

Schieberle
 Engl 312
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2534: 59-72

Thou knowest how guiltless first I met thy flame,
 When love approached me under friendship's name;
 My fancy formed thee of angelic kind,
 Some emanation of the all-beauteous Mind.
 Those smiling eyes, attempering every ray,
 Shone sweetly lambent with celestial day:
 Guiltless I gazed; heaven listened while you sung;
 And truths divine came mended from that tongue.
 From lips like those what precept failed to move?
 Too soon they taught me 'twas no sin to love.
 Back through the paths of pleasing sense I ran,
 Nor wished an angel whom I loved a man.
 Dim and remote the joys of saints I see,
 Nor envy them, that heaven I lose for thee.

2537-38: 224-236, 249-254

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 snatched 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 every 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...
 ...For thee the fates, severely kind, ordain
 A cool suspense from pleasure and from pain;
 Thy life a long dead calm of fixed repose;
 No pulse that riots, and no blood that glows.
 Still as the sea, ere winds were taught to blow,
 Or moving spirit bade the waters flow;

Eloisa's Ironic and Irreconcilable Relationships

Pope uses both oxymorons and verbal irony to illustrate Eloisa's inability to reconcile the physical realm with the spiritual, specifically in regards to her relationships with both Abelard and God. This irreconcilability implicates Eloisa as a sympathetic character; the reader sees her tragically attempt to conflate an un-experienced love of God with one she has experienced with Abelard. Topic/Arg clear, might need a little more wind-up to situate your reader.

In the first selected passage, Eloisa initially details the beginning of her relationship with Abelard with a complete lack of oxymorons. In the first selected passage, Pope presents a genuine, and rather spiritual interaction, Eloisa describes herself as "guiltless" when she met Abelard, and she fancied him of some "angelic kind" and an "emanation of the all-beauteous Mind," specifically, some emanation of God. Eloisa makes little distinction between Abelard and God/angels with her language here, and she describes how Abelard delivered truths "divine" and she chose to love him as an angel and not a man. In the beginning of the relationship, she has no issue holding Abelard and God in the same spiritual-physical regard, and, in fact, relishes in it.

In this selection of text, Pope also illustrates the genuineness by presenting a congruity between adjectives and the nouns they modify: "eyes" are "sweetly lambent," "celestial day," and "truths divine." His eyes are "sweetly lambent," or, sweetly "Of a flame...shining with a soft clear light and without fierce heat" (*OED, lambent, adj, 1a*). His eyes shone with a clear light, a light from days, which can be "celestial," or, heavenly, in this sense, without any semantic dissonance between the two words. This implies a harmony between the way she feels about Abelard and God; her love for both can coexist, as she conflates them to be of a similar nature. The "truths divine" serve more to describe Abelard's religious instruction, but more importantly,

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the ideas are, for the most part, connected; Truth, in the beginning of their relationship came from both Abelard and God (or, from God via Abelard). [Good](#).

The consonance, (or more apt, the lack of oxymorons) occurs when she describes their early relationship, using the past tense. The last two lines of the selection, however, bring Eloisa back to the present, wherein we see the dissonance begin to loom. She describes the saints' joys as "dim and remote" and does not envy them. She no longer (presently) feels a singular love for both Abelard and God, and Pope ironically shows this by the oxymoronic discord between the "joys" and their negative descriptions.

Special attention should be brought, however, to the word "fancy" in the first section. The *OED* defines *fancy* as "Delusive imagination; hallucination; an instance of this," and contends it is synonymous with *fantasy* (*fancy*, n, 3). This definition yields a reading sympathetic to the notion that, in fact, Abelard is *not* of "angelic kind," nor an "emanation of the all-beauteous Mind"; Eloisa merely imagines him as such. The *OED* also contains a definition of *fancy*, wherein it is: "Capricious or arbitrary preference; individual taste; an inclination, liking" (*fancy*, n, 8.a). With the latter definition in mind, Eloisa inclines and prefers to think of Abelard in this godly, spiritual manner, regardless of his actual existence as such.

With the simple inclusion of this word, "fancy," emerges Pope's use of verbal irony. The *OED* defines irony as "A figure of speech in which the intended meaning is the opposite of that expressed by the words used" (*irony*, n, 1). [← NAEL is a better source for lit terms](#) Pope chiefly uses verbal irony, a variant of irony that requires a speaker fully aware that she intends the opposite meaning than her words ostensibly convey. (This form in opposition with dramatic irony, a variant wherein the speaker is not aware their words convey a different meaning than intended.) This implies that Eloisa is fully aware that her ability to view Abelard as angelic and

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god-like was merely her desire to conflate her two loves. This situation is ironic because she knows he is not and was not heavenly, but claims that her fancy wished it so. She has not, explicitly, consummated the relationship and does not have that knowledge yet; Pope shows her ignorance (as aforementioned) through the lack of oxymorons, for they only begin to appear as she, from the literary present, looks back to the relation's impetus. Thus, through Pope's use of verbal irony, we see Eloisa's early inability to fuse her spiritual and physical love of God and Abelard. [Nice observations](#)

While the first selection is mainly rooted in the past and only whisked back to the present at the end, the second selection is entirely [set in the?](#) present. Eloisa finds it impossible to reconcile her past (and present, through dreams) physical relationship with the Abelard and her past and present relationship with God. This passage directly follows another in which Eloisa jealously depicts a happy Nun, having never loved and thus never having to reconcile a physical and spiritual relationship.

Eloisa has just described the Nun's heavenly "experiences" when she introduces "Far other dreams my erring soul employ/ Far other raptures, of unholy joy" (2537). First, Eloisa describes "far other raptures," which contains a multitude of connotations. The nun in the paragraph prior to this undergoes a heavenly rapture in her contact with God, which correlates to the *OED*'s common definition of rapture as "transport of mind, mental exaltation or absorption, ecstasy; (now *esp.*) ecstatic delight or joy" (*rapture*, n., def 1.c). This definition remains consistent to the "joy" later described in the sentence; Eloisa, however, refers to this joy as "unholy joy." Again, Pope presents a discord between "unholy" and "joy" to delineate Eloisa's yet-unreconciled conflict twixt flesh and spirit. The *OED* contains yet another, now-obsolete, definition of "rapture" that remains in documented use even in Pope's time: "The action or an

act of carrying off a woman by force; abduction. (*rapture*, n., def. 2.a, *Obs.*). Eloisa's own rapture consists her and Abelard, in dreams, embracing one another; at the same time, this (pseudo-)physicality (it is a dream, after all...) and she is abducted away into a dream state by "all-conscious night." Furthermore, a final and also now-obsolete definition of rapture displays Pope's irony to its fullest extent. According to the *OED*, rapture at that time could also mean "The act of conveying a person from one place to another, *esp.* to heaven; the fact of being so conveyed" (*rapture*, n., def 4.a, *Obs.*). Eloisa's "rapture" becomes ironic on several levels. First, it's ironic that she thinks herself "conveyed" to a figurative heaven in her dream, wherein she and Abelard can embrace. This irony is augmented by the fact that the very real heaven from which she cannot reconcile her love(s) still remains, and remains separate from her dreams. Lastly, her guilt calls upon "daemons" to remove her restraints in this "heavenly" rapture. Pope uses this ironic and oxymoronic imagery to showcase Eloisa's conflicted relationships. [Good](#)

Pope does not stop there with the oxymorons, however. He continues the discord between Eloisa's relationships with a smattering of further incongruities. Beyond "unholy joy," Eloisa describes her "dear horrors," referring to her dreams, in which she embraces Abelard. She does not view them as "horrors"; in actuality, she enjoys them, ~~but~~ she only claims them to be horrors because of her religious views. More importantly, she refers to them as "dear horrors," or horrifying things that she holds dear to herself. She continues with "all-conscious night"—all-knowing night is humorous, in that, it seems to be some play on words with "carnal knowledge," as well as juxtaposing the nun's "not-conscious day" in her eternal sunshine with Eloisa's "all-knowing night,"; also, it's ironic because nighttime is associated with darkness, and with darkness comes an inability to see, to know; traditionally *day* would be associated with seeing/observing/knowing, but in Eloisa's inability to reconcile the cognitive dissonance of flesh

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and spirit, Pope inverts day and night, as if to say “why does day have to be considered all-knowing?” and at the same time implicating “does one, in fact, have to reconcile the physical and the spiritual?” Good Finally, Eloisa again describes how “guilt exalts the keen delight “—here, Pope has Eloisa subvert guilt from a negative experience into one that exalts and praises the “keen delights” of she and Abelard meeting in her dreams. She feels guilty for her lust while in the convent, but that guilt only dignifies the delight further. Pope ironically juxtaposes the incongruity between the negative “guilt” and the positive “exalts,” to show Eloisa’s incongruous relationship with the spiritual and the flesh. Traditionally, one would exalt a God, and man would feel guilt; here, this is not the case. Good support and analysis.

Throughout these selections Pope uses literary devices very selectively to present Eloisa’s dilemma. He presents harmony between words and meanings in the first selection, when Eloisa looks back on the sunny beginning she and Abelard shared, before she knew what such relationship would entail—here, she can fantasize to conflate her loves of Abelard and God. After she learns, knows and acknowledges what the physical relationship implies, however, enter the oxymorons; Pope uses them to show the dissonance between her conflation which has occurred with her knowledge. Pope furthermore uses irony to demonstrate Eloisa’s awareness that she only fancied Abelard and God as one love initially because she remained ignorant; now that she is no longer, she becomes tragic in her attempt to still unify these disparate loves: the known flesh and the unknown spirit; her physicality with her spirituality; her real, *earthly* existence with her *prospective* heavenly one. Good!

– overall this is engagingly written and clear in its analysis of key devices/words in the poem that contribute to the effect you describe. Your argument is useful and interesting.
Well done.

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