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## Feminine Love in the Twelfth Century - A Case Study: The Mulier in the Lost Love Letters and the Work of Female 'Mystics'

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### Abstract

This article compares the twelfth-century writings of the secular *mulier* in the *Lost Love Letters* with the work of religious female 'mystics' to draw comparisons about the way these authors chose to express love. An analysis of the use of imagery and the dominant discourses in their writings allows the author to draw conclusions about the characteristics of a feminine expression of love in this period. The conclusions of the article open up the possibility of questioning the widely held idea of 'uniqueness' in the work of Hildegard of Bingen.

### Keywords

12th Century; women; feminine; love; mystics; lost love letters

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century writings of the secular mulier in the Lost Love Letters with the work of religious female 'mystics' to draw comparisons about the way these authors chose to express love. An analysis of the use of imagery and the dominant discourses in their writings allows the author to draw conclusions about the characteristics of a feminine expression of love in this period. In 1999 the historian Mews sparked a ferocious academic debate when he declared that a set of 'Lost Love Letters' (LLL), as he described them, had been penned by the fêted Abelard and Heloïse. His controversial argument derived from an analysis of the linguistic and philosophical patterns in the letters.