Heloise d'Argenteuil: A Christian Woman
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ABSTRACT:
This project is an examination of Heloise d'Argenteuil and her correspondence with Peter Abelard. Abelard and Heloise lived during the early 1100s and were involved in a tumultuous love affair, which ended with the both of them entering into religious life within the church. The letters exchanged between the two of them after this point are a window into a period of extreme upheaval in their lives. Heloise has garnered attention for her philosophy, but her writing has not fully been appreciated because it has not been examined with the understanding that Heloise was a Christian woman, functioning within a religious world. Heloise’s self-conception as religious is what shapes her philosophy. Her letters of correspondence with Abelard are where we can see her actions and thoughts reflecting the religious world around her. By understanding the letters themselves not as a philosophical tract but rather as the writings of a strong woman negotiating her way through the world, it becomes clear that Heloise defines herself first in religious terms. The Christian ideas that she was raised within shaped every aspect of her life, and every choice that she made. Earlier scholarly work has not paid sufficient attention to this aspect of her life, and in illuminating her religiousness, my study offers a more complete picture of her motivations and self-understanding.