



## **The Sharp Hook of Love: A Novel of Heloise and Abelard**

*Sherry Jones*

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Among the young women of 12th century Paris, Heloise d'Argenteuil stands apart. Extraordinarily educated and quick-witted, she is being groomed by her uncle to become an abbess in the service of God. But with one encounter, her destiny changes forever.

Pierre Abelard, headmaster at the Nôtre Dame Cloister School, is acclaimed as one of the greatest philosophers in France. His controversial reputation only adds to his allure, yet despite the legions of women swooning over his poetry and dashing looks, he is captivated by the brilliant Heloise alone. As their relationship blossoms from a meeting of the minds to a forbidden love affair, both Heloise and Abelard must choose between love, duty, and ambition.

Sherry Jones weaves the lovers' own words into an evocative account of desire and sacrifice. As intimate as it is erotic, as devastating as it is beautiful, *The Sharp Hook of Love* is a poignant, tender tribute to one of history's greatest romances, and to love's power to transform and endure.

## **The Sharp Hook of Love: A Novel of Heloise and Abelard Details**

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Author : Sherry Jones

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## **From Reader Review The Sharp Hook of Love: A Novel of Héloïse and Abelard for online ebook**

### **Angela Smith says**

Even with my love of history, the real life story of Abelard and Héloïse had eluded me until reading this book. Although this is of course, a work of fiction, it is part fact as well, of the lovers Pierre Abélard and Héloïse d'Argenteuil. They lived over 900 years ago and that that love is still remembered is perhaps a testament to it.

Héloïse was a rare woman of her times. She was well educated and with an intelligent mind. This was something definitely not encouraged in the 1100's! Pierre Abélard was a brilliant scholar among other things. I enjoyed this book. It was a bit of a slow burner for me, I read it in small chunks at first but when things really got going, it was hard to put it down.

I often felt anger at Héloïse's sometimes blind faith in Pierre and his intentions. Yes, he loved Héloïse, but it often felt as if he loved himself a lot more. I kept thinking about no matter how intelligent and sharp, your wits/learning, in the words of Jane Austen, "We are all fools in love." Héloïse's uncle, the vicious Cannon Fulbert was a malignant character throughout the book. He was obsessed with advancement through the ranks of the church and saw Pierre as his chance of that.

This is a tragic love story, but it is not a perfect love. Perhaps that is why it has endured so long after it occurred. You can feel the despair of Héloïse as the story is told through her eyes. The little happiness she and Pierre shared was of short duration. He had taken a vow of celibacy, so to be with Héloïse intimately, he was risking a lot for that love. However, I think they fell in love with each other's minds first and although their passion for each other is expressed in the book, I think the author tells it as a meeting of minds as well as a meeting of bodies.

As I didn't know the full story of Héloïse and Abelard, the events and trials, they had to suffer were more shocking to me. I think especially the punishment that Her uncle, Cannon Fulbert visited on Abelard, which led to them both taking the veil on her part and his becoming a monk. I would have liked to know more about what happened to their only child, Astrolabe.

A well written, and intelligent book. It was descriptive of the life in those times, especially with the conditions that I could imagine the smell and feel of it all.

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### **Colleen Turner says**

The Sharp Hook of Love might be one of the most poetic and beautifully written novels I have read in quite some time. I found myself rereading passages out loud just to hear them spoken. The way the author included quotes from the lovers' letters to each other really helped solidify not only the ardent love they experienced but the hurt, fear and confusion that came from going against the destinies set before them and the political, religious and societal norms and rules they were breaking at every turn.

What I enjoyed even more than the beautiful writing, however, was the unbelievable complexity of the feelings between Héloïse and Abelard. Both of these characters are flawed in their own way and yet their

love is true and deep. Abelard is brilliant beyond compare in so many ways - he's a poet, philosopher, teacher, singer and songwriter - and he has no problem letting everyone know it! At times he comes off as arrogant, rude and manipulative and I found myself questioning his motives in regards to Heloise. Then as the story progressed I discovered how much he actually sacrificed for love and I realized that any man who didn't love a woman as he loved Heloise wouldn't have risked all he did to be with her whenever he could. Heloise isn't perfect herself, conducting her love affair under her uncle's roof knowing full well she is meant for the abbey and, feeling abandoned and pained, eventually elicits the help of this very same uncle, who she knows wants nothing more than to bring down Abelard, inadvertently taking away any chance of the two living happily-ever-after. These very imperfections are what makes this love story feel so real, unusual and meant to go down in history. No matter what they do to each other that sharp hook embedded in each of their hearts will never let go!

It is quite clear that Sherry Jones did a good amount of research into not only these two captivating people's lives but also into the environment they lived in. The descriptions of the architecture, the streets and the people all come to life on the page. To fully immerse themselves in the story the reader has to also fully immerse themselves in the time and place in which their lives unfold, and the author makes this easy to do. Heloise's vibrant intelligence and wit is not appreciated or, seemingly, wanted in her lifetime and she has very few choices when the men in her life try to determine what course her future should take. This was very hard to read at times, especially given the sacrifices she will have to make (I don't want to give too much away!), but this makes the choices she does make that much more poignant and heartbreakingly. The author does not shy away from the very real and very harsh historical truths and I, for one, really appreciate that when reading historical fiction.

The Sharp Hook of Love presents a love story out of time and one, given the time it DOES fall into, seemingly destined to fail. However these two intelligent and determined people will not let their world dictate what they feel in their hearts and, even given all the hurt caused, both want nothing but each other when their last days arrive. This is a heartbreakingly tragic story yet one that is also inspiring and completely captivating.

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### **Aditi says**

*God knows I never sought anything in you except yourself. I wanted simply you, nothing of yours.*  
----Héloïse d'Argenteuil, a 12th-century French nun, writer, scholar, and abbess, best known for her love affair and correspondence with Pierre Abélard

As the author, Sherry Jones, an international best-seller author says in her note at the end of her book, *The Sharp Hook of Love* that though this is a fictional story but Heloise and Abelard's love affair is not like fictional characters Romeo and Juliet's love affair, instead they were very much real. Inspired by one of the famous love stories of the world- Heloise and Abelard, dating back to the 12th century in France, the author, Sherry Jones, has crafted out a fine historical novel, *The Sharp Hook of Love: A Novel of Heloise and Abelard* that encompasses Heloise and Abelard's heart-breaking and devastatingly beautiful love-story.

### **Synopsis:**

*Among the young women of 12th century Paris, Heloise d'Argenteuil stands apart. Extraordinarily educated and quick-witted, she is being groomed by her uncle to become an abbess in the service of God. But with one encounter, her destiny changes forever.*

*Pierre Abelard, headmaster at the Notre Dame Cloister School, is acclaimed as one of the greatest philosophers in France. His controversial reputation only adds to his allure, yet despite the legions of women swooning over his poetry and dashing looks, he is captivated by the brilliant Heloise alone. As their relationship blossoms from a meeting of the minds to a forbidden love affair, both Heloise and Abelard must choose between love, duty, and ambition.*

Sherry Jones has spun a story of Heloise and Abelard from the letters shard between them, so mind it! this book is a tribute to one of the greatest love affair in our history! And for that I'd like to hats off to the author, Sherry Jones, for honoring Heloise and Abelard in the form of an alluring and reminiscent novel.

This 900 years old love story of Heloise and Abelard which is not only romantic but also very passionate, have scandalized the whole community in Notre Dame. Heloise, a very young 12th century intellectually gifted scholar, who is left abandoned by her very own mother. Having grown up in a church, Heloise has always wanted to be an abbess, but when she returns back to her uncle Fulbert's home in Notre Dame to seek knowledge about human existence, there was only one philosopher and theologian who can give her what she was seeking for- Pierre Abélard, one of the most celebrated philosopher of the 12th century! Intrigued by Heloise's quick wit and infallible intellect, Abelard fell for her passionately thus making her his inspiration for the poems he wrote. Soon they find themselves entwined in the inevitable attraction for each other thus embarking their forbidden love affair! Read the novel to lose yourself in the fascinating aura and passion of their love story.

I have to confess this that I'm now a huge fan of Sherry Jones, because I now think of no body else, who could have pull off Heloise and Abelard's love story so strikingly. From the very first page, when Heloise is left abandoned by her own mother to the time when she returns back to her hometown with her Uncle Fulbert to the time when she first meets the intriguing and highly educated Pierre to the time when she passionately opens up her soul to Pierre, the author's eloquent narrative style kept me gripped to it's very core. Moreover, she unfolded the whole love story compassionately and with enough mystery, thus leaving us anticipating as to what is going to happen next! The prose is absolutely articulate, layered with expressive words from both Latin and French. The time period that she drew in her novel is thoroughly vivid and lively, and at times you can almost see the aristocrats and the scholars strolling around Notre-Dame de Paris and that medieval aura was very much alive in the author's prose.

The author portrayed those real life characters with enough depth, thus making us acquainted with their demeanor. Since Heloise and Abelard are real life characters, so it's not a real easy thing to portray such characters true to their demeanor, but Sherry Jones has brilliantly brought them alive in their tale and have maintained the realism. Moreover, the way she told her story leaves us with enough space for us to contemplate with them.

**PS:** *Since Heloise and Abelard's love affair scandalized the whole community, so even on their death beds, they were not allowed to have each other in their arms. So 600 years after their death, Napoleon I's wife, Josephine Bonaparte, ordered the remains of Heloise and Abelard be entombed together at Pére Lachaise cemetery in Paris.*

**Verdict:** *A must read novel for everyone to relive in the burning passion of Heloise and Abelard through Sherry Jones words!*

**Courtesy:** *Thanks to the author, Sherry Jones, for giving me a golden opportunity to read and review this intriguing and gripping love-story!*

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## **Melinda says**

I was thrilled when offered the opportunity to participate in the book tour for *The Sharp Hook of Love*. Since I can remember Heloise and Abelard's story has always painfully fascinated me. I was even more elated to learn Sherry Jones decided to write her interpretation of this celebrated couple (I was curious when a gifted author would take the leap). Heloise and Abelard, known for their love affair and for the tragedy separating them.

In my opinion their love story is the most tragic in history. Both well educated, passion driving them towards each other, sadly, divided by Heloise's uncle's act of pure vengeance. Jones masterfully captures the brutality and humanness of their heart wrenching story through her melodic and poetic prose expounding on Heloise and Abelard's actual correspondence as well as the intricacy of emotion seeping through both characters and narrative. You undoubtedly feel the infinite presence of a love so profound you will be rendered breathless.

Despite the myriad of obstacles testing, intentions hell bent on destroying their love, these two forged on until vengeance played judge, jury and executioner on this resolute couple. Religion and political climate in a turbulent time period where men ruled the realm you know their love is doomed, nevertheless you are shocked by the extreme taken and nonplussed by their everlasting devotion even under the most dire of circumstances, these two scream love in its truest and purest form. Jones excelled in setting the ambiance, touching on the appropriate measure of political and religious dominance during this time. You are immersed in the climate enhancing the narrative completely.

Sketching an elaborate characterization added to the pull towards both characters equally. Heloise, highly intelligent yet playing with fire in her uncle's home. Innocent, naive in regards to her uncle, yet driven by love when she solicits this evil doer's assistance. She sacrifices more than any human should, endlessly gives for the cause, heartbreakingly to witness. Abelard comes off as cocky, cavalier, however as their tale unfolds you realize this man is sacrificing all in the name of true love. He gives of himself and much more. Jones captures the devotion and love we all hope to find in this lifetime, at least I do by her unraveling of characters.

*The Sharp Hook of Love* has been the best historical romance I have read this year, and I have been privileged to read quite an abundance of great books in 2014. Jones' lyrical style, along with her brilliance to bring this memorable historical couple to life will leave you in awe – tortuously pleasing, achingly beautiful. For those unfamiliar with Heloise and Abelard what a wonderful way to discover a story penned with talent and competency on Jones' part, no doubt you are in for a real treat. Cannot recommend this tale of unfaltering love enough, bravo Sherry Jones.

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## **vvb says**

This was my introduction to the star-crossed love story of Heloise d'Argenteuil and Pierre Abelard (aka the original Romeo and Juliet). I had not heard of this 12th century french couple before so I was in for some frustrating moments.

I had mixed feelings about the story throughout the whole reading. The couple's love and passion for each other were in abundance - evident in some steamy scenes. But, the social norms that the couple had to endure

during their life conflicted in regards to their relationship which bugged me at times.

Got me thinking of how far women have come these days when it comes to economic independence.

However, I did have a nice a-ha moment at the end which made me come around to a better understanding of the couple and the dynamic between them.

I loved how the chapter headers incorporated original text from the letters Heloise and Abelard wrote to each other. The feelings and emotions are expressed so well from the brief passages.

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### **Lianne says**

I received an ARC of this novel as part of a book blog tour that I participated in. This review in its entirety was originally posted at **caffeinativedlife.net**: <http://www.caffeinatedlife.net/blog/2...>

*The Sharp Hook of Love* invites the reader into the story of Abelard and Heloise and the world they live in from the very first page. I love how the story is narrated from Heloise's perspective as her backstory and circumstances were interesting and has potential for drama and obstacles (namely in the form of her uncle, Fulbert (insert groan here)), not to mention a bit of mystery and intrigue (who was her father? Why did her mother abandon her and left plans that she be an abbess someday?). Through Heloise's perspective, the reader also gains a sense of what it's like for women living in this time period. Heloise is also a very intelligent and thoughtful woman, and while her opportunities for furthering her education and making a career out of her brilliance are few, the education and discourse that she was able to receive is still impressive. The reader is also exposed to the prevalent ideas and philosophers that were studied at the time, which were all really informative.

As for her relationship with Abelard...the feels! Her love for Abelard, coupled with quotes at the start of each chapter from their letters, is really all-compassing, passionate, sweet, even as they go through the ups and downs, the moments of passion and the moments of hardship and separation and all the other trials that go through. It's honestly a bit of a difficult read, knowing how their story pans out, and all of the problems they have to face along the way. And in the end it's utterly heartbreaking how these two people who found each other, respect and admire each other's intellect and opinions, and who love each other despite of the other's faults and circumstances, just can't live the rest of their lives together and in peace.

*The Sharp Hook of Love* does a lovely job in bringing Abelard and Heloise's story to a narrative outside of the letters that have survived between them. Secondary characters that populate this novel were also interesting, from the loyal Jean to the brutish Fulbert, and medieval French life—both in the city and in the countryside—is wonderfully brought to life through these pages. You may have to be in a particular mood to read their story (lest you end up flailing over their circumstances and what drives them apart in the end), but it's a deeply-felt romance that also raises some interesting and philosophical questions about the nature and impact of love.

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### **Erin Al-Mehairi says**

Historical author Sherry Jones is one of the most lyrical, poetic writers of historical and biographical fiction

that exists. In all my reading of historical fiction, I've rarely seen anyone write sentences with the emotion, depth of feeling, and silky sounding, dripping with detail sentences as Sherry does. As well, her character development, of which usually one is many times in first person, is so dimensional that the historical people come vividly to life.

Her newest book, *The Sharp Hook of Love*, just sold me more on those points and is now one of my favorites of her titles. I highly recommend this book as much as I'd recommend a gorgeous sugary treat from the most prestige bakery on the streets of Paris. Except, though you'll devour it just as much, you'll want to forever keep this book and re-read often. It's deliciously written, with lovely sentences and thought-provoking sections, wrapped up in a tale of love you'll not soon forget.

*The Sharp Hook of Love* is her retelling of the story of Heloise, a young woman in twelfth-century Paris who lives with her Uncle Canon Fulbert after being abandoned by her mother to an abbey. She is on track, with her intellect, to be an abbess. She meets Abelard, a man who has given up his inheritance to teach philosophy and write poetry, becoming a distinguished and highly sought after scholar. He is quite taken with Heloise and becomes her educator, and as cunning as he is, he manipulates her power-hungry uncle into letting him board with them. Immediately, they fall in love, though physical love and intimacy is not allowed for either of them.

The story, in my opinion, though of Heloise and Abelard's love affair, was really about Heloise. It's told from her point of view and I can't but feel sorry for all the abandonment, hurt, and controlling people in her life. She a young woman of great intellect and questions, yet her desire for men to see her as their equal, and love her for her brains and soul, frustrates her, because they remain in the flesh (while preaching against the flesh of course!). It would me too, in any age of time, but in this time, the only women who were allowed to be intelligent and educated or to educate, were nuns. How awful it must have been for her to know she could rival any man, hold her own in debate, be a scholar, and love her Church, but to have that would mean to giving up true love! What a price to pay. I really frown upon this period and the fact that men could have it all, while women could not. (Well, as long as they weren't caught or announced their doings like Abelard!)

Sherry really deals with the issues of women's independence, how religion ruled the day in the medieval times, the corrupt actions of men in religious roles, and the fear that permeated all that surrounded the Church, or wanted to be involved in the Church. She really took to task the rules and hypocrisy of the Church and how it effected both men and women during this time period.

I'm proud of the Heloise she wrote of, the one she made me feel connected to so deeply. I felt her pain, her remorse, her excitement, her frustration, her love. Sherry poured her very essence into this book, calling on deep life experiences of her own. Heloise has a need for love and acceptance, for understanding why her mother abandoned her and why her lover must do the same, and wants to know her true calling and who she is to be in life. I like that she knows what she wants and tries to make it happen, to follow her heart, even if others are too afraid to let her have her deepest desire. It's amazing how being in love can make you feel inside and the lengths some will go to sustain it, and others, to destroy it. Though some feel her naive or manipulated, I think she always was smart enough to know, but choose love and forgiveness, and sometimes emotions, over realistic rules and procedures.

I don't want to give away all the book, in case you haven't read it, and in case you don't know the story from history too, but Heloise wanted to love, to love Abelard and their child, more than she wanted to be a abbess or a prioress. She didn't want the prestige, only love. But so many others created such strife with this romance, that it truly was a tale of star-crossed lovers. Overall, Heloise was right in her thinking, everyone loves differently, it doesn't mean they don't love at all. I loved how Sherry stayed true to the story that they

both loved each other, just in different ways, and had various ways of showing it, sometimes causing much perplexing drama to the other. It was an awfully sad tale that really pulled at the heart strings, made me cry, and made me hurt for them. Sherry did a tremendous job writing the characters of Heloise of Abelard and created a lasting tribute to them of merit. I loved how she included excerpts from real letters they wrote each other, because it really tied it all together.

Her secondary characters were wisely and well-created, there is no flat in Sherry's writing. The uncle I could visualize with clarity and he made me chuckle (with his heh-heh) and retch when he lifted his fist and used his booming voice. I enjoyed her personality created for Agnes, a friend to Heloise and Abelard both, and Jean and Pauline, the servants in her uncle's home. As well, her settings were seeped in detail and description, yet in a way that molded into the story so as you hardly knew you were reading them, rather absorbing them. Her clothing, home, food, and other description also dripped with clear and distinct details that added such captivating allure to the novel.

The major essence of this book that I loved was that at the end, which though very sad of course, Sherry also showed how love can withstand anything and how things can come full circle. What they went through really did seem senseless. She showed in finality that Abelard loved Heloise, not only lusted after her. I LOVED how Sherry wrote the ending!! Love transcends all boundaries, even life. It was an amazing story of loyalty on both ends, and a joining together after all that had passed, which was emotional and hopeful all at the same time. It showed remorse, forgiveness, and the true joining together of souls. Love can heal hurt and pain, even if it also causes it. I guess the main question really is, how could God not accept true love between people, a love in its truest form, even if the laws of the Church, or family, ruled against it? For love is the most important part of life.

Once I opened this book, it had my heart skipping a beat from the start. I had an instant connection I rarely receive at first, and I was invested and up all night. As I stated at the start, I truly recommend this book to historical readers, but please do take care to open your heart, slow down your reading, savor her delectable sentences, and truly listen to this endearing, even though heart-wrenching, story. It's beautifully written, as a song on the wind, a book you'd read with your lover on a sunny day, while having a picnic, a bottle of wine, a few stolen kisses, and nothing but the trees around you. Sherry's retelling will stand the test of time.

I was given a copy in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Kate Eminhizer says**

Passionate, captivating, spell-binding, thought provoking. Sherry Jones does a phenomenal job at weaving primary sources in with her own vivid imagination. The use of first person narrative provides an intense relationship between the reader and the characters. You will feel their love and their joy. You will feel their pain and their sorrow. You will find topics of discussion throughout. This is not just a flippant love story, but one that truly captures the essence of the culture that Heloise and Abelard lived in. A brilliant work that brings this beautiful story to light to be enjoyed by all.

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### **Patricia Osborne says**

Being blessed with the honor to be one of Sherry's Sirens. I had the opportunity to read ARC The Sharp

Hook of Love. Indeed the name itself speaks volumes. This novel is thought provoking and intense read. What a love story! Such sacrifice and passion. Sherry brings it all to life.

One of many passages in the novel struck and intense cord in me. This one in particular "Women -- daughters of Eve!" he cried. "Nay, you are Eve, the gateway of the devil. The one who unsealed the curse of the for-bidden tree." What a burden women then and now still carry with this mindset.

There is so much more than one can imagine in this love story and one that should not be set aside as a passing thought to read. I am sure when you pick up this novel you will be asking yourself if your love story could be like Heloise and Abelard or would you even want to.

The Sharp Hook of Love is a novel that would create great discussion and debates for Book Clubs and educational foundations. Sherry Jones

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### **Catherine says**

I'm having a hard time with this one. I'm trying very hard not to judge the story through a contemporary lens but man, it's hard. The book is well written and the language is beautiful, but boy I would have loved to step back in time and smack some sense in to the heroine. Our 'hero' is vain, rakish, and completely self-serving. Our heroine is supposed to be the most learned lady of her time. Her intellect is known throughout France, but we don't see much evidence of this in the story. Once they fall in love, she is full on obsessed with him and that's all that's talked about. No science, no debate, no philosophy other than the philosophy of love.

In the end, it wasn't a bad book and I'll probably pick up another by the author because the writing was lovely. I guess my 21st century mind just couldn't really sink into the 12th century way of life (thank god!).

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### **Annette says**

Source: Free copy from Simon and Schuster and France Book Tours in exchange for a review.

Summary:

"To forbid the fruit only sweetens its flavor"

Among the young women of 12th century Paris, Heloise d'Argenteuil stands apart. Extraordinarily educated and quick-witted, she is being groomed by her uncle to become an abbess in the service of God.

But with one encounter, her destiny changes forever. Pierre Abelard, headmaster at the Notre Dame Cloister School, is acclaimed as one of the greatest philosophers in France. His controversial reputation only adds to his allure, yet despite the legions of women swooning over his poetry and dashing looks, he is captivated by the brilliant Heloise alone. As their relationship blossoms from a meeting of the minds to a forbidden love affair, both Heloise and Abelard must choose between love, duty, and ambition.

Sherry Jones weaves the lovers' own words into an evocative account of desire and sacrifice. As intimate as it is erotic, as devastating as it is beautiful, The Sharp Hook of Love is a poignant, tender tribute to one of history's greatest romances, and to love's power to transform and endure. [provided by the author]

My Thoughts:

Young, Sweet, beautiful, intelligent, and naive Heloise, loses all common sense and becomes involved with an older experienced man named Pierre Abelard. I was not surprised at her attraction to Abelard. Heloise

seeks affection and love. Heloise had been raised in a bleak monastery and is to become an abbess. Heloise is intellectual minded. But she is not wise to the world. There were moments in the story when I became exasperated with Heloise. I did not want her to become involved in a relationship that seemed unwise, yet she followed her heart.

While reading the story I had to place my age and logic on the back burner so to speak. I had to remember what it was like to be fully engulfed in passion. The Sharp Hook of Love is a story with the same resonance of Romeo and Juliet. I felt compassion for Abelard and Heloise, yet I had a nagging sense of fear for them. I felt glued to the story, even though I felt troubled, I had to know what the future held for Abelard and Heloise.

The prose is evocative and dramatic.

The beauty of the story is in the closure. I had teary eyes as I read the last few pages.

The Sharp Hook of Love is an emotional read. It is a memorizing read. It is a haunting and memorable read.

Favorite quotes:

"The moon shone full and fertile." Page 124.

"A valuable jewel must be jealously guarded. She who makes herself a ewe will be eaten by the wolf." Page 36.

"The lofty thoughts which used to flood my mind and spill onto the wax will not come to me now. Instead, desire consumes me, and the pleasures of the flesh." Page 170.

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## **Erin says**

Find this and other reviews at: <http://flashlightcommentary.blogspot....>

Sherry Jones' The Sharp Hook of Love needs no introduction. Seriously folks, this book is all over the net and I'm not sure that's a good thing. Overexposure nearly caused me to burn out before I'd started the first page and though Gallery Books kindly provided me an advanced edition for review, I'd seen so much of the piece that I honestly considered declining to offer commentary altogether. The exceedingly aggressive promotional campaign launched over social media left such a bad taste in my mouth that I allowed the book to languish on my shelf for weeks before reluctantly tackling the narrative and even then, I wasn't exactly enthusiastic about my prospects.

In the end, I didn't have to fight to finish and that's always a good sign, but if I'm honest, I'm no more excited now than I was before I cracked open the book. On one hand, I enjoyed discovering the subject matter. On the other, I felt the execution lacking in several places and wish the underlying themes had been more clearly developed and defined over the course of the story.

Atmospherically, I had hoped The Sharp Hook of Love would open a window to twelfth century France, a means by which to visualize the hustle and bustle of her streets and appreciate the rhythms that characterized life in her cities, but that desire went unfulfilled. Don't misunderstand, Jones can be quite eloquent in her descriptions, she simply spends more time going on about Abelard's devouring mouth and probing fingers than she does the world her characters inhabit.

In writing solely from Heloise's perspective, Jones left Abelard's motivations up to interpretation and I think that decision really undermined her efforts to develop him as a romantic hero and hindered the authenticity of the feelings he bore his lady. It is abundantly clear that Heloise is blinded by love for her roguish theologian, but there is such ambiguity in her partner's character and aspirations that I couldn't give credit to

the romance the two were supposed to have shared.

I had similar difficulty understanding Heloise. Jones repeatedly states her heroine is renowned for her academic achievements, but the reader is so rarely afforded insight to that facet of her character that I found the claim difficult to accept. For chapters at a time, she thinks of Abelard with a single-mindedness that speaks more to naive infatuation than intended sacrifice, a fact which made it hard to believe she was capable of dedicated study or rational decisioning.

Bottom line, I think *The Sharp Hook of Love* could be a stronger piece, but I'm not unhappy with the time I spent reading it. Jones exposed me to a new chapter of history and despite my lukewarm assessment of the story, I was impressed with her tone and look forward to reading her again in the future.

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### **LillyBooks says**

Mon Dieu, this book is terrible. Being a Francophile, I am familiar with the legend of Heloise and Abelard, the original pair of star-crossed lovers. Their story is told in a few letters that they wrote in old age which contain beautiful, beautiful passages even if I find the whole story far-fetched. So I was interested to read a fictionalized account of how their grand passion started. My first complaint with this book (which I did not finish), is that Heloise is reduced to brain-dead teenager. According to history, Heloise was the most famous female scholar of her time, renowned throughout Europe for her brilliance, and an accomplished physician. Here, it's a wonder she can string two sentences together. She "falls in love" with her new tutor, Abelard, who seems to only desire her for her beauty from the beginning. I would share what Abelard taught the great Heloise, but in this book it appears to only be sadism. (If I wanted to read *Fifty Shades of Gray*, I would.) And then he rapes her! And we're supposed to believe that - I am not making this up - that no sooner does she wake up and realize that she is being raped by drunken man that she starts to enjoy it and falls even deeper in love with him! I know that in the original letters there a line that suggests Abelard did rape Heloise. However, it's open to debate, which has been very vigorous. So, as a author, you want to write the one of the world's greatest love stories, and you decide to use this version of events? How is that acceptable, let alone romantic and loving?

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### **Meg - A Bookish Affair says**

4.5 stars. "*The Sharp Hook of Love*" is a historical fiction story that surrounds the lives of real-life star-crossed lovers, Heloise and Abelard. It is hard to think of a couple with a story that is both filled with equal amounts of romance and tragedy. Heloise and Abelard have sometimes been called the real-life Romeo and Juliet but in this humble reader's opinion, their story may be even more tragic and more heart wrenching. Historical lovers may be familiar with the story of Heloise and Abelard but Jones breathes new life into this love story that had me reading with bated breath.

The main characters in this book are completely compelling and kept me turning the pages. Heloise was a woman before her time. She had a promising life as a scholar and so many in her family were pushing her to follow in her famous mother's footprints. Abelard is a scholar in his own right. They challenge each other mentally through pondering through theology and philosophy together. They fall for each other wholeheartedly but of course, as we know from history, their love was not allowed to be. Because I was so

drawn to the characters and liked how their romance unfolded, I so wanted their ending to be different. Even if you know how things end for them, you will still find yourself rooting for Heloise and Abelard.

I was drawn in by not only the characters but the setting and historical detail as well. This book is definitely a feast for the mind for readers. Jones vividly paints a great picture of what life was like for Heloise and Abelard. We see Heloise's family's excitement over her future turn to devastation as they realize how her independent mind is messing up their plans. We also get a good glimpse at French society during the time. This detail was fantastic and really helped me to understand just how forbidden and how scandalous Heloise and Abelard's relationship must have seemed at the time. This is definitely a book that I am going to be thinking about for a long, long time!

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### **Sandi \*~The Pirate Wench~\* says**

Setting: 12th Century France

2-1/2 Stars.

Heloise d'Argenteuil tells her story of how she met the brilliant headmaster of the Notre Dame Cloister school, Pierre Abelard. It was dangerous for a woman meant for the convent and a man whose future was to become a priest to meet let alone have their passion for each other grow. But grow it does and quickly, and when Heloise conceives their child they secretly marry. Situations happen and others won't allow these two happiness, so Heloise takes her vows and becomes an abbess just as her uncle had planned for her. As time moves on, Heloise and Abelard write letters in which secrets are revealed making it seem throughout the story that they will only be together in death. A re-imagining of a legendary romance and passionate forbidden relationship between Heloise and Abelard that eventually leads to heartbreak.

When I first started this book I had such high hopes in reading about these two lovers, and I really struggled getting into it. Picking it back up again I had to soldier on to make it to the end without skipping my way through. A big disappointment as I found it dragged and there really wasn't much substance to the characters or their story. Maybe if I hadn't read other articles/info on these two it would have worked the "re-imagining" but it just didn't..at least not for this reader.

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