

THE CHRISTIAN VISION OF POPE'S **Eloisa to Abelard**

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For Pat:

Joys which earth cannot afford.

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ABBREVIATIONS

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ELH: A Journal of English Literary History

Hebel ed.: The Works of Michael Drayton, ed. J. W. Hebel, with introductions, notes, and variant readings by K. Tillotson and B. H. Newdigate, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1961).

JEGP: Journal of English and Germanic Philology

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Martin ed.: The Poems, English, Latin and Greek, of Richard Crashaw, ed. L. C. Martin, 2nd ed., (Oxford, 1957).

MP: Modern Philology

PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America

PQ: Philological Quarterly

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This study seeks to illuminate Pope's Eloisa to Abelard by investigation of its internal structure of words and images, its literary relationships, its cultural and intellectual contexts, and its meaning as an artifact.

First, Eloisa to Abelard (1717) appears related to The Letters of Abelard and Heloise (1713) in very special ways hitherto unnoticed. Pope draws heavily upon Abelard's letters, as well as Heloise's, in order to heighten the passionate conflict of Eloisa by placing her drama inextricably within a liturgical and devotional context.

Secondly, in Chapter II, the poem develops a resolution of Eloisa's conflict between desire and devotion by dramatizing the action of divine grace upon her otherwise hopeless dilemma. Thus developed, the poem stands in opposition to many current developments in late 17th and early 18th century thought, especially in their religious and moral aspects.

In Chapter III, Eloisa to Abelard is shown to utilize the heroic epistle of Ovid in not only formal ways, but thematic and structural ways as well, especially in regard to the dramatization of the human psyche under the twin disciplines of law and adversity. Also, thematic and structural relationships are found between Eloisa to Abelard and Drayton's Englands Heroicall Epistles (1597-99), which serve as a bridge between the rigors of law and adversity on one hand, and the healing power of grace on the other. Eloisa to Abelard also appears to contain several possible echoes to significant thematic and structural details in some poems by Richard Crashaw.

Chapter IV completes the study by showing the confessional and liturgical structure of the poem which supports its Christian vision of human nature struggling to justify itself before a just but merciful God.

CHAPTER I

POPE'S ELOISA TO ABELARD AND "THOSE CELEBRATED LETTERS"

In view of the customary austerity of Samuel Johnson's critical judgment, his praise of Pope's Eloisa to Abelard (1717) is memorable: "The Epistle of Eloisa to Abelard is one of the most happy productions of human wit." Johnson then discusses the history of Abelard and Heloise, and concludes with an appraisal of Pope's poetical genius:

the subject is so judiciously chosen, that it would be difficult, in turning over the annals of the world, to find another which so many circumstances concur to recommend. We regularly interest ourselves most in the fortune of those who most deserve our notice. Abelard and Eloisa were conspicuous in their days for eminence of merit. The heart naturally loves truth. The adventures and misfortunes of this illustrious pair are known from undisputed history. Their fate does not leave the mind in hopeless dejection, for they both found quiet and consolation in retirement and piety. So new and so affecting is their story, that it supercedes invention and imagination ranges at full liberty without straggling into scenes of fable.

The story, thus skilfully adopted, has been diligently improved. Pope has left nothing behind him which seems more the effect of studious perseverance and laborious revisal. Here is particularly observable the curiosa felicitas, a fruitful soil and careful cultivation. Here is no crudeness of sense, nor asperity of language.¹

Johnson's image from gardening suggests an intimate relationship between nature and art, and more particularly the integral unity of Pope's subject matter and his art. If the story of Abelard and Heloise offers "a fruitful soil," it deserved the "careful cultivation" of Pope's art.

Eloisa to Abelard remains to this day sufficiently esteemed to appear in anthologies of literature, yet some modern critics have not admitted a central fact of Pope's poetical achievement--that unity of subject matter and art implied by Johnson in his image from gardening.² Professor Reuben Brower, for example, sees Eloisa to Abelard as essentially a tour de force: "the essential poetic design of the poem is Ovidian," and Pope has attempted, but only "very nearly succeeded in doing the impossible, in naturalizing an alien literary tradition and form."³ To Professor Brower, Eloisa to Abelard is thus merely an English rendition of hybrid foreign materials, a French story cast in the mold of the Latin heroic epistle of Ovid. The heroic epistle, however, had been successfully written in English by Michael Drayton in his Englands Heroicall Epistles (1597-99) more than a century before Pope, and Drayton's work had remained popular throughout his lifetime and the seventeenth century.⁴ If an "alien" tradition had to be "naturalized" at all, it would seem that Drayton's poems had already completed the process. In the present chapter, we will seek to elucidate the basic Christian fabric of the poem in an effort to discover some of the ways by which a "careful cultivation"

helps to create, out of a collection of old letters, a new poem with its own significant meaning.

I

One of the most influential modern scholars of medieval thought, Etienne Gilson, has praised Pope's Eloisa to Abelard for capturing the essential spirit of the twelfth century letters of Abelard and Heloise: "I would not take an oath," Professor Gilson declares, "that Pope is always faithful to the thought of Heloise. But I know at least four of his lines which Heloise herself would have been sorry not to have written, so well do they express what the Abbess of the Paraclete suggests on each page, without daring to give it expression:

Still on that breast enamour'd let me lie,
 Still drink delicious poison from thy eye,
 Pant on thy lip, and to thy heart be prest;
 Give all thou canst--and let me dream the rest.
 (121-24)

If this is not what Heloise was thinking as she wrote Letters II and IV of the Correspondence, then it is useless for other poets to try to express her experience. The last line, especially, is priceless."⁵ Professor Gilson thus notices in Pope's poem the preservation of the passionate intensity of Heloise's emotional struggle. The correspondence of feeling that Professor Gilson perceives between the original medieval letters and Pope's poem suggests, in turn,

the possible existence of an important contextual and thematic continuity between them.

In "The Argument" prefixed to Eloisa to Abelard, Pope states that his poem is "partly extracted" from "those celebrated letters" of Abelard and Heloise,⁶ and the profusion of parallels between Eloisa to Abelard and John Hughes' 1713 translation of the Letters of Abelard and Heloise (the first in English) indicates Pope's immediate source.⁷ Many of these parallels, but by no means all, are cited in the introduction and notes to the Twickenham Edition of Eloisa to Abelard. In addition, Professor Geoffrey Tillotson and other scholars have reviewed at some length the complicated history of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century translations of the Abelard and Heloise letters.⁸ They seek to establish that the difference between the twelfth century letters and the later translations arises from the infusion of the popular seventeenth century rhetoric of romance into the twelfth century letters.⁹ Certainly we can agree that obvious differences separate the seventeenth and eighteenth century translations from the medieval letters: Hughes himself knew that his translation had cast off the bulk of what he calls "School Divinity, and . . . the Learning of those [medieval] Times."¹⁰ Without exception, however, modern studies of Pope's poem have ignored the persistence of an enduring Christian context and theme in the medieval letters, in the seventeenth and eighteenth century French and English translations, and in Pope's Eloisa to Abelard.

A summary of the history of the letters from the medieval originals to the form in which they reached Pope will not only suggest the alterations they suffered, but also may affirm the basic contextual and thematic continuity of the Abelard and Heloise story.

At Paris, in 1616, Francois D'Amboise published the first edition of the medieval Latin letters as part of a larger edition of Abelard's works.¹¹ [The high regard of D'Amboise for the letters anticipates the esteem felt for them in later times especially for their warm and passionate confessions of ardent mutual love. But the confessions of love represent only a small portion of the letters, and even they usually appear within a larger Christian context of sin, suffering, and hope for redemption. Heloise and Abelard have committed a sin by loving each other without regard for the divine and eternal laws of the Church to which they previously had sworn their faith. Each has sinned by turning away from God in favor of one of His creatures, and they come to see the calamities separating them irrevocably from each other as punishment for their sin. The purpose of their punishment and suffering is to re-direct their now fruitless manifestation of human love to include God, its source and end. Heloise's struggle in the Letters reveals her attempt to see in her love for Abelard the seed of a renewed love for God. "Her problem," as Professor Gilson explains, "is to find in the passion this man inspires the strength required for a life of sacrifice which is both meaningless and impossible

save on the level of the love of God."¹² Heloise, and Abelard too, are sustained in this struggle by the faith that what seems an impossible task for mere human will can be effected with the assistance of God's grace. Suffering attains meaning for Heloise and Abelard from their conviction that God benignly directs all human events toward human redemption and salvation.¹³

Later in the seventeenth century, Roger de Rabutin, Comte de Bussy (1618-93), translated into French three letters of the original eight--two letters by Heloise (Letters II and IV) and one by Abelard (Letter III).¹⁴ Bussy chose the most passionate letters and added freely to the Latin original, but his translation nevertheless preserved the main Christian context and theme of the Latin letters. And while Bussy, who wrote The Amorous History of the Gauls (1666), certainly emphasized the frankly sensuous and passionate character of the letters, it surely is a distortion to see in Bussy's Heloise, as Professor Tillotson has done, "the dynamo of what amounts to a 'romantick' novel."¹⁵ By heightening the passion of Heloise for Abelard, Bussy actually raises into sharper relief [Heloise's struggle between the love of creature and the love of Creator] which we have seen to be a central conflict in the Latin letters.

As an epistolary model for a passionate nun deserted by her lover, Bussy had the letters of Marianna Alcofrado, published at Paris in 1669 as Lettres portugaises.¹⁶ Although these letters from a Portuguese nun do little to suggest a

depth of agony in the human soul, they provided Bussy with an already popular and analogous subject written in contemporary style.

Other French translations based on Bussy's appeared in the late seventeenth century,¹⁷ and Pierre Bayle included many details of the Heloise and Abelard story in his Critical and Historical Dictionary (1697: English trans., 1710).¹⁸ Francois Du Bois used Bussy's MS translation, Bayle's Dictionary, and an anonymous 1693 French translation (published at The Hague) to fashion a collection of the letters which included two entirely fabricated letters and a translation of Abelard's Historia calamitatum.¹⁹ It was the fifth edition of Du Bois' collection (1711) that John Hughes translated into English.

The Latin letters of Heloise and Abelard had suffered not only translation, but also truncation and accretion, before they came into the hands of John Hughes. Yet in spite of this series of alterations, the traditional Christian context and theme of sin, suffering, and redemption survived. Hughes found this theme in Du Bois' edition, and he preserved it in his own translation of the letters into English. The profusion of parallels between Pope's Eloisa to Abelard and Hughes' translation may therefore affirm more than mere similarities of diction; they may affirm also the continuity of the basic Christian contextual and thematic fabric of the medieval Latin letters in both Hughes and in Pope. Pope's Eloisa to Abelard, like the letters that serve as its source,

is distinguished, we shall see, by its emphatic concern with human frailty and suffering and with the problem of salvation. If in one sense Pope's poem has lost the specific medieval tone of the Latin letters, in another deeper sense it has retained what is essential to them: the Christian view of man humbled by his own weakness before a just but merciful God.

II

The Christian view of man in Eloisa to Abelard appears in sharp outline when we consider some of the more important ways in which Pope used Hughes' translation of the Letters. In Hughes' translation of the Letters, Heloise appears in her convent fully aware of her guilt and sin in a love which has no room for God: "I am here, I confess, a Sinner, but one who far from weeping for her Sins, weeps only for her Lover; far from abhorring her Crimes, endeavors only to add to them" (p. 123). Heloise confesses herself a sinner, but admits the imperfection of her act of contrition. She admits that she does not have "the sincere Desire of being truly penitent. Thus I strive and labour in vain" (p. 123). Without the perfection of the indispensable act of contrition, which depends upon the firm intention of the will to return to God, Heloise remains immersed, unrepentant and unforgiven, in her crimes. She recognizes the weakness of her own will: "I am conquered by my Inclination. My Love troubles my Mind,

and disorders my Will" (p. 124). The specific disorder of her will that Heloise confesses is the exclusion of God from her devotion: "Among those who are wedded to God I serve a Man; Among the Hercick Supporters of the Cross I am a poor Slave to a Human Passion; at the head of a Religious Community I am devoted to Abelard only" (p. 123). Pope's Eloisa, too, acknowledges the impotence of a will that cannot return her to God as long as she remains an absolute "slave" (178) to Abelard, and the outlines of Eloisa's struggle appear sharply drawn in the balanced antithesis of his couplet:

Ah wretch! believ'd the spouse of God in vain,
 Confess'd within the slave of love and man.
 (177-78)

Like Hughes' Heloise, Pope's Eloisa recognizes her "crime" (104, 185, 193), her "guilt" (230), her "stain" (266), and her "sin" (191).²⁰

Hughes' Heloise understands clearly that for their sin "of a Criminal Love" she and Abelard now suffer punishment at the hands of God: "the whole Wrath of Heaven fell on us in all its Weight" (p. 169). She perceives her own punishment to be particularly appropriate to the nature of her sin--the letters and conversation which before had given her happiness and pleasure now cause her misery and pain: "Those tender Letters I have wrote to you, and those passionate Conversations I have had with you, give me as much Pain now, as they formerly did Pleasure" (p. 185). Heloise admits the culpability of her willful sin with Abelard, and

she knows too that she could have avoided her punishment by abstaining from her sin: "I ought to have foreseen other more certain Evils; and to have consider'd that the Idea of lost Enjoyments would be the Trouble of my whole Life" (p. 173).

The "Idea of lost Enjoyments" recurs frequently in Pope's Eloisa to Abelard. For instance, the sudden loss of the enjoyment of love is woven into the very structure of line 37, where misery follows happiness by only the short breathless pause of a caesura: "Now warm in love, now with'ring in thy bloom." The first word of the following line seems to punctuate the loss of happiness with an abrupt finality: "Lost in a convent's solitary gloom!"²¹ Eloisa then recalls the happiness she enjoyed in her passion for Abelard (55-96), but also immediately remembers the subsequent brutal revenge taken on Abelard:

This sure is bliss (if bliss on earth there be)
And once the lot of Abelard and me.

Alas how chang'd! what sudden horrors rise!
A naked Lover bound and bleeding lies!

(97-100)

Throughout much of the poem, in Eloisa's reminiscences and dreams, the "Idea of lost Enjoyments" haunts and tortures her. Her torture is all the more intense for she has lost, in addition to Abelard, her God.

The memory of all that has been lost through her sin moves Eloisa to an intense awareness of her misery. Her tears, which Professors Audra and Tillotson somewhat jocularly see as a "deluge" imitating lachrymose epics and romances,²² are moved by her recognition that her sin-damaged world

is indeed a vale of tears.

In the final sentence of Hughes' translation, Abelard implores Heloise to shed tears which will help prepare her for eventual salvation--tears of contrition: "may you shed as many Tears for your Salvation, as you have done during the Course of our Misfortunes" (p. 218). But Hughes' Heloise, like all Christians, remains uncertain whether her tears will be effectual for her salvation. In her final letter to Abelard she compares his relatively peaceful seclusion with her torments:

You Abelard will happily finish your Course,
your Desires and Ambitions will be no Obstacle to
your Salvation. Heloise only must lament, she only
must weep without being certain whether all her
Tears will be available or not to her Salvation.
(P. 199)

Pope's Eloisa, haunted by memories of the image of Abelard as her lover, fears the stubborn strength of her love for the man will render her tears useless for her salvation:

Nor pray's nor fasts its [her heart's] stubborn pulse restrain,
Nor tears, for ages, taught to flow in vain.
(27-28)

Specifically, Eloisa questions whether her tears of anguish at the loss of Abelard do not in some way withhold her from full contrition at the loss of God and, therefore, from final salvation. In both Hughes and Pope, Eloisa recognizes that as long as her continued desire for Abelard diminishes her love of God she remains in danger of losing her own salvation.

As some of the notes to the Twickenham Edition show, Pope readily borrowed hints and passages from Hughes' translation of Abelard's letters, and adapted them to Eloisa's

Hughes' Abelard asks, "How can I separate from the Person I love, the Passion I must detest?" (p. 141). Pope, in a chiasmic couplet, adapts Abelard's dilemma to Eloisa's own struggle in order to distinguish her crime from the source of her love and pleasure, or the "sin"--"offence" from the "sense"--"offender":

How shall I lose the sin, yet keep the sense,
And love th' offender, yet detest th' offence?
(191-92)

Hughes' Abelard continues to meditate upon the difficulty of separating the person of Heloise from the passion he continues to feel toward her:

What Abhorrence can I be said to have of my
Sins, if the Objects of them are always amiable
to me? . . . 'Tis difficult in our Sorrow to
distinguish Penitence from Love. The Memory of
the Crime, and the Memory of the Object which has
charmed us, are too nearly related to be
immediately separated. (P. 141)

Abelard's inability to separate the hateful crime, or sin, from its beloved object, Heloise, reappears in the anti-thetical balance of Pope's couplet:

How the dear object from the crime remove,
Or how distinguish penitence from love?
(193-94)

When Hughes' Abelard laments the self-contradictions that contribute to his sufferings, he verifies what Heloise had written to him in her first letter. Heloise had realized that "a Heart which has been so sensibly affected as mine cannot soon be indifferent. We fluctuate long between Love and Hatred, before we can arrive at a happy Tranquility" (p. 129). Abelard admits to Heloise that he suffers

the same fluctuation of love and hatred: "my Heart is at once pierced with your Sorrows and its own . . . in such different Disquietudes I betray and contradict my self. I hate you; I love you; Shame presses me on all sides" (pp. 142, 135). From the preceding exchange in Hughes, Pope draws signal words and phrases to frame Eloisa's conflict of passions:

Unequal task! a passion to resign,
For hearts so touch'd, so pierc'd, so lost as mine.
Ere such a soul regains its peaceful state,
How often must it love, how often hate!
(195-98)

Pope's Eloisa then contrasts the pain of suffering that springs from her love for Abelard to the bliss offered to her by the love of God:

But let heav'n seize it, all at once 'tis fir'd,
Not touch'd, but rapt; not waken'd, but inspir'd!
Oh come! oh teach me nature to subdue,
Renounce my love, my life, my self--and you.
Fill my fond heart with God alone, for he
Alone can rival, can succeed to thee.
(201-06)

Pope draws most of his inspiration from Hughes' Heloise to describe the effect of the love of God on the tortured soul. However, he does respond, it would seem, to the amplification of certain phrases that appear in the letters of both Heloise and Abelard. In her first letter, Hughes' Heloise implores Abelard for help in overcoming her suffering: "Oh, for Pity's sake, help a Wretch to renounce her Desires, her self, and if it be possible even to renounce You!" (p. 125). Later in the same letter she declares to Abelard that God exercises a singular power over him: "God has a peculiar

Right over the Hearts of Great Men, which he has created. When he pleases to touch them, he ravishes them, and lets them not speak nor breathe but for his Glory" (p. 131). In her second letter to Abelard, Heloise declares, in a passage suggesting lines 205-06 of Eloisa to Abelard, that Abelard's rival for her love is God: "When I have told you what Rival hath ravished my Heart from you, you will praise my Inconstancy. . . . By this you may judge that 'tis God alone that takes Heloise from you" (pp. 183-84). Pope seems to recall what Abelard had revealed to Heloise in his first answer to her: "My Jealousie seemed to be extinguish'd: When God only is our Rival, we have nothing to fear" (p. 152). Pope's characteristic method, it would seem from the examples above, is to use scenes and phrases from Hughes' translation to sharpen by contrast and antithesis the dramatic conflicts that make up Eloisa's suffering. His borrowings from Hughes, which here extend through the wide range of three lengthy letters (pp. 125-84), are compressed into an intensified and tightly knit drama of suffering and potential redemption.

Hughes' translation does not permit the mere recognition of human sin and weakness (with its resultant suffering) to be a final pronouncement on the human condition. In his first reply to Heloise, Abelard points the way from weakness to strength--the way of the Cross: "How weak are we in our selves, if we do not support our selves on the Cross of Christ?" (p. 135). Later in the same letter, Abelard sees the work of God even in human weakness: "Who does not

know that 'tis for the Glory of God, to find no other Foundation in Man for his Mercy, than Man's very weakness?" (p. 153). If man's very weakness becomes the occasion for God's revelation of His mercy to man, Abelard implies that even man's weakness has a purpose in the divinely created world. Heloise had said as much in her first and most famous letter to Abelard:

I am ready to humble myself with you to the wonderful Providence of God, who does all Things for our Sanctification, who by his Grace purifies all that is vicious and corrupt in the Principle, and by the inconceivable Riches of his Mercy draws us to himself against our Wishes, and by degrees opens our Eyes to discern the Greatness of his Bounty, which at first we would not understand. ²³
(P. 125)

Hughes' Heloise discovers here how God, by an act of grace, empowers man's will and "draws us to himself against our Wishes." When she cries out for help, however, she is not certain whether her prayer is inspired by God's grace or goaded by despair: "What a Prodigy am I? Enlighten me, O Lord! Does thy Grace or my own Despair draw these words from Me?" (p. 123). Pope's Eloisa echoes this doubt by questioning the source of her own prayer:

Assist me heav'n! but whence arose that pray'r?
Sprung it from piety, or from despair?
(179-80)

Eloisa's question about the source of her prayer must be answered within the context of the traditional Christian understanding of prayer. The ability to pray to God comes as a grace from God to man. Prayer is an act of human will, and thus the power of the will to seek God by prayer comes to man

as a grace from God.²⁴ In contrast to prayer, the state of despair in Christian psychology marks the worst possible estrangement from God--the utter loss of hope in the efficacy of divine mercy. Despair itself becomes a state of sin, for with the loss of hope man suffers the loss of his power to repent and to be forgiven.²⁵ The state of despair defines, in one way, the locus, or mental place, of hell and its tortures. In The Faerie Queene, the Redcross Knight feels the tortures of hell as Despair, "that cursed man," seeks to convince him to commit suicide:

the Miscreaunt

Perceived him to waver, weake and fraile,
 Whiles trembling horror did his conscience daunt,
 And hellish anguish did his soule assaile;
 To drive him to despaire, and quite to quaile,
 Hee shewd him, painted in a table plaine,
 The damned ghosts that doe in torments waile,
 And thousand feends that doe them endlesse paine
 With fire and brimstone, which for ever shall remaine.
 (F.Q. I.ix.49)

And in Paradise Lost, Satan, "rackt with deep despair" (I.126), embodies hell:

Me miserable! which way shall I fly
 Infinite wrath, and infinite despair?
 Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell.
 (IV. 73-5)

In contrast to Satan and his despair, Adam and Eve receive "prevenient grace," the grace which anticipates and empowers repentance:

Thus they in lowliest plight repentant stood
 Praying, for from the Mercy-seat above
 Prevenient Grace descending had remov'd
 The stony from thir hearts, and made new flesh
 Regenerate grow instead, that sighs now breath'd
 Unutterable, which the Spirit of prayer

Inspir'd, and wing'd for Heav'n with speedier flight
Than loudest Oratory . . .

(XI. 1-8)

Eloisa, like Adam and Eve, prays for God's assistance to help her combat her frailties. Her prayer comes from her recognition of her own weakness--a state of self-knowledge which in Christian psychology marks the opening of the way to God. Eloisa's prayer, then, most certainly does not spring from despair, and if it does not spring from her own "piety," it shows nevertheless her will to communicate with God.

In Hughes' translation of the Letters, Abelard agrees with Heloise that, given the fact of human weakness, men must seek assistance from God: "We shall more certainly compass our End [of conquering temptations] by imploring God's Assistance, than by using any Means drawn from our selves" (p. 208). Earlier, Abelard had declared the necessity of divine assistance to free the lovers from the bondage of their sin: "We must have the Assistance of God, that we may break our Chains; we have engaged too deeply in Love, to free our selves" (p. 154). With the assurance that the assistance of divine grace renders the human will efficacious where it once was weak, Abelard exhorts Heloise to resolve to correct the mistakes of their past relationship: "Let us repair, as far as is possible, the Evils we have done . . ." (p. 155).

We have seen earlier in this essay how Pope adapted to his epistle passages on suffering from the letters of Hughes' Abelard. Now we should notice how Pope again borrows from

Hughes' Abelard an intensely dramatic scene in which he creates Elcisa's will to "repair, as far as is possible, the Evils [she has] done."

In Abelard's first letter to Heloise, he describes his own humility as a sinner before God, and confesses his persistent weakness before the temptation of his love for Heloise: "I am a miserable Sinner, prostrate before my Judge, and with my Face pressed to the Earth, I mix my Tears and Sighs in the Dust, when the Beams of Grace and Reason enlighten me. Come, see me in this Posture, and solícite me to love you [.]²⁶ Come, if you think fit, and in your Holy Habit thrust yourself between God and me, and be a Wall of Separation. Come, and force from me those Sighs, Thoughts, and Vows, which I owe to him only. Assist the Evil Spirits, and be the Instrument of their Malice" (p. 144). Shortly after summoning Heloise, Abelard reverses himself and resists the temptation that would separate him from his God: "Let me remove far from you, and obey the Apostle who hath said fly" (p. 146).

Pope adapts Abelard's situation in Hughes' translation of the Letters by responding to a hint in the first letter of Heloise: "Even into holy Places before the Altar I carry with me the Memory of our guilty Loves. They are my whole Business, and far from lamenting for having been seduced, I sigh for having lost them" (p. 175). Pope expands the hint from Heloise with specific details taken from Abelard. In the following lines, Elcisa's visions of Abelard before the

altar interrupt her prayers at Matins and her devotions during the celebration of the Mass. Her visions of Abelard disrupt the formal order of the rituals of devotion to God, and in this way become what Hughes' Abelard called "a Wall of Separation":

What scenes appear where-e'er I turn my view!
 The dear Ideas, where I fly, pursue,
 Rise in the grove, before the altar rise,
 Stain all my soul, and wanton in my eyes!
 I waste the Matin lamp in sighs for thee,
 Thy image steals between my God and me,
 Thy voice I seem in ev'ry hymn to hear,
 With ev'ry bead I drop too soft a tear.
 (263-70)

Eloisa's vision of Abelard's "image" (268), in effect, blots out the image of her suffering God on the Crucifix. The image of Abelard becomes "a Wall of Separation" between Eloisa and the Image of God.

Pope's Eloisa, like Hughes' Abelard, perceives the light of divine grace within her soul when, aware of her sinful submission to temptation during her devotions, she humbles herself in the dust (279). Pope omits Abelard's conjunction of "Grace and Reason" in favor of "dawning grace"---an omission that avoids the blurring of distinctions caused by Hughes' conjunction, and focuses sharply the Christian perspective in which Eloisa to Abelard must be seen and understood. But at the same time that Eloisa perceives the light of grace in her humility, she also summons the tempting vision of Abelard to "oppose thy self to heav'n":

While prostrate here in humble grief I lie,
 Kind, virtuous drops just gath'ring in my eye,
 While praying, trembling, in the dust I roll,

And dawning grace is opening on my soul:
 Come, if thou dar'st, all charming as thou art!
 Oppose thy self to heav'n; dispute my heart!
 Come, with one glance of those deluding eyes,
 Blot out each bright Idea of the skies.
 Take back that grace, those sorrows, and those tears,
 Take back my fruitless penitence and pray'rs,
 Snatch me, just mounting, from the blest abode,
 Assist the Fiends and tear me from my God!
 (277-88)

Pope follows Hughes' Abelard fairly closely in this passage, with one important exception. Hughes' Abelard calls Heloise to be near in her "Holy Habit" (p. 144, quoted above), but this detail forms no part of Eloisa's analogous vision. Only after Eloisa has rejected the temptation of Abelard's opposition to God ("No, fly me, fly me! far as Pole from Pole" [289]) will she summon him to herself in his appropriate "Holy Habit." In a vision of her own future death, Eloisa sees Abelard in the crucial role of a priest administering the last rites and sacrament to her. As a priest, Abelard is the agent of God, and a communicator of God's grace to man. But even within her vision of Abelard as a priest, Eloisa must suppress the recurring temptation of Abelard as a lover who sucks the last breath of her sexual "death":

Thou, Abelard! the last sad office pay,
 And smooth my passage to the realms of the day:
 See my lips tremble, and my eye-balls roll,
 Suck my last breath, and catch my flying soul!
 Ah no--in sacred vestments may'st thou stand,
 The hallow'd taper trembling in thy hand,
 Present the Cross before my lifted eye,
 Teach me at once, and learn of me to die.
 (321-28)

When Eloisa sees Abelard in his "Holy Habit," his "sacred vestments," he does not "blot out" the Image of God from her, and he does not "steal between" her God and herself.

Instead, Abelard now holds the Cross before Eloisa and functions as the means by which she fixes her attention primarily upon the Cross and the love of God that it signifies.

This dramatic scene, which Pope creates from a mere hint in Hughes' translation of the Letters, shows quite literally in its physical configuration that Eloisa no longer diverts her eye from the Cross to Abelard, but keeps the Cross foremost in her devotion. Behind and beneath the Cross, Abelard the man as priest, the agent of God, supports the new order of Eloisa's love--a love that now embraces first God, and then Abelard the sanctified man. In this new hierarchical order of love, Eloisa properly adapts her love for the creature to her devotion to the Creator. Eloisa's vision of Abelard the priest and agent of God marks the most vivid discovery in the poem of what in Hughes' translation of the Letters Heloise called "the wonderful Providence of God, who does all Things for our Sanctification" (p. 125).

NOTES

¹ Lives of the English Poets, ed., George Birkbeck Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), III, 235-36. For a brief history of the lives of Heloise and Abelard, see the Twickenham Edition of The Rape of the Lock and Other Poems, ed. Geoffrey Tillotson, 3rd ed. (London, 1962), pp. 411-13. All quotations from Eloisa to Abelard are taken from this edition, hereafter cited as Twick. Ed.

² See Henry Pettit, "Pope's Eloisa to Abelard: An Interpretation," in University of Colorado Studies: Series in Language and Literature, No. 4 (July 1953), pp. 67-74, especially pp. 73-74; and Thomas R. Edwards, Jr., This Dark Estate: A Reading of Pope (University of California Press, 1963), p. 23. See also Reuben Arthur Brower, Alexander Pope: The Poetry of Allusion (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), pp. 74-84. For a different and more suggestive view, see Brendan P. O Hehir, "Virtue and Passion: The Dialectic of Eloisa to Abelard," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, II (1960), 219-32. After my essay had been written, James E. Wellington, ed., Alexander Pope: Eloisa to Abelard (Miami, Fla., 1965), hereafter cited as Wellington ed., published his view that Eloisa "is one of the poet's personae, an identity created for the purpose of dramatizing truth, rather than a fully individualized creation" (p.60). If Professor Wellington is correct, then Pope's Eloisa and necessarily the whole poem, lacks the integrity of "a fully individualized creation." My essay implicitly seeks to refute Professor Wellington's judgment of Pope's creation.

³ Brower, p. 83.

⁴ For the popularity of Drayton's Englands Heroicall Epistles, see Twick. Ed., p. 294.

⁵ Etienne Gilson, Heloise and Abelard, trans. L. K. Shook (University of Michigan Press, 1960), pp. ix-x.

⁶ Twick. Ed., p. 318.

⁷ Hughes' translation was an immediate success in Pope's time. Four editions had appeared by 1722, and seven by 1743. I quote from the 4th ed., 1722. I retain Hughes' Anglicized spelling "Heloise" to distinguish the person in the medieval letters and their later translations from Pope's Eloisa of his poem. Cf. Twick. Ed., "Note on the Text," p. 315. Part

of Hughes' 1713 translation of the Letters has been reprinted in the Wellington ed., pp. 63 ff. Regrettably, Professor Wellington has chosen to omit all Abelard's letters from his reprinting of Hughes' translation. This omission (cf. Wellington ed., textual note, p. 63) severely limits the utility of his edition and reprinting, for as it will be noted, Pope makes extensive and crucial use of Abelard's letters in his poem. All six letters, as translated by Hughes, are readily available in The Temple Classics Edition, The Love Letters of Abelard and Heloise (London, 1901).

⁸ See Twick. Ed., pp. 295-98; Emile Audra, L'Influence française dans l'oeuvre de Pope (Paris, 1931), pp. 399-426; Robert K. Root, The Poetical Career of Alexander Pope (Princeton, 1938), pp. 94-96; John Joseph Deeney, "A Critical Study of Alexander Pope's Eloisa to Abelard," unpubl. diss. (Fordham, 1961), pp. 1-25; Lawrence S. Wright, "A History of the Letters of Abelard and Heloise in French and English," unpubl. diss. (Harvard, 1930); Wellington ed., pp. 20-24.

⁹ See, for example, Twick. Ed., p. 297, and Wellington ed., pp. 20-24.

¹⁰ Hughes, "Preface," sig. A3v; quoted in Twick. Ed., p. 208.

¹¹ Petri Abaelardi. . . et Heloissae conjugis ejus. . . Opera, 2 vols. (Paris, 1616). Richard Rawlinson's edition of the Latin letters, P. Abaelardi. . . et Heloissae. . . epistolae (London, 1718), was published after Eloisa to Abelard; there is no evidence that Pope saw Rawlinson's edition before publication. Cf. Twick. Ed., p. 298.

¹² Gilson, Heloise and Abelard, p. 96.

¹³ Cf. Abelard in his Historia calamitatum (Letter I): "Wherefore also is it said to Him rightly in all circumstances; 'Thy will be done.'" (trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff [New York, 1926], p. 49). And Heloise (Letter IV): "In whatever little corner of heaven God puts me, that will satisfy me" (trans. H.H.O. Taylor, The Mediaeval Mind, 4th ed. [Cambridge, Mass., 1951], ii, 46).

¹⁴ Roger de Rabutin, Comte de Bussy, Les Lettres de Messire Roger de Rabutin, Comte de Bussy (Paris, 1697).

¹⁵ Twick. Ed., p. 297.

¹⁶ Twick. Ed., p. 295. See Edmund Gosse, "A Nun's Love Letters," Fortnightly Review, new ser., XLIII (1888), 506-17.

17 Audra, L'Influence française, pp. 412-22.

18 See articles, "Abelard," "Heloise," "Foulques," and "Paraclete."

19 N.F. Du Bois, Histoire des amours et infortunes d'Abelard et d'Eloise, avec la traduction des lettres, 5th ed. (The Hague, 1711). Cf. Audra, L'Influence française, p. 417.

20 In Hughes' translation, Heloise and Abelard show their awareness of their sin by invoking an analogy of themselves with Adam and Eve. Heloise writes: "'Twas Woman which threw down the first Man from that Glorious Condition in which Heaven had placed him. She who was created in order to partake of his Happiness, was the sole Cause of his Ruin" (pp. 180-1). Abelard replies: "Such is the Lot of the Posterity of Adam, that they should always have something to suffer, because they have forfeited their Primitive Happiness" (p. 218).

21 My italics.

22 Twick. Ed., p. 308, n. 1; Audra, L'Influence française, pp. 438-9.

23 Cf. Abelard's conviction that he and Heloise "retired from the World to sanctify ourselves. . ." (p. 201).

24 Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologiae, literally translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York, 1947), IIa-IIae, Q. 83, A. 15.

25 Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, Sum. theol. IIa-IIae, Q. 20, AA. 1-3.

26 In Hughes' translation, this sentence concludes with a question mark that distorts its manifest syntax and sense.

CHAPTER II

"REBEL NATURE" AND "GRACE SERENE"

Shortly before the publication of Eloisa to Abelard on June 3, 1717, Pope, in a letter to Martha Blount, seems to refer to the distinctive passional character of his poem:

I am here [no place named] studying ten hours a day, but thinking of you in spite of all the learned. The Epistle of Eloise grows warm, and begins to have some Breathings of the Heart in it, which may make posterity think I was in love.¹

In this letter to a young lady later supposed by some to be his mistress,² Pope seems to recall, from Hughes' translation of the Letters, Abelard's hope that Heloise, when she had received a love letter he had sent to her, "would read with pleasure those Breathings of my heart."³ The echo in Pope's personal correspondence suggests at once his thorough assimilation of Hughes' translation of the Letters and his full response to the passionate love they portray.

As we have seen, Pope responded also (indeed it would have been strange if he had not) to the pervasive religious context enclosing the drama of Heloise and Abelard--a context he developed into a functional and integral part of his poem. The walls of Eloisa's convent cell describe a Christian setting in which her experience and its meaning must be understood. In this chapter, I shall examine the specific

Christian matrix in which appears, as Pope says in the "Argument" prefixed to Eloisa to Abelard, "so lively a picture of the struggles of grace and nature, virtue and passion."⁴ In the four sections that follow, I (1) consider the traditional Christian union of nature and grace, in which context "the struggles of grace and nature" occur; (2) examine briefly various kinds of attacks on this traditional union of grace and nature in the religious milieu of Pope's time; (3) consider Pope's rejection of these contemporary attacks in his Essay on Criticism (1711); and (4) examine some specific passages in Eloisa to Abelard in order to begin to determine the function and meaning of "the struggles of grace and nature, virtue and passion" in the poem.

I

Pope's statement that Eloisa to Abelard shows "the struggles of grace and nature, virtue and passion" falls within the larger traditional Christian context of values apparent throughout the poem. Within this ancient context, men have their nature from God, and, as a consequence, have the alternative and opportunity to orient the dictates of their nature to the order of ethical responsibility and spiritual excellence communicated as law to man from God.

Long before the advent of Christianity, of course, classical writers and teachers vigorously endorsed the idea

of nature as an ethical force. In the Laws, Plato argued that the term "nature" signifies not the first creative power, but that which comes into being as a result of the manifestation of divine reason. Man's soul, like the universe, is a part of a divinely imposed order that must be maintained by the government of reason manifested in ethical discipline.⁵ Although Aristotle employed "nature" as a norm with a complex variety of meaning, in the Nicomachean Ethics he emphasized the capacity of human nature to receive and develop moral virtues: "nature gives us the capacity to receive them, and this capacity is brought to maturity by habit."⁶ Cicero enlarges the concept of the natural capacity for moral virtue in the individual to include a manifest disposition toward moral virtue in the aggregate of individuals of a whole society. In Cicero, nature as a total order of structured creation includes reason that guides the acts of its reasonable creature, man. The structure of reason that man derives from nature Cicero identifies as law--the social dictates of moral virtue.⁷

In Christian philosophy, nature participates in God's Being, and receives a firm basis of justice and law conferred by God.⁸ St. Paul identifies the law inherent in nature when he defends the Gentiles who "do by nature the things contained in the law" (Rom. 2:14).⁹ Later, Clement of Alexandria in his ethical homilies invokes nature as an ethical force that should guide daily human conduct.¹⁰

In the times of the early Latin Church Fathers, the concept of nature infused with moral law appears most fully developed and articulated in the works of St. Augustine, and in The City of God he stresses the goodness of nature. For St. Augustine the angels, and each other kind of creature including man, receive from God a distinct nature that renders them individuals. Each individual nature makes up one part of nature's total hierarchical order of natures, or essences, directed toward a goal ordained by God. Each nature within the hierarchical order retains its original goodness intact until it somehow seeks to operate contrary to the goal for which God has ordained its creation out of nothing. St. Augustine examines the chief among fallen angels, Satan, and accordingly concludes "that the flaw of wickedness is not nature, but contrary to nature, and has its origin, not in the Creator, but in the will."¹¹ Satan's original nature is good because created good by God. Satan's will remains the sole source of his evil, but even this lack of good God uses to effect even greater good.¹² St. Augustine repeats what emerges as a crucial point--all natures created by God are good: ". . . thus there is no being contrary to God, the Supreme Being, and Author of all beings whatsoever."¹³ Even vice, or evil manifest, depends upon some nature in which to exist. Evil has no being in itself, for it is a negation of God's act of creation.¹⁴ Nature, to St. Augustine, does not exist apart from the goodness created in it by God,

and in man the divine source of this goodness of creation becomes manifest in so far as man establishes and maintains a moral order in conjunction with the divine order of nature everywhere apparent.

The goodness of created nature, including man, stems from God's infusing it with law. This law in nature derives from the Creator and in God is simply God Himself. Like God Himself, law is eternal. As communicated in nature, law manifests itself as the natural order and structure of creation, or natural law. In man, this natural law serves as a light from God, and functions as his conscience. The conscience as a natural light from God informs and directs the moral order that man must establish and maintain.¹⁵ The varied commands of man's conscience, then, spring from his nature and the eternal law of God infused therein.

But as St. Augustine makes clear in his description of the human conscience, man must answer the demand of the eternal law as manifested in his conscience by the embrace of his will. As Gilson explains, "Man knows the law. Is he going to will it? Henceforth, that is the question. Everything depends on the decision man will or will not make to allow the order he sees imposed by God on nature to reign within himself."¹⁶ St. Augustine presents this critical issue of human will and its response to the eternal law in his very affirmation of the eternal law in man. No one can claim ignorance of the law in Matt. 7:12 inscribed by God

in all human hearts: "That which to thyself thou wouldest not have done, do not thou to another." Not only do all men know this law by nature, it is written in the Scriptures. But the failure of men to follow this law rests not with any ignorance of it, but their unwillingness to act by it. As St. Augustine insists, "For it was not that they had it not written, but read it they would not."¹⁷ In so far as the human will resists and ignores the natural law of conscience, human sin results.

If, in St. Augustine's psychology, human will were the final and absolute determinant to the possibility of human salvation, man's salvation would be lost in the sinfulness of his fallen state, or his perverse application of his will. After having rejected the demands of conscience, man's natural powers of virtue created in him by God lose much of their efficacy, and would remain helpless to direct man to salvation if God did not grant to men an additional assistance in the form of a wholly gratuitous gift of supernatural grace, in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, that corrects the disorder created by man's will, restores the possibility of merit to human virtue, and redirects man's will to the embrace of eternal law and salvation.¹⁸ In this way, grace does not oppose or defeat nature, but assists and fulfills it.

St. Thomas Aquinas affirms the Augustinian concept of the order of nature. In his account of the creation, St. Thomas concludes that

. . . in natural things species seem to be arranged in degrees; as the mixed things are more perfect than the elements, and plants than minerals, and animals than plants, and men than other animals; and in each of these one species is more perfect than others. Therefore, as the divine wisdom is the cause of the distinction of things for the sake of the perfection of the universe, so is it the cause of inequality. For the universe would not be perfect if only one grade of goodness were found in things.¹⁹

In the hierarchical system of nature, every created being receives from God an essence, or nature, originally good:

". . . thus every actual being is a good, as having a relation to good. For as it has being in potentiality, so has it goodness in potentiality."²⁰ Evil itself cannot be a nature,²¹ and exists only in good as privation of good.²²

Evil occurs only when an individual nature willfully falls short of its created order within the due disposition and end of nature.²³ Nature itself, then stands as an established order, and any deviation or denial of this order constitutes an evil, or privation.

The concept of nature in St. Thomas includes the rule of law by which God governs his creation and its acts.²⁴ The total plan of order by which the universe functions exists in the mind of God as the eternal law.²⁵ As the eternal law participates in the actual workings of created nature, it manifests itself as natural law.²⁶ The natural law therefore appears to man as a reflection of the eternal law,²⁷ and this reflection cannot be effaced from the hearts

of men.²⁸ With the exercise of his reason, man can construct a just system of human law, in so far as his human law receives guidance from the eternal and natural law.²⁹ In order that man may perceive and participate in the eternal and natural law as they direct him to his supernatural end, God gave man the additional direction of divine law, in the revelations of His Old and New Testaments to man.³⁰ Within the structure of these four laws, the eternal, the natural, the human, and the divine, man finds and according to his will may participate in the total order of created nature and its end.

• Active participation in the created order of nature by a human being depends, St. Thomas tells us, upon the conformity of his will to the eternal law, or the will of God.³¹ In order to do this, man finds it necessary to place his will under the direction of his intellect and reason which stand as the natural manifestations of the eternal law in man.³² Human conscience contains the precepts of natural law in the mind of man, although conscience may be laid aside.³³ The power of the human intellect and will determine human moral acts, and these acts constitute the human means by which man wins or loses his salvation.³⁴

St. Thomas concludes his volume (Sum. theol., Ia-IIae) on the analysis of human action, including the human will, with a statement on the role of divine grace. Without this conclusion to the volume, his analysis of human acts would be

incomplete and therefore unintelligible.³⁵ Similar to St. Augustine, St. Thomas distinguishes between the powers created in man, in human nature, by the original gift of God,³⁶ called sanctifying grace, and the special gift of actual, or gratuitous, grace that man needs to implement and use his original natural gifts.³⁷ Actual grace then is not contranatural in any sense, but manifestly supernatural as an added gift of power from God to man. The very action of actual grace bears directly on the natural human intellect and will by which man must seek his own salvation.³⁸ Man himself becomes the chief focus of the harmony of grace and nature for, in the words of an eminent theologian, "he is the image of God by his nature and the son of God by divine grace."³⁹

Richard Hooker, writing from within a vast interconnection of the classical, patristic, and scholastic traditions, defends the episcopacy of the 16th century Church of England by explaining in detail how the laws of church and state government are derived from the natural law and the eternal law of God. Hooker's famous articulation of the operation of eternal God on temporal nature clearly affirms the vital linkage between God and his creation: "his commanding these things to be which are, and to be in such sort as they are, to keep that tenure and course which they do, importeth the establishment of nature's law. This world's first creation, and the preservation since of things created, what is it but only so far forth a manifestation by

execution; what the eternal law of God is concerning things natural?"⁴⁰ For Hooker, the law of God is written in hearts of men as "the universal law of mankind, the law of Reason; whereby they judge as by a rule which God hath given unto all men for that purpose."⁴¹ What God has inscribed in human hearts, man may discover as natural law, if he will only seek it.⁴² The law that men may find in their hearts, the law of reason, should move their wills to seek in all human actions "the utmost good and greatest perfection whereof Nature hath made it capable."⁴³ In this way, Hooker sees man directed by natural law, "the universal law of mankind," originating from the eternal law of God at creation, to rectify his own actions in order to effect (in so far as possible by human means) his own salvation. Since these human means to salvation spring from a natural law in all mankind, Hooker calls them natural: "Our natural means therefore unto blessedness are our works; nor is it possible that Nature should ever find any other way to salvation than only this."⁴⁴

But Hooker immediately develops the weakness of human works before the judgment of God.⁴⁵ Human will itself remains demonstrably unable to choose consistently the greater good before the lesser.⁴⁶ Failure in this fundamental kind of choice immerses man and his efforts willfully in sin "which cannot be done without the singular disgrace of Nature, and the utter disturbance of that divine order."⁴⁷ In the face of the fact of human sin, human salvation can be effected only by supernatural assistance of divine grace:

There resteth therefore either no way unto salvation, or if any, then surely a way which is supernatural, a way which could never have entered into the heart of man as much as once to conceive or imagine, if God himself had not revealed it extraordinarily. For which cause we term it the Mystery or secret way of salvation.⁴⁸

Hooker sees the fact of human sin not simply as the weakness of nature in man, but the occasion of God's grace of compassion and redemption to man.⁴⁹

Later, in the seventeenth century, latitudinarian and conservative churchmen alike reasserted the need of nature, human nature, for the revelation and assistance of divine grace. For instance, Isaac Barrow, whose works Pope included in his own library,⁵⁰ recognized in human nature the continuing need for grace, "the immense goodness and pity" of God that rescues man from his fallen state by the gift of Christ:

Almighty God, seeing the generality of mankind alienated from Himself by gross ignorance of its duty toward Him, and by habitual inclinations to violate His holy laws (originally implanted by Him in our nature, or anciently revealed to our first parents), immersed in error, enslaved to vice, and obnoxious to the woeful consequences of them, severe punishment and extreme misery, was pleased in His immense goodness and pity to design its rescue from that sad condition. . . .⁵¹

The inability of nature alone to achieve union with Christ forms the key argument of Archbishop John Tillotson's sermon on "The Necessity of Supernatural Grace, in order to [lead] a Christian Life." Under the running title "The grace of Christ given to relieve and assist nature," Tillotson

argues the weakness of man within the traditional Christian doctrine of nature dependent on divine grace:

Whatever natural power we have to do any thing, is from God, and an effect of his Goodness; but God considering the lapsed and decayed condition of Mankind, sent his Son into the World, to recover us out of that sinful and miserable condition into which we were fallen. . . . And this supernatural Grace of Christ is that alone, which can enable us to perform what he requires of us.⁵²

In this sermon "the strength of evil Habits," or our human nature's inveterate inclination to rebel against God, requires "supernatural Grace and Assistance for our recovery."⁵³

In two Whitsunday sermons "of the Spirit of Grace," Jeremy Taylor also examines the relationship of nature and grace, and describes the way by which grace may draw "rebel nature" in man into a new and rectified order with God. Taylor contrasts fallen nature in man, "the loosenesses of nature,"⁵⁴ with the rectified nature of man infused by the Holy Spirit, and shows that "while the Spirit dwells in us, we cannot sin; that is, it is against our natures, our reformed natures, to sin."⁵⁵ Endowed with the Spirit of Grace, man cannot sin "without great trouble . . . without doing violence to his nature. . . . Every sin is against a good man's nature."⁵⁶ Taylor illuminates this rectified nature given to man by grace in his explication of 2 Peter 1: 3-4:

his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us

exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature
 . . .

Taylor argues the adaptability of human nature to be partakers of divine nature by grace, and that "this new and godlike nature [is] given to every person that serves God, whereby he is sanctified . . . The Greeks generally call this [charisma] , 'a gracious gift,' an extraordinary superaddition to nature. . ."⁵⁷ And Robert South (1663-1716), Prebendary of Westminster, in another Whitsunday sermon, celebrates "God's gracious love and condescension to man"⁵⁸ in the Pentecost, for, he states:

It was an action that carried in it such bright testimonies of a supernatural power, so much above, may against the means and actors visibly appearing in it; that I know no argument from metaphysics or natural philosophy, that to my reason proves the existence of a Deity more fully than the consideration of this prodigious revolution.⁵⁹

Although we should not neglect the theological differences that distinguish, for instance, Hooker from Aquinas, or Barrow from South, nevertheless the Christian philosophers briefly reviewed display a common and enduring commitment to the view that the order of nature is created, sustained, and complemented by the supernatural grace of God. Nature, although involved in man's first disobedience, does not maintain its radical opposition to God, but through the Redemption of man by Christ becomes oriented to a new destiny given by grace.

The harmony of grace and nature in the writers reviewed

implies a meaningful coherence to human endeavor and purpose in the search for unity with God. It implies, indeed, that in traditional Christian psychology the passions and virtue function as unified powers of the soul.⁶⁰ Man experiences not only a variety of passions, but also (as we have seen above) a moral conscience infused by God,⁶¹ and a will capable of implementing the directives of that conscience.⁶² The passions, or the sensual appetite, are not basically sinful in Christian psychology; rather when guided by the moral conscience and directed by the will, the passions can lead man to embrace a known good, which constitutes the traditional Christian definition of virtue.⁶³

As Robert South indicated in his sermon above, supernatural power may act "against," or in opposition to, "the means," or ability and will, of human beings. In this sense, perhaps, we can see that "the struggles of grace and nature" in Pope's Eloisa to Abelard do not necessarily preclude or refute the possibility of their enduring union. Indeed, Eloisa, while intensely suffering in sin and despair in what she sees as Hell, passionately experiences and receives (entirely gratuitously) the first motions of grace healing her sin-torn soul. The passions, morally guided by grace, thus seem essential to achieve what Pope, in a later poem, calls "The first, last purpose of the human soul": the restored harmonious union of grace and nature in "LOVE of GOD, and LOVE of MAN."⁶⁴

II

Against the background of the traditional Christian harmony of nature and grace, we now may focus more sharply certain important developments in the religious milieu of Pope's Augustan England. In this way, we may see Eloisa to Abelard in the full perspective of its relationship to ancient Christian tradition and the state of these traditions in Augustan England.

The history of Augustan Christianity has undergone modification and reinterpretation by scholars in our century. Students of 18th century cultural and religious history no longer remain content with neat generalizations about the "languid" Augustan age.⁶⁵ To Thomas Carlyle the history of 18th century Christianity culminated in "an age fallen languid, destitute of faith and terrified at skepticism."⁶⁶ The severe spiritual impotence attributed by Carlyle to late 18th century Christianity now seems less applicable to the intellectual milieu of any part of the 18th century than it once did. Instead, the history of Augustan Christianity reveals, as Roland Stromberg has shown, a vigorous and vital age in which evidence of genuine Christian commitment emerges from much of the abundant contemporary theological controversy:

It is common to meet the opinion that religion fell into sad decay in England's Augustan age, the victim of complacency and materialism. There is indeed evidence to support this view. Much of it, however, requires criticism and careful weighing; and when we are done, our judgment must be that this age was, in its own way, deeply

concerned with religion. How, otherwise, are we to account for the vast body of religious literature produced, and for the great interest religious questions aroused? It will be our thesis that this spate of theological disputation, far from being wholly inconsequential, was actually interesting and important; that the years between 1690 and 1740 were in fact years of crisis in the religious foundations of Western civilization. They were years not so much of languid doubt as of critical tension.⁶⁷

If, as Stromberg suggests, the widespread theological disputes signal a vigorous commitment to the defense of traditional Christianity, we must not lose our focus on the source of the profound religious crisis in the Augustan age: the widespread religious discontent of the age, and the major issues at the heart of this discontent.

During the first half of these years of religious crisis, Pope developed his poetic genius; and if we remember Pope's characteristic passionate sensitivity to the contemporary state of art, learning, and morals as shown in his Essay on Criticism (1711), we should be surprised if he, the poet who wrote the Messiah: A Sacred Eclogue (1712), failed to be alert to the religious milieu of his own times. In the midst of this crisis, perhaps not wholly by coincidence, he wrote and published in 1717 Eloisa to Abelard,⁶⁸ a poem concerned, we have seen in Chapter I, with the intertwining of human and supernatural values, of nature and grace.

Within Augustan Christianity, five basic issues principally bear on the relevance of the traditional

Christian supernatural mysteries to the individual Christian and his salvation: (1) the Socinian, or Unitarian, movement; (2) the Arian heresy; (3) the Arminian movement; (4) the new emphasis on natural religion; and (5) the growth of increasingly secular and materialistic concepts of human psychology. The religious crisis of the Augustan age seems to have stemmed from the way these five kinds of dispute stimulated, on the one hand, the growth of skepticism, or perhaps simple unconcern, about the importance, and in many cases the very existence, of the traditional Christian mysteries. On the other hand, as a reaction to the growth of skepticism, a resultant uneasy feeling seemed to grow among believers that the mysteries somehow required defense and justification.

The Socinian-Unitarian movement, widely influential in 17th and 18th century England, contested the traditional Anglican and Roman Catholic concept of Deity.⁶⁹ The opening sentence of Stephen Nye's summary and defense of Socinian doctrine in his anonymously published tract, A Brief History of the Unitarians, Called also Socinians, 2nd ed. (London, 1691), clearly states "their doctrine concerning God":

They affirm, God is only One Person, not Three. They make our Lord Christ to be the Messenger, Minister, Servant, and Creature of God; they confess he is also the Son of God, because he was begotten on Mary by the Spirit or Power of God, Luke I. 35. But they deny that he or any other Person but the Father (the God and Father of the said our Lord Jesus Christ) is God Almighty and Eternal. The Holy Ghost, or Spirit, according to them, is the Power and Inspiration of God, Luke I. 35.⁷⁰

For the doctrine of the Trinity, the Socinians could find no text in the Scriptures to support it. The Trinity "is contrary to the whole Scripture, which speaks of God as but one Person; and speaks of him and to him by singular Pronouns, such as I, Thou, Me, Him, &c. which are never used but of single Persons."⁷¹ Moreover, the Socinians found the doctrine of the Trinity inadequate when examined under the light of human reason. Nye argues that "Our Lord Christ is by the sacred Writers, so distinguished from, and opposed to God that it amounts to as much as an express denial that he is God. Nothing that is God can be distinguished from, or opposed to God; for Distinction and Opposition suppose Diversity."⁷² As Mr. McLachlan summarizes, "At the bar of reason, too, [the doctrine of the Trinity] utterly failed to convince: three persons in one substance were an impossibility of thought. The doctrine seemed, in fact, a metaphysical labyrinth, out of which it was impossible to find one's way. Moreover, to make man's salvation depend upon so abstruse a teaching, which had no practical significance for the Christian life, was absurd. Its place was therefore taken by the doctrine of the Unipersonality of God and its natural corollary the humanity of Christ."⁷³ The doctrines of Socinus (Fausto Sozzini [1539-1604], following his uncle Lelio Sozzini [1525-62]), contested directly against the mysteries of Christ, and Nye echoes this doctrine when he specifies Christ as merely the "Creature of God." As Robert South stated in a sermon defending the mysteries of

the deity of Christ: "Socinus held that he was a mere man, and had no subsistence or being at all, till such a time as he was conceived by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary."⁷⁴

The Socinian attack on the divine nature of Christ led, inevitably it would seem, to a radical dispute on the traditional Christian concept of the Atonement. "Here," Mr. McLachlan argues, "Socinus most clearly revealed his controlling ethical interest. . . . Socinus argued that the work of Christ was to make a new moral impression upon mankind, to influence men not God. Moreover, the condition of God's forgiveness of sins was not punishment but repentance. In this as elsewhere [Socinus] laid great stress upon the prophetic function of Christ: pre-eminently the Revealer rather than the Reconciler."⁷⁵ Christ as Revealer must have men able to receive and embrace his message of God's will. In the Socinian doctrine, natural man therefore preserves a potential capability of moral perfection free from any taint or disability of original sin. The Socinians "promulgated a new conception of the Christian religion as primarily the saving knowledge of God, mediated through Christ, which gives to men eternal life. To learn God's will, as it is revealed by Christ, and to obey it is the sum and substance of the Christian life."⁷⁶ In another Socinian tract, Brief Notes on the Creed of St. Athanasius, the anonymous author stressed moral conduct rather than theological dogma: "a good life is of absolute necessity to salvation, but a right belief in those

points that have always been controverted . . . is in no degree necessary."⁷⁷ The Socinian revision of Christian theology, whatever auspicious effects it had on the growth of religious toleration in the 17th and 18th centuries,⁷⁸ clearly undermined the Christ-centered structure of the traditional Christian mysteries. As Roland Stromberg points out, "the making of Christ a creature displaces the vital emphasis from faith to works, from salvation by divine grace to salvation by worthy conduct."⁷⁹ High-churchman Robert South, in effect, doubted the efficacy of the Socinians to maintain any high degree of "a good life," for he saw their doctrine as motivated by pride:

The Socinians, indeed, who would obtrude upon the world (and of late more daringly than ever) a new Christianity of their own inventing, will admit of nothing mysterious in this religion, nothing which the natural reason of man can not have a clear and comprehensive perception of: and this not only in defiance of the express words of scripture, so frequently and fully affirming the contrary, but also of the constant, universal sense of all antiquity, unánimously confessing an incomprehensibility in many of the articles of the Christian faith. So that these bold persons stand alone by themselves, upon a new bottom, and an upstart principle, not much above a hundred years old, spitting upon all antiquity before them; and . . . are the only sect of men in the world who ever pretended to set up or own a religion without out either a mystery or a sacrifice belonging to it.⁸⁰

The Socinian dismissal of Christian mysteries remains for South not only contrary to Christian Scriptures, but also contrary to Christian morals. The Socinian controversy continued into the early 18th century, and in 1715 Stephen Nye, no longer

obliged to publish his tracts anonymously, summarized the anti-Trinitarian doctrine in The Explication of the Articles of the Divine Unity, the Trinity, and Incarnation.

In some points similar to the protracted Socinian controversy on the doctrine of the Trinity, the Arian movement against the doctrine of the Trinity gained impetus in the early 18th century. This heresy centered attention on negating the mysterious doctrine of the person of Christ, and sought to justify naturalistic conclusions very similar to those already outlined above in Nye's Brief History of the Unitarians. The principal spokesmen for the Arian heresy in Pope's time were William Whiston and Samuel Clarke. Clarke, famous for his Boyle Lectures on the Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God (1704), affirmed in a new book, The Scripture-doctrine of the Trinity (1712), the subordination of Christ to God the Father, to whom alone belonged worship as a divine being. Clarke rejected as spurious all worship of the Holy Spirit, which he saw subordinate to Christ as well as the Father. Clarke's Arianism, therefore, reinforced the Socinian attacks on the mystery of the Trinity, and advocated its replacement by a more rational concept of Deity.⁸¹

Arminianism, the third basic revision of the supernatural content of Augustan Christianity that we shall examine, became so widespread in Pope's time that it emerges as "not heresy but orthodoxy."⁸² The teachings of Jacobus Arminius (Jacob Harmensen, 1560-1609), the Dutch Remonstrant,

sought to mitigate the concept of human depravity in the doctrine of original sin by reviving, not unlike Socinus, a new realization of what he saw as man's free moral excellence. He emphasized mediation between the mutually opposed doctrines of free will and predestination, potential human moral excellence and necessary human depravity.⁸³ But instead of maintaining a mediatory position, 17th and 18th century English Arminians in practice drew closer to an unqualified embrace of faith in man's salvation by moral excellence alone--a faith in Christianity as primarily an ethical religion and moral code.

Augustan Arminianism in practice, then, emerged as a neo-Pelagianism, "the classic example of a Christianity stressing God too little and man too much."⁸⁴ Like the Socinians, the Arminians minimized the importance of Christ as the Reconciler between God and man, and weakened the traditional Christian doctrine of the Atonement by hinging human salvation upon a supposed human potential for moral excellence. In a revival of the doctrines of Pelagius, the British theologian active during the first quarter of the 5th century in Rome, the Augustan Socinians and Arminians reasserted the conviction against which St. Augustine toiled vigorously--that men can achieve their own salvation without the aid of divine grace.

In the Arminian and Socinian doctrines, man appears as a creature whose salvation rests largely within the efficacy of his own human spirit and its process of ethical

self-development. Living by a moral code, man acts in the world without the crippling stigma and depravity of original sin. The Arminian and Socinian rejection of the doctrine of original sin points to the heart of their dispute with traditional Christianity--the problem of evil.⁸⁵ To the Arminians and Socinians, man under the curse of original sin seems doomed fatalistically to immersion in evil by the very nature of his creation. Since man's creation obviously must have been a divine act, the Arminians and Socinians reasoned to their own satisfaction that the doctrine of original sin implied that God created man evil. Their rejection of the doctrine of original sin permitted them to find and identify the source of evil where they sought it: not in a naturally imperfect man, but in man's supposed neglect of the basic code of moral conduct revealed in the Scriptures.

If evil springs from man's neglect of a moral code, then the means leading to the conquest of evil become clear: man must rectify himself by ethical perseverance in the fulfillment of the moral code previously neglected. His salvation, therefore, depends not upon supernatural mysteries like the Atonement and divine grace, but upon human ethical perseverance and perfection.

The same overriding desire to shift the efficacy, and meaning, of human salvation from God to man, from mystery to morality, generates the fourth basic dispute within Augustan Christianity: the new emphasis, and

direction, given to natural religion. Traditionally a vital part of Christian devotion in writings of the early Church Fathers, the medieval theologians, and the Renaissance and seventeenth century churchmen, Protestant and Roman Catholic alike, natural religion in Christian theology at once complemented and led to the truths men learned from revealed religion. One of the most famous and influential perceptions of natural religion occurs in Book X of St. Augustine's Confessions. Retracing one of the paths by which he sought and found God, St. Augustine begins with a search for God throughout nature and its creatures, all of whom gratefully and humbly direct the seeker and point above into Heaven to their great Maker. By following their directions, St. Augustine begins his ascent through nature up to God.

A similar traditional progress through created nature to discover God functions vitally as the structural center of one of the most popular books of Pope's time, Defoe's Robinson Crusoe (1719). After having been "Delivered Wonderfully from Sickness," Crusoe reflects on the order and cause of recent events, and arrives at conclusions he never before discovered:

What is this earth and sea, of which I have seen so much? Whence is it produced? And what am I and all the other creatures, wild and tame, human and brutal whence are we?

Sure we are all made by some secret Power who formed the earth and sea, the air and sky; and who is that?

Then it followed most naturally, It is God that has made it all. Well, but then, it came on strangely, if God has made all these things, He guides and governs them all and all things that

concern them; for the Power that could make all things must certainly have power to guide and direct them.

If so, nothing can happen in the great circuit of His works either without His knowledge or appointment.

And if nothing happens without His knowledge, He knows that I am here and am in this dreadful condition; and if nothing happens without His appointment, He has appointed all this to befall me.⁸⁶

Although obviously dissimilar in some important respects, these writers saw natural religion as a complement to revealed religion. Natural religion led the Christian to another vantage point from which he then could see in a new perspective the revealed nature of divine creation, and the position and duty of men contained and sustained within it.

But in the late 17th century and the early 18th century, many writers placed an emphasis on the concept of natural religion entirely different from that in St. Augustine, or in Defoe, who leads Crusoe on a mind's ascent to God. Instead of finding in natural religion a complement to revealed and mysterious Christianity, writers like John Toland (1670-1722), for example, asserted the self-sufficiency of natural religion as opposed to what they saw as the unreliability and superfluity of revealed religion. Natural religion became not an illuminating path leading to a bright vision of the transcendent and omnipotent Christian God, but a rationale aimed at the total exclusion of transcendent religion from serious human thought. The newly emphasized rationale of natural

religion sought to demonstrate the irrelevance of traditional Christian mysteries which were seen to be mere "superstition." The aim of deism, the common name given to a wide spectrum of commitments within natural religion,⁸⁷ was to "banish mysteries, miracles, and secrets from religion and to expose religion to the light of knowledge. Toland's book Christianity Not Mysterious (1696 [English ed., 1702]) describes in its title the theme which hereafter appears over and over again in the writings of the deistic movement."⁸⁸ Basing his argument on Lockean theories of knowledge and Locke's Reasonableness of Christianity (1695). Toland contends that when we speak of "mysteries" in religion we only mark the relative limits of our human knowledge at the time of our speaking. Any kind of "revelation" about mysteries becomes, to Toland, but one more form of communication whose verity must still be tested and proved on the anvil of human reason.⁸⁹

The effect of deistic probings into the nature and validity of traditional Christian theology amplified, it would seem, the force of similar Socinian and Arminian disputes. Despite the widely varied differences within these revisionist doctrines, they spoke as one in their attack on traditional Christian doctrines of revelation, mystery, and divine grace. These attacks moved and disturbed contemporaries deeply: we may take Swift's Tale of a Tub (1704) as a vigorous testimony, from an Anglican point of view, of the eruptive and divisive state of Augustan Christianity. Swift

saw the whole fabric of English Christianity torn and unravelled by the factious self-interest of many of its adherents. In a later ironic essay, An Argument Against the Abolishing of Christianity in England (1711), Swift starkly characterizes the English as a people utterly devoid of real Christian or religious values of any kind in all spheres of their lives. To many Augustan Christians who opposed the rationalistic attacks on revelation, mystery, and divine grace, the issue at stake involved no less than the image of man before his God.

The attempt to erase mysteries and miracles from religion must, as Swift saw, involve a radical dislocation in moral values nourished by the beliefs in which they have their roots. The 17th century revival of the ancient physical concept of materialism seemed to invite, if not accomplish, this kind of radical dislocation of moral values, for in this concept human nature appeared easily reduced to its physical and material necessities.⁹⁰

If human nature were essentially materialistic, then the moral condition of individual and social life oriented to a supernatural deity becomes superfluous and irrelevant. We know, as Pope undoubtedly knew, that in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, from the publication of Thomas Hobbes' Leviathan (1651) to Bernard Mandeville's Grumbling Hive; or Knives Turned Honest (1705) and The Fable of the Bees; or Private Vices Public Benefits (1714), influential writers adopted an increasingly secular and materialistic

concept of human nature and psychology.⁹¹ Man, in Hobbes and Mandeville, appears little distinguished from brute animals; the difference stands more as one of degree than one of kind.⁹² In Mandeville's Grumbling Hive, the infusion of moral virtues into individuals of a society stifles commerce and industry which are sustained by desire for material luxury. Moral virtues appear, therefore, not only irrelevant, but also unnatural and destructive to human society, as we might suppose them to be in the animal kingdom. In An Enquiry Into the Origin of Moral Virtue, Mandeville's description of human pride demands the reader to accept pride as an imperfection of all animals:

As in all Animals that are not too imperfect to discover Pride, we find, that the finest and such as are the most beautiful and valuable of their kind, have generally the greatest Share of it; so in Man, the most perfect of Animals, it is so inseparable from his very Essence.⁹³

Mandeville then argues in his Enquiry how moral virtue in man springs from the insatiable desire for flattery of his pride. Citing the great example of moral virtue in classical Greece and Rome, Mandeville insists

we shall find, that what carried so many of them to the utmost Pitch of Self-denial, was nothing but their Policy in making use of the most effectual Means that human Pride could be flatter'd with.⁹⁴

In Mandeville's view of human nature, moral virtues then stand divorced from religious foundations, and ethics as a discipline becomes effectively explained away. Man reduced to a mere animal has no effective conception of ethical conduct separate from his desire for flattery and

effusive praise:

It is visible then that it was not any Heathen Religion or other Idolatrous Superstition, that first put Man upon crossing his Appetites and subduing his dearest Inclinations, but the skilful Management of wary Politicians; and the nearer we search into human Nature, the more we shall be convinced, that the Moral Virtues are the Political Offspring which Flattery begot upon Pride.⁹⁵

Ethics and religion lose their independence and become in Mandeville, as in Hobbes,⁹⁶ mere extensions of human desire. To Mandeville, the satisfaction of egocentric desire alone moves the human world, and moves the world not as a means to an end greater than the immediate object of physical desire, but to the object itself as sole end. Man, like other animals, appears driven by egocentric desires that have no relevance to the ideal ethical standards imposed in human nature by religion. The human passions, therefore, in their origin, function, and operation, become bound solely to the necessities of man's physical nature. Mandeville's view of human nature emptied the word "virtue" of its meaning and significance. No human action could manifest virtue, or be motivated by it, for, in the materialist view, man sought only to gratify selfishly the demands of his animal desires. Virtue as an ideal goal of human achievement became less meaningful and relevant to the study of human nature. Virtue seemed to have little place in a system, like Hobbes' or Mandeville's, built on an essentially brutal and egoistic psychology of man.

Although hardly a homogeneous "school," the libertines

of Restoration England, as their popular name suggests, frequently endorsed a materialistic and hedonistic view of human nature. The materialism of the 17th century libertines stressed a need for the absolute freedom and full satisfaction of the primitive physical appetites and passions so prominently a part of human nature.⁹⁷ John Oldham presents in a monologue a libertine's view of sensuous human nature in his Satyr against Vertue (1674). Oldham's libertine asserts that man's perverse will to submit to self-enslavement caused the loss of his "Primitive liberty." As a result, the mere "Brutes" now live more happily than men because they follow "the great Rule of sense," the rule of the physical appetites. "The great Rule of sense" remains reliable for man because innate to human nature as well as "the Brutes." For this reason, Oldham's libertine sees the demands of the physical appetites as a natural directive for man, his "First Charter."

John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, in his famous Satyr against Mankind (1675), makes a similar comparison of the happiness of men in a civilization of religion and law with the unencumbered happiness of animals. From this comparison, Rochester then concludes, not unlike Hebbes and Mandeville, with an affirmation of man's depravity manifested by his enduring knavery:

Be judge your self, I'll bring it to the Test,
Which is the basest Creature, Man, or Beast:
Birds feed on Birds, Beast on each other prey;
But savage Man alone, does Man betray.
Prest by Necessity, They kill for Food;
Man undoes Man, to do himself no good.⁹⁸
(127-32)

Even when man claims the performance of a virtuous act,
Rochester discovers selfish motives for it:⁹⁹

The Good he acts, the Ill he does endure,
'Tis all from Fear, to make himself secure.
Meerly for safety, after Fame they thirst,
For all Men would be Cowards if they durst:
And Honesty's against all common sense--
Men must be Knaves; 'tis in their own defence,
Mankind's dishonest . . .

(155-61)

Rochester undercuts man's pretension to virtue by showing human motivation to be essentially brutal and selfish. In place of the dishonest pretense to virtue, Rochester advocated, earlier in the poem, "right reason," which he defines as radically opposed to mere speculation. Rochester's "right reason" consists of an immediate response by the will to satisfy the demands of the physical senses:

Thus whilst against false reas'ning I inveigh,
I own right Reason, which I would obey;
That Reason which distinguishes by Sense,
And gives us rules of good and ill from thence;
That bounds Desires with a reforming Will
To keep them more in vigour, not to kill.

(98-103)

In Rochester's psychology of man, "right reason" becomes a kind of directive conscience for the will, but a conscience whose knowledge of good extends only as far as the physical appetite.

Against the background of the influential revival of the materialist view of human nature, Pope's concern in Eloisa to Abelard with the struggles of "virtue and passion" should appear in new depth and dimension. The use of the passions and the very existence of human virtue were by no

means clear across the wide and variegated spectrum of Augustan thought: opposing the revival of the materialist view of human passion, the neo-stoic ethic, widely prevalent in the 17th century,¹⁰⁰ defined the human passions as destructive and evil in themselves, and advocated the full suppression of the passions as indispensable to human happiness. The Hobbesian materialists and the Calvinists, although mutually opposed on many key issues of "grace and nature," appear to support one another in their advocacy of the effective suppression of man's selfish passions. The Hobbesian and Calvinist insistence on man's innate selfishness came under vigorous attack from the latitudinarian divines of the late 17th century, who, as a corollary to their moralistic theology examined above as Arminianism, conceived human nature to be instinctively benevolent toward others, and who saw the passions, not as merely destructive and selfish compulsions, but as the very means by which man engages and manifests his innate compassion for others.¹⁰¹ With a more frankly secular interest than the latitudinarian divines, Shaftesbury, in his Inquiry concerning Virtue (1699), and other moralists of the early 18th century emphasized a human psychology in which the passions augment and implement the innate benevolence of man.¹⁰² Also, radically opposed to those who would suppress the passions, the 17th century libertines, on the other hand, advocated the uninhibited gratification of the physical passions as the sole path to human happiness,¹⁰³ and became notorious by their practical

application of their philosophy of pleasure to their own lives.

III

If we turn, now, to Pope's specific response to the revisionist doctrines outlined above, we see that in the Essay on Criticism (1711), he describes the era of modern England as "these Flagitious Times" (529). He begins his review of modern English cultural history with the surfeit of sensual pleasures during the reign of Charles II:

In the fat Age of Pleasure, Wealth, and Ease,
Sprung the rank Weed, and thriv'd with large
Increase;
When Love was all an easie Monarch's Care;
Seldom at Council, never in a War;
Jilts rul'd the State, and Statesmen Farces writ;
Nay Wits had Pensions, and young Lords had Wit:
The Fair sate parting at a Courtier's Play,
And not a Mask went un-improv'd away:
The modest Fan was lifted up no more,
And Virgins smil'd at what they blush'd before--
(534-43)

In the familiar metaphor of the kingdom as a garden,¹⁰⁴ Pope emphasizes the laxity of Charles II's "easie" cultivation: "Love," not labor, was all his "Care." His "Love" permitted "large Increase,"¹⁰⁵ but the growth nourished "In the fat Age of Pleasure" was obnoxious and unhealthy, "a rank Weed."

Pope evokes in the passage above the well-known contemporary image of Charles II as the royal patron and exemplar of a licentious court of notorious libertines.

allowed to expire under the influence of the Dutch Protestant King William III: ". . . the Licensing Act was finally allowed to expire in the more liberal age ushered in by the Revolution [of 1688] . After 1696 an Englishman was permitted to print and publish whatever he chose, without consulting any authority in Church or State . . ."107

The expiration of government restriction of the press permitted the publication of numerous Socinian tracts and other kinds of revisionist works summarized earlier in this chapter.¹⁰⁸ Pope's judgment of these works is clear enough: the revisionist works, although "Licenc'd", were still "Blasphemies" (553) which England was encouraged to drink intemperately to the very "dregs of bold Socinus" (545).

The terminal punctuation at line 543 in the Essay on Criticism, a dash, would seem to suggest a continuity, rather than a division, between the Restoration England of Charles II (534-43) and the reign of William III and Mary (544-53). Each of the two periods of late 17th century English history, as Pope conceives them, seems permeated with "Licence," a looseness of moral standards. On the basis of their qualitative similarity, Pope suggests not only a temporal continuity in history, but also a kind of moral continuity between the two periods.¹⁰⁹ Although Pope does not specify their exact causal relationship, the moral "Licence" of one age seems to follow directly upon the moral "Licence" of the last, and the cultural milieu of each age produces "Monsters" (554).

In this passage from the Essay on Criticism, Pope links the hedonist material values endorsed by a dissolute court with the weakening faith in the relevance of supernatural mysteries to human values and acts encouraged by Socinian and related revisionist theological doctrines. Churchmen themselves embraced and encouraged material values by seeking easier ways to "Salvation" (547) and by flattering vice, rather than offending it (550-1). Pope condemns the endorsement of material values in search of pleasurable goals instead of the embrace of supernatural and spiritual values in search of moral goals. The issue at the heart of Pope's condemnation appears none other than the issue examined earlier in this chapter: the relationship of nature to supernature. In the Essay on Criticism, he exposes the debility of recent English society and morals as the result of the bifurcation of nature and supernature in the morals of the court and the doctrines of the Church. It would appear, then, that Eloisa to Abelard was not Pope's first engagement of the issue of nature and supernature, nature and grace.

IV

A common misconception of the function and meaning of "nature" in Pope's Eloisa to Abelard often has impeded the clear understanding of the poem's issues. Specifically, the impediment usually consists of an over-simplified assumption

that nature everywhere in Eloisa to Abelard stands unalterably opposed and recalcitrant to grace. This assumption signals a misapplication of the introduction Pope supplies his reader in the "Argument" prefixed to the poem. When Pope alerts us to "the struggles of grace and nature, virtue and passions," he directs our attention to the outlines of the poem's drama; he does not present us in any sense with a complete statement of the poem's meaning. He offers us a hint, or a guidepost, to the important dramatic issues to follow, and places Eloisa's letter in a traditional Christian context of the order between nature and grace, between the natural and the supernatural, and between man and God.

The "struggles of grace and nature" in Eloisa to Abelard appear vividly described in the conflict revealed in the very opening lines of the poem. Eloisa's surging desires for Abelard clearly show nature, as manifested in her undisciplined impulses, opposed to her commitment to God and the grace He offers. But more than this (which probably few readers have missed), the conflict between grace and nature in the opening lines of the poem specifies Eloisa's deep isolation, "In these deep solitudes and awful cells" (1), from fulfillment of her loves, the human love she retains for Abelard, as well as the love of God she seeks:

In these deep solitudes and awful cells,
Where heav'nly-pensive, contemplation dwells,
And ever musing melancholy reigns;

What means this tumult in a Vestal's veins?
 Why rove my thoughts beyond this last retreat?
 Why feels my heart its long-forgotten heat?
 Yet, yet I love!--From Abelard it came,
 And Eloisa yet must kiss the name.

(1-8)

Eloisa's desperate outcry at the very beginning of her letter springs from the severe anguish she suffers all the more intensely for her ability to perceive its exquisite and apparently irresolvable complication. Immured from human society as a Vestal consecrated to the service of God, she perceives the physical "tumult" and "heat" that drive her "thoughts" away from her convent cell to "rove" in search of human society in the person of Abelard. But this same physical impulse negates the very purpose of her physical isolation from the world: her commitment to God. In the place of intense devotion to God, "where heav'nly pensive, contemplations dwells," she finds herself unable to maintain her commitment to God. Her cell, as part of a house consecrated and devoted to God, isolates her from Abelard; her desire for Abelard isolates her from God even in His Own house where He dwells.

Isolation from God and His creatures (here, of course, limited specifically to Abelard), does not exhaust the depth of Eloisa's conflict. In the opening passage of the poem, she expresses, as a result of her isolation from God and Abelard, the intense internal discord that divides her "thoughts" and her "heart" from her conscience. Her "thoughts" wander away from her convent cell, which should

be the fixed point of her duty and conscience. The imagery Pope employs is literally spatial: Eloisa's thoughts "rove . . . beyond" her "last retreat," the place in which she has vowed to unify her body and soul in devotion to God. From the imagery of space, Pope moves to the imagery of time: Eloisa confesses that her "heart" stirs and renews her past and "long-forgotten" love of Abelard. Eloisa experiences her internal conflict as a kind of psychic isolation, or division, in space and time, of her will from her conscience. She is divided within herself, and from this division springs her suffering of discord.

Few critics have failed to note a psychological conflict in which Eloisa suffers, and yet seldom has the significance of the conflict itself been examined.¹⁰⁹ In their sum, the details of Eloisa's conflict in the opening lines emphasize her isolation, and, furthermore, her isolation specifically recalls by analogy the traditional Christian view of fallen human nature bound in threefold isolation from God, from the creatures of divinely-created nature, and from itself. In this ancient metaphor, the corporate unity of creation receives a shattering and disintegrating blow from the sin of man, and this sin results in the discords between man and God, man and his fellow men, and inside man himself. The cleavage caused by these discords persists until man accepts the restoration and reunification offered by Christ who "hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us" (Ephes. 2:14), between the flesh and the spirit in each

man, between the individual and his neighbors, and between all men and God.¹¹⁰

The scene Elcisa describes for us becomes charged with meaning if viewed within this ancient psychology of sin. Immured in her convent cell but nonetheless isolated from God, Eloisa presents a figure, in its outward shape of suffering, of a captive of sin. She reveals her own participation in a fallen nature locked in a state of disharmony with God and his original grace, or gift, of creation. The suffering she endures suggests, even at this early point in the poem, the insufficiency of nature (as seen in one of its creatures), liable to sin, to exist at rest and peace with itself apart from God.

A few lines later, Eloisa specifies a related meaning of "nature" when, in line 28, she perceives her separation from God, and sees herself as part of a larger scheme of nature as an aggregate of natures. She identifies nature, manifested in her own human nature, as a rebel maintaining a state of willful separation from God:

All is not Heav'n's while Abelard has part,
 Still rebel nature holds out half my heart.
 (25-6)

In this couplet, the first word "All," is compromised by "half," which stands apart near the end of the second line.

In her commitment as a nun, Eloisa already had vowed to give all her love wholly to God. But if she withholds half her heart for Abelard, she fragments into two parts the

"all," or the whole-heartedness, of her love for God. She compromises her love for the whole, "Heav'n," in order to love a mere part of God's creation, Abelard. Eloisa thus confuses the relationship of part to whole, for if she gives half her heart to Abelard, exclusive of God, she bifurcates the unity of her love for God. Eloisa sees that her heart, the traditional seat of the will in Christian psychology,¹¹¹ attempts to serve two masters equally. But Eloisa implies that if her human nature now is a "rebel," it may be restored to a just and normative relationship between Creator and creature in which nature does not rebel, but serves God. The very distinction of a part implies an ordered relationship to a whole in which the part may function.

The issue of part versus whole underlies the meaning of "nature" when Eloisa describes the happiness she once enjoyed in her love of Abelard. She endorses a love unconstrained by the customs and ceremonies demanded by society--a love reminiscent of the libertine view of man in a nature ordered by the laws and ethics of desire and appetite. Eloisa at this point in her struggle recalls a time when she found her total commitment of love to Abelard, not merely half her heart, a self-sufficient happiness:

Oh happy state! when souls each other draw,
 When love is liberty, and nature, law:
 All then is full, possessing, and possest,
 No craving Void left aking in the breast;
 Ev'n thought meets thought ere from the lips
 it part,
 And each warm wish springs mutual from the heart.

This sure is bliss (if bliss on earth there be)
 And once the lot of Abelard and me.
 (91-8)

This love, not merely of bodies, but of souls so intensely attracted that they seem to exert mysteriously a force that draws them mutually together into an identity, seems so complete that the world, the "All," to them exists as a plenum they alone fulfill. They alone are nature: they fill it completely. They exclude from their universe, their nature, all other things that might impede the mutual love of their souls and hearts. Their thoughts and wishes mysteriously commingle in a spontaneous mutual generation unimpeded by the physical medium of "lips" (95). The exclusion of all impediments from the "intercourse" of souls, as Eloisa calls it in line 57, defines, then, the state of nature in which she envisions nature as "law" (92). She and Abelard, who fill all and are filled by all, exist therefore as a sufficient law unto themselves.

Significantly, Elcisa (at this point in the poem) excludes any awareness of God from nature. If Eloisa and Abelard fill all, mutually "possessing and possessed," then no space, physical or spiritual, remains for God, who in Christian theology is omnipresent. The character of Elcisa's self-sufficient nature seems directly contrary to the nature Pope asserts in his later poem, An Essay on Man, where God infuses and fills the whole of nature in all its parts: "He fills, he bounds, connects, and equals all" (I, 280). Elcisa herself, however, learns the weakness

of nature, even when apparently complete and self-sufficient to endure as a self-contained bliss. She enjoyed her "lot" (98) with Abelard only temporarily before their bliss was destroyed with abrupt and brutal finality:

Alas how chang'd! what sudden horrors rise!
A naked Lover bound and bleeding lies!
(99-100)

Her recollection of the sequence of events from bliss to violent destruction exemplifies the radical insufficiency and instability of nature dissociated from God, of a part dissociated from the whole.

Shortly before her passionate encomium of their earthly bliss, Eloisa affirmed her love for Abelard in spite of the loss she recognized as its price:

Dim and remote the joys of saints I see,
Nor envy them, that heav'n I lose for thee.
(71-2)

Immediately after her recollection of Abelard's suffering subsequent to the destruction of their earthly bliss, she recalls the day of her vows when she reaffirmed her love, not for God, but for Abelard:

Not grace, or zeal, love only was my call,
And if I lose thy love, I lose my all.
(117-18)

Once again, Eloisa places her expression of love for Abelard within the context of part and whole. She clearly designates in the balanced structure of line 118 the identity of "thy love" with "my all." Abelard, the creature, not God, the Creator, engages Eloisa's whole interest and desire.

Elcisa then visualizes her dream-like embrace of Abelard (119-24), but through a forced assertion of her will she rejects the insubstantial pleasure of this mere dream for the joys of the "bright abode" (127) she before had seen only as "dim and remote" (71):

Ah no! instruct me other joys to prize,
 With other beauties charm my partial eyes,
 Full in my view set all the bright abode,
 And make my soul quit Abelard for God.
(125-8)

The structure of diction in lines 126-7 suggests again the issue of part and whole in Elcisa's devotions: her "eyes" are "partial" to Abelard, and quite literally she gazes fondly upon the part, not the whole. But she calls upon Abelard himself to assist her to overcome her love for the part alone, her partiality, with a "Full" view of "all" heaven. The repetition of "Full," even as an adverb, and "all" in one line of reference to heaven hardly seems a capricious accident.¹¹² The wholeness of heaven, Elcisa seems to realize, albeit here tenuously, offers the most promising alternative to her present isolation and suffering. In another more brutal sense (a sense not alien to this poem that springs from the brutal violence of the actual human history), Eloisa's renewed search for an alternative may grow from her realization that with the destruction of Abelard's physical sexuality, she indeed has lost what was her "all."

Eloisa's prayer to be empowered to commit her soul to the passionate love of God is impermanent, for she sees

herself "Confess'd within the slave of love and man" (178). But the struggle of her passionate desire for Abelard against her vows to God continues in the intense conflict between spirit and flesh. Eloisa proceeds to describe (181-94). Eloisa finds no help from the mere virtuous task of resignation to abstinence for the struggles of passion she suffers:

Unequal task! a passion to resign,
For hearts so touch'd, so pierc'd, so lost as mine.
(195-6)

The merely wishful virtue to resign her passion does not, she finds, measure up to the "task" which is malign, or "unequal," the negative meaning of the Latin root of "equal"--"aequus," which means "benign." But when she invokes the power of "heav'n" (201) to aid her soul in its struggles with her intense passion for Abelard, she testifies to her unawareness of a dormant ember of a potential flaming heart for the love of God. The possibility of embracing God with this passionate spiritual love inspires her to implore Abelard to teach her to seek and find the grace that will "seize" her soul:

But let heav'n seize it, all at once 'tis fir'd,
Not touch'd, but rapt; not waken'd, but inspir'd!
Oh come! oh teach me nature to subdue.
(201-3)

In this passage, Eloisa envisions her soul, so passionately committed in union to Abelard, seized and captured by grace, the power of "heav'n." The love she envisions supersedes in intensity even that which she holds for Abelard: her soul seized by God will be "fir'd," "rapt," and "inspir'd."

These terms, drawn from a long and familiar history of mystic devotions to God, signify a state of union between Eloisa's soul and "heav'n." Eloisa vowed upon entering the convent to seek and maintain an intense bond of devotion to God, and she is virtuous only in so far as she keeps her will directed to her pledge:

Oh come! oh teach me nature to subdue,
Renounce my love, my life, my self--and you.
Fill my fond heart with God alone, for he
Alone can rival, can succeed to thee.
(203-6)

Eloisa sees in the potential seizing power of "heav'n" a source of her own virtue--a source of power, given by God's grace, able to effect her bond with God. Her passionate soul, when she envisions it seized by divine grace, no longer distracts her from God, but her soul by becoming "fir'd," "rapt," and "inspir'd" will fulfill her devotion to God.

Although it brings her more closely to God, Eloisa's assertion of her will to embrace God alone and to renounce Abelard seems less demanding than her persistent love for Abelard. The renunciation of Abelard brings Eloisa back to the relationship of the part to the whole in which she previously had understood the conflict of Abelard with God in her devotions. At this point in the poem, she seeks to "fill" her heart with God alone, to embrace the whole, but in a way that would renounce Abelard, or exclude the part. Again, the structure of diction within a key couplet in this passage expresses in compressed form the meaning of nature

for Eloisa. She still conceives nature as something opposed to God, for when at the end of line 203 she implores Abelard to teach her "nature to subdue," she defines what she means by "subdue" with the first word of the next line in the couplet: "Renounce" (204). Eloisa, however, offers no justification why nature in order to be subdued must be utterly renounced.

Indeed, in the passage immediately following, Eloisa begins to revise her idea of the disjunction between God and nature. Her image of an immaculate and blameless nun, perhaps the most famous descriptive passage in the poem (207-22), has at its metaphoric heart an illustration of one potential significance of nature---the supernatural manifestations of God in the elements and creatures of nature:

How happy is the blameless Vestal's lot!
 The world forgetting, by the world forgot.
 Eternal sun-shine of the spotless mind!
 Each pray'r accepted, and each wish resign'd;
 Labour and rest, that equal periods keep;
 'Obedient slumbers that can wake and weep';
 Desires compos'd, affections ever ev'n,
 Tears that delight, and sighs that waft to heav'n.
 Grace shines around her with serenest beams,
 And whisp'ring Angels prompt her golden dreams.
 For her th' unfading rose of Eden blooms,
 And wings of Seraphs shed divine perfumes;
 For her the Spouse prepares the bridal ring,
 For her white virgins Hymenaeals sing;
 To sounds of heav'nly harps, she dies away,
 And melts in visions of eternal day.

In order to understand this often admired passage, we should analyze closely some of the details of its imagery and structure. In the very first line, Pope employes the characteristic rhetoric of praise usually bestowed upon the

beatus vir, the happy man, in the literature of retirement in English poetry of the 17th and 18th centuries.¹¹³ He seems to echo his own Windsor-Forest and its endorsement of the human values inherent in "humbler Joys":

Happy the Man whom this bright Court approves,
His Sov'reign favours, and his Country loves;
Happy next him who to these Shades retires,
Whom Nature charms, and whom the Muse inspires,
Whom humbler Joys of home-felt Quiet please,
Successive Study, Exercise and Ease.
(235-40)

He recalls, too, his earlier poem, the Ode on Solitude:

"Happy the man, whose wish and care/ A few paternal acres bound" (1-2). The rhetorical structure of exclamation in praise of the retired life in Elcisa to Abelard seems to allude by analogy to the long literary history of poems, evidently very familiar to Pope, that exclaim "beatus ille": "How happy is he . . .," and "Happy the man" Pope's phrase finds, perhaps, its closest analogues in Dryden's translations of Virgil and Horace:

O happy, if he knew his happy State!
The Swain, who, free from Business and Debate,
Receives his easy Food from Nature's Hand.
.....
Happy the Man, who, studying Nature's Laws
Thro' known Effects can trace the secret Cause.
.....
And happy too is he, who decks the Bow'rs
Of Sylvans, and adores the Rural Pow'rs.
(Virgil, Georgics, II,
639-41, 698-9, 702-3)

How happy in his low degree,
How rich in humble Poverty, is he,
Who leads a quiet country life!
(From Horace, Epod. 2d., 1-3)

Happy the man, and happy he alone,
He, who can call to-day his own . . .
(Horat. Ode 29, Book 3 Paraphras'd, 65-6)¹¹⁴

As the analogues in Dryden's translations suggest, Pope adapts the secular retirement endorsed by the Roman poets to Eloisa's vision of religious retirement. Eloisa's nun retires, "The world forgetting, by the world forgot." The Twickenham Edition shows that Pope's line echoes the Eleventh Epistle of the First Book of Horace: "Oblitusque meorum obliviscendus et illus."¹¹⁵ In this Epistle on travel, Horace approves Lebedus as a place where one can escape unsettling cares, "The world forgetting, by the world forgot," although the point of the Epistle emphasizes the futility of expecting merely a change in place to produce tranquility of the mind.

By his verbal echo of the theme of retirement, Pope places Eloisa's vision within the context of ancient values endorsed by a long history of classical and English poetry. Eloisa augments the austerity and contentment of the individual, traditionally celebrated as the chief values in the literature of rural retirement, with the Christian values of devotion and dedication to God. The moral image of Horace pervaded 18th century poetry and constituted an important influence on Pope's conception of his own career.¹¹⁶ Largely on the authority of Renaissance editors and annotators, Horace became for Augustan readers, as Professor Thomas Maresca has shown, "a nearly unimpeachable moral arbiter and guide, on the level of authority almost with the Scriptures to which his sentiments were so often compared."¹¹⁷ The moral image of Horace amplifies Eloisa's perception of the

lasting benefits of individual retirement and commitment to the service of God. Eloisa envisions a whole-hearted commitment to ancient classical and Christian moral values by an immaculate nun, who as a result achieves a state of individual contentment and happiness so earnestly sought and defined by ancients and moderns alike, from Aristotle to Pope himself in his Essay on Man (1733-4).

After she sets the imagined scene of the blameless nun's retirement, and invokes the moral and spiritual values that sustain it, Eloisa envisions the effect of these values. She describes for Abelard the results of the nun's total devotion and commitment to God. The nun's state of contentment in religious retirement exceeds the peace of secular retirement, for she enjoys an interior contentment of mind expressed in an image of supernatural light: "Eternal sun-shine of the spotless mind!" (209). Pope's imagery of light seems accounted for by Joseph Warton's original recognition that the whole passage recalls "the opinions of the mystics and quietists."¹¹⁸ But the details of Pope's imagery, here in line 209 and elsewhere throughout the passage, demand close scrutiny and precise analysis, for by means of imagery Pope at this point reveals a fusion and continuity between grace and nature. In an obvious way, the phrase "Eternal sun-shine" fuses a natural phenomenon with a condition of supernatural being--eternity. The image, "Eternal sun-shine," recalls from "the opinions of the mystics," the vision of God as light, eternal light,

pure, essential, and "spotless." Pope has not merely yoked opposites in a forced paradox, but instead he has presented an image of nature infused with supernature to describe the spiritual state of the blameless nun. The image shows a chief and significant characteristic of the nun's spiritual peace: she experiences an enduring beatific vision of eternal light as a condition of her "spotless" mind. Her own mind, then, as she maintains it "spotless" in devotional retirement, becomes a point of confluence of nature and supernature wherein natural human will and conscience seek and, in so far as possible, meet in a vision of supernatural light the presence of God. In this way, the nun herself, as she comprehends the image of "Eternal sunshine," appears a manifestation of the achieved harmony of grace and nature, the enduring vision of God in an immaculate mind.¹¹⁹

The achieved harmony of grace and nature in the nun seems supported and illustrated by the line that immediately follows in which Eloisa envisions her "Each pray'r accepted, and each wish resign'd" (210). Here, the specific conditions that sustain the nun's "Eternal sun-shine" begin to appear. If she sees "Each pray'r" accepted," she enjoys a state of grace, a close contact with her God Who, if He accepts her prayers, obviously first must hear them and respond to them. The immaculate nun, although a recluse, is not isolated from her God. Indeed, her retirement differs radically from Eloisa's described in the opening lines of

the poem. The nun suffers no tumult and no sense of displacement: her sighs "waft to heav'n" (214).

In the ways reviewed above, the first two couplets communicate the moral context of values embraced by the nun, and the resultant spiritual communion she enjoys. Eloisa then continues in the next two couplets to fill in the image of the blameless nun. The word "equal" in line 211 retains the force of its Latin root meaning "benign." The nun's blissful retirement is punctuated, therefore, by a balance between benign "labour" and benign "rest." The attributes of the nun's retirement accumulate in the passage to form a picture not merely of her physical situation but of the spiritual order of her life as well: "blameless," "forgot," "Eternal," "Spotless," "accepted," "resign'd," "equal," "Obedient," "compos'd," and "ev'n."¹²⁰

In the vision of "Eternal sun-shine," Eloisa conceives the possibility of a part of nature, the sun, being transfigured into eternity. Her vision of the nun thus far in the whole passage, ll. 207-22, shows the outward signs of an inner peace that suggests the transfiguration of the nun's whole human nature. The remaining imagery of Eloisa's vision graphically portrays an accumulating transfiguration of the created substances of nature into an undying world sustained for the nun by the divine grace of communion and marriage to Christ. The very senses of the nun participate in a general transfiguration of nature into supernature. Grace manifests its supernatural light,

its "serenest beams" (215), to the nun whose mind, we have already seen, perceives and enjoys "Eternal sun-shine." The supernatural presence, the aureole, of grace that bathes her from without seems analogous in its ineffable serenity to the "Eternal sun-shine" of her mind. The light of grace literally has permeated the nun, and what she experiences within, she sees without. The supernatural light of grace infuses her dreams and colors them with gold (216), a traditional hue of the apocalyptic visions of Heaven. The very dreams themselves show the nun's empowered sense of hearing by which she receives from "whisp'ring Angels" (216) the promptings of grace. The sense of smell next bears the imprint of transfiguration, for the mystic "rose of Eden" (217), blooms eternally and un fadingly in a kind of paradise regained to the immaculate nun. Pope completes the imagery of smells in this couplet by augmenting the smell of the rose, transfigured from nature to the mystic rose of Heaven, with the "divine perfumes" shed not from flowers but directly from the "wings of Seraphs" (218). Heaven and earth, grace and nature, fuse in these intensely passionate sensory images.

The fusion of grace and nature that Elcisa envisions perhaps stands most clearly illustrated in the mystic marriage of the immaculate nun to her Spouse, Christ (219). Elcisa specifically invokes the Christian metaphor of communion with God as a marriage of the soul with Christ. In the commitment of vows, of course, the nun pledges her

troth to Christ and becomes his bride. The metaphor itself links grace and nature, for the earthly conjunction of marriage, already a union of souls as well as bodies, becomes transfigured out of time into eternity by the divine gift of Christ as the Spouse. In the image of the mystic marriage with Christ, Pope places Eloisa's vision in the allusive context of the Christian exegetical tradition of The Song of Solomon.¹²¹ Indeed, much of Eloisa's use of sensuous imagery to express the immaculate nun's spiritual consummation falls within the exegesis of the sensuous imagery of The Song of Solomon. The nun enjoys a harmony of grace and nature that transfigures the physical world about her in a way which effectively conveys this transfiguration, like the other earlier in the passage, to her senses. Her sense of hearing receives the presence of Christ as the harmony of sound (220-1), and leads her to the final and consummative vision of apocalyptic light, the "eternal day" (222) made by the light of grace.

Throughout this passage Eloisa envisions the bliss of another imagined nun. But her ability to visualize in specific concrete images the harmony of grace and nature marks a decided possibility that she herself may strive more resolutely and successfully toward this sharply visualized goal. The blameless nun, of course, suffers no complication in her devotion to God: she has no Abelard to distract her. Eloisa, in spite of her earlier temporary desire to "quit" (128) her love for Abelard, has not succeeded. For this

reason, and in the face of the difference between her sinful self and the blameless nun she envisions, Eloisa must fit her complicating love for Abelard into a scheme of grace and her devotion to God.

If Eloisa can visualize the fused harmony of grace and nature in the imagery evoked by an immaculate nun, she can experience conversely images of nature so far divorced from grace as to be images of Hell. In the passage immediately following the imagery of grace and nature harmonized in the immaculate nun, Eloisa experiences her own nature left free by conscience in a dream "of unholy joy" (224):

Far other dreams my erring soul employ,
 Far other raptures, of unholy joy:
 When at the close of each sad, sorrowing day,
 Fancy restores what vengeance snatch'd away,
 Then conscience sleeps, and leaving nature free,
 All my loose soul unbounded springs to thee.
 O curst, dear horrors of all-conscious night!
 How glowing guilt exalts the keen delight!
 Provoking Daemons all restraint remove,
 And stir within me ev'ry source of love.
 I hear thee, view thee, gaze o'er all thy charms,
 And round thy phantom glue my clasping arms.
 I wake--no more I hear, no more I view,
 The phantom flies me, as unkind as you.
 I call aloud; it hears not what I say;
 I stretch my empty arms; it glides away:
 To dream once more I close my willing eyes;
 Ye soft illusions, dear deceits, arise!
 Alas no more!--me thinks we wand'ring go
 Thro' dreary wastes, and weep each other's woe;
 Where round some mould'ring tow'r pale ivy creeps,
 And low-brow'd rocks hang nodding o'er the deep.
 Sudden you mount! you beckon from the skies!
 Clouds interpose, waves roar, and winds arise.
 I shriek, start up, the same and prospect find,
 And wake to all the griefs I left behind.

(223-48)

Nature in this passage is a dark illusory Hell: "Provoking Daemons" (231) and an elusive "phantom" (234,236) of Abelard alternately goad and tantalize an unrestrained and sensuous Eloisa, and leave her not with "visions of eternal day" (222), but awakened and immersed in "the same sad prospect" (247) she suffered in her nightmare.

The imagery of Eloisa's suffering contrasts sharply to the imagery of the immaculate nun. Eloisa's sorrow makes up her "sad, sorrowing day" (225), not the light "of eternal day." Her torment occurs at night, but the night itself is "all-conscious" (229), all-knowing with enough light to make the darkness in Eloisa's "loose soul" (228) visible. In place of the immaculate radiance that floods the blameless nun, Eloisa experiences "glowing guilt" (230). The epithet "glowing" often had been used in 17th century love poetry to evoke a sensuous flush,¹²² and here the color it suggests only serves to dimly illuminate Eloisa's "guilt." Consistent also with Renaissance and 17th century love poetry, Eloisa's sensuous pleasure oxymoronically is her pain. Her "Fancy" (226), or her love and affection,¹²³ produces "horrors" which although "cursed" remain "dear" (229). At this point, she approves the sin of her dreams, and thus partakes in guilt because of her willing consent.¹²⁴ But the oxymoron comes full circle, for the guilt is sensuously "glowing" and pleasurable; it certainly "exalts the keen delight" (230), a delight that seems itself to include the pain of a "keen" edge. Vision and hearing

themselves become as inconstant and illusory as Eloisa's pleasure in a phantom. One moment she sees, even gazes (223), and hears, but suddenly upon waking sees and hears "no more" (235). Even as she drifts willingly back into her dream, she is unable to enjoy the former "soft illusions and dear deceits" (240). Instead she and Abelard suffer Hell together in a different way: they wander weeping through a hostile and obscured wasteland (241-4). But even this conjunction in suffering proves inconstant to Eloisa: suddenly Abelard mounts and deserts her as she rudely awakens to the "griefs" (248) she has accumulated in her fitful night of restless dreaming. In contrast to the immaculate nun's "sighs that waft to hear'n" (248), Eloisa has called "aloud" (237), wept not from "delight" (214) but from "woe" (242), and "shrieked" (247) in response to the roar of "waves" (246) that separate her from Abelard.

The contrasting images of Heaven and Hell envisioned by Eloisa in the two verse paragraphs (207-48) present an extraordinary statement of the scope of her personal suffering. If the value of literature is still to be searched for in its portrayal of the anguish and suffering experienced by the human soul in adversity (as many agree with William Faulkner that it does),¹²⁵ then Eloisa to Abelard, especially in the passages we have just examined, must remain one of the most impassioned and compassionate artifacts imaging the struggles and sufferings of the human soul in all literature.

Eloisa's anguish and suffering becomes but more intense when she then describes how Abelard's image disrupts her worship at Matins and during the Mass. At the time when other souls rise closer to God in the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice, Eloisa, distracted by her sinful "thought" (273) of Abelard, violently plunges into the flaming seas of Hell. The imagery of height and depth describes Eloisa's participation and repetition of The Fall of Man and especially Satan's violent headlong plunge from Heaven into Hell in Paradise Lost, Book I. She falls into deeper isolation from God--an isolation felt and perceived all the more intensely because of the simultaneous pull toward communion with God offered by the Mass.

But Eloisa's plunge suddenly and mysteriously becomes a fortunate fall. The poignant awareness of her own sin and how it plunges her soul to Hell prostrates her "in humble grief" (277) before her God. Her prostration marks not only her greatest distance from her God, but paradoxically the point at which she "praying, trembling" (279) perceives "dawning grace . . . opening on my soul" (280). As we have seen earlier in Chapter I, the ability and disposition to pray itself shows the efficacy of grace already at work within the Christian soul.¹²⁶ Eloisa has fallen in sin, but grace, manifested in an image of "dawning" light, has drawn her in humility and prayer closer to God. The use of the metaphor of the natural light of dawn to express the infused presence of God is traditional, and

nature infused by God presents an obvious image of harmony of grace and nature. At this very moment, however, "while" (276,278) Elcisa perceives the skies opening to emit the grace that will free her from sin, she willingly calls for the sin in the person of Abelard to tighten its bonds on her soul and to enforce her isolation from God:

Come, if thou dar'st, all charming as thou art:
Oppose thy self to heav'n; dispute my heart;
Come, with one glance of those deluding eyes,
Blot out each bright idea of the skies.
Take back that grace, those scrowns, and those
tears,
Take back my fruitless penitence and pray'rs,
Snatch me, just mounting, from the blest abode,
Assist the Fiends and tear me from my God!
(281--88)

Elcisa desires Abelard as the agent of sin to "Blot out" (284) the image of fused nature and grace in dawning light, "the bright Idea of the skies." She employs numerous verbs of divisive fragmentation to show her preference here for the part, Abelard, rather than the whole, God: "Oppose," "dispute," "deluding," "Take back," "Snatch," and "tear." The violent abduction delineated in the final couplet especially reveals Eloisa's desire to be literally torn "from her God" in this "blest abode" (287), to which she in "dawning grace" (280) is "just mounting" (287), and joined in a Hell of sin with "the Fiends" (288) and Abelard, who now functions as a devil.

Having willed her own rape from the blest abode of God, Eloisa recoils in apparent horror from the fiendish image of Abelard, "No, fly me, fly me: far as Pole from

Pole" (289), and immediately wills her separation from him (289-96). Eloisa's conscience and will, and her soul which depends on these, have torn her away from the devils who abducted her, and prepared her for the prayer to God for "faith" (300), "hope" (299), and "grace serene" (297).

The means to her restoration to God, her "eternal rest" (302), are revealed as she hears the voice, in answer to her prayer, tell her: "God, not man, absolves our frailties here" (316). The revelation comes as a grace from God in the mysterious and supernatural voice of a former "Love's victim" (312) who like Eloisa sought to be "a sainted maid." The grace of absolution of her sins specifically fulfills Eloisa's invocation and prayer for "grace serene."

Nor does Eloisa remain a prisoner to her "griefs." In her vision of the immaculate nun, Eloisa's ability to visualize in specific concrete images the harmony and fusion of grace and nature marks a point of progress and illumination achieved in her suffering. Now she is able to envision herself wrapped in the grace of this harmony. She once again envisions images of nature transfigured by grace, and the images she sees seem to describe her own future ascent into Heaven:

I come, I come: prepare your roseate bow'rs,
 Celestial palms, and ever-blooming flow'rs.
 Thither, where sinners may have rest, I go,
 Where flames refin'd in breasts seraphic glow,
 Thou, Abelard! the last sad office pay,
 And smooth my passage to the realms of day.
 (317-22)

In details similar to those in her vision of the immaculate nun, Eloisa sees "roseate bow'rs," "palms," and "flow'rs" transfigured from the mortality of created nature to the eternity of the "unfading rose of Eden" (217). She enjoys, like the immaculate nun, the transfigured light that glows in flames of the love of God from the angels closest to Him, the seraphs. In her vision of the harmony of grace and nature, she receives the final "office" (321) of Extreme Unction from Abelard, who in his role as priest participates, as a creature of nature, in the fusion of grace and nature. As a sanctified man, Abelard himself stands before Eloisa as an embodiment of the harmony of grace and nature. And Eloisa now can love him as a priest, and enjoy that love as a part of a love for God. The part, Abelard, will be restored, not "quit" (128, 293), when Eloisa restores herself to God, Who sustains and embraces all creatures. By seeking God with her will, Eloisa releases herself from isolation from Abelard as well as from God.

Eloisa's "struggles of grace and nature" are by no means ended; indeed, they will be endless throughout her life. For instance, she immediately sees Abelard, not as a priest, but as her lover with whom she engages in sexual intercourse:

See my lips tremble, and my eye-balls roll,
Suck my last breath, and catch my flying soul:
(323-4)

Her vision of her future death is transformed into a vision of her sexual "death" in physical union with Abelard. But

her conscience spurs a willed negation, "Ah no" (325), of this erotic scene, and leads her to affirm her love of Abelard as a priest "in sacred vestments" (325) dressed--a creature of nature sanctified by grace.

If the history of Eloisa and Abelard offers, as Pope tells us, "so lively a picture of the struggles of grace and nature, virtue and passion," the struggles, specifically the struggles analyzed above, do not result in the annihilation of one term, or pair of terms, by another. In the imagery of transfigured nature we see nature permeated by grace. In the passages analyzed above, Eloisa finds herself unable "to resign" (195) her passion for Abelard at all: her own power, or virtue alone, simply does not and, she concedes, cannot measure up to the demands of that "Unequal task" (195). But, she then realizes divine grace can capture her soul and draw the heart's intense passion of love to God, and thereby achieve the vows and ends of virtue. Eloisa's recognition of divine power and its influence over natural passions offers, in human terms, the chief instance in the poem of nature permeated by grace.

In this specific vision of harmonious interaction between grace and nature, virtue and passion, the poem, it would seem, offers a vigorous opposition to the major trends of contemporary Augustan thought we have reviewed earlier in this chapter. Against those who would choose to doubt the relevance of Christian mysteries to human life, the poem offers Eloisa's awareness of the mystery of divine grace as

a source of real and specific power effective in her particular struggles. And against those who would choose to present the nature of man as essentially animalistic, brutal, and intelligible only to a rationalistic psychology, the poem offers Elcisa's nature passionately suffering in body and soul as she seeks her God.

NOTES

- ¹ The Correspondence of Alexander Pope, ed. George Sherburn, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1956), I, 338. See Twick. Ed., pp. 311-12, for a discussion of this letter's date.
- ² George Sherburn, The Early Career of Alexander Pope (Oxford, 1934), pp. 291-7.
- ³ P. 79.
- ⁴ Twick. Ed., p. 318.
- ⁵ See Laws, X. 889-92, and the discussion of this passage in A. O. Lovejoy and G. Boas, Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity (Baltimore, 1935), pp. 166-7. For a detailed study of the idea of nature as an ethical norm in antiquity, see Lovejoy and Boas, *passim*, esp. pp. 133-16.
- ⁶ Nicomachean Ethics, II. i. 3 (1103a); trans. H. Rackham, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1962). See the discussion of nature and capacity as developed by Aristotle in Lovejoy and Boas, pp. 189-90. William G. Madsen, The Idea of Nature in Milton's Poetry, in Three Studies in the Renaissance (New Haven, 1957), p. 199, cites this passage from Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, II. i. 3, in his summary of the development of nature as an ethical norm. I wish to acknowledge a general debt to Professor Madsen's discussion of "nature," pp. 198-204.
- ⁷ See De legibus, I. vi. 18, and De officiis, I. iv. 11-14. See also the discussion of De legibus in Madsen, p. 200, and the discussion of De officiis in Lovejoy and Boas, pp. 249-51.
- ⁸ See Etienne Gilson, The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy, trans. A. H. C. Downes (New York, 1940), pp. 99-100, 368-9.
- ⁹ See also Rom. 1:26.
- ¹⁰ See The Miscellanies, or Stromata, II. xix; and The Instructor, or Paedagogus, II. ii, and *passim*, in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, vol. 2: cited in Madsen, pp. 200-1.

- 11 The City of God, XI. XVII. (heading); trans. M. Dods in Basic Writings of Saint Augustine, ed. Whitney J. Oates, 2 vols. (New York, 1948), vol. 2.
- 12 The City of God, XI. XVII.
- 13 The City of God, XII. II.
- 14 The City of God, XII. III-V.
- 15 See Etienne Gilson, The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine, trans. L. E. M. Lynch (New York, 1960), p. 130.
- 16 Gilson, The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine, p. 132.
- 17 St. Augustine, Expositions of the Book of Psalms, Psalm 58 (Latin 57), in 6 vols. (Oxford, 1849), III, 97.
- 18 See Gilson, The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine, pp. 152-3.
- 19 St. Thomas Aquinas, Sum. theol. I.Q. 47, A. 2.
- 20 Sum. theol. I, Q. 48, A. 3.
- 21 Sum. theol. I, Q. 48, A. 1.
- 22 Sum. theol. I, Q. 48, A. 3.
- 23 Sum. theol. I, Q. 49, A. 1.
- 24 Sum. theol. Ia-IIae, Q. 90, AA. 1-2.
- 25 Sum. theol. Ia-IIae, Q. 91, A. 1; Q. 93, AA. 1-6.
- 26 Sum. theol. Ia-IIae, Q. 91, A. 2; Q. 94, AA. 1-6.
- 27 Sum. theol. Ia-IIae, Q. 93, A. 2.
- 28 Sum. theol. Ia-IIae, Q. 94, AA. 5-6.
- 29 Sum. theol. Ia-IIae, Q. 95, A. 2.
- 30 Sum. theol. Ia-IIae, Q. 91, AA. 4-5.
- 31 Sum. theol. Ia-IIae, Q. 9, A. 6.
- 32 Sum. theol. Ia-IIae, Q. 9, A. 1.
- 33 Sum. theol. Ia-IIae, Q. 94, A. 1; I, Q. 79, A. 13.

34 See John A. Driscoll, "On Human Acts," in the Appendix to St. Thomas Aquinas, Sum. theol., literally translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, III, 3219b.

35 See Walter Farrell, "Divine Grace," in the Appendix to Sum. theol. III, 3280b.

36 Sum. theol. Ia-IIae, Q. 111, AA. 1-5.

37 Sum. theol. Ia-IIae, Q. 109, AA. 1-10. This is the famous passage "Of the Necessity of Grace." See esp. AA. 7-10. I have not distinguished between sufficient grace and efficacious actual grace in this summary.

38 Sum. theol. Ia-IIae, Q. 110, A. 4.

39 Farrell, "Divine Grace," III, 3288b.

40 Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, I. iii. 2; Everyman's Library, 2 vols. (London, 1963), hereafter cited as Laws.

41 Laws, I. xvi. 5. Hooker cites Rom. 2:15 in a footnote to this passage.

42 Laws, I. viii. 1.

43 Laws, I. viii. 1.

44 Laws, I. xi. 5.

45 Laws, I. xi. 5.

46 Laws, I. vii. 7. ⁴⁷ Laws, I, vii. 7.

48 Laws, I. xi. 5.

49 Laws, I. xi. 6.

50 Corres., II, 81.

51 Issac Barrow, Works, 3 vols. (New York, 1845), II, 139a. Italics added.

52 John Tillotson, Sermons, 2nd ed., 13 vols. (London, 1704), X, 448-9.

53 Tillotson, Sermons, 2nd ed., X, 454-5.

54 Jeremy Taylor, Sermons (Philadelphia, 1845), p. 197a.

- 55 Taylor, p. 195b.
- 56 Taylor, p. 195b.
- 57 Taylor, p. 201a.
- 58 Robert South, Sermons Preached Upon Several Occasions, 5 vols. (New York, 1871), IV, 453.
- 59 South, IV, 451.
- 60 The classical foundation for this psychological principle appears in Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, I. xiii. 15-19 (1102b-1103a), in which we see that the irrational element of the soul participates in the rational element. Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, Sum. theol. Ia-IIae, Q. 59, AA. 1-2, 5.
- 61 See St. Augustine, The City of God, XIV, XIII; St. Thomas Aquinas, Sum. theol. Ia-IIae, Q. 55, A. 4; Hooker, Laws, I. v. 3.
- 62 See St. Augustine, The City of God, XIV. VI; St. Thomas Aquinas, Sum. theol. I, Q. 82, AA. 1-5; Hooker, Laws, I. vii. 1-2.
- 63 See St. Thomas Aquinas, Sum. theol. Ia-IIae, Q. 58, AA. 4-5.
- 64 Pope, An Essay on Man, IV, 338, 340. Cf. St. Augustine, The City of God, XIV, VII; St. Thomas Aquinas, Sum. theol. Ia-IIae, Q. 9, A. 6; Hooker, Laws, I. vii. 3.
- 65 Norman Sykes examines some reasons behind the disapproval of the 18th century English Church by later critics and argues for "a more sympathetic and impartial survey of the religious tradition and standards of the Hanoverian Church" in Church and State in England in the XVIIIth Century (Cambridge, 1934), pp. 3-7.
- 66 Quoted in Roland N. Stromberg, Religious Liberalism in Eighteenth-Century England (London, 1954), p. ix.
- 67 Stromberg, p. 1.
- 68 For a discussion of the time of composition for Elisa to Abelard, see Twick. Ed., pp. 311-13.
- 69 See H. John McLachlan, Socinianism in Seventeenth-Century England (London, 1951), pp. 3-17 and passim; E. M. Wilbur, A History of Unitarianism (Cambridge, Mass., 1952), pp. 219-35; and C. J. Abbey and J. H. Overton, The English Church in the Eighteenth Century, 2 vols. (London, 1878), I. 481.

- 70 A Brief History of the Unitarians, p. 3.
- 71 A Brief History of the Unitarians, p. 7.
- 72 A Brief History of the Unitarians, p. 5.
- 73 McLachlan, Socinianism in Seventeenth-Century England, p. 13.
- 74 South, II, 137.
- 75 McLachlan, pp. 14-15. Cf. the discussion of Socinus and the Atonement in Abbey and Overton, I, 510-11.
- 76 McLachlan, p. 15.
- 77 William Sherlock, A Vindication of the Doctrine of the Holy and Ever Blessed Trinity (London, 1690), quoting a Socinian text, Brief Notes on the Creed of St. Athanasius (1689). Sherlock's work is quoted in Stromberg, p. 38.
- 78 See McLachlan, pp. 15-16, 336-7: and Wilbur, p. 210.
- 79 Stromberg, p. 38.
- 80 South, II, 116-17. South's sermon, preached at Westminster Abbey, April 29, 1694, bears the title: "Christianity Mysterious, and the Wisdom of God in making it so."
- 81 Wilbur, pp. 236-43.
- 82 Stromberg, p. 110.
- 83 Stromberg, pp. 110-11. Stromberg oversimplifies the doctrines of St. Augustine on free will and nature: see Etienne Gilson, The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine. trans. L. E. M. Lynch (New York, 1690), pp. 132-64.
- 84 Stromberg, p. 110.
- 85 See Ernst Cassirer, The Philosophy of the Enlightenment, trans. Fritz C. A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove (Boston, 1960), pp. 137-60. Cf. Stromberg, pp. 114-17.
- 86 Modern Library (New York, 1948), p. 102. See J. Paul Hunter, The Reluctant Pilgrim: Defoe's Emblematic Method and Quest for Form in "Robinson Crusoe" (Baltimore, 1966), pp. 157-8, 164. See G. R. Cragg, The Church and the Age of Reason, 1648-1789, rev. ed. (Harmondsworth, England, 1966) and From Puritanism to the Age of Reason (Cambridge, 1966) for valuable discussions of natural religion, deism, and rationalism.

87 See Stromberg, pp. 52-69; Ernest Campbell Mossner, Bishop Butler and the Age of Reason (New York, 1936), pp. 23-78; Alfred Owen Aldridge, Shaftesbury and the Deist Manifesto, in Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, N. S., Vol. 41 (1951), 298-304; Leslie Stephen, History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (New York, 1902), vol. I; and Abbey and Overton, I, 178-9.

88 Cassirer, The Philosophy of the Enlightenment, p. 171. The full title of Toland's book reads, Christianity Not Mysterious: or, A Treatise Shewing, That there is nothing in the Gospel Contrary to Reason, Nor Above it: And that no Christian Doctrine can be properly call'd a Mystery. Cf. also Wilbur, p. 251.

89 See, for example, the discussion in Stromberg, pp. 55-6.

90 See R. F. Jones, Ancients and Moderns: A Study of the Rise of the Scientific Movement in Seventeenth Century England, 2nd ed. (St. Louis, 1961), passim, and "The Background of the Attack on Science in the Age of Pope," in Pope and His Contemporaries: Essays Presented to George Sherburn, ed. J. L. Clifford and L. A. Landa (Oxford, 1949), pp. 96-113.

91 For analysis and discussion of this trend in 17th century psychology, see Anthony Levi, S. J., French Moralists: The Theory of the Passions, 1575-1649 (Oxford, 1964), p. 73 and passim.

92 Leviathan, I. 8; Everyman's Library (London, 1959), pp. 32-3.

93 Bernard Mandeville, The Fable of the Bees: or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits, ed. F. B. Kaye, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1924), I, 44: hereafter cited as Kaye ed.

94 Kaye ed., I, 51.

95 Kaye ed., I, 51.

96 Leviathan, I. 12; Everyman's Library, p. 54: "Seeing there are no signes, nor fruit of Religion, but in Man onely; there is no cause to doubt, but that the seed of Religion, is also onely in Man."

97 For the roots of this doctrine in the primitivism of the ancient Cynics, see Lovejoy and Boas, Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity, pp. 120-1.

98 Quotations from Rochester follow the text in the Collected Works of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, ed. John Hayward (London, 1926).

99 Cf. Kaye ed., I, xivii-xiviii and cxx-cxxvi, for the similarity of Rochester's concept of virtue to the combination of ascetic and rational ethics called "rigorism" used and reduced to an absurdity in Mandeville's Fable of the Bees.

100 See Levy, French Moralists, pp. 74-111 and passim.

101 See R. S. Crane, "Suggestions toward a Genealogy of the 'Man of Feeling,'" ELH, I (1934), 220-7, and Bertrand A. Goldgar, "Pope's Theory of the Passions: The Background of Epistle II of the Essay on Man," PQ, XLI (1962), 732-3.

102 See Aldridge, Shaftesbury and the Deist Manifesto, pp. 310-13. Ernest Tuveson, "The Importance of Shaftesbury," ELH, XX (1953), 284-6, emphasizes Shaftesbury's awareness of abnormal and unnatural passions which, in spite of their perverse pleasure, lead to a life of misery.

103 For the meaning and context of the term "libertine," see Louis I. Bredvold, "The Naturalism of Donne in Relation to Some Renaissance Traditions," JEGP, XXII (1923), 471-502; and Dale Underwood, Etherege and the Seventeenth-Century Comedy of Manners (New Haven and London, 1957), pp. 3-40. For the relationship between libertinism and atheism, particularly in reference to Oldham and Rochester, see Don Cameron Allen, Doubt's Boundless Sea: Skepticism and Faith in the Renaissance (Baltimore, 1964), pp. 187-223. Cf. also Madsen, pp. 185-92, in reference to Milton's Comus.

104 Cf. Richard II, Hamlet.

105 Perhaps Pope includes here a tangential reference to Charles II's promiscuity; cf. Dryden, Absalom and Achitophel, ll. 1-10.

106 See An Essay on Criticism, 538n., in The Twickenham Edition of Pastoral Poetry and An Essay on Criticism, ed. E. Audra and Aubrey Williams (London, 1961), p. 298. Hereafter cited as Audra and Williams.

107 G. M. Trevelyan, English Social History (London, 1946), p. 262; quoted in Audra and Williams, p. 300n.

108 Even those anti-Trinitarian works excluded from the Act of Toleration were published anonymously and thus eluded more often than not the penalties risked; see Abbey and Overton, I, 488 (cited in Audra and Williams, p. 301).

109 The "dualism" asserted by Henry Pettit, "Pope's Eloisa to Abelard: An Interpretation," in Univ. of Colorado Studies: Series in Language and Literature, No. 4 (July, 1953), 69-70, seems over-simplified to me.

110 See Henri de Lubac, Catholicism: A Study of Dogma in Relation to the Corporate Destiny of Mankind, trans. L. C. Sheppard (New York, 1964), pp. 17-27, for an exposition of this enduring Protestant and Roman Catholic concept. Cf. Levi, French Moralists, p. 220n.

111 The locus classicus for this traditional idea may be found in "Heb. 4:12. Cf. 1 Cor. 14:24-5.

112 For seminal essays on the particular force of Pope's diction, see Maynard Mack, "On Reading Pope," College English, VII (1945-6), 263-73; and "'Wit and Poetry' and Pope": Some Observations on his Imagery," in Pope and his Contemporaries: Essays Presented to George Sherburn, ed. James L. Clifford and Louis A. Landa (Oxford, 1949), 20-40; see also William K. Wimsatt, Jr., "One Relation of Rhyme to Reason," and "Rhetoric and Poems: Alexander Pope," in The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry (Lexington, Kentucky, 1954), pp. 154-66 and 169-85, resp.

113 See Maren-Sofie Røstvig, The Happy Man, 2 vols. (Oslo, 1954-8); and Maynard Mack, "Secretum Iter: Some Uses of Retirement Literature in the Poetry of Pope," in Aspects of the Eighteenth Century, ed. Earl R. Wasserman (Baltimore, 1965), pp. 207-43.

114 Quotations from The Poems of John Dryden, ed. James Kinsley, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1958), I, 436-7; see also Dryden's To My Honour'd Kinsman, John Driden, of Chesterton 1-2 (Kinsley ed., IV, 1529): "How blest is he . . ."

115 Twick. Ed., p. 337n.

116 See Thomas E. Maresca, Pope's Horatian Poems (Columbus, Ohio, 1966).

117 Maresca, p. 15.

118 An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope, 2 vols. (London, 1756), I, 320.

119 Cf. Pope's facetious use of "Eternal sun-shine" in a letter to Martha Blount, 24 November 1714 (Corres., I, 269): "Don't so much as hope I may go to Heaven: tis a place I am not very fond of, I hear no great good of it: All the Descriptions I ever heard of it amount to no more than just this: It is eternal singing, & piping, and sitting in Sunshine. Much good it may do the Saints; and those who

intend to be Saints. For my part I am better than a Saint, for I am / Madam / Your most faithfull Admi-/ rer, Friend, Servant, / any thing."

120 By the allusion to Crashaw in line 212, Pope points, on one level, to the poet most famous to 18th century readers for his descriptions of devotional bliss. See Chapter III.

121 See Stanley Stewart, The Enclosed Garden: The Tradition and the Image in Seventeenth-Century Poetry (Madison, 1966), pp. 3-30. Cf. Rev. 21:2. .

122 See Twick. Ed., p. 340, l. 252n.

123 See OED, "Fancy," n., sense 8: "an inclination, liking." Cf. Milton, Samson Agonistes, 794, and Midsummer Night's Dream, I, i, 155.

124 Cf. Adam's reassurance of Eve based on her disapproval of her dream in Paradise Lost, Book V:

. . . yet be not sad.
Evil into the mind of God or Man
May come and go, so unapprov'd, and leave
No spot or blame behind.

(116-19)

125 See the Stockholm Address.

126 See line 179; see Chapter I. Cf. also the blameless nun, l. 210.

CHAPTER VIII

LITERARY CONTEXTS: ANCIENT AND MODERN

In his later years, Pope recalled to Joseph Spence how deeply the poet William Walsh had influenced his practice of poetry during his formative youth in the early 1700's:

About fifteen, I got acquainted with Mr. Walsh. He used to encourage me much, and used to tell me, that there was one way left of excelling; for though we had several great poets, we never had any one great poet that was correct; and he desired me to make that my study and aim.¹

The meaning of this famous criterion of correctness in Pope's poetry has been explored by a number of scholars: no mere stylistic punctilio, correctness comprised an extensive goal of harmonious design in poetical form and content.² One specific technique of poetical design Walsh communicated to Pope deserves particular attention in the light of Pope's well-known affinity for ancient classical literature. Pope had presented early copies of The Pastorals to Walsh for criticism, and had asked his judgment on the propriety of borrowing images and diction from other poets. Walsh endorsed to Pope the technique of allusion and, furthermore, approved not the borrowing of "one or two bright thoughts," but instead a full absorption: "But when 'tis all melted down together, and the Gold of the Ancients so mixt with

that of the Moderns that none can distinguish the one from the other, I can never find fault with it."³

The ancient gold, the Ovidian heroic epistle, with which Pope chose to "mix" and inform his Eloisa to Abelard seems especially appropriate for two reasons. Dryden, in an influential essay prefixed to his edition and compilation of Ovid's Epistles, Translat'd by Several Hands (1680), affirmed them "generally granted to be the most perfect piece of Ovid," and found their style "tenderly passionate and courtly; two properties well agreeing with the persons which were heroines and lovers."⁴ Dryden's judgment and conception of the heroic style and characters in Ovid's epistles seem to suggest vividly the attraction they must have had for Pope, who was to strive for precisely such correctness, or perfection, of poetic art, and conceived anew the drama of a distinctive heroine and her lover, "two of the most distinguish'd persons of their age in learning and beauty," and "their unfortunate passion."⁵

Pope in Eloisa to Abelard conceives a modern poem from the significant human experience found in the Christian context of the medieval letters. He also designs the substance of Eloisa's experience within the clearly recognizable and familiar genre of the Ovidian heroic epistle. Professor Geoffrey Tillotson describes Pope's method of allusion to Ovid and his aim: "In Eloisa to Abelard he chose existing materials--a contemporary version of the correspondence of the medieval lovers--and by

selection, addition, and arrangement gave them the sort of shape Ovid had given his Heroides,⁶ writing thereby "the best Heroic Epistle since Ovid."⁷ The exact "sort of shape" found in Ovid's Heroides, and its relationship to Pope's Eloisa to Abelard, needs more detailed analysis and precise definition than yet given it. A full critical analysis of the Heroides would be an intrusion here; nevertheless, we should establish the critical principle of their integrity as individual poems, and suggest the unified pattern of meaning in the whole collection of poems as seen in a representative integral poem, Ovid's Sappho to Phaon, so important to Pope's recasting of the Heroides in his Sappho to Phaon and Eloisa to Abelard.

I

The twenty-one epistolary poems comprising the Heroides have received the critical demur that they redundantly present a monotonous recurrence of the complaining heroine without essential change or character development from epistle to epistle.⁸ But in the Heroides each epistle reveals to the reader a specifically new dramatic situation of different characters with their own particular human values and desires. Ovid's choice of familiar and traditional characters from Greek and Roman literature would seem to lessen the chance of his poems being thought repetitious, for readers in his time would (and readers in

our times should) be able to distinguish the severe and radical difference between the love of Penelope (Heroides I) and the loves of, for instance, Phyllis (Heroides II), Briseis (Heroides III), Phaedra (Heroides IV), Dido (Heroides VII), Medea (Heroides XIII), or Sappho (Heroides XV). Each character, of course, suggests different kinds of "loves," expresses different values, and suffers different adversities: indeed, the differences that distinguish them emerge from the different dramatic situation in each poem. The basic conception of a series of well-known heroines, then, fundamentally establishes a framework by which each poem in the series will present its own familiar, and therefore distinct, narrative. As the characters differ from one epistle to the next, the content obviously must change in consequence. With the change in content, each poem must embody a new form, or structure, of language, and, logically, a new and different meaning. Only when the Heroides are seen as distinct and individual poems covering a wide spectrum of human character and values can a significant meaning and unity of the whole group of poems as an aggregate be ascertained.

The most important and pervasive thematic, structural, and metaphoric element in Ovid's epistles⁹ is their urgent concern with human nature suffering in adversity and that adversity is an inescapable effect on human passion in the most private instances of human behavior. In the Heroides, all the drama of passionate love, for which they customarily

have been celebrated in literary criticism,¹⁰ unfolds within a larger context of adversity suffered.

In each poem of the Heroides, the adversities suffered by the heroine grow from violations they themselves commit, or suffer at the hands of their lovers, or, in a few cases, at the hands of other agents. By far the greatest number of the Heroides, seventeen of the total twenty-one, portray the heroine herself immersed in the effects of a violation she has perpetrated against another human being, against the gods, or against external nature seen as a source of power greater than man. In the successive epistles in the Heroides, Ovid explores a broadening range of culpability and sacrilege that the heroides themselves confess: the promiscuity of Phyllis (II) and Briseis (III), the incest of Phaedra (IV) and Canace (XI), the vengeful profanity of Hypsipyle (VI), the sacrilege of Dido (VII), the bigamy of Hermione (VIII), the murderous revenge of Deianira (IX) and Medea (XII), the betrayal by Ariadne (X), the filial disobedience of Hypermnestra (XIV), the incontinence of Sappho (XV), the adultery of Helen and Paris (XVI-XVII), Leander's disregard for the strength of natural barriers which limit him (XVIII), and the treachery of Acontius compounded by the sacrilege of Cydippe (XX-XXI). In four other poems, the heroine suffers as victim the violations committed against her without provocation or just cause: Penelope (I) laments Ulysses' neglect of her; Oenone (V), much like Penelope in situation but not in character,

laments the desertion of Paris; Laodamia (XVIII) mourns the absence of Protesilaus for she has envisioned his premature death as the first Achaian to be killed in the invasion of Troy; and Hero (XIX) suffers the arbitrary prohibitions of her guardians against the love she holds for Leander, who now is driven to desperate means of stealth which will lead to his drowning as he attempts to swim the Hellespont.

If the Heroides may be seen as portraits of human character living under the stress of adversity concomitant with violation, then violation itself--its context, its source, its moral and metaphysical implications--must be understood as it functions in the poems. The stress on violation logically must imply a context of law, or laws, in which the acts of violation occur. The implied context of law is as much a part of the dramatic action of each poem as the violation which is so explicit in each. The context of law may differ from poem to poem, but the intrinsic unity of each poem, it seems to me, is maintained coherently by the strong logical bond of violation and concomitant law.

An appropriate example to extract from the twenty-one Heroides would be, of course, the epistle from Sappho to Phaon, which bookseller Jacob Tonson solicited Pope to translate for the eighth edition (1712) of Ovid's Epistles Translated by Several Hands. Certainly Tonson demonstrated his high professional regard for the young Pope as a poet, for the epistle from Sappho to Phaon traditionally has been valued for its high intensity of passion expressed in a

poignant illustration of the desperate situation endured by Ovid's heroines. But the passion for which the poem universally has been valued occurs only as a resultant part of the larger context of adversity, violation, and law within the poem. The following analysis will seek to define and clarify this larger context as it appears in the text of the poem.

At the very outset of the poem, Sappho refers to the state of strife in which she finds herself. The elegiac meter by which, she tells us, she brings poetic coherence to her griefs for the loss of Phaon's love, itself constitutes a dislocation of her normally distinctive and accomplished "mode" (6) of poetry:

Perhaps, too, you may ask why my verses alternate,
when I am better suited to the lyric mode. I
must weep, for my love--and elegy is the weeping
strain; no lyre is suited to my tears.

(Heroides, XV, 5-8)

[Forsitan et quare mea sint alterna requiras
carmina, cum lyricis sim magis apta modis.
flendus amor meus est--elegiae flebile carmen;
non facit ad lacrima barbitos ulla meos.]

She "burns" (9: "Uror") in love for Phaon, but simultaneously must "weep" (7), in elegiac grief at his sudden stealthy departure. She suffers the adversity of Phaon's cowardly desertion for which she indicts him as "erronem" (53), which Showerman translates as "wanderer," But "erronem" also carries the sense of straying from the right path morally, and Sappho's indictment aims at Phaon's faithless moral conduct, which he shows by his desertion of her. Her

pain of separation seems exquisitely augmented by her own incontinent nature. She creates her own fires of Aetna, a kind of volcanic hell, in which to suffer:

I burn--as burns the fruitful acre when its harvests are ablaze, with untamed east-winds driving on the flame. The fields you frequent, O Phaon, lie far away, by Typhoean Aetna; and I--heat not less than the fires of Aetna preys on me.

(9-12)

[Uror, ut indomitis ignem exercentibus Euris fertilis accensis messibus ardet ager. arva, Phaon, celebras diversa Typhoidos Aetnae; me calor Aetnaeo non minor igne tenet.]

Sappho's suffering in a tumultuous state, seen in the image of torturing fires, reverberates through her poetry, which, she again emphasizes, must convey the interior state of her mind (13-14). Here we can affirm that Ovid's Sapphic epistle itself is no mere exercise in the precious use of artificial language for its own sake (as often asserted by critics like Wilkinson), but an ambitious attempt to make intelligible the distraught and disordered anguish of a violated human being sensitive to her plight. For Sappho, harmonious songs are the product of "minds care-free" (14: "vacuae . . . mentis"). Ovid's epistle attempts, therefore, to search out and fix the appropriate form to express, not a "care-free" mind, but one anguished by violation and loss.

The purpose of the elegiac structure of grief that Sappho herself chooses to use (7) is precisely to restore order to the suddenly disordered experience. Sappho seeks to persuade her lover to return to her and thereby restore the bliss lost when he violated her by desertion. To

achieve her ends, she must convince Phaon that his desertion of her was treacherous and with this aim she so addresses him: "unworthy one" (20: "inprobe").

At the same time, however, Sappho accuses not only Phaon of violation of universal human and natural laws; she admits her own history of reproach in her sexual love of the Lesbian maids "whom I have loved not without reproach" (19: "quas non sine crimine amavi"). And later in the epistle, she speaks of the Lesbian maids as those "whom I have loved to my reproach" (20: "Lesbides, infamem quae me fecistis amatae"). In Sappho's life, love enjoyed with the Lesbian maids has been a guilt-ridden experience--a violation of human and natural laws "non sine crimine," "not without reproach." But her love of Phaon marks the end of her love for the Lesbian maids (20). Phaon becomes the sole possessor of Sappho's love: she isolates herself from her former reproachful loves in order to surrender herself completely to him. Phaon, of course, accepts; and his acceptance followed abruptly by his desertion measures clearly the extent of his violation of Sappho's trust.

Sappho seeks to persuade Phaon's return by emphasizing the unworthiness of his act of betrayal and desertion. Her defense of her own worthiness, not in beauty, but wit, or "genius" (32: "ingenio"), granted her by nature (31-32), serves to place Phaon's unworthy act in clear contrast to the object of that act. Since none are so beautiful in body to deserve Phaon in his beauty, then only the divine power

of Sappho's poetry (27), and the passion of love it sustains and celebrates, deserves the reward of Phaon's love (21-40).

Her recollection of the intensity of their former love (41-50) emphasizes the unity of the two lovers, "when the joys of both had mingled into one" (49: "ubi amborum fuerat confusa voluptas"). Sappho attributes her readiness to join Phaon in sexual unity to a law of her nature (81: "nascenti legem"), a law either by which she was created or by which the function of her poetic art has softened her heart (79-84). Phaon's destruction of their unity in love, a unity that engages Sappho to the very depth of her nature, wounds her mortally, as she shows by baring her breast (122) in a sign of being helpless before a fatal "wrong" (103: "iniuria").

Sappho's sensuality intensely augments her suffering at Phaon's desertion. In her dream of Phaon's return, she describes her submission to him as an act without rule: "all takes place, I feel the delight, and cannot rule myself" (133-34: "omnia fiunt,/et juvat, et siccae non licet esse mihi"). Isolated throughout the poem in a state in which she cannot rule herself, Sappho is doomed by her own incontinence to suffer what she called earlier in the poem "the fires of Aetna" (12). While she possessed Phaon, her love without rule brought her fulfillment; but now that she has lost him it brings her only grief.

Faced with a lifetime of suffering, Sappho readily accepts the relief offered by a Naiad, a genius of a spring, whose supernatural presence emerges benignly from a nearby sacred spring. The Naiad advises suicide and justifies it to Sappho as the surest means to quench her fiery suffering (163-72). By leaping from a cliff into the sea, Sappho, the Naiad contends, will relieve her suffering life and enjoy the new benefits of "the law of yonder place" (171: "legem locus ille"), the cliff. To Sappho, the Naiad's alternative, however severe, promises to place her under a new law, a natural law of physical destruction offered by the cliff, which at once will soothe the pain she suffers both by Phaon's faithless desertion and her own subsequent interior fires of incontinence. The Naiad's new law demands Sappho's life in suicide as a necessary condition for relief. Confronted with supernatural order of being and a new plane of supernatural law concomitant with that being manifested here by the presence and omniscience of the Naiad, human suffering (the poem would seem to endorse) only can be blotted out and extinguished.

The details of Sappho's lament for Phaon at this point in her poem are important, for she specifically underscores the value of what is at stake in her love. In effect, she defines with severe clarity the nature of her relationship of love with Phaon. She laments, in the loss of Phaon, not merely the loss of her "love"--a term which if allowed to remain unexplained in criticism simply begs the question

of its definition. She laments, as we shall see shortly, the loss of a comprehensive spiritual orientation in a world ordered and inhabited by supernatural powers and beings, like the Naiad, who are cognizant of human and natural laws under which human beings must live--the faithless love of Phaon, the destruction offered by the cliff. She has lost the beauty of Phaon, and with it, she has lost the profound sense of union with beauty spiritual as well as physical--a beauty that she understands as divine. It is divine, for Phaon has appeared to her from the beginning of the poem as Apollo, and then as Bacchus, "manifest" (23-4: "fies manifestus Apollo . . . Bacchus eris"). Sappho fears, therefore, that this divine beauty radiating from Phaon will attract the love of the most beautiful and desirable goddesses, Aurora, Phoebe, and Venus (89-92).

As a result of her grief at Phaon's betrayal, Sappho also loses her creative power of poetry:

Grief stops my art, and all my genius is
halted by my woes. My old-time power in song
will not respond to the call; my plectrum
for grief is silent, mute for grief is my
lyre.

(195-8)

[dolar artibus obstat,
ingeniumque meis substitit omne malis.
non mihi respondent veteres in carmina vires;
plectra dolore tacent, muta dolore lyra est.]

The power of poetic creation, Sappho understood earlier, originally was granted to her by "nature" (31: "natura"), and then sustained for her by the sacred Muses: "yet for me the daughters of Pegasus dictate sweetest songs" (27:

"at mihi Pegasides blandissima carmina dictant"). As long as she employs her lyre in poetry, she shares a "common boon" (181: "communis munera") with Phoebus Apollo, the god of the creative arts: the divine power of creation. As long as she loves Phaon, she enjoys the beauty he emanates-- the beauty of Apollo and Bacchus, the beauty the goddesses love. Phaon, in the image Sappho perceives him, lives as a kind of human conductor emanating the beauty and inspiration of the gods to the art of Sappho. The loss of her lover and his love, therefore, means the loss of her source of divine inspiration to write poetry: "my genius had its powers from him, with him, they were swept away" (206: "ingenio vires ille dat, ille rapit"). Sappho's loss of Phaon brings to an end her love and her art, for her art is integral with her love. Indeed, the beauty Phaon manifests and the art he inspires in Sappho reveal in the poem the influence of the gods and their power in human affairs. The desolation of Sappho's life caused by the loss of love and art commends to her the desperate relief she hopes to find in suicide, an act that will impart the stern natural law of death on her life of former pleasure.

In this heroic epistle, Sappho remains bound in her isolation and misery unrelieved by the return of her lover, or the release from her adversity. In the human drama Ovid presents, she and the other heroines enjoy no reunitive discovery of their lovers' return. Neither do the heroines experience any amelioration of their sense of agonized

isolation. In despair born of agony, some seek suicide as a source of relief. Their complaints, therefore, are not mere "love" poems, but passionate testaments of human suffering in a world of human disorder. Human love in the Heroides appears sorrowful because the human propensity to violate redounds with traumatic consequences upon the violator as well as the violated. In the world of Ovid's Heroides, as seen in epitome in Sappho to Phaon, law functions as a constant retributive force against which human violation generates its own suffering. Sappho, who at first achieves a kind of communion with the gods in her ruleless love of Phaon, finds the communion short-lived as Phaon treats her without rule in his faithless desertion of her. Her loss is all the more painful to her as she reflects upon her former state of bliss. The only alleviation she finds in her suffering comes at the unified order of natural and divine powers: the Naiad as a goddess offers her the revelation of stern relief at the hands of the natural law of the cliff, which will result in destruction: The order of law--divine, natural, and human--is severe and unremitting in the world of Ovid's Heroides.

II

Culpability and violation distinguish Ovid's heroines, and it is not surprising to find that the heroes and heroines of Michael Drayton's Englands Heroicall Epistles (1597-

99) display a similar distinctive series of human portraits. Drayton's poems, of course, develop the basic characterization of culpability and violation within a rich framework of British history and Tudor politics that revitalizes the Ovidian legends into a genealogical and cultural fabric relevant to the contemporary Tudor audience. But Drayton's Heroicall Epistles also retain the fundamental dramatic situation found in the epistles of Ovid, "whose imitator," Drayton affirms, "I partly profess to be."¹¹ Drayton's heroes, like those of Ovid whom he imitates, appear immersed in a world of human adversity, violation, and culpability. Yet Drayton's vision of human drama in this struggle scans a world more complex than that of Ovid, for in several of Englands Heroicall Epistles man appears acutely aware of a specifically Christian divine power of providence and mercy which impinges upon human adversity, violation, and culpability. Drayton's Heroicall Epistles thus provided Pope with a ready example of transition, within the genre of the heroic epistle, from the ancient context of pagan law to a modern vision of Christian grace. Furthermore, four epistles of the twenty-four comprising Drayton's Englands Heroicall Epistles reveal the heroic character developed in terms of a specifically Christian heroism. In the two pairs of epistles between King John and Matilda and The Lady Jane Gray and the Lord Gilford Dudley, Drayton reveals the Christian hero confronted with a series of severe tests by sin to the strength of personal faith, resolve, and courage.

Drayton announces in "The Argument" to the epistle, King John to Matilda, the lawless means of coercion and deceit used by King John who "strives . . . / To get by force, what faire meanes could not winne." King John seeks to persuade Matilda to cast aside her vocation as a cloistered nun in order to be his lover. His disregard for law appears in his sacrilegious suggestions in perversion of the rituals of worship in the nunnery. If he were a monk, a role he may take ("Ile be a Monke, so I may live with thee," [70]), they would live together in sensuous pleasure as regular as the daily worship within the cloister. And he then enumerates the parts of her body that will serve as holy artifacts: her lips, "the sacrisy Bell" (72); her eyes, the Mattens Light (75-6); her curls, "Beads" (78); her brows, "his Booke" (78); her body, "the Crosse" he embraces (79-80); her "Brest the Altar" (84); her mouth, the "Psalter" (86); their kisses, their "Beades" (87); and his "Bed," her "shrine" (84). King John also seeks to coerce Matilda into submission by extortion: he banishes her father only to offer his return for her favor (177-78).

Matilda quickly places King John's letter in its moral context of sin, and identifies it as "Thy blamefull lines bespotted so with Sin" (17). She inveighs against his "unbridled lust" (97) and his "deceit for Sinne" (13), and vows to remain separate from him, even at the cost of suffering her father's continued banishment, to avoid these horrors. The resolve of Matilda in her love of God is

superceded in passion only by the love of man and God that unfolds in the final pair of epistles between Lady Jane Gray and Lord Gilford Dudley.

Lady Jane Gray sees the plight of herself and her husband, imprisoned for their attempted exclusion of Mary Tudor from the throne, as caused by a kind of original sin perpetrated by their two fathers, who used their marriage to claim the throne for their families and themselves:

They which begot us, did beget this Sinne,
They first begun, what did our griefe beginne,
We tasted not, 'twas they which did rebell,
(Not our offence) but in their fall we fell.
(35-8)

Drayton's historical gloss on these lines amplifies the sin in which Lady Jane Gray and Lord Dudley become involved: "Shewing the ambition of the two Dukes, their Fathers, whose pride was the cause of the utter overthrow of their children."¹² Lady Jane then echoes the deceit of ambition, and places her suffering in the moral context of Heaven and Hell:

Ah vile Ambition, how dost thou deceive us,
Which shew'st us Heav'n, and yet in Hell dost
leave us?
(43-4)

Although Jane Gray takes pains to insist on "our spotlesse Innocence" (50) as contrasted with the original sin of their fathers, she nevertheless admits an involvement (albeit unwilling) in the vain perpetration of "a lawlesse Usurpation" (65).

Jane's reflections turn repeatedly to the implications of "a lawlesse Usurpation," in which her personal

innocence seems but a small issue in the greater contest between human and divine law in the establishment of Henry VIII and the Tudor line of divinely constituted monarchs:

For what great HENRY most strove to avoid,
 The Heav'ns have built, where Earth would have
 destroy'd.
 And seating EDWARD on his Regall Throne,
 He gives to MARY all that was his owne,
 By Death assuring what by Life is theirs,
 The Lawfull claime of HENRIES Lawfull heires.
 By mortall Lawes the bond may be divorc'd,
 But Heavens decree by no meanes can be forc'd:
 That rules the case, when men have all decreed,
 Who tooke him hence foresaw who should succeed,
 For we in vaine relie on humane Lawes,
 When Heaven stands forth to pleade the righteous
 cause,
 Thus rule the Skies in their continuall course,
 That yeelds to Fate, that doth not yeeld to force.
 (101-14).

But this same righteous force of Heaven stands not only upon the inflexible application of its divine laws. It offers the sinner relief in the merciful efficacy of "Faith, Repentance, and Humilitie," (152). Lady Jane's epistle thus comprehends the theme of law seen throughout Englands Heroicall Epistles, but does not rest with the final efficacy of law. Rather her epistle seeks to reveal a divine order which, in addition to being responsible for the efficacy of law, transcends it in the fullness of time by the means of grace. "The Soule," Lady Jane assures her husband, "is Heavenly, and from Heaven reliev'd" (118). Then Lady Jane shows the responsive movement of the soul to the attraction it finds in "Celestiall Joyes" (161):

For each good motion that the Soule awakes,
 A Heavenly figure sees, from whence it takes
 That sweet Resemblance, which by power of kinde,
 Formes (like it selfe) an Image in the minde,
 And in our Faith the operations bee,
 Of that Divinenesse which through that we see;

· · · · ·
 Then draw thy Forces all up to thy Heart,
 The strongest Fortresse of this Earthly part,
 And on these three let thy assurance lye,
 On Faith, Repentance, and Humilitie;
 By which, to Heav'n ascending by degrees,
 Persist in Prayer upon your bended Knees:
 Whereon if you assuredly be stay'd,
 You need in Perill not to be dismay'd,
 Which still shall keepe you, that you shall not
 fall,
 For any Perill that you can appall:
 The Key of Heav'n thus with you, you shall beare,
 And Grace you guiding, get you entrance there;
 And you of those Celestiall Joyes possesse,
 Which mortall Tongue's unable to expresse.
 (133-8; 149-62)

Lady Jane's epistle establishes, in its concern with the nature of the human soul and the conditions under which it exists and suffers, a fully developed context of divine organization and providential mercy. The theme of the guiding force of binding law appears functional only within a clearly larger context of "Grace" and "Celestiall Joyes . . . Which mortall Tongue's unable to expresse" (160-2). Lady Jane suffers under the punishment of the human law duly endorsed by "Heavens decree" (108, above) in favor of the Tudor line of monarchal succession. The same Heavenly source, however, draws the human soul to itself with "The Key of Heav'n" (159), which is "Grace" (160). Lady Jane not only suffers under the law, but she also transcends it in her affirmation of faith in the fulfillment of a greater destiny shaped by divine grace. For this transcendence by

grace, Lady Jane utters her prayer of thanksgiving:

Then thanks the Heav'n, preparing us this Roome,
Crowning our Heads with glorious Martyrdome,
Before the blacke and dismall dayes begin,
The dayes of all Idolatrie and Sinne.
(163-6)

Her husband, Gilford Dudley, endorses her resolve in his reply: he, too, looks forward to Heaven, "when we shall so nappily be gone" (117).

The faith of Lady Jane and Gilford Dudley in a benign Providence completes in a personal drama the affirmation of such a Providence and cannot occur without a complementary affirmation in the efficacy of law in the world of nature and man. In the Heroicall Epistles, the affirmation of law provides the necessary frame of order for a specific manifestation of that law: the providential guidance of the history and destiny of England. From the depths of incipient civil war in the Richard II--Isabel epistles, Drayton takes us to a conclusion in which Lady Jane Gray affirms in a vision the guiding hand of Providence manifest in the birth of a destined righteous golden age of England to come in the reign of "faire Elizabeth":

Yet Heav'n forbid, that MARIES Wombe should bring
Englands faire Scepter to a forraine King;
But she to faire ELIZABETH shall leave it,
Which broken, hurt, and wounded shall receive it.
And on her temples having plac'd the Crowne,
Root out the dregges Idolatry hath sowne:
And Sions glory shall againe restore
Laid ruine, waste, and desolate before;
And from blacke Sinders, and rude heapes of Stones,
Shall gather up the Martyrs sacred Bones;
And shall extirpe the Pow'r of Rome againe,
And cast aside the heav'ie Yoke of Spaine.
(171-182)

Professor Richard F. Hardin cites Drayton's historical note to this passage: "A Prophecie of Queene Maries Barrenesse, and of the happie and glorious Raigne of Queene Elizabeth; her restoring of Religion, the abolishing of Romish Servitude, and casting aside the Yoke of Spain." Lady Jane Gray's prophecy stands proved and fulfilled for Drayton's Elizabethan reader, and for this reason Professor Hardin affirms that "Jane Gray's consolation to Dudley, . . . furnishes a grand close to the whole epistolary sequence, and a reassurance for Elizabethans of the unerring protection of Divine Providence."¹³ The overt vindication of Providence in Lady Jane Gray's epistle has been implied throughout all the epistles wherever we see the maintenance of law in the affairs of men: the workings of Providence are not only seen in visionary prophecy but also felt throughout in the experience of a constance governing force of law in the lives of men. In this sense, then, we can agree emphatically with Professor Hardin that "the Heroicall Epistles view the past in the traditional Augustinian concept of history as an extension of the will of God."¹⁴

In Ovid, human violation and culpability meet only severe retribution and suffering finds relief only in destruction of self. In Drayton, however, human sin and suffering occur in a providential world of purposeful redemptive powers. Violation is healed by love of man and God, and suffering reveals the capacity for merciful

forgiveness by the providential power of God as it functions in the world of men. Pope would have found in the tradition of the literary heroic epistle a clear development which embraced the whole range of classical and Christian values.

Pope could scarcely have been unaware of Drayton's Heroicall Epistles. Several specific parallels in diction, line and couplet structure, and dramatic situation between Eloisa to Abelard and many of Drayton's Heroicall Epistles verify unmistakably Pope's thorough and intensely detailed knowledge of his Elizabethan predecessor in the heroic couplet. The numerous close analogues (see Twick. Ed. notes) suggest the deep impression of Drayton's diction on Pope, especially within the epistle between King John and Matilda, and the epistle of Lady Jane Gray. In the epistle of King John and Matilda, Pope found extensive application of the special diction that Geoffrey Tillotson finds native to the funeral elegy and translations of epics (in addition to the heroic epistle) and Maynard Mack finds important in "the new vocabulary of sentiment set abroad by the gallants of the salons and the mystical writers of the Counter-Reformation": "murmur," "celestial," "relent," "tears," "sighs," "eyes," "dear," "gaze," "beauteous," "sad," "in vain," and "tremble."¹⁵ In Lady Jane Gray's epistle to her husband, Gilford Dudley, Drayton uses further the diction of the mystics in the description of heaven that Lady Jane envisions as her goal. Pope would not, of course, have been exposed to these kinds of diction only in

Drayton's epistles; he could, and did find them elsewhere, too. But the felicitous conjunction of style and content already so firmly cemented in the heroic epistle seems a most tempting center of poetic organization that Pope, in his quest for poetic unity of meaning, would have found difficult to ignore as he brought meaning to the epistle of Elcisa.

If we can agree that the numerous verbal and dramatic parallels between Eloisa to Abelard and Englands Heroicall Epistles indicate the probability of Pope's close knowledge with Drayton's work, then we might agree also that Pope would not have been likely to overlook the poignant suffering of lawless lovers and the dramatic hope of peace achieved by those who seek to know and love the supernatural source of all law, God. Certainly Pope's Eloisa engages willingly in a lawless love and suffers for it. Her insistence on the beauty of libertine love is famous (91-8). But, we should notice subsequently in Eloisa to Abelard how close Elcisa comes, in her development throughout her epistle, to Drayton's sensuous, but disciplined nun, Matilda.¹⁶ At the end of her epistle, Eloisa denies the sensuous image of Abelard as lover (see Chapter I) and strives to love him as a priest (325-36). In her rejection of sinful temptation, she seems to follow the dramatic example of Drayton's Matilda, who rejects King John's blasphemous sensuality to maintain her vows and honor as a nun.

Matilda, although not nearly so passionate nor enraptured by libertine love as Eloisa, reveals nonetheless in her "great and constant Resolution,"¹⁷ a sense of struggle against as yet ungoverned impulses within herself. She expresses her discomfort upon receipt of King John's letter in a psychomachia that may anticipate, in part at least, Eloisa's struggles:

I set me downe, at large to write my mind,
 But now nor Pen, nor Paper can I find;
 For still my passion is so powerfull o'r me,
 That I discerne not things that stand before me:

 I write, indite, I point, I raze, I quote,
 I enterline, I blot, correct, I note,
I hope, despaire, take courage, faint, disdain,
I make, alledge, I imitate, I faine:
Now thus it must be, and now thus, and thus,
Bold, shame-fac'd, fearlesse, doubtfull, timorous;
 My faint Hand writing, when my full Eye reads,
 From ev'ry word strange Passion still proceeds.
 (27-42, italics added)

The rhetoric of fluctuation and the specific antithetical structure of the italicized lines seems to provide a reinforcing rhetorical pattern to that Pope found in Hughes translation of the Letters of Abelard and Heloise.¹⁸ Eloisa's expression of her shifting and contradictory passions bursts forth in a very similar rhetoric of rapid antitheses:

Unequal task! a passion to resign,
 For hearts so touch'd, so pierc'd, so lost as mine.
 Ere such a soul regains its peaceful state,
 How often must it love, how often hate!
 How often, hope, despair, resent, regret,
 Conceal, disdain--do all things but forget.
 (195-200)

It seems unlikely that Pope, writing an heroic epistle about a nun torn between her vows to God and her love of a man,

would disengage his characteristic sensitivity to earlier English poetry and ignore Drayton's portrayal in an heroic epistle of a nun in a similar situation.

When Elcisa, the outcome of whose struggle is severely more tenuous than that of Matilda, envisions her own future death, she orients herself (with Abelard's help in the last rites) to a final state in which the love of Abelard, even as a priest and sanctified man, will be dissolved as the flesh is dissolved into dust. The importance of death in Eloisa to Abelard is not that it is sought by Eloisa with a kind of fatal and suicidal urgency, but rather that once it comes, or is seen as sure to come, it serves as a teacher, or rectifier, by which human values may be illuminated. Eloisa emphasizes this instructive function of death:

Ah no--in sacred vestments may'st thou stand,
The hallow'd taper trembling in thy hand,
Present the Cross before my lifted eye,
Teach me at once, and learn of me to die.
Ah then, thy once-lov'd Eloisa see!
It will be then no crime to gaze on me.
See from my cheek the transient roses fly!
See the last sparkle languish in my eye!
Till ev'ry motion, pulse, and breath, be o'er;
And ev'n my Abelard be lov'd no more.
O death all-eloquent! you only prove
What dust we doat on, when 'tis man we love.
(325-36)

In administering her the last rights, Abelard, Eloisa asserts, may teach her of death and absolution (316), but he may also see her willing receipt of death's convincing argument against her sexual passion for him. Death proves Abelard, and Eloisa herself, to be really mere dust. Knowing this

grim, but essential, fact allows Eloisa to accept the loss of her life willingly, for she knows that even the sensuous charms of Abelard will not endure beyond a limited span of time, soon to be terminated, Abelard's earlier and partial dissolution, his castration, was but a prefigurement of all dissolution into impotent dust. Eloisa imaged the castrated Abelard earlier in the poem as "dead" (258, 262). Now she calls on him to mark how firmly she faces and accepts the new force of death that proves all, "death all-eloquent":

Present the Cross before my lifted eye,
Teach me at once, and learn of me to die.
(327-8)

Eloisa's resolve, and her mode of expressing it, recall Drayton's Lady Jane Gray, who affirms her strength of resolve in love of God as she recounts her august family lineage and denies pride in her nobility: "Nor doe I boast of this, but learne to die " (92).

In each epistle, the ars moriendi implies the value of its artful goal and the meaning of its human act. To the recluse (Lady Jane, although not a nun, is imprisoned) the goal and the act are identical: to orient one's love to God is to love all beings in their order in Him. To love God is to seek Him, and for this reason the value and meaning of death then attain their most illuminating intensity. Learning to die thus becomes another way, more complete than the earlier, of living with God. To this divine source of love and grace do Eloisa and Jane Gray turn their aspirations.

Within the final pair of epistles, then, especially within the epistle of Lady Jane Gray, Drayton orients the Ovidian moral center of law to a new Christian center of grace. Drayton's Heroicall Epistles provided Pope with an already existing model for the adaptation of the classical emphasis upon the implacable suffering under law to the Christian emphasis on absolution by grace. The difference between Sappho to Phaon, with its sole expiation of guilt by suicide, and the later Eloisa to Abelard, with Eloisa's search for grace and her vision of Heaven, certainly suggests a movement from inflexible law to redemptive grace in Pope's poems similar to that he must have found in Drayton.

III

It should not be surprising that Pope should respond to the dramatic possibilities inherent and potential within the image of the Christian hero. The rich store of human drama contained within that image was available to Pope in a very wide range of 17th and 18th century literary and theological traditions. To disentangle all the possible sources of influence prominent in Pope's time would be a prodigious task; but a beginning may be made with an important literary commerce with the poetry of Richard Crashaw that Pope makes obvious in Eloisa to Abelard.

Pope, of course, would not have needed to depend on

Drayton's poems for so traditional a literary and meditative conceptual structure as the ars moriendi. Nor would he have needed to read Crashaw's Death's Lecture at the Funeral of A Young Gentleman (1652):¹⁹ and yet as the exhortation of Drayton's Lady Jane Gray to her husband to "learn to die" seems to provide a seminal hint for Eloisa's exhortation to Abelard as a priest to "Teach me at once, and learn of me to die" (328), just so, in this same passage in which Eloisa envisions her own death, her comprehension of the finality of death seems to echo the conclusive power of death in Crashaw's poem. As Eloisa envisions her own death, she enumerates the progressive extinctions of sexual potency within herself (329-34), and then exclaims her knowledge of what death, a constant test, reveals to be constant in physical human nature:

O death all-eloquent! You only prove
 What dust we doat on, when 'tis man we love.
(335-6)

The conclusion of Crashaw's Death's Lecture also enumerates the physical debilities of the human visage and structure (21-31) and arrives at much the same truth emergent from the test of human nature:

All daring dust and ashes! only you
 Of all interpreters read Nature true.
(31-2)

Eloisa's vision of her own death as a time of testing and proof recalls the revelation of the vision from the affirmation of death's power in Crashaw.²⁰

As a part of the image of "the blameless Vestal"

(207-22), envisioned by Eloisa as the archetypical Christian heroine, Pope includes line 212 in quotation marks and foot-
 notes it as "Taken from Crashaw."²¹ The line adds an
 important detail to the whole picture of the disciplined
 nun living in full commitment to the love of God: she sleeps
 "Obedient slumbers that can wake and weep." Pope has
 "taken," as the Twickenham Edition notes, l. 16 from Crashaw's
 "Description of a Religious House and Condition of Life
 (Out of Barclay)." In this little poem (39 lines), inspired
 by a section of John Barclay's (1582-1621) historical
 romance in Latin, Argenis (1621), Crashaw describes the
 peaceful and disciplined response of devout recluses, one
 of whom speaks as the narrator. We learn of the inhabitants'
 willing commitment as the narrator unfolds the rigorous duty
 they maintain to God: they have only

A hasty portion of praescribed sleep;
 Obedient slumbers? that can wake & weep.
 (15-16)

In spite of his quotation marks at Eloisa to Abelard, l. 212,
 Pope does not quote Crashaw's line 16 exactly. By omitting
 the question mark, he alters the syntax of Crashaw's line,
 resulting in the moderation of Crashaw's severe caesura--a
 moderation which makes the whole line more effectively
 indicative in mood, and therefore more coherent with the
 affirmative rhetoric of Pope's whole passage on the felici-
 ties of "the blameless Vestal."

The impact of the image in l. 212 emerges from the
 metaphor, "obedient slumbers." The metaphor insists that

a physical necessity, sleep, not normally subject finally to the human will, does submit to the firm will of "the blameless Vestal." Furthermore, the "slumbers" themselves become willful, and therefore can be seen as "obedient." The "slumbers" themselves, in an animated synecdoche, recognize over physical necessity the superior spiritual necessity of devotion to God. The oxymoronic strength of "slumbers that can wake" stresses the Vestal's subjection of her physical needs to her spiritual commitment. The whole couplet, ll. 211-12, places the "Obedient slumbers" and the waking that grows from them within a context of disciplined harmony in "equal periods," in which "equal" means not only a chronological and quantitative harmony, but also implies an older latinate root significance, "beneficent," from Latin aequus:

Labour and rest, that equal periods keep;
'Obedient slumbers that can wake and weep.'
(211-12)

All the cloistered activities of "the blameless Vestal" as bride of Christ, then, are harmonious and beneficent: "labour and rest," and their chiasmic structured parallels, "slumbers" and waking to weep. Eloisa's own state, of course, differs radically on the very basis of these cloistered activities: as a nun, her labors of penitence are performed "in vain" (15, 28, 177); she knows no "rest" nor any slumber free from "tumult" (4) and nightmares (223 ff.); and her waking hours are spent mainly with sensuous recollection of her love with Abelard--recollections all too frequently accompanied with the tears of despairing eros (45-8, 148).

In both Crashaw and Pope, the demands of physical nature are not ignored, but they are seen to be met as a part of a larger reality to which they must become adapted and harmonized. Pope's "blameless Vestal," like the subjects of Crashaw's "Description of a Religious House," is content because in her commitment to God she has successfully resolved the struggle of the physical against the spiritual, of nature against grace; she has subdued (not eradicated) the demands of nature to the demands of grace. She seeks the Bridegroom with

Desires compos'd, affections ever ev'n,
Tears that delight, and sighs that waft to heav'n.
(213-14)

In a letter addressed to Henry Cromwell, December 17, 1710, Pope offers his criticism and analysis of Crashaw's poetry. His judgment of Crashaw's poetry is severe, but not wholly unsympathetic:

All that regards design, form, fable
(which is the soul of poetry), all that
concerns exactness, or consent of parts
(which is the body) will probably be
wanting; only pretty conceptions, fine
metaphors, glittering expressions, and
something of a neat cast of verse (which
are properly the dress, gems, and loose
ornaments of poetry), may be found in these verses. ²²

It may, at first, be surprising to see Pope quoting from poetry he previously judged to lack "body" and "soul," but Pope's debt to Crashaw, in spite of his letter to Henry Cromwell, appears more extensive than the borrowing of a single line. The opening lines of Crashaw's "Description of A Religious House and Condition of Life" offered him

some "pretty conceptions" which appear adapted closely
in Eloisa to Abelard:

No roofes of gold o're riotous tables shining
Whole dayes and suns devour'd with endlesse dining;
No soules of tyrian sylk proud pavements sweeping;
Nor ivory couches costlyer slumbers keeping;
False lights of flairing gemmes; tumultuous joyes;
Halls full of flattering men & frisking boyes;
Whate're false showed of short & slippery good
Mix the mad sons of men in mutuall blood.
But WALKES & unshorn woods; and soules just so.
Unforc't & genuine; but not shady tho.
Our lodgings hard & homely as our fare.
That chaste & cheap, as the few clothes we weare.
Those, course & negligent, As the naturall lockes
Of these loose grooves, rough as th'unpolish'd
rockes.

(1-14)

Crashaw's description of the life led by those in the religious house reflects in its outward appearance the inhabitants' spiritual commitment to God. The first eight lines present an image of the enjoyment of physical pleasures and material wealth--an image that the religious house negates. Crashaw begins with a negative image of a corrupt "religious house" that shows a dedication to Mammon and Venus rather than Christ, to the ephemeral and therefore specious riches of a nature divorced from the Source of grace to whose service the religious house presumably is still outwardly dedicated. The opening of Crashaw's poem is ironical in which we see the obverse side, as it were, of what we might expect the poem to present from its title. In Crashaw's poem, we are immediately caught up in the ironical rhetoric of indirection as we first see what the "religious house" is not. The negative image, however, with

its cumulative detail of human sin in a cloister seems all too real and possible, as if the negative image of a "condition of life" in idolatrous worship of Mammon and Venus remains a threatening potential urging and tempting "a religious house" to fulfill.

The difference between the "false" (5) values of the first religious house and the "genuine" (10) devotion of the second hinges upon their respective uses of nature. Crasshaw does not oversimplify by showing the "genuine" religious rejecting nature: rather nature is preserved and cherished in its primitive and unpretentious beauty. The simplicity of nature surrounding the "genuine" religious house seems to suggest "the condition of life" therein: the "unshorn woods" (9), through or near which the "WALKES" would seem to extend, image forth "soules, just so/ unforc't & genuine" (9-10); and, reciprocally, the "condition of life" of the devotees reflects back to the condition of unspoiled nature as their "few clothes" are "course & Negligent, As the naturall lockes/Of these loose groves, rough as th' unpolish't rockes" (12-14, italics added). Conversely, the luxury and pride of ostentation of the first religious house reveal a disharmony that can only be an unnatural and perverse expression of religious duty. Indeed, the "description" of the first religious house is devoid of any mention concerning the overt presence of nature as a part of that "condition of life." Nature never enters the perverse image crowded as it is with gold roofs, dining tables, "tyrian sylk," "proud

pavements," "ivory couches," "flairing gemmes," "flattering men," "frisking boyes," and "false showes." The scene already clogged with things then brings forth the source of the clutter: a confused rout of human creatures linked together only by their common heritage of madness:

Whate're false showes of short & slippery good
Mix the mad sons of men in mutuall blood.
(7-8)

The mad "condition of life" in the opening eight lines of Crashaw's poem reflects qualitatively the moral and spiritual debility of those, referred to in the poem, who indulge themselves under the guise of serving God.

Crashaw's "Description of a Religious House and Condition of Life" seems to have impressed Pope, for when Eloisa undertakes to recollect her happiness when first committed to the life of a nun in Abelard's newly founded convent, the Paraclete, she recalls a scene analogous in form and content to Crashaw's opening lines:

Ah think at least thy flock deserves thy care,
Plants of thy hand, and children of they pray'r.
From the false world in early youth they fled,
By thee to mountains, wilds, and deserts led.
You rais'd these hallow'd walls; the desert smil'd,
And Paradise was open'd in the Wild.
No weeping orphan saw his father's stores
Our shrines irradiate, or emblaze the floors;
No silver saints, by dying misers giv'n,
Here brib'd the rage of ill-requited heav'n:
But such plain roofs as piety could raise,
And only vocal with the Maker's praise.
(129-40, italics added)

In the italicized lines, Eloisa clearly fixes the anti-theetical condition of the world, on the one hand, and on the other, the secluded convent. The world is "false" in the

sense that it stands antithetical to the second line of the couplet: it is false for it harbors false men who are not found in unadorned and terrifying primeval nature. As Eloisa interprets Abelard's escape, he returned not only closer to nature, but closer to God, for in primeval nature he finds a place receptive to "hallow'd walls." Nature, which first appears in its terrifying aspect (perhaps because it is closer to God), now appears benign, "the desert smil'd," as Abelard constructs a holy place of devotion to God. The "false world" thus stands successively in opposition to Abelard, who escapes from it to worship God; to nature, which receives Abelard, serves as the scene and medium of Abelard's worship, and in assent to Abelard's worship miraculously changes its aspect to bring forth a "Paradise . . . in the Wild;"²³ and, finally, by analogy, to God. Once again we see in Eloisa to Abelard an image of nature that serves as a link between human nature and grace: here, specifically, between Abelard and the nuns (including Eloisa) and the Holy Spirit, or the Paraclete, as Pope's note to line 133 affirms.²⁴

At line 135, Pope then shifts clearly into a rhetoric ("No . . . No . . . But . . .") similar in its antitheses to Crashaw's "Description of a Religious House" by first presenting us with a negative image of a perverse and even grossly uncharitable irreligious house. He makes more explicit than Crashaw the damage wrought by the worldly house's sins against its society (the "weeping orphan" [135])

whose patrimony the house has devoured) and against its God, "ill-requited" by its "bribes" (138). Like Crashaw, Pope contrasts the worldly house of luxury and pride to the pious house of plainness and humility. Eloisa makes a distinction between a richly endowed convent like the famed Santa Casa at Loreto²⁵ and Abelard's rustic retreat at the Paraclete. In John Hughes' 1713 translation of the Letters of Abelard and Heloise, we find Heloise making the same distinction:

These Cloisters owe nothing to publick
Charities; our Walls were not rais'd
by the Usury of Publicans, nor their
Foundations laid in base Extortion.
God whom we serve, sees nothing but
innocent Riches, and harmless Votaries,
whom you have placed here (p. 108).²⁶

It would be much too facile to ascribe Pope's lines on the founding of Abelard's convent solely to his major source, Hughes' translation. Crashaw's opening couplets in "Description of A Religious House" offer a possible additional analogue to the logical structure and meaning of Pope's lines. Pope even seems to recall the thought of Crashaw's striking beginning, "No roofes of gold" (1), when Eloisa specifies the humble character of the Paraclete's design: "But such plain roofs as piety could raise" (139). In Pope's repetition of the key verb "raise" (133, 139), we certainly see the possible imprint of the relevant passage from Hughes;²⁷ but we must, I think, see that Pope's imagination probably has conflated the rhetorical structure and content of images from both Hughes and Crashaw into one coherent and new image of the humble nun as Christian heroine in Eloisa to Abelard.

Other poems of Crashaw provided Pope with examples of the Christian heroine in adversity.²⁸ The Twickenham Edition twice refers to Crashaw's Alexias, The Complaint of the Forsaken Wife of Sainte Alexis (1648-52): once for a parallel in epithet choice ("Relentless walls," Eloisa to Abelard, 17; "relentlesse rockes," Alexias, II. 15), and once for a similar scene of future mourning over the tomb of the heroine (Eloisa to Abelard, 345 ff; Alexias, I. 25 ff.). Crashaw's adaptation in three elegies abbreviates Remond's Latin originals on Alexias,²⁹ but preserves the basic image of the grieving faithful wife whom Alexis has laid aside to follow Christ.³⁰ In her grief, Alexias considers what crime could have possibly caused her to deserve her rejection at the hands of Alexis:

And I, what is my crime I cannot tell.
 Unlesse it be a crime to have lov'd too well.
(III, 19-20)

The issue of crime in love arises in Eloisa to Abelard when Eloisa confronts the destruction of her happiness in love with Abelard; she reviews her early acquaintance with Abelard and isolates the point at which she first submitted to his persuasion:

From lips like those what precept fail'd to move?
 Too soon they taught me 'twas no sin to love.
(67-8)

She invokes the traditional Christian idea of love as "no sin," but with a significant difference. In so far as this love of Eloisa for Abelard does not turn away from God, then her love is literally "no sin." But the love Eloisa

describes is the product of Abelard's deceit "under Friendship's name" (60). She is moved "too soon" to believe that love, even love turned away from God, is "no sin." Her sin is then not in the love itself, but in the turning away from God which is the result of her sensuous desire for Abelard. She describes in a vivid scenic metaphor her willful turn away from God--a turn that drives her away from the "light" of God and "Back thro'" a pathway from which the light of God appears "Dim and remote":

Back thro' the paths of pleasing sense I ran,³¹
 Nor wish'd an Angel whom I lov'd a Man.
 Dim and remote the joys of saints I see,
 Nor envy them, that heav'n I lose for thee.
 (69-72)

Eloisa runs to the erotic attraction of Abelard's "tongue" and "lips" (67). Sensuality itself is "no sin" until she casts all desire for God aside in the exclusive indulgence of her sensuous love of Abelard. The result of Abelard's teaching Eloisa "Too soon" (68) appears to have been her failure to see and experience how love can lead her to God as well as Abelard. Her early experience with love seems metaphorically narrowed in the image of the "paths of pleasing sense" (69). She willfully confines her pleasure to the sensual love of man and willfully rejects God, "the joys of saints" (71) and "heav'n" (72), for Abelard (70, 72). Eloisa's "sin" results not merely from her love of Abelard, but from the deceit he uses to involve her unwittingly at first in a love that then encourages her to separate willfully herself from God. Abelard's deceit involves Eloisa

in love "Too soon" (68) for her to understand that love is "no sin" only when it leads consistently into love of God and to final union with Him. Through deceit by Abelard and her own resultant error, then, Eloisa shuts out God from her love, and in so far as she does this, she sins.

The effect of Pope's use of the situation he found in Crashaw's Alexias³² is thus two-fold. First, he establishes the exact conditions and circumstances of Eloisa's sin in love. She has been deceived and misled by Abelard, her preceptor, and she has been tempted into sin before she had acquired the understanding to resist it. Thus explained, Eloisa's struggles are more likely to generate sympathy in the reader. Secondly, he establishes at the same time the characteristics of a love which is "no sin": by involving herself in the issue of love as "sin" and "no sin," Eloisa already begins to rectify her understanding of love from the damage done to it by Abelard's deceitful teachings. Once she knows her sin, she may be able then to strive to achieve a love for God, and Abelard, in which there is "no sin."

The image of the Christian heroine that Pope found in Crashaw's Alexias implies a struggle in which Christian virtues are exercised by the heroine. As Eloisa calls for the traditional triad of theological virtues to empower her to sustain her search for God, she concludes her invocation of them in terms that again recall the poetry of Crashaw. She first invokes "grace serene" (297), or charity,³³ and

"hope" (299) with their apposite powers of directing the Christian heavenward to God. Then she calls for "faith, our early immortality" (300) and uses phraseology from Crashaw's "Answer" to Cowley in On Hope (51-2):

Fair Hope: our earlyer Heaven! by thee
Young Time is taster to Eternity.

Crashaw and Pope alike present memorable characterizations of the suffering Christian heroine, and this fact alone should render Pope's significant use of Crashaw's poetry to construct the drama in his own less strange. But Pope's significant use of Crashaw does not imply a weakening of distinctions between the two great poets: rather, it offers us a chance to define their difference of outlook more sharply. In the poem On Hope, Crashaw invokes Hope in terms of the highest goal she seeks:

True Hope's a glorious Huntresse, and her chase
The God of Nature in the fields of Grace.³⁴

The best of Crashaw's poetry with its ecstatic and impassioned vision of human nature in a state of grace seems to have at its very center the "chase" of "the God of Nature in the fields of Grace." Pope, however, resolutely seeks to treat the imprint of God in the workings of human nature, and how in its earthly setting, human nature itself must understand the created harmonies in the larger patterns of external nature around itself. Pope's poetry, then, especially Eloisa to Abelard, has as its central movement a search, or "chase," of the God of Grace in the fields of nature.

IV

In order to assess Pope's use of the literary traditions he found, we should begin with his paraphrastic translation³⁵ of Ovid's Sapho to Phaon, Wholly Translated, written perhaps as early as 1707, that ostensibly replaces the earlier version of that epistle translated, and severely abbreviated, by Sir Carr Scrope for the first edition of Ovids Epistles, Translat'd by Several Hands (1680).³⁶ Pope's poem links him directly to the Ovidian drama of human love set firmly in a world of violation and punishment, for he articulates in his poem the issues that reticulate in Ovid's Latin poem. His Sapho, like Ovid's, suffers most severely from the consequences of her own ungoverned sensuality, now, at Phaon's desertion, turned upon herself:

I burn, I burn, as when thro' ripen'd Corn
By driving Winds the spreading Flames are born:
Phaon to AETna's scorching Field retires,
While I consume with more than AETna's Fires:
No more my Soul a Charm in Musick finds,
Music has Charms alone for peaceful Minds.
(9-14)

Sapho eschews "the Lyrick Muse" (6) for "Elegies of Woe" (8) because of the rage in her "Soul"--a rage that "consumes" her peace in a hell of fire. Her state of self-consumption and self-destruction can be mitigated only by the unlikely return of Phaon. Like Ovid, Pope clearly shows Sapho's suffering at the outset of the poem as the direct result of her unrestrained, but fruitless, sensuality.

Pope then departs from the strict sense of Ovid's

Latin text to introduce a passage descriptive of Sapho's psychological state:

Soft Scenes of Solitude no more can please,
Love enters there, and I'm my own Disease.
(15-16)

The distinctive characteristic of this passage, its "tender melancholy,"³⁷ constitutes the effect of Sapho's restless and suffering "Soul" (13) on her perception of her environment. The normal pleasures of nature, clearly defined first as "Soft Scenes of Solitude" (15), have been perverted into scenes that no longer return their expected pleasure to the viewer. This effect on Sapho, we learn in line 16, has been caused by the intrusion of "Love" into the scene before her eyes, which makes the real absence of love with Phaon more painfully felt. She herself is the source of this intruding presence of "Love"; therefore, she is the source of her own pain and her "own Disease."

For Pope, however, Sapho's Hell does not confine itself within her own mind, but extends to embrace and color her whole world. He insists on a profound relationship between perceiver and thing perceived--a relationship that is not merely the effect of a simple psychological projection, but one that implies an ordered continuity of existence between human perceiver and thing perceived. The restlessness in Sapho that makes her her own disease denies her the enjoyment of nature's normally proffered "Soft Scenes of Solitude." Her breach of natural law in her incontinence perverts what should be the normal lawful

pleasures of nature external to her. She does not, in Pope's addition to Ovid, exist or act in a vacuum separate from nature, but her suffering under Phaon's faithless desertion mars her ability to see the whole of nature in which she exists. Pope's departure from the strict sense of Ovid's text, therefore, functions to reinforce what I have shown earlier to be Ovid's basic and pervading meaning in his Sappho to Phaon: love cannot be defined apart from the structure of law, moral and natural, and the suffering consequent upon violation, in the total order of nature.

Immediately following his departure from the strict sense of Ovid in lines 15-16, Pope returns to the Latin text only to modify it again. He omits Ovid's detailed list of Sappho's former Lesbian loves (15-19), perhaps for reasons of propriety:³⁸

No more the Lesbian Dames my passion move,
Once the dear Objects of my guilty Love.
(17-18)

This couplet abbreviates the list of names in Ovid and eschews the tabulation of the "hundred others" of Lesbia "loved" (19: "aliae centum . . . amavi") by Sappho not without "reproach" (19: "non sine crimine"). Pope's lines do not omit Sappho's sense of guilt, her reproach to herself for her "guilty Loves." Indeed, his abbreviation serves to underscore Sappho's loss of yet another pleasure as a result of her incontinence with Phaon, her "guilty Loves" in Lesbia.

Pope, then, departs from Ovid in order to dramatize more vividly the nature of Sappho's plight. She submitted

to Phaon of her own will, and however great his guilt of violation by subsequent desertion, she remains the sole source of what she calls her "Flame"--her incontinent and restless sexual passion:

All other loves are lost in only thine,
Ah Youth ungrateful to a Flame like mine!
(19-20)

Neither Ovid nor Pope in any way impose a merely prudish or arbitrary judgment of ascetic morality upon Sapho's sexual passion. In both poems her passion is seen to be incontinent because of the intense and unquenchable pain she complains that it inflicts. The image of the volcanic fires of Aetna, early established in both poems as the sensual quality of Sapho's "Flame," conveys a hellish quality to all her pangs of love for Phaon. In her incontinence, she is her own pain and her own hell.

Like Ovid's Sappho, Pope's Sappho, derives her creative power of poetry directly from divine sources--the Muses and Venus. Also, as in Ovid, her power of poetry is inspired by her exceptional agitation of soul in love:

The Muses teach me all their softest Lays,
And the Wide World resounds with Sapho's Praise.
Tho' great Alcaeus more sublimely sings,
And strikes with bolder Rage the sounding Strings,
No less Renown attends the moving Lyre,
Which Venus tunes, and all her Loves inspire,
To me what Nature has in Charms deny'd
Is well by Wit's more lasting Flames supply'd.
(31-8)

In line 38, Pope departs from the strict sense of Ovid's diction when he defines "Wit" in an image of "Flames," the same image Pope and Ovid often use to define Sapho's love

and passion for Phaon. Pope's departure here brings Sapho's love together with her wit, or the divinely inspired genius of her poetry, in a common image of "Flames." Both love and creativity are identified traditionally with the gods, and on rare occasions, are inspired by them into human breasts. We have seen earlier that the "Flames" of Sapho's love, in Phaon's absence, bring her only the super-human torments of the volcanic fires of Aetna, the traditional classical earthly link with the fires of hell. Her "Flames" of wit, under the severe duress of "wandring" (66) Phaon's ignoble desertion, as we have seen, first alter from lyric poetry of love to "Elegies of Woe" (8). Later, at the end of the poem, her art will dissipate into silence of the same "Woe" (231):

Alas! the Muses now no more inspire,
 Untun'd my Lute, and silent is my Lyre,
 My languid Numbers have forgot to flow,
 And Fancy sinks beneath a Weight of Woe.
 (228-31)

The loss of love, then, for Pope's Sapho as well as Ovid's, marks the loss of an intimate communion with the powers of the gods---powers that Sapho relinquishes in despair at the loss of Phaon:

My Phaon's fled, and I those Arts resign,
 (Wretch that I am, to call that Phaon mine!)
 Return fair Youth, return, and bring along
 Joy to my Soul, and Vigour to my Song:
 Absent from thee, the Poet's Flame expires,
 But, ah! how fiercely burn the Lover's Fires?
 (236-41)

Sapho places all her happiness upon Phaon's unlikely return, and, in effect, casts her own gods and their powers aside

in despair: "and I those Arts resign."

In the sister powers, love and poetry, for which she is renowned, Sapho finds the cause of her sensuous nature:

Cupid's light Darts my tender Bosom move,
 Still is there cause for Sapho still to love:
 So from my Birth the Sisters fix'd my Doom,
 And gave to Venus all my Life to come;
 Or while my Muse in melting Notes complains,
 My yielding Heart keeps Measure to my Strains.
 (80-94)

Her "yielding Heart," established by a law of fate, or "Doom" (91), and sharply augmented by her "melting" (93) poetic art, leads her to be "undone" (96). Sapho sees her fate "fix'd" (91) to suffer from her sensuous nature as well as the betrayal of Phaon's desertion: she suffers equally from her own "Flames" (38) as well as from his "Crimes" (141).

As in Ovid, Pope's Sapho recounts her ungovernable dreams of sexual intercourse with the absent Phaon (143-52). She admits, like Ovid's Sappho (Heroides XV, 132-33) that she cannot control herself before the "Fancy" (146) of his "visionary Charms" (147) in spite of her "blush" of guilty conscience:

Then fiercer Joys--I blush to mention these,
 Yet while I blush, confess how much they please!
 (153-4)

Instead of pleasure, she finds intense and "frantick" (159) misery, for her dreams of violent love were only tantalizing "sweet Delusions" that "fly" (155) at daybreak.

In contrast to the fanciful and fleeting pleasures

of Phaon's return in her dream, Sapho appears now "like some Fury" (159) wandering forlornly as a spirit of hell lost in a cursed wasteland:

As if once more forsaken, I complain,
And close my Eyes, to dream of you again.
Then frantick rise, and like some Fury rove
Thro' lonely Plains, and thro' the silent Grove,
As if the silent Grove, and lonely Plains
That knew my Pleasures, cou'd relieve my Pains.
(157-62)

The melancholy landscape of Sapho's distraught wandering marks the profound dissolution of the fleeting pleasure in her sensuous dreams to an enduring state of pain and despair. Pope derives from Ovid his melancholy landscape, for both he and Ovid show a nature barren to Sapho's search for gratification:

I view the Grotto, once the Scene of Love,
The Rocks around, the hanging Roofs above,
That charm'd me more, with Native Moss o'ergrown,
Than Phrygian Marble or the Parian Stone.
I find the Shades that veil'd our Joys before,
But, Phaon gone, those Shades delight no more.
(163-8)

The change she has undergone as a result of Phaon's unnatural desertion has violated not only herself, but also her perception of the order of nature. The sole response in an otherwise silent nature, rendered so in mourning at Phaon's desertion, emerges from the nightingale's solitary song of abandoned and violated love--the call of Philomela invoking the terror of Tereus' passionate violence against man and nature (173-8). Sapho's allusive image of Tereus conveys her realization, in this part of Pope's poem that deviates from the strict sense of Ovid,³⁹

that the crimes of men, herself and Phaon, as well as Tereus, violate the order of moral and natural laws in the world in which they must live.

In contrast to the sterile scene of darkness that Sapho must endure, Pope's "Watry Virgin" (186), like Ovid's Naiad, offers succour from her sacred spring whose purity and beauty is protected within "a Grove" (182) where

Eternal Greens the mossie Margin grace
Watch'd by the Sylvan Genius of the Place.
(183-4)

Although Pope's nymph of the spring speaks from the locus of a rejuvenated nature of "Eternal Greens," she, like Ovid's Naiad, offers Sapho release only in the act of suicide.

As in Ovid, Pope shows Sapho aware of the alternatives she faces. The loss of Phaon and his godlike beauty means the loss of a godlike inspiration in her life: her art. The loss of her creative power robs her of any future chance of bringing order to the chaos of her passion, as she has done in this very poem in the form of an impassioned plea for Phaon's return. She knows that the result of her "Lover's Fires" (241) for the absent Phaon will simply be that the fires will remain unrequited. Sapho's only recourse under the isolated hell of her own punishment is to seek the relief of suicide in "the raging Seas" (257), whose rage is more mild than the rage of torment she now suffers.

The comparison of Pope's translated heroic epistle, Sapho to Phaon, to his later original effort, Eloisa to Abelard, distinguishes two principal qualities about the latter poem. First, Eloisa to Abelard shows a deep impression left upon its theme and style from Pope's apprenticeship in the translation of Ovid.⁴⁰ Secondly, the key points of similarity in mode linking Eloisa to Abelard with Sapho to Phaon serve also to define, as we shall see, important distinctions between the poems. If we first examine the similarities the two poems present, we may then more sharply articulate the profoundly distinctive and original character of Eloisa to Abelard.

The opening scene of each poem presents the writer of the epistle not only "as treasuring her lover's letter and as struggling with tears and emotion in her attempts to answer it,"⁴¹ but also as isolated from social intercourse with human beings, and bound to a seemingly irrevocable past of violation and a present of sorrow. The anguish of Sapho, "I'm my own Disease" (16), seems comparable to the way Eloisa feels her own intense desire for Abelard to be the very source of her intense suffering:

In vain lost Eloisa weeps and prays,
Her heart still dictates, and her hand obeys.
(15-16)

"Her heart" as the traditional seat of her will turns "her hand," a synecdoche for her body, against her expressive

acts of contrition. Divorced from her will, Eloisa's contrition seems ineffective and useless to herself. Not only this, but her own will actively combats her contrition, and thus causes her to be her "own Disease."⁴²

Sapho and Eloisa are similar in their awareness of the centripetal source of the suffering they experience: themselves. They prove similar, too, in the way they find the loss of pleasure in themselves extend out from its center to drive pleasure from their environment of nature. Pope develops Sapho's awareness of her total loss of pleasure from its first revelation that "Soft Scenes of Solitude no more can please" (15), to a more thoroughly detailed description of the way nature in her perception turns into hell, a place of unrequited desire and recurrent torture. For instance, Sapho's visionary joys of recollected sexual intercourse with Phaon (143 ff.) cause her more anguish because they remain, however momentarily "sweet" (155), mere fleeting "Delusions" (155). Once lost, the delusions drive Sapho in torment out to seek fruitless refuge from a now hostile, not "Soft" (15), scene of solitude, a "lonely" (160, 161) and "silent" (160, 161) plain and grove. As we have seen earlier in the analysis of Pope's Sapho to Phaon, Sapho no longer enjoys a receptive and protective nature:

I find the Shades that veil'd our Joys before,
But, Phaon gone, those Shades delight no more.
(167-8)

In Sapho to Phaon, ll. 143-4, the antithesis of pain and pleasure, "Care"--"Delight" (143) and "Longing"--

"Dream" (144), establishes a polarity of reference that Pope seems to develop in a similar scene of a night of torment in Eloisa to Abelard, ll. 223-48. Eloisa remarks at the outset the extreme and antithetical distance of her own pleasures from those of the holy nun she has envisioned immediately before:

Far other dreams my erring soul employ,
Far other raptures, of unholy joy.
(223-4)

As impassioned sexual sensibility "stir[s] within [her] ev'ry source of love" (232), but in spite of her love so sharply awakened, Eloisa finds no satisfaction with her own nature, nor any complementary fulfillment from external nature. However "soft" and "dear" (240), her erotic visions of Abelard prove "illusions" and "deceits" (240).

As in Sapho to Phaon, perceived nature seems real nature for Eloisa. She makes her own hell out of nature as she wanders in a distraught vision with Abelard,

Thro' dreary wastes, and weep each other's woe;
Where round some mould'ring tower pale ivy creeps,
And low-brow'd rocks hang nodding o'er the deeps.
(242-4)

The allusive diction suggestive of the sensibility of Milton's L'Allegro, "There under Ebon shades, and low-brow'd Rocks" (8), suggests more than the general influence of Milton on 18th century poetry: it suggests Pope's use of a particularly responsive mode of human perception.⁴³ Eloisa's personal hell organizes her response to nature; for, in effect, it obliterates the distinction between

interior personal human nature and exterior environmental nature, between subjective nature and objective nature. To Eloisa, external nature appears as a hell on earth because her perception of external nature occurs within her comprehensive moral experience of sin and suffering. This is not to say simplistically that Eloisa extends, or transfers, her immediate mood to nature. Rather, Pope insists, it would seem that her act of perception remains inseparable from her total moral experience of evaluation and understanding. Her experience of external nature, then, must be seen as but a part of a larger whole--a whole moral and evaluative context of human experience that the poem has been primarily unfolding from its very first line. For example, the wasteland of Eloisa's night-marish vision quoted above suggests two analogous experiences described in Dryden's translation of the Aeneid, one of which is cited as an analogue in the Twickenham Edition. In the fourth book, Dido laments the desertion of Aeneas, and suffers the anguish of his lost image in her dreams:

stern Aeneas in her dreams appears,
 Disdainful as by day: she seems, alone,
 To wander in her sleep, thro' ways unknown,
 Guideless and dark; or, in a desert plain,⁴⁴
 To seek her subjects, and to seek in vain.
(Aeneid IV, 676-80)

The landscape of Dido's dream does not exist detached from her as she perceives it, but instead it becomes a part of her comprehensive emotional experience.

Eloisa's "dreary wastes" (242) suggest also another scene from Dryden's Aeneid, Book VI, as Aeneas and the Cumaean Sybil begin their journey into the underworld:

Obscure they went thro' dreary shades, that led
 Along the waste dominions of the dead.
(Aeneid VI, 378-9)

Pope's description of nature perceived as hell helps to fix the quality of Eloisa's experience. Her "wandring" (241) in nature clearly becomes in her experience a journey through hell--a hell that is not merely transferred from within her to external nature but is inseparable from her receptive experience of nature.

Among many scenes in Eloisa to Abelard that recall similar scenes in Sapho to Phaon, the analogous scenes of supernatural communication in each poem point beyond similarity to a distinct and crucial difference between the basic thematic and structural coherence of each poem. In Sapho to Phaon, Ovid's as well as Pope's, we have seen how a Naiad, "a Watry Virgin" (Pope, 186) stands before the weeping Sapho and points the way to her relief by the stern means of suicide. Only in this implacable way of self-extinction can Sapho relieve the disordered state of her unrequited love. Alive, her loveless life without Phaon is totally disordered: dead, she will find what relief the nature goddess offers only if she literally disintegrates herself on the rocks below "Apollo's Fane" (Pope, 190). The law of nature embodied in the nature goddess, the Naiad, offers relief only at the fullsome

price of extinction under its power--an extinction that, of course, precludes any reunion with the separated Phaon.

In Eloisa to Abelard, however, as we have seen in Chapter I, Eloisa attains in her vision of her death the prospect of restored union with Abelard. When she envisions Abelard as a priest, she experiences the manifest union of grace and nature in her love of Abelard, who as sanctified man, becomes the means of her consummate love of God. Like Eloisa's visual perception of nature, her visionary perception of Abelard engages her whole moral and spiritual existence. Reality for Eloisa comes to be not merely material, but moral and spiritual. Her perception of Abelard as a priest comes only after long suffering, and agonized resistance to persistent temptation. Even before her vision of Abelard as a priest, she must receive a supernatural revelation in order for her natural suffering in the convent cell to become fruitful. The importance in Eloisa to Abelard, then, of the scene in which Eloisa experiences the supernatural communication in her convent cell far exceeds the importance of the analogous scene in Sapho to Phaon. In Eloisa to Abelard, the revelation by the supernatural voice grants Eloisa knowledge of absolution (316) to assist her will in resisting her as yet most insidious temptation: the sensual image of Abelard, not as priest, but as lover, sucking the last breath of her sexual "death" in the act of sexual intercourse. The "Spirit" voice (305) that calls Eloisa functions in the poem as the

final step in her preparation to accept the love of Abelard in the only way by which she can enjoy that love not in a "partial" (126) way exclusive of God, but only within a whole order of love for God, and for Abelard in God. The supernatural voice in Eloisa to Abelard, perceived gratuitously by Eloisa, reveals nothing less than the efficacy of grace as it works upon human sin and suffering.

Eloisa draws attention to the setting of the scene in her cell contiguous to the dead as she leans "Propt on some tomb, a neighbour of the dead" (304). We are prepared, with Eloisa so close to the dead, to accept her perception of a communication to her from the dead. When Eloisa asserts that "a Spirit calls/ And more than Echoes talk along the walls" (305-6), the responsive reader is less likely to question her, for the setting of the scene so deep within memento mori evokes the communicative and homiletic potential of her surroundings. The words of the "Spirit" are borne "in" the "wind," and we need not ignore this detail unless we refuse to see the effective union of nature and supernature that functions in the image to bring spiritual communication to Eloisa. The convent "walls" themselves, part of the architecture consecrated to the Source of Grace, also function as a medium to convey information to Eloisa. The "wind" and "the walls" carry the voices of spirits who bring by their revelation a grace-filled gift to Eloisa: they relieve her utter isolation, which, as we have seen, had been a poignant quality of her

sense of loss in Hell (ll. 38, 173-6). In this very specific way, the walls of Eloisa's convent cell that imprison her afford a means of her reception of the power of grace which figuratively and literally encompasses her suffering. The walls, consecrated to God, embrace Eloisa as she struggles to consecrate herself to Him. The situation in which she had suffered earlier as a kind of Hell of isolation from God now becomes not a prison far away from God, but a place as fully comprehended by His Grace as it is comprehended by the walls which serve as the medium of God's Grace.

Unlike the analogous offer of death in Sapho to Phaon, the call of the "spirit" in Eloisa to Abelard does not offer simply the cessation of suffering at the natural termination of existence in death. In Eloisa to Abelard, the "Spirit" elaborates in detail the nature of death and what it implies for Eloisa. In Death, "all is calm in this eternal sleep" (313)--"all is calm," not merely insensible or non-existent. Existence is not lost in death but changed: rather than existence, certain attributes are lost:

Here grief forgets to groan, and love to weep,
 Ev'n superstition loses ev'ry fear.
 For God, not man, absolves our frailties here.
 (314-16)

The "Spirit" assures Eloisa that she need not fear interminable predicaments sustained only by the limitations of the human mind and soul on earth: groaning grief, weeping love,

and fearful superstition. Instead of stark grief, anguish, and fear (the final state of Sapho, for instance), death will bring Eloisa closer to the grace of absolution offered freely by her God. The grief, anguish, and fear Eloisa harbors will be absolved along with all her other "frailties."

The analogous scenes of supernatural communication in Eloisa to Abelard and Sapho to Phaon continue to set off in sharp relief the differences that persist within the analogy. The emphatic denial of man as the source of absolution in line 316 defines for us a further specific difference between Eloisa to Abelard and Sapho to Phaon. In Eloisa to Abelard, "God, not man, absolves our frailties here;" in Sapho to Phaon, Sapho implores Phaon as the only source of her rejuvenated life free from the oppression of anguished unrequited love:

Return fair Youth, return, and bring along
Joy to my soul, and vigour to my song:

· · · · · Phaon · · · · ·
if not from Phaon I must hope for Ease,
Ah let me seek it from the raging Seas.

(238-9; 256-7)

Eloisa learns from the "Spirit" voice that God alone can bring her peace to relieve her fruitless anguish. This fact seems a necessary requisite to Eloisa's subsequent experience of love for Abelard the priest as part of her whole love of God.⁴⁵ Only through God can Eloisa find the peace to sustain a renewed love for Abelard. And the death proffered by the "Spirit" voice does not mean, as it does

for Sapho, mere extinction, but an ascension into Heaven in the company of eternal seraphs whose "breasts glow" (320) with the flaming love of God:

I come, I come! prepare your roseate bow'rs,
 Celestial palms, and ever-blooming flow'rs.
 Thither, where sinners may have rest, I go,
 Where flames refin'd in breasts seraphic glow.
 (317-20)

The grace of absolution, revealed and asserted to Eloisa, affirms the merciful succour available to her in the presence of her God. Empowered by this affirmation of a merciful God, Eloisa is then able to conceive the vision of Abelard as a priest functioning as an instrument of God's mercy and love (325-8).

In the most general sense, of course, we may define the difference shown in these two analogous narrative scenes as the difference between the pagan epistle of Ovid, and the explicit Christian context of Pope's Eloisa and Abelard story. But the details of Eloisa to Abelard examined above belie any mere superficial conception of the Christian context of Eloisa to Abelard. We see Eloisa as she experiences the gradual unfolding of a just but merciful world in which suffering implies not merely a closed world of temporal discomfort, but opens upon a new world of union with God and man. The new world constitutes Eloisa's desire, "I come, I come!" (317), and her vision of nature perceived in a new poetic reality. The metaphors of nature used to describe eternal heaven show nature renewed into a changed yet unchanging life. In this vision of nature recreated

into eternal Heaven, Eloisa, now briefly but indelibly like "the blameless Vestal" (207), experiences her own ecstasy in "Visions of eternal day" (222).

Eloisa's designation of her envisioned heaven as a place "where sinners may have rest" (319) recalls her earlier prayer for grace uttered immediately before the call of the "spirit" we have examined above:

O grace serene: oh virtue heav'nly fair:
 Divine oblivion of low-thoughted care:
 Fresh blooming hope, gay daughter of the sky:
 And faith, our early immortality:
 Enter each mild, each amicable guest;
 Receive, and wrap me in eternal rest:
 (297-302)

She prays for a reciprocal influx of "grace serene" and its attributes into herself ("Enter," 301), and herself into the nexus of "grace serene" ("Receive, and wrap me in eternal rest," 302). Her prayer is answered by the "Spirit" voice that affirms the effective operation of grace on the soul of a human sinner, and assures her of "eternal rest"; "all is calm in this eternal sleep" (313). This Eloisa affirms for herself in her own vision of a heaven "where sinners may have rest" (319).

The prospect of heaven, absolution, and eternal rest that opens before Eloisa in her vision does not, of course, abrogate the necessity of her continued struggle nor the possibility of her continued suffering as long as she lives. But we must conclude from the foregoing comparison of Sappho to Phaon with Eloisa to Abelard that although important similarity in the poetic mode of perception of

nature exists between the two poems, even greater dissimilarity distinguishes the precise ontology of nature in each poem. In Sapho to Phaon we see in nature a closed and implacable world of suffering in which Sapho's complaint and suicide remain fruitless. But in Eloisa to Abelard, Eloisa's mystical experience of revelation by voice and vision is capable of assuming a new order of "roseate bow'rs, / Celestial palms, and ever-blooming flow'rs"--an order of grace by which suffering for the violation of law may be fruitful for the human being who endures the suffering with faith, hope, and the love of God. Nature, in Eloisa to Abelard, is incomplete in reference to itself for the love of God that Eloisa seeks (128, 205-6, 297-302), she finds in nature transfigured and in the "Spirit" voice of the "sainted maid" (312) with its divine revelation of the grace of absolution proffered by "God, not man" (316).

VI

Although deceived and tempted by Abelard, Eloisa sins, an act for which she alone is responsible when she willfully seeks his sensual love after she has become the spouse of God at her taking of the veil. She often conflates Abelard with the Christian Godhead, and grants to her earthly lover the devotion she, as the spouse of Christ, owes to Christ. By means of an allusion to Milton's Paradise Regained, Pope strengthens the development of a

pattern in Eloisa's conflation of creature and Creator.

From the beginning of her epistle, Eloisa conflates Abelard with Christ, creature with Creator, lover with Redeemer, for the "name" she claims she "must kiss" (8) is not the Holy Name of Christ, nor the Gospel that the priest kisses and venerates during the Mass, but the name of her lover, Abelard. In her blasphemous parody of a divine meditation on the Holy Name of Christ,⁴⁶ beginning at line 9, she calls Abelard's name "dear," as if she cherished that name as much as she should cherish the Holy Name of Christ. She extends the theological scope of the blasphemy in the oxymoron, "dear fatal name" (9), which suggests not only the loving aspect in the Holy Name, but also a severely judging, even primitive and magical, power released by the Name of Christ the Judge, or by His Old Testament aspect in Jehovah, the God of Wrath. In fear of the dread consequence of uttering that "dear fatal name," Eloisa implores her "heart" (11), the center of her soul and seat of her will, to confine and obscure it:

Dear fatal name! rest ever unreveal'd,
Nor pass these lips in holy silence seal'd.
Hide it, my heart, within that close disguise,
Where, mix'd with God's, his lov'd Idea lies.
(9-12)

But Eloisa's whole difficulty in fulfilling her commitment to God in the convent grows from the bifurcated state of devotion in her heart. She cannot "hide" the name of Abelard within her heart, for her Christian God searches the hearts of men.⁴⁷ Her heart presents no "close disguise,"

moreover, to the God whose own image, or "lov'd Idea," can be found there where He placed it at Eloisa's creation. The "mix'd" state of God's "Idea," or image, with that of Abelard in her heart reveals the sufficient cause of her sin: her will is "mix'd" in devotion to two lovers at the same time. The entire blasphemous parody of a divine meditation on the Holy Name completes its ironic cycle when her "mix'd" heart "dictates" (16) her true will against the vain hope of suppression: Abelard's name "appears /Already written" (14) as an outward sign of a true inward reality. Eloisa does not clearly distinguish, at this early point in her epistle, between the sacred Name and Image of God, and the profane name and image of Abelard; between the love of the Creator, and the love of the creature: this is her sin, and it appears in her divine meditation as a parody of sacred worship.

A further parody of divine worship seems to tumble from Eloisa's lips as she implores Abelard to write to her in order that she at first may share, then completely assume all his sufferings upon herself. Her plea parodies the desire of the worshiper to share in the grief of Christ crucified and ultimately to bear the full burden of the Cross as Christ did.

Eloisa further conflates Abelard with Christ in a compound allusion to the Transfiguration of Christ (Matt. 17:1; Mark 9:2; Luke 9:28) and The Visitation of the Virgin Mary (Luke 1:26) when she recounts her first meeting with

Abelard. We examined the passage in which this occurs (59-72) earlier in reference to Crashaw, and noted then the emphasis Eloisa places upon Abelard's deceit. She does not, however, neglect her own willingness to be deceived:

My fancy form'd thee of Angelick kind,
Some emanation of th' all-beauteous Mind.
Those smiling eyes, attemp'ring ev'ry ray,
Shone sweetly lambent with celestial day:
Guiltless I gaz'd; heav'n listen'd while you sung;
And truths divine came mended from that tongue.
(61-66)

Abelard stands before Eloisa transfigured from a human being into an angelic being. Eloisa sees him related somehow to God ("th' all-beauteous Mind") not merely as creature, made from nothing, to his Creator; but, as the word "emanation" suggests, as a being that shares God's nature as a result of an outpouring, or flowing forth, of part of His nature. Christ-like, Abelard's eyes convey a benign aspect to this brilliant epiphany of divinity. The God on whom it is fatal to cast one's eyes here consciously subdues, or attempers, his fatal brilliance.⁴⁸

Eloisa repeats her erroneous conflation of Abelard and Christ in an even more startling instance when she recounts the destruction of her original happiness as Abelard's libertine mistress (73-98). She recalls the violence and mutilation inflicted upon Abelard when he was castrated by her vengeful uncle:

Alas how chang'd! What sudden horrors, rise!
A naked Lover bound and bleeding lies!
(99-100)

The "naked Lover" clearly refers to Abelard. But Eloisa,

as a nun, has committed herself to a life as "the spouse of God" (177); therefore, the only "Lover" she should have is Christ. Indeed, the graphic brutality of her vision recalls not only the recent violence perpetrated upon her mortal "Lover," Abelard, but it also recalls the ancient and perpetual violence inflicted upon her divine "Lover," Christ, in the Crucifixion of his mortal body. Which "naked Lover" does Eloisa mean?⁴⁹

The haunting presence of Christ, the Divine Lover, in Eloisa's vision of calamity reveals clearly her betrayal of her commitment to Him. Her vision of "A naked Lover bound and bleeding" as a vision of Abelard parodies in blasphemy another traditional divine meditation: the meditation on The Crucifixion. Often beginning with an effort to envision Christ suffering on the Cross, the exercitant would try to "Be present, then, in spirit at all He does."⁵⁰ Eloisa's reminiscence of Abelard's mutilation seems to follow in parody this general method of formal meditation, for she agonizes as if she were "present" with her suffering "Lover":

Where, where was Eloise? her voice, her hand,
 Her ponyard had oppos'd the dire command.
 Barbarian stay! that bloody stroke restrain;
 The crime was common, common be the pain.
 I can no more, by shame, by rage suppress,
 Let tears, and burning blushes speak the rest.
 (101-106)

The rage, shame, and tears that Eloisa suffers for Abelard's sake should be suffered for Christ's pain and humiliation at the Crucifixion. Eloisa's meditation deeply stirs her sympathy, but for Abelard, not primarily for Christ on the

Cross. The terms she uses to describe the vision of mutilation suggest a meditation on Christ suffering. Her devotion to Abelard, however, conflates him with Christ, and results in another parody of divine meditation.

Earlier, in Chapter I, we noticed in Eloisa's account of her "institution as a nun," ll. 107-18, that her attention was devoted to Abelard as if he, not God on the Cross, were the center of her vows. When Eloisa then moves forward in her recollection of the past, she reminds Abelard of his founding of the Paraclete and his responsibility to the nuns who inhabit it (129-48).⁵¹ Retreat from the world brought the youthful nuns out of the wilderness of this world into a newly restored "Paradise":

From the false world in early youth they fled,
By thee to mountains, wilds, and deserts led.
You rais'd these hallow'd walls; the desert smil'd,
And Paradise was open'd in the Wild.

(131-4)

In an allusion to Milton's Paradise Regained I, 1-7,⁵² Pope shows Eloisa's radical inability to distinguish between Abelard and Christ. In Milton, the "one man" who "rais'd" and restored "Eden . . . in the waste Wilderness" is, of course, Christ:

I who erewhile the happy Garden sung,
By one man's disobedience lost, now sing
Recover'd Paradise to all mankind,
By one man's firm obedience fully tried
Through all temptation, and the Tempter foil'd
In all his wiles, defeated and repuls't,
And Eden rais'd in the waste Wilderness.

(1-7)

To Eloisa, Abelard performs the traditional function of

Christ as portrayed in Paradise Regained: he is her redeemer who reconstructs an earthly "Paradise" in the earthly "Wild." Once again, Eloisa has radically conflated the identity of Abelard with the identity of Christ.

Like Christ in His traditional role as Creator, Abelard "rais'd these hallow'd walls" (133). Clearly, then, Eloisa emphasizes Abelard's creative act as well as his redemptive function. Therefore, when she verifies the maintenance of plain piety within the walls of the convent Abelard has built, as distinct from the "false world" whence "they fled" (131), she generates ambiguity in the identity of the "Maker" whose values the nuns pursue:

No silver saints, by dying misers giv'n,
Here brib'd the rage of ill-requited heav'n:
But such plain roofs as piety could raise,
And only vocal with the Maker's praise.
(137-40)

The "Maker," in line 140, seems clearly to refer to God, especially since the "vocal" praise of the nuns stands in sharp antithesis to the hollow bribery that induces "the rage of ill-requited heav'n" in line 138. But since Eloisa just had written that Abelard "rais'd these hallow'd walls," more than one "Maker's praise" may be the object of the vocal devotions in the convent Abelard founded. Eloisa then moves to "praise" of Abelard, and distinguishes him once again for the ameliorative power of his eyes, the sight of which transforms her whole world into a paradise of glory:

Thy eyes diffus'd a reconciling ray,
 And gleams of glory brighten'd all the day.
 (145-6)

Eloisa's devotion to "the Maker" conflates God and Abelard into an ambiguous union.

If Eloisa's love for Abelard becomes the occasion of her turning away from God, love also retains its absolute capacity for leading her back to God: love in itself is "no sin," as Pope's use of Crashaw verifies in Eloisa to Abelard. Similarly, Eloisa's conflation of Abelard and Christ leads her into a radical dislocation of her understanding and devotion: she worships Abelard instead of Christ. But may not her love for Abelard, in spite of its blasphemy, move her closer to a capacity to love God by increasing her capacity to love one of His creatures other than herself?

After she has learned of God's grace in absolving sins (316), and after her vision of Abelard as priest administering to her the last rites (325-8) at her death, Eloisa casts her vision forward to the future death of Abelard. In a flood of divine light, she once again conflates Abelard and Christ in a prayerful vision of the Ascension (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51; John 20:17):

Then, too, when fate shall they fair frame destroy,
 (That cause of all my guilt, and all my joy)
 In trance ecstatic may thy pangs be drown'd,
 Bright clouds descend, and Angels watch thee round,
 From opening skies may streaming glories shine,
 And Saints embrace thee with a love like mine.
 (337-42)

The last line of her vision of Heaven opening in "streaming

glories" reveals what Eloisa's conflation of Abelard and Christ in her love has implied throughout the epistle. The conflation of the sacred Christ with the profane Abelard means not merely a corruption of the sacred by the profane: this state of sin is but one possible result potential in the conflation of the sacred with the profane. The other possible result manifests the capacity for love to be "no sin" and to draw the individual increasingly further outside himself to love another creature selflessly. Eloisa's prayerful wish that Abelard ascend (without her) to Heaven at his death surely achieves a selfless expression of love. She prays that Abelard may receive the full blessing of God's sacred love, and the path to her brilliant vision of angels and saints in the triumphant light of God has not excluded profane love, but fulfilled it. The simile, "and Saints embrace thee with a love like mine," cannot mean, given its context in a beatific vision, that Eloisa sees the refined love of Saints as profane and sexual. In its context of beatific vision, the simile asserts a continuity and homogeneity between the Saints' love of Abelard ascending and Eloisa's love of Abelard, the sanctified man as priest. Eloisa's commitment as a nun to the sacred love of God is not merely mocked; corrupted, and defeated by her love of Abelard. Instead, Eloisa's love of Abelard, with its sinfulness absolved by grace, results in the increase and rectification of her whole capacity to love. If the "Saints embrace" Abelard "with a love like [hers]," then conversely her love must be seen to be Saint-like.

NOTES

¹ Joseph Spence, Anecdotes, Observations, and Characters of Books and Men, ed. S. W. Singer (London, 1820), p. 280.

² See especially Geoffrey Tillotson, On the Poetry of Pope, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1950); and the "Introduction" to An Essay on Criticism in Audra and Williams, pp. 197-232.

³ Corres., I, 21. Walsh's letter of 20 July, 1706.

⁴ John Dryden, Of Dramatic Poesy and Other Critical Essays, ed. George Watson, 2 vols. (London: Everyman's Library, 1962), I, 267. Hereafter cited as Watson ed. Cf. The Spectator, No. 618, Nov. 10, 1714.

⁵ "Argument," Twick. Ed., p. 318.

⁶ Geoffrey Tillotson, Pope and Human Nature (Oxford, 1958), p. 198.

⁷ Tillotson, On the Poetry of Pope, p. 15.

⁸ L. P. Wilkinson, Ovid Recalled (Cambridge, 1955), pp. 88-9.

⁹ See Wilkinson, pp. 83-5, for a discussion of the authenticity of the epistles, especially numbers XVI-XXI.

¹⁰ See Grant Showerman's introduction to his translation of Ovid: Heroides and Amores, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), p. 9. See Wilkinson, pp. 95 ff., for a valuation of the Heroides' rhetorical agility.

¹¹ The Works of Michael Drayton, ed. J. W. Hebel, with introductions, notes, and variant readings by K. Tillotson and B. H. Newdigate, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1961), II, 130; hereafter cited as Hebel ed. All quotations from Drayton are taken from this edition.

¹² Hebel ed., II, 300.

¹³ "Convention and Design in Drayton's Heroicall Epistles," PMLA, LXXXIII (1968), 40.

¹⁴ Hardin, p. 41.

15 Introduction to Eloisa to Abelard in Major British Writers, gen. ed. G. B. Harrison, 2 vols. (New York, c. 1954), I, 785.

16 Twick. Ed., p. 303, and n. 5, does not explore this relationship.

17 Hebel ed., II, 159.

18 cf. Chapter I.

19 All Crashaw quotations and titles are taken from The Poems, English, Latin and Greek, of Richard Crashaw, ed. L. C. Martin, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1957), hereafter cited as Martin ed. Variant titles for Death's Lecture appear in the 1646 and 1648 editions of the poem.

20 See also Crashaw's A Hymn to the Name and Honor of the Admirable Sainte Teresa, ll. 54, 182 (1652 ed.; l. 183 in 1646 ed.).

21 Twick. Ed., p. 337, l. 212 n.

22 Corres. I, 110. Mario Fraz discusses Pope's assessment of Crashaw in the letter to Cromwell in The Flaming Heart (New York, 1958), p. 251.

23 We shall have occasion to return to these lines in reference to Milton below.

24 Cf. Chapter II on the union of nature and grace.

25 Cited in Twick. Ed., p. 331, l. 137n.

26 Cited in Twick. Ed., pp. 330-1, ll. 135 ff. n.

27 We also may hear an echo of Hughes in ll. 131-2; compare Hughes as quoted in Twick. Ed., p. 330, ll. 129 ff. n.

28 Cf. note 20 on A Hymn to . . . Sainte Teresa.

29 Martin / ed., pp. 450-2.

30 Alexis' desertion took place on their wedding day.

31 Professor Henry Pettit sees an epitome of Lockean and Hutichisonian material psychology in Pope's "paths of pleasing sense" (69) in his brief essay, "'The Pleasing Paths of Sense': The Subject Matter of Augustan Literature," in Literature and Science (Oxford, 1955), pp. 169-74. But the closest analogues from Dryden's Oedipus, III. i, quoted in The Spectator, no. 40, April 16, 1711, and Shakespeare's Hamlet, I. iii, 50, "the primrose path of dalliance," suggest

a less parochial literary context. Cf. also An Essay on Man, III, 233.

32 Other analogues suggest Pope's close familiarity with Crashaw's Alexias: for Eloisa to Abelard, 347-52, see Alexias, Elegy I, 27-32; Eloisa to Abelard, 365, Alexias, Elegy I, 12; Eloisa to Abelard, 165, Alexias, Elegy II, 13-18; Eloisa to Abelard, 250, Alexias, Elegy III, 50.

33 Perhaps Pope avoids the familiar term, "charity," because of its secular and mundane connotations accrued in contemporary usage signifying the giving of alms: see R. S. Crane's documentation of this semantic phenomenon in "Suggestions toward a Genealogy of the 'Man of Feeling,'" ELH, I (1934), 205-30. Cf. Chapter II, n. 101.

34 cf. variant reading, Martin ed., p. 145 n.

35 Cf. Dryden's famous definition of the "three heads" of translation, metaphrase, paraphrase, and imitations, in his preface to Ovid's Epistles, Translated by Several Hands, in Watson ed., I, 268.

36 Ovid's Sappho to Phaon has 220 lines; Scrope's translation a mere 97; Pope's, 259. For a full account of the genesis of Pope's poem, see Audra and Williams, pp. 339-343, and for an assessment of stylistic qualities, pp. 343-6. For a different, and essentially impressionistic, assessment of Sappho to Phaon, see Brower, Alexander Pope: The Poetry of Allusion, pp. 66-74.

37 For Pope's addition of "tender melancholy," see Audra and Williams, p. 343, and p. 393, ll. 15-18n.

38 See Audra and Williams, p. 342. David R. Hauser has noticed other instances of Pope's softening some of Ovid's more lugubrious passages in his unpublished Johns Hopkins University dissertation; "The Neoclassical Ovid: Ovid in English Literature, 1660-1750" (1956), pp. 52-3. I wish to acknowledge a general debt to Mr. Hauser's dissertation, although I argue for a much closer affinity between Pope and Ovid than he allows. I use Ovid's spelling, "Sappho," when referring to his character in his poem; I use Pope's spelling, "Sapho," when referring to his character in his translation.

39 Pope deviates from Ovid here by way of Scrope's translation: see Audra and Williams, p. 401, ll. 175-8n., and pp. 344-5.

40 See Audra and Williams, p. 346. Pope's apprenticeship with Ovid's poetry included his published translations of episodes from the Metamorphoses: the stories of Polyphemus

and Acis and Vertumnus and Pomona, and The Fable of Dryope.

41 Twick. Ed., p. 319, l. 1n.

42 In Chapter IV, I shall explore Eloisa's act of contrition more extensively.

43 The valuable scholarship of Raymond D. Havens, The Influence of Milton on English Poetry (Cambridge, Mass., 1922) needs to be reviewed, it seems to me, from a vantage point that should illuminate conceptual strands of relationship between Milton and later English poets, especially 18th century poets. Pope's sensitivity to the minor poems of Milton's is well known: see Twick. Ed., p. 305 and n. 1; and George Sherburn, "The Early Popularity of Milton's Minor Poems," MP, XVII (1919-20).

44 Cf. Twick. Ed. p. 339, ll. 241 ff. n.

45 Cf. Chapter I.

46 See Crashaw's T. the Name Above Every Name, The Name of Jesus, and Louis L. Martz, The Poetry of Meditation, rev. ed. (New Haven, 1962), pp. 61-4, 338-52.

47 See Ps. 139:23, Jer. 17:10, 1 Chron. 28:9, R m. 8:27, Rev. 2:23.

48 In a review of the Audra and Williams Twickenham Edition of Pope's Pastoral Poetry and An Essay on Criticism, Earl R. Wasserman comments briefly on the history of the light imagery in this passage from Eloisa to Abelard: see PQ, LX (1961).

49 Brower, Alexander Pope: The Poetry of Allusion, p. 82, sees no reference to Christ in Eloisa to Abelard and speaks of the poems resultant "vagueness." But he omits consideration of the "naked lover" in line 100. Eloisa seems to be horrified by her involvement in events leading to Abelard's mutilation. Also, by sinking against Christ in her love of Abelard before Him, she crucifies Him anew according to Catholic doctrine. The mutilation of Abelard and the Crucifixion of Christ are conflated by Eloisa in a horrifying but indelible perception.

50 See Martz, The Poetry of Meditation, p. 73.

51 Cf. Pope's extensive use of Crashaw in this passage examined above, pp. 129-33.

52 Cited in Twick. Ed., p. 330, l. 134 n.

CHAPTER IV

THE SACRAMENTAL ANALOGY IN ELOISA TO ABELARD

I

In a letter of acknowledgement and encouragement to Dr. William Cooper, who was engaged in translating some of Pope's poems into Latin, Pope thanks him for his work on Messiah, and suggests Eloisa to Abelard as especially apt for translation into Latin: "it has," he claims, "more of that Descriptive, &, (if I may so say) Enthusiastic Spirit, which is the Character of the Ancient Poets."¹ Although written 15 years after the publication of the poem, Pope's comment provides an illuminating approach to the essential poetic "character" of his poem. Having discussed the "Descriptive" character of Eloisa to Abelard in Chapter III, we now should move to consider what Pope meant by the "Enthusiastic Spirit" of the poem.

Pope's cautious use of the word "enthusiastic" to relate the spirit of Eloisa to Abelard with that of ancient poetry suggests that he was willing to run the risk of being misunderstood in order to articulate as precisely as he could the distinctive achievement of Eloisa to Abelard. The word, "enthusiastic," of course, has had part of its

meaning and usage well catalogued by scholars of historical semantics. Clearly, it was used in Pope's time to designate a wide range of religious and utopian sects committed to the ready testimony of a special supernatural communication, perception, or mission granted to them exclusive of any other mediative channel.² Whatever the veracity of the assertive claims of special illumination by those called "enthusiasts," the word accrued in the late 17th century a pejorative connotation growing from the increased disfavor with which their religious, social, and political doctrines were held. But in addition to this signification of "enthusiastic" as a state of restrictive and unreliable individual assertion of supernatural insight, the word had, as Pope's usage of it demands us to recognize, alternative signification.

Alternative meanings may be found in use before Pope. In Dryden's Author's Apology for Heroic Poetry and Poetic License prefixed to The State of Innocence (1677), "enthusiasm," far from being a pejorative term, names the primary means by which poetry achieves the Longinian sublime:

Imaging is, in itself, the very height and life of poetry. It is, as Longinus describes it, a discourse which, by a kind of enthusiasm, or extraordinary emotion of the soul, makes it seem to us that we behold those things which the poet paints, so as to be pleased with them and to admire them.³

"Enthusiasm" here denominates the empowered state of alert sensitivity by which the reader can envision ("behold")

the world that the poet explores. Enthusiasm is the response the poet seeks most vigorously to create and maintain in his reader: the poet must engage, in Dryden's view (and certainly in Longinus'), the reader's soul in order to convey the coherent visions of his own soul, his art. Dryden endorses, not surprisingly in an essay on heroic poetry, the concept of poetry as the communication of souls--the poet's soul fired by his vision, the reader's soul moved in sympathy with the poet's. As a term in neo-classical literary criticism describing the effect of poetry on the human soul, "enthusiasm" seems a very likely term for Pope to employ in description of the "Spirit" of Eloisa to Abelard.

In Dryden's criticism, as well as in much other neo-classical criticism, poetry and its effects engage in the poet and in his reader "enthusiasm," the God within the mind.⁴ The Greek root of the word, of course, expresses clearly Dryden's assent to an ancient theory defining the origin and end of poetry: "en-," in, or within; "theos," god. To write heroic verse and create the imagings that are "the very height and life of poetry," the poet must have the breath of God, or some divine inspiration, within him. Only when inspired in this way can the poet hope to create a sympathetic and resonant inspiration, or enthusiasm, within his reader.

Dryden also uses "enthusiastic" in his essay, Of Heroic Plays (1672), to indicate the inclusion of gods and

spirits in the action and drama of heroic poetry. Again, Dryden's sense of the word derives from its Greek root, "en-theos," god within, but the word is confined in meaning to descriptive literary criticism. Dryden eschews all implication of zeal in the word "enthusiastic." Speaking of Lucan's use of "the oracle of Appius, and the witchcraft of Erictho" in the Pharsalia, he says that

for my part, I am of opinion that neither Homer, Virgil, Statius, Aristo, Tasso, nor our English Spenser could have formed their poems half so beautiful without those gods and spirits, and those enthusiastic parts of poetry which compose the most noble parts of all their writings.⁵

In Dryden's criticism then, an heroic poem must be, above all, "enthusiastic": it must contain the "noble parts" of poetry--the gods and spirits in action within human experience.

Dryden's employment of "enthusiasm" and "enthusiastic" as essential parts of his literary critical terminology clearly provides the words with a respectable, and even honorific, background in the Augustan age. And so when Pope points out to Dr. Cooper the "Enthusiastic Spirit" of Eloisa to Abelard, he may be suggesting his poems' power of inciting "an extraordinary emotion of the soul," comparable to the affect achieved by ancient heroic poetry, as well as his poem's intense involvement with a penetrating Christian spirituality.

From the opening scene of Eloisa to Abelard, Eloisa struggles to establish and maintain within herself a sincere

penance for her submission to temptation in her persistent love of Abelard. She seeks in such penance to develop her own Christian spirituality. In the second verse paragraph of the poem, she describes her struggle to resist the sacrilegious adoration of Abelard's name. She resists speaking it, but nevertheless she fails to suppress it:

Oh write it not, my hand--The name appears
 Already written---wash it out, my tears!
 In vain lost Eloisa weeps and prays,
 Her heart still dictates, and her hand obeys.
(13-16)

Although she resists uttering his name, she is unable to control her heart, the traditional seat of the human will and soul, and it commits her to the act of sacrilege. As a result of her sacrilege, Eloisa experiences remorse; and, as a result of her remorse, she begins her penance of tears, even though she thinks that they are shed "in vain" (15). From the first occurrence of her weeping, Pope firmly establishes the penitential character and context of her tears. Her penance of tears appears to her again "in vain" (28) against the rebel force of nature impelling her heart to cling to her sensuous love for Abelard, but from the opening part of the poem, she reveals herself struggling to achieve a contrite heart before God. At least part of the "Repentant sighs, and voluntary pains" (18) contained by the surrounding convent walls originate with Eloisa. But her penance is imperfect, and with this imperfection of spirit she struggles.

The scenes of penitential weeping in Eloisa to Abelard recall more readily the Renaissance and 17th century literature of tears than lachrymose epics and romances.⁶ The similarity of Eloisa to Abelard with the literature of tears enables us to see the fundamental kinship of Pope's poem with the penitential tradition of English poems by Southwell, Nashe, Herbert, Crashaw, and Marvell.

The penitential character of Eloisa's weeping established, Pope is able to introduce with sharpened contrast and emphatic meaning her erotic tears and sighs:

Oh name for ever sad! for ever dear!
 Still breath'd in sighs, still usher'd with a tear

 Line after line my gushing eyes o'erflow,
 Led thro' a sad variety of woe:

 Yet write, oh write me all, that I may join
 Griefs to thy griefs, and echo sighs to thine.
 (31-32, 35-36, 41-42)

Her weeping is not wholeheartedly an act of sacramental penance: it is partly, even largely, an act of secular regret for a lost eroticism, and she underscores for us the specific conflict between the sacrament of penance and her worldly regret for lost eroticism:

Tears still are mine, and those I need not spare,
 Love but demands what else were shed in pray'r.
 (45-46)

The divorce here of liturgical from secular act, the weeping "in pray'r" from the weeping for carnal love, reveals Eloisa's awareness of a basic contradiction in her own action between the tears and their meaning. This awareness

is shown in her admission of futility in her secular tears that now have no meaning:

No happier task these faded eyes pursue;
To read and weep is all they now can do.
(47-48)

Repeatedly, when Eloisa seeks some portion of worldly pleasure or contentment from the recollection of her cohabitation with Abelard, she appears in scenes of passion showing the futility of her effort:

(1) upon her vision of Abelard's castration:

I can no more; by shame, by rage suppress'd,
Let tears, and burning blushes speak the rest.
(105-106)

(2) after Abelard leaves the Paraclete:

But now no face divine contentment wears,
'Tis all blank sadness, or continual tears.
(147-48)

and (3) after her nightmare of temptation with Abelard:

I shriek, start up, the same sad prospect find,
And wake to all the griefs I left behind.
(247-48)

The acts of sacramental penance and mere worldly regret clash forcefully as Eloisa momentarily engages in the rigor of the sacrament only to "curse," rather than seek the blessing of, her innocence:

Now turn'd to heav'n, I weep my past offence,
Now think of thee, and curse my innocence.
(187-188)

Contrasted to Eloisa, "the blameless Vestal" (207) enjoys the peace of a penitence that is perfect. Her tears and sighs, unlike Eloisa's, bring her not to anguish and futility, but to the love of God: they are "Tears that

delight, and sighs that waft to heav'n" (214). Her penitence is perfect, and leads her to union with the Spouse, Christ, as the most complete, fulfilled, and fruitful conclusion to the sacrament of penance.

Later, when Pope paints Eloisa's passion during her devotions at Matins (267-270), he shows her weeping with her beads, but conscious, too, that with each bead and tear she thinks of her worldly loss of Abelard. Her tears are "too soft" (270) for the beads and the penitence they should signify and call to mind. She is sensual, not penitential, as tears at Matins should be.

The plunge of her soul into a fiery hell during Matins certainly measures the imperfection of Eloisa's penitence, but it also marks a traditional posture of the penitent in the Divine Office of Matins. Perhaps the most famous of the Seven Penitential Psalms forms an integral part of the Matins Office: De profundis clamavi Domine, "Out of the depths I have called thee, Lord." Pope thus reveals Eloisa after her plunge into flames struggling with her imperfect penitence and crying out of the depths of her failure in the Divine Office of Matins. Her tears now appear not sensual, but as graphic evidence of her weakness "prostrate" (277) in her cell. In this passage, she discovers and experiences "humble grief" (277); and as outward expressions of this inward spiritual state, her tears are justifiably "kind" and "virtuous" (278):

While prostrate here in humble grief I lie,
 Kind, virtuous drops just gathering in my eye,
 While praying, trembling, in the dust I roll,
 And dawning grace is opening on my soul.
 (277-80)

From out of the depths and weakness of her sin, Eloisa perceives a new possibility of personal strength gratuitous and as yet untapped. Her struggle is not abrogated by the presence of this new strength: indeed, her struggle is intensified, for immediately upon her perception of "dawning grace," she willingly recalls hell to herself in the form of "Fiends" (288) in order to prolong her sensual enjoyment of Abelard. Not unlike St. Augustine in his struggles against concupiscence, Eloisa grieves for her willful sensuality, but does not necessarily want to forego it. Upon the perception of "dawning grace . . . opening on [her] soul," Eloisa desires the Fiends and Abelard to tear her away from God. The violent action Eloisa dramatizes here strongly asserts the deeply animal nature of her sensual passion for sexual love of Abelard. Her subsequent negation of her violent vision of tearing Fiends, and her ecstatic submission to the embrace of "grace serene," assert as vividly her deep capacity for passionate love of God, the discovery of which constitutes the poem's achievement of what Pope called its "Enthusiastic Spirit."

II

Since Joseph Warton's method of explicating Eloisa to Abelard as a linear sequence of one emotive scene after another appeared in 1756 as part of his Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope, recent critics have for the most part followed his assumptions about the structure of the poem. Professor Geoffrey Tillotson sees in the poem "a series of scenes and moods all about equal in the number of their lines, one leading properly into another, all of them arranged to fit the psychological progress of Eloisa's mind."⁷ Professor Tillotson elsewhere speaks of the poem's "'geometry' of situation" in which "Eloisa pits one situation against another, formalizes, makes points."⁸ Professor Reuben Brower responds to Professor Tillotson's idea of "geometry" by describing a sequential structure of parts in the poem:

We go from melancholy to ecstatic remembrance, from innocent communion to guilty love, from assertions of freedom to the horrors of imprisonment and damnation; from visions of pure faith to passionate abandonment. One state of mind or feeling is thus always being qualified ironically by its opposite.⁹

Each of these accounts of the poem's structure helps to make us aware of the drama of Eloisa's suffering, but neither offers to explain how one scene or mood properly leads into, or opposes, another, or why such progress or opposition might be significant and meaningful.

One important structural pattern, however, emerges from the hypothesis of a sequential order of events in

Eloisa to Abelard: a pattern of the passage of time, and its corollary concept, an awareness of history. Professor Henry Pettit, following Warton's idea of sequential progress in Eloisa to Abelard, sees the poem divided into three nearly equal parts sequentially linked in chronological order of past, present, and future. In the first part (lines 1-118), Professor Pettit sees Eloisa "developing emotion through methodical recollection," through a survey of the history of time past. He then says that "the second part" (lines 119-256) explores "the immediate situation" in time present. The third part (lines 257-366), then, "is a vision of death," a vision of the future.¹⁰

Professor Pettit calls our attention to Eloisa's pervading concern for her history and her destiny, and he is correct, I think, in pointing out Pope's emphasis on the past in the first half of the poem. Eloisa is still vitally concerned with reviewing her past acts well beyond Professor Pettit's dividing point at line 118: see the whole passage of review and struggle, lines 177-200. We may agree, too, that the concluding portion of Eloisa to Abelard, but from line 303, not line 227, constitutes a vision of future death.

Professor Pettit's idea of structural division in the poem collapses, however, when we notice that over 80 per cent of the poem, from lines 1-302, concerns itself not only with the past, but also with Eloisa's suffering and struggle in the present. Past and present in Eloisa

to Abelard are not cleanly divided; but the suffering of Eloisa's soul in the present is inseparable from her acts in the past, for they have their consequences, consequences that she perceives all too well, in the present. At the very outset of the poem, the past penetrates Eloisa's present in the convent when she discovers Abelard's passionate letters and as she experiences anew the stirrings and "tumult" (4) of her former love. Even the vision of future death from lines 303-66 appears not as a distant and remote event, but one in which Eloisa acts in the present tense more often than not: see lines 313-16, 317-35, 339-42, and 351-6. In the vision, the future is seen in an immediate fulfillment in the present by means of the revelation of grace in absolution in the present at line 302. Eloisa's vision of the future is imbedded within action occurring in the present tense; and her death with the Cross before her eye (327) and Abelard's death "In trance extatic" (339) in effect bring all heaven before her eyes as an image of that which she is heir to through hope, "Fresh blooming hope" (299). If she knows she must in all probability endure a purgation as a "pensive ghost" (365), her suffering is not pointless or endless if endured with the hope of the already envisioned, and therefore realized, "opening skies" and "streaming glories" (341) of Heaven.

The primary movement and structure of Eloisa to Abelard, therefore, is not rigorously sequential or chronological. A historical sequence of narrative cannot

account for the conflation and fusion of time and events past, present, and future so often the result of Eloisa's meditative visions. Time is, however, important in so far as it is the medium of Eloisa's introspection and retrospection. The analysis of her acts and her responsibility for them constitutes much of the sheer substance of the poem. Her analysis does not limit itself to a merely simplified sequence of causality to account for her responsibility. She does not merely find in the past the seed of her present suffering. Her analysis embraces a far more comprehensive matrix of interwoven moral responsibility. Her sin is more grievous when seen against the destiny of redemption offered to her as well as to "the blameless Vestal" (207). This destiny she foresees in visions of the future, and her moral responsibility appears even greater when she realizes that her past acts reverberate not only into the present, but into the future as well. She does not primarily seek to excuse herself: even when she explores some mitigating circumstances in which her fall occurred (her innocence [59-65]; Abelard's beauty [61-4]; or the tempting bliss of libertine love [91 ff.]), she does not permit her analysis to obscure her own responsible sin and subsequent guilt (see 104, 185, 191, 193, 230, & 266). In this thorough review of her culpability, Eloisa makes her retrospection introspective: she discovers an aspect of her personal character by searching for the meaning and moral value of her acts. Only by

the means of introspection, then, does the past become linked with the present in Eloisa to Abelard: the link is not chronological, but moral and evaluative.¹¹

Her introspection characteristically becomes prospective as she assesses the effect of her sinful past and present on her destiny as a Christian. She finds herself at one crucial point denied the "visions of eternal day" (222), the present visions of a future bliss with the Spouse. Unlike "the blameless Vestal" (207), Eloisa sees in her self-analysis, now prospective rather than retrospective, that her destiny as a Christian has undergone severe alteration from the effect of her sin in the past and her persistence in sin in the present. She sees her destiny as hell, both at this point in the poem and later when she describes the fiery sea into which her sinful soul is immersed (271-6). Thus, her autobiography derives its coherence from a moral order of her acts, an order determined in the poem by means of retrospection, introspection, and prospection. It is inadequate to describe the poem's structure as chronological because past, present, and future do not appear as distinct entities in the poem: they often are telescoped, interspersed, fused, and non-sequential.

The order of Eloisa's autobiography conforms to the moral paradigm of acts that begin in innocence, produce knowledge and experience which themselves involve sin, and result in a ruinous fall into desperate anguish. The

paradigm unfolds gradually in the poem: for the first 58 lines, Eloisa describes her present sufferings of profane tumult within the sacred walls of the convent and within, too, the sacred vows of silence she reveals she had made (10). But the critical hypothesis of a single chronological order for the poem immediately fails to define the character of the first 58 lines of the poem. Although seemingly set in the present, the opening of the poem under consideration here reveals by its frequent invocation of the past that the "present" cannot even be conceived without the awareness, on Eloisa's part, of a moral matrix that includes her acts in the past. In epitome, the first 58 lines demonstrate what will be true throughout the poem: that experience itself has meaning only when viewed within a context of human, spiritual, and moral values. Without regard to keeping to any single segment of time, therefore, Eloisa conflates past and present as she explores in the first 58 lines the spiritual roots of her now fallen state.

Within her retrospective passage from lines 59 to 72, she telescopes the three dimensions of her autobiography in time: she sees in her present state the past matured and the future conceived. She affirms first to Abelard her early state of innocence: "Thou know'st how guiltless first I met thy flame" (59). Even upon meeting Abelard, she assures us of her persistent innocence: "Guiltless I gaz'd" (65). But her innocence did not survive the onslaught of knowledge from Abelard, for it was knowledge with a stigma or stain within it. Divine truth was altered by Abelard before

offered to Eloisa: "And truths divine came mended from that tongue" (66, italics added). Eloisa's loss of innocence was the acquisition of knowledge that quickly impinged upon her will to act:

From lips like those what precept fail'd to move?
Too soon they taught me 'twas no sin to love.
(67-8)

The physical appearance of the lips persuades Eloisa, not only the precepts that they articulated: she diverts herself from the exercise of her understanding upon the specious precepts offered her in order to enjoy sensuous pleasure. Also, she diverts herself from the rational discourse leading to the Highest Good, God, seen in "truths divine," in order to submit herself to a lesser good, the "lips" and the "tongue" that "mend" and, therefore, deface, the "truths divine." Eloisa employs her will to act in vigorous pursuit of the lesser good, pleasure, by indulging her "sense" (69) with Abelard. Her willful embrace of a lesser good constitutes her sin with love (contrary to Abelard's "mended" teachings), and the sin cuts her off from God:

Back thro' the paths of pleasing sense I ran,
Nor wish'd an Angel whom I lov'd a Man.
Dim and remote the joys of saints I see,
Nor envy them, that heav'n I lose for thee.
(69-72)

Eloisa's loss of Heaven in line 72 is not confined to the present, of course: it implies the loss of a whole future destiny. The loss of a future prospect constitutes the third dimension of Eloisa's whole act of will: she has

explored fully the wholeness of her sin.

The exploration of the spiritual and moral dimensions of her fall from innocence in an act of sin continues to occupy Eloisa's minute attention, and leads her, like Satan in Paradise Lost, to discover in her "lowest deep a lower deep" (IV. 76) as, during the Mass, thoughts of Abelard displace thoughts of God. Hell opens even greater depths into which Eloisa's autobiography plunges:

In seas of flame my plunging soul is drown'd,
While Altars blaze, and Angels tremble round.
(275-6)

Eloisa's rejection of Heaven (72) and plunge into Hell (275) imply an eternal damnation and residence in Hell. Her spiritual present seems to extend in a continuum of not merely a future, but an eternity, of Hell.

But the Christian paradigm of human history does not end, of course, at a point of a fixed future of eternal flames in a Hell of the spirit. Nor does Eloisa's paradigm in her autobiography end with her confined in Hell, for, quite gratuitously, at her lowest point of descent yet in the poem, as she lies "prostrate," she experiences the spiritual presence of light, the traditional image of grace as the presence of God. The grace she receives is the spiritual strength of humility and contrition (277-8) that enables her to pray (279):

While prostrate here in humble grief I lie,
Kind, virtuous drops just gath'ring in my eye,
While praying, trembling, in the dust I roll,
And dawning grace is opening on my soul. . . .
(277-280)

Eloisa proves the power of this grace by overcoming an intense desire to defeat it by calling on the aid of "Fiends" to "tear" her away from the presence of God that the grace has brought (288). The grace comes to Eloisa, unexpectedly descending to her self-made Hell, and intersecting from above her present suffering with the promise of a new destiny, a new future of faith, hope, and the love of God in an embrace of "eternal rest" (297-302). The vision of future death that ensues brings with it a kind of prophetic vision of heaven to be attained upon the absolution of Eloisa's sins (316) as a part of her redemption. If Eloisa sees her "pensive ghost" (365) at the end of her autobiography, she shows her awareness of her moral and spiritual need for purgation before final absolution by God in Heaven. In the terms of her destiny in the future, Eloisa completes her autobiographical paradigm: she moves from innocence, through a fall, toward redemption. Her paradigm is also the structure of the poem, and this structure fulfils its Christian vision of earth, Hell or Purgatory, and Heaven.

Eloisa's autobiography, then, is structurally analogous to a sacred history that she shares with all men; the structure of sacred history gives meaning to all her acts. This is as much to say that her structure of autobiography, the contour of the poem, is analogous to the sacramental paradigm of Christian human history. At all points of her life imaged in the poem, Eloisa is aware of

a relationship to God.¹² Even in her rejection of Him, she is aware of Him; and her account of her rejection of Him often makes the substance of what she herself calls in the poem her confession:

Ah wretch! believ'd the spouse of God in vain,
 Confess'd within the slave of love and man.
 (177-8)

Much of Eloisa to Abelard is "confess'd within": indeed, Eloisa conceives and realizes her participation in the history of man from innocence, to fall, toward redemption only within the introspective awareness she achieves as a result of her confession. The poem as confession constitutes the central act in the traditional Sacrament of Penance with its four main parts: contrition, confession, absolution, and purgation. Eloisa's personal history is structured as an analogy to the sacramental experience of Penance.

Eloisa begins her sacrament of penance when she is startled by the awareness of deep spiritual and moral disorder in her life upon the receipt of Abelard's letter. The letter provokes her to a serious consideration of her plight as a sinner cut off from God as well as from Abelard. Her tears and sighs are the outward signs of her contrition, and yet she knows that if her tears are at all wept for Abelard, then her contrition is imperfect. The awareness of her imperfection in the act of contrition brings Eloisa to the firm and anguished conviction of her own sin. With this conviction squarely before her, Eloisa descends

spiritually and morally in her own awareness from her guiltless state of innocence to a nadir of her soul plunged into the punishing flames of Hell (275-6). At this low point in her life, she experiences her first clear awareness of the presence of grace, "dawning grace" (280). The effect of the grace, seen in her strong rejection (289 ff.) of her immediate temptation to embrace a sensual vision of Abelard (281-88), is nothing less than a conversion of Eloisa's desire for Abelard to a desire for God. Her conversion begins a regeneration of her spiritual and moral life, for she then receives the revelatory testimony from the voice of the nun-spirit that God offers absolution for all her sins. Since Eloisa once again rejects the temptation of a sensual vision of Abelard, and turns instead to embrace God in the viaticum that Abelard the priest of God serves her, the regenerative force of "dawning grace" sacramentally effects Eloisa's destiny of future redemption.¹³

But redemption remains for Eloisa a destiny to be enjoyed in the present only by hope and promise. She knows all too well, it would seem, that, although Abelard will ascend saint-like to Heaven upon his death (337-42), she must linger after death as a "pensive ghost" (365) undergoing purgation for her manifold sins during her life. But purgation itself is the final step in her sacrament of penance, and her life history at the end of the poem loses its raw expression of anguish and assumes a new sense of

peace, resignation, and acceptance. The emotional development Eloisa undergoes therefore parallels the spiritual progress she experiences within the sacrament of penance and the sacred history of her life from innocence, to fall, toward redemption. Eloisa's poem is confessional in rhetorical mode, archetypal in its image of personal history congruent with a sacred history of all men, and sacramental in the analogy it constructs with the act of penance Eloisa everywhere in the poem struggles to perfect.

NOTES

¹ Corres., III, 269. The date of the letter is 5 Feb. 1731/2. Professor Sherburn observes that "if (Pope) is calling Eloisa more descriptive, more enthusiastic, and hence more 'classical' than the Unfortunate Lady, it is an interesting judgment" (p. 268, n.2). Twick. Ed., p. 301, n.3, calls attention to this letter.

² See Ronald A. Knox, Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion (London, 1950).

³ Watson ed., I, 203. Italics added.

⁴ See the discussion of John Dennis' use of the word, "enthusiasm," and its derivatives in Samuel H. Monk, The Sublime (Ann Arbor, 1960; first publ., 1935), pp. 45-54.

⁵ Of Heroic Plays, Watson ed., I, 160.

⁶ See Louis L. Martz, The Poetry of Meditation (New Haven, 1954), pp. 199-203. The structural relationship of the image of tears with spatial, as well as penitential, modes of 17th century English poetry is discussed in Marjorie Hope Nicolson, The Breaking of the Circle, rev. ed. (New York, 1962), pp. 67-72.

⁷ Geoffrey Tillotson, On the Poetry of Pope, p. 47.

⁸ Twick. Ed., p. 299.

⁹ Brower, Alexander Pope: The Poetry of Allusion, p. 83.

¹⁰ Pettit, "Pope's Eloisa to Abelard: An Interpretation," 72. Curiously, Professor Pettit denies arbitrarily the significance of the question of "the struggles of grace and nature" in Eloisa to Abelard, p. 68.

¹¹ J. Paul Hunter, The Reluctant Pilgrim: Defoe's Emblematic Method and Quest for Form in "Robinson Crusoe", pp. 144-7, has influenced my discussion of retrospection and introspection at this point.

¹² Gilson, The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy, pp. 98-9.

13 See G. A. Starr, Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography (Princeton, 1966), p. 62, and Aubrey Williams' review of this book in Yale Review, LV (Winter, 1966), 312-15, for articulation of penance in Puritan autobiographies which I find analogous in traditional form to Eloisa's penance. I have drawn some of my terminology from their analyses.

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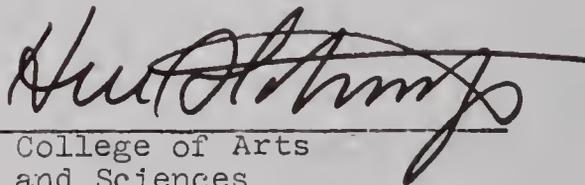
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This dissertaion was prepared under the direction of the chairman of the candidate's supervisory committee and has been approved by all members of that committee. It was submitted to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate Council, and was approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

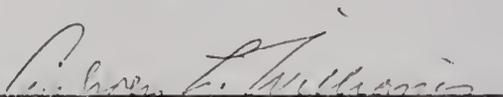
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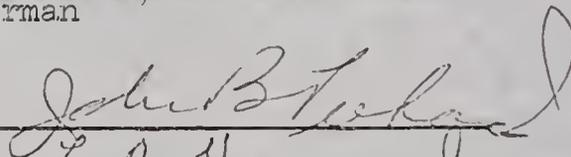
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