguised conclusion to the effect that Plato and Socrates are essentially identical, because they are both essentially identical with humanity. It does not matter that various particulars distinguish Plato and Socrates, since the various contingent or accidental features that

³⁹ Evidence as to his personality is clear in his *Historia Calamitatum*, and is commented upon by many scholars, including Mews, 2004 and Marenbon, 1997.

⁴⁰ He gloats over his successes against his teachers in *Historia Calamitatum*.

⁴¹ Abelard was a pupil of William of Champeaux in Paris.

distinguish them are not essential to them⁴². One can imagine the reverence and admiration that Abelard's own students had for him with respect to his skill in logic and sheer comic delight in his exposition of philosophical positions. For example, in his work "Glosses on Porphyry" (translated by Wippel and Wolter) which he had begun whilst a student of Theology under Anselm of Laon, he extends the Plato/Socrates identity to propose that the identity between Socrates and an ass could readily be demonstrated, thereby making a tangential jibe at the Realist Plato. The strategy he uses is to analyse the nature and implications for Universals of contraries, like blackness and whiteness or rationality and irrationality (Marenbon 107). Abelard argues against a realist position⁴³. However, as was stated earlier, it is not particularly significant for the purposes of this study that various objections could be raised against Abelard's arguments. My main interest is in the dexterity of thinking that he displays, and his witty approach to the traditional philosophical modes of argument. Indeed, one could readily imagine that he would attempt to dispose of such objections with the same intellectual dexterity and philosophical playfulness.

Associated with the problem of universals and particulars is the issue referred to in modern linguistic philosophy as Denotation and Connotation. This is one of the areas which I exploit in the screenplay. It is this area upon which Abelard is lecturing when he makes his first appearance in the script. 'Denotation' means the sort of reference one makes by using common nouns such as 'man'. For example, the denotation of the word 'man' is the set of individuals who can be called men. In medieval philosophy the term 'appellation' corresponds to the modern term, 'denotation'. By 'connotation' is meant the meaning of the word. In the case of the word 'man' it would refer to the set of characteristics used as criteria for assigning the word 'man' to various individual men. In medieval philosophy the term 'signification' corresponds to the modern term

⁴² See particularly the discussion in Spade.

⁴³ He claims that a property such as animality is a single real thing, inhering in particular animals. Abelard's basic argument is simple. If animality were a singular real thing, inhering as an essential part of both rational and irrational animals, then this one thing would be partly composed of contraries, which is impossible. More specifically, not only would the contraries be in Socrates as an essential part, but they would also be present in the ass as an essential part. So ultimately Socrates is essentially animality and the ass is essentially animality. So Socrates is the ass. Of course, this is just the absurd conclusion Abelard had intended as the final part of this *Reductio ad absurdum* argument against the Realist claims of William of Champeaux.

Of course, it could be objected that Abelard's argument is unsound on the following grounds. Abelard is claiming that Socrates contains the genus animality plus other forms, and so does the ass. However, in both cases, the other forms are not the essence, according to Abelard. This claim seems to be false. Abelard's argument seems to ignore the specific differences, such as rationality in Socrates and irrationality in the ass, as well as whatever differences differentiate asses from other irrational animals. Ultimately then, even if animality is one single thing, Socrates and the ass are not simply identical with it. Interestingly enough, Abelard's theory would allow him to prove that Socrates is Plato, since they are both identical with humanity. This differs from the Socrates/ ass case in that the various accidental forms that distinguish Plato and Socrates are not of their essence.

'connotation'⁴⁴. In *Historia Calamitatum*, and in his later letters to Heloise, Abelard makes it clear that his philosophical interest is not merely in making grammatically correct predications such as "Socrates is a stone," which is the area of rhetoric. His interest is in making the predications, which he calls 'true categories.' But, claims Abelard, in his work *Sic et Non* (translated by Boyer and McKeon), the work of the logician or philosopher is compromised by the way that so many philosophers have mistaken rhetoric for logic (Abelard *sic et non* 81). Thus all the problems associated with the incorrect view of universals derives from failing to understand this distinction. For example, in the sentence, "Socrates is white," the verb 'is' behaves as a copula or link. It functions as the 'is' of predication, that is, of ascribing the property of being white to the object denoted by the term Socrates. It does not function as the 'is' of identity, such as, 'Abelard is the lover of Heloise.' To think that it does leads to the erroneous search for an essential entity known as whiteness, and the means whereby the one inheres in the other.

3. Abelard's Philosophy of Religion

Abelard returned to Paris in 1113 where he acquired extraordinary popularity as a teacher. There he wrote his most famous book in 1120-1122; *Sic et Non* (Yes and No). This work presents a variety of dialectical arguments for and against many theses, although some do not proceed to a conclusion but simply posit different controversial positions. The book was extremely influential and pointed a way to overcome orthodoxy and dogma, resting as it does on the presupposition that logic was the 'science' of Christianity. Some scholars, such as Koeller, maintain that the book was written, at least initially, as a response to Islamic challenges to Christianity – specifically, the challenge that Christianity contradicted itself through its various proponents. I believe Abelard's notice may have been drawn to this challenge but it would have been a minor issue. Far more significant to him would be a demonstration of his intellectual skills in tackling a very important contemporary problem – that of making logical sense of the scriptures and of theological problems, of showing that religious understanding comes through reason, not faith, although faith leads one to search for such understanding. However, the controversial nature of Abelard's theses contributed significantly to attracting charges of heresy against him. Many of these theses, as Radice points out, appeared in his book on the Holy Trinity, called *Theologia*

⁴⁴ These distinctions help to make sense of Abelard's thesis that universals and appellative or common nouns are not co-extensive; some of the former are not the latter and *vice versa*. For example, some common nouns exist in Latin in the form of oblique cases, such as accusative, genitive, dative and ablative cases. Thus the oblique dative case of the word 'man', rendered in English as 'of man' would produce a sentence such as "Socrates is of man". But this example would not be a signification of a universal. Such sentences are not used to predicate individuals. On the other hand, some universals are not common nouns or appellations. For example, in the sentence, "Socrates walks." the denotation of 'walks' is not a thing, but the verb 'walks' is indeed a universal term which can be predicated of various individuals.

(Radice 38). Abelard's nominalist solution to the problem of Universals, when applied to the doctrine of the Trinity, seemed to imply that the Three Persons of the Trinity had a real existence, but that the One God was only an abstraction. This was deemed heretical⁴⁵. Moreover, the book seemed to be openly critical of Church authority by way of Abelard's claiming that it was possible to arrive at a complete understanding of every aspect of God's nature. In order to do this, one had to apply reason and logic, and of course be reasonably clever, but one did not need the guidance of Church authorities (Boyer and McKeon 104). Opponents of the book managed to arrange for a council at Soissons, to be chaired by the Papal Legate. Abelard was never given the opportunity to debate matters raised in the book. His debating skills were well known and the council would have had the worst of such an encounter. Abelard relates that on one occasion one of the councillors, Alberic, a pupil of Anselm of Laon, challenged Abelard's claim that although God has begotten God, it was false that God had begotten himself. Alberic was not interested in hearing Abelard's explanation but cared only for the words of authority. Abelard instantly pointed out the relevant passage in his book which provided just that authority. It was a reference to Augustine, *On the Trinity*, Book 1. "Whosoever believes that it is within the power of God to beget himself is sadly in error; this power is not in God, neither is it in any created thing, spiritual or corporeal. For there is nothing that can give birth to itself." (Abelard HC 80) Abelard then went on to suggest that Alberic had himself fallen into a heresy in believing that a father can possibly be his own son. Enraged, Alberic resorted to threats, clearly being no match for Abelard's intellectual dexterity. Further trouble with the church led to Abelard's being summoned to the council of Sens in 1141 where he was criticised by Bernard of Clairvaux and various of his propositions were condemned out of hand (Marenbon 1997 162).

4. Abelard's Philosophy of Ethics

It was not simply the canonical teachings of the church concerning the nature of the Divinity that were perceived to be under threat from Abelard by church authorities. His views on ethics were also interpreted as being at best, contrary to church views, and at worst, heretical (Marenbon 1997 162). These views are expressed in *Ethica or Scito Te Ipsum* (Know Thyself)(translated by East). Abelard makes frequent use of the technique of division. He divides virtues and vices into those of body and mind, and the latter he further divides into non-moral and moral. Morals are further divided into dispositions and acts – vice is not equivalent to sin. Sin consists in the disposition of the sinner, the decision to do some wrong act, or in other words, the intention of the

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see the discussion in Marenbon 1997.

agent.⁴⁶ Performance of the act does not make the sin any worse because the decision itself to commit the act is what is sinful. But it is not the mere mechanistic decision, but the wilful nature of the decision that is significant. Thus one could commit a wrong act, but do so without sin if the act were committed against one's will. This is in sharp contrast to the Church doctrine of the time that holds "each man is responsible to God for all acts which he commits" (Grane 63).

Abelard developed the philosophy of Christian Ethics in an original and imaginative way, enabling the thoughtful Christian to understand the basis of Christian belief in an analytical context independent of mere Church authority. For example, he proposes that our acts proceed from God, but God permits the faculty of disobedience in order that virtue may exist. There is a natural tendency towards evil, argues Abelard, for if that tendency did not exist, there would be no possibility of effort against evil, and if there is no effort, then there is no virtue. Even more controversial in terms of Church doctrine is Abelard's claim that God cannot be virtuous, since he cannot be tempted by evil. However, he can be virtuous in man, which is why he allows man to tend towards evil in order to further allow him to triumph over it, be virtuous, and thereby allow virtue to exist (Williams 89). Even more precipitous was Abelard's view that even if God were to lead one into temptation it would be to give one the opportunity for struggle and victory or redemption (Williams 91). Therefore a necessary condition for the existence of virtue is the possibility of Sin. Remarkably, then, God's admission of this possibility into the world essentially defines the special context wherein God is virtuous. Little wonder that Abelard's views were deemed to constitute a major threat to the authority of the Church's views on Christian Theology in relation to morality (Spade 1995 14).

Abelard's views on more general issues of theology were equally bold. He delighted in extracting Christian ideas from ancient philosophy, even though he seems to have been only vaguely acquainted with some of its ideas. He suggests that in many ways there was less of a gulf between Christianity and ancient philosophy than there was between the Old and New Testament (Spade 1995 16). It has been contended⁴⁷ that Abelard was the most able mind of the Middle Ages. Although he assigned a significant role to faith in religious matters, his doctrine of reason and his analytical methods were of considerable importance in bridging the gulf between the common people and Theological understanding (Russell 61). His contribution to the theory of Universals was significant since even the most modern analyses of the issue have progressed very little beyond Abelard's (Russell 62).

⁴⁶ See Radice's *introduction* (27,28) with reference to *letter 1* 115. Heloise knows she is a sinner despite her outward show.

⁴⁷ see Marebon, and Russell throughout his chapter on Abelard.

Although possessing obvious human faults and failings in terms of his personality and manner, his larger-than-life persona makes him a character of extreme attractiveness, and when writing the script, it was sometimes tempting to make Abelard the hero of the story, rather than Heloise.

Other historical concerns for the screenplay: costume, daily life, transport, monasteries and music.

The remainder of the historical research was concerned with creating a milieu for the action which was as authentic as possible. Details of costume⁴⁸, both for men and women, were important in many scenes, and it was also necessary to reach an understanding of the architecture of the time.⁴⁹ For the scene in which Heloise travels to her proposed husband's estate, it was important to understand the types of transport available to her⁵⁰. Holmes provides an engaging description of life in Medieval Paris which was of great assistance in providing an authentic ambience for many scenes.

Notre Dame, the central setting for the screenplay, existed as a much smaller edifice in the early years of the twelfth century (Temko 2), and in fact the Notre Dame that exists today was commenced about the time of Abelard's death – with some of the money that his students added to the coffers of the cathedral (Temko 4).

Church hierarchy at that time was well established (Southern 43). There was a great deal of controversy about married priests (Boswell 217), and Abelard's position was not as clear as I depict it in the screenplay. However, to enter into the complexities of the arguments for and against the marriage of priests would be inappropriate in terms of the time required and detrimental to the flow of the story. In fact, it was possible his promotion would have been achievable had he been married, but he would not have been able to take his wife with him into his new position within the church (Boswell 242). It makes for a much stronger conclusion to the screenplay to have Heloise leave him to join the convent – an action which is in keeping with both their characters⁵¹.

It certainly was, if not common, not unusual for a wife to join the church and leave her husband (Wogan-Browne 127). In fact, Abelard's own mother did this. She left her

⁴⁸ A thorough discussion of this is to be found in Norris. He also has excellent descriptions of weapons in 12th century France.

⁴⁹ Excellent sources for monastic and ecclesiastical architecture include Terryl Kinder and Michael Downey's book *Cistercian Europe: Architecture of Contemplation*, and Terryl Kinder's *Architecture of Silence: Abbeys of France*.

⁵⁰ A recommended text is Albert Leighton's *Transport and Communication in early Medieval Europe*.

⁵¹ see the description of characters, p8.

husband to become a nun (Abelard HC 62). It was de facto, the only way of divorcing someone in those days – either you lived with the man you married or you became a nun. It was the only legitimate path for women who wanted a release from an unhappy marriage (Wogan-Browne 143).

Unfortunately, none of the secular songs which were written by Abelard survive to this day. Both Abelard (Abelard HC 68) and Heloise (letter 1 115) speak of the songs that Abelard wrote and sang, and of how popular they were. What do remain, and are reprinted in the letters, are two hymns which were written by Abelard. It is from one of these, *Sabbato ad Vesperas* (qtd. in Radice 292), that I borrowed the structure and the metre for the song Abelard composes for Heloise in the screenplay. So, although the words are not Abelard's, the rhythm and rhyme patterns are indisputably authentic. Scholars such as Berry have speculated that some of the songs in the songbooks of the middle ages are indeed those of Abelard, but there are none extant which are attributable to him.⁵² Even the words which are his – the hymns and David's lament for Jonathan – have no musical staves to provide any indication of the tunes. In 1957, Michel Huglo located a single example of Abelard's music – an early manuscript of the lament which did include a stave. In the early 1980s, Fr Chrysogonus Waddell discovered sequences in early thirteenth century manuscripts – three in particular – which contained strophic forms and rhyme schemes peculiar to Abelard's hymns. Waddell became convinced that they were indeed the work of a single composer, Abelard. From this beginning, Waddell and Professor Mary Berry undertook a possible reconstruction of

Abelard's music. This is available on CD (Herald music 1994).

Listening to the music of the Schola Gregoriana of Cambridge and the Winchester Cathedral Choristers, directed by Mary Berry, I was able to determine a close approximation of the way Abelard's music might have sounded.

⁵² A fuller account of this musical research can be found in the sleeve notes, which were written by Waddell and Berry, of *12th Century Chant, Abelard: hymns and sequences for Heloise*.

D. Changes From the Historical Story to the Script and Why Those Changes Were Made.

Screenwriter and theorist Terry Rossio⁵³ has very sound advice on adaptation of historical material.⁵⁴

Your goal in writing an adaptation absolutely cannot be to “preserve the source material onto the screen.” It must be to “make an effective film based on the source material.” Lorenzo Deboeventura put this quite succinctly: ...

“sometimes keeping too true to the material results in not doing justice to the material.”⁵⁵ In writing adaptations, we give ourselves an additional challenge: to make an effective film based on the source material, and preserve as much of the source material as possible, and write the new material in the voice of the source material as much as possible (Rossio column 27).

Ross, the writer of *Seabiscuit*, in an interview with Rita Cook (38), admits that he changed the truth for dramatic purposes, but not the spirit. “That was my compass, that’s what I wanted to make sure I was honouring. [I] would change details and fictionalise parts [but] capture the impact of the story, the meaning of the book.” David Franzoni, the screenwriter of *King Arthur*, expresses a similar idea: “The most important thing to make “accurate” is what it is about. You can [...] twist facts for dramatic reasons – it doesn’t really matter as long as you are faithful to the overall truth.” (qtd. by McCallum 34).

In *Heloise*, I made an effort to retain as much historical accuracy as possible. There are a few incidents that are not historical in the screenplay of *Heloise*, but these are largely present for structure and pacing. For instance, *Heloise* travelled twice from Brittany to Paris, and in the screenplay she only does so once. It seemed unnecessary to have her make the trip twice, since it slowed down the action and served no real purpose in the story. As well, she actually married in Paris on her first visit (Abelard, HC 82), and the marriage was not such a secret as it could have been (Abelard, HC 83), but the facts are sketchy, and for the purpose of the screenplay, a secret marriage in Brittany, away from the church hierarchy and her uncle, was more compelling than a secret marriage in Paris.

⁵³ He wrote: *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* (2005), *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl* (2003), *Treasure Planet* (2002), *Shrek* (2001), *The Road to El Dorado* (2000), *The Mask of Zorro* (1998), *Small Soldiers* (1998), *Godzilla* (1998), *Steven Spielberg's Director's Chair* (1996), *The Puppet Masters* (1994), *Aladdin* (1992), *Little Monsters* (1989).

⁵⁴ These ideas will be discussed in the section on genre, p 47.

⁵⁵ See the later discussions on genre, p 47.

Abelard did have a sister in Brittany, with whom he and Heloise stayed, but there is little information about her⁵⁶. It is not known if she, in fact, raised Astralabe – although it seems likely, unless he was sent to be raised at a monastery.

Jacques, of course, is a fabricated character. Abelard did have a servant who betrayed him to Fulbert, and this servant was castrated (and blinded) after the authorities caught him (Abelard, HC 75), but there is no more information about him except that he existed.

Gaston is a representation of all Abelard's students. He was modelled on Hilary of England in the respect of his sexuality and ideas⁵⁷ (some of Hilary's writings, particularly his homoerotic poetry are still in existence)⁵⁸. However, beyond this, he is a product of the necessities of the script.

Some of the more bizarre incidents – the dressing up as a nun to escape to Brittany, and the making love in the refectory of the convent at Argenteuil, for example, are historically accurate, and written of in Heloise and Abelard's letters (Radice 38).

Heloise's arguments against marriage are authentic (Heloise, letter 3 128) – but some of these, based on philosophical and theological principles, would have been too complicated to include in a screenplay. The argument which most strongly resonates with modern sensibilities is the sacrifice that she was making for the man she loved (Heloise letter 3 129), hence that is the one emphasised in the screenplay. I did include dialogue which itemised the other arguments, but I concentrated on one for the purposes of pace and Heloise's character arc.

One of the most significant departures from the letters is that Abelard told Heloise to enter the convent (Abelard HC 81). She did – because she loved him and wanted to obey him. This does not work for Heloise as feisty, defiant hero in the story⁵⁹. I needed her to make that decision on her own, so her sacrifice was her own choice, and so I have her choosing to become a nun so Abelard would be free to follow his career. For dramatic purposes, I had this occur simultaneously with Abelard's castration, an event which effectively ended his meteoric rise to fame as a teacher at Notre Dame.

⁵⁶ Scholars such as Clanchy and McLaughlin refer to *Historia Calamitatum* when discussing Abelard's sister.

⁵⁷ See Boswell 249+.

⁵⁸ Included in the appendix of Boswell, p 372+, are translations of some of Hilary's homoerotic poetry.

⁵⁹ See notes on the characterisation of Heloise, p 9.

In Abelard and Heloise's story, a great number of signposts existed, but there was also a great deal of "white space" to fill in. A writer often needs a degree of licence to create a compelling narrative because the stories of real people rarely conform to a three-act structure which underlies many screenplays.⁶⁰ Because of this, I decided at an early date to omit the time after the castration, for very little happened in their relationship, except that

they wrote to one another, and Abelard and Heloise were apart. I wanted this screenplay to be the story of their lives together. I was working from a limited number of known facts, and my task was to link these facts together with intervening drama and action. I was able to establish characters who could act in such a way that their personalities would actually fit the facts that are known, they would behave in the way that history says they did, and the rest of the story would flow from their motivations in a credible fashion. I made conscious decisions about the dialogue and, wherever possible, used phrases from the letters, especially in Abelard and Heloise's discussions and arguments with one another. I preserved historical accuracy when I could while maintaining the pace and drama of a marketable screenplay with characters that the modern world would care about.

⁶⁰ see McKee, and the later discussion on structure, p 58.

E. A Comment on Stealing Heaven

There has been one other film addressing the life of Abelard and Heloise. It was called *Stealing Heaven* (1988), directed by Clive Donner and based on the novel of the same name by Marion Meade. I purposely did not read the novel because I did not want to be influenced either directly or subconsciously by the novel on which the film, *Stealing Heaven*, was based, and I still have not read it because it is possible that I may be asked to do rewrites on the script by a producer. During the writing of the screenplay, I managed to obtain a copy of the rare video, which I had never seen, but I still refused to watch it until I had written “fade to black” on the draft. I then sat down in fear and trepidation to see how close my screenplay was to the 1988 film. Apart from the fact that these were two scripts based on the same original story, their treatment of the subject matter was completely dissimilar. *Stealing Heaven* continues the story until the deaths of Abelard and Heloise, and this slows the action and compresses the most cinematic part of the story into a far shorter time frame. The “feel” of the movie is slow and European, whereas I have made a conscious decision to increase the pace of the action towards Hollywood-style velocity. There is little humour in Donner’s film, while I chose to have a seam of humour throughout the screenplay to counteract the tragic romance which was the basis of the action. I must confess that the vast dissimilarities between my script and that of *Stealing Heaven* were a great relief, and it can certainly never be said by anyone that there was any plagiarism, intentional or unintentional, since I had not seen Donner’s film nor read the screenplay, nor even read the book by Marion Mead on which the screenplay was based, before writing *Heloise*.

1.

SECTION 3: THE SCRIPT

A. Preliminary Decisions

Genre

The decision that the love story of Heloise and Abelard was to be the subject of the screenplay determined the genres of the screenplay. If it were to take place in the twelfth century, then it had to be a period drama. If it were a love story, then it had to be a romance. The issue of genre and the frameworks of genre for this screenplay could be seen as a moot point. But Heloise does follow some of the conventions of those genres, and to that extent it is important to situate it in its generic context in terms of convention and expectation. When examining the concept of genre, and selecting the genre for a screenplay, it becomes pertinent to examine the concept of genre itself, to question what determines a genre, and what is the purpose of genre, if, in fact genres actually exist – a point debated by genre theorists Buscomb and Stam.

Are genres really 'out there' in the world, or are they merely the constructions of analysts? Is there a finite taxonomy of genres or are they in principle infinite? Are genres timeless Platonic essences or ephemeral, time-bound entities? Are genres culture-bound or transcultural?... Should genre analysis be descriptive or proscriptive? (Stam 14)

The concept of genre as a sociocultural expression⁶¹, or the expectations that genre imposes on the responder of a visual text (Fowler 215), are less relevant to the craft of a screenwriter setting out to write a screenplay than an approach that identifies genre as a framework for creation, a set of limitations, or a package of structural guidelines, much as the formula, “fourteen lines, iambic pentameter” provides for the writer of a sonnet. As Tom Ryall suggests, “Genre may be defined as patterns / forms / styles / structures which transcend individual films, and which supervise both their construction by the filmmaker and their reading by an audience” (27-28). If such frameworks exist, then the next step must be to determine where Heloise would be situated in terms of its genre or genres.

The screenplay of Heloise is positioned, of necessity, as a period film, that is, in the historical genre. It is a true story, and hence tries to reproduce the times as accurately as possible within the limitations of a screenplay. That is to say, there is nothing essentially anachronistic in the screenplay – no velvet clothes⁶², no glass mirrors,⁶³ no

⁶¹ This aspect of genre theory is elaborated upon by Schatz. It seems to rely, however on the film having been completed, and makes observations on genre which presuppose a responder to the film. When starting a screenplay, such a responder would exist only in the imagination of the composer, hence could not be studied.

⁶² Velvet was introduced in the 13th century (De Marinis 1).

carriages⁶⁴. The roads are cobbled or paved and many of the buildings are wood and thatched. It is twelfth century France, and there is a freedom of lifestyle which has a distinctly modern ring about it. Women want to learn, although the church is unhappy about this (Amt 43), and the churches also bewail the number of “Ganymedes” (homosexuals) in the streets and within their own ranks (Boswell 182). However, simply because the film is set in the past, this does not dictate the way that the screenplay is written. In fact, films have displayed the gamut of styles – from the ultra modern language and music of *A Knight’s Tale* To the strict adherence to historical accuracy of *The Name of the Rose* or *Cadfael*. Toplin, an historian himself, suggests that the narrative conventions of the historical genre must, of necessity include taking liberties with simplification, compression of time, fabrication of dialogue and many other responses to the challenge of filmmaking. He also suggests that “the broader and deeper truths about an event” are what is the important issue in such dramas (134). I did not want to stray as far from the truth that could be garnered from the primary sources as Robert Rodat did in *Saving Private Ryan*⁶⁵, or Randall Wallace did in *Braveheart* (Ewan 1219). My aim was to approach the subject matter with historical veracity within the framework of a period film.

The screenplay is also a romance, and reflects the conventions of the romance genre. Essentially, a romance is a story concerning two people in love, but for whom the path of love does not run smoothly (Saunders 2). This is true for the real life story of Heloise and Abelard – although they fell in love, had a child and married, the obstacles to their love were overwhelming – Fulbert, the Church, Abelard’s career, society’s attitude towards women, and ultimately, Heloise’s becoming a nun and Abelard’s castration. The story is not, of necessity, a simple romance. However, as Haskell suggests in her excellent discussion of the romance genre, today’s responders are not so naive that they require a conventional happy ending. The conflicts of Heloise are firmly grounded in the romance genre, its resolution is ambiguous and ironic. There is no escaping the fact that the story of Heloise does not have the traditional and expected happy ending. I attempted to give it an “up” ending, which allowed for the possibility of future happiness in Heloise’s relationship with her son, Astralabe. The challenge was to tell the story as it happened so that the responders – the producers and directors and

⁶³ The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* states that “The use of glass with a metallic backing commenced in the late 12th and early 13th centuries.”

⁶⁴ Which, according to *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* were not developed until the fifteenth century.

⁶⁵ See Kilvert-Jones’ excellent book on Omaha Beach for a full discussion of the historical inaccuracies.

actors that will read and judge it, and ultimately, the audience that will one day see it – will love the story, empathise with the characters, and appreciate the craft.

Hollywood or European?

In addressing the tone of the screenplay, it was necessary to determine if *Heloise* were to be a “Hollywood” film or one with European sensibilities. It developed as a hybrid – striving for the commercial potential of the former while still embracing the more appealing depths of the latter. However, this places the screenplay in a culturally insecure position in terms of marketing. Will it be read as a film that would succeed in pleasing everyone, or a script that is too European for Hollywood and too Hollywood for Europe? Since the script is yet to be sold and made, this remains to be answered. Hollywood is the home of the “high concept,” the “blockbuster” – films that have the sole purpose of creating revenue (Puttnam 67). As Mark Le Fanu, a European film historian, suggests in an interview with Mette Madsen, a typical Hollywood blockbuster is an “escape from reality” for the responder. It feeds the viewers “stories and meanings, with no room for personal interpretation.” The scripts are witty and include a “vicious exchange of dialogues, and clichés,” and the movies “usually portray the extremes” (1). Even the ‘average’ lifestyle is often exaggerated and an optimistic mask of reality is created, to draw viewers into the movie, and escape from reality. European films operate on a different level, with different intents in mind. The European framework of thinking exists due to shared socio-historical experience and geographical proximity (Madsen 4). As Becker suggests, Europeans accept reality as being absurd and harsh, and this European perspective translates onto the screen in the form of ‘everyday life’, instead of the fantasies presented by Hollywood (Becker 24). Le Fanu also makes the point that European films “tend to avoid the genre formulas” of Hollywood, and are thus able to be more focussed on the psychology of the characters (qtd. in Madsen 4) “What’s distinctive about European films is that they’re not frightened of talk. There’s a lot of “telling” in such films. Take a director like Eric Rohmer. A man and a woman sit in a room talking about life and philosophy... it’s fascinating!”(5). In *Heloise*, there are scenes where *Heloise* and *Abelard* do exactly that – but they do it in a “witty” way, in what is, hopefully, “a vicious exchange of dialogue.” As a result of these different elements, the European movie is much slower paced, provokes internal monologue, challenging viewers to ask the big questions (why are we here, what is our purpose in life?), and ultimately causing responders to think, instead of merely view (Becker 26). One of the main intentions in the writing of *Heloise* was to require the responders to ask the big questions, to challenge their sensibilities about the nature of love, and to cause them to re-evaluate prejudices. Unfortunately, the

success of these worthy intentions cannot be measured until and unless the screenplay is produced.

Language choices – modern or not?

The choice of what type of language to use in *Heloise* was not an easy one. It is common these days to use modern English grammar in historical pieces and, quite often, it doesn't sound out of place. For example, the *Cadfael* movies which were made for television, set in England in the twelfth century, use occasional archaic terms, but adopt a modern word order and contractions. At other times, modern language is emphasised and made a feature of the film. At the extreme, *A Knight's Tale* adopts modern speech patterns, modern idiom and modern sensibilities as well as modern music.

There was a range of possibilities and the final choice was based on what I felt I could achieve without the language feeling stilted. I wrote and rewrote scenes in numerous ways, and sought feedback from other writers on the effect of the language on the scene.

Eventually, I settled for a style which was not modern in character. The lexicon, the grammatical forms and the sentence structure are all slightly archaic, without being pretentious. My main concern was that actors will have to speak my dialogue, making it sound natural. However, my choice not to include any word contractions has lent that touch of "historical flavour" to the script without being intrusive. In fact, few people who read the script even notice the absence of contractions, which is gratifying. The style of language adds the correct flavour without imposing the burden of unfamiliar words.

The Language of Jacques

Jacques is a larrikin. I wanted him to represent a readily identifiable teenage boy of the twelfth century. But I didn't want his speech to be littered with modern swear words. I wanted him to curse in a colourful way, even allowing him the use of actual blasphemy (taking the name of the Lord in vain.) Rauth, in his excellent article, discusses what actually constitutes blasphemy, and includes various colourful suggestions:

Uttering 'sblood (*sang de Dieu*), 'shead (*tête Dieu*), 'sbelly (*ventre Dieu*), 'sdeath (*mordieu*) — or the softened form zounds for God's wounds (the euphemised French *morbleu* and *ventrebleu* may count as equivalents) — was to invoke metonymically the storied scenario of Christ's suffering. Behind them lay that narrative's incarnate vividness and poignancy that lent a contained shock value to the passing profane sentiment or occasion (18).

There is little to be discovered on the actual variations of profanities. As Rauth explains, "Though it may well have been "as common as dirt" (an everyday occurrence in the local speech communities of European Christendom), the record of blasphemous

utterance is fragmentary (22).” Hence, it was necessary for me to imagine the types of utterances that a boy of his age may devise. Oaths such as “by St Peter’s pillicock”, therefore, are fabricated, although they do seem to capture both the spirit of Jacques and the spirit of profanity at the time, according to Rauth, and to provide an amusing and interesting slant to Jacques’ dialogue.

Comedy

I made the decision fairly early on to include comedy in the screenplay. This may seem a strange direction, but Heloise is such a tragic story and the tragedy could be offset by lighter moments. This not only makes the screenplay more enjoyable on certain levels, but serves to heighten the tragedy at the end. Comedy, as Stuart Voytilla claims, “is an effective way to question our society, its institutions and beliefs. By putting a comic spin on serious issues... comedy reveals the madness of our world” (14).

The character of Jacques is the main trickster. As Voytilla asserts, Comedy serves an audience’s need for wish fulfilment. It offers journeys of a trickster breaking rules, usurping the establishment, spouting witty comebacks, and often pursuing a reckless course of personal gratification. It can be enjoyed vicariously through the ultimate heroic sacrifice, whether it’s Buster Keaton overcoming fear, fate and everything that our mechanised world can throw in his way to save the train and the girl in *The General*, or Adam Sandler’s *Water Boy* becoming a collegiate football star.⁶⁶ The comic journey can serve the more gratifying wish-fulfillment needs of getting well-deserved revenge (*Nine to Five*, or *Oceans Eleven*, for example) (42).⁶⁷

There are many types of humour used in *Heloise*, from witty dialogue to puns to physical humour. The most controversial,⁶⁸ is the bawdy humour, rife with sexual innuendo. I included it because, as Ross states, it was a common form of humour at the time of *Heloise* and *Abelard*, even though it is viewed by many people as a “lower” form of humour, reminiscent of the *Carry-On* films. Use of this type of humour in *Heloise*, is appropriate to the twelfth century, but may be quite controversial in films today because it evokes that characteristic British B-movie-type humour of those films in which it was overused.

How much Philosophy?

Another important issue in writing the screenplay was how much of *Abelard*’s philosophy to include. As many of his ideas could be cleverly used to demonstrate his intellect and wit, I was tempted to play with different ideas all the way through.

⁶⁶ Or Jacques giving up his ambitions for *Heloise*.

⁶⁷ Or Jacques’ revenge against *Abelard* for his perceived betrayal of *Heloise*.

⁶⁸ In terms of attracting most comments by readers of the screenplay – The South Coast Performance Writers’ Group, for example.

However, in the end, I chose only to have three examples of his philosophy. One scene (Heloise 12) deals with the naming of things and the problems of Universals and Particulars. This scene has Heloise asking when a tree is actually a tree, and increasing the suggestiveness of the idea by asking if it could be a trysting place or, indeed a urinal – and if it would still be a tree. Abelard answers as his philosophical writings would suggest that he would, “by custom we recognise when something is a tree. God tells us, “What you see is a tree.” It is similar to all other trees, so we name it a tree.” Heloise tries to get the better of him and her audacity manages to win her Abelard’s respect. When Abelard first appears, I have him giving a lecture on grammar and universals, and making bawdy references to please the students and annoy the church hierarchy. The arguments he uses are mere extrapolations of his own arguments⁶⁹. The third example, that of ethical philosophy, I have used some artistic licence and an argument which was first propounded by Abelard later in his career, I have given to Heloise to suggest – that there cannot be an evil act. To attribute it to Heloise, and then have it picked up by Abelard as his own, I felt would underline her intelligence and also how much he was influenced by their relationship.

⁶⁹ See the section on philosophy, p 28.

B. The Process of Writing

The Journey of the Hero

The concept of the 'Hero's journey', explained by Joseph Campbell and clarified for the modern idea of story construction by Christopher Vogler, is a useful framework for constructing a screenplay, and the identification of the roles of the various characters. As Vogler points out, the Hero's journey is "not an invention, but an observation"(ix). It is not a set of guidelines by which to write, or a Platonic Form which exists in isolation somewhere. Nor is it gender-specific. A hero – the protagonist of a story – can be either gender. Maureen Murdoch discusses this at length, as well as outlining areas where the journey may differ for men and women. The hero's journey has limitations and many of these have been discussed by critics⁷⁰ but it is nevertheless a useful framework for plotting a screenplay, for identifying the archetypal nature of the roles of various characters, and for understanding the movement of the major character.

Vogler's and Campbell's idea is that, "all stories consist of a few common structural elements found universally in myths, fairy tales, dreams and movies."(Vogler 1) These elements constitute the Hero's Journey. It is not my aim here to outline the whole theory, in fact there is not the scope to do so, but merely to show how it informed the planning of *Heloise*. In *Heloise*, it is Heloise who is the hero. It is her story. In Act One, Heloise leaves her ordinary world – the world of childhood with her Uncle, and answers the call to adventure – she decides to seduce Abelard. This is, at this stage, more of an inward journey than an outward one, although she does disguise herself as a boy and enter the forbidden precinct of the cathedral in order to start the adventure. In this adventure, her mentor is not Abelard, as one would suspect, but her friend Jacques. Jacques helps her cross the first threshold by aiding her subterfuge in entering the all-male cathedral and assisting her efforts to meet Abelard. In Act Two, Heloise encounters tests, allies and enemies who add to her journey as she and Abelard fall in love. Heloise faces her ordeal as she is imprisoned by Fulbert, separated from Abelard. Nevertheless, she manages to get word to Abelard who rescues her. This would seem to be a reversal of roles at this point – that Abelard is performing the hero role by gaining the reward, Heloise. That is a surface interpretation of the events. Heloise has, in fact, been the one to get word to Abelard, and the reward – life as Abelard's lover, is hers. Together they travel to Brittany. There, some of the classic elements appear – atonement with the father, the peace of the ultimate boon (the birth of Astralabe). However, the Third Act still remains, and the final conflict with the antagonist in the Church Council and Fulbert. It seems here that Heloise has failed. She is rescued only

⁷⁰ Vogler outlines many critical stances and approaches in the preface to his second edition of *The Writer's Journey* 1998.

to lose her apparent prize – Abelard – and enter a convent. But what she gains is more important. Her elixir is the knowledge that she has acted for someone else, rather than herself. It may not have the ideal happy ending of a Hollywood blockbuster, but it does have the hopeful ending that she is reunited eventually with her son. She finds a measure of peace and fulfilment, even if it is not the sort that she has pursued throughout the screenplay.

There are some very clear areas in which I used the hero's journey as a structural device for the plotting of the major turning points of the screenplay, but there are some deliberate departures from the theories, particularly when it came to the concept of the archetypes.

The Mentor figure is usually a wise older person (Obi Wan Kenobi [Alec Guinness] in *Star Wars*, Gandalf [Ian McKellen] in *Lord of the Rings*). It can hardly be said that Jacques fits that description. Jacques is Heloise's age, and while he has far more knowledge about the world and its realities than she does, he can hardly be described as wise. However, the function of the Mentor is to help the hero face the adventure. Obi Wan gives Luke [Mark Hamill] his father's light saber. Gandalf gives Frodo [Elijah Wood] the ring and the lore that surrounds it. The Good Witch [Billie Burke] gives Dorothy [Judy Garland] the red slippers in *The Wizard of Oz*. Jacques certainly warns Heloise of the dangers of what she is about to do and also provides information (about sex with men, for example) and support. Jacques is also the trickster, the comic relief in the story, the mirror in which Heloise can see the truth and validity of her love when compared with Jacques' romantic entanglements, and the measure of Abelard's devotion to her when compared with Jacques' friendship. The comic mentor is a feature of romantic comedies, and can be easily identified in the classics such as Alma [Thelma Ritter] in *Pillow Talk* and Pete Ramsey [Tony Randall] in *Lover Come Back*.

Abelard encompasses a number of the archetypes of the hero's journey. He is at times a mentor, at times a threshold guardian, at times an ally, at times the antagonist (the shadow, in Vogler's archetypes) and because he is unpredictable in many ways, he is also the shapeshifter, as discussed by both Campbell and Vogler. In all these roles he aids or hinders Heloise's attainment of her goals. The shapeshifter serves the dramatic function of bringing doubt and suspense to the story (Vogler 65-70). Heloise's doubt comes from her conflicting concerns about her love for Abelard affecting his career.

Fulbert is clearly the representative of the shadow. He is not as evil as Darth Vader or Sauron, but he represents those forces which would keep Heloise and Abelard apart. He is a member of the Church, of society, and of Heloise's family – the three forces which, for different reasons, would keep Heloise from a liaison with Abelard. He fulfils

the psychological function of Shadow by emphasising Heloise's guilt, and the dramatic function by physically separating the lovers. I have attempted to humanise Fulbert so he is not completely evil. This ploy makes for more interesting villains, such as Darth Vader/ Anakin Skywalker [Hayden Christiansen]. Fulbert does love Heloise and this makes him vulnerable.

Heloise has allowed me to explore the possibilities of the Hero's Journey and adapt it to my own work. The historical limitations meant I could not give Heloise the typically Hollywood happy ending that today's audiences may feel she deserves after her trials. What I could do is give her hope as the screenplay finishes, allowing her to achieve some form of happiness.

The structure

Heloise follows the traditional three-act structure, explained and elaborated upon by many major screenwriting theorists such as Syd Field, Robert McKee, David Trotter, Michael Straczynski and Linda Aronson. All these describe in detail the basics of the classic three act structure, with minor variations. In the 120 page screenplay, the "normal" course for this structure is that the first 20 to 30 minutes is the set up – the inciting event and the beginning of the screenplay. At the end of this comes the first act turning point, after which everything changes for the hero. The next 60 minutes is the second act, the confrontation or conflict, and this section contains an important event at the midpoint. At the end of the second act comes the second major turning point, sometimes referred to as the climax, about 20 to 30 minutes before the end. The third act constitutes the resolution. There are many variations on this structure, and the estimated times act only as guidelines, but this is how I plotted the screenplay before writing. I decided early on to "envelope" or "bookend" the story in the visit of Astralabe to his mother's convent to collect Abelard's effects after his death. This softer, more hopeful, story could be the vehicle for an "up" ending which would not be forthcoming from the main story. I also had to decide where to begin and end the story. If I continued past the castration into their lives in the convent, I felt that the story would lose a great deal of momentum, and end with a whimper. If I finished with the castration, I would need the bookend story to wind things up, but at least could do so quickly.

I then examined the story to see how it could "fit" the three-act structure paradigm. I drew up a chart of the three act structure in the way Field (157) suggests and wrote in the events of their lives. In such a diagrammatic form, it was possible to evaluate which bits were too long, where the story should be condensed, where things must be cut,

exaggerated, etc. in order for the timing to work well (see appendix C: preliminary structural diagram).

I decided that the first act should be everything that happens up until they start their love affair. A good first act turning point would be when Abelard moves into Fulbert's house. It gives the opportunity to introduce the four main characters – Heloise, Abelard, Jacques and Fulbert, and to establish the flavour of the age and something of the ecumenical and sociological constraints that encompass this story. In a 114-page script, Abelard moves in at page 20 – so this worked out very well. I felt I could achieve everything that Field claims ought to be achieved in the requisite number of pages. “You have approximately 30 pages to set up your story, introduce your main character, state the dramatic premise and introduce the situation visually and dramatically” (Field 158). Many writers such as Trotter (62) refer to a catalyst or inciting incident (McKee 181) that spins the story into action. In Heloise, that is Heloise's first sight of Abelard, when she falls in love with him. It leads her character into a position where the first act turning point – Abelard moving in with her and Fulbert – can change her life.

The second act, then, would include the love scenes, the discovery of their love affair by Fulbert, Fulbert throwing Abelard out of the house, the rescue of Heloise by Abelard, their flight to Brittany, Astralabe's birth, their marriage, the plot by Fulbert to discredit Abelard, Heloise's return to Paris and the church court. At first, I thought that Fulbert's discovery would make a good central point, but in rewrites, it became clear that too many love scenes or intimate moments were slowing the second act down, and the flight to Brittany – the close call where they are nearly caught at the inn, was a far more exciting midpoint. This actually occurs at page 58, thus following the structure.

The second act turning point was originally going to be the castration, followed by the events that followed in their life. This would have worked well, but once the decision was made to cut out what happened in their later lives – which was essentially boring, since all they did was to write letters to one another – I had to find another second act turning point. It became clear that when Heloise denies they are married in front of the church court, this is a very significant event. It puts her back into Fulbert's hands, and she has effectively risked her immortal soul by lying to the ecclesiastical court and before God. I felt that this could be elevated to a level where nothing could ever be the same for her again – a second act turning point. This occurs on page 85.

The final act then includes Heloise's torture by Fulbert, her rescue, her hiding in a convent, Fulbert's revenge on Abelard – his castration, and Heloise's entering the convent. The final bookend could then provide a lift to the otherwise tragic ending. The ending of a screenplay is a very important decision. In this case, Heloise has the

Astralabe envelope, which softens the castration, but the castration itself is the event to which the action has been leading. The physical castration of Abelard, and the symbolic castration of Heloise, by having her cut off her hair and enter a convent, effectively ends the intimacy between them – on many levels. Terry Rossio declares that “A good ending must be decisive, set-up, and inevitable – but nonetheless unexpected”(Rossio column 13).

In Heloise, the ending is “set-up.” Fulbert is the villain, desperate to get his revenge. Jacques feels Abelard has betrayed Heloise, and loves her enough to sacrifice his own ambition, so the audience expects some recrimination by Fulbert. The ending of Heloise is “inevitable” – it is appropriate, right. Castration removes the means by which Heloise and Abelard’s relationship – in the physical sense – could continue and Heloise’s entry into a convent symbolically achieves the same end. By the same token, it is unexpected and extreme. Its finality denies any chance the physical love could continue. In the Astralabe coda, I was able to lift the ending with hope for the future. Heloise has now met her son, and he knows who she is. The one remaining proof of her physical love for Abelard still exists in her life.

So, having completed this preparation, researching the story and outlining the events, I was satisfied that the pace of the screenplay, its balance and underlying sense of movement, would work.

It sounds deceptively simple, but the structure also encompasses the inner journeys of the characters, and any subplots which also must be included for texture and depth. The main story tracks the efforts of the protagonist – Heloise – to obtain her external primary objective – a life with Abelard. The character’s inner journey provides the main emotional thrust of the movie in revealing Heloise’s character arc with a focus on the transformation of her values. At the climax of the main story, Heloise gives up Abelard. It would seem that in the battle between the protagonist and the antagonist, Fulbert has won. However, Heloise’s final choice is also the climax of the inner journey – and her decision marks her journey from selfish desire to sacrifice for love. She chooses love over everything else and sacrifices the rest of her life for the man she loves. These actions coincide at the second act turning point, and lead inevitably to the denouement. One of the major functions of sub-plots is that they should echo (or contrast) the emotional journey of the hero. Heloise sacrifices herself for Abelard, and in a parallel fashion, Jacques and Marie–Claire both do the same for Heloise.

All this structural manipulation may sound formulaic, but it is no more formulaic than saying that a sonnet must have 14 lines, have a set rhyme scheme and be written in iambic pentametre. It is a useful framework to make sure that a screenplay is the right

length and “feels” right to a responder within a western context. It does not reduce the skill or creativity to have a framework on which to build. An architect can create a magnificent building, but beneath it is a similar framework to the humblest council house. As McKee puts it,

Story is about principles, not rules. A rule says, “You must do it this way.” A principle says, “This works... and has through all remembered time.” The difference is crucial. Your work needn’t be modelled after the “well-made” play; rather it must be well made within the principles that shape our art (3).

Structure is by no means simple. As McKee’s book explains, structure is linked intrinsically with the setting that is selected (67), the genre of the screenplay (79), The characters and their individual arcs, needs and goals (100) and the meaning of the story (100). Once the main structure is outlined, there are structural decisions to make within each act, each sequence within the acts, and each scene within the sequences. As I discuss the crafting of *Heloise*, I intend to address these levels of structural consideration.

Before proceeding to the discussion of other techniques, however, the use of the flashback as part of the structural framework of the screenplay requires some comment. Although the use of flashback has been criticised by certain screenwriting theorists⁷¹, I used the technique for a number of reasons. Firstly, I wanted to establish a point of view that was independent of both *Heloise* and *Abelard*. There are important scenes in the screenplay that involve either *Heloise* or *Abelard*, but not both. While *Heloise* is the protagonist, the screenplay needed to contain scenes (such as the interplay between *Abelard* and *Fulbert*, and the scenes between *Fulbert* and *Anselm*) of which *Heloise* could have had no knowledge. In order to do that I devised *Jacques*, a third party narrator who was privy to the secrets of *Heloise*, *Abelard* and *Anselm*. To create such a character and to have the story told from his point of view solved a number of problems in terms of perception of events, perception of characters and perspective on the total narrative. The technique of flashback, which permits *Jacques* to tell this story with the benefit of hindsight, allows the subplots to blend more successfully with the main story. The various levels of plot have the common element of having *Jacques* present, or at the very least privy to, the secrets of the major players in each scene. This binding technique allowed reflection on the action as well as, on a deeper level, development of subtle resonances between the plot and the subplots (between *Jacques*’ relationship with *Anselm* and *Heloise*’s relationship with *Abelard*, for example.)

⁷¹ Seeger, for example suggests that it is often used to tell, rather than to show expository backstory, is often too informational, and frequently tends to “bog down the script” (153 - 154).

The flashback technique also allowed the ending to be hopeful. The screenplay could have finished with the castration, but the rhythm seemed to require something more at the end, something that released the tension of that horrific moment. However, it would have been an anticlimax to revisit the relationship between Heloise and Abelard after such a physical and symbolic rift had occurred between them. The flashback envelope allowed the screenplay to flash forward at this crucial point and relieve the tension generated by the climax and crisis. The responder can detach from that moment of tension before putting down the script (or leaving the cinema.) It also allowed for the tying up of loose ends - the resolution of the question as to what happened to Astralabe and whether Heloise ever saw him again.

The creation of a “future” for Heloise and Jacques, and by implication for Abelard, created its own challenges. There had to be a smaller, separate arc for the characters that existed within the different time frame. McKee (341) suggests that all successful use of flashback interpolates such a “mini-drama.” In Heloise this arc is epitomised by the poignant use of the word “mother” by Astralabe. At the beginning he calls Heloise “Mother” and means “Mother Superior.” At the end, he calls her “Mother” because he knows that she is, indeed, his mother. A further challenge was to create credible characters for Heloise and Jacques twenty-five years on. It was necessary to address how people change, and how, specifically, the events of their lives would have changed Heloise and Jacques and their relationship with one another. It was important that this be realistic, believable and nevertheless reflect the differences that age and their experiences would bring. The choice to have them still best friends after all the intervening years and events allowed for a continuation of the teasing banter, but also a confirmation of the endurance of what was never less than love between them, in spite of all the hardships of their lives. Although I considered the possibility of flashing forward several times during the narrative to Jacques telling the story, I finally discarded that option, since I could see no need for it, in favour of the simple bookend approach, which holds the story together and allows for a defined and useful perspective, the tying up of loose ends and the opportunity for the ending to be not altogether tragic.

C. Screenwriting Techniques

There are many techniques that are used to improve scenes in a screenplay. In this section, I will focus on several techniques. Firstly, character techniques will be examined, including introducing characters, giving characters different agendas and creating chemistry between characters. Secondly, techniques for making the script more dramatic will be discussed, including making dramatic choices for the initial introduction of the story, introducing conflict and tension, the use of dramatic irony, setups and payoffs, the selection of the setting for a scene, the use of crucibles, misleads and reveals, giving the scene a future and the creation of suspense. Thirdly, techniques for improving description are discussed. Fourthly, subtext is addressed such as revealing information to the responders, layering and the use of symbols. Finally, there is a discussion of dialogue, and several techniques for improving both the structure and content of dialogue exchanges. For each technique I will comment on the theory behind it, illustrate its use in other screenplays, and demonstrate how the theory was applied in the writing process in *Heloise*. The screenplays selected for analysis provide good examples of the technique under discussion. I am making no other claim as to their quality as films, although several of them represent excellence in certain aspects of screenwriting and have been critically acclaimed as films. However, whatever their other merits, they do represent superior examples of certain screenwriting techniques.

Writing the characters into the screenplay

A writer's characterisation must elicit emotion from a wide variety of readers without fail. How does he do it? He learns the art of characterisation, adding details and depth until he has created a character whom we may know better than all but our closest friends (Stein 52).⁷²

Characterisation may be seen as the art of bringing a character to life and having a reader – a producer, director or actor – experience the essence of who that character is on paper.

1. Introducing characters

Some basic texts on writing screenplays have the instruction that the character description should be short and precise. However, when you first introduce a character, you need to write more than "BILL, 30, thin and handsome." There is no personality in such a description. In *GI Jane*, however, descriptions are vivid and compelling. For

⁷² Stein has two excellent chapters on the importance of characterisation, and some of the ideas for the one-page characterisation sheet discussed on page 9 derive from his suggestions as well as those of Linda Seeger and Hal Croasmun.

example, the opening description of the Chairperson of the Senate Arms Committee [Anne Bancroft] who is presiding over a military hearing:

LILLIAN DEHAVEN is a tough-hided old Southern belle, Scarlett O'Hara at 60. In her arsenal she carries conversational hand-grenades – and she's apt to pull a pin at the slightest whim.

Obviously, this is a person to watch out for. She may explode at any moment. Another excellent description is that of Master Chief [Viggo Mortensen], who will train the seal trainees.

The C.O. paces before the Trainees.

C.O.

Now I turn you over to the chief training officer. He has earned six naval commendations, the purple heart, and the Navy Cross for heroism and valor. I give you Master Chief John James Urgayle.

Taking over, THE CHIEF stands before the class a moment, sizing them up while giving them – an eyeload of him, too: His body is 30 years old, his face 40, his eyes 50. An ageless warrior. Somewhere, the blood of Ulysses runs in this guy's veins.

The Chief is described in both dialogue and the description. This character has to have the strength to cause change in all the recruits. Instead of saying "The chief is a respected member of the seal team," the reader is told of his medals and that his eyes look 50 while his real age is 30 – "an ageless warrior." In both cases, the character is described through exaggeration, comparison, and metaphor.

What about a woman who was described as skinny? 'She always stands sideways so people can see how thin she is.' The writer is not just describing; he is characterizing by an action. We individualize by seeing characters doing things and saying things, not by the author telling us about them (Stein 60).

Exaggeration is an excellent technique for characterisation. If a screenwriter were to write, 'Maria weighs two tons naked.' Nobody would believe for a second that Maria weighs four thousand pounds, but such a description works in context, and provides an interesting visual experience. A further use of exaggeration is by comparing the character with someone else, for example, 'Fred was Wilt Chamberlain tall.'

The first introduction to a character should make that character at once unique and interesting. A character should burst onto the scene, giving the reader a vivid picture and feel for who they are. A wonderful example is to be found in *As Good As It Gets*:

MELVIN UDALL... Well past 50... unliked, unloved, unsettling. A huge pain in the ass to everyone he's ever met. Right now all his considerable talent and strength is totally focused on seducing a tiny dog into the elevator door he holds open.

MELVIN

Come here, sweetheart... come on.

Melvin's first act is to capture the dog and dump it into a garbage chute. The reader can assume a great deal about him from that one simple action.

In many scripts, the main character is given two or three descriptive introductions. In Erin Brockovich, for example, on the first page of the script, Susannah Grant writes,

He nods. Now we see who he is talking to: ERIN BROCKOVICH.

How to describe her? A beauty queen would come to mind – which, in fact, she was. Tall in a mini skirt, legs crossed, tight top, beautiful – but clearly from a social class and geographic orientation whose standards for displaying beauty are not based on subtlety.

After that introduction, Grant continues with this scene on the next page,

EXT. AROUND THE CORNER – DAY

A side street. No pedestrians, just parked cars. A PARKING TICKET flaps under the wiper of an old Hyundai.

ERIN

Fuck.

Even when she talks dirty, there's a heartland goodness to her voice. Like Kansas corn fields swaying in the breeze.

That "heartland goodness" mixed with the profanity gives the audience the first of Erin's paradoxes. By this time, the ideal responder is already enjoying this character.

Dialogue and environment are also very useful tools to introduce characters. The opening scene from Bull Durham gives many different forms of characterisation. First, Annie [Susan Sarandon]'s environment is shown, then her voice-over indicates what a unique and interesting character she is. Finally, she appears. About this opening monologue, the writer/director, Ron Shelton, when interviewed by Hal Croasmun for Your First Page Sells Your Script, said,

"I figured that I have to start with a woman whose compelling monologue will so attract an audience that they will be willing to follow her anywhere. Because in 1988, when I made this movie, baseball movies and sports movies were considered death at the box office. The opening is a very simple, old fashion[ed] opening, in which you want to get inside the mind of a character who will be the narrator and the guide and in this case, a high priestess."

A WALL COVERED WITH BASEBALL PICTURES behind a small table covered with objects and lit candles. A baseball, an old baseball card, a broken bat, a rosin bag, a jar of pine tar – also a peacock feather, a silk shawl, a picture of Isadora Duncan. Clearly, the arrangement is–

A SHRINE – And it glows with the candles like some religious altar.

We hear a woman's voice in a North Carolina accent.

ANNIE (V.O.)

I believe in the Church of Baseball.

(beat)

I've tried all the major religions and most of the minor ones – I've worshipped Buddha, Allah, Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, trees, mushrooms, and Isadora Duncan...

PAN AWAY FROM THE SHRINE across the room. Late afternoon light spills into the room, across fine old furniture, to a small dressing table. A WOMAN applies make up.

ANNIE SAVOY, mid 30's, touches up her face. Very pretty, knowing, outwardly confident. Words flow from her Southern lips with ease, but her view of the world crosses Southern, National and International borders. She's cosmic.

ANNIE (V.O. CONT'D)

I know things. For instance –

(beat)

There are 108 beads in a Catholic rosary. And –

(beat)

There are 108 stitches in a baseball.

(beat)

When I learned that, I gave Jesus a chance.

(beat)

But it just didn't work out between us. The Lord laid too much guilt on me. I prefer metaphysics to theology.

(beat)

You see, there's no guilt in baseball... and it's never boring.

ANNIE OPENS A CLOSET DOOR – Dozens of shoes hang from the door. She chooses a pair of RED HIGH HEELS, with thin straps. She sits on a bench and

ANNIE

Which makes it like sex.

(beat)

There's never been a ballplayer
slept with me who didn't have the
best year of his career.

(beat)

Making love is like hitting a
baseball – you just got to relax
and concentrate.

ANNIE SLIPS ON THE RED HIGH HEELS – Smoothing her hands up her
calves as she does.

ANNIE

Besides, I'd never sleep with a
player hitting under .250 unless
he had a lot of R.B.I.'s or was a
great glove man up the middle.

(beat)

A woman's got to have standards.

With that, the reader of the screenplay knows that Annie is a unique character who is a mixture of metaphysical counsellor, baseball fanatic and highly sexual woman. What is learned about Annie derives more from how she told the readers than what she said. What she was saying, basically, was, "I have sex with baseball players and try to improve them in the process." But it would not engage a reader as thoroughly as the words Shelton selected.

From this, it appears that there may be at least six places where characterisation can occur:

1. Through the first and ongoing description of the character.
2. Through how the character is introduced into the scene.
3. Through the character's actions and the description of those actions.
4. Through the character's dialogue.
5. Through other character's dialogue about the first character.
6. Through their natural environment.

When writing Heloise, I attempted to incorporate all of these into certain scenes. The following excerpts from Heloise illustrate the various techniques in operation. On the first page, Heloise is introduced as a girl masquerading as a boy. The reader is introduced to both Heloise at 15 and the young Jacques, through both descriptions, their own dialogue, their actions, and what Jacques says about her.

INT. HELOISE'S ROOMS, 12TH CENTURY PARIS – DAY

SUPERSCRIPT: FRANCE, YEAR OF OUR LORD 1117

HELOISE (15) dressed in boy's clothes, adjusts the steel mirror, hastens to tuck the last strands of her glorious long hair under a boy's cap.

JACQUES (16) vivacious, endearing, androgynous, races into the room, knocks a book off the seat, then picks it up. He sticks a lily into a vase on her dresser.

JACQUES

By The Pope's balls, I cannot believe that someone as supposedly intelligent as you would really want to go through with this.

HELOISE

Hurry, or we shall surely be late.

She runs out. Jacques calls after her as he follows.

JACQUES

What about breakfast!

Heloise, an attractive fifteen-year-old is dressed as a boy – an act which characterises her as unconventional, daring. Jacques adds to this picture by describing her as “intelligent”, yet suggesting that she is being rash. The next scene flashes forward to when Heloise is older:

INT. CONVENT TOWER, 12TH CENTURY PARIS – DAY

SUPERSCRIPT: FRANCE, YEAR OF OUR LORD 1142

HELOISE (39), Mother Superior of the Convent of the Paraclete, places the last of a pile of letters into a small carved box. Her fingers trail over it, reluctant to let go. She places a tree-shaped cloak pin on top of the letter then closes the box and takes measured steps towards the window.

She stands gazing out of the window. Sedate and serene, hands folded in front of her, she seems the perfect picture of self-possession, yet beneath the calm exterior, she is nervous.

She picks up a lily from a vase near the window, twirls it in her hands.

Heloise, older, has changed. The sense of urgency about her life has disappeared, to be replaced by fingers that trail with reluctance over keepsakes, and the studied picture of serenity and calm. Before the action returns to Heloise's childhood, Jacques describes both Heloise and Abelard to Astralabe:

JACQUES

Abelard was glorious: famous, stunning, the fantasy of every woman, worshipped by his students. Heloise was the most brilliant woman in the whole of Paris. She was clever and beautiful and loving...

The scene then switches to the time of which Jacques is speaking and in the next section, there are two more foreshadowings of Abelard's character in the dialogue of other characters.

JACQUES

I told you we would get here on time.
The great Master Abelard will not speak
until the auditorium is full.

and,

ANSELM

You, lads! Enough of such behaviour!
Hurry now, all of you, unless you wish
to be made an example of. Master Abelard
does not tolerate stragglers.

When Abelard finally appears, his description and actions, as well as Gaston's comment, all introduce the type of person he is:

ABELARD(37) strides onto the dais with all the confidence of one who knows he is adored.

The crowd erupts in applause. All cheer and stamp.

He holds up his arms and welcomes even louder acclamation. The crowd roars.

He smiles, makes a minimal gesture, and the whole crowd falls silent in an instant.

HELOISE

(whispers)

I cannot believe I am actually here.

GASTON

(whispers)

You will not be here for very long
if he hears you talk.

2. Giving characters competing agendas

Characters do not exist in isolation, and a scene is nearly always better if two or more characters have competing agendas. Duelling agendas, Croasmun suggests in Character relationships – The great writer's tool, is one of the keys to great dialogue and increased conflict between characters. Stein makes a similar point. "The secret of

creating conflict in scenes you write is to give your characters different scripts... Do that and you'll have conflict and an entertained reader or audience" (Stein 60).

Different agendas show up in a character's action, inaction, dialogue or lack of dialogue. For example, in this scene from Erin Brockovich, George Halaby and Erin have completely different agendas.

INT. ERIN'S HOUSE – HALLWAY – NIGHT

Erin comes out of the bedroom and softly closes the door. But just as the handle clicks into place, the house is filled with the DEAFENING ROAR of a MOTORCYCLE, REVVING and REVVING. It sounds as if it's gonna drive through the wall.

EXT. ERIN'S HOUSE – NIGHT

Erin steps out onto her front stoop and looks over at what used to be Mrs. Morales' house. A few MOTORCYCLES are parked on the lawn; A FEW BIKERS are drinking beer on the stoop; and one asshole is on his bike, REVVING HIS ENGINE.

ERIN

Hey!

But of course he can't hear her. She walks over to him, stands right in his line of vision.

ERIN

HEY!

He sees her and kills the engine. Everything about GEORGE HALABY is tough – his denim, his leather, his bike, his long hair. Everything but his eyes, which twinkle like Santa's.

GEORGE

Well, hello to you, Damian.

ERIN

What the hell do you think you're doing, making all that goddamn noise?

GEORGE

Just introducing myself to the neighbors.

ERIN

Well, I'm the neighbors. There, now we're introduced, so you can shut the fuck up.

The guys on the porch chuckle. Erin turns and starts back to her house. George hops off his bike and follows her.

GEORGE

Ooh, now, see, if I'da known there was a beautiful woman next door, I'da done this different. Let's start over. My name's George. What's yours?

ERIN

Just think of me as the person next door who likes it quiet.

GEORGE

Now, don't be like that. Tell you what. How about if I take you out to dinner to apologize for my rudeness?

Erin shakes her head in disbelief and keeps walking.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Come on. Gimme your number, I'll call you up proper and ask you out and everything.

She stops at her porch, turns to him.

ERIN

You want my number?

GEORGE

I do.

ERIN

Which number do you want, George?

GEORGE

You got more than one?

ERIN

Shit, yeah. I got numbers coming out of my ears. Like, for instance, ten.

GEORGE

Ten?

ERIN

Sure. That's one of my numbers. It's how many months old my little girl is.

GEORGE

You got a little girl?

ERIN

Yeah. Sexy, huh? And here's another:

five. That's how old my other daughter is. Seven is my son's age. Two is how many times I been married and divorced. You getting all this? 16 is the number of dollars in my bank account. 454-3943 is my phone number. And with all the numbers I gave you, I'm guessing zero is the number of times you're gonna call it.

She turns and heads inside. He calls out after her:

GEORGE

How the hell do you know your bank balance right off the top of your head like that? See, that impresses me.

Erin [Julia Roberts]'s agenda is to get George [Aaron Eckhart] to be quiet and leave her alone. George's agenda is to get a date with Erin, the girl next door. The competing agendas provide the conflict and opportunity for comedy. Without George's agenda, Erin would walk out, ask him to shut up. The bikers would have sneered, but that is all. Maybe some conflict would have come out of it, but nothing this rich.

In *Heloise*, where exposition is required, or in scenes which link others, I have tried to incorporate conflicting agendas to increase the interest.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE CATHEDRAL - DAY

Heloise (15), dressed in her boy's clothes, drags Jacques (16) around a corner, slows down as they reach the cathedral gates. Other young men mill around, progress through the cathedral gates. CANON ANSELM, middle aged, fat and balding, stands beside the gate. Jacques gives a little wave.

JACQUES

I told you we would get here on time. The great Master Abelard will not speak until the auditorium is full.

Heloise and Jacques join the line of young men.

JACQUES

You'll get caught.

HELOISE

How do I look? Will he notice me?

JACQUES

Your uncle will kill you.

Jacques tucks a stray strand of Heloise's hair under her cap, adjusts her tunic.

JACQUES

There.

(beat)
He'll kill me too.

Jacques' agenda is to keep Heloise from harm, to protect her from herself. Heloise is only interested in the excitement of the escapade and meeting Abelard.

3. Creating chemistry between characters

Characters must also relate to one another. A relationship between characters can have depth that will add drama to a script. In fact, many times it's the relationship between two characters, the chemistry, that people really remember. Chemistry happens when characters share something meaningful. That 'something' could include a way of communicating, a goal, a fight, a common history, an admiration for each other or even a glance.

The question that a writer must address is, "How do you create chemistry between two characters?" There seem to be many ways to approach this. Firstly, people with chemistry often have a language of their own. Many times, a word or phrase may have a history of meaning behind it. If this is to happen, it must be set up towards the beginning and paid off towards the end. Secondly, characters who show positive emotions toward each other often have chemistry. Even enemies can respect or admire each other's talents. That provides a level of chemistry. Thirdly, characters can "play the same game." This is where the chemistry comes from in a scene from *Die Hard*. In it, John McClane [Bruce Willis], the protagonist, and Hans [Alan Rickman], the antagonist, are about to talk for the first time. Even though these two are in opposition, there's a degree of respect and admiration for each other, along with a willingness to play a game together.

MCCLANE – 34th FLOOR – BOARD ROOM

He's got a CB on the table and his cop's notebook is out again. He's already upgraded the NUMBER OF TERRORISTS? to "12 minus 3 = 9" and added other information. As he speaks he takes ammo clips the dead men dropped, their sidearms, etc.

MCCLANE

(into CB)

Gee, I'm sorry, Hans, nobody gave me the message. You shoulda put it on the bulletin board. Anyway, I thought you and Franco and Karl and the other boys might be lonely, now that I waxed Tony and Marco and their buddy. So I invited some of the guys from my card game.

In the office, the terrorists REACT, startled, as McClane name-drops.

FRANCO

How... how does he know so much about –

HANS

(waving for silence)

Ah, how nice of you to call. I assume you are our mysterious party crasher. You are most troublesome for a... security guard?

INT. 34th FLOOR – ON MCCLANE – INTERCUT

Moving down the corridor. Now armed with Marco's machine gun and carrying Heinrich's kit bag, he seems more lethal.

MCCLANE

(into CB)

BZZZ! Sorry, Hans, wrong guess. Would you like to go for Double Jeopardy, where the stakes are double and the scores really change?

He rolls Heinrich over and is delighted to find a pack of Gauloises in the man's pocket. He takes them, pats the dead man's face.

MCCLANE

(sotto, to the body)

Bad for your health anyway.

HANS

Who are you, then?

MCCLANE

(into CB)

Just the fly in the ointment, Hans. The monkey in the wrench, the pain in the ass.

This scene could have been written with the characters mocking each other or screaming obscenities or avoiding each other, but none of that would give them chemistry. Instead, the writer, Jeb Stuart, chose to have them engage in this cat and mouse game.

A fourth way of creating chemistry between characters is in the area of need fulfilment. This can be either where two characters have similar needs and fulfil them as a team,

or where each has a strength that fulfils the other's weakness. In Jerry Maguire, Dorothy and Jerry are continually fulfilling each other's needs in many ways. When Jerry is fired and makes the scene in the office, only Dorothy stands up to join him in his new company. On the other hand, Jerry fulfils her need to be inspired. Both have a need for their small company to succeed and both love her son. Throughout the movie, they alternate fulfilling each other's needs... until it becomes clear that Dorothy's most important need – to be loved for who she is – is not being taken care of. They separate and don't come back together until Jerry realises that he loves her and expresses it in front of her "divorce support group."

In Heloise, when Heloise first goes to Abelard's room, I tried to create that chemistry by utilising these four techniques. Firstly, the idea of a tree as a "trysting place" has already been set up in two previous scenes, so when Heloise begins the conversation with talk of a tree, it should suggest where this scene will be going.

ABELARD

The Cathedral of Saint Stephen and the church of Notre Dame can be clearly seen, can they not?

HELOISE

Indeed, Master Abelard. I often used to sit here as a child and look at them. You also have a very good view of the courtyard, and uncle's chestnut tree.

Abelard turns, surprised to see her there, bows. Heloise holds out her hand to him.

The emotions in this scene are all positive. These two people admire one another physically and intellectually. It is in the game playing, though, that the chemistry is most apparent.

ABELARD

Forgive me, Mistress. I did not hear you come in.

He kisses her hand.

HELOISE

Behold I come as a thief...

ABELARD

You know scripture, Mistress? Do you know what follows, for it is appropriate to your beauty: Blessed is he that watcheth.

HELOISE

Is it not: blessed is he that watcheth and
keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked?

Heloise wraps herself in Abelard's cloak.

ABELARD

I see I have met my match in quotation from
the scriptures.

HELOISE

In misconstruing them also, perhaps?

ABELARD

Do you find pleasure in misconstruing
scripture?

HELOISE

There are many things, Master Abelard, in
which I find pleasure. If I can find some
verse in scripture which supports my
pleasure, I embrace it.

Heloise suggests that he should spend all his free time “teaching” her – another
concept which is developing its own private meaning between them. Abelard asks how
he is to survive without his other private students.

HELOISE

You will have no need for other private
students. I will fulfil all the needs a great
teacher may have.

ABELARD

The needs of the mind?

HELOISE

Indeed. For I would know philosophy and
logic, grammar and rhetoric...

ABELARD

What of my soul, Mistress? Surely only
Our Lord can fulfil the needs of the soul?

HELOISE

Then I would pray with you, and help lead
your soul closer to Our Lord. And we would
dispute theology, which would be of benefit
to both our souls, would it not?

ABELARD

So, mind and soul... What then of my body?

Heloise glances around the room, indicates the bread, cheese and wine on the table.

HELOISE

Master Abelard, if you were referring to shelter and food, and the wherewithal to buy clothes, and a place to sleep in comfort... then that, I think, is already provided.

Heloise sits on the bed.

HELOISE

If you were not, then I think...

They look at one another, the message clear, the attraction electric.

HELOISE

(slowly, seductively)

Then I think you were being a little forward, Sir.

She gets up, takes off his cloak, holds out her hand. He bows deeply, kisses it, keeps holding it.

HELOISE

I wonder, Sir, how often you find yourself kissing your students – even if you are not beneath a tree.

She sweeps out of the room.

ABELARD

(to himself)

And what of my heart, Heloise? For that is equally part of a man.

In this scene it is clear how Abelard's need for intellectual discourse and a worthy opponent, as well as his need for a woman who is his intellectual equal is being fulfilled. Heloise's needs to be recognised as an intelligent person and not just "a woman" is also fulfilled by the respect which Abelard pays to her clever answers. They play the game together – courtship under the guise of propriety – and this creates chemistry between them.

Characterisation, character relationships and character interaction create interesting scenes, but they are not sufficient to make the script satisfying. Screenwriters also need to make choices which make screenplays dramatic.

Creating Drama

For any scene, there are many ways it could be written, many different dramatic decisions which can affect the movement of the screenplay. Croasmun insists (in *What makes a movie dramatic?*) that with every scene that is written, the screenwriter makes dramatic choices. These choices can be about the plot, the characters, the dialogue, the setting and the description. The writer's choices can cause a scene to be experienced as dramatic or boring. The objective of every scene is to create an emotional journey for the reader and viewer. In great screenplays, the writers make dramatic choices which inform, excite, and captivate the reader or viewer. In the first few minutes of *Fellowship of the Ring*, for example, there are numerous dramatic choices. Jackson has a few minutes to set up a great deal and draw the responders in. Responders have to be given history, geography, to be introduced to new species, and to understand their interrelationships, all in a very short space of time. And in the first ten minutes of the extended version of the movie, Peter Jackson accomplishes this – the denseness of this introductory section sets up the history of the ring and position of the protagonist.⁷³

To make dramatic choices that sweep the responders into the world of the screenplay, even in script with a smaller scope, is extremely important. So it is important to analyse how those dramatic moments are created.

1. Conflict and tension

There are many ways to increase the drama in a scene, to make it more dramatic. Conflict and tension are two of the most common. Conflict is about opposition and disharmony while tension is

stretching something to the point where it is barely tolerable. Many great movies use these techniques. For example, Alan Ball includes both conflict and tension in many scenes in *American Beauty*.

One such scene takes place at the beginning of the second act. Lester [Kevin Spacey], a forty-year-old ordinary guy, has become obsessed with his daughter's sixteen-year-old friend Angela [Mena Suvari]. His daughter, Jane [Thora Birch], is disgusted with his behaviour.

INT. BURNHAM HOUSE – FAMILY ROOM – LATER

Jane and Angela are watching MTV. We HEAR the back door open.

⁷³ See appendix D for an examination of the opening ten minutes of this motion picture.

JANE

Oh, shit. They're home. Quick,
let's go up to my room.

Jane switches off the TV.

ANGELA

I should say hi to your dad.
(off Jane's look)
I don't want to be rude.

She starts toward the kitchen. Jane doesn't like this.

There is a conflict here between Jane and Angela. Jane wants to hide from her parents to avoid embarrassment, but Angela likes the attention. Even though this seems small, without this conflict, the scenes to come would not be as replete with tension.

INT. BURNHAM HOUSE – KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

Lester enters and opens the refrigerator.

ANGELA (O.S.)

Nice suit.

He turns, and is instantly transfixed by:

HIS POV: Angela leans against the counter, twirling her hair.

ANGELA

You're looking good, Mr. Burnham.

Here, the tension has begun. Angela is flirting with Lester and from previous scenes, the audience knows that Lester lusts after her. Also, Jane will soon follow Angela into the kitchen and witness whatever transpires between these two.

She starts toward him.

ANGELA

Last time I saw you, you looked
kind of wound up.
(spots something)
Ooh, is that root beer?

She reaches inside the refrigerator to grab a bottle. As she does, she moves to place her other hand casually on Lester's shoulder. He sees it coming. Everything SLOWS DOWN, and all sound FADES...

EXTREME CLOSE UP on her hand as it briefly touches his shoulder in SLOW MOTION. We HEAR only the amplified BRUSH of her fingers against the fabric of his suit, and its unnatural, hollow ECHO...

Slowing this moment down shows the audience how Lester is experiencing Angela's "innocent touch." This is the "forbidden fruit" that Lester has been fantasising about. Everything that draws him closer to her increases the tension. This is crafted in order that the intended responder is screaming for him not to make this mistake.

BACK IN REAL TIME: She grabs the root beer and smiles at him.

CLOSE on Lester: his eyes narrow slightly, then:

He cups her face in his hands and kisses her. She seems shocked, but doesn't resist as he pulls her toward him with surprising strength. He breaks the kiss, looking at her in awe, then he reaches up and touches his lips. His eyes widen as he pulls a ROSE PETAL from his mouth right before we SMASH CUT TO:

Lester kissed her. At this point, the tension has reached a high point which lasts until the rose petal is revealed and it becomes apparent that this is just his fantasy. This is the internal conflict that Lester is going through. That rose petal breaks the tension and allows the responder to 'breathe a sigh of relief.'

INT. BURNHAM HOUSE – KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

Angela is back against the counter, drinking the root beer. Lester stands by the refrigerator, gazing at her, still lost in fantasy.

ANGELA

I love root beer, don't you?

Just when the responder thinks everything is all right, Angela is flirting again.

Jane watches from the doorway to the family room, feeling incredibly awkward in her own home. Carolyn enters from the dining room. Lester snaps out of it and grabs a root beer from the refrigerator.

JANE

Mom, you remember Angela.

CAROLYN

(her sales smile)

Yes, of course!

JANE

I forgot to tell you, she's spending the night. Is that okay?

Now Angela is spending the night, which increases the chance that something disturbing will happen between her and Lester. Once again, this stretches out the tension.

LESTER

Sure!

He takes a sip of his root beer, but it goes down the wrong way and he starts COUGHING violently.

While this is funny, it also increases the chance that Jane and Carolyn will think Lester has some problem with Angela staying the night. Once again, this increases the tension for the viewer and shows that Lester has an internal conflict about this girl.

INT. BURNHAM HOUSE – JANE'S BEDROOM – LATER THAT NIGHT

Angela lays on the bed, in bra and panties, reading a magazine. Jane, in an oversized T shirt, plays a video game on her computer.

JANE

I'm sorry about my dad.

ANGELA

Don't be. I think it's funny.

JANE

Yeah, to you, he's just another guy who wants to jump your bones. But to me... he's just too embarrassing to live.

Obviously, Jane knows. And it bothers her. This has become a conflict between her and her dad, also.

ANGELA

Your mom's the one who's embarrassing. What a phony.

Jane glances at Angela, irritated.

ANGELA

Your dad's actually kind of cute.

JANE

Shut up.

And the conflict continues. Poor Jane is embarrassed about her father's actions and her girlfriend continues to play with him.

Conflict can come from almost any source: Other characters, entities, internal emotions, obstacles, complications, or twists in the story. Jennifer Lerch says that writers should, "Make the story's central conflict the most compelling, juicy, interesting problem in your story so the reader keeps turning the pages to see how it gets resolved" (107). There are many possible sources of conflict, for example, opposition to a character's wants, something that threatens the character's main goal, characters

may have competing agendas, someone may say one thing and do another, there may be internal confusion or fear, someone may have made the wrong decision, there may be unrealistic deadlines or a choice between two negatives, or many other causes. Tension can be increased in scenes by having characters make decisions that have serious consequences. Characters may be in a place they shouldn't be, or overstepping their normal boundaries. They may have to decide between two evils or take socially unacceptable actions.

Conflict and tension can occur in love scenes. Love scenes are not as successful if all that happens is that two characters have a drink and then decide to sleep together, after which they go to bed and proceed to enjoy themselves. In such a scene there is no conflict. But change that scene to a kidnapping and it becomes the love scene from *Three Days of the Condor*. Change it to an investigation and it is *The Thomas Crown Affair* or *Out of Sight*. Change it to a lawyer trying to save her brother from a death sentence and it is the love scene from *Return to Paradise*. Even with a love scene, what makes it irresistible is the conflict around the romance. If the characters are in a physically or emotionally awkward place, the scene improves. Kario Salem, screenwriter of *The Score*, in an interview with Croasmun (*Conflict and Tension*), comments,

Every chance I get, I put my characters in spots that make me uncomfortable. If I'm comfortable with where they are, it's a boring script. I say 'what's the worst thing that could happen to this guy' and then I write that in. My characters hate me and that's what makes my scripts better.

2. Dramatic Irony

Another way of increasing the drama of a scene is by using dramatic irony. When the audience knows something that the characters do not know, the tension levels of the responders are raised. Croasmun (*Dramatic Irony*) writes,

I always love it when I go to a movie and there is so much concern created on the screen that audience members yell directions at the characters. "Watch out! It's around the corner!" Or you watch as audience members are shaking their heads, trying to will the main character not to do something.

Dramatic irony includes the audience in the story, causes them to worry about the characters, entertains and increases the drama of any scene. An excellent example occurs in *Moulin Rouge*. This scene is at the beginning of the third act. Up until this point, Christian and Satin have been conducting their relationship behind the Duke's back. On the night that they are to run away together, the Duke tells Zidler that he will have Christian killed if Satin isn't delivered to him immediately and the relationship ended.

INT. MOULIN ROUGE. STAR DRESSING ROOM – NIGHT

Zidler, kneeling beside Satin, speaks gently.

ZIDLER

The Duke's a dangerous man. Send Christian away; only you can save him.

Satin shakes her head. She is crying now.

SATIN

Christian loves me: he'll fight for me.

ZIDLER

Yes; unless he were to believe you don't love him.

Satin, a slow, dawning horror.

SATIN

What?

ZIDLER

You are a great actress Satin. Make Christian believe you don't love him.

SATIN

No...

ZIDLER

Use your talent to save him.

Satin, crying, looks away. Zidler presses on.

ZIDLER

Hurt him to save him. It's the only way.

Zidler, strangely vulnerable, almost whispers.

ZIDLER

The show must go on Satin... for all of us.

Zidler leaves.

At this point the situation has been set up. The audience has seen the real truth of what is happening, knows the deception that is about to occur and understands the irony. Satin is going to hurt him to save him. She is going to convince him she does not love him in order to protect him.

In this next scene, the dramatic irony is played out. Christian has no idea what has happened behind-the-scenes. He is packing for them to leave the Moulin Rouge forever. This dramatic irony allows a responder to experience a much deeper meaning than if the real reason for the break-up was not known.

INT. CHRISTIAN'S GARRET – DAY

Christian has packed, ready to leave.

CHRISTIAN

Satin, what's wrong?

Satin, calm and strong, is in the doorway.

SATIN

I'm staying with the Duke.

Christian, still. Then suddenly he laughs.

CHRISTIAN

That's not funny Satin.

Satin is cold as stone.

SATIN

He's insane with jealousy; he's offered me everything.

Christian in a rising panic.

CHRISTIAN

Don't talk like this...

SATIN

I can never see you again; that's his one condition. If you go to the Moulin Rouge, they'll hurt you. I'm sorry.

CHRISTIAN

What are you talking about? What about last night?

SATIN

I don't expect you to understand. You don't belong here. But this is my home: the Moulin Rouge...

Christian stares at Satin in horror. Her breathing becomes heavy. A weak smile. She heads for the door. Christian grabs her violently.

CHRISTIAN

What's going on? Satin! There's

something wrong...

Satin struggles to control her breathing.

CHRISTIAN

You're sick. Tell me the truth!

Satin, gathering the last of her strength, turns with cold, dead eyes.

SATIN

The truth... The truth is, I am the Hindi Courtesan Christian, and I choose the Maharaja. That's how this story ends.

With that, Satin is gone.

The audience experiences the emotion of Christian's heartbreak and the emotion of Satin's bittersweet show of love. Clueing an audience into secrets, deception, and hidden information can create a deeper emotional experience for responders.

3. Setups and Payoffs

Setups and payoffs are yet another way of increasing the drama of scenes. Movies such as *The Sixth Sense* clearly utilise setups and payoffs to move the story forward and demand audience involvement.

In an interview with Croasmun (*Setups in a screenplay*), M. Night Shyamalan, the writer/director, explains how he had written a story of a child who sees dead people and the psychologist who tries to help him. He thought it was a good story, but it lacked something. One night, he got his answer – The psychologist is one of the dead people the child sees and the child is actually helping him. At that point, he went back through and designed an intricate web of setups that culminate in the final payoff where it is revealed to the psychologist that he is one of the dead people the child is helping.

Some of the best movies have an intricate setup/payoff structure that increases the involvement and satisfaction of the audience. As each setup is paid off, the audience mentally returns to the original scene and closes an open question. Often, the unique payoffs are the most interesting parts of the movie. Howard and Mabley, in their book on the tools of screenwriting, suggest,

A plant [setup] is a preparatory device that helps to weave the fabric of a screenplay together. It can be a line of dialogue, a character's gesture, a mannerism, a prop, a costume, or a combination of these... Usually, there is a payoff on this plant in which it takes on a new meaning. It can provide us with a bit of information that is relatively meaningless at the time, but that becomes critical later in the story. For example, if a handgun is planted in the bedroom night stand early in a story and then later our protagonist is trying to escape

from or subdue someone bent on homicide, we remember the gun and hope the protagonist will also remember (63).

Setups can foreshadow upcoming events, mislead the audience, challenge the characters and be the basis for future solutions. Payoffs can surprise the audience, create excitement, add new meaning to the setup, twist the story in a new direction or provide closure. They are useful tools in making scripts more dramatic.

4. The Setting – where a scene is located

Another way of adding drama to a scene is by careful selection of the setting, and many times it is as important as any other choice. In the movie *The Usual Suspects*, the story is told through the interrogation of Verbal Kint [Kevin Spacey] who later turns out to be the notorious Keyser Soze. The story could have been told many other ways, but it would not have the same dramatic impact that results from having the ultimate con man trick the police in their own building.

Chosen well, setting can bring an enormous amount of meaning and conflict to scenes and the overall story. Setting can be used to contrast, to darken the mood, to increase the threat, to bring in new elements, to create a crucible, to add mystery, to show a new side to a character, or to demand immediate action. In *The Silence of the Lambs*, Clarice first meets Hannibal Lecter in a dungeon where only the worst offenders are kept. That setting imparts a great deal of information about the Hannibal character and it terrifies Clarice. If their first meeting had been in, say, a psychologist's office or a typical jail cell, it would have had far less impact.

5. The Crucible

Dramatic tension can also be increased by creating a crucible. A crucible puts opposing characters in a closed environment where they have to face each other and can't escape.

Characters caught in a crucible won't declare a truce and quit. They're in it till the end. The key to the crucible is that the motivation of the characters to continue opposing each other is greater than their motivation to run away. Or they can't run away because they're in a prison cell, a lifeboat, an army, or a family (Stein 94).⁷⁴

There are many crucibles used in movies, for example, in *Air Force One*, the US President is trapped with terrorists who have taken over the plane. In *GI Jane*, the Captain is forced to take her and they both have to live with the political pressure. In *Jumanji*, once the children take the first turn, the game does not stop until they reach the final square. They must keep

⁷⁴ He discusses this idea in detail pages 94-97.

playing no matter how dangerous it gets. In *12 Angry Men*, a jury must stay in the jury room until they come to a verdict. All of these have crucibles as part of their major plot, but crucibles can, of course, be much smaller. In *Remember The Titans*, there are many crucibles: a racist town where the schools are combined, a coaching staff where the two head coaches of different races fight, the school where the two races face one another, football camp where the African-American team and the White team are at odds and the coach demands they sleep, eat, play, and talk together, the football field where other racist teams play against the Titans, and others. These crucibles would not exist if one or both of the two schools had a choice. They would just leave the situation and live their lives separately. There would be no movie.

Third acts are often designed with a crucible where the 'good guys' and 'bad guys' finally fight it out. In *A Few Good Men*, the crucible is the courtroom where Lt. Daniel Kaffee [Tom Cruise] is required to confront Col. Nathan Jessep [Jack Nicholson] and Col. Jessep must sit in the witness chair and answer the questions he believes are

disrespectful of his position and record. The power of the ending is increased because of the compelling crucible where they must face one another.

6. Misleads and Reveals

Some of the most dramatic moments in movies occur when the audience or one of the characters is misled, then the truth is revealed. In a mystery script, for example, what looks like the most supportive person in the movie often turns out to be the bad guy, or a key piece of evidence turns out to be erroneous, or someone who was thought to be dead reappears. Those are the most blatant uses of this technique, but misleads and reveals are used in almost every movie, irrespective of genre, to increase the drama. A mislead guides the audience or another character into believing one thing and a reveal exposes the truth. The mislead may be a deliberate action of one of the characters or it may be an "accidental" piece of misinformation that a character stumbles upon. Also, while a mislead almost always demands a reveal in the future of the script, a reveal doesn't require a mislead for its existence. In fact, almost any piece of information can be delivered in a reveal. The reveal needs to evoke an emotional response for it to be valuable to the script. For a reveal to work well, it needs to answer a story question or bring a level of surprise with it that changes the direction of the story.

One of the ultimate mislead/reveal movies is *Mission Impossible*.

INT. KIEV APARTMENT – NIGHT

We're in a large closet. JACK KIEFER, an athletic American in his late thirties wearing a headset, is wedged into a corner, staring at a television screen.

The television shows a surveillance view of the living room that lies outside the confines of the closet. The TV image is in black and white. JACK shifts, trying like hell to get comfortable but he's been there a while.

MISLEAD: This is set up to look like standard surveillance.

ON THE SCREEN

A bare bulb shines down on the contents of a shabby hotel room. Directly under the bulb a man, GENNADY KASIMOV, sits in a straight backed wooden chair in his blood-stained T-shirt. There are a couple of THUGS and a stray HOOKER in the room behind him. A legend:

KIEV

MISLEAD: Are these really thugs and a hooker or more evidence supporting the mislead of the setting?

KASIMOV is sobbing. Uncontrollably. A MAN enters the room, ANATOLY, an imperious Russian in his forties, a Russian godfather. The THUGS and HOOKERS are ushered out. ANATOLY looks down at KASIMOV piteously and urges him to go and sit by him in a chair he picks up for him. KASIMOV does as he is bid, looking gratefully up at ANATOLY. They speak in Russian which is subtitled.

MISLEAD: Anatoly will turn out to be someone else.

IN THE APARTMENT

ANATOLY

Kasimov, Kasimov, good that you called us.

KASIMOV

(sobbing)

I don't remember what happened! We were at the bar, drinking, laughing – having fun.

ANATOLY gets up out of the chair and goes to a bed across the room. A WOMAN lies half under the sheets. She's lying in an unnatural position on the bed, and the sheets are smeared with blood. She's dead. ANATOLY lifts her eyelid.

MISLEAD: Dead woman?

KASIMOV

I don't even know how I got here.
I swear, Anatoly, I never touched

her! I didn't lay a finger on her.

ANATOLY moves away from the WOMAN.

ANATOLY
Kasimov. Don't flounder.

IN THE CLOSET

JACK, impatient, checks his watch.

JACK
Jesus, she's been under too long.
Come on, come on!

REVEAL: The woman is "under." This tells the audience that there is some kind of danger to the woman if she doesn't come out of this trance. It also reveals that Jack is in on whatever ruse is going on. That creates story questions: What does Jack have to do with it? Will this woman live? How do the two people and this situation connect? What the hell is going on?

IN THE APARTMENT

KASIMOV
You're the only one who can help me.

REVEAL: For some reason, Kasimov thinks Anatoly can help him. This is a small reveal that creates more story questions: Why does he think that Anatoly is the only one who can help him? How can he help him? And will he?

Desperately he tugs at ANATOLY'S jacket. But ANATOLY hits his hand away and smacks him around the head.

IN THE CLOSET

JACK reacts.

ON THE SCREEN

ANATOLY bends close to KASIMOV.

ANATOLY
C'mon, c'mon, tell the truth... c'mon.

KASIMOV
They'll kill me.

ANATOLY paces up the room, away from KASIMOV.

ANATOLY

You asked for my help. You asked
for my help... come on...

MISLEAD: Did he actually ask for Anatoly's help? Remember, he could not remember what happened. Maybe he woke up into this mess and was told that he was asking for Anatoly's help.

KASIMOV
You're right, of course.

IN THE CLOSET

JACK leans forward.

JACK
The name pal... give us the name.

REVEAL: Now, for the first time, it is clear that Jack wants the same information that Anatoly wants. This raises a story question: are Jack and Anatoly in it together or is Jack spying on Anatoly also?

IN THE APARTMENT

KASIMOV
The contact in Minsk... the contact in
Minsk... works in a travel agency.

IN THE CLOSET

JACK
Come on!

IN THE APARTMENT

ANATOLY
Come on!

KASIMOV
His name is... Dimitri Miediev.

ANATOLY
Dimitri Miediev... Dimitri Miediev...

IN THE CLOSET

JACK
Got him.

ON THE SCREEN

Back on screen, ANATOLY places a hand on KASIMOV'S shoulder as if he had just anointed him.

IN THE CLOSET

In the closet, JACK types the name into a computer and cross checks – "MIEDIEV" comes up, then "posting/American consulate/Kiev."

JACK turns and nods to a WHOREHOUSE WAITRESS in costume

in the closet next to him, dressed in traditional Russian tunic and virtually no bottom. She quickly leaves.

IN THE APARTMENT

A WAITRESS enters the room carrying a tray with a bottle of vodka and two shot glasses.

ANATOLY

Now, we drink.

REVEAL: This is the first actual evidence that Jack is part of what is going on in the room. Before this point, he could have just been doing surveillance. Now, he nods and a waitress goes into the room. This raises the story question: is he running this operation? What does Anatoly have to do with it?

He pours them out and hands one to KASIMOV.

ANATOLY

To friends.

KASIMOV

Yes, Anatoly, yes.

JACK

Cheers.

He drinks. He blinks. Something felt funny about that.

Dizzied, KASIMOV swoons and passes out on the floor. moves to the closet door and opens it.

ANATOLY

IN THE CLOSET

ANATOLY reaches up to his face –

– and tears away a mask of flesh. He's no middle aged Russian mobster, he's ETHAN HUNT, an American in his early thirties.

He gestures to KASIMOV contemptuously. JACK hands ETHAN a hypodermic kit and he goes quickly back into the room.

REVEAL: Anatoly is Ethan Hunt.

REVEAL: Jack and Ethan are working together.

ETHAN
(in English now)
Get rid of this scum.

Immediately, there is activity, and PEOPLE everywhere. TWO OTHERS come into the room and carry KASIMOV out.

ETHAN goes quickly to the body of the dead woman. He checks the pulse in her neck, shines a penlight in her eye. He strips the adrenalin kit and jabs the long needle into the dead woman's thigh.

REVEAL: She was part of it. And she isn't completely dead, or is she? This raises the story question: was she an unwilling participant or an agent like the others?

He checks her pulse again, checking a stopwatch. In about ten seconds, the woman's eyes open.

CLAIRE is her name, a French woman of thirty or so. She half rolls over, GROANS, and wipes some of the blood from her mouth.

CLAIRE
Did we get it?

ETHAN
We got it. On your feet.

REVEAL: Claire was an active part of the scheme.

This scene was built on misleads and reveals. In fact very little of what the audience sees in the beginning is what was really happening. The way it was written is designed to intrigue the reader (or watcher). Ethan Hunt is also introduced in a way which invites the responder to discover more. This scene gives the audience the most important part of his character – he is a secret agent who deceives in order to complete his mission.

7. Giving the scene a future

A further technique that can be used to make a script dramatic is to give the scene a future, to make the audience worry about what will happen next in the script. To do this, a screenwriter can make characters talk about something in the future of the movie, or they could give a warning about a future event. It is also possible to create suspense, to introduce uncertainty about a future decision or to introduce hooks that make the responder want to know what will happen.

8. Use of these techniques in Heloise

It was a conscious decision to include many of these techniques in Heloise. In the following scene, many of them are noted.

INT. INN CORRIDOR – NIGHT

Heloise and Jacques, both dressed as nuns, creep along the dark corridor. They reach a door at the end. A window beside it looks out onto the inn yard.

HELOISE

(whispers)

Just keep your eyes and ears alert.

JACQUES

What if someone comes?

This suggests a possible future for the scene, a possible thing that can go wrong.

There is already tension building here.

Heloise kisses him on the nose.

HELOISE

Improvise.

She opens the door.

INT. ABELARD'S ROOM AT THE INN – NIGHT

Heloise shuts the door behind her in silence.

By closing the door she creates a crucible. They are stuck in this room together.

She crosses to the narrow pallet and climbs over
astride him. He wakes, startled.

Abelard, sits

This is a twist – it is unusual for someone dressed as a nun to climb onto a sleeping man. It provides an interesting visual which keeps the scene dramatic.

She places her fingers to his lips, then replaces her
fingers with her own lips. Abelard clasps her head and
raises it a little.

ABELARD

What are you doing here?

HELOISE

Kissing my lover.

Heloise moves the blankets off Abelard and begins to
lacings on his leggings.

undo the

ABELARD

This is madness. I would be gelded if I
were found with a nun!

There is conflict here about whether they should be doing this or not. However, Abelard does not stop her. There is also a sense of suspense, and worry about some possible future.

HELOISE

That is not a problem. Jacques has told people that you are our father.

She raises her own skirts and lowers herself onto

Abelard.

Heloise reduces the tension with a joke, but increases it as the responders realise that incest is not any better than having sex with a nun – worse if anything.

ABELARD

Do you think that information would make this situation better?

Heloise pulls his hands to her hips and leans in for another kiss.

HELOISE

Come, will you be a noun or a verb?

This pays off a setup from Abelard's first appearance. Abelard says that verbs conjugate and nouns decline. At that time, Heloise was disguised as a boy. Here she is disguised as a nun – neither of whom should be having sex with Abelard. There is tension here because they could so easily be caught doing this by the others in the inn.

INT. INN CORRIDOR – NIGHT

Jacques gazes out of the window. The young man he flirted with earlier stops at a door further along the corridor, sees Jacques.

This is a twist. Jacques is dressed as a nun also. The setup has been that the young man claims to have seen through Jacques' disguise as a nun – but he thinks Jacques is a girl travelling as a nun with her father for her protection. Jacques has admitted that he would not be averse to a tryst if it weren't for his father, who did something unspeakable to the last boy he was found with. Now the young man sees Jacques "alone".

EXT. INN YARD – NIGHT

Horsemen ride up the road towards the inn.

There is tension here. With three scenes playing simultaneously, the possibility of parallel action and increase of tension is presented. The audience may wonder who the horsemen are, which increases the drama, as does the setting.

INT. INN CORRIDOR – NIGHT

The young man puts his arms around Jacques, nuzzles Jacques' neck.

YOUNG MAN

So, Sister, we meet again. Where is your father now?

Jacques turns in his arms, about to say something, but the young man catches his lips and after a brief hesitation, Jacques surrenders.

Jacques has no problems with this being a boy – he is, after all, a "ganymede" as they were called in the twelfth century, but the audience knows that the young man does not know, and this adds to the tension and the humour of the situation. Also, Jacques is supposed to be on the lookout to guard Heloise, and now he is preoccupied. This also adds to the dramatic tension.

INT. ABELARD'S ROOM AT THE INN – NIGHT

Heloise moves with slow grace, smiles down at Abelard as they make love.

HELOISE

So where are we going?

ABELARD

To the convent at Argenteuil.

HELOISE

No!

The twist in the scene at this point is that they are having a serious conversation as they make love – the dialogue is in conflict with the actions. The actual conversation is also a conflict. Heloise does not want to do what Abelard has planned for her, and must change his mind. They are talking about the future, so this is a way of propelling the script forward. It is also a reveal – Heloise did not know Abelard's plans.

ABELARD

You will be safe there. Your uncle will not be able to reach you.

HELOISE

You will not be able to reach me!

ABELARD

It will only be for a short while. When the teaching term is over, I will take you to my sister in Brittany.

HELOISE

Let us go there now.

ABELARD

She may take some persuading...

HELOISE

You do not think she would welcome your whore into her home?

The incongruity of Heloise, dressed as a nun, using language like this adds to the tension in the scene.

ABELARD

Crudely put, my love, but you have...

Heloise changes the angle of her movements.

ABELARD

...judged it just right. Like that, yes.

The dual meaning of Abelard's dialogue, the sexual innuendo, adds to the humour.

Heloise speeds up her movements.

INT. INN CORRIDOR – NIGHT

Cutting back and forward between these two couples who are both engaged in amorous activities, both in disguise – but with different agendas and with the responders knowing different amounts of information – increases the tension.

The young man presses Jacques against the wall with urgent, passionate kisses.

The sound of men dismounting from their horses.

The men are dismounting in the yard. Jacques is supposed to be watching out for this, and the responders realise he isn't. This increases the tension and the dramatic irony. It is also a twist that has the responder wanting Jacques to look, to pay attention.

INT. ABELARD'S ROOM AT THE INN – NIGHT

Abelard and Heloise are in the final throes of passion. Heloise leans in close to Abelard's ear.

HELOISE

But would she accept his one true love,
the mother of his unborn child?

This reveal at the moment of orgasm – that she is pregnant – is a twist which has
Abelard change his mind about their future actions. This is an ideal place for the reveal.

They both reach orgasm.

ABELARD

YES!

The innuendo continues – but this time the conflict between them has passed.

Heloise collapses onto Abelard's chest.

HELOISE

Brittany it is, then.

Heloise has won. This twists the story in a new direction as they travel to Brittany
instead of the convent.

INT. INN CORRIDOR – NIGHT

Jacques tries to redirect the wandering hands of his
companion.

Below in the inn yard, a voice calls out.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

...Master Peter Abelard?

There is an increase in tension as the audience realises that these men are here for
Abelard – and at this moment, Jacques realises it too, and must warn Abelard and
Heloise. He has to get out of the situation he is in.

Jacques tries to wriggle away. The young man will not let him.

JACQUES

You know how you said you had guessed my
secret?

The young man kisses him more...

YOUNG MAN

Mmmm....

JACQUES

Well, you did not quite guess all of it.

Jacques takes the young man's hand and places it on his

groin.

This is a twist, and an amusing reveal, without using dialogue. The dramatic irony setup where the audience knows about Jacques' sex (and sexuality) and the young man does not is paid off in a humorous way.

The young man jumps back in surprise and horror.

Jacques runs into Abelard's room, his nun's habit awry.

Now Jacques has to warn them and they have to get away. The tension has shifted to whether they will be successful or not.

INT. ABELARD'S ROOM AT THE INN – NIGHT

Heloise kisses Abelard, and he places his hand on her stomach in wonder.

Jacques covers his eyes.

JACQUES

Master Abelard!

Abelard looks at Heloise in adoration. Heloise nods.

The audience knows that this moment of love and wonder at Heloise's pregnancy is wasting time, so the tension increases.

ABELARD

What is it, Jacques?

JACQUES

Men. Fulbert's – le Comte's – I know not, but by the Pope's pillicock, they are in the inn yard as we speak.

Abelard leans forward, kisses Heloise's belly, then lifts her to her feet.

All three fix their clothing in haste and stuff belongings into the carry sacks. Abelard buckles on his sword.

Now there is haste, and the tension increases – will they make it?

ABELARD

How do you know?

JACQUES

I heard a man ask for you, Master.

They run out of the room.

INT. INN CORRIDOR – NIGHT

The young man stands dazed in the corridor.

ABELARD

Where is he?

The young man sees Abelard, panics, runs up the corridor,
darts into his room and slams the door.

The fugitives run past.

This is a payoff of Jacques' previous story to the young man about the unspeakable things his father would do to any lover – the young man misinterprets Abelard's question and runs – a final moment of humour in this scene as they run for their lives.

9. Suspense

In the scene discussed, many dramatic techniques have been utilised to create a scene at the pivotal mid point of the screenplay, including suspense. Suspense is an important dramatic element in any script. Irene Webb, a literary agent, in an interview with Croasmun, claims that, "The most important thing in a script is suspense. Even in a comedy, I love it when I can't wait to see what they did with it on the next page."

David Howard says of suspense,

Although surprise can create a very powerful moment, and most assuredly has its place in any narrative film, it is a less effective tool overall than suspense, which is created through irony. The famous example that Alfred Hitchcock gave concerns a bomb that is placed under a table. If a group of characters are sitting around a table and there is a bomb under it, but we don't know it's there and neither do the characters, there is one major moment of surprise – when the bomb goes off. If we know the bomb is there and the characters don't, we can sustain the audience's participation in hoping and fearing for a considerable time, solely because of the audience's knowledge and the characters' ignorance... Clearly, suspense is a stronger tool, and it is based on revealing some things to the audience before they are revealed to one or more of the characters (Howard 74).

Suspense is created by promising an event that matters and then delaying the fulfilment. The event(s) are usually promised through anticipatory dialogue, a prediction, a deadline or a countdown. The event and its impact must matter to the lead characters. It must affect them on many levels. If it does not matter, there is no suspense. The fulfilment of that event is opposed, competed for, fought against, or feared throughout the scene or the movie. This can come from an opposing force or could be the character's own fears or reservations.

This pattern can be seen in many movies. For example, in *Rocky*, an opportunity is presented, the Heavyweight Championship fight, and training is required first.

Throughout the movie, the audience is in suspense about how Rocky will perform and what will happen to him. The promise is the Heavyweight Championship fight. What matters is respect and the dream every fighter has. The delay is the scheduled event and the training that is required.

In *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, the goal is to find the Ark and they have to go through a journey and series of rooms, each with a life threatening challenge before they find the Ark. Each room presents its own form of suspense. The promise is that the location of the Ark will be discovered. What matters is saving the planet from evil. The delay is the journey, the opposition and the challenges of each room.

In each of these movies, suspense was created many times inside the scenes. In *Rocky*, there's suspense about the fight, but there is also suspense about whether he and Adrienne will get together, about whether Paulie will object to the relationship, about whether the media will trash Rocky, about whether Rocky will even take the fight and many more. Many of the major decisions have suspense connected to them in some way.

You've Got Mail is a romantic comedy full of suspense. Joe [Tom Hanks] and Kathleen [Meg Ryan] have a chat room/email relationship. Kathleen is in love with the "online Joe," but does not know he is the one who put her out of business in real life. Joe is keeping his identity in the online relationship a secret. He has been "running into her" on purpose and slowly building trust. Now he wants to tell her the truth and have the relationship, but will she? And when she finds out that he has been the online lover, will she be upset? Will she ever forgive him for what happened to her business? At the end of the movie, they are finally going to meet... or so the audience hopes. But the writer delays the meeting and continues to create suspense up until they do.

EXT. COMPUTER SCREEN – NIGHT

As Joe types.

JOE (V.O.)

How about meeting Saturday? The first day of spring. 4 P.M. There's a place in Riverside Park at 88th Street where the path curves and when you come around the curve, you'll find me waiting.

The promise is an email invitation for the two online lovers to meet. At this point, what matters is their relationship. There is also the delay – 4 P.M. It will not happen until

then. That is how long Joe has to break the news that he is also the online lover. And once he breaks that news, she will react. The responder fears she will dump him, but hopes she will forgive him.

INT./EXT. SATURDAY – GREY'S PAPAYA – THE FIRST DAY OF SPRING

Kathleen and Joe are putting mustard on their hot dogs.

JOE
Today?

KATHLEEN
Today.

JOE
Whoa.

KATHLEEN
I know. In Riverside Park.
Isn't that amazing? Maybe I've seen him,
and I don't even know it.

He has not told her yet. When is he going to tell her? And how?

EXT. COLUMBUS AVENUE – DAY

As they walk uptown, eating their hot dogs and drinking papaya drinks.

JOE
He could be the Zipper Man.

KATHLEEN
Who's that?

JOE
This guy on Amsterdam who repairs
zippers. You'll never have to buy new
luggage.

KATHLEEN
Stop teasing.

JOE
Timing is everything. He waited until
you were primed. Until you knew there
was no other man you could ever love.

KATHLEEN
(almost believes it)
Yes.

Joe is testing the water. If there is no other man she could love, then she would not love him. The writer is playing with the hope/fear of the responder, building worries that it might not happen.

JOE

Sometimes I wonder...

KATHLEEN

What?

They stop walking, they look at each other.

JOE

If I hadn't been Fox books and you
hadn't been The Shop Around the Corner
and we'd just met –

KATHLEEN

Don't.

She is stopping Joe yet again.

JOE

I would have asked for your phone number
and I wouldn't have been able to wait 24
hours before calling and asking, "How
about coffee, drinks, dinner, a movie,
for as long as we both shall live?"

Here, Joe has put himself completely on the line, and he has done so in a very romantic way. How can she turn this down? And if she does, it is over... isn't it?

KATHLEEN

(almost a swoon)

Joe...

JOE

And then we would never have been at
war.

KATHLEEN

No.

JOE

The only fight we'd ever have is what
video to rent on Saturday night.

KATHLEEN

Who fights about that?

JOE

Some people. Not us.

KATHLEEN

We would never.

Another twist gives the responder hope. She is going along with it. The writer gives the audience a reason to believe they should be together.

A long beat.

JOE

If only...

KATHLEEN

Please. I have to go.

More suspense is created as she says she has to go. She is not willing to say yes to Joe. This is not a good sign, especially after he just offered the "as long as we both shall live."

She doesn't move.

JOE

Let me ask you something? How come you'll forgive him for standing you up and you won't forgive me for a little tiny thing like putting you out of business?

Kathleen looks at him. Shakes her head.

They look at each other.

JOE

Oh how I wish you would.

The writer has taken the audience one more step and if she says no here, all he can do is tell her that he is the online lover. The audience is waiting, hoping, worrying...

It's all Kathleen can do not to forgive him.

It's all Joe can do not to kiss her.

KATHLEEN

I really do have to go.

JOE

You don't want to be late.

She's in agony.

He turns and walks away.

After a moment, she does too.

He did not tell her. Just when the audience believes that the suspense was going to be paid off, the writer draws it out even further. What is Joe going to do now? The delay is very well constructed. He should have told her by now. But instead, he went for the indirect approach and it failed. That failure increases the suspense.

EXT. KATHLEEN'S APARTMENT – LATER

As we see Kathleen come down the street and walk into her house.

EXT. KATHLEEN'S APARTMENT – LATER

As she comes out of the apartment house, having changed her clothes.

EXT. RIVERSIDE DRIVE – LATER AFTERNOON

As she comes toward the entrance to the park.

EXT. RIVERSIDE DRIVE PARK – LATE AFTERNOON

As Kathleen comes down a path in the park, near 88th Street.

She comes to a stop.

Looks around.

A young woman in running clothes passes by.

A young father pushing a baby in one of those strollers runners use to push babies in.

Kathleen looks at her watch.

All of this is delay. It works when there has already been suspense created. Otherwise, who would want to watch Kathleen spend half a page walking, waiting, looking at her watch?

Suddenly she hears a noise. A dog barking.

And Brinkley comes around the corner.

VOICE

Brinkley! Brinkley!

And hold on Kathleen as she sees... Joe

And she starts to cry.

And he comes to her. And puts his arms around her.

JOE

Don't cry, Shopgirl, don't cry.

KATHLEEN

I wanted it to be you. I wanted it to
be you so badly.

And as they kiss, we hold on them.

Finally, the suspense is paid off.

The promise is that she's finally going to meet her online lover. What matters is their love, their offline relationship. The delay is him walking her home and the 4 pm deadline.

Suspense can be created in any scene. It can be created with or without violence or a life being threatened. And it can be created to have an audience care about almost any outcome. Any great dramatic script is full of uncertainty. David Howard suggests, What is the trick behind keeping the audience participating in the story and creating in itself the emotional response that drama depends upon? In a word, uncertainty. Uncertainty about the near future, uncertainty about the eventual turn of events. Another way of stating this idea is hope versus fear. If a filmmaker can get the audience to hope for one turn of events and fear another, where the audience truly does not know which way the story will go, this state of uncertainty becomes a very powerful tool indeed (Howard 37).

The technique that many writers use is to alternate hope and fear. The audience hopes for one thing and is afraid that another will happen. An excellent example is in Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope where Luke has just rescued Princess Leia from the detention bay on the death star.⁷⁵ With a little effort, the hope and fear can be balanced in a way that keeps the reader glued to the script and the audience glued to their seats. As Howard suggests,

The KEY to keeping an audience from guessing ahead is not to keep it in the dark about what will happen, but to make it believe that maybe it's hope will happen, but that it's fear is just as likely to happen. We are in anticipation of what MIGHT happen. Anticipation is an informed situation, not one of ignorance (Howard 38).

In *Heloise*, there are many scenes of suspense. The scene where Jacques and Abelard rescue Heloise is full of suspense, as they are delayed at every turn. The keys do not fit, Jacques must find whether his key is where he left it. He passes rooms where people are sleeping and may wake up, Henrietta arrives and Marie-Claire is forced to divert her. When they find Heloise, she is unconscious, so they must carry

⁷⁵ Although this is an excellent example of the hope/fear technique, the scene is long, so is included in appendix E.

her. They are nearly caught in the hall as Fulbert returns, and they only just make it out. Even then, there is a problem with the horses and they have to take Marie-Claire with them. The promise is Heloise's safe escape, What matters is her life and her future with Abelard. The delay is all the obstacles in their way and Fulbert's impending arrival. This same scene is a seesaw of hope and fear for the characters.

Description

Since roughly half of a screenplay is the description, it is essential that the description in a screenplay attracts an actor to a role and gives that actor accurate cues for building a character. It must also describe a setting for the production designer to create, suggest a shot for the director of photography to frame, and fabricate the details of a world that will attract a director and producer. Description must, on the simplest level, describe what is seen on the screen – setting, characters, action, events. It must also deliver tone, attitude, emotion, it must imply more than what is said, and it must give the reader insights into the characters, their relationships, and the story. There are some well established rules for writing description in screenplays. These are the parameters which govern the work. Firstly, description must be in the present tense, it must be economical, it must convey the essence of what is happening on the screen.

Every word must count. Screenwriting teacher Robert McKee says,

To write vividly, avoid generic nouns and verbs with adjectives and adverbs attached and seek the name of the thing: Not 'The carpenter uses a big nail,' but 'The carpenter hammers a SPIKE.' Spike pops a vivid image in the reader's mind. . . Use the most specific, active verbs and concrete nouns possible. . . . Fine film description requires an imagination and a vocabulary (McKee 396).

Jennifer Lerch gives this advice on writing descriptions of a character:

Define a few salient physical traits when describing your character for the first time so the Hollywood Reader forms a mental picture. Jinx Paige, a panther in Armani. Sully Dylan, a fireplug of a man. Jill Weston, Einstein brain in a Miss Universe body (Lerch 35).

While initial description of characters has already been mentioned, it is pertinent in this section to examine the techniques used in such descriptions. In Broadcast News, the lead character is first described as:

AARON ALTMAN, looking almost preposterously young in his graduation gown – is delivering his valedictory. He is a rare breed – a battle-scarred innocent.

In Bull Durham, the lead is described like this:

ANNIE SAVOY, mid 30's, touches up her face. Very pretty, knowing, outwardly confident. Words flow from her Southern lips with ease, but her view of the world crosses Southern, National and International borders. She's cosmic.

The techniques used here are metaphor, exaggeration, and comparison. Each of these may be used to express the essence of a descriptive line in a powerful way. Occasionally in a script, there is another device used – emotional description. In the following scene from Erin Brockovich, this type of description is used sparingly, but effectively.

INT. MASRY & VITITOE – ED'S OFFICE – DAY

Midday. Ed enters with a cup of coffee in his hand. As he heads to his desk, he trips on a box of files. Coffee sloshes up out of his cup and on to his shirt.

ED

Damn it!

(calling out)

Brenda!

She pops her head in.

BRENDA

Yeah?

He grabs a tissue, swabs his shirt, then kicks at the box.

ED

What the hell is this doing here?

BRENDA

It's those files you asked for.

ED

I didn't mean for you to leave them in the middle of the floor. Jesus. Look at me.

As Ed checks his reflection in the glass wall of his office, he notices, on the other side:

ERIN, standing in the middle of the secretaries' area, talking to DONALD, the office boy. Donald heads away from her.

ED (CONT'D)

What's she doing here?

BRENDA

Who?

Ed goes to his office door and waves Donald over.

ED

Hey, Donald, what's she doing here?

DONALD

She works here.

Ed looks back out at her – what the hell?

INT. MASRY & VITITOE – MAIN ROOM – DAY

The support staff – mostly middle-aged women – are all stealing glances at Erin. Ed approaches her, friendly.

ED

Erin! How's it going?

Up close, the wear and tear of worry show on her face.

ERIN

You never called me back. I left messages.

ED

You did? Wow, sorry about that.

(beat)

Listen, Donald seems to think that you said –

ERIN

There's two things that aggravate me, Mr. Masry. Being ignored, and being lied to. You did both.

Glances skitter between the secretaries – get a load of this. Ed lowers his voice.

ED

I never lied, Erin.

ERIN

You said things would be fine, and they're not. I trusted you.

ED

I'm sorry about that. Really. But –

ERIN

I don't need pity. I need a paycheck. And I've looked, but when you've spent the last six years raising babies, it's real hard to convince someone to give you a job that pays worth a damn.

(referring to Brenda's staring)

You getting every word of this down, honey, or am I talking too fast for you!?

Brenda jumps. Ed sees everyone watching him, listening.

ED

I'd love to help, Erin, but I'm sorry, I
have a full staff right now, so –

He starts to escort her out, but she stays put.

ERIN

Bullshit. If you had a full staff, this
office would return a client's damn
phone calls.

She's backing him into a corner here. The secretaries
exchange knowing glances.

ERIN (CONT'D)

Now, I'm smart, I'm hard-working, and
I'll do anything, and I'm not leaving
here without a job.

Erin steps in close to Ed and speaks in a low
voice that combines fierceness with desperation:

ERIN (CONT'D)

Don't make me beg. If it doesn't work
out, fire me... But don't make me beg.

Ed looks at her for a long moment. Then:

ED

No benefits.

In that scene, six lines reference an internal state:

Ed looks back out at her – what the hell?

Ed approaches her, friendly.

Up close, the wear and tear of worry show on her face.

Glances skitter between the secretaries – get a load of this.

She's backing him into a corner here.

Erin steps in close to Ed and speaks in a low voice that combines
fierceness with desperation.

It is possible that the "description purist" would attack these lines and claim that they "tell and not show," but it is possible to argue that they add to the story without going overboard. They also deliver the essence of the emotion or internal state. Even in the sentence "Glances skitter between the secretaries – get a load of this," the screenwriter, Grant, is delivering the essence of what those secretaries think. Just as important, those thoughts can easily be shown on their faces. Also, in each case, the

visual description is written before the internal one, so the reader knows what is happening and then feels the emotion. These principles have been important influences on my writing of *Heloise*, and the techniques have been used, albeit sparingly, in the screenplay.⁷⁶

Subtext

Subtext is a very important tool for the writer. McKee states, TEXT means the sensory surface of a work of art. In film, it's the images on screen and the soundtrack of dialogue, music, and sound effects. What we see. What we hear. What people say. What they do. SUBTEXT is the life under that surface – thoughts and feelings both known and unknown, hidden by behavior. (McKee 252)

Aaron Sorkin is a master of subtext. In this scene in *The American President*, Sydney just got a job at the GDC and within a few days, had a date with the President. The next morning, she talks with her boss, Leo.

INT. LEO SOLOMON'S OFFICE – DAY

SYDNEY enters.

SYDNEY

Leo, you wanted to see me?

LEO

So there I was, thinking maybe I should give Sydney a call. She's new in town, doesn't know many people...

It is possible to think at this point that Leo was concerned Sydney had no social life and was sitting at home all alone. But in one second, he will toss the newspaper on the desk and the picture delivers a deeper meaning.

LEO produces a copy of the morning paper, which has a photo of SHEPHERD and SYDNEY dancing.

SYDNEY

Leo—

LEO

Then I picked up the Times –

⁷⁶ e.g. They look at one another, the message clear, the attraction electric(22). Their lips draw towards one another, unable to stay apart. They kiss – a dam bursts, frees the torrent of pent-up desire(27). Abelard looks up – Jacques does what?(29). Gaston hesitates – how will he put this?(102). Abelard lies, unmoving, in a bath of blood. Is he dead?(107).

Now the audience realises that the concern was not about Sydney's social life. There is subtext, but it is still not clear what the real concern is. Sydney explains.

SYDNEY

It was crazy. He called me at home.

LEO

What's going on?

SYDNEY

Nothing. It was innocent. His cousin got the flu at the last minute.

LEO

Did you sleep with him?

SYDNEY

That's none of your business, Leo.

LEO

Yeah, it is, Sydney.

SYDNEY

You wanna tell me how my personal life in any way –

LEO

Because when it's the President, it's not personal. Sydney, I hired your reputation. I hired a pit bull, not a prom queen.

Finally, the first meaning of the subtext is revealed. Leo is concerned about whether Sydney's reputation will be damaged, thus rendering her useless to Leo's cause.

SYDNEY

That's unfair.

LEO

It's incredibly unfair. But you've spent a lot of time over the year telling me the trouble with the environmental lobby is that we don't understand the fundamental truth that politics is perception. This is a bad time to develop ignorance.

The implication here is that Sydney is making a big mistake and she should know it.

SYDNEY

You're making way too much of this.

LEO

Am I? This is your time, Sydney. You're sitting at the grown-ups' table. You have a chance to get everything you want – run a national campaign, be a major player inside the party. But this relationship had better go all the way, because with the leader of the free world there is no halfway. Politics is perception, and if things don't work out, the amount of time it'll take you to go from being a hired gun to a cocktail party joke can be clocked with an egg timer.

Here, Leo tries to persuade her of the value of these actions, but the audience knows he is concerned about how much value Sydney will bring him and the GDC. Also, there is a veiled threat at the end. Right now, she is a hired gun. The subtext of the cocktail party joke is that she will be useless in Washington, thus will lose her job.

There's a quick knock at the door – Leo's SECRETARY steps in with a strange-looking package.

SYDNEY

Leo, there is no relationship. It was one night. It's done.

LEO'S SECRETARY

Mr. Solomon, this was just delivered by White House messenger. It's marked "Perishable."

LEO

The White House has sent me something perishable?

LEO'S SECRETARY

It's for Ms. Wade.

LEO

Here we go...

Sorkin uses a metaphor, a gift, to show the validity of Leo's point. The text shows the gift delivered. The first level of subtext is that Leo was right. The second level of subtext is that there is more to this than just one date.

SYDNEY begins unwrapping the package.

SYDNEY

Relax, Leo. I'm sure it's just a

formality.

LEO'S SECRETARY

(exited)

It's from him.

LEO

Of course it's from him.

SYDNEY

So he had some staff flunky send me a fruit basket.

LEO'S SECRETARY

He wrote the note himself.

SYDNEY

I'm sure he didn't take the time to –

LEO'S SECRETARY

The messenger said he was waiting in the Oval Office for ten minutes while the President wrote the card.

SYDNEY

Okay, listen, so he –

(to LEO'S SECRETARY)

– it took him ten minutes to write a card?!

Sydney asks about the card, but she is really asking, "Am I that important to him?"

LEO'S SECRETARY

Apparently he went through several drafts.

SYDNEY can't stifle her laugh – she sees what the gift is.

LEO

What is it... what is it?

SYDNEY

A ham.

LEO

(beat)

A ham?

SYDNEY

He sent me a Virginia ham.

LEO'S SECRETARY

Dig it, Ms. Wade. You're the President's girlfriend.

If this scene is considered in isolation, most of what Sydney says does not show up as subtext. All through the scene, she is denying that there is anything going on between her and the President. But when it is taken into account that in the previous scenes, the President has gone to a lot of trouble to buy her flowers from her state and finally settles on the Virginia ham, it becomes apparent that every denial that Sydney made has subtext underlying it – the subtext was just revealed in the secretary's line. She is the President's girlfriend.

SYDNEY's smile fades away... she looks at LEO.

LEO

There's never an egg timer around
when you need one.

Because the "egg timer" metaphor was set up earlier, this line carries a great deal of meaning. The text is that there is never an egg timer around when you need one. The first level of subtext is, "See, I was right all along." The second level is that this is going to turn into a political nightmare. And the third level is, "You're going to lose your job if you don't do something."

Subtext has surface action and/or dialogue and it has a deeper meaning. When Leo says,

LEO

So there I was, thinking maybe I
should give Sydney a call. She's
new in town, doesn't know many
people...

he is really setting Sydney up to make his point. But the words (surface) would indicate that he is concerned about her being alone. Those words cover a deeper meaning that has not yet been revealed. Half a page later, Leo says,

LEO

Because when it's the President, it's
not personal. Sydney, I hired your
reputation. I hired a pit bull, not
a prom queen.

and the meaning is finally conveyed that he is afraid she is incapable of doing the job he hired her for.

Meaning can be revealed at different points in a scene. It is possible to reveal the meaning of the subtext before the scene is played out. This often happens when there is some type of scheme. The audience is told about the scheme first, then sees it

played out. Each statement made is interpreted through the scheme, thus revealing the subtext. For example, the meaning of the "egg timer" is given early in the scene.

LEO

. . . Politics is perception,
and if things don't work out, the
amount of time it'll take you to go
from being a hired gun to a cocktail
party joke can be clocked with an egg
timer.

Then, at the end of the scene, a surface line is given,

LEO

There's never an egg timer around
when you need one.

and it carries the deeper meaning that came from the earlier dialogue. Obviously, Leo doesn't really want an egg timer. He is communicating to Sydney the danger she is putting herself in. But it would not have worked unless it was set up in the earlier dialogue. Meaning is sometimes revealed as the text is said. This occurs in a situation where the "actions speak louder than the words." The potential lovers speak about the weather, but are drawn to each other and even as they continue talking about the weather, they begin kissing. The text is about the weather, the subtext is about their romance. Meaning may also be revealed after the text. Characters take a position and in later scenes the true meaning is discovered. Sometimes the audience totally believes their first position. In some scripts, responders are led to suspect something and begin trying to work out the true meaning of the subtext. When it is finally discovered, the point of revelation can be very dramatic.⁷⁷

1. Layering

There are many reasons for subtextual layering. One is to add emotion, such as love, fear or anger. Often, there is something that one character wants that they are not talking about. A character may have a repressed fear or belief, or someone may have power over their decisions and they are acting without explaining the real source of their actions. In the scene above from *American President*, Leo clearly has a concern that is real. It is logical and emotional. While it has to do with external forces, Leo is the one making the decision here and his subtext is there to make a point. Another example of layered subtextual levels is in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*. The layers of subtext here build upon one another to create a rich and powerful layering of meaning⁷⁸.

⁷⁷ The use of subtext in *Heloise* will be discussed in detail later in this section (p 131).

⁷⁸ This example is long, and hence is included in appendix F.

2. Symbols

There have been complete books published discussing symbols, such as Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*, Jung's *Man and His Symbols*, Fontana's *The Secret Language of Symbols* and Campbell's *The Mythic Image*, among others. There have been literary debates about symbols for centuries. But in this discussion, I intend to look at symbols from a subtext perspective only. A symbol is separate from its meaning before that meaning is established, but once a meaning is firmly connected to the symbol, the symbol and the meaning are one. In order to use symbols effectively in a screenplay, it is necessary to introduce the symbol through its meaning early in the story. Then, the writer must establish its meaning powerfully enough so that its presence will cause an audience response. Finally, the writer should use the symbol to cause or show change in the characters or their situation. This is where a symbol can have a forceful impact. Since its meaning has been set powerfully before, it can easily be the catalyst for change.

In *As Good as it Gets*, Jack Nicholson plays Melvin, a troubled writer who dislikes and abuses everyone he knows, including the gay guy who lives next door and his little dog. The dog is a symbol. It is introduced at the beginning when the audience learns that Melvin hates the dog. He chases after it in the first scene. It is set powerfully when Melvin puts the dog down the garbage shoot while telling it, "You've pissed on your last floor, you dog-eared monkey." As Melvin interacts with other characters, it becomes clear that he feels the same way toward them. At about the point that the audience believes that Melvin will never change, he is forced to take care of the dog while his neighbour recovers. Quickly, he and the dog bond. He starts talking to it, bringing home treats for the dog and treating it like a friend. From that point on, it is clear that Melvin can change. His attitude to the dog symbolises that.

In *Serendipity*, Jonathan [John Cusak] and Sara [Kate Beckinsale] meet at a store, have lunch together and discuss how chance brought them together. He wants to spend more time with her, but she decides to "let fate determine if they're meant to be together." She has him write his number on a five-dollar bill that she spends. Then she writes her number in a book and agrees to sell it to a used book store the next day. As soon as one of them finds the number and calls the other, they will know they are supposed to be together. The symbols are introduced when Sara agrees to send their numbers out into the universe on a five-dollar bill and in a used book. The book and five-dollar bill are introduced at the point where Jonathan most wants the relationship to happen. Throughout the story, Jonathan checks book stores for the book and Sara checks five-dollar bills. Years later, the night before Jonathan's wedding, his bride-to-

be gives him a book. When he opens it, there is Sara's phone number. Jonathan jumps on a plane and cancels the wedding. These objects – the book and the five-dollar bill, symbolise the characters' love and their hope for the future.

In *Moulin Rouge*, the Duke wants Satin [Nicole Kidman], but she is in love with the writer, Christian [Ewan McGregor]. They write a play that the Duke is financing and Satin has to sleep with him on the opening night for payment. The entire play is a metaphor for their situation with the Duke, but there is also a wonderful symbol in the "Lover's secret song." Satin tells Christian that she has to sleep with the Duke. He writes a song that she will sing at the end of the play and when he hears it, it means that she loves him. Since it is presented as the solution to their problem, it is powerful from the beginning. But when the Duke declares that he dislikes the ending and he wants the song out of the play, it takes on more value. They are having to fight for their symbol. In the end of the movie, Christian is filled with grief because Satin ended the relationship to protect him from the Duke. Christian goes on stage in the play and "publicly pays his whore," but as he is leaving, Satin sings the song. It is a message straight to Christian's heart that she loves him. He does an about-face and sings with her for a triumphant ending.

In *Heloise*, one such symbol is Heloise's hair. She hides it when she dresses up as a boy, but wears it loose when she meets Abelard for the first time as herself. He comments on its beauty as he lifts her down from the tree and it cascades all around him. Her hair becomes the symbol of their physical relationship. It is always loose as they make love, and she defiantly unbinds it when facing the church court. In the final scenes, she cuts off her hair to join the convent, and Abelard places a lock of her hair on the tray where Abelard's men ultimately throw his genitals.

The use of symbol is powerful in terms of introducing subtext into a screenplay, and an important one in *Heloise*, where other symbols such as the tree, the brooch, disguise, the lily, etc. all add depth and layering to the story. In the climactic sequence of *Heloise*, there has been a conscious use of many subtextual techniques.

INT. MOTHER SUPERIOR'S OFFICE, CONVENT OF ARGENTEUIL – DAY

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Is this what you want, my daughter?

Heloise looks at the knife in her hand, turns it over.

The knife is a symbol of cutting off the old life, and it will be echoed later in this sequence in Abelard's room.

She lifts her hair, cuts through it with the knife.

This is a symbol of cutting off their physical relationship.

HELOISE

He said it captured the light itself
within it.

Abelard imbued the hair with light – symbolic of all going well between them, their love.

EXT. FULBERT'S HOUSE – DAY

Jacques dismounts at the door, thumps repeatedly.

The door opens and Jacques strides in.

Jacques is planning something here. The audience may wonder what he is doing at the home of the antagonist.

INT. MOTHER SUPERIOR'S OFFICE, CONVENT OF ARGENTEUIL –
DAY

Heloise's thick tresses lie scattered on the stone floor of the convent.

This reinforces the significance of the symbol.

INT. ABELARD'S ROOM – NIGHT

Abelard caresses the lock of Heloise's hair, tied with a red ribbon.
He kisses it, then places it on a silver
platter on which stands a jug of wine and a portion of
bread.

Abelard keeps the symbol of their love with him. He caresses it, kisses it, then gives it equal place on the plate with the sacrament. This is symbolic of Heloise's importance in his life.

In the centre of the room, in front of a crackling fire, a large tub of
water steams in invitation.

Gaston pours an ewer of water into the tub, steps to one side and
points to the tub.

GASTON

All ready.

Abelard strips off the last of his clothing and steps
into the bath. The firelight dances over his superb
body and is reflected in the silver platter.

Abelard is washing before his ceremony of acceptance into the church (symbolic in its own right), but he does not intend to leave Heloise, he intends to continue seeing her. The fact that his lock of her hair, which represents her, is already cut, foreshadows the possibility that this is not going to happen.

ABELARD

You may bathe after me, Gaston.

He indicates the platter.

ABELARD

Then we will partake of the sacrament.

If there were any doubt before this that the bread and the wine on the platter was the sacrament, Abelard has just dispelled it. Heloise, or his love for Heloise, has attained a religious status.

GASTON

(nervous)

Master Abelard...

Abelard waves his hand, gives permission for Gaston to continue.

Gaston hesitates – how will he put this?

GASTON (CONT'D)

Why are you naming me as your deacon?

ABELARD

I have my reasons.

(beat)

Was he here?

Gaston polishes an imaginary mark on the platter with his sleeve.

GASTON

He said he was going somewhere where his services were appreciated.

Abelard smirks.

ABELARD

He will be back.

Abelard trusts Jacques to return. But the audience knows where Jacques is.

EXT. STREET – NIGHT

Jacques glances around, then approaches four shadowy figures.

He points out a window in a nearby building which flickers with firelight.

And Jacques points out where Abelard is staying with Gaston.

INT. ABELARD'S ROOM – NIGHT

GASTON

You promised that it would be him.

(beat)

I do not think he is happy.

The technique of understatement is used here.

EXT. STREET – NIGHT

Jacques stares at the window, first angry, then strides away.

resigned. He

INT. ABELARD'S ROOM – NIGHT

ABELARD

Do not concern yourself for him. Are my robes ready for tomorrow?

From the start, Abelard is hiding something. He is hiding from Gaston the argument he had with Jacques. He is asking for his robes which, for Abelard, are part of the "disguise" theme. Abelard has chosen to be promoted because Heloise has asked him to do that. He is finally acting for her rather than for himself.

GASTON

I will fetch them, Sir.

He leaves, closes the door behind him.

Abelard picks up the soap and lathers it in the water.

ABELARD

(sings)

The happiest of masters
To have a mistress fair.
With eyes of gentle moonlight
And sunlight in her hair.

The song is also a symbol, as is Heloise's hair, which is referenced within it. This song has meant trouble in the past – it was how Fulbert discovered the liaison, it enraged Fulbert enough to galvanise him into destroying Abelard, so now its inclusion is ominous.

EXT. STREET – NIGHT

The shadowy figures pull up their hoods, steal across the street
and slip into the dark doorway.

There is dramatic irony in the scene because the audience knows, and Abelard does not know, that there are men creeping up to the house, and that Jacques has pointed out where Abelard is. This also raises the tension. The plot is building against him.

INT. ABELARD'S ROOM – NIGHT

Abelard soaps himself, declaring his happiness at full voice.

ABELARD

Her skin is soft as roses,
Her breath a gentle breeze,
Yet naught transcends the mind of
My gentle Heloise.

The door slowly opens.

The tension builds still further.

Abelard turns, smiling.

More tension. Is it the men?...

Gaston enters, struggles with the cassock, hood and stole. He spreads them over the storage chests, then strokes the embroidery, caresses the rich fabric of the hood.

Not yet...

The disguise/ dressing up symbol of his promotion is building up.

ABELARD

I dreamed of this so often.

Gaston crosses to the fire, moves the drying cloths closer to the bath.

GASTON

What of Heloise, Master?

ABELARD

After this, I will take her to Brittany.

Tension builds with talk of the future.

Abelard soaps his privates, deep in thought.

Subtext is used here with sexual undertones.

GASTON

And your teaching?

Abelard leans back, closes his eyes, wrapped in his dream.

ABELARD

I will set up a school there. I can see it now...

GASTON

(fervently)

Your students will all follow you. It will become a new centre of learning.

Gaston will, of course follow him. He loves Abelard. Tension is building further with talk of a future which the responders know is in jeopardy.

Abelard scrutinises him.

ABELARD

Do you think so?

Abelard washes his hair. Gaston reaches over to help, then stops himself.

GASTON

I will fetch the surplice.

Gaston, of course, has fancied Abelard from the start. But he still stops himself from achieving his dream. This is a subtext parallel to Abelard not achieving his own. More of the disguise is coming.

INT. CONVENT CHAPEL – NIGHT

Surrounded by a chanting choir of nuns, Heloise in a habit, her hair shorn, approaches the Mother Superior at the altar.

Heloise has cut her hair. For her, their time of physical love is over. Now she approaches her new life.

INT. STAIRS – NIGHT

Gaston steps with care down the dark stairs. A candle lights his way.

INT. LANDING – NIGHT

The shadowy figures see a candle flame approaching from the staircase above them.

They become one with the darkness of a doorway.

Gaston passes them, intent on his duties.

The tension increases here as the scenes cut from one location to another, and as Gaston and the men pass close to one another in the dark passages and stairs.

INT. CONVENT CHAPEL – NIGHT

Heloise kneels before the Mother Superior.

INT. ABELARD'S ROOM – NIGHT

Abelard rinses his hair, reaches for the drying cloths.

The symbols of washing are important. He is washing off his new life. Heloise is shedding hers at the same time.

He hums as he dries his hair.

The symbol of hair reinforces the rift between them.

He steps out of the bath, stands facing the fireplace, naked as he dries himself. The light reflects on smooth skin and shiny hair. This man is magnificent.

The door opens behind him.

ABELARD

Just put it on the hook, Gaston.

This is misdirection, and the audience holds its breath. They know something that Abelard does not.

Silence, then a slight noise. Abelard freezes, aware something amiss.

that there is

Tension builds, something is 'off' here.

He turns slowly, sees the men.

ABELARD

What!?!...

Two men make a grab for him.

Abelard struggles, retrieves his sword from

the table.

They try to seize him again, while a third man snatches the drying cloth and stuffs it hard into Abelard's mouth.

The fourth man examines the sword, runs his finger down the blade, then places it with care on the table next to the silver platter.

There is a build up of hope and fear in this sequence.

Abelard relaxes slightly.

The man pulls out and brandishes a large knife.

KNIFE MAN

No fancy rhetoric, Master Abelard?

Abelard struggles, but they restrain him. His face reflects his fear.

KNIFE MAN

No pithy witticisms to record as your last words?

The third man yanks the gag from Abelard's mouth.

ABELARD

I have a message for Fulbert: sending you to kill me is the act of a coward. It shows his lack of manhood.

This line foreshadows what will happen. Abelard is just about to lose his manhood.

The knife man steps up to Abelard, the knife between them, intense, menacing.

KNIFE MAN

And I give you a message from Canon Fulbert: "As you sow, so shall ye reap."

The images of religion, combined with the sexual "sowing" and "reaping" and the underlying thematic image of threat and revenge is very powerful in this line. The idea of "reaping" when combined with the fact that the man is wielding a sword also increases the subtextual power of the text.

He reaches towards Abelard's groin, grasps his penis and testicles.

Abelard jerks back. The men hold him. He is powerless.

The knife-man swings the knife down, brings it up sharply.

INT. STAIRS – NIGHT

An inhuman howl of agony rends the air.

Gaston, laden with a surplice, pauses on the stairs. He looks upwards – what on earth was that?

Four men hurry down past him, push Gaston aside.

Gaston, startled and motionless, allows them to pass.

In an instant, he regains his powers of speech.

GASTON

Wait!

He hesitates, turns to follow them, then turns again and rushes up the stairs.

INT. ABELARD'S ROOM – NIGHT

Gaston rushes in. He hesitates on the threshold. The room is silent.

Abelard lies, unmoving, in a bath of blood. Is he dead?

The flames shine from the silver platter on the table.

Between the wine and the bread, on the lock of Heloise's hair, lies a bloody penis and testicles.

The severed manhood beside the severed hair, and on the same platter as the sacrament – wine and bread, layers the symbolic and subtextual power of this scene.

INT. CONVENT CHAPEL – NIGHT

The Mother Superior wraps Heloise's head in a wimple and places the veil over it. The chanting of the choir swells.

Heloise stands up and faces the nuns, one of them for ever.

Heloise's head is covered forever. She has symbolically cut herself off from physical union, and for Abelard, this has been done for him.

Dialogue

One of the most important parts of a script is dialogue. Although Hitchcock once said, "When the screenplay has been written and the dialogue has been added, we're ready to shoot"(quoted in McKee 394), most screenwriters will agree dialogue is a very important part of a great screenplay. Dialogue doesn't "tell" the story. It is not a substitute for story. If characters tell each other what they are doing, the scene and

dialogue will come across as dull exposition. Dialogue is a screenwriting tool just like visuals, music, character, etc. The two main activities of dialogue are a constant expression of character and a consistent attack/counterattack. This is why it is absolutely possible for Jules [Samuel L. Jackson] and Vincent [John Travolta] in *Pulp Fiction* to spend their time, on the way to murder four people, talking about Big Macs, foot massages, and their boss' wife, and the audience enjoys it because it expresses character and has consistent attack/counterattack. As Eric Edson, the Executive director of The Hollywood Symposium, says in an interview with *Croasmun* (Giving dialogue character),

Dialogue IS a TOOL of attack and counter attack. Watch again the movies you love, but this time turn off the picture, and just listen. Good dialogue advances plot and conflict. In fine films, characters don't just chat, or complain or whine, they parry and thrust with a few well chosen words.

This is why a show like *Seinfeld* is successful. Jerry Seinfeld often refers to his show as "a show about nothing."⁷⁹ But it is a show where the dialogue achieves its purpose, because, besides the comedy, there is attention to character and consistent attack/counterattack about small, unimportant issues.

Great dialogue sounds natural, but isn't. It accomplishes a purpose. Many writers justify bad dialogue by saying, "That's what they would say in real life." But the reality is that great dialogue just sounds natural. Dialogue is either setting something up, paying it off, providing other meanings, highlighting something that needs to be in the foreground, foreshadowing something coming up or a number of other things. It is essential that every line of dialogue accomplishes a purpose, otherwise, it does not belong in a script.

In this very short scene from the beginning of *Terminator*, a Police Officer has been chasing Reese [Arnold Schwarzenegger] through the downtown area.

EXT. ALLEYWAY – NIGHT

Without slowing, Reese leaps toward him, twisting in mid-air like a cat. The cop FIRES. Misses. Goes down under Reese's tackle and they slide together on the polished floor.

Before they even come to rest Reese snatches the cop's gun, aiming it at the other's face two-handed.

REESE
What day is it? The date...

⁷⁹ For example, when interviewed in *New York Magazine*, April 6 1998.

COP
Thursday... uh... May twelfth.

REESE
(viciously)
What year?

On the surface, this is simply a conversation about the date, but in only three lines, the audience understands a great deal. After being chased by the police officer and caught, Reese takes away his gun and asks only one question. That in itself highlights the importance of the question. The responder is forced to wonder why is it so important, and the answer indicates that Reese does not know what year he is in. It also says that Reese came from a different time, most likely the future, and most importantly, it says that it is essential for Reese to know the date. Later, it becomes clear that he had to arrive on or before the moment that the real Terminator arrived. All of that is derived from three seemingly innocuous lines.

According to McKee, good dialogue is never 'on-the-nose.' One of the worst insults to pay a screenwriter is to say their dialogue is on-the-nose, which simply means that the character says exactly what they mean without any form of characterisation or any other meaning coming through. There are many problems with such dialogue. It does not require the audience to think at all, it makes the characters completely predictable, it cuts out one or more levels of meaning, it gives the actor nothing to act and it is uninteresting, boring, dull and bland. There are times when the character should say exactly what they mean, but that is not a good reason for being on-the-nose throughout an entire script. Each line must do more than simply saying what the character means. Great dialogue delivers on multiple levels. That can occur through metaphor, indirection, subtext, or even silence. In order to write good dialogue, a writer must understand the patterns, structures, techniques, and rules. A writer must also recognise and create opportunities for great dialogue.

In the following scene from Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring, once again, the simplest dialogue delivers on multiple levels. In this short scene, Frodo [Elijah Wood] and Sam [Sean Astin] are about to leave the Shire at the start of their journey. Frodo already knows the dire nature of the ring he carries, but has no idea of what he has let himself in for. He is trusting in the judgement and wisdom of his friend, Gandalf [Sir Ian McKellen], who has told him that the ring cannot remain in the Shire, for there are servants of the Dark Lord who are searching for it. Up till now, Frodo and Sam's journey has been much like a pleasant cross-country hike, with no apparent dangers whatsoever.

EXT. GREEN HILL COUNTRY – AFTERNOON

Sam stops short... taking stock of his surroundings. Sam looks back from where they came.

SAM

This is it.

This is a simple, direct line which reveals the simplicity of the character. Sam always says what he means. He is down to earth and direct.

FRODO

This is what?

Frodo always encourages Sam to explain himself. Frodo knows that beneath the plain exterior, Sam always has something important to say. Both these simple lines reveal important aspects of the characters. Frodo is also challenging Sam.

SAM

If I take one more step it'll be the farthest away from home I've ever been.

Sam's loyalty to Frodo is one of the most important of his characteristics, as is his love for the Shire where he was born. At this point, these two are in opposition and Sam stops moving. It is also a metaphor for leaving one's comfort zone, for becoming something more than you have ever been in your life. Sam is doing something that hobbits never do – go on adventures. He is about to cross the line between the past and an uncertain future, between the known and the unknown. This line that Sam is about to cross is the threshold to adventure of the Hero's journey – leaving the familiar world. It is the archetypal step into the void.

FRODO gives Sam a pat on the shoulder.

FRODO

Come on, Sam.

Frodo's dedication to his duty, a duty he doesn't understand, is calling him to move on. In this line he shows his utter faith in Sam, and his complete trust in Sam's loyalty to him. Frodo has no hesitation in taking that step himself. He knows it must be taken, because for him there is no realistic alternative. He has to save his home from what is searching for the ring. But he understands Sam's hesitation, and at the same time trusts Sam implicitly to make the correct choice.

Sam does not answer, and his silence speaks volumes. He simply moves onwards. He has made his choice and he has chosen his friend, the duty he understands and

demonstrated the unfailing loyalty that will characterise his every action for the rest of the saga. The challenge also continues here. Frodo tells Sam to "come on" to leave the world he has known and to step forward. Sam, faithfully and without hesitating, does just that. It is interesting, incidentally, that in the final part of the trilogy, *Lord of the Rings: Return of the King*, this scene is mirrored when Sam, in the depths of Mordor, encourages Frodo to complete the journey to destroy the ring by "taking another step."

Sam takes a deep breath and steps forward.
CLOSE ON: SAM'S brown, furry foot hits the ground.

Frodo is smiling.

FRODO (CONT'D)
Remember what Bilbo used to say... it's
a dangerous business...
Frodo and Sam continue their journey.

BILBO (V.O.)
... it's a dangerous business, Frodo,
going out your door... you step onto the
road, and if you don't keep your feet,
there's no knowing where you might
be swept off to.

This voice-over reveals Bilbo's character – Bilbo [Sir Ian Holm] accepted adventure and, even though he was also, at first, a reluctant hero, enjoyed the notoriety that his reputation brought him in the Shire. He enjoyed proffering these snippets of wisdom. The metaphor of going out of your door being dangerous is particularly pertinent at this juncture. Sam is leaving his home for the first time. Frodo is also travelling away from home, not knowing where his journey will lead him. The important thing about this dialogue is that Bilbo's wisdom tells you that you have to keep your feet – keep your wits about you. You must keep being realistic and taking one step at a time, not getting ahead of yourself, not dreaming about what dangers might lurk ahead, for if you do not "keep your feet" you may be swept off to the unknown. This is also a prediction, for here, at the beginning of Frodo's journey, there are dangers ahead that he could never dream about, and by the end of it, he and Sam will have been swept off to the ends of Middle earth – both physically and emotionally. The dialogue in this short scene works powerfully on a number of levels, and prepares the viewer for the immensity of the physical, emotional, psychological and heroic journey which lies ahead.

There are many other techniques for improving the dialogue of the characters in a screenplay. These include making sure that the dialogue represents the core of the character, and that one or more of the character's traits is demonstrated well in each

line of dialogue.⁸⁰ Another is to identify the “world view” of the character and incorporate the life metaphors from which the character operates in their dialogue.⁸¹ Abelard’s dialogue, for example, often reflects a religious motif, and he frequently quotes from the scriptures. Jacques’ unique form of swearing is another example of this.

Other techniques for making dialogue structures more interesting include contrasting dialogue where the dialogue gives one message and the actions or the environment give another. Scenes where Abelard and Heloise are making love and discussing philosophy, or having an argument about the future are such scenes. There are also examples in the screenplay of circular dialogue, such as Heloise’s discussions with Fulbert about the possibility of Abelard staying with them. She starts on that topic, seemingly wanders off the topic, and then returns to it with all the arguments made, even though it appeared that they were referring to something else at the time. Characters often speak using metaphor, and this also deepens the impact of dialogue.

HELOISE

Forgive the impertinence of my
hair, Sir.

ABELARD

A magnificent impertinence,
Mistress, which captures the light
itself within it.

Anticipatory dialogue, as described by Croasmun (Causing anticipation – Make your script a “Page Turner”), is used throughout the screenplay. This includes direct prediction, indirect prediction, the idea of a countdown (time running out for something), implying consequences, giving warnings, creating reputations for characters before they actually enter the screenplay, or issuing challenges. All these techniques combine to create a future for the script in the dialogue. This type of dialogue has been indicated in several of the scenes discussed, especially the scene where Heloise tells Abelard of her pregnancy, and the later scene with Gaston, immediately preceding Abelard’s castration.

Subtext is included in the dialogue whenever possible. Methods of creating subtext include the use of silence when someone ought to answer, making their actions incongruent with their words, having them change the subject or asking questions back

⁸⁰ Character traits are discussed well by Linda Seeger, in her book *Creating Unforgettable Characters*, 146+.

⁸¹ This approach to improving dialogue is included in the work of Linda Seeger, when she discusses the characters’ philosophy of life.

or attacking or misdirecting or distracting or delivering an inappropriate response to a line. Other ways of introducing subtext into dialogue include making a joke of something serious or ignoring a remark and continuing a conversation as if it had not been said. All of these add layers to the dialogue and contribute subtext to the overall screenplay.⁸² There are techniques for including subtextual elements within the line of dialogue itself. These include metaphor, implication, insinuation, hints, sarcasm and allusion. All of these suggest a layer of meaning below the surface and are useful tools to spice up dialogue by introducing subtext.

Dialogue can also be made more colourful and interesting by taking things to an extreme, by making it more poetic at times, or by introducing unique elements for certain characters. Jacques, for example, has a unique way of using profanities, and this colours his dialogue. The use of jargon makes dialogue more interesting, and in this screenplay, jargon includes religious and philosophical references. Dialogue can also be made more interesting by introducing emotion, and by including elements such as contradictory statements and strange conclusions which give lines a life of their own.⁸³ All these techniques were used in the construction of dialogue in *Heloise*.

⁸²Subtext is discussed in great detail by Linder Seeger in *Creating Unforgettable Characters* 148-151 and elsewhere in that book.

⁸³ Techniques for making dialogue more colourful are discussed by Hal Barwood in *Everything but the Words, a gaming primer*.

SECTION 4 – CONCLUSION

The result of all this research and craft is the final text of the screenplay, and as Phillip Noyce says, “the final text comes from thousands of answers to thousands of questions that have been edited into coherent thoughts”(qtd. in Galvin 25). For Heloise, the journey has encompassed the research into the lives of Heloise and Abelard, the contemporary social and religious mores, the philosophy and theology of Abelard, and the myriad historical details of life in twelfth century France. This basic story was then moulded into a suitable structure for a screenplay, omitting, emphasising or condensing facts where necessary for the pace of the screenplay or to serve the story structure. It was also necessary to understand the characters, and to create characters who would credibly behave in the way history claims they did. Only then was it possible to begin to write the screenplay, and to do that, many screenplay writing techniques were utilised. The total research and writing time spanned two years.

All this work, however, was vindicated when Heloise won the IF award for “Best unproduced screenplay in Australia” in 2003.

Of course, a screenplay is not written primarily to be read. Nor is it written for personal accolade, however gratifying. It is written to be seen on the big screen. So far, no producers that have been approached have been “passionate” about a period romance. But this screenplay is not one which is dependent upon current events to increase its chances of production. It is simply not one of the “fashionable genres” in 2005. However, I have conviction that the fashion in Hollywood will swing around once more and Heloise will be there when it does. For it is not until it is made that it will have achieved the ultimate goal for all screenplays, and do the job it was designed to do – to entertain responders, to broaden their awareness, to make them think. For that, claims Rossio, is the most important task of a film.

The best movies can cause an internal struggle, or reaffirmation of values. Perhaps you wanted one thing for a character, but something else happened. And the character didn't respond in the way you expected. Suddenly you question your own presumptions. Perhaps the experience of the movie as a whole induces a bit of soul-searching, a reassessment of personal values. An effective movie can cause us to challenge our fundamental beliefs. To examine our presumptions. To broaden our awareness. And even, in some cases, to change (Rossio column 10).

HELOISE

A screenplay submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the degree

DOCTOR OF CREATIVE ARTS

from

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

RIE NATALENKO, BA (Hons), Dip Ed, M Ed (hons), MCA

FACULTY OF CREATIVE ARTS

2005

Heloise
by
Rie Natalenko

(Based on an historical event)

WINNER OF THE 2003 ZTUDIO IF AWARD
FOR
BEST UNPRODUCED SCREENPLAY IN AUSTRALIA

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FADE IN:

INT. HELOISE'S ROOMS, 12TH CENTURY PARIS - DAY

SUPERSCRIPT: PARIS, YEAR OF OUR LORD 1117

HELOISE (15), dressed in boy's clothes, adjusts the steel mirror, hastens to tuck the last strands of her glorious long hair under a boy's cap.

JACQUES (16) vivacious, endearing, androgynous, races into the room, knocks a book off the seat, then picks it up. He sticks a lily into a vase on her dresser.

JACQUES

By The Pope's balls, I cannot understand why someone as supposedly intelligent as you would want to go through with this.

HELOISE

Hurry, or we shall be late.

She dashes out. Jacques yells after her as he follows.

JACQUES

What about breakfast!

EXT. PARIS STREET - DAY

Paris at the beginning of the 12th century: teeming with life everywhere -- merchants and thieves, market women and musicians, professors and streetwalkers.

Heloise (dressed as a boy) scurries along, drags Jacques in her wake. They dodge carts, horses, people as they run.

HELOISE

Come on Jacques!

She grabs an apple as they pass a fruit seller's cart, holds it up in triumph. A body blocks her way. A hand takes the apple. Heloise ducks under the arm.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Come back here, lad!

HELOISE

(to Jacques)

Sorry. I tried.

She ducks and weaves as they run on.

INT. CONVENT TOWER, 12TH CENTURY PARIS - DAY

Superscript: FRANCE, YEAR OF OUR LORD 1142

HELOISE (39), Mother Superior of the Convent of the Paraclete, places the last of a pile of letters into a small carved box. Her fingers trail over it, reluctant to let go. She places a tree-shaped cloak pin on the top letter then closes the box and takes measured steps towards the window.

She stands gazing out of the window. Sedate and serene, hands folded in front of her, she seems the perfect picture of self-possession, yet beneath the calm exterior, she is nervous.

She picks up a lily from a vase near the window, twirls it in her hands.

A YOUNG NUN picks up a tray which holds an empty plate and cup.

YOUNG NUN
Shall I bring you more water,
Reverend Mother?

HELOISE
Thank you, Sister. No.

JACQUES, beautiful, androgynous even at forty, rushes through the door, bumps into the nun.

The tray crashes to the floor.

He bends to help the nun pick up the mess.

JACQUES
Sorry! Sorry, Sister, sorry ah...
Reverend Mother.

The nun leaves, smiles to herself at his antics. Jacques closes the door, then rushes to Heloise.

JACQUES
Look!

Heloise turns to gaze out of the window again.

Jacques' arms encircle her from behind. He nuzzles her neck.

She leans into his embrace.

JACQUES
Can you see him? He is nearly at
the gate.

EXT. THE CONVENT GATE - DAY

Below, ASTRALABE (23) cuts a striking figure as rides up to the gates. He stops, swings himself off his horse in an effortless dismount.

INT. CONVENT TOWER - DAY

HELOISE
Is that him?

JACQUES
Tall, stunning, magnificent. The
very image of his father.

He looks out of the window over Heloise's shoulder.

JACQUES
I wonder how great is his...
intellect?

Heloise turns, cuffs his arm with a playful slap.

HELOISE
Has nothing changed in all these
years?

JACQUES
I can still look, and I can still
appreciate.

HELOISE
And you can still do penance for
those thoughts.
(beat)
Go on, meet him. I will join you
shortly.

JACQUES
You are still determined not to
tell him who you are?

HELOISE
And you must promise to do the
same.

Jacques kisses Heloise on the cheek

JACQUES
Louis! I love you.

He glances once more out of the window, then rushes off. He
turns before the door, bows.

JACQUES
Reverend Mother.

They laugh as he leaves.

Heloise looks out of the window once more.

HELOISE
I love you too, idiot.

EXT. CONVENT GATES - DAY

Jacques hurries up to Astralabe, bows his head for a second.

JACQUES
Welcome, Master Astralabe.

Jacques takes the horse's reins as Astralabe returns the bow.

ASTRALABE
I was expecting a nun.

Jacques looks at himself.

JACQUES
Oh! No, I'm Jacques. Come, I'll
take you to your room.

Jacques beckons to a POSTULANT who hurries up to them and takes the reins.

ASTRALABE
Lead on.

Jacques takes the baggage off the horse and tries to carry it all. There is too much, and he drops several pieces as he walks with Astralabe.

Astralabe retrieves the items that Jacques drops.

INT. CONVENT CELL - DAY

Jacques stands aside, watches, as Astralabe enters the cell.

Astralabe inspects the frugal interior. He is an impressive, self-confident young man, graced with classic beauty, his face sensitive yet in no way effeminate.

He notices Jacques' scrutiny, coughs a little. Jacques comes back to himself.

JACQUES
So much like your father.

Astralabe picks up the jug on the table, looks inside.

JACQUES
Only water.

Astralabe picks up an apple from a plate, sits on the bed.

JACQUES
Please, refresh yourself. The
Reverend Mother will see you
shortly.

INT. MEETING ROOM, CONVENT - DAY

Heloise stands next to a table on which rests the carved wooden box.

The door opens. Jacques and Astralabe enter. Astralabe crosses to Heloise, kneels before her.

He takes her hand and kisses it. She makes the sign of the cross over his head.

HELOISE
Arise, my son.

ASTRALABE
Reverend Mother. Thank you for seeing me.

He stands up. Heloise contemplates him for several seconds, then turns to the books and the box.

HELOISE
These were your father's writings. And this is a box of his letters and souvenirs.

ASTRALABE
I shall keep them safe.

HELOISE
You must treasure them, for they are the work and the possessions of the greatest man that ever lived.

ASTRALABE
I will, Mother.

Heloise freezes, catches Jacques eye. Jacques takes an aborted step towards her, but she motions him to be still.

HELOISE
You are welcome to stay as long as you wish.
(beat)
His grave is by the chapel.

ASTRALABE
Thank you.

Heloise sweeps out of the room. Jacques watches her go -- is she all right?

INT. CONVENT CELL - NIGHT

Astralabe sits on the bed, his father's books spread around him. A knock at the door.

ASTRALABE

Come in.

Jacques slips in, brandishes a large jug and two goblets.

JACQUES

Better than water!

He pours the wine into a goblet and hands it to Astralabe.

ASTRALABE

Join me.

Jacques pours wine into the other.

ASTRALABE

You knew my father?

JACQUES

Not in the biblical sense.

Astralabe chuckles.

ASTRALABE

And my mother?

JACQUES

My mother was her nurse. We grew up together.

Astralabe gestures towards the chair.

ASTRALABE

Do you have duties this evening?

Jacques smiles, sits.

JACQUES

Abelard was glorious: famous, stunning, the fantasy of every woman, worshipped by his students. Heloise was the most brilliant woman in the whole of Paris. She was clever and beautiful and loving...

EXT. OUTSIDE THE CATHEDRAL - DAY

SUPERSCRIPT: PARIS, YEAR OF OUR LORD 1117

Heloise (15), dressed in her boy's clothes, drags Jacques (16) around a corner, slows down as they reach the cathedral gates. Other young men mill around, progress through the cathedral gates. CANON ANSELM, middle aged, fat and balding, stands beside the gate. Jacques gives a little wave.

JACQUES
I told you we would get here on
time. The great Master Abelard
will not speak until the
auditorium is full.

Heloise and Jacques join the line of young men.

JACQUES
You'll get caught.

HELOISE
How do I look? Will he notice me?

JACQUES
Your uncle will kill you.

Jacques tucks a stray strand of Heloise's hair under her
cap, adjusts her tunic.

JACQUES
There.
(beat)
He'll kill me too.

Heloise kisses him on the cheek.

ANSELM
You, lads! Enough of such
behavior! Hurry now, all of you,
unless you wish to be made an
example of. Master Abelard does
not tolerate stragglers.

Heloise and Jacques pass through the gate. Canon Anselm
pulls Jacques aside, strokes his hair with affection.

ANSELM
(whispers)
And I will see you after vespers
in my rooms, young man.

JACQUES
(grins)
Yes, Sir.

Anselm pats him on the rear. Jacques rushes to catch up
with Heloise.

EXT. INSIDE THE CATHEDRAL GROUNDS - CONTINUOUS

HELOISE
Never forgo an opportunity do we,
even one which is fat and bald?

JACQUES
He loves me. And one day he will
make me a deacon.

Heloise's mouth quirks into an indulgent smile.

HELOISE
Idiot. Come on now.

They jostle their way through a crowd of young men. Heloise pushes to find a place where she can see the podium.

HELOISE
Excuse me. Excuse me please.

She wriggles through to the very front, stops beside GASTON, a striking young man in his early twenties, whose eyes are riveted on Abelard from the moment he walks on stage -- a clear case of hero worship.

GASTON
Shhhhh!

ABELARD (37) strides onto the dais with all the confidence of one who knows he is adored.

The crowd erupts in applause. All cheer and stamp.

He holds up his arms and welcomes even louder acclamation. The crowd roars.

He smiles, makes a minimal gesture, and the whole crowd falls silent in an instant.

HELOISE
(whispers)
I cannot believe I am actually here.

GASTON
(whispers)
You will not be here for very long if he hears you talk.

Gaston glimpses Jacques, they exchange grins, then they turn their full attention on Abelard.

EXT. INSIDE THE CATHEDRAL GROUNDS - DAY (MONTAGE)

ABELARD
Today I will discuss copulation.

Students are amused, Clerics not at all.

ABELARD
"Is" in a sentence joins things.
For example, "Socrates IS a man."
"Is" joins "Socrates" and "a man." Thus it acts as a copulation between Socrates and a man.

Jacques chuckles, digs Gaston in the ribs. General amusement.

ABELARD
I see some of you already
understand that idea better than
I.

LATER...

ABELARD
...and words have preferred
positions that they assume. Like
some of you.

Laughter. Heloise is caught in his spell.

LATER...

ABELARD
You must decide whether it is
better to do something in life -
like a verb, or to exist
unchanged, like a noun.

Students nod, murmurs of agreement. Clerics also nod.

ABELARD
To help you decide, remember:
Verbs conjugate and copulate.
Nouns decline. Make your choice.

Huge applause. Clerics' reactions vary. Heloise stares, besotted. Abelard bows with a flourish, leaves the podium. Students continue to clap and stamp.

EXT. CATHEDRAL GARDENS - DAY

Heloise drifts in a dream as Jacques and Gaston stroll towards the cloisters.

JACQUES
Is it true that Dominic has left
his service?

GASTON
Yes, but he has no money to hire
another servant.

They walk around a fountain. Jacques bends to drink, then splashes Gaston, who reciprocates. Heloise watches the game, trails her fingers over the lilies by the fountain.

HELOISE
Surely such a great and wonderful
teacher would have ample money?

GASTON

True, if he did not spend it on embroidered cloaks and fine leather shoes. If you want the truth, he will have nowhere to live if he does not pay his rent.

Jacques picks up a pine cone and throws it to Heloise. Heloise throws it back. Gaston intercepts it.

HELOISE

Can he not take more private students?

GASTON

Yes, but where can he teach us?

Jacques steals the pine cone. Gaston grabs Jacques from behind, tries to wrest the pine cone from his grasp.

JACQUES

Put in a word for me, if he is hiring.

In the distance Abelard approaches. Heloise and Gaston both stare, entranced. Jacques joins them in their hero worship.

JACQUES

Or put in more than a word if you get the chance.

Heloise jolts out of her dream, drags Jacques away.

HELOISE

Come on, Jacques. We have knowledge to pursue.

Jacques waves to Gaston as Heloise hauls him towards the cloisters.

EXT. CLOISTERS - DAY

Abelard strides along, cloak billowing behind him. He is glorious, confident and determined, and in an obvious hurry. Jacques and Heloise hide in a tree, wait for Abelard to pass.

JACQUES

Here he comes. Did you ever see such a man? His eyes, his hair, his hands. They say that if you have large hands, you also have a large...

HELOISE

Intellect. Ready?

JACQUES

You really mean to do it?

Just as Abelard approaches, Heloise jumps down in front of him, forces him to stop before he runs into her.

HELOISE
Master Abelard!

ABELARD
Watch where you are going, lad.
Is it your custom to waylay
people from a tree?

HELOISE
Master Abelard, it is of trees
that I need to speak to you.

ABELARD
What is so important about a
tree?

HELOISE
I need to know when a tree is a
tree, and when it is not a tree.

ABELARD
Child, a tree is always a tree.

HELOISE
How do we know what is a tree?

ABELARD
We have seen trees and can look
around and say, "That is a tree."

He tries to get past. Heloise stops him.

HELOISE
When does a sapling become a
tree?

ABELARD
What is your name?

HELOISE
Louis.

ABELARD
Louis, by custom we recognise
when something is a tree. God
tells us, "What you see is a
tree." It is similar to all other
trees, so we name it a tree.

Abelard pats Heloise on the head and walks past.

HELOISE
What if I name it a shelter?

Abelard turns.

HELOISE
God has created it as a shelter,
and it is similar to other
shelters, so I name it a shelter.
Is it then still a tree?

ABELARD
Louis...

HELOISE
Please.

ABELARD
If you use the tree as a shelter,
then it is a shelter and a tree.

He turns again to continue on.

HELOISE
Or a urinal.

Abelard stops.

HELOISE
If I used the tree as a urinal,
then it would be a urinal.

Abelard scrutinizes Louis. This is becoming silly.

ABELARD
Louis!

Abelard walks on. Heloise trots along beside him.

HELOISE
Or a place for a secret tryst?

ABELARD
It would still be a tree.

HELOISE
So if somebody -- say you, Master
Abelard, were to kiss somebody --
me for instance, under a tree...

ABELARD
I have no intention of kissing
you under a tree!

HELOISE
No, of course not. But if you
did, it would be a trysting place
and a tree.

ABELARD
I have said it would. Can we
discuss this later?

HELOISE

But what if you were to kiss me --
which you would not -- under a
tree -- and you had not planned
ahead to do so, then it would not
be a trysting place.

The bells of the cathedral start to toll. Abelard listens.

ABELARD

Louis. I promise, we will do this
later. Now I must go.

Abelard strides off. Heloise calls after him.

HELOISE

What will we do later, Master
Abelard? Will you kiss me beneath
a tree?

Abelard turns, laughs at her.

ABELARD

We will discuss your questions.

HELOISE

When?

ABELARD

Within the week.

Heloise stops beneath a tree, looks up at it.

HELOISE

Within the week, Master Abelard!

EXT. OUTSIDE THE CATHEDRAL - DAY

Heloise (still dressed as a boy) and Jacques leave the
cathedral gates.

JACQUES

Thank God that is over! We will
be killed if ever you are
discovered.

HELOISE

It will not happen.

FULBERT (O.S.)

Jacques! Is that you, lad? Help
me with these books!

JACQUES

By God's Mother, Louis, your
uncle!

Heloise grabs the cloak Jacques carries and runs behind a
street stall.

HELOISE
Delay him!

Jacques approaches FULBERT (45) an unattractive fussy man in Canon's robes, takes the books from him and drops one.

FULBERT
Clumsy child!

Jacques takes his time as he picks up the book.

Heloise prances up, clothes concealed by the cloak, hair now long and loose. She pecks Fulbert on the cheek.

HELOISE
Hello uncle!

FULBERT
Heloise! Where is your companion?

HELOISE
He is here -- you have sent him to school. So I came to meet him.

FULBERT
You are alone? I will have Marie-Claire whipped...

HELOISE
Then you must whip me, Sir, for Marie-Claire knew nothing.

FULBERT
We will discuss your punishment when we are home.

They pass a flower seller in the street. Fulbert picks out a lily for Heloise, selects the correct coin with care.

Heloise sighs over the lily, shakes her head in an exaggerated manner.

FULBERT
Is something bothering you, my dear?

HELOISE
No, Uncle, unless it be some sad news I heard from the flower sellers at the market.

Fulbert looks at her, alarmed.

FULBERT
The market? What have I told you...

HELOISE
I was merely passing the time, uncle.

(MORE)

HELOISE (cont'd)
I am so bored without Jacques.
But it seems so sad for Master
Abelard.

FULBERT
Abelard? What of Abelard?

HELOISE
That he has nowhere to live.

They pass some women cleaning fish on a doorstep.

FULBERT
Who said that?

HELOISE
They were but women, uncle, so
they may have been mistaken. Yet
the fishwives at the river
also...

Fulbert turns on Heloise.

FULBERT
What were you doing at the river?

HELOISE
I had nothing to occupy my mind,
with Jacques at school all day,
so I walked to the river.

FULBERT
You are not to do that.

They walk on.

HELOISE
No, uncle.

FULBERT
So what did they say?

HELOISE
That he has no means to pay for
lodgings, and must be turned out
onto the street.

They pass an inn where patrons drink outside. One of the
patrons blows Jacques a kiss. Jacques blows a kiss back,
nearly drops the books.

FULBERT
Careful, lad!... Surely not?

HELOISE
And the scullery maids at the inn
told me...

FULBERT
The market! The river! Now the
inn! And engaging in such
scurrilous gossip!

HELOISE
(beat)
Do you want me to repeat the
scurrilous gossip?

FULBERT
Go on.

HELOISE
They say that he is deeply in
debt and must take on some
private students, but yet has
nowhere to teach them.

FULBERT
I can hardly believe it. Abelard!

Heloise walks on in silence for a while.

HELOISE
I wish I could learn from such a
great man. What a shame, uncle,
that I am not a boy.

Fulbert strides along, deep in thought, then stops at their
door, opens it, stands back for Heloise to go in ahead of
him. Heloise swishes by, careful to keep her cloak closed.

HELOISE
What a shame also, that you have
decided not to let out the garret
rooms.

EXT. FULBERT'S GARDEN - DAY

Beneath the spreading limbs of a large chestnut, FULBERT
and ABELARD sit on ornate wooden benches, sip wine from
stoneware goblets.

FULBERT
But I warn you, Master Abelard,
she will not be an easy pupil.

ABELARD
I am sure...

FULBERT
I indulged the girl from the
moment I took her in, when my
dear sister died. From that day
on she has been my heart's
delight and my soul's torment.

ABELARD

I have heard of her learning, her beauty, her... ah...

FULBERT

Yes. And all you have heard is probably the truth! For in desperation with her never-ending questions, I taught her to read when she was six, and she has devoured learning from that moment on. And did the questions cease? Oh no. They multiplied a thousandfold!

ABELARD

She is now...?

FULBERT

Fifteen. With fifteen thousand questions and answers for every one of them. Be warned, my dear Abelard, she is always right.

ABELARD

I have dealt with students like that.

FULBERT

Really?

(beat)

Well, she will soon be your responsibility. A good teacher is one who leads his students to the correct path.

HELOISE (O.S.)

On the contrary, Uncle, a good teacher is one who encourages his students to ask questions to which even he may not know the answer!

They look up into the tree, where Heloise sits, book in hand, beautiful, self-assured, and bold. They spring to their feet.

HELOISE

Now no more, or you will scare him away before he has even met me!

(beat)

Well, Uncle, are you not going to help me down?

ABELARD

Allow me.

He reaches up for her.

Heloise's hair cascades all over Abelard as he lifts her down.

HELOISE
Forgive the impertinence of my
hair, Sir.

ABELARD
A magnificent impertinence,
Mistress, which captures the
light itself within it.

She disengages herself, smooths her dress, stretches out her hand to Abelard. He bows over it, kisses it.

She turns, then throws her arms around her uncle's neck and pecks his cheek.

HELOISE
I think you should go now.

FULBERT
It hardly seems proper...

HELOISE
Is Master Abelard not to be
trusted, Uncle? For if you
think...

FULBERT
No... No. Please excuse me,
Abelard. I have much to do...

He leaves, unsure.

Heloise's smile becomes provocative.

HELOISE
So, Master Abelard, it seems this
tree is a trysting place. Did I
not tell you that before the week
was out you would kiss me beneath
a tree?

Abelard's eyes register his shock, then scrutinize Heloise. She holds back her hair, an impudent grin on her lips.

ABELARD
Louis? My lady, you will cause a
revolution if the school finds
out you are...

HELOISE
But you will not tell them, Sir.
And I will not risk the deception
again.

ABELARD
No?

HELOISE

No. I only became a boy to learn
from you. Now you are here, I can
have you all the time.

INT. STAIRS - DAY

Fulbert huffs up the stairs, red-faced. Abelard strides up
after him. They stop on a landing.

FULBERT

It's up there, Abelard. The
stairs are too much for me. I
told young Jacques he is to serve
you as your valet.

ABELARD

I am most grateful.

FULBERT

You must use whatever time you
have to teach Heloise -- day or
night, it matters not.

ABELARD

I thank you. I am convinced that
this arrangement will bring
satisfaction all round.

INT. GARRET ROOM - DAY

Abelard inspects the large room, deposits his lute on the
four poster bed, then picks up some bread and cheese from a
table and pours himself some wine. He opens the windows,
surveys the roof tops of 12th century Paris.

Behind him, Jacques struggles in backwards as he drags a
trunk. He leaves the trunk beside two others which already
stand in the centre of the room.

Jacques undoes the straps around one and throws it open. It
is full of books. He opens the second -- clothes.

Jacques takes a cloak from the trunk and hangs it on a
hook.

Heloise enters with a sheaf of lilies, which she places in
a vase near the door. She picks up another cloak of rich
burgundy wool, rubs it against her cheek.

Jacques reaches for another garment. Heloise waves him
away.

She shoos him out, despite his silent protests, and closes
the door.

ABELARD

The Cathedral of Saint Stephen
and the church of Notre Dame can
be clearly seen, can they not?

HELOISE

Indeed, Master Abelard. I often
used to sit here as a child and
look at them. You also have a
very good view of the courtyard,
and uncle's chestnut tree.

Abelard turns, surprised to see her there, bows. Heloise
holds out her hand to him.

ABELARD

Forgive me, Mistress. I did not
hear you come in.

He kisses her hand.

HELOISE

Behold I come as a thief...

ABELARD

You know scripture, Mistress? Do
you know what follows, for it is
appropriate to your beauty:
Blessed is he that watcheth.

HELOISE

Is it not: blessed is he that
watcheth and keepeth his
garments, lest he walk naked?

Heloise wraps herself in Abelard's cloak.

ABELARD

I see I have met my match in
quotation from the scriptures.

HELOISE

In misconstruing them also,
perhaps?

ABELARD

Do you find pleasure in
misconstruing scripture?

HELOISE

There are many things, Master
Abelard, in which I find
pleasure. If I can find some
verse in scripture which supports
my pleasure, I embrace it.

ABELARD

Where is my new valet?

HELOISE

I sent him away. I thought we could have our first lesson.

ABELARD

You are very... forward!

HELOISE

Did you not heed my uncle? At any time, day or night, you must teach me.

ABELARD

Surely...

HELOISE

I mean to hold you to it. Whenever you are not elsewhere engaged you must be here with me, teaching me... day or night.

ABELARD

Teaching you what, exactly, mistress?

HELOISE

Everything.

ABELARD

I hardly presume to know everything.

HELOISE

Then what we do not know we may discover together.

ABELARD

What of my other private students?

HELOISE

You will have no need for other private students. I will fulfil all the needs a great teacher may have.

ABELARD

The needs of the mind?

HELOISE

Indeed. For I would know philosophy and logic, grammar and rhetoric...

ABELARD

What of my soul, Mistress? Surely only Our Lord can fulfil the needs of the soul?

HELOISE

Then I would pray with you, and
help lead your soul closer to Our
Lord. And we would dispute
theology, which would be of
benefit to both our souls, would
it not?

ABELARD

So, mind and soul... What then of
my body?

Heloise glances around the room, indicates the bread,
cheese and wine on the table.

HELOISE

Master Abelard, if you were
referring to shelter and food,
and the wherewithal to buy
clothes, and a place to sleep in
comfort... then that, I think, is
already provided.

Heloise sits on the bed.

HELOISE

If you were not, then I think...

They look at one another, the message clear, the attraction
electric.

HELOISE

(slowly, seductively)
Then I think you were being a
little forward, Sir.

She gets up, takes off his cloak, holds out her hand. With
a deep bow he kisses it, keeps holding it.

HELOISE

I wonder, Sir, how often you find
yourself kissing your students --
even if you are not beneath a
tree.

She sweeps out of the room.

ABELARD

(to himself)
And what of my heart, Heloise?
For that is equally part of a
man.

INT. STABLES - DAY

At the top of the ladder in the barn, Jacques and Heloise
stand in a pile of hay. Heloise places Jacques' hands on
her hips, places her arms around his neck and moves her
mouth towards his.

JACQUES
Must we really do this?

HELOISE
I have to learn. Who else is
going to teach me?

JACQUES
But...

Heloise stops him speaking by placing her lips on his in a chaste kiss.

HELOISE
There.

Jacques tries to pull away, embarrassed.

HELOISE
Oh no. You promised me.

She pulls him back into a much more amorous kiss.

The bag Jacques is holding drops to the floor, as Heloise moulds their bodies together.

She squirms against him, pulling his arms tighter around herself.

JACQUES
Louis!

HELOISE
Teach me.

She pulls him down to the straw, holds him on top of her, kisses him with enthusiasm.

JACQUES
By Basil's balls, stop it, Louis.
(beat)
This is taking education too far.

Thomas the stableboy's head appears over the ladder.

His eyes become saucers, then the head disappears.

JACQUES
Thomas! It is not what you think.

HELOISE
I do not care if he sees.

JACQUES
I do. You will ruin my -- chances
-- completely.

Heloise unties the laces on Jacques' shirt, and begins to ease it over his shoulders, all the while plaguing him with kisses.

He pulls away, his breathing heavy.

JACQUES
I love you, Louis, But I cannot
do this.

Heloise stops, reaches down with her hand.

HELOISE
It does not feel like you cannot
do this.

JACQUES
That is my body. Not me.
(beat)
Besides, you seem to have the
idea now.

Heloise runs her seductive hands down his body.

HELOISE
How will I know how to please a
man if nobody shows me?

Jacques sits up, straightens his shirt, businesslike.

JACQUES
Right. You asked for it. How to
please a man, lesson one.

He reaches for his bag.

Heloise sits up, watches him remove something from his bag.
Her face reflects her shock.

HELOISE
What is that?

JACQUES
I carved it from a turnip.

HELOISE
A... very large... turnip.

JACQUES
And these little bags of sand can
fit around it like this.

HELOISE
But... You...

JACQUES
I am sixteen years old, Louis.
Master Abelard... is not. Now put
out your hand.

Heloise reaches her hand out to Jacques, who slathers
something in her palm. Heloise pulls her hand back, looks
at it, appalled.

HELOISE
What is this?

JACQUES
Goose fat.
(beat)
This was your idea, remember.
(beat)
What did you want? Education or
romance?

INT. GARRET ROOMS - NIGHT

The candlelight plays on Heloise's hair as she leans over some papers on her lap. Abelard sits beside her on the carved bench seat. On the low table in front of them are the remains of a simple meal and a pile of half-rolled papers.

HELOISE
If a man should perform an act
which he believes to be evil, but
of that act there should come
great good, then is the act good
or evil?

ABELARD
It is evil, for his intent was
evil.

HELOISE
But what if he should do
something, believing it to be
good, but it causes a great evil?

ABELARD
Then the act is good.

HELOISE
But the result was evil.

ABELARD
So how would you reconcile this?

HELOISE
I would say that the act itself
is neutral, neither good nor
evil, but that the intent and the
result can be good or evil.

ABELARD
You are saying that there could
never be a good or evil act.

HELOISE
You do not find that compelling?

ABELARD

I find it an awe-inspiring proposition, perilously close to heresy. Is this how you dispute logical concerns with your young friend?

HELOISE

No, Sir. His disposition towards learning stretches so far as to debate the possible size of your... intellect.

Abelard leans back, stretches.

ABELARD

This question of my intellect -- does it concern you also?

HELOISE

If one is to be taught, Sir, it would be a wise thing to discover the size of the intellect of one's teacher.

ABELARD

Are you hoping to be taught, my young mistress?

HELOISE

Certainly, it is something that I thought upon much, of late.

ABELARD

Dreamed of, perhaps.

HELOISE

As you, perhaps, have dreamed of teaching me?

He turns towards her. Their eyes lock.

ABELARD

What, do you suppose, would be the best manner of teaching? Do you dream, perhaps of a slow, lingering build up to the learning, followed, possibly, by a regular thrusting of the information into your young, receptive mind?

HELOISE

(breathless)
Or?

ABELARD

Perchance a fast and vigorous inculcation of facts, impelling and plunging the instruction into you.

HELOISE
Either. Both, Master. For both, I
judge, would result in a wondrous
explosion of knowledge within me.

ABELARD
Heloise...

Heloise places her hand on his thigh.

HELOISE
This discourse arouses your
passion for teaching me?

He moves her hand to his arousal.

ABELARD
It hardens my intellect to the
task ahead.

HELOISE
And when shall we begin that
task?

Abelard takes her hand and they rise to their feet.

ABELARD
As your uncle said, "At any time,
day or night, you must teach
her."

HELOISE
Teach me.

Their lips draw towards one another, unable to stay apart.
They kiss -- a dam bursts, frees the torrent of pent-up
desire.

EXT. CATHEDRAL CLOISTERS - DAY

Abelard strides along, trailing Jacques in his wake.
Fulbert huffs up to join them, hands Abelard a flagellation
whip.

FULBERT
This is for you.

Abelard stops, examines the whip while Fulbert catches his
breath.

ABELARD
You think I need this?

FULBERT
For Heloise.

Abelard turns the whip over, intrigued, a smile plays
around his lips.

ABELARD
Heloise?

FULBERT
In case she does not learn her
lessons.

ABELARD
Oh, I have no complaints on that
score.

FULBERT
You must be too soft with her.

ABELARD
Believe me, Fulbert, I am never
soft with her.

Jacques turns his back on Fulbert to hide his amusement.

FULBERT
You must make the lessons long
and hard.

ABELARD
Hard. Yes.

JACQUES
And long.

Abelard turns Jacques around.

ABELARD
(to Jacques)
How would you know?

JACQUES
Mistress Heloise reported...

ABELARD
No matter.

FULBERT
Or if her enthusiasm is lacking,
or if she does not come when you
require her to.

ABELARD
Then I am to beat her?

FULBERT
Exactly.

ABELARD
I will bear that in mind if she
lacks enthusiasm.

Jacques doubles up, pretends to cough.

JACQUES
(splutters)
Or if she does not come.

FULBERT
And you, Jacques -- are you
enjoying your private lessons
with Canon Anselm?

Jacques struggles upright, barely under control.

JACQUES
Indeed, sir.

FULBERT
Yes, well Anselm is not as good a
teacher as Abelard, here, by all
reports, and he has a different
style, different requirements of
his students.

Abelard plays with the whip.

JACQUES
Indeed, sir.

FULBERT
But nevertheless, I want you to
share anything you learn with
Heloise. Discuss your lessons
together and you will both
benefit.

JACQUES
Indeed, sir. I will. We do that
already.

Abelard looks up -- Jacques does what?!

FULBERT
Maybe Master Abelard here will
let you sit in on some of her
lessons.

JACQUES
Oh yes! I would very much
enjoy...

ABELARD
Come Jacques, we are late. Canon
Fulbert, you must excuse us.
Thank you for the -- ah -- whip.

Abelard grabs Jacques' shoulder as he strides away. Their
voices grow fainter as they disappear towards the gate.

ABELARD
You discuss your LESSONS with
Heloise?

JACQUES
Can I borrow the whip?

Abelard mock-threatens him with the whip.

Fulbert gazes after them, shakes his head at their antics.

INT. GARRET ROOM - DAY

Abelard and Heloise snuggle close together in the bed in the aftermath of passion. The whip lies on the bed beside them. Abelard's attention wanders to the bed drapes.

ABELARD
Do you see the nymphs on the
brocade, how they dance with
their garlands? They are like
you, my sweet student.

HELOISE
How? Flat and unmoving?

Abelard runs his hands over her naked body.

ABELARD
I would call you neither flat,
nor unmoving, wench.

HELOISE
I used to think they were
worshipping some pagan goddess.

ABELARD
Perchance they are.
(beat)
You have lain here before, then?

HELOISE
Do you fear that I might have
done such things with former
tutors?

Abelard strokes the hair from her face, his eyes questioning. He takes the pendant she wears around her neck and runs it over her breasts.

HELOISE
No, sir, do not think me
unfaithful in my learning. Mostly
I lay here with a woman.

Abelard wraps his arms around her, continues to play with the pendant.

HELOISE
She would wrap her arms about me
as you have done.

ABELARD
I know of such things between
men, but...

HELOISE
She was my nurse. She gave me the
pendant you hold.

ABELARD
I must meet your nurse.

HELOISE
She died, Sir.
(beat)
I also used to lie here with a
boy.

Abelard lies on his back beside her.

ABELARD
Did you love him?

HELOISE
I loved him truly. Love him
still, and will forever, to the
day I die.

Heloise wraps her arms around him.

INT. BED - DAY (FLASHBACK)

YOUNG HELOISE wraps her arms around YOUNG JACQUES as young
Jacques cries.

HELOISE (V.O.)
This boy and I, we have held one
another, thus, here on this bed,
comforting one another in our
darkest hour, giving solace to
each other's grief."As one whom
his mother comforteth, so I did
comfort him."

INT. ABELARD'S ROOM - DAY

ABELARD
Who is this boy who held you and
likely stole your virtue.

HELOISE
He would have no interest in my
virtue! Rather look to yours! For
my nurse was Jacques' mother, and
we did mourn her here, together
in our suffering, on her bed
where she had held us both.

ABELARD
I would not have you be unhappy
in our bed.

HELOISE
Nor I. Such unhappy memories must
be exorcised...
(beat)
repeatedly.

Heloise rolls over, sits astride Abelard's hips.

HELOISE
I feel you will be a tower of
strength in helping me to thrust
out these memories.

Abelard grasps her hips.

ABELARD
Repeatedly.

INT. CATHEDRAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Jacques hurries down the corridor. Canon Anselm stands in a doorway, calls out as Jacques rushes past.

ANSELM
Jacques!

Jacques stops, turns.

JACQUES
I am late for class.

ANSELM
Just a few moments.

Jacques glances down the corridor, then gives up, goes with Anselm.

INT. SMALL ROOM - DAY

Jacques laces up his leggings, reaches for his shirt. Anselm straightens his robes, gazes at Jacques.

ANSELM
Do you know how beautiful you
are?

Jacques puts on his shirt.

ANSELM
You have been busy since becoming
Master Abelard's body servant.

JACQUES
Yes.

ANSELM
I hear you have to work late into
the night.

JACQUES
What do you hear?

Jacques puts on his overshirt and fastens it.

ANSELM
Nothing. Only that he instructs
his students at -- unusual hours.

JACQUES
I am not his student.

ANSELM
No. But your young friend is.
Rumour has it...

JACQUES
Ignore rumour.

ANSELM
I do. I cannot speak for Canon
Fulbert, however.

JACQUES
What does he know?

ANSELM
Nothing. I do not know. I am
merely saying.

Jacques picks up his cloak.

JACQUES
Then he must not hear the
rumours. Or if he does, he must
not believe them.

ANSELM
What can I do? I cannot...

Jacques attacks Anselm with a kiss, then moves away. Anselm
reaches for him.

JACQUES
You like this, do you not?

ANSELM
I live for your touch.

JACQUES
Savour this.

Jacques' kiss would seduce a saint.

JACQUES
For if Fulbert suspects anything,
Anselm, I will not come to you
again.

EXT. CATHEDRAL CLOISTERS - DAY

Fulbert and Anselm stroll in the sunny cloisters. BOYS walk by, sit on the cathedral lawns.

FULBERT
...and my household is much more
pleasant since Abelard keeps the
young vixen engrossed in her
studies.

One group of boys has a lute and another prepares to sing.
Anselm and Fulbert approach.

BOY
The happiest of masters
To have a mistress fair.
With eyes of gentle moonlight
And sunlight in her hair.
Her skin is soft as roses,
Her breath a gentle breeze,
Yet naught transcends the mind of
The gentle Heloise.

Anselm hurries Fulbert along.

FULBERT
Wait. What was that?

ANSELM
One of their silly fashionable
songs... nothing.

The Boy sings, and during the song, Anselm's conversation
gets louder as he tries to distract Fulbert.

BOY	ANSELM
(sings)	Come, Fulbert. Let us hurry
Her wit is such a treasure,	to the refectory. I hear
Her discourse sharp and clear	there is to be a great
No woman born can match her	serving of the finest roasted
No scholar is her peer.	beef today.

Anselm tugs Fulbert's sleeve, ushers him away. Fulbert
resists.

FULBERT
Be quiet...

BOY
(sings)
And I will ever love her
And ever try to please
That sweet and gentle maiden
My darling Heloise.

ANSELM
I would not want to miss
that, would you? Last time
they served beef, I was so
late I hardly was able to
find a slice that was not
full of fat.

FULBERT
Quiet!

Fulbert slaps his hand over Anselm's mouth in time to hear
the boys all sing:

BOYS
For Peter Abelard's in love
With mistress Heloise.

The boys laugh. Fulbert looks shocked. Anselm deflates.

INT. ABELARD'S ROOMS - NIGHT

Laughter emanates from a huge four-poster bed. The curtains
of the bed stand open and Heloise kneels above Abelard. Her
hair creates another curtain around their bodies.

HELOISE
Do you not fear the whispers?

ABELARD
I fear nothing while I am in this
shelter. While such glory
surrounds me, nothing can harm
me.

They make playful love. She strews delicate kisses on his
eyelids, his nose, his mouth, each part of his face. She
punctuates her kisses with words.

HELOISE
So many things that God has
created for a mouth to do...
eating... speaking. But see,
Master, how a mouth can lick,
thus. And how it can suck, in
this way.

She sucks little tiny bits of his neck and shoulders,
leaves marks, works down his body to his nipples.

HELOISE
Licking, sucking and... biting.

She bites on his nipple. He springs up and turns her over,
lies on top, laughs, tickles her, cups her breast.

ABELARD
An interesting lesson in finding
alternative uses for objects.
(MORE)

ABELARD (cont'd)
Let me see if I have learned it.
Kissing...

He kisses the nipple.

ABELARD
And licking...

Heloise tries to wriggle away, but he grabs her hands with his free hand and holds them above her head. Heloise shrieks as she pretends to resist.

Outside the door, sounds of a struggle.

JACQUES (O.S.)
No!

ABELARD
And sucking...

He sucks on the nipple. Heloise shrieks.

JACQUES (O.S.)
No! You can't!

ABELARD
And biting...

Heloise again shrieks, as a knock is heard at the door. Abelard and Heloise freeze.

ABELARD
Who is it?

JACQUES (O.S.)
You can't go in there!

Fulbert opens the door and strides into the sitting area of the room.

FULBERT
Forgive me, Master Abelard. I was...

He looks around. Jacques follows him in.

JACQUES
I tried.

FULBERT
Get out of here, boy! Abelard?
Jacques leaves.

Abelard gets out of the bed, closes the bed curtain, grabs the cover to pull around him. Heloise grabs it back to cover her.

Abelard strolls around the bed towards Fulbert, naked. He gathers up his robe and puts it on.

FULBERT
I was looking for my niece.

ABELARD
You think she is here?

FULBERT
No, I...

Fulbert notices the tiny red marks on Abelard's neck.

Abelard sees him looking, and pulls his robe over the marks.

FULBERT
I thought I heard...

Abelard puts his arm around Fulbert's shoulder, steers him in the direction of the door.

ABELARD
My dear Fulbert. May I ask for your help in a most delicate situation.

FULBERT
Of course, Sir.

ABELARD
You have come, it is true, at ah... a most inopportune moment. I was just, shall we say, in the middle of some rather pleasant discourse.

FULBERT
Discourse?

ABELARD
Discourse.

FULBERT
Oh! Right... discourse.

Fulbert tries to see over Abelard's shoulder.

Heloise stretches an ankle out from between the curtains.

ABELARD
And you know that certain types of discourse are rather frowned upon by my colleagues.

Fulbert stares in distraction at the ankle, as more leg appears.

FULBERT
And you wish me...

ABELARD
Not to mention this to them.
Please. I would be in your debt.

The leg moves up and down.

FULBERT
Not to mention this. Of course.

He stares mesmerised at the length of naked leg.

Abelard steers him to the door.

ABELARD
And if I may further presume on
your most estimable circumspect
nature.

FULBERT
Of course.

ABELARD
I beg of you, do not discuss
this... ah... discourse with your
lovely niece.

FULBERT
I understand. If she discovered
that her idol is less than a
saint... And I know what loose
tongues certain young women have!

ABELARD
Loose tongues. Indeed. Thank you,
Fulbert. I am relieved to know
that I can rely on your
discretion.

Fulbert nods as he exits, steals one more lingering glance
at the leg. It is not there. Toes appear and wiggle at him.
He sighs.

FULBERT
Discretion.

Abelard closes the door, sinks against it.

The leg waves in the background. A hand joins it,
beckoning.

INT. OUTSIDE ABELARD'S DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Fulbert looks at the door, then at Jacques, who huddles
beside it in fear.

FULBERT
Discretion, boy.

He chuckles, pats him on the head as he walks past. Jacques stares at the door, stunned.

FULBERT
Abelard, you devil!

INT. ABELARD'S ROOMS - CONTINUOUS

At the bedside, Abelard shrugs off the robe, grabs the ankle and kisses it, then kisses further up the leg as he disappears behind the curtains. Bubbles of mirth burst from the bed. Abelard cries out in pleasure.

ABELARD
You devil!

HELOISE (O.S.)
You know what loose tongues
certain young women have!

INT. OUTSIDE ABELARD'S DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Marie-Claire climbs the stairs with a tray laden with supper for two and a single lily.

Jacques motions Marie-Claire away. She hesitates.

Fulbert stares at the tray in horror, then turns and storms back into the room.

INT. ABELARD'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Fulbert flings open the door, strides to the bed and rips open the curtains. Jacques and Marie-Claire follow him.

Abelard rolls off Heloise, who pulls the covers over her. Fulbert pulls Heloise out of the bed by her hair. She drags the covers with her. Fulbert marches her towards the door by her hair.

HELOISE
Uncle!

FULBERT
(to Abelard)
You have until tonight to leave
this house. I will destroy you
for this.

HELOISE
You cannot destroy him without
destroying my reputation and your
own.

FULBERT
Until tonight.

INT. HELOISE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Heloise wraps a sheet of paper around a stone and throws it out of the window.

EXT. FULBERT'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Marie-Claire picks it up.

INT. HELOISE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Heloise smiles. She gazes out of the window at the full moon.

A cloud crosses the moon.

Heloise stares at the full moon again, thunderstruck.

She crosses to her bed and pulls out a journal from under the pallet.

She leafs backwards through the journal in agitation, then shock is replaced with delight and she again contemplates the moon.

In awe, she places a hand on her abdomen.

The sound of footsteps and a key unlocking the heavy door.

Heloise hides the journal once more.

Fulbert brings in a tray with food and water. He places it on the table.

HELOISE
Where is Marie-Claire?

FULBERT
She is otherwise occupied.

HELOISE
You cannot keep me here forever,
Uncle.

FULBERT
I do not intend to. I have
received correspondence from le
Comte d'Avignon. You are to be
his wife.

HELOISE
He is old and ugly.
(beat)
And already married!

FULBERT
She died.

HELOISE
From looking too long at his
gross obesity.

FULBERT
She died delivering a child.

HELOISE
Then it was not his, for he
wheezes and pants so constantly
that he would be unable to raise
his little staff to pierce her,
or keep it up long enough for her
to quicken.

Fulbert slaps Heloise hard across the cheek.

FULBERT
Whore!

HELOISE
If I am one, you made me so. How
much did you sell me for?

FULBERT
A goodly sum, for "a woman is a
crown to her husband."

HELOISE
"A *virtuous* woman is a crown to
her husband." I, as you so
zealously point out, am not.
Which is why Monsieur le Comte
will not want me. I belong to...

FULBERT
Monsieur le Comte has already
agreed to take you, my little
slut, and you will never see His
Arrogance again.

HELOISE
Le Comte will not want me when he
hears how experienced I have
become in matters of the flesh.

FULBERT
Which, my dear harlot, he will
not.

HELOISE
I will inform him.

FULBERT
Did I mention that I expect to be
elevated to the board of
appointments and promotions at
the cathedral?

HELOISE

When I linger over all the
details of nights with my lover,
do you think his prick will rise?

Fulbert restrains himself from hitting her again.

FULBERT

And this board recommends, nay
decides, who shall be permitted
to teach... or not to teach...
and who shall gain preferment.

HELOISE

You would not do that!

FULBERT

But, my sweet strumpet, I would.
So I suggest that you think on
this marriage, for, in spite of
his abundance of fat and his
little prick, it will happen.

Heloise slumps on the bed in despair.

HELOISE

If I do your will, Abelard will
be safe in his position?

FULBERT

You have my word.

HELOISE

When must I go?

FULBERT

He is sending a coach for you
tomorrow.

HELOISE

So soon!
(beat)
May I not see Abelard once more?

FULBERT

Do not mistake me for a fool, my
dear.

HELOISE

Then let me at least bid farewell
to Jacques.

FULBERT

I think not.

HELOISE

You may stay in the room every
second he is here.

FULBERT
If you say anything in the way of
a message...

HELOISE
I am no fool either, Uncle.

FULBERT
One last thing.

He picks up her ink and paper.

HELOISE
Uncle!

He straightens out a crumpled piece of paper he has been
holding. It is the message she wrote earlier.

FULBERT
There will be no written
messages, either. Of escape or
of...

He glances at the paper.

FULBERT
Filth.

Heloise stares at the paper as he crumples it up again, her
distress evident.

HELOISE
Do not punish Marie-Claire,
please.

Fulbert looks at her one last time, then turns and leaves.

FULBERT
I will send for Jacques.

The key turns in the lock.

Heloise whips out her journal, all sign of distress gone.
She tears a sheet from the back of the journal.

She looks on the table -- a quill, but no ink. She looks
around -- nothing.

She takes the knife from the food tray. She places her hand
on her abdomen, smiles, then without hesitation, makes a
small cut in her left palm. She dips the quill in her blood
and writes.

She places the note inside her pendant.

INT. HELOISE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Fulbert leads Jacques into the room. Jacques steps up to
Heloise, arms wide.

FULBERT
No closer.

Jacques stops. Jacques and Heloise embrace with their eyes.

JACQUES
You are going away?

HELOISE
To be married.

JACQUES
I do not know what to say.

HELOISE
Say I am happy.

JACQUES
Nothing else?

FULBERT
No. That is the message.

JACQUES
Will I see you again?

Heloise takes the pendant from around her neck, turns it in her hands.

HELOISE
May I give this to him, Uncle? It
was his mother's.

Fulbert takes the pendant, examines it, hands it to Jacques.

HELOISE
Take it, my dearest friend, and
think of me.

Jacques steps past Fulbert and takes Heloise in his arms.
She clings to him.

JACQUES
Louis.

Fulbert pulls them apart, pushes Jacques from the room.

FULBERT
(to Heloise)
I warned you.

EXT. THE ROAD - DAY

Heloise, in travelling clothes, rides on horseback. Three men in ducal livery flank her horse. Gerard and Claude ride beside her, Robert walks, and Marie-Claire rides in a cart piled high with several chests.

From time to time, Heloise drops a red ribbon as they ride.

HELOISE
Will we be stopping at an inn
tonight?

GERARD
That is all arranged, my lady.
You need not worry your head
about such matters.

HELOISE
You are most assiduous in your
care.

GERARD
Indeed, we were charged to look
to you at all times, that you
should not endure a single moment
of loneliness.

HELOISE
I thank you for your deep
concern.
(beat)
Tell me of your master.

GERARD
He is rich.

They ride on. Heloise pulls out a rolled paper, tied with a
ribbon, and drops it.

HELOISE
Your silences are loud, Sir!

Robert steps up.

ROBERT
Excuse me, mistress, but I think
you dropped this!

He hands her the rolled paper.

HELOISE
Thank you! How careless I am!

He hands her a bunch of red ribbons.

ROBERT
You also dropped these.

Heloise takes them in silence. Gerard smirks.

They ride on.

HELOISE
May I stop for a moment, Gerard.
I am afraid I must attend to
nature.

Gerard shakes his head, disbelieving.

He stops, dismounts, and helps Heloise from her horse.

Marie-Claire clambers down from the cart and accompanies Heloise.

HELOISE

I would prefer to attend to this
in privacy.

GERARD

No, Lady, we must see to it that
you come to no harm. It is more
than our lives are worth should
something untoward transpire.

Heloise and Marie-Claire disappear behind a clump of bushes
beside the road.

Gerard stamps his feet, impatient.

Claude unstops a wineskin, takes a swig and offers it to
Gerard. Gerard shrugs, takes a swig.

Muffled shouts come from behind the bushes. Gerard thrusts
the wineskin back at Claude and the three men race towards
the noise.

EXT. IN THE WOODLAND - DAY

Marie-Claire lies trussed up with lengths of ribbon. Her
shawl is bound over her mouth.

GERARD

Unbind her, I will retrieve our
little vixen!

He races off through the woods.

EXT. THE ROAD - DAY

Marie-Claire sits in the cart, fans herself -- what an
adventure!

Gerard strides up with Heloise kicking and squealing under
his arm.

He lifts her up and places her onto the horse.

HELOISE

I will be sure my Lord is told
how insensitively I was dealt
with.

Gerard remounts.

GERARD
Console yourself that he is rich.

HELOISE
Riches cannot buy everything.

Gerard leers at her.

GERARD
Your beauty could win you what le
Comte cannot give.

HELOISE
How dare you, Sir!

Heloise refuses to meet his gaze.

Gerard grins to himself. She is irresistible.

Ahead, a wagon lies overturned at the side of the road, and
three nuns stand helpless beside it.

Gerard dismounts, beckons Robert to hold Heloise's horse,
and he and Claude approach the nuns.

GERARD
May we be of service, sisters?

The youngest nun steps forward.

NUN
Thank you kindly, sir. We need
help to pull the cart upright.

GERARD
We would be honoured.

The two men get to work on the cart.

The youngest nun approaches Robert.

NUN
Excuse me, young man, but could
you spare some water?

ROBERT
Of course, Sister.

He reaches up to the saddlebags of the horse.

As he turns, the nun pulls out a knife and holds it to his
throat.

NUN
Silence.

She winks at Heloise. It is Jacques.

Jacques binds Robert's wrists.

The two nuns -- Abelard and Gaston -- pull out swords from beneath their habits, and each take one of the men.

GERARD

What!

They tie the men to the cart, amid cries of outrage.

Heloise jumps down from her horse and grabs Marie-Claire, pulls her from the cart.

HELOISE

Come with me.

MARIE-CLAIRE

What is to become of me?

HELOISE

These nuns are my friends, they
will not harm you!

She drags Marie-Claire over to the cart and hands her to Jacques.

Heloise throws her arms around one of the nuns, and they exchange passionate kisses.

MARIE-CLAIRE

Holy Mary, Mother of God!

Jacques tickles her. She recognises him.

MARIE-CLAIRE

Jacques!

HELOISE

I knew you would come!

INT. INN - NIGHT

Heloise and Jacques, both dressed as nuns, sit opposite Abelard.

The serving maid brings platters of thick, greasy stew and chunks of bread.

A young man at a nearby table scrutinizes them -- pays particular attention to Jacques.

Abelard takes the bread and dips it in the stew.

Heloise looks at it, queasy.

Jacques pulls out a piece of meat and begins to gnaw on it.

JACQUES

'Tis fat as a canon's buttocks.

ABELARD
Hush, Sister. Your language
belies your garb.

JACQUES
Sorry!

Heloise puts her hand over her mouth and runs for the door.

Abelard and Jacques both spring to their feet to follow her.

JACQUES
I had better go to her.

The young man's eyes follow Jacques as he hurries after Heloise, almost tripping on his habit.

EXT. INN - NIGHT

Heloise heaves against the wall. Jacques help her, holds fabric out of the way.

JACQUES
What did you put into you that is
making you feel like this?

HELOISE
I? Nothing. It is rather what
Master Abelard put into me which
is having this result.

JACQUES
But...
(beat)
Christ's cock Louis! So... and...
are you... happy?

HELOISE
Leagues beyond simply happy.

Jacques hugs Heloise, kisses her cheek, hugs her again.

JACQUES
And Master Abelard is happy also?

HELOISE
He does not know.

JACQUES
Oh God. Are you feeling better?
Shall I bring you some water?

HELOISE
I am well enough.

They go back into the inn.

INT. INN - NIGHT

The young man's eyes follow Jacques as they return. He smiles at Jacques. Jacques smiles back, then looks away. Heloise and Jacques sit down to their meal.

ABELARD
Are you well, my lady?

HELOISE
I am much improved.

Heloise picks up her spoon, regards the stew, puts down her spoon again.

ABELARD
We could eat upstairs.

HELOISE
I would prefer that.

ABELARD
Come, then.

Heloise rises, the very picture of a devout nun. Abelard picks up her stew. She motions him to stop. He picks up his own and follows her.

Jacques takes Heloise's piece of bread, dips it in her dinner, then stuffs it into his mouth before collecting his bowl and following them.

The young man grabs hold of Jacques' arm as he goes past.

YOUNG MAN
Forgive me, sister, but I have been watching you.

JACQUES
(mouth full)
Oh?

YOUNG MAN
I know your secret.

JACQUES
You do? What secret?

YOUNG MAN
You are no nun.

JACQUES
I...

YOUNG MAN
Let me guess. You are travelling in disguise to protect your virtue.

JACQUES
How did you know?

YOUNG MAN
Many maids would do the same, I surmise. But now I know all about you, shall we meet tonight? For I have something I would delight in giving to you.

JACQUES
Young man, I have no doubt that the delight would be equal for us both. You are very comely, and I am very willing, it is true.

YOUNG MAN
So...

JACQUES
But I dare not, young sir. You observed the man who is with us? He is my father. And the last time he suspected a man of even looking at me, he...

Jacques whispers in the young man's ear.

The young man's eyes grow wide with fear and imagined pain. He winces.

JACQUES
So now I must find him before he sees us talking.

YOUNG MAN
Go! Go!

Jacques hurries off after Abelard and Heloise, casts a wistful glance at the young man.

INT. INN CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Heloise and Jacques, both dressed as nuns, creep along the dark corridor. They reach a door at the end. A window beside it looks out onto the inn yard.

HELOISE
(whispers)
Just keep your eyes and ears alert.

JACQUES
What if someone comes?

Heloise kisses him on the nose.

HELOISE
Improvise.

She opens the door.

INT. ABELARD'S ROOM AT THE INN - CONTINUOUS

Heloise shuts the door behind her in silence.

She crosses to the narrow pallet and climbs over Abelard, sits astride him. He wakes, startled.

She places her fingers to his lips, then replaces her fingers with her own lips. Abelard clasps her head and raises it a little.

ABELARD

What are you doing here?

HELOISE

Kissing my lover.

Heloise moves the blankets off Abelard and begins to undo the lacings on his leggings.

ABELARD

This is madness. I would be gelded if I were found with a nun!

HELOISE

That is not a problem. Jacques has told people that you are our father.

She raises her own skirts and lowers herself onto Abelard.

ABELARD

Do you think that information would make this situation better?

Heloise pulls his hands to her hips and leans in for another kiss.

HELOISE

Come, will you be a noun or a verb?

INT. INN CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Jacques gazes out of the window. The young man he flirted with earlier stops at a door further along the corridor, sees Jacques.

EXT. INN YARD - CONTINUOUS

Horsemen ride up the road towards the inn.

INT. INN CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

The young man puts his arms around Jacques, nuzzles Jacques' neck.

YOUNG MAN
So, Sister, we meet again. Where
is your father now?

Jacques turns in his arms, about to say something, but the young man catches his lips and after a brief hesitation, Jacques surrenders.

INT. ABELARD'S ROOM AT THE INN - CONTINUOUS

Heloise moves with slow grace, smiles down at Abelard as they make love.

HELOISE
So where are we going?

ABELARD
To the convent at Argenteuil.

HELOISE
No!

ABELARD
You will be safe there. Your
uncle will not be able to reach
you.

HELOISE
You will not be able to reach me!

ABELARD
It will only be for a short
while. When the teaching term is
over, I will take you to my
sister in Brittany.

HELOISE
Let us go there now.

ABELARD
She may take some persuading...

HELOISE
You do not think she would
welcome your whore into her home?

ABELARD
Crudely put, my love, but you
have...

Heloise changes the angle of her movements.

ABELARD
...judged it just right. Like
that, yes.

Heloise speeds up her movements.

INT. INN CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

The young man presses Jacques against the wall with urgent,
passionate kisses.

The sound of men dismounting from their horses.

INT. ABELARD'S ROOM AT THE INN - CONTINUOUS

Abelard and Heloise are in the final throes of passion.
Heloise leans in close to Abelard's ear.

HELOISE
But would she accept his one true
love, the mother of his unborn
child?

They both reach orgasm.

ABELARD
YES!

Heloise collapses onto Abelard's chest.

HELOISE
Brittany it is, then.

INT. INN CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Jacques tries to redirect the wandering hands of his
companion.

Below in the inn yard, a voice calls out.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
...Master Peter Abelard?

Jacques tries to wriggle away. The young man will not let
him.

JACQUES
You know how you said you had
guessed my secret?

The young man kisses him more...

YOUNG MAN
Mmmm....

JACQUES
Well, you did not quite guess all
of it.

Jacques takes the young man's hand and places it on his groin.

The young man jumps back in surprise and horror.

Jacques runs into Abelard's room, his nun's habit awry.

INT. ABELARD'S ROOM AT THE INN - CONTINUOUS

Heloise kisses Abelard, and he places his hand on her stomach in wonder.

Jacques covers his eyes.

JACQUES
Master Abelard!

Abelard looks at Heloise in adoration. Heloise nods.

ABELARD
What is it, Jacques?

JACQUES
Men. Fulbert's -- le Comte's -- I
know not, but by the Pope's
pillicock, they are in the inn
yard as we speak.

Abelard leans forward, kisses Heloise's belly, then lifts her to her feet.

All three fix their clothing in haste and stuff belongings into carry sacks. Abelard buckles on his sword.

ABELARD
How do you know?

JACQUES
I heard a man ask for you,
Master.

They run out of the room.

INT. INN CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

The young man stands dazed in the corridor.

ABELARD
Where is he?

The young man sees Abelard, panics, runs up the corridor, darts into his room and slams the door.

The fugitives run past.

INT. HELOISE AND JACQUES' ROOM AT THE INN - NIGHT

Abelard helps Heloise and Jacques gather their things.

JACQUES
We will never get away.

ABELARD
Hurry.

He climbs out of the window on to the roof. Heloise follows.

EXT. INN ROOF - NIGHT

Footsteps of men running along the corridor can be heard.

Jacques, laden with bags, struggles out of the window.

JACQUES
Quick! When they find Master
Abelard's room is empty...

They edge their way along the thatched roof towards a pillar.

JACQUES
What happens if we get caught?

ABELARD
Believe me, you do not want to
get caught. Abduction...

He indicates the nun's habits.

ABELARD
...heresy...

They reach the pillar. Abelard hesitates.

Heloise and Jacques grin at each other and hold hands.
Children again, they jump down. Jacques stumbles in his
skirts as he lands.

Abelard jumps down beside them.

ABELARD
Now stay here and don't make a
sound. I will fetch the horses.

HELOISE
Peter...

He gives her a brief kiss.

ABELARD
Whatever happens, I'll make sure
you are safe.

He kisses her again, puts his hand on her stomach. They share a secret smile.

Abelard slides around the corner of the inn.

Jacques and Heloise shrink into the shadows. Jacques shivers.

HELOISE
Abelard will not come to any harm.

JACQUES
God's balls, Louis, I am not concerned about Abelard.

Noises grow louder above them as angry MEN cluster at the window and look out.

JACQUES
They are coming.

HELOISE
Follow me.

Jacques follows Heloise as she creeps around the corner of the inn. More shouts are heard from ahead of them.

MAN (V.O.)
Come back with those horses!

EXT. STABLES - NIGHT

Abelard, the knight in shining armour, rides out of the stables, leading another horse by the reins.

EXT. INN - NIGHT

The horse shies as Heloise appears in front of it. Abelard reaches down and pulls her into the saddle in front of him.

Jacques tries several times to mount the second horse. Then he tucks all his skirts up into his belt and mounts.

ABELARD
Now ride.

They ride off.

HELOISE
God speed us to your sister and some peace.

ABELARD
It is clear that you do not know my sister!

EXT. LA PALLET GARDEN - DAY

Six laughing and squealing CHILDREN (ages 2-14) chase DENISE, (early 30s) around the garden. A baby lies in a basket beneath a tree. The children catch Denise and all jump on her, land in a mass of happy bodies.

Abelard, Heloise and Jacques watch this from the gate.

One of the children tugs at Denise's skirt and points out the newcomers.

Denise sits up.

DENISE
What are you doing here?

ABELARD
I...

DENISE
Who is this?

ABELARD
Heloise, this is my sister,
Denise.

Denise struggles up and opens the gate for them, followed by the tribe.

As Jacques passes in front of her, she pulls off his wimple.

DENISE
What is a good looking lad like
you doing dressed like this?

Abelard kisses her cheek. Heloise looks somewhat shy.

DENISE
I wager she is no nun either.

ABELARD
Let us go inside, sister. I will
explain it all.

EXT. LA PALLET GARDEN - DAY

Abelard watches as Heloise and the children play with a ball and a hoop. Jacques plays wooden swords with one of the boys. A girl offers Heloise a skipping rope.

Heloise takes it and jumps with it.

Denise carries a basket of washing from the stream.

DENISE
I would not jump like that in
your condition, lass.

Heloise stops, approaches Denise.

Jacques takes the rope and tries to skip with it. The
younger children laugh at his efforts.

DENISE
I have never seen him like this.

They regard Abelard, who picks up one of the little ones
and examines a sore finger.

HELOISE
So happy?

DENISE
So... what is the opposite of
arrogant?

They laugh.

HELOISE
He should be back with his
students.

DENISE
He will be gone soon enough.

Abelard puts the child down with a kiss.

ABELARD
Lover! Come with me to the
village!

Heloise runs off, takes his hand. Jacques and Denise watch
them go.

EXT. CATHEDRAL CLOSE - DAY

Abelard and Gaston ladle soup into earthenware bowls for a
line of poor. Canon Anselm oversees.

ANSELM
You are well?

ABELARD
Very well.

ANSELM
(beat)
And all your household?

ABELARD
All are well, Anselm.

Abelard sings. Gaston joins in, as do some of the people in the line.

ABELARD
The happiest of masters
To have a mistress fair.
With eyes of gentle moonlight
And sunlight in her hair.
Her skin is soft as roses,
Her breath a gentle breeze,
Yet naught transcends the mind of
My gentle Heloise.

GASTON
How is Heloise, Master?

ABELARD
Much larger than when you saw her
last!

GASTON
Will you be returning to Brittany
for her lying-in?

ABELARD
I am here only to complete my
lectures. I return within the
week.

Abelard turns to take another pot of soup from the fireplace.

Fulbert strides up to Anselm.

FULBERT
You may go to prayer, now.

ANSELM
Very well, I will leave you to
your benevolent works. Perhaps
you may find some generosity
towards your fellow helpers.

He passes Abelard as he leaves.

ANSELM
Tell... give everyone my...
greetings.

Anselm hurries out.

Abelard turns around with the pot. Abelard and Fulbert stare at one another for long moments.

GASTON
Do you need some help. Master?

ABELARD
Divine intervention, I surmise.

Gaston looks up at Fulbert who is furious.

Abelard proceeds to ladle out soup to the waiting line of waifs and strays.

Fulbert joins him. They try to appear pleasant enough to the outside world, but the tension seethes beneath the surface.

FULBERT

I am surprised that you have the courage to show your face here, Master Abelard.

ABELARD

What other part of me would you rather I show?

FULBERT

I would like to see the back of you. For ever.

ABELARD

I did not realize your tastes were thus. What does the commandment say? Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's ass?

Gaston sniggers. Fulbert shoots him a look full of daggers. He restrains himself.

FULBERT

Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

GASTON

I think I preferred the songs.

The line shuffles along. Abelard and Fulbert smile at the people and each other as they fight. They bless each person as they give them the bowls of soup.

FULBERT

I believe you can help me with the location of certain of my property, Master Abelard.

ABELARD

My dear Canon, I do not recall that I have anything of yours.

FULBERT

Indeed, you do, sir.

ABELARD

What I have, sir, is mine. It ceased to be yours when you sold it to the highest -- or should I say fattest -- bidder.

FULBERT
By what authority do you claim it
to be yours?

ABELARD
May I ask, sir, if human beings
were born with free choice.

A beggar listens to them.

RAGGED BEGGAR
Choice? Do I get a choice of
soup?

GASTON
Soup or no soup.

FULBERT
Free choice to choose good or
evil, and you have chosen evil.

ABELARD
The outcome of my act may turn
out to be evil -- although I
doubt this will be so -- however,
the act itself is no more than an
act. It is neither good nor evil.

FULBERT
That is heresy, Master Abelard.

ABELARD
And Heloise's choice was one of
free will. She chose me over that
pig-bellied lard-barrel you
wished to put in her bed.

FULBERT
You corrupted her young mind.

ABELARD
If my memory serves me correctly,
you encouraged our lessons. "Teach
her day and night," I seem to
recall. Whip her if she does not
come!

FULBERT
You carried your teaching past
the margin of propriety.

ABELARD
I recall something going past her
margin of propriety.

GASTON
The thrust of your argument?

FULBERT
Is she with you in Paris?

ABELARD
She is with my family. You will
never find her.

FULBERT
Tell her that her uncle sends his
affections to his little girl.

A pregnant woman waits for soup.

Gaston gestures at her as he makes the sign of the cross.

GASTON
Not so little, now, eh, Abelard!

FULBERT
What does he mean?

GASTON
That the impetus of his profound
teaching has borne fruit, and
your niece will be producing a
notion of her own very soon.

FULBERT
A notion? When?

ABELARD
In the autumn.

The line continues past. An old man shuffles by.

FULBERT
This is beyond shame. How do you
propose to repair my reputation?

ABELARD
We could marry.

The man looks astounded.

FULBERT
You would do that?

ABELARD
If you think it is for the best.

FULBERT
You cannot be promoted if you are
married.

ABELARD
It could remain a secret
marriage. We would still be
married in the sight of God.

Abelard and Fulbert forget to bless the man. After hearing
this, he crosses himself and hurries off.

FULBERT
What of Heloise?

ABELARD
She will do as I instruct her.

EXT. LA PALLET GARDEN - DAY

Abelard holds out a lily to Heloise who, battles her huge belly to fold washing. She ignores the lily.

HELOISE
Marry?! I will not marry!

ABELARD
I gave my word to your uncle that we would.

HELOISE
You had no right to promise him anything without consulting me.

ABELARD
Our marriage would solve our problems with him.

HELOISE
It would rather create many more.

ABELARD
Why do you deny me this? You have never denied me any other part of yourself.

HELOISE
I love you, Peter Abelard, and I prefer love to wedlock and freedom to chains.

She holds her hand to her stomach, caught in a wave of pain.

ABELARD
We shall have wedlock and love, and I will never take away your liberty.

HELOISE
What of your disgrace?

ABELARD
It would be no disgrace to take you as my wife!

HELOISE
You are the greatest philosopher that ever lived. You are perfect in body, mind and soul. What king matches your fame?
(MORE)

HELOISE (cont'd)
What town or village does not
rush out to see you when you pass
through?

ABELARD
Heloise!

HELOISE
I speak the truth. What youth
does not sing your love songs?
What wife or young girl -- or boy
-- does not long for you and
desire you and become inflamed
when you are near them? There is
nobody in France who does not
envy me my place in your bed.

ABELARD
So...

HELOISE
To be tied to one such as me.

ABELARD
You are my equal. I choose you.

HELOISE
Yes. You choose me above all
others. How wonderful that is!
How amazing!

ABELARD
I will always choose you.

HELOISE
But I will not know that. If we
marry, you will be chained to me.
I will share your bed and I will
never know if you want that or
not. I can never be certain that
your love is what keeps you
there.

Heloise bends to lift up the basket. Another wave of pain.
She lifts the basket and takes it inside. Abelard follows.

INT. LA PALLET KITCHEN - DAY

HELOISE
For a logical man, you are not
thinking well. You are a
philosopher, my own love. How can
a man devote himself to a family
and to philosophy alike? I would
be a burden to you. The children
would be a burden to you.

ABELARD
You would never be a burden.

HELOISE

Then there is the damage to your career. With a wife you will never be a teaching Canon. You deserve to be the greatest man that ever lived. I will hate myself, knowing that I am holding you back.

ABELARD

You are more important to me than the whims of the stupid church hierarchy.

HELOISE

That is your future. You will grow to resent me as you see far lesser men raised where you should be.

ABELARD

Then let us be married in secret. That would satisfy my desires to make us a family, to have you close to me ever.

Heloise is gripped by another contraction.

HELOISE

I will be close to you -- but by choice, not by shackles.

ABELARD

Your uncle wants you married.

HELOISE

My uncle would never be satisfied with a secret marriage.

ABELARD

He says...

HELOISE

He says many things, but, much as I love him, he is a hypocrite and an old fool.

ABELARD

We cannot live like this forever.

HELOISE

It is what I wish.

ABELARD

Perhaps you would rather save yourself for someone else?

HELOISE

How could you say that? As God is my witness: If Augustus, Emperor of the whole world were to offer me the honour of marriage, and conferred all the world on me to possess for ever, it would be dearer and more honourable to me to be called not his Empress but your whore.

ABELARD

I want us to be wed.

HELOISE

And I do not.

ABELARD

Heloise. I gave him my word, and I will marry you. We will be a family, and the Devil take the consequences.

She doubles over in pain.

HELOISE

The Devil, you say? This is indeed his work. This will be the beginning of the end for us -- an ill fated union. We shall both be destroyed. All that will be left to us is suffering as great as our love has been.

Heloise holds her stomach.

HELOISE

You had better fetch your sister.

ABELARD

So you will marry me?

HELOISE

If you wish it.

(beat)

Now for the love of God, fetch Denise.

INT. LA PALLET BEDROOM - DAY

In a room awash with lilies, Heloise suckles her new son as Abelard looks on.

HELOISE

Astralabe?

ABELARD

It measures the distance to heaven.

HELOISE
We should not have to measure it.

ABELARD
Do not be sad. We will never lose
each other. Or him.

EXT. LA PALLET CHAPEL - DAY

Denise walks up the path, surrounded by children.

Behind them, Heloise approaches carrying a baby. She is dressed in wedding finery, her hair covered by a long headdress.

Jacques meets her, kisses her, then walks beside her.

At the door of the chapel she hands the baby to Denise. Denise takes the baby, hands Heloise a single lily.

DENISE
Come on little one. Aunt Denise
will love you in spite of your
silly name. Rather call him Wood
axe or Plough. They, at least,
have an honest use. Astralabe!

Denise and the children enter.

Jacques takes Heloise's hand. He places her pendant around her neck.

JACQUES
Are you happy, Louis?

Heloise takes a deep breath and enters the chapel.

INT. LA PALLET CHAPEL - DAY

Abelard and DENISE'S HUSBAND come to the door. Jacques steps aside. Abelard opens a pouch and takes out a fine silver cloak pin in the shape of a tree. He pins it above her left breast.

ABELARD
Now when I kiss you beneath the
tree, I will reach your heart.

Heloise strokes the pin.

HELOISE
You always have.

ABELARD
Why have you covered your hair?

DENISE
For modesty, like the hair of any
decent bride.

Abelard takes her hand.

ABELARD
This should be a happy day.

HELOISE
Let us get it over with, then.

They walk towards the PRIEST.

INT. ROBIN ROOM - DAY

Fulbert and Anselm dress for a church service.

ANSELM
You do not seem to be filling out
those robes as much these days.
You should get a new cook.

FULBERT
Heloise always enlivened meal
times.

ANSELM
Young people tend to do that.
(beat)
Missing someone has the opposite
effect on my waistline.

He struggles into his robes, ties the belt around himself,
has to loosen it a notch.

ANSELM
I wish there were some way of
getting her back here for you.

FULBERT
She will not return without
Abelard.

ANSELM
Then you need to find something
that will keep him here --
permanently.

Fulbert tightens his belt.

FULBERT
He is a good teacher.

ANSELM
We will lose half the students if
he decides to set up a school in
Brittany.

Fulbert files away this information.

FULBERT
You think he is that good?

ANSELM
Young, controversial, popular,
clever. They all want him -- to
learn from, to salivate over, to
fuel their bedtime fantasies.
What matters it to students if
his teachings lie on the borders
of heresy? Only the Cathedral
court concerns itself over that.

Fulbert and Anselm prepare the sacrament. Fulbert takes out
the wine and Anselm takes out the bread. They place it on a
silver platter.

FULBERT
And they have -- ah -- concerned
themselves with it?

ANSELM
Several times his preferment has
been mooted.

FULBERT
And?

ANSELM
The subject has been dismissed.

They cover the platter with a white cloth.

FULBERT
These cloths are new.

ANSELM
The finest linen.

FULBERT
How much would the cathedral
lose, if Abelard took his
students?

Anselm straightens the cloth, pats his stomach.

ANSELM
We would all save on belt-
leather!

FULBERT
Perhaps the time has come to
reconsider certain borders of
heresy. It might be that they are
not as clear as we have thought.

Fulbert picks up the tray and follows Anselm out of the
room.

INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Fulbert walks behind Anselm along the corridor.

ANSELM
But then he will not be able to
marry that young niece of yours.

FULBERT
I doubt he ever intended to in
the first place.

ANSELM
Even so, perhaps she will return
to Paris.

INT. CATHEDRAL ALTAR - DAY

Anselm kneels before the altar. He grunts a little, loosens his belt one more notch. Fulbert places the plate on the altar, kneels beside Anselm.

FULBERT
And those who went with her,
also.

EXT. FULBERT'S HOUSE - DAY

Fulbert talks to a messenger who stands beside a horse. He hands over a scroll.

FULBERT
Give this to Abelard.

He hands the messenger another scroll and a money pouch.

FULBERT
Then wait four days, and give
this scroll to Heloise. Accompany
her when she returns.

EXT. LA PALLET GARDEN - DAY

Heloise reads while rocking the baby in its cradle. The children laugh and play around her -- the picture of happiness and contentment.

Abelard and Jacques, dressed for travel, cross to Heloise.

Jacques and Heloise embrace.

JACQUES
God be with you, Louis. Abelard
holds her tightly.

ABELARD
You will be safe here with
Denise.

HELOISE
Rest assured, all will be well.

ABELARD
I will return as soon as I can.
As soon as the Cathedral Court
permits.

HELOISE
I am not worried. Whatever they
say, it must be a lie.

Abelard kisses her. Jacques picks up Astralabe, kisses him,
holds him out to Abelard who kisses him also.

ABELARD
God be with you, my son. Be
safe... wife.

HELOISE
Lover.

INT. CHURCH COURT - DAY

The ELDERS of the church are gathered in rows. Three chairs
face the assembly.

The elders rise as BISHOP DENIS and CANON MARTIN file in
and take two of the chairs.

At one side, between Bishop Denis and the elders stands an
imposing lectern.

EXT. CHURCH COURT - DAY

Abelard waits with Canon Anselm.

ABELARD
(whispers)
Can you give me no intimation as
to why I have been called here?

Anselm looks at Abelard. He is not supposed to be speaking.

ABELARD
Tell me at least, is it heresy?
Have I been accused? Must I
defend myself?

Anselm raises his finger to his lips and turns to the door.

INT. CHURCH COURT - DAY

They all sit. Bishop Denis lifts a hand bell and rings it.

All heads turn to watch as the door opens and Abelard is led in by Canon Anselm. Abelard stands at the lectern while Anselm sits on the free seat at the front.

BISHOP DENIS
Master Peter Abelard, you are called before the ecclesiastical court today to answer certain questions.

Abelard draws himself up, ready to answer any accusation.

BISHOP DENIS
How would you assess your teaching?

ABELARD
I have always been forthright in my dealings with my students. I have always spoken what I believe is the truth. I have always challenged young men to think for themselves and weigh up the arguments for and against a position. I am well loved by my students...

Some sniggering in the ranks.

ABELARD
...and I believe I teach by inspiration and example and lead my pupils to a higher understanding of both Philosophy and God.

BISHOP DENIS
Some of your ideas are considered somewhat... unorthodox. What say you?

Abelard's anxiety is hidden by the power of his rhetoric.

ABELARD
I do not accept that something must be true simply because it has always been done or thought or said. The Lord said "I am truth," not "I am custom." I strive always for that truth.

BISHOP DENIS
Quite so, quite so. Well, Master
Abelard, I take it that you would
concur with the decision of the
church elders that you should be
raised to the position of
teaching Canon of Notre Dame.

Abelard is speechless for a change.

BISHOP DENIS
We await your answer, Abelard.

ABELARD
Canon? You want to make me a
Canon?

BISHOP DENIS
Do you not deserve it?

ABELARD
You honour me too much.

BISHOP DENIS
Nonsense. You have attracted more
students in the time you have
been here than any ten of the
other masters. You are
universally loved and respected
by your acolytes.

Abelard hesitates.

BISHOP DENIS
So do you accept the honour? Will
you take holy orders and become
the youngest teacher ever to be
raised?

ANSELM
(whispers)
Come on, Abelard. How hard can it
be?

The door opens and Fulbert stands at the threshold.

FULBERT
One moment, your grace.

BISHOP DENIS
Canon Fulbert?

Fulbert walks to the front and faces Abelard as he speaks.

FULBERT
Master Abelard cannot consent to
this distinction.

BISHOP DENIS
Is there a problem, Canon
Fulbert, of which we are unaware?

Fulbert faces the assembly.

FULBERT
Master Abelard, Your Grace, is
married.

There is a general intake of breath.

BISHOP DENIS
Is this true?

Abelard looks in anguish and anger at Fulbert, who crows in triumph.

BISHOP DENIS
Abelard?

FULBERT
Of course it is true. He is
married to my niece.

BISHOP DENIS
I need an answer, Abelard. What
say you to this accusation?

Abelard looks Fulbert in the eye.

ABELARD
Your Grace, if I had something as
fair as the sweet Heloise to call
my own, I would never let her out
of my sight. I would protect her
and cleave to her for all our
lives. I would not lock up her
body and crush her soul as this,
her uncle has done.

BISHOP DENIS
An answer, Abelard. Is Heloise
bound to you or not?

ABELARD
There is nobody on earth who
could own the free spirit that is
Heloise. Bound to me?
(beat)
No Your Grace, she is not.

The assembly breaks out into subdued chatter.

BISHOP DENIS
Silence!

The assembly is silent.

FULBERT
He lies, Your Grace!

BISHOP DENIS
Canon Fulbert, am I correct in
the understanding that you are
accusing Master Abelard of
perjuring himself in front of the
ecclesiastical court?

Fulbert does not take his eyes off Abelard.

FULBERT
Absolutely correct. What is more,
I will prove it.

ABELARD
Prove it, Fulbert? How do you
intend to do that?

Fulbert turns in triumph to Bishop Denis.

FULBERT
You may question Heloise
yourself.

ABELARD
Impossible! You do not know where
she is.

He turns to Abelard.

FULBERT
She is, at this very moment on
the road from Brittany where you
have been hiding her.

EXT. LA PALLET GARDEN - DAY

Heloise plays with the children.

Denise speaks to a messenger who waits on his horse at the
gate.

Denise takes a scroll and crosses to Heloise.

Heloise opens the scroll. Horror crosses her face. She
sits.

Denise helps her.

HELOISE
He is wounded.

DENISE
Not mortally, surely?

HELOISE
Would I be summoned to his side
if he were not?
(beat)
I must go.

DENISE
Let us prepare your things.

INT. LA PALLET KITCHEN - DAY

Heloise, dressed for travelling, looks at Astralabe in his cradle.

DENISE
He will be safe here. And you
will be back soon.

Heloise fights back tears.

DENISE
This is your home and your son's
home.

Heloise takes the pendant from around her neck and places it in the cradle. Astralabe's fingers curl around one of her own. She bends and kisses his tiny hand, then gets up.

HELOISE
Love him, Denise.

They embrace.

DENISE
He will always be loved.

HELOISE
Yes, always.
(beat)
God be with you, my son, until I
see you again.

INT. CATHEDRAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Jacques waits in the shadows beside the door to the Court.

The door opens. Abelard strides through, flanked by two deacons.

JACQUES
Master Abelard!

Abelard hesitates, but the deacons hurry him on.

Jacques retreats into the shadows as the clergy depart.

Anselm strolls through, accompanied by Fulbert. Jacques stands closer.

ANSELM
But he denied that they were
married.

FULBERT

He is a liar. Heloise will be
here shortly, however, and you
may hear what she has to say.

Jacques retreats once more into the shadows, angry and
upset.

INT. CHURCH COURT CELL - DAY

In the bare stone room, Heloise stands, looks out of the
window. Her agitation and attempts to calm herself are
unambiguous. She fidgets with the wimple that covers her
hair.

She walks around, sits, stands again.

Footsteps echo outside the cell.

She sits, appears calm and unruffled.

The door opens. Canon Anselm enters.

She rises to her feet.

ANSELM

The church elders are still
debating. I will inform you when
you are summoned.

Heloise sits again.

ANSELM

(to someone behind him)
They will have my neck for this.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

Jacques, a lily in his hand, kisses Anselm's cheek.

JACQUES

I will have more than your neck,
later.

INT. CHURCH COURT CELL - DAY

Jacques enters the cell, closes the door.

Heloise rushes to hug him, takes the lily.

JACQUES

What did they do to you?

HELOISE

They... I was not harmed.

JACQUES
Where is Astralabe?

HELOISE
I...
(fights emotion)
Denise will take care of him.

JACQUES
Oh, Louis!

Jacques enfolds her in a desperate embrace.

HELOISE
Do not weep for me, Jacques.

JACQUES
What will you say?

HELOISE
What will they ask?

JACQUES
By Satan's balls, You know he
betrayed you. He denied you to
further his own ambition.

HELOISE
He is destined for greatness.

Anselm opens the door.

ANSELM
Someone approaches!

JACQUES
He is not worth it, Louis.

Jacques kisses her, then leaves.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

Anselm grabs Jacques as he passes. Jacques forces a smile.

JACQUES
(sultry)
Tonight, Anselm.

ANSELM
No, I cannot tonight. Come
tomorrow.

JACQUES
Tomorrow, then.

INT. CHURCH COURT CELL - DAY

Heloise sits. Hurried footsteps outside.

INT. CORRIDOR

ANSELM
I cannot permit you to enter.

FULBERT
I insist on seeing my niece.

ANSELM
I cannot, old friend...

FULBERT
Was that your catamite I just saw leaving?

ANSELM
They will summon her at any instant.

FULBERT
That is your problem.

Fulbert enters the cell.

INT. CHURCH COURT CELL - DAY

Heloise rises. As she realizes who it is, fear crosses her face but is soon under control.

HELOISE
(dripping with sarcasm)
My dear uncle. Are you here to torture me further?

FULBERT
I am here to discover the truth.

HELOISE
Truth? Is it your idea of truth to lure me here with tales of Abelard's ailment?

FULBERT
His ailment is that he is sick with his own ambition.

Heloise turns from him in disgust.

FULBERT
So. Is this marriage yet another fiction, devised so that he can keep you as his whore?

HELOISE
I am proud to be his whore.

FULBERT

No matter. If you are not married, you will return with me as my ward. If you are, you will destroy his career and his credibility forever. Either way, I will see him suffer.

HELOISE

I once believed there was no such thing as an evil act.

Fulbert raises his hand to slap her.

Anselm opens the door, looks shocked.

ANSELM

Fulbert! They come!

Fulbert lowers his hand, a sadistic smile on his lips as he leaves.

Anselm closes the door.

Heloise kneels as if in prayer.

Footsteps ring outside. The door opens.

Two priests enter and regard Heloise. They hesitate, unsure how to proceed, as Heloise continues to pray.

HELOISE

Amen.

She crosses herself, rises with a bold stare.

HELOISE

I am ready.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

Heloise walks ahead of them, confident and unafraid, lily clasped in her hands.

Two Cathedral guards flank the court doors. They open them as Heloise and the priests approach.

Heloise stops, takes off her wimple, releases her hair.

INT. CHURCH COURT - DAY

As Heloise progresses up the aisle, all heads turn to look at her.

She reaches the front and stops opposite Abelard.

Abelard steps forward. The priests restrain him.

They regard one another. He seems agitated, she is serene and calm.

Her escort directs her to the lectern.

BISHOP DENIS
Mistress Heloise, can you read?

HELOISE
Yes, your reverence.

The priests hand her a scroll.

HELOISE
(reads)
As God is my witness, I shall
impart only the truth to this
court, in fear of damnation of my
immortal soul. Amen.

BISHOP DENIS
Bearing in mind this most serious
oath, I ask you. Are you the
lawful wife of Master Peter
Abelard?

Abelard and Heloise look at one another across the court.
Heloise smiles, looks only at him.

HELOISE
I am...not.

EXT. FULBERT'S HOUSE - DAY

Jacques approaches the door, knocks.

HENRIETTA (V.O.)
Marie-Claire! Marie-Claire! Where
is that child?

Jacques knocks again.

Henrietta answers the door.

Jacques holds out his arms, hugs Henrietta, goes to walk
in.

Henrietta's bulk stops him.

HENRIETTA
I am sorry, Master Jacques. You
must tell your master...

JACQUES
I do not have a master.

HENRIETTA

You have left his service? Good.
All the time he ate my food, he
never once called me by my name.
Will you go to that Canon of
yours?

JACQUES

Anselm? No. I think I will not
see him again. I thought if I was
- good to him, he would make me a
deacon. He is too honest for
that.

HENRIETTA

You? A deacon?

JACQUES

(smiles)

By Peter's prick, why not? Do you
not think I would be handsome in
deacon's robes?

Henrietta laughs.

HENRIETTA

By Peter's prick, you would.

JACQUES

It will not happen now.

Jacques pushes past her. She is a rock.

JACQUES

I just want to see Heloise.

HENRIETTA

I dare not.

JACQUES

I am her friend. And yours.

HENRIETTA

Nothing is the way it was.

JACQUES

Let me talk to Fulbert.

HENRIETTA

It was he who gave the order.

JACQUES

I will be back. Look after her.
Tell her I love her.

Henrietta watches in sadness as Jacques turns away, walks
down the street.

Abelard rushes up with Marie-Claire.

Jacques hugs Marie-Claire.

ABELARD
Thank God I have found you.

MARIE-CLAIRE
I must go, Sir.

Jacques kisses her cheek goodbye.

ABELARD
Go. Thank you, child.
(to Jacques)
You must help me.

JACQUES
I do not wish to help one who
betrayed my friend.

ABELARD
Betrayed?

JACQUES
You want preferment more than you
want her.

ABELARD
How can you think that?

JACQUES
You allowed her to deny your
marriage.

ABELARD
And that is more important to you
than her peril?

JACQUES
What peril?

ABELARD
Her maid said Fulbert has beaten
her, has allowed her no food, and
nobody may see her.

JACQUES
Fulbert would not do such a
thing.

ABELARD
It seems he has.

JACQUES
She chose him over you.

ABELARD
You are a fool to think that.

JACQUES
It is not me who is the fool.

Jacques walks away.

ABELARD
What can I offer you for your
help?

JACQUES
What I want, you have cast aside.

ABELARD
No! I need you to take her back
to Brittany for me. To safety.

Jacques turns to face Abelard.

JACQUES
And you will stay here?

ABELARD
Until I hear about the
preferment.

Jacques turns away again in disgust.

ABELARD
The preferment is what SHE wants.

Jacques stops, then turns.

JACQUES
Have you chosen your deacon yet?

ABELARD
What?

JACQUES
If you are preferred, you will
need to choose your deacon.

Abelard can't believe what Jacques is asking for.

ABELARD
Surely, you jest.

JACQUES
Do you want my help?

Abelard sneers.

ABELARD
You will do well in the clergy.

JACQUES
So when will this drama begin?

ABELARD
Tonight Fulbert has a meeting
with Anselm. Can you persuade
Anselm to delay him as long as he
can?

JACQUES
And what will you do? Masquerade
as a nun?

INT. HELOISE'S ROOM - DAY

There are no comforts. The room is bare and dark. The window is barred.

Fulbert looms over the bed, a demon shadow.

Sobs punctuate the darkness.

Fulbert moves from the bed, taps a switch against his palm.

FULBERT
Get up, slut!

Heloise lies bruised and beaten on the bed. Her dress is torn in several places, her hair a mess, her eyes red from crying and gaunt from lack of sleep.

She sits up, pulls her dress around her in pain, winces as she touches her sore breasts.

FULBERT
I heard his lecture today.

A brief flicker of interest crosses Heloise's face.

FULBERT
Brilliant as ever - witty,
popular.

HELOISE
He deserves his preferment.

FULBERT
Preferment? Did I not tell you?
No, we... the church... has
decided to postpone that --
indefinitely. He is considered to
be too controversial after all
the fuss in the church court.

HELOISE
But...

FULBERT
So your grand sacrificial gesture
was wasted, my dear.

Heloise slumps in despair.

FULBERT
What? No clever repartee? No
cutting wit?

Heloise turns away.

FULBERT
Is the vixen tamed, then? Perhaps
you deserve some boon for curbing
your tongue.

Heloise looks up at him, her eyes pleading. She touches her
breasts, heavy with milk, and winces.

HELOISE
My baby?

Fulbert turns on her in anger.

FULBERT
Your bastard? His bastard? I will
have no such trash under this
roof.

HELOISE
Then let me go to him.

Fulbert bangs his fists on the wall, indicates the four
walls.

FULBERT
These are all you will see until
I choose otherwise.

HELOISE
Then may I send Jacques?

FULBERT
I hear that rats are said to flee
from ships that are in trouble.
That particular rat no longer
serves the great Master
Arrogance. I have no idea into
what sewer he may have crawled.

Heloise looks up, runs her fingers through her tangled
hair.

FULBERT
But you do deserve some reward
for holding your wicked tongue,
my dear.

Heloise looks hopeful.

FULBERT
I will send you a hair brush.

Fulbert turns to leave.

HELOISE
Uncle?

Fulbert turns.

HELOISE
And bindings to stop my milk.

He walks out.

INT. CATHEDRAL ROBINING ROOM - DAY.

Heavy breathing -- someone's orgasm.

Canon Anselm's fleshy, red face defines the ultimate in ecstasy.

His hands rest on his clerical robes above a fat belly.

The robes move around his feet.

Jacques backs out from beneath them on hands and knees.

ANSELM
My dear boy...

JACQUES
My pleasure.

Anselm's pudgy hand plays with Jacques' hair.

ANSELM
I am so pleased that you are back, that we are friends once more. If ever there is anything...

JACQUES
Well, actually, there is one thing.

Anselm is suspicious.

ANSELM
Oh?

JACQUES
It would be very convenient if you could delay Canon Fulbert's return to his house tonight.

Anselm's eyes widen. He nods, realising what is going on.

ANSELM
Now that, my lad, is a great deal to ask.

Jacques stands, unlaces his shirt and pulls it over his head.

JACQUES
I, my wonderful mentor, have a great deal to offer.

ANSELM
Just how do you suggest I delay
the good Canon?

Jacques, the ultimate in seduction, unlaces his leggings.

JACQUES
If we were to give your great --
resources access to my -- ah --
much praised ingenuity -- I am
sure we could come up with
something.

EXT. FULBERT'S HOUSE, STABLES ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Abelard and Jacques approach the door.

JACQUES
He said he would do his best.

Marie-Claire opens it before they knock. She places a
finger on her lips for silence.

MARIE-CLAIRE
Oh, my Lord, you must hurry!

Marie-Claire gives Abelard a candle. Abelard shakes his
head.

JACQUES
It's Louis' room -- He knows his
way there in the dark!

INT. ANSELM'S ROOMS - NIGHT

Anselm and Fulbert argue.

ANSELM
The church needs the money from
the students he attracts!

FULBERT
I merely ask for a few more days.

ANSELM
What you are doing is an evil
act. A sin.

FULBERT
"Let he who is without sin, cast
the first stone."

He sweeps out.

ANSELM
Fulbert!

INT. CORRIDORS - NIGHT

The three creep along the corridors. A sound. They hide in a doorway, frozen.

They continue, furtive and silent, up a flight of stairs.

They arrive at Heloise's door.

Marie-Claire produces a bunch of keys.

MARIE-CLAIRE
This is all I could find, Sir. It
must be one of these.

Abelard tries key after key. He whispers through the door.

ABELARD
Heloise! Dear heart!

There is no answer.

None of the keys fit.

JACQUES
Is my old room untouched?

MARIE-CLAIRE
I think so.

JACQUES
Wait here.

INT. STAIRS - NIGHT

Jacques climbs the stairs to his attic room.

He passes a door which is ajar.

Rustles from within. He freezes.

More sounds -- of snoring.

He continues to a door, opens it.

INT. JACQUES' ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The moon casts eerie shadows through the casement.

Jacques gazes round the room in nostalgia. Then reaches up and feels along the door ledge, finds a key.

INT. STAIRS - NIGHT

Jacques descends.

He stops.

Ahead of him, a servant carries a candle.

Whoever it is does not climb the stairs, but goes in the direction of Heloise's room.

Jacques follows, unable to do anything.

INT. PASSAGE OUTSIDE HELOISE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Marie-Claire and Abelard see the candle approaching.

The candle lights the face of the cook, Henrietta.

Abelard pulls Marie-Claire into the shadows, but she breaks free.

MARIE-CLAIRE
Henrietta! Thank the Lord I have
found you. Quickly to the
kitchen! The pottage is burning.

HENRIETTA
Burning?

MARIE-CLAIRE
And sticking to the pot.

Henrietta grabs Marie-Claire's arm and marches her off.

HENRIETTA (V.O.)
Can you not do a simple thing
such as watch soup, lass? I'll
tan your hide if the master's
dinner is spoiled!

Jacques slips up to Abelard and gives him the key.

JACQUES
There is not much time.

The key turns in the lock and they enter.

INT. HELOISE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Heloise lies on the bed, bruised, beaten and unconscious.

Jacques lights a candle. As he holds it up, his hand trembles in anger.

Abelard steps closer to the bed, his face contorts in horror.

JACQUES
Sweet Jesus' ass.

Jacques steps closer, clenches his fist. The candle wavers as he places it in the sconce.

Abelard sits on the bed. He examines Heloise's bruises, his pain evident.

ABELARD
She needs a healer.

JACQUES
She needs to be out of here.

Abelard hesitates, strokes her hair. His thumb ghosts across a huge bruise on her face.

Jacques grabs Heloise's robe from the bed and throws it over his shoulder.

JACQUES
Carry her. Come on.

Abelard lifts her up, she stirs.

HELOISE
No more!

Abelard feels a sticky wetness on his hands.

ABELARD
Bring the candle here.

They examine Heloise's back -- a bloody battlefield.

JACQUES
Saint Peter's balls!

Faint sound of horses hooves on cobbles.

ABELARD
Quickly.

INT. CORRIDORS - NIGHT

From another room, the thwack of a cane hitting flesh, and a sharp cry.

Jacques and Abelard, carrying Heloise, reach the back door.

There is a distinct clatter outside of horses' hooves.

Abelard and Jacques become statues.

FULBERT (V.O.)
Where is that lazy groom?

Abelard and Jacques look round in fear.

Marie-Claire runs up to the door, holding her hand where she has been hit.

She opens it, looks out.

MARIE-CLAIRE
Go through the front.

ABELARD
The horses!

MARIE-CLAIRE
I will bring them.

INT. FULBERT'S FRONT HALL - NIGHT

Abelard, carrying Heloise, crosses the floor. Jacques follows him, wary and alert.

EXT. FULBERT'S HOUSE, STABLES ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Marie-Claire opens the door for Fulbert.

MARIE-CLAIRE
I will wake young Thomas, Sir.

FULBERT
Whose horses are these?

MARIE-CLAIRE
Two gentlemen, Sir. They await you within.

FULBERT
Who are they?

MARIE-CLAIRE
From the Cathedral, Sir, I think.

FULBERT
Get Thomas to see to their horses also. Warn him he is in for a thrashing on the morrow.

Marie-Claire curtsies, watches Fulbert stride inside, runs to the horses.

EXT. FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Jacques and Abelard slip out into the street.

Abelard adjusts his hold on Heloise.

Clink of horses hooves.

Marie-Claire leads two horses around the side of the house.

Abelard hands Heloise to Jacques, then mounts. He throws a purse to Marie-Claire.

ABELARD
You have done well, wench.

Jacques hands Heloise up to Abelard, who places her in the saddle in front of him.

MARIE-CLAIRE
Please, Sir, take me with you. I cannot stay now.

ABELARD
Can you ride?

Jacques mounts his horse.

MARIE-CLAIRE
I can do anything. You will need help with the mistress.

ABELARD
Very well.

Jacques reaches his hand to her. She grins, then winces as he grasps her sore hand.

She mounts behind him.

She almost slips off twice as they ride away.

EXT. CONVENT AT ARGENTEUIL - NIGHT

Abelard rides up with Heloise, Jacques with Marie-Claire. Jacques dismounts and pounds on the convent doors.

A light appears, and a NUN with a candle opens a tiny window.

ABELARD
Sister! Help us, please. My wife is injured and needs your help.

NUN
Master Abelard? Wait there.

Jacques helps Heloise down from the horse. She is still unconscious. Abelard also dismounts.

Jacques then helps Marie-Claire down.

The gate opens, and the party go inside.

INT. CONVENT RECEPTION ROOM, CONVENT OF ARGENTEUIL - NIGHT

Abelard carries Heloise. Two NUNS help him lower her onto a pallet. One nun leaves.

A tapestry of Adam and Eve beside a tree adorns the wall.

Heloise regains consciousness, sees Abelard, smiles.

Abelard kneels beside her, kisses her.

HELOISE
Still kissing me beneath a tree.

ABELARD
Always.

The MOTHER SUPERIOR enters in silence.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Master Abelard?

Abelard rises, bows.

ABELARD
Reverend Mother.

The Mother Superior crosses to Heloise, examines her injuries, indicates for the nun to look also.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Who did this?

ABELARD
You must keep her here. She will
be safe here until she is well
enough to travel.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Is this your desire, my daughter?

HELOISE
I do not wish to stay with my
uncle. I would be grateful if I
could stay here.

NUN
This is an evil deed, Mother.

Abelard and Heloise look at one another, share a smile.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Very well. When will you return,
Master Abelard?

ABELARD
In one week.

JACQUES
Without fail.

Jacques hugs Marie-Claire goodbye. A nun leads her away.

JACQUES
Take care of her, Marie-Claire.

Abelard kisses Heloise. She holds his hand as he gets up.

She reaches for the knife in his belt, takes it out and severs a lock of her hair, which she gives to him.

He kisses it.

Jacques bends over to kiss her forehead.

JACQUES
One week, Louis.

INT. CATHEDRAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Jacques sees Anselm approaching, fondling the hair of a young boy. He hides until they have gone past.

Fulbert spots Jacques in the shadows. He steals up to him, then seizes his arm.

FULBERT
You little traitor. You know where she is.

JACQUES
She is beyond your evil reach, Fulbert. Even you cannot take her from a convent!

FULBERT
A convent! Has he abandoned her altogether so he may pursue his own glory?

JACQUES
It will not be forever.

FULBERT
You believe that? You are more foolish than I thought. And you allowed him to do it. I thought you loved her.

He lets Jacques go. Jacques rubs his arm.

FULBERT
I will destroy him.

INT. MOTHER SUPERIOR'S OFFICE, CONVENT OF ARGENTEUIL - DAY

The Mother Superior, her face a storm-cloud hiding her sunlight, looms over her desk and stares at Heloise in her white shift. Heloise's bruises are fading.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
How are your injuries?

HELOISE
Much improved.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Have you considered your future?

HELOISE
I cannot go back.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
To your uncle?

HELOISE
At all.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
What of your... What of Abelard?

HELOISE
I have destroyed him.
(beat)
But for me he would have
preferment.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
But for you he would not have
preferment! The council voted in
his favor. He has only to accept.

Heloise drops to a seat, stunned.

HELOISE
Uncle said...

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Heloise, he is here.

HELOISE
(terrified)
Uncle?

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Abelard.

HELOISE
Would you accept me if I took the
veil?

MOTHER SUPERIOR
The veil, my daughter? But why?

HELOISE
I would not have him perjure
himself before God. This way, he
will be free.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Speak to him, Heloise.

INT. REFECTORY - DAY

A tapestry of the Virgin Mary beneath a tree, arms outstretched, looks down in sadness at the stark refectory. Heloise, in postulant's robes, stands beneath the tapestry, her face mirroring that of the virgin.

Abelard enters, strides over, arms outstretched. He reaches for her. She is still, her body and face impassive. She dare not look at him.

Abelard hesitates, surveys her robes.

ABELARD
You have not...?

Abelard lifts her chin.

HELOISE
No.

ABELARD
So. Is this the way to greet your husband?

HELOISE
I denied you before God.

ABELARD
Look at me.

Abelard steps closer. Their gazes meet.

ABELARD
God heard our vows. He knows our hearts.

Abelard's hands flutter around Heloise's face. His touch is feather-light, electricity building between them.

His hair falls over his eyes. Heloise reaches to brush it away, and the thunderstorm erupts.

Abelard rips off the wimple which covers Heloise's hair.

In an instant their lips crush together in passion.

HELOISE
I never thought I would feel this again.

ABELARD
How can we live without it?

Abelard struggles with Heloise's clothes, lifts the skirts, pushes them out of the way, greedy in his caresses.

ABELARD
I want you.

HELOISE

I want you to be promoted.

Abelard laughs, pushes her hand towards his crotch. She strokes him.

ABELARD

Oh God! I would do anything for you.

Heloise works on the laces of his leggings, equally demanding.

Abelard kisses her face, her throat, insatiable.

HELOISE

Anything?

He pushes her against the tapestry, desperate, ravenous.

ABELARD

Jacques waits outside to take you back to Brittany.

HELOISE

No. Accept the preferment.

He lifts her, thrusts into her. She clings to him as he thrusts, a life-raft in a treacherous storm.

ABELARD

I want you with me.

HELOISE

Promise me you'll take the preferment first. Then I will accept.

ABELARD

Yes.

They reach orgasm.

The Virgin Mary on the tapestry above them looks down as if in sadness as they both sink to the floor.

INT. MOTHER SUPERIOR'S OFFICE, CONVENT OF ARGENTEUIL - DAY

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Have you reached your decision, then, my daughter?

Heloise crosses to the table, picks up the knife.

She turns her back on the Mother Superior and kneels down.

EXT. CONVENT GATES - DAY

Abelard mounts his horse. Jacques holds the reins of his own.

JACQUES
Where is she?

ABELARD
She is safer here.

JACQUES
What about Brittany?

ABELARD
It is not the right time.

JACQUES
No. I will not leave her in this prison.

Abelard rides ahead.

ABELARD
Prison? It is a sanctuary. A place where Fulbert cannot reach her.

Jacques mounts his horse and catches up.

INT. MOTHER SUPERIOR'S OFFICE, CONVENT OF ARGENTEUIL - DAY

MOTHER SUPERIOR
There must be no doubt. Is this for God or for Abelard?

HELOISE
It is God's will that Abelard become everything that he can be. I am but his handmaiden. Who am I to thwart the will of God?

EXT. ROAD - DAY

They ride in silence.

JACQUES
How did she seem?

Abelard remembers the passion -- it shows in his voice.

ABELARD
Satisfied.

JACQUES
Did she send any word for me?

ABELARD

She did not so much as mention
your name.

JACQUES

Fulbert seeks your downfall.

ABELARD

He does not know where I am
lodging -- and he can do nothing
once I am a Canon.

JACQUES

By the Pope's balls! You are
going to accept the promotion.
What of your wife?

ABELARD

If I do not become a Canon, you
will not become a deacon.

JACQUES

All my life I have only wanted
for Heloise to be happy. I will
not sacrifice that happiness on
the altar of my ambition.

ABELARD

I have already named you. It is
too late.

JACQUES

No, Peter Abelard, it is never
too late.

Jacques rides away.

INT. MOTHER SUPERIOR'S OFFICE, CONVENT OF ARGENTEUIL - DAY

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Is this what you want, my
daughter?

Heloise looks at the knife in her hand, turns it over.

She lifts her hair, cuts through it with the knife.

HELOISE

He said it captured the light
itself within it.

EXT. FULBERT'S HOUSE - DAY

Jacques dismounts at the door, thumps repeatedly.

The door opens and Jacques strides in.

INT. MOTHER SUPERIOR'S OFFICE, CONVENT OF ARGENTEUIL - DAY

Heloise's thick tresses lie scattered on the stone floor of the convent.

INT. ABELARD'S ROOM - NIGHT

Abelard caresses the lock of Heloise's hair, tied with a red ribbon. He kisses it, then places it on a silver platter on which stands a jug of wine and a portion of bread.

In the centre of the room, in front of a crackling fire, a large tub of water steams in invitation.

Gaston pours an ewer of water into the tub, steps to one side and points to the tub.

GASTON

All ready.

Abelard strips off the last of his clothing and steps into the bath. The firelight dances over his superb body and is reflected in the silver platter.

ABELARD

You may bathe after me, Gaston.

He indicates the platter.

ABELARD

Then we will partake of the sacrament.

GASTON

(nervous)

Master Abelard...

Abelard gestures for Gaston to continue.

Gaston hesitates -- how will he put this?

GASTON

Why are you naming me as your deacon?

ABELARD

I have my reasons.

(beat)

Was he here?

Gaston polishes an imaginary mark on the platter with his sleeve.

GASTON

He said he was going somewhere where his services were appreciated.

Abelard smirks.

ABELARD
Little whore. He will be back.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Jacques glances round, then approaches four shadowy figures.

He points out a window in a nearby building which flickers with firelight.

INT. ABELARD'S ROOM - NIGHT

GASTON
You promised that it would be
him.
(beat)
I do not think he is happy.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Jacques stares at the window, first angry, then resigned.
He strides away.

INT. ABELARD'S ROOM - NIGHT

ABELARD
Do not concern yourself for him.
Are my robes ready for tomorrow?

GASTON
I will fetch them, Sir.

He leaves, closes the door behind him.

Abelard picks up the soap and lathers it in the water.

ABELARD
(sings)
The happiest of masters
To have a mistress fair.
With eyes of gentle moonlight
And sunlight in her hair.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The shadowy figures pull up their hoods, steal across the street and slip into the dark doorway.

INT. ABELARD'S ROOM - NIGHT

Abelard soaps himself, declares his happiness at full voice.

ABELARD
Her skin is soft as roses,
Her breath a gentle breeze,
Yet naught transcends the mind of
My gentle Heloise.

The door creaks open.

Abelard turns, smiling.

Gaston enters, struggles with the cassock, hood and stole. He spreads them over the storage chests, then strokes the embroidery, caresses the rich fabric of the hood.

ABELARD
I dreamed of this so often.

Gaston crosses to the fire, moves the drying cloths closer to the bath.

GASTON
What of Heloise, Master?

ABELARD
After this, I will take her to
Brittany.

Abelard soaps his privates, deep in thought.

GASTON
And your teaching?

Abelard leans back, closes his eyes, wrapped in his dream.

ABELARD
I will set up a school there. I
can see it now...

GASTON
(fervently)
Your students will all follow
you. It will become a new centre
of learning.

Abelard scrutinizes him.

ABELARD
Do you think so?

Abelard washes his hair. Gaston reaches over to help, then stops himself.

GASTON
I will fetch the surplice.

INT. CONVENT CHAPEL - NIGHT

Surrounded by a chanting choir of nuns, Heloise in a habit, her hair shorn, approaches the Mother Superior at the altar.

INT. STAIRS - NIGHT

Gaston steps with care down the dark stairs. A candle lights his way.

INT. LANDING - NIGHT

The shadowy figures see a candle flame approaching from the staircase above them.

They become one with the darkness of a doorway.

Gaston passes them, intent on his duties.

INT. CONVENT CHAPEL - NIGHT

Heloise kneels before the Mother Superior.

INT. ABELARD'S ROOM - NIGHT

Abelard rinses his hair, reaches for the drying cloths.

He hums as he dries his hair.

He steps out of the bath, stands facing the fireplace, naked as he dries himself. The light reflects on smooth skin and shiny hair. This man is magnificent.

The door opens behind him.

ABELARD

Just put it on the hook, Gaston.

Silence, then a slight sound. Abelard freezes, aware that there is something amiss.

He turns, sees the men.

ABELARD

What!?!...

Two men make a grab for him.

Abelard struggles, retrieves his sword from the table.

They try to seize him again, while a third man snatches the drying cloth and stuffs it hard into Abelard's mouth.

The fourth man examines the sword, runs his finger down the blade, then places it with care on the table next to the silver platter.

Abelard relaxes a little.

The man pulls out and brandishes a large knife.

KNIFE MAN
No fancy rhetoric, Master
Abelard?

Abelard struggles, but they restrain him. His face reflects his fear.

KNIFE MAN
No pithy witticisms to record as
your last words?

The third man yanks the gag from Abelard's mouth.

ABELARD
I have a message for Fulbert:
sending you to kill me is the act
of a coward. It shows his lack of
manhood.

The knife man steps up to Abelard, the knife between them, intense, menacing.

KNIFE MAN
And I give you a message from
Canon Fulbert: "As you sow, so
shall ye reap."

He reaches towards Abelard's groin, grasps his penis and testicles.

Abelard jerks back. The men hold him. He is powerless.

The knife-man swings the knife down, brings it up sharply.

INT. STAIRS - NIGHT

An inhuman howl of agony rends the air.

Gaston, laden with a surplice, pauses on the stairs. He looks upwards -- what on earth was that?

Four men hurry down past him, push Gaston aside.

Gaston, startled and motionless, allows them to pass.

In an instant, he regains his powers of speech.

GASTON
Wait!

He hesitates, turns to follow them, then turns again and rushes up the stairs.

INT. ABELARD'S ROOM - NIGHT

Gaston rushes in. He hesitates on the threshold. The room is silent.

Abelard lies, unmoving, in a bath of blood. Is he dead?

The flames shine from the silver platter on the table.

Between the wine and the bread, on the lock of Heloise's hair, lies a bloody penis and testicles.

INT. CONVENT CHAPEL - NIGHT

The Mother Superior wraps Heloise's head in a wimple and places the veil over it. The chanting of the choir swells.

Heloise stands up and faces the nuns, one of them for ever.

INT. CONVENT CELL - NIGHT

Superscript: YEAR OF OUR LORD 1142

Astralabe sits on the bed. Jacques sits on the chair. Jacques pours out the last dregs of wine into their cups.

ASTRALABE

I am surprised my father survived. Most who suffer that fate... do not.

JACQUES

The Lord was with him. As punishment for that crime, two others were castrated.

(beat)

The other man, the man who did the deed, perished from his wounds.

Astralabe scrutinizes Jacques, puts the pieces together.

ASTRALABE

You?

JACQUES

Survived, yes. And eventually your mother came to forgive me. Yet great good came of it also, for because of my... I have been permitted to serve beside her all my life.

ASTRALABE
And Abelard fulfilled his destiny
in the church, also.

JACQUES
(smiles)
And even as a monk, he never
stopped having opinions that he
thought all men should hear.

ASTRALABE
Did they ever see one another
again?

Jacques rises, opens the box, leafs through the papers.

JACQUES
A few times, in the course of
their duties.

He lifts the letters.

JACQUES
They wrote letters.

ASTRALABE
Thank you, Jacques.

JACQUES
I should ask you for your
forgiveness.

ASTRALABE
I have had a wonderful life with
a host of brothers and sisters. I
have been happy.

Jacques opens the door.

JACQUES
Then I will see you when you
leave. Sleep well.

He closes the door behind him.

Astralabe picks up the silver tree-shaped brooch, turns it
over in his hands, puts it back in the box. He takes the
first letter, pulls a pendant from beneath his shirt,
stares at it, then opens the letter and starts to read.

EXT. CONVENT GATES - DAY

Astralabe packs his horse, straps the books to the saddle.

The box lies on a bench beside the gate.

Jacques and Heloise approach. Jacques hurries to help
Astralabe with his things.

They hug one another, clasp each other's shoulders.

JACQUES
May God go with you.

ASTRALABE
And with you.

Heloise arrives.

HELOISE
I trust that your stay with us
was beneficial.

ASTRALABE
It was.

HELOISE
Will you come to visit us again?

ASTRALABE
I would like that. Very much.

HELOISE
As would I.

He picks up the box and gives it to her.

Heloise looks at the box, questioning.

ASTRALABE
May I leave this in your safe
keeping?

HELOISE
(smiles)
I will guard it well.

She hands him a letter.

HELOISE
I have written a recommendation
for the Bishop of Clunes. He may
be able to give you a good
position if you need it.

Astralabe starts to protest.

ASTRALABE
But...

Heloise stops him by raising her hand.

HELOISE
Take it.

Astralabe takes the letter and clasps Heloise's hand.

HELOISE
Go in peace, my son.

Astralabe squeezes her hand before he lets go.

ASTRALABE
Mother, I will.

He mounts his horse, turns and rides away.

Jacques and Heloise watch him gallop into the distance.

Jacques takes Heloise's hand.

After a while she turns and leaves him standing at the gate.

Letters on parchment bear the words:

Abelard became a monk after his recovery, and some of the letters Heloise and Abelard wrote to one another over the years have survived.

It is through these letters that we have learned their story.

Heloise served as Mother Superior of the Convent of the Paraclete for 21 years after Abelard's death.

She was buried in the same grave as Abelard. Together for eternity.

FADE TO BLACK.