



according to rumor
Fulbert “had testified his love for Héloïse”
by giving her such “unrivalled”
knowledge (Latin & Hebrew & Greek) that she could practice the holy
“mysteries of the older world.”

Curious,
alacritous,
Héloïse

at first just listened
as Abelard read to her in the small room on the second storey where the Canon
left them to themselves.

The smell of meat & thatch burdened the open window.
Abelard tapped his finger on the codex.



*Bright choriamb,
short slow-mouthed flames,
burned in her ears:
girl in a sheer
blue wimple (worn
at each lesson
on her uncle
the Canon's rule)
went word-mad, turned
red, fell hell-sure
in love over
Sappho; later,
combing unrhymed
Jeremiah
with her lover,
fell still further.*



“Love made himself of the party with them.” After
Abelard, as Pater tells it,
found
the “ground of reality below the abstractions of philosophy”—
by feeling “the hand of Héloïse,”
by looking “into her eyes” & making scholastic
distinctions among the kinds of blue there (a pocket
of cornflowers,
the cobalt pots of Kashan,
the ice chasuble of Christ Pantokrator)—
he “composed many verses in the vulgar tongue: already the young
men sang them on the quay below the house.”
Héloïse listened sometimes
to the clerks’ iterations of her lover:



*Let playful Venus intercede
to break the hermit's ecstasy:
a rhyme, a kiss, a touch, a word
to fracture logic's fantasy
of wholeness, self-repose, & truth.
Loïse, our hands & eyes belie
all lonely visionary proofs.*



Love like logic
 bodied forth a “new kingdom,” storied new
 ways of knowing, “not opposed to but only beyond, independent
 of,” spiritual law—

yet Héloïse

later realized,

fucking in the refectory
 of the Most Holy
 Virgin, “This is not

making

this is not philosophy

this is

the immediate selfish moment, votary
 of hipslope,

this is not fleshthinking reconciliation
 this is our annihilation.”

