

## SOME CRITERIA FOR EDITING ABAELARD

Despite the gap between the date of composition and the dates of the earliest manuscripts the text of Abaelard's *Historia Calamitatum* is fairly secure. By attending to some previously unnoticed structural features we may enhance that security, at once ascertaining the textual integrity of the work, acquiring new insights into the author's thought and art, and improving presentation of the text for future readers.

The following text of title, exordium or chapter I, and chapter II may be compared with the recent editions by Muckle and Monfrin<sup>1</sup>. The title is my reconstruction<sup>2</sup>. Capital letters and punctuation marks in boldface represent features of Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Add. C 271 f. 85vb. To the right of the text the first column notes the line number, the second the rhyme scheme, the third the number of words, the fourth the number of syllables, and the fifth the number of letters. In the subsequent analysis figures in round brackets refer to the line numbers of Monfrin's edition.

---

1. J.T. Muckle (ed.), 'Abelard's Letter of Consolation to a Friend (*Historia Calamitatum*)', *Mediaeval Studies* XII (1950) 163-213. J. Monfrin (ed.), *Abelard: Historia Calamitatum*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Paris, 1967).

2. Consider the titles from the following manuscripts as reported by Muckle, p. 175 n. 2, and Monfrin, pp. 8,60.

A Paris Bibl. nat. MS lat. 2923 :

T Troyes Bibl. mun. MS 802 :

R Reims Bibl. mun. MS 872 :

B Paris Bibl. nat. MS lat. 2544 :

D Douai Bibl. mun. MS 797 :

Abaelardi ad amicum suum consolatoria  
Abaelardi ad amicum suum consolatoria  
Epistola prima Petri Abaelardi seu Historia  
Calamitatum (*s.m.*)

Vita Magistri Petri Abaelardi (*s.m.*)

Epistola magistri Petri Abaelardi ad  
amicam suam de temptationibus et calamitibus  
in suis eventibus habitis et qualiter suam  
Heloyam sibi copulavit primitus in amorem  
et postmodum in uxorem (*p.m.*)

F Paris Bibl. nat. MS n.acq.lat.13057

Epistola venerabilis magistri Petri Abaelardi  
(*s.m.*)

**Abaelardi ad amicum consolatoria epistola  
de calamitatum mearum historia**

A Sepe humanos affectus	1		3	8	19
B aut provocant aut mitigant			4	8	23
C amplius exempla quam verba.			4	9	23
D Unde post nonnullam sermonis ad presentem habiti consolationem				8	21 55
E de ipsis calamitatum mearum experimentis :	5		5	16	36
D' consolatoriam ad absentem scribere decrevi.			5	17	38
C' ut in comparatione mearum			4	11	22
B' tuas aut nullas aut modicas temptationes recognoscas.			7	18	46
A' et tolerabilius feras.	9		3	9	19

Ego igitur oppido quodam oriundus			a	5	14 29
quod in ingressu minoris Britannie constructum			b	6	15 41
ab urbe Namnetica versus orientem octo credo miliaris remotum			b	9	25 54
proprio vocabulo Palatium appellatur.			c	4	15 33
sicut natura terre mee vel generis animo levis.	5	a	8	18	39
ita et ingenio extiti et ad litteratoriam disciplinam facilis.		a	9	25	53
Patrem autem habebam		b	3	7	18
litteris aliquantulum imbutum		b	3	11	27
antequam militari cingulo insigniretur.		c	4	15	35
Unde postmodum tanto litteras amore complexus est :	10	d	7	17	43
ut quoscumque filios haberet		e	4	10	25
litteris antequam armis instrui disponeret.		e	5	15	38
Sicque profecto actum est.		d	4	8	22
Me itaque primogenitum suum quanto cariorum habebam		f	7	20	45
tanto diligentius erudiri curavit.	15	f	4	14	30
Ego vero quanto amplius et facilius in studio litterarum profeci.		g	10	10	55
tanto ardentius eis inhesi.		g	4	11	23
et in tanto earum amore illectus sum :		b	7	14	30
ut militaris glorie pompam		b	4	10	23
cum hereditate et prerogativa primogenitorum	20	b	5	18	40
meorum fratribus derelinquens :		a	3	10	27
Martis curie penitus abdicarem.		h	4	12	27
ut Minerve gremio educarer.,		h	4	11	23
Et quoniam dialecticarum rationum armaturam		b	5	17	39
omnibus philosophiae documentis pretuli :	25	g	4	15	35
his armis alia commutavi		g	4	9	21
et trophis bellorum conflictus pretuli disputationum.		b	6	19	48
Proinde diversas disputando perambulans provincias :		a	5	18	46
ubicunque huius artis vigere studium audieram		b	6	18	40
peripateticorum emulatur factus sum.,	30	b	4	14	32

The reconstructed title prefigures the shape of the entire *Historia Calamitatum*, Abaelard's nine-lettered name being the first of the nine-word title, and the nine-part exordium being the first chapter of this nine-part work.

The structure is chiasmic. In the exordium compare *aut ... aut* in B with *aut ... aut* in B', *amplius ... quam* in C with *in comparatione* in C', *sermonis ad presentem* and *consolationem* in D with *consolatoriam* and *ad absentem scribere* in D'. The central word, twenty-second of forty-three, states the subject of the work, *calamitatum*. The third word before it and the third word after it state the purpose of the work, *consolationem* and *consolatoriam*. The fifth word before it and the fifth word after it address the recipient of the work, *presentem* and *absentem*.

Divide the number of the central twenty-second word by half:  $22 \div 2 = 11$ . The first word after *calamitatum* is *meorum*; from *meorum* to *meorum* inclusive there are eleven words, and the latter is the eleventh word from the end of the exordium. From *presentem* to *absentem* inclusive there are eleven words. Divide the number 11 by symmetry, at 6. The sixth word from the beginning is the end of the first *aut ... aut*. After the second *aut ... aut* there are six words to the end of the exordium. From the beginning of the exordium the fourteenth word is *nonnullam*, between which and the central *calamitatum* there are seven words. After *calamitatum* the fourteenth word is *nullas*, after which there are seven words to the end of the exordium.

In parts A-C-E-C'-A' the words are arranged symmetrically 3-4-5-4-3. In parts B-D-D'-B' the words are arranged 4-8-5-7, twelve before the crux and twelve after the crux. The four words of B and the seven words of B' are the minor and major parts of the golden section of 11. The eight words of D and the five words of D' are the major and minor parts of the golden section of 13.

Parts A and A' contain not only three words each but nineteen letters each. Parts C and C' contain not only four words each; the former contains twenty-three letters and the latter twenty-two letters. Part B contains twenty-three letters, exactly half as many as part B', forty-six letters.

The rhythm of parts A and A' is identical, *humános afféctus* and *tolerabilius féras* each a *cursus planus*. The rhythm of parts B and B' is identical, *próvocant aut mítigant* and *temptatiónes recognóscas et* each a *dispondeus dactylicus*. The rhythm of C and C' is identical, *exémpla quam vérba* and *comparatióne meárum* each a *cursus planus*. The rhythm of D and D' is identical, *cónsolutiódem* and *scribere*

*decrévi* each a *trispondiacus*, around *meárum expèrimentis*, a *cursus velox* at the *crux* in E.

The first letters of the nine lines of the exordium, SAAUDCUTE, are an anagram of ECAUDATUS, and the last letters, STAMSIMSS, are an anagram of S[CITO] SIM MAS S[INE] T[ESTIBUS]. Together they read ECAUDATUS S[CITO] SIM MAS S[INE] T[ESTIBUS] 'Know that I may be a de-tailed man without testicles'<sup>3</sup>. Unless this should be mere coincidence we see Abaelard referring to his calamities exactly at the centre of the exordium and at the beginning and the end of every one of its constituent phrases.

This exordium is balanced by the epilogue or valediction, the ninth chapter, which echoes much of its diction at the end of the text :

Hec dilectissime fráter in Xpísto  
 et ex divina conversatione familiaríssime cómes :  
 de calamitatum meárum história  
 in quibus quasi a cunabulis iúgiter láboro  
 tue me desolationi atque iniurie illate scripsísse sufficiat.  
 ut sicut in exordio prefátus sum epístole  
 oppressionem tuam in comparatióne meárum  
 aut nullam aut modicam ésse iúdíces.  
 Et tanto eam patiéntius féras  
 quanto minórem consíderas.  
 Illud semper in consolatióne ássumens  
 quod membris suis de membris diaboli Dóminus predíxit.  
 « Si me persecuti sunt et vos persequentur... »

In the second chapter, directly after the exordium, Abaelard begins to write rhymed rhythmical prose, in which he makes patterns even of the most prosaic elements. Note the balance of *sicut x vel y 5, ita et x et y 6*, and *sicque 13, itaque 14* ; *antequam 9, postmodum 10, antequam 12* ; *tanto ... ut ...* and two subjunctive verbs, *haberet* and *disponeret* 10-12, balanced by *tanto ... ut abdicarem, ut educarer* 18-23 ; around *quanto ... tanto* 14-15 and *quanto ... tanto* 16-17.

Abaelard observes a widespread convention of authorial self-reference at the beginning, one-ninth and eight-ninths, and the sesquioctave part of the title and the second chapter. The nine words of the title divide by one-ninth and eight-ninths at 1 and 8. He names himself in the first word, the nine-lettered *Abaelardi*, and refers to himself in the eighth word, *mearum*. The 157 words of the second chapter divide by sesquioctave ratio at 83 and 74. The first word is *ego*, and the eighty-

3. The verb *scire* would ordinarily be followed by a verb in indicative mood.

third word is *ego*. Divide 83 by symmetry, at 42. From *me itaque primogenitum* to *prerogativa primogenitorum meorum* inclusive there are forty-two words.

At the beginning of the second chapter Abaelard refers to his birth in Brittany, *in ingressu minoris Britannie*, not far from Nantes, *ab urbe Namnetica*. At the beginning and the end of the eighth chapter, the chiasitic pair to this, he refers again to Brittany, *in Britannia minore* (1235) and the Count of Nantes *Namneti ad comitem* (1511). These are the only places in the entire text in which the names of Brittany and Nantes occur.

In the second paragraph of the second chapter Abaelard refers to difficulties with his first master *Guilhelmus Campellensis* (31-44) in a parallelism of five parts, balanced by the account of difficulties with his second master *Anselmus Laudunensis* (161-221).

- 1 Perveni tandem Parisius ubi iam maxime disciplina hec florere consueverat
- 2 ad Guilhelmum scilicet Campellensem preceptorem meum
- 3 in hoc tunc magisterio re et fama precipuum
- 4 cum quo aliquantulum moratus primo ei acceptus
- 5 postmodum gravissimus extiti cum nonnullas scilicet eius sententias refellere conarer
- 1' In hac autem lectione
- 2' magister eius Anselmus Laudunensis maximam ex antiquitate auctoritatem tunc tenebat
- 3' accessi igitur ad hunc senem cui magis longevus usus quam ingenium vel memoria nomen comparaverat
- 4' ad quem si quis de aliqua questione pulsandum accederet incertus redibat incertior
- 5' accidit autem quadam die ut post aliquas sententiarum collationes nos scholares invicem iocaremur

Of the former he writes *hinc calamitatum mearum que nunc usque perseverant ceperunt exordia* (41-42), which he attributes in the last word of the paragraph to *invidia*.

In the third paragraph of the second chapter (45-80) he writes in a parallelism of twelve parts about his school at *Meliduni castrum* (48), his departure to Brittany *coactus sum repatriare* (67), and his absence from France *a Francia remotus* (68), balanced by the paragraph (117-161) in which he writes of his return to *Melidunum* (117), then removal to Paris *Meliduno Parisius redii* (127), departure to Brittany *mater mea Lucia repatriare me compulit* (155-156), and return to France *reversus sum in Franciam* (158-159).

- 1 Meliduni castrum et sedem regiam  
 2 presensit hoc predictus magister meus et quo longius posset scholas  
 nostras a se removeere conatus  
 3 priusquam a suis recederem scholis  
 4 habebat emulos  
 5 ad castrum Corbolii quod Parisiace urbi vicinius est quamtotius  
 scholas nostras transferrem  
 6 assultus  
 7 non multo autem interiecto tempore  
 8 coactus sum repatriare  
 9 et per annos aliquot a Francia remotus  
 10 querebar ardentius ab his quos dialectica sollicitabat  
 doctrina  
 11 preceptor meus ille Guilielmus Parisiacensis archidia-  
 conus ... ut quo religiosior crederetur  
 12 Catalaunensi episcopo facto  
 1' Melidunum reversus scholas ibi nostras sicut antea constitui  
 2' cum ille intelligeret ... transtulit se et conventiculum fratrum cum scho-  
 lis suis ad villam quandam ab urbe remotam  
 3' statimque ego Meliduno Parisius redii  
 4' ab emulo nostro  
 5' extra civitatem in monte Sancte Genovefe scholarum nostrarum  
 castra posui  
 6' obsessurus  
 7' dum vero hec agerentur  
 8' mater mea Lucia repatriare me compulit  
 9' reversus sum in Franciam  
 10' ut de divinitate addiscerem  
 11' sepefatus magister noster Guilielmus  
 12' in episcopatu Catalaunensi pollebat

These are the only places in the entire text in which he mentions the names of Melun and France and uses the verb *repatriare*.

The central part of this chapter (80-116) tells how Abaelard forced William to change his teaching about universals.

Abaelard refers in the first paragraph to literary studies five times, states that he went to William of Champeaux first for *dialectica doctrina* (69) and then for *rethoricam* (81), and to Anselm of Laon *de divinitate* (159).

The chiasmic pair to the second chapter exhibits an internal chiasmus of nine parts. Compare the first part (1229-1303) with the ninth (1489-1559), both referring to Brittany; the second (1304-1328) with the eighth (1477-1488), both recounting Abaelard's dealings with the nuns who removed from Argenteuil to the Paraclete; the third (1328-1340) *quippe quo feminarum sexus est infirmior* with the seventh (1459-

1476) *adeo namque sexus infirmior fortioris indiget auxilio*, the only places in the entire text in which he uses the words *sexus infirmior*; the fourth (1341-1358) with the sixth (1445-1459), both quoting Jerome; around the central fifth paragraph (1358-1444). The second chapter relates persecution of Abaelard by his masters; the eighth relates persecution of Abaelard by his sons, that is the monks who should have obeyed him.

The third chapter (222-248) relates his persecution by two rivals, *Albericus Remensis et Lotulfus Lombardus*. The chiasmic pair to this, the seventh chapter (1200-1228), relates that his *priores emuli ... adversum me novos apostolos ... excitaverunt*.

The fourth chapter (248-269) recounts Abaelard's fame, as does the sixth (1196-1200).

The crux of the *Historia* is a triple account, first of Abaelard's relationship with Heloise (280-622), second of the period from his entry into the monastery of St Denis and hers into the convent of Argenteuil to the burning of his book at the Council of Soissons and his persecution by the abbot of St Denis (623-1016), and third of his arrival at the Paraclete (1017-1195).

To establish the chiasmic structure of the central narrative of the event which inflicted on Abaelard his greatest grief compare the reference to *abbatia sancti Dionysii* (628) with his return to it (936), his removal to the cell at Maisoncelle en Brie (665) with his removal to the monastery of *sancti Medardi* (907), the account of his *tractatum De Unitate et Trinitate Divina* (692-693) with his enforced recitation of the Athanasian Creed about the same subject (900 ff.), the references to his *emuli* Alberic and Lotulf (702-725) with the charges *a falsis accusatoribus* (880-890), *dicentes me tres deos predicare et scripsisse* (725) with *fides et teneat et profiteatur tres omnipotentes esse* (876-877), the judging of his book by an incompetent legate (726-735, 855-876), the Catholic Christian faith (736-749, 845-854), attacks by his *emuli* (749-781, 838-845), deliberations of the council (782-789, 823-837), the advice of *Gaufridus Carnotensis episcopus* (789-797) compared with that of *beati Nichodemi* (812-822), *si hunc prejudicio ... gravaveritis* (797-798) compared with *si autem canonice agere in eum disponitis* (809), quotations from Jerome (801-804, 807-809), around the crux (805-806):

videte ne plus ei nominis conferatis violenter agendo  
et plus nobis criminis ex invidia quam ei ex iusticia conquiramus.

There are many more Biblical quotations than the editions have noted, most of them purposeful and pointed. There is much more

beauty in the prose than its most ardent modern admirer has yet claimed. The structure is not simply or discretely chiasmic. Elements from each section of the narrative are woven into other sections, as if to illustrate the comprehensive and connected nature of the calamities, which Abaelard has commuted from paranoia and private grief into a public work of art. Recognition of the structure allows one to correct misapprehensions by earlier editors, to confirm the integrity of the text in minute particulars, and to clarify Abaelard's meanings by using the form of his narrative as an inbuilt commentary. Particular details of composition may offer new criteria that allow readers to distinguish Abaelard's style from Heloise's. I hope to address these matters in a new edition of this remarkable work.

D.R. HOWLETT  
Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources  
Oxford