Mock-Christ, Mater Tenebrarum, and Hawthorne: Disastrous Deification in Melville's Domestic Metafiction, *Pierre; or, The Ambiguities*

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Introduction

Four days after publishing *Moby-Dick; or, the Whale* (1851), and probably a few months before starting to write *Pierre; or, The Ambiguities* (1852), Herman Melville (1819-91) begot a second son, Stanwix, by his wife Elizabeth. Possibly because of the coincidence that Melville happened to be a second son himself, the writer unconsciously but unmistakably committed a Freudian slip of an oedipal nature while filling out the birth certificate of Stanwix, whose name came

from a forebear on the maternal side of Melville's family. The document was written thus:

First Name of Father	Maiden Name of Mother	Birthplace of Father	Birthplace of Mother
Herman	Maria G. Melville	New York	Albany

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As the *Maiden Name of Mother,* Melville should have written "Elizabeth Knapp Shaw" instead of "Maria G. Melville." And as the *Birthplace of Mother,* he should have written Boston, not Albany, where Melville's own mother, Maria Gansevoort Melville, the daughter of General Peter Gansevoort, had been born. Melville's maternal grandfather was called the "Hero of Fort Stanwix" in honor of his gallant fight to defend Fort Stanwix during the American Revolutionary War, and the writer passed the name "Stanwix" along transgenerationally to his second son. In naming his son thus, Melville might have wanted to pay respect to his maternal grandfather. Or, via deference to his mother's father, he might have been simultaneously exhibiting an unconscious oedipal desire for the mother. Interestingly, the (anti-)hero's name of the fiction, Pierre, is a French form of "Peter," the name of his grandfather General Peter Gansevoort. This suggests that the author felt an attachment to the maternal lineage, as well as to the mother herself. Thus, we are tempted to directly apply the grid of Freudian psychoanalysis to the story, in the expectation that the psycho drama of the Melville's family will unfold in *Pierre.* According to Freud, a hesitation before speaking or a misstatement in speech is a clear indicator of a repressed desire of the speaker. As a conspicuous example of this, Melville gives vent to an unconscious desire in filling out the birth certificate. If this desire governed the author's emotional life, then it would not be unreasonable to postulate that both *Pierre and Moby-Dick* were shaped, to some degree, by his oedipal fixation to his mother. Myra Jehlen cogently alleges that "Half a century before Freud analyzed the homicidal impulses of affectionate sons, Melville clearly understood in similar terms the 'romantic filial love' that has made Pierre 'strangely docile ... to the maternal tuitions'" (189).

Meanwhile, in a November 1851 letter to Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–64) (*Correspondence* 213), Melville alludes to the fiction [*Pierre*] which then preoccupied him by comparing the work in progress to "Kraken"—a bigger fish than

Leviathan or the Moby Dick. Yet later, in a January 1852 letter to Hawthorne's wife, Sophia, Melville writes, "My Dear Lady, I shall not again send you a bowl of salt water. The next chalice I shall commend will be a rural bowl of milk" (*Correspondence* 219). In alluding to *Pierre,* these two letters describe the same story in directly opposite terms: to Hawthorne in adventurous terms, to his wife in sentimental terms. These two letters show the undeniable signs of ambiguities in *Pierre; or, The Ambiguities,* the book referred to, and in fact the title is appended with an appropriate subtitle, "*or, The Ambiguities.*" Indeed, Melville seemed to be indecisive, uncertain as to whether he intended to write another adventure story à la *Moby-Dick* for chauvinistic display of his feigned masculinity, targeting a readership of young guys, or to make a radical turnabout toward a domestic fiction fraught with sentimentality, pandering exclusively to middle-class women. Putting aside the question of the genre into which *Pierre* fits, both *Moby-Dick* and *Pierre* share a common hidden leitmotif about domesticity, or about the sanctimonious/sentimental and weird/fraudulent patriarchic family.

As a harbinger of the theme for *Pierre,* Ishmael's remarks in the latter half of *Moby-Dick* reveal part of the theme: "Where lies the final harbor, whence we unmoor no more?.... Where is the foundling's father hidden? Our souls are like those orphans whose unwedded mothers die in bearing them" (chapter CXIV The Gilder). Ultimately, in the epilogue of *Moby-Dick,* Ishmael appears to arrive at his final harbor when he is rescued from the sinking *Pequod* and taken aboard the other whaler, captained by Gardiner, a man disparate to recover his missing twelve-year old son. Incidentally, Pierre loses his father at the age of twelve, just as Melville did in real life. Melville resembles both the young protagonist Pierre and Ishmael in this respect. Hence it seems natural that the author should be fraught with a paranoiac dread of desertion and the (im)possibility of rescue. Presumably, both *Moby-Dick* and *Pierre* reflect some aspects of the author, who self-referentially and self-derogatively describes himself in the metafiction *Pierre.* In fact, the would-be writer in *Pierre,* Vivia (an alias for Pierre) writes of both himself and Melville.

Interestingly, the whaler is appropriately called *Rachel,* the name of the woman who weeps for her lost children in Jeremiah (31.15). The symbolic presence of Rachel functions as a connector between the adventurous and the sentimental. In his next fiction *Pierre,* the author shifts his attention and probes more

deeply into domestic/maternal issues. Though Melville was geared towards the family, as has been indicated by critics such as Paul McCarthy, Charles J. Haberstroh, Robert K. Martin, and Monika Mueller, he paradoxically allowed his protagonists to discard their own families in order to, say, man a whaler as in *Moby-Dick,* or refuse a right to succession, as in *Pierre*.

The two factors mentioned above, Melville's slip of the tongue in filling out his son's birth certificate and his fixation on family matters, are so formidable, I venture to make the following postulations. The previously dormant family-related abnormalities of the author might be activated in a way that propels the (anti-)hero to make a paradoxical declaration of "the heaven-begotten Christ" (106) at the critical moment when Pierre tries in vain to wean himself from the grid of family.[1] What activates Melville and Pierre in their unconscious realm is the maternal grip, a force augmented precisely at the moment when Melville's putative lover Hawthorne left him after sending the above-cited letters.

Therefore, my ultimate aim in this thesis is as follows: by verifying the above-mentioned hypotheses, I will clarify the entangled maternal/Hawthornian dynamism, a dynamism so overwhelming as to develop psychosis in Pierre/Melville. I will begin the thesis by revealing that Pierre is incarcerated in his own family. Then I will refute the dubious interpretation proffered by modernist/humanist-minded critics, such as Takehiko Terada, who deify Pierre for his independent and god-defiant posture. Next, I will single out the manipulator of Pierre's psyche, the Mater Tenebrarum (Dark Mother), who distorts her son's immature will to be independent and lets him suffer the disastrous effects. Lastly, I will attempt to relate the psychological influence of Pierre's mother to the psychological influence of Hawthorne.[2]

I. Casting Doubt over Pierre's Disengagement from Family

Pierre claims that due to his "divine unidentifiableness, that owned no earthly kith or kin" (89), "I [Pierre] will have no more have a father" (87). "[D]oubly an orphan," he adds (90), "[I] will not own a mortal parent, and spurn and rend all mortal bonds" (106). Here, however, we are inclined to suspect that Pierre makes only a false show of either absolute independence from his widowed mother or resignation of his inheritable asset. Let us take note of Pierre's suspicious mentor, Plotinus Plinlimmon, the author of "Chronometricals

and Horologicals," the pamphlet that Pierre avidly reads, memorizes, and un-
knowingly loses through the slit of his coat pocket. With "no family or blood ties
of any sort" (290), Plinlimmon pulls a bluff of (mock-)independence from his
family, pretending to be encouraging to and supportive of Pierre. In fact, Pierre
sees Plinlimmon as more than just a proxy for Pierre, a character with no family.
In the eyes of Pierre, Plinlimmon deserves respect: "a guiding spirit of the
Church [of the Apostle]" (Weinstein 175). Yet in reading, we may entertain
misgivings as to the genuineness of Plinlimmon's apparent authority and inde-
pendence, by dint of his inscrutable personality and questionable features:
"[Plinlimmon's] very face [that] ... disguised [him]" (290), "that remarkable
face of repose, – repose neither divine nor human, nor any thing made up of ei-
ther or both, – but a repose separate and apart – a repose of a face by itself"
(290). In our minds, Plinlimmon's plausibly self-reliant bearing arouses the sus-
picion that Pierre's declaration of independence from his family is insincere.

To estimate how authentic and committed Pierre is in his attempt at inde-
pendence from his family, we may diachronically and synchronically historicize
the issue. As a diachronic approach, let us trace back to Greek myth for the very
origin of the quest story. At first glance, *Pierre* seems to take the form of the tra-
ditional quest story, where Pierre endeavors to make certain the identities of his
father and half-sister. Next, we will take a synchronic approach, one which will
help us review the contemporary trend that surrounded the author when he
wrote the story.

I. A. Diachronic Approach

In the first place, we may temporally categorize *Pierre* into the traditional
quest story and make a diachronic approach towards the forces that can prevent
Pierre from achieving independence from the family. To state my conclusion in
advance, Pierre remains trapped in the family throughout the story, unable to be-
come a traditional hero. If Pierre seeks, though in vain, to demystify the identity
of "the Girl of all-bewildering mystery" (126), and if, therefore, the story takes
the form of a traditional European quest story, it might be beneficial to refer back
to Greek myth. Ever since Greek times, quest stories have endowed the male
sex with braveness and intellectual dominance, allowing the male to seek a prize
of knowledge and positive values. As Wilma Garcia suggests (30): "[a]long his

magical journey the questing male may find a passive and receptive damsel in distress to rescue and claim as an auxiliary prize, but he is just as apt to be lured, as was Odysseus, by a sexually aggressive Circe or Calypso into chaos and swinish bestiality." Yet the direct application of this interpretation to *Pierre* might be inappropriate. My sense of inappropriateness in categorizing *Pierre* into the male-centric Greek quest myth is augmented when I think of Melville's propensity for thrusting queer characters such as Pierre into his stories. Melville's own sexual proclivity might have propelled him to (un)intentionally decompose the two traditionally established norms: the gender assumption and the literary genre.

Unlike the ancient Greek heroes, the nineteenth-century American counterparts in *Pierre* and *Moby-Dick* are powerless and actually defeated by the unknowable (unidentifiable) beings they confront. Ahab falls prey to a punishing monstrous whale, Moby Dick, while Pierre rather willingly succumbs to a sexually tempting girl, Isabel. Moreover, we find that the pathways to defeat for Ahab and Pierre are far from heroic. Just as King Ahab in the Old Testament is lured by Jezebel to worship the heretical god Baal and to let the Hebrews descend into idolatry, sexual immorality, and consequent downfall, so Pierre is (mis)led by Isabel to disinherit himself from the Glendinning property, to invite the curse of Isabel and to ruin his distinguished family (Nojima 124-25, 140). Just as Captain Ahab in *Moby-Dick* is unmanned by the monstrous whale, who robs him of his leg, so Pierre is unmanned by Isabel, who impoverishes him, leaves the Glendinning family heirless, and "threatens the Glendinnings' rule over their peaceable kingdom" (Rogin 167). Unlike Greek heroes, Pierre and the two Ahabs [Ahab in *Moby-Dick* and Ahab in the Old Bible] are de-gendered. This suggests that the traditional pattern of the heroic quest by the male does not apply to the stories of Ahab and Pierre.

I. B. Synchronic Approach

By observing the contemporary social background in which *Pierre* was written, we will search for another clue to prove that Pierre holds a flawed idea about his independence from the Glendinning family. Here, "the contemporary social background in which *Pierre* was written" is directly paraphrased into the following: "the actual circumstance in which the author wrote the story." The change

of subject―from Pierre to the author―seems to be justifiable, thanks to the metafictional and self-referential nature of *Pierre*. In *Pierre,* the implied narrator (probably Pierre himself) recounts a story about how the main character Pierre writes a story. Hence, the would-be writer in question (i.e., Pierre) probably reflects some vital aspects of the author Melville, as suggested in the introduction of this paper. Let us thus compare Pierre with Melville. Pierre was denigrated by the publishing world, though once he was ironically hailed for pandering to the mass readership of young ladies in the sentimental culture of mid nineteenth-century America. In the reverse sense, the narrator resembles the author, who was once flatteringly celebrated as an author of an adventurous turn of mind but later denounced as a madman after publishing this incestuous story [*Pierre*]. To endow *Pierre* with a metafictional dimension, Melville inserted a chapter called "Young America" in which the implied narrator [probably Pierre himself] ridicules the artistically illiterate editors and clients, and despises himself at the same time. Pierre's self-hatred tacitly evokes the self-hatred of the author. Incidentally, Hershel Parker has argued that the passages concerning Pierre's career as an author were added at a later stage in the writing process of *Pierre* as a response to the negative critical reception of *Moby-Dick*; and that the author edited and published a version of the novel (the "Kraken" edition of *Pierre* (1995)) that elided those parts.

This resemblance of Pierre to Melville allows us to take a detour and probe into a broader field surrounding the author (and his proxy Pierre). Let us take, for instance, the influential discourse of the day, i.e., Emerson' statement, "Self-Reliance" (1841), the discourse that must have been influential over Melville:

> 0 father, 0 mother, 0 wife, 0 brother, 0 friend, I have lived with you after appearances hitherto. Henceforward I am the truth's. Be it known unto you that henceforward I obey no law less than the eternal law. I will have no covenants but proximities. I shall endeavor to nourish my parents, to support my family, to be the chaste husband of one wife, but these relations I must fill after a new and unprecedented way. 154

In Pierre's raucous explanation about his unwholesome self-making, we can hear dark echoes of Emersonian Transcendentalism.[3] The idea of the self-made and self-reliant man permeated the highbrow society of nineteenth-century America. Emerson's vociferous claim of independence from the superior [the European

influence] and the authoritative [America's own] past was closely relevant to the nationalistic trend and the republican discourse of the day, and the breeding ground for this Emersonian zeitgeist had already been laid by the evangelical revival movements. The first movement [Great Awakening] spread like wildfire between the 1730s and 1780s, led by Jonathan Edwards (1703-58). Despite his initial aim of fortifying orthodox Calvinism, Edwards ironically rallied liberal-minded people from diverse denomination with qualm about their faiths, and thus paved the way for nationalism to fight with Britain for independence. In the second movement, from the 1790s to the 1830s, dozens of utopian communities were established in succession in western New York State. The religious fervor was so intensive there that some referred to the region as the "Burnt-Over District." Melville was not alone in being inculcated under these circumstances. In fact, most of the contemporary representative intellectuals — Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Amos Bronson Alcott, George Ripley, and even Nathaniel Hawthorne included among them — were, to use a negative term, deluded into believing that it would be viable to liberate themselves from their own pasts. Without exception, they shared a need to wean themselves from England on many levels — socially, politically, economically, and culturally. Some of the intellectuals vigorously defied the Calvinism which had imbued America since its foundation. Others went so far as to disestablish the consanguine lineage and the conjugal system, replacing them with a Fourierstic proto-socialistic community, a community in which the promise of the dream of severance from their consanguine families would unexpectedly elude them. On the contrary, the result of their socialistic experiment was a re-strengthening of the patriarchy, their past family system. And to make matters worse, the system was re-strengthened in a skewed way as exemplified by the Oneida Community, the cult society established by John Humphrey Noyes. This community was said to be tainted with the sexually lax quasi-radical motive, either polygamous or homosexual. The radical followers of Emerson translated the significance of the evangelical movement, and the insistence of Emerson himself, into the following declaration: the current monogamous heterosexual marital system is outmoded.

In his exposé novel, *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), Hawthorne indirectly muckraked the actual community, Brook Farm, by incriminating a fictitious community called Blithedale for its sexual deregulation. In *Pierre,* the apparently

anti-capitalistic utopian society seemingly represented by Plinlimmon is inhabited by questionable residents in the Church of the Apostles, and all of the members of the community with whom Pierre and Isabel decide to live appear to have left their biological families: "ambiguously professional nondescripts in very genteel but shabby black, and unaccountable foreign-looking fellows in blue spectacles; who, previously issuing from unknown parts of the world, like storks in Holland, light on the eaves, and in the attics of lofty old buildings in most large sea-port towns," and "artists of various sorts; painters, or sculptors, or indigent students, or teachers of languages, or poets, or fugitive French politicians, or German philosophers" (267). Pierre's involvement in this anti-social community suggests that he fails to attain complete independence from his family or to rise above an immaturity which blinds him to the reality.

In the atmosphere of the nineteenth-century American highbrow society thus defined, the insistence for self-autonomy expounded passionately by Emerson sounds distinctly hollow. Justifying himself in his "Nature" (1836), Emerson pronounces that "our age is retrospective" and "builds the sepulchres of the fathers" (8). Despite the chauvinistic Emersonian clamor, American society in the early capitalistic stage was sentimentalized and awash in a gynocentric culture. While this sentimentality, with its emphasis on the importance of the women's role, was based on an apparently stable patriarchy, it was virtually destabilizing to the nucleus of the patriarchy. This conflicting nature of sentimentality would help to nourish the Oedipus complex in the son of the middle class family and consequently undermine Emerson's idea of self-reliant man. It follows that if Emerson's apparently lofty ideal was undermined, so too was Pierre's seemingly courageous behavior. Pierre's voluntary disinheritance, his departure from his mother's château, his detour from the mansion of his cousin Glen Stanley during his helpless search for lodgings for many hours in the metropolis, and his decision to reside in the Church of the Apostle with the hermits—all these behaviors amount to nothing more than an unpractical, adolescent bluff which ultimately harms those around him and even himself.

II. Pierre, Christ, and Demiurge

The narrator exclaims, as we have already seen, that "in the Enthusiast to Duty ... [Pierre] will not own a mortal parent, and spurns and rends all mortal

bonds" (106). He even goes so far as to equate Pierre to "the heaven-begotten Christ" (106). The critic Henry Murray declares that "[Pierre's] sacrificial love had a divine origin" (460), and the Japanese scholar Takehiko Terada, whose interpretation will be presented below, seems to agree. Yet Murray and Terada misinterpret Pierre's stilted statements, as Higgins and Parker keenly point out. When Murray turned in his introduction to *Pierre* in 1949, the United States was still enjoying the benefits of the so-called Pax Americana. And later, in 1968, when Terada published his comprehensive criticism of Melville's major works, there was no question that the Japanese economy would continue to grow. It was only natural that Murray and Terada should adhere to an optimistic humanism which placed an undue emphasis on man's limitless potentials against God. To our regret, not a few readers have accepted this modernistic/humanistic interpretation.

According to Takehiko Terada and William B. Dillingham, the major characters in Melville's works defy demiurgic beings, false gods of the earth, both similar to and different from the heavenly God. In *Moby-Dick* the Demiurge is symbolically embodied by the white whale. In *Pierre,* it follows that the metaphor of Demiurge is not applied exclusively to Pierre's formerly sacred and currently deceptive father, but applied extensively to all of three of the female figures, as well: Pierre's mother [Mary Glendinning], his fiancée [Lucy Tartan], and his half-sister [Isabel].

Lucy, though an apparently innocent teenage girl, has the surname, Tartan. This name echoes "Tartarus," an underworld suggestive of hell, and "tartar," "a person or thing that, when grasped or tackled, proves unexpectedly formidable" (*Webster's*). We find a piece of evidence in support of the characterization of Lucy as a Demiurge: when Pierre, Isabel, and Lucy, go for an outing and stop by the free exhibition for the auction, Lucy is attracted to the copy of the portrait of Beatrice Cenci, the girl who commits incest and patricide. The contrast between the copy and the original parallels the contrast between Lucy and Isabel: the copy depicts "so sweetly and seraphically blonde a being," i.e., a Lucy-like being, while the original portrays "soft and light blue eyes, with an extremely fair complexion, veiled by funereally jetty hair," i.e., an Isabel-like being (351). We thus find it probable that demiurgic attributes are assigned to both Lucy and Isabel. Without saying, Isabel is also typecast as the conventional

"femme fatale":

> Her changed attitude of beautiful audacity; her long scornful hair, that trailed out a disheveled banner; her wonderful transfigured eyes, in which some meteors seemed playing up; all this now seemed to Pierre the work of an invisible enchanter. Transformed she stood before him; and Pierre, bowing low over to her, owned that irrespective, darting majesty of humanity, which can be majestical and menacing in woman as in man. (160)

Mary is the more formidable than the other two female figures, Isabel and Lucy. Her personality and authority over her son are to be discussed later. Suffice it to mention here that in an unhesitant way, the implied narrator Pierre portrays his mother as follows:

> She loveth me, ay;—but why? Had I been cast in a cripple's mold, how then? Now, do I remember that in her most caressing love, there ever gleamed some scaly, glittering folds of pride. Me she loveth with pride's love; in me she thinks she seeth her own curled and haughty beauty; before my glass she stands,—pride's priestess—and to her mirrored image, not to me, she offers up her offerings of kisses. (90)

Here, several questions arise. Is Pierre a sincere rebel against the domestic Demiurges? Does he deserve to be called a heroic debunker of Demiurges? In coming pages we will decompose Pierre's heroicness to make certain whether Terada's and Murray's evaluation of Pierre is to the point. To begin, we will discuss Pierre's erroneous idea of the self-made man and its concomitant pitfall, i.e., self-righteousness.

II. A. Pitfalls of Pierre's Self-Righteousness

From a psychological viewpoint, Béla Grunberger and Janie Chasseguet-Smirgel (266, 277) warn us of our tendency to mistake self-righteousness for genuine independence. This warning leads us to a discussion of the self-righteousness into which Pierre may lapse. According to these two psychologists, self-righteousness is based on an unquestioned assumption within a clear-cut but simplistic binary system. Virtue, for example, can be chosen over vice. This binarity is likely to be imbued in the fundamental approach of Western philosophy. It tends to germinate a violence and totalitarianism in which one becomes intolerant of and coercive to liberal democracy. This phenomenon seems

to be true enough, judging from radical extremist groups, best exemplified by the Nazis, the National-Socialist German Workers Party. Indeed, an association of Nazis with *Pierre* is not farfetched.

Ethnocentricity and eugenics, together with their concomitant but hidden posture of self-complacency, plagued the Nazis and drove them to exterminate others: non-Aryans such as Jews and Romanies, the sexually aberrant [the homosexual], the eugenically disadvantaged [the mentally handicapped], and the bourgeois or loan capitalists [represented by the financially successful Jews]. A counterpart of German society of the early twentieth century can be found in the American society of the mid-nineteenth century. The members of the former society were the pure-blooded Aryan in the Nazis regime, while those of the latter were white Anglo-Saxon middle-class men of property: the qualification rarely questioned and tacitly taken for granted in the "imagined community"—to use the phrase coined by Benedict Anderson—of white America. Therefore, it follows that the ideal of independence must have easily become interchangeable with the erroneous concept of self-righteousness that cunningly hid the racially intolerant posture. In the following section we will verify the analogy between Nazism and *Pierre* as a way to refute the modernistic interpretation which uncritically celebrates Pierre as a maverick hero. In the next section we will compare Melville's *Pierre* with *Pola X* (1999), the cinematized version of *Pierre* by the French film director Leos Carax (1960-). This comparison will expose the falsity of Pierre's notion of self-reliance and the unmistakable evidence of self-righteousness which veils ethnocentrocity. Incidentally, Mary (Marie) in *Pola X* was played by the established French actress Catherine Deneuve [Fig. 1]; Isabel

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

(Isabelle), by an aspiring new Russian actress, Yekaterina Golubeva; and Pierre, by Guillaume Depardieu, a French actor, well-known for meaningful episodes of discord against his actor father, for Pierre-like delinquent behavior, and for an Ahab-like dissection of his leg following a motor cycle accident [Fig. 2].

II. B. *Pola X* and Pierre

By way of introducing *Pola X,* it is helpful to note the connotation of the film title, *Pola X,* and to grope for explanations as to why the film director decided to endow the key figure Isabelle with the sobriquet Pola X. "Pola" is officially known to be an acronym for *Pierre ou les Ambiguïtés,* and X stands for the tenth (=X) draft of the director's script of the film. We may also speculate that the director's own identity has a bearing on the title: "X," the unusual name the director chooses for Pola, is the last letter of his own name, Leos Carax. Carax might have replaced "Lucy (Lucie)" with "Isabel (Isabelle)" in Melville's following words: "the real Lucy[/Isabel] he, in his scheming thoughts, had substituted but a sign—some empty x—and in the ultimate solution of the problem, that empty x still figured; not the real Lucy[/Isabel]" (181). Or it may be that "X" outspokenly reveals Pola's (Isabelle's) bastard status and her defiance against patriarchy, calling into the viewers' mind Malcolm X, the militant Muslim activist who fought for the rights of African Americans, who disdained to inherit a family name which had been imposed upon him by the white. Incidentally, the film partly deals with Yugoslav Wars, the strife between Christians and Muslims, and in this context Isabelle is assumed to be a Muslim. In addition, another factor must have motivated Carax, as well. Probably mindful of the two saints, Peter

and Paul in The Acts of the Apostles of the New Testament, Carax associates the
two cinema characters with the two biblical saints: Pierre with Peter and Isabelle
with Pola [Paula], the feminine form of Paul. Paul is regarded as one of the
twelve apostles, but in a narrow sense he is excluded from that status, in part be-
cause he bears no witness to the real life of Jesus Christ and in part because he
only comes to believe in Christianity after the death of Christ.

This volatile status of Paul resembles that of Pola, the woman in Carax's
Pola X, i.e., Isabelle [or Isabel in Melville's Pierre]. Pola (Isabelle [/Isabel]) is
deserted by her father, and she knows nothing of how he spends his life after he
deserts her and his lover. Similarly, St. Paul bears no direct witness to the life
of Jesus Christ. By no means can Pola/Isabelle in Carax's movie and Isabel in
Melville's fiction be categorized into the hagiology. Far from a saint, Pola/
Isabelle/Isabel is a Pariah, and is represented in the movie as a poverty-stricken
scavenger; an illegal immigrant or fugitive from Yugoslavia, where the ferocity
of ethnic cleansing has terrified the Muslims; an outsider excluded from French
Christian society [Fig. 3], who barely escapes police interrogation in Paris.
Allow me here to quickly interject that history, as the leading New Historicist
Hayden White theorizes, is a specific and directly unknowable narrative (Lynn
107-49). Hence, we can legitimately refer to Carax, the film director who dar-
ingly transplants domestic issues of mid-nineteenth American society into
European society at the end of the twentieth century.

Fig. 3 [An immigrant district in Paris]

Isabel in Melville's story is said to have started her life—if her ambiguous
memory is correct and reliable—as the child of a miserable French immigrant

mother, and Isabel has now become a mere domestic helper employed by a sharecropping family, the Ulvers. Incidentally, Ulver's daughter is condemned for her sexual misbehavior and expelled from the manor by the mistress (Pierre's mother, Mary Glendinning). Taken altogether, both Isabelle/Pola in the movie and Isabel in the fiction are at the fringes of society.

We have opened the threshold and paved the way for verifying the analogy between the two self-righteous parties, i.e., the ethno-centric Nazis and the ego-centric, self-reliant Pierre. For further verification, we will now put side by side the two dwellings: an old factory that houses Pierre and Isabelle/Pola in *Pola X;* and a church where Pierre and Isabel seek lodgment in *Pierre.* The putative siblings of the original story, *Pierre,* decide to live in the Church of the Apostles, while those in the counterpart film, *Pola X,* seek a safe haven in the factory—dilapidated and yet still in use. The factory residents are squatters [self-professed revolutionary-minded socialists], who assert their apparent working-class identities by operating gigantic low-tech machines. In Melville's fiction, the residents of the previous church building comprise questionable intelligentsias, as "mostly artists of various sorts; painters, or sculptors, or indigent students, or teachers of languages, or poets, or figurative French politicians, or German philosophers" (267), "[the] poor, penniless, devils," "still striv[ing] for their physical forlornness, by resolutely reveling in the region of blissful ideals" (267) with their faith in the false Utopia. In a word, all the residents are intelligent bachelors without any women except Isabel (and Lucy). In Carax's film, the very existence of married women, little children, and domestic animals, implies that the community organized in the precinct of the factory is self-sufficient, autistic, and socially defiant [Fig. 4]. With respect to the marital status in the two communities, indeed, there lies a difference between the film and the novel. That difference, however, is not so critical, as both artificial communities appear to be dissociated from, and even antagonistic to, society. The anti-social facet of the community in the film is easily observable in the scene where the male members receive military training probably in preparation for what will probably be their prospective anarchic revolution [Fig. 5a, 5b]. Moreover, the apparent leader of the community in the film makes a podium appearance, stirring the members into ecstasy. All of the members look up to the charismatic leader for cues in the rock music [Fig. 6]. Though this community leader—lean, of a rather fragile
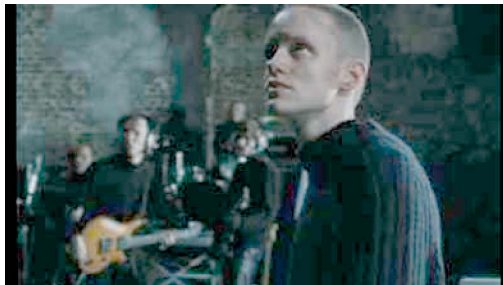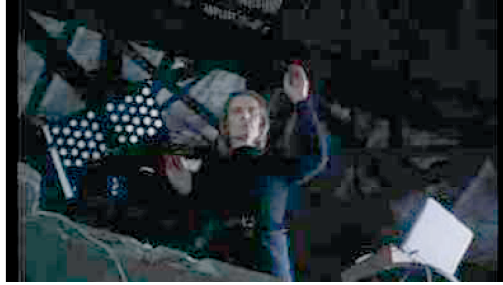
Fig. 4

Fig. 5a

Fig. 5b

Fig. 6

physique, with blond hair—looks by no means superior in physique by all appearances, he is endowed with a hypnotizing talent, reminiscent of Adolph Hitler, the Nazi leader, the eloquent speaker of propaganda, the embodiment of racialism, ethnocentricity, self-righteousness, and intolerance of others. The ambition of Nazis comes to mind what we witness the community members conducting military training to rehearse for a possible terrorist attack against the establishment, and the film actually refers to a bomb explosion in the subway. This seemingly utopian community, the white only community, reminds us of the Oneida community of nineteenth-century America and its Eugenic foundational concept. Moreover, what if the Hitler-like leader in Carax's movie is analogous to the suspicious looking Plinlimmon, the virtual leader of the community in Melville's fiction (both have a mesmerizing power)? If there is a legitimate analogy, it follows that Plinlimmon, the philosopher whom Pierre admires as the mentor of the residents in the Church of Apostles, also turns out to be suspicious, as we have already sensed at the beginning of Chapter I of this thesis. This reasoning undermines Pierre's bluff of independence and aspiration for truth/God seeker.

The analogy of *Pola X/Pierre* to Nazis gains strength when we see the racially ambiguous depictions of the two girls Isabelle [Pola] and Isabel, depictions which cast them in a disadvantageous light in the Euro-American white hegemony. Isabelle in the movie has black hair, while Melville endows Isabel in the fiction with "her dark, olive cheek" (46), "tresses of the jettiest hair" (118), and "inscrutable dark glance" (129). Pierre in the novel also manifests an unconscious racism through his deep respect for his own grandfather, a man who drove out the Indians, with the help of his black slave.

Thus, we see the following: Pierre's assertive behavior is far from a mature striving for independence. Not worthy to be called "the heaven-begotten Christ" or debunker of domestic Demiurge(s), Pierre fails to consider the possibility that his apparent bravery might spell out disaster for the others around him.

III. Pierre's Self-Magnification under the Machiavellian Mother Mary

Through our analysis, we have unveiled the sanctimonious heroism of Pierre's immature behavior. What remain hidden, however, are his unconscious motives and the uncertain agency (agencies) which instigate(s) the innocent protagonist to ecstatically declare himself as a Christ-like figure. In our search

for clues to identify the holder of the power which motivates Pierre, we are tempted to focus on the female figures in *Pierre*. Female figures loom large in the domestic emotional realms, especially in the days when emotion was exclusively allotted to women. Indeed, Melville's style in depicting female characters seems to be based on the stereotype. This style is so pronounced, Judith Fryer and other feminists have charged that Melville's banal depictions of female characters in *Pierre* are mere signs which fail to reflect their realities. On the contrary, there are other feminist critics who side with Melville. According to Wilma Garcia, the author adopted an ironic mode, intentionally making character development only a secondary consideration, to paradoxically shed light on the absurdities of contemporary patriarchic mythologies [by which, I mean the embodiment of Freud's oedipal theme]. Myra Jehlen indicates that, to Pierre, the "drawing-room portrait" of Mary's late husband [Pierre's father] is not just "[that] of a pious but patricidal son as a culmination of Freud's Oedipus thesis," "[the thesis] outlin[ing] the familial middle-class ideology" (22). Jehlen may hit the target, yet she falls short of identifying the agency that puts into motion Pierre's Oedipus complex.

The women in question in *Pierre* are Pierre's half-sister Isabel, his fiancée Lucy, and his mother Mary (the target in this thesis). Here we will observe these three women in the order of Lucy, Isabel, and Mary, to zero in on our objective—the woman who wields the most influence over Pierre's (un)conscious psyche. Given the sentimental culture of the nineteenth century, we can expect in advance that the possible manipulator, who (un)knowingly deceives Pierre, may primarily be his mother.

First of all, we will observe Lucy Tartan. As the meek girl obedient to Pierre's mother and best qualified as the mother-in-law's pet, Lucy has conspired with Mary in keeping Pierre under the control of the mother. In her unconscious collaboration with Pierre's mother, Lucy helps Mary achieve the latter's desire to let Pierre establish the questionable patriarchic subjectivity, the false authority and independence. Lucy's broken engagement with Pierre is "hardly to be wept over" (Dimock 170). Though secondary to Isabel in terms of psychic strength over Pierre, Lucy does not remain as innocent or as miserably exploited by the apparently patriarchic behavior of Pierre as some feminists are prone to rashly consider her to be. She behaves as a "second Isabel" by attempting to

usurp Isabel's privileged status. Nonetheless, Lucy's charm is outshone by that of Isabel, as Pierre thinks more highly of Isabel than of Lucy. Then, what are to make of Isabel's power over Pierre? Isabel shows up in front of Pierre and professes herself to be his sister by a different mother. Pierre then voluntarily leaves his mother to enter into the spell of his half sister, and this paradoxically affords him a different outlook on his mother. Pierre begins to detect an unfamiliar aspect behind Mary's superficial expression: "in me she thinks she seeth her own curled and haughty beauty; before my glass she stands, — pride's priestess- and to her mirrored image, not to me, she offers up her offerings of kisses" (90). While the pride and narcissism of his mother are suddenly exposed, this does not necessarily mean that Pierre gains full knowledge of the reality, namely that he has been goaded into that (pre-)oedipal realm by his mother, the mother who has already paved a road which will culminate in his behaving like (Mock-/Anti-) Christ. As Priscilla Wald remarks, "what Isabel wills, though subtly articulated, replaces what Mrs. Glendinning demands; Pierre simply transfers his allegiance" (106), and more importantly, Isabel "stop[s] to free Pierre from Mary Glendinning's grasp" (Rogin 173). However, Isabel ironically "draws the son more deeply into his mother's power" despite her antagonistic position to Pierre's mother Mary (Rogin 173). Gillian Brown also concludes that Pierre returns to "the iconography of sentimental motherhood" (165), and this means that Mary, not Isabel, is victorious over Pierre throughout. In terms of her physically and emotionally outstanding presence, Mary Glendinning surpasses any young girl: "when lit up and bediademeded by ball-room lights, ... still eclipsed far younger charms, and had she chosen to encourage them, would have been followed by a train of infatuated suitors, little less than her own son Pierre" (4-5). Taken altogether, it is Mary who wields maximum influence over Pierre, hence it is Mary on whom we will focus. Eric J. Sundquist asserts that "Melville turned in Pierre to a society extraordinarily feminized, a society in which psychological and philosophical authority undergoes a concomitant transfiguration. *Pierre's* lack of a Moby Dick entails replacing the authority of God the Father with that of Goddess the Mother, the Mater Tenebrarum [Dark Mother], or at least with a God whose authority is strangely hybrid, emasculated and feminized" (166). If Mary Glendinning is equal to the Mater Tenebrarum, it follows that Pierre makes either a false show of absolute independence from his widowed mother or

hypocritically resigns from her assets. Thus, Pierre falsely claims that, due to his "divine unidentifiableness, that owned no earthly kith or kin" (89), "I [Pierre] will no more have a father" (87). He adds that, "doubly an orphan" (90), he "will not own a mortal parent, and spurn and rend all mortal bonds" (106), to conclude as follows: "in the Enthusiasts to Duty, the heaven-begotten Christ is born." Below, we will investigate how Mary makes use of Christianity.

III. A. Mock-Virgin Mary Making Use of Christianity

Pierre has accepted the Christianity of the sentimental middle-class gynocentric Euro-American society of the mid-nineteenth century, though not entirely. The sole function of Christianity in sentimentalism was supposedly to gentrify the untamed masculinity of husbands and sons, the masculinity indispensable in successfully surviving and standing out in competitive capitalism. The augmented feminine power over the male breadwinner in this capitalistic society produced the neutered male, a figure best exemplified by Mary's late husband [Pierre's father] in the "drawing-room portrait," the portrait drawn "by a celebrated artist of her own election and costumed after her own taste" (83). Pierre Glendinning, a namesake of the story's anti-hero, dies with "a marked reputation as a gentleman and a Christian" (68), allowing his wife and son to summon up a picture which shows to them that "now uncorruptibly sainted in heaven," "the venerated form of the departed husband and father" "majestically and holily walk[s]" (69). His wife Mary concocts, nurtures, and instills into her son the impeccable personality of her husband as an ideal Christian. Through the untainted image of her husband, as well as through this approach to her son, Mary can monopolize the chaste but false image of her husband and maintain the hierarchic dignity as Mater Tenebrarum. Theoretically, Mary might be second to her late husband, but in the unconscious psych of her son she actually appears second to none.

Higgins and Parker summarize that "Every major character in *Pierre*, we eventually discover, perverts, distorts, or trivializes Christianity" (48), and that the two culprits in *Pierre* are the mother the (Mock-Virgin) widow Mary and her son Pierre, the latter of whom is misled by and put under the sway of the former. Mary Glendinning, "the generous foundress and the untiring patroness of the beautiful little marble church," "the same untiring benefactress, from whose

purse, ... came a great part of [Rev. Falsgrave's] salary" (97), can even put the minister in the palm of her own hand. Rev. Falsgrave takes it as his duty to fully agree with her opinion whatsoever it may be. Though born to peasant parents, Falsgrave has attained enough education to be gentrified into "the choicest female society" (98), thanks probably to financial help from the Glendinnings. Falsgrave is enabled to take holy orders, and he can, in doing so, if he wishes, disregard economic inequalities and the sharecroppers' suppressed enmities against the manor owners.

In the sentimental middle-class culture of nineteenth-century America, the supporters of the culture, mainly propertied women and ministers, veered their attention to the reality of the slum life and stirred themselves to social reform movements such as abolitionism, temperance, moral reform, and public education. In *Pierre,* Mary Glendinning lets her tenement girls sew everyday clothes "for the benefit of various settlements of necessitous emigrants, who had lately pitched their populous shanties further up the river" (44). These apparent works of welfare, however, hid two elements: the fear of the middle class against possible uprising of the needy; and the real motivation of the middle class to put the lower class under their control. By involving themselves in the social reform movements, the middle class justified their own reluctance to face the realities of the needy.

Rev. Falsgrave dares not probe into the economic disaster of the sharecropper's expelled pregnant girl, Delly Ulver. Sponsored by Mary Glendinning, he fears that he would lose Mary's patronage if he directly asserted his opinion about the reality of social inequalities. Moreover, in facing the mistress Mary and the young master Pierre, Falsgrave imagines that "[b]efore him also, stood united in one person, the most exalted lady and the most storied beauty of all country round; and the finest, most intellectual, and congenial youth he knew" (97). Attesting to the indication of Ann Douglas, Mary thus succeeds in feminizing the minister, a man endowed with a somewhat feminine physique— "the remarkable smallness of his feet, and the almost infantile delicacy, and vivid whiteness and purity of his hands" (98). The fact that the (Mock-Virgin) widow Mary leads the minister by the nose suggests that she could easily do the same with her son, and by extension fabricate the Mock-Christ out of him.

Let us see the process used for making Pierre into the Mock-Christ.

Contrary to what he had imagined, Pierre realizes that his deceased father was lecherous enough to have fathered an illegitimate daughter before marriage. Pierre dramatically remodels the previous relationship between father and son, i.e., the relationship between the domestic god and the follower/worshipper. Pierre boldly reverses the seniority-based hierarchy, and consequently, elevating the son to the superior position and demoting the father (dethroning the domestic god). Mary Glendinning may not be pleased by the dethronement of her dead husband, and she may not profit from it, but the enthronement of her son to a Christ-like status could be more than compensatory. The reversed power relation between Pierre and his father runs parallel to that of Jesus and Joseph, in which the son Jesus is superior to the father Joseph. According to the two psychologists, Grunberger and Smirgel, the son's superiority over the father, is attested to by the essential nature of Christianity, a religion which equates God and his only son in terms of sacredness. These two psychologists do not fail to refer to the connotative name, Christianity, which comes not from Joseph the father, but from Jesus Christ, God's only child, the son [Jesus].

III. B. Marianism in the American Middle-Class Family of the Nineteenth-Century

"[T]he heaven-begotten Christ" (106) are the remarks made by the implied narrator, i.e., Pierre himself. The remarks utterly captivate Pierre into becoming more and more inattentive to the hypnotic power unleashed by his mother, and thus into entertaining the exorbitant idea that, "heaven begotten," he is no longer dependent on his parents. Pierre's denying biological lineage— "[I] will not own a mortal parent, and spurns and rends all mortal bonds" (106) —may seem perplexing to the two parties, his mother Mary and the reader. Mary may be slightly baffled in her plan of everlastingly keeping him under her own control, while the reader, expecting Mary to exert perpetual influence over Pierre, may feel as if Mary's plan is hitting a dead end. Yet, their embarrassment turns out to be groundless.

The above-mentioned reasoning is explained with the aid of psychological views that observe the affinity between Catholicism and Oedipus complex. Originally founded by Puritans, American society somehow maintained remnants of the Puritan dogma by the mid-nineteenth century. The society was not incom-

patible with Catholicism, though the hegemonic Puritans of the mid-nineteenth century were suspicious of the Catholic immigrants who had escaped from the Irish potato famine and populated the slums of American big cities. America was in its early stage of capitalism at that time. In *Pierre,* its rapid growth is negatively symbolized by the dilapidation and desecration of the Church of the Apostles. Puritan Piety has plainly been replaced by commercialism. To satisfy the demand of commercialism, this once sacred building has been "divided into stores," "cut into offices," and "given for a roost to the gregarious lawyers" (266), though the rapid change of commercial districts makes the precinct desolate and leaves the building untenanted. Commercialism is compatible with secularism and sentimentalism, and sentimentalism holds the ideology of "Domestic Eden" that the Angel [i.e., the ideal mother] resides in the sweet home, an ideology which overlaps with Mary-centered Catholicism. Reiterated, within the sentimental gynocentric culture of the day, was the importance of domestic happiness in the virtually matriarchic family, a family which was disguised into a patriarchic family by all appearances. This dual nature of the middle-class family — matriarchic vs. patriarchic, apparently conflicting and yet compatible — provided the foundation necessary for producing the atmosphere attuned to Catholicism. This was an atmosphere specific to the mid-nineteenth American middle-class family, where, like the Catholic dyad between the Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ, the relation between the mother and the son was unduly reinforced. It follows then that just as Virgin Mary was worshipped by the Catholics as a sort of proxy for God, so was the mother in the family admired by the American middle class as a domestic angel.

The widowed Mary Glendinning accomplishes her undisguised intention to behave like a symbolic empress over her son and her sharecroppers in her manor. In analyzing the psychodynamics of Mary's self-aggrandizement, it is instructive to lend an ear to the pathological diagnosis that touches upon the undisclosed complicity between Marianism and Catholicism. According to the aforementioned theory of Grunberger and Smirgel, the Catholics prefer to ask Virgin Mary for intervention rather than directly pray the Father God, and as a result they unconsciously identify Mary as an entity almost as mighty as God. This mechanism could indirectly help Mary promote the Son (Jesus) into the status of God. The same could be said of the widowed mother Mary Glendinning, but

in a skewed way. Only Mary will preside over Glendinning mansion; there is no adult male to fill the position. Mary is asked to play the role of arbiter, just like the Virgin Mary, when her social inferior Rev. Falsgrave asks her what to do with the manservant Ned and Delly Ulver, now that Delly is pregnant from their illicit love affair. Though Falsgrave expects her to provide an amicable solution for the poor girl, Mary decides that Delly should be expelled from the manor. Unlike Virgin Mary, Mary Glendinning is infatuated with her own power, giving an eye to "the baton [symbolic of phallic power]" of her father, General Pierre Glendinning, a heroic Revolutionary War hero. She "lifted it, and musingly swayed it to and fro; then paused, and staff-wise rested with it in her hand," with "her stately beauty" "somewhat martial in it" (20). Her deceased father's baton is, she hopes, now embodied by her son, who will "remain all docility to me, and yet prove a haughty hero to the world" (20). The power of her father is repre-sented by the baton, and now she needs the power incarnated by her son Pierre, who hands over his power to his mother and then loses it. As Michael Rogin ex-plains (164), "[Pierre] is her phallus, and he will have to free himself from her to acquire a self, sex, and power of his own." But this is something he will not do. Mary Glendinning's self-awareness of her own power grows to its fullest when she wields it over her son. Higgins and Parker detect that "[Mary] is re-vealing her inability to think of [Pierre] except in subjugation to her, as well as her inability to see that in suppressing his independent manhood, by making him her 'brother' and 'lady-in-waiting,' she has perversely inhibited his natural mas-culine development" (43). The landlady with the manorial tillage has nurtures her son's innocence, and stunts his financial sense so completely. She puts him in her own hands. Psychologically speaking, Mary behaves as a phallic mother in a way, putting Pierre within her own turf and thus forcing him to stay infantile and maintain the Oedipus complex.

III. C. Mock-Virgin Mary's Deployment of Oedipus

Psychologists indicate that by inventing the myth and religion (including Christianity), the young narcissist is likely to avoid directly confronting the Oedipus complex, i.e., the problem of how to override his own father (Grunberger and Smirgel). The young man in question reiterates the imaginary family romance, as best exemplified in its extreme case by the *Bible,* and in a

secular form, by *Pierre*. In the family romance, the real biological father recedes from the view of the son, who deguts the father's corporeality (carnality) and replaces the image of the mortal father with the image of the ideal but unreal god-like father. The young guys, including Jesus and, it could be quickly added, Pierre, are supposed to identify themselves with that illusory sacred paternal image (Grunberger and Smirgel).

At the patriarchic position, Pierre complacently weaves "a text of American family romance" "in which the foundling's father and unwedded mother become the American dream family" (Sundquist 149). Complacently and unconsciously, Pierre formulates the American family romance in collaboration with his widowed mother Mary, who encourages her son to weave the American family romance by abusing the son's Oedipus complex. Rather, we should put it thus: unawares, Pierre is merely driven by his mother to dramatize the American family romance and misleadingly perform a marionette show embroidered with religious threads.

With regard to this problematical parental abuse of the Oedipus complex of the (quasi-) son, let us temporarily digress from *Pierre* and observe the similarity between Melville's *Pierre* and Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850). The abuse of the Oedipus complex by those around the (anti-)hero is reminiscent of the minister Dimmesdale in Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*. The young minister writhes in anguished guilt in the presence of the paternal figure or the cuckolded doctor Chillingworth, but the minister is actually maneuvered by the physician or psychologist-manqué into believing the Puritan dogma, the dogma of God's possible punishment of the sinner. It could be reasonably surmised that the cuckolded senile intelligentsia, Chillingworth, is an impotent but demanding paterfamilias who courts the wife's (Hester's) unfavorable criticism, partly by dedicating himself undividedly to medical knowledge, partly by neglecting his wife('s wholesome sexuality). Deservedly, he is forsaken by his wife. The man dethroned from the status of paterfamilias becomes equal to the de-gendered grotesque being, and in a sense stands closer to the virago, also the de-gendered monstrous being. In Melville's *Pierre,* this grotesque being happens to be represented by Mary Glendinning, and, like Chillingworth, is about to lose power and authority over the son when the son realizes the hypocrisy of the parents.

Mary and Chillingworth, both the de-gendered beings, might concur on their

views: the deployment of the patriarchic ideology, in which the father/Father/God could be symbolically equated, is advantageous in retrieving and maintaining their otherwise insecure leading stance or the psychological dominance over their (quasi-)sons, Pierre and Dimmesdale. Mary and Chillingworth reduce the oedipally suffering young men [Pierre and Dimmesdale] to meekly obedient and /or de-gendered beings, beings both unfeminine and unmasculine; in a word, monstrous. Pierre and Dimmesdale become monstrous and yet powerless, unlike the Oedipus complex manipulators, Mary and Chillingworth. Thus, Mary and Chillingworth can guarantee their position and raison d'être, and continue to organize the patriarchic community. Freud postulates that through the relation with the father, the son unconsciously formulates the Oedipus complex. Yet it is not the son but the parent who turns on the oedipal system in *The Scarlet Letter* and *Pierre.* These fictions put into practice the theory of Gilles Deleuze and Pierre-Félix Guattari, the postmodern theory that deconstructs and reverses Freud.

IV. Melville under the Spell of Hawthorne

We have verified that Pierre's independence is sham at the most, that his mother forces him to make the oedipal psych, himself unawares, and that his mentality thus forged misleads him to self-righteousness and false independence from the family. Now we will take our discussion to the starting point, to recall the following assumptions: that the author's emotional effusion brought *Pierre* into existence; and that, placed in triple predicaments, aesthetical, financial, and emotional [oedipal], the author as a professional writer portrayed the leading character Pierre as his proxy (as both Melville and Pierre strove for the establishment of professional authorship).

From the very beginning of this thesis, there have been implications that a probable homology could be established between Pierre and Melville in failing to gain freedom from the mother (Mary Glendinning and Maria Gansevoort, respectively). This homology, as it turns out, takes on a complicated aspect. While Melville was writing *Pierre* under a powerful unconscious oedipal fixation to his mother, his association with Hawthorne reached its apex. This phenomenon suggests that the maternal influence was likely to have been augmented by Melville's association with Hawthorne, and thus leads us to a bold supposition

that in the mind of Melville, the image of mother could be interchangeable with that of Hawthorne.

The "image" should be termed as "imago," to use the psychological word referring to a flawless and therefore illusive image of a parent or parental figure, the image that one begins to nurse from childhood (Kohut). To a little infant entirely dependent on its parents, the parents appear omnipotent and godlike. If one bereaves of one's parent too early for one to perceive the adult realities, including the realities of the parent, one loses the chance to modify the parental imago and is doomed to keep the initial imago intact throughout all of life. We can thus surmise that Hawthorne must have taken the form of the parental imago in the eyes of Melville. In "Hawthorne and His Mosses" (1850), Melville expresses passionate admiration of Hawthorne for his likeness with Shakespeare, the god and absolute of the literary world, precisely because Melville saw Hawthorne as a parental substitute worthy of being idolized and even sacralized.

Which parental imago did Hawthorne's imago resemble, the maternal imago or paternal imago? To probe into this problem, we will observe Melville's actual circumstances when he wrote *Pierre*. Just before setting out to write *Pierre*, Melville had to accept the fact of Hawthorne's departure from Lenox, Massachusetts. In Melville's paranoiac mind, Hawthorne must have appeared to have virtually abandoned him, just as Melville's father had done by passing away. Also, the departures of, first, Melville's own father, and later, Hawthorne, could overlap with that of Pierre's father. This suggests that Hawthorne may have been a substitute for Melville's father, and that Hawthorne's imago was (mis)taken for the paternal. As suggested by the critics Robert Milder, Charles J. Haberstroh, Jr., James Creech, Joseph Adamson, and Monica Mueller, to name a few, Hawthorne's removal must have been traumatic, augmenting Melville's difficulty in freeing himself from the bindings of the parental imagoes, the imagoes of his own making, or the parental imago that ran amok throughout his life thereafter.

Was the paternal imago built up by Melville from the image of Hawthorne entirely unrelated to the maternal image? Though Melville was the queer writer, critics today concur with the evaluation that Melville did not meddle with gender differentiation. Here, we should recall that the imago of Allan [/Melville's real father] in the mind of the author, or to put it differently, the

imago of Pierre's father in the mind of Pierre, may appear to be deep rooted, but is literally and figuratively defunct and easily replaced by the overwhelming power of Melville's/Pierre's mother. Perhaps, the paternal imago could be exchangeable with and replaceable by the maternal in Pierre's/Melville's mind. This reasoning suggests that if, in Melville's mind, Hawthorne's imago could be compared to the (substitute) father's, then it could also be compared to the (substitute) mother's. Despite or because of gender-wise ambiguous feature, Hawthorne stressed the importance of domestic values with the same conviction as the contemporary middle-class bestselling female writers of the day. This was not motivated by a feministic mindset or by chauvinistic machismo, but by an urgent need to establish his own fragile masculinity. Hawthorne's socially and economically unstable status could easily lead him to the position of a woman, and in Melville's mind, that of the maternal figure. This reasoning brings about the assumption that the imago of Hawthorne could function interchangeably as both that of the mother and that of the father. Hawthorne's interchangeabilities, or his ambiguities if you will, from one gender to another, and from one parental role to another, must have been confusing and yet comfortably confusing. Indeed, it might have ultimately compounded in Melville's difficulty in extricating himself from the quagmire in which he had been thrown; or, more accurately, the quagmire he unconsciously courted.

Melville adored Hawthorne intellectually, emotionally, and physically, dedicating *Moby-Dick* to Hawthorne. The infatuated Melville wrote a letter fraught with sexual innuendoes which capture the attention of Charles N. Watson, Jr.: "Whence come you, Hawthorne? By what right do you drink from my flagon of life? And when I put it to my lips — lo, they are yours and not mine" [to Hawthorne (17?) Nov. 1851]. The above-cited letter, written during their brief honeymoon period bears witness to "frantic deluge of love, of the need for approval, of self-promotion and self-doubt" (Haberstroh 66). After their separation, however, Melville's tone drastically changed from one of passionate yearning for Hawthorne to a bitter resentment against him. In the long pilgrimage poem *Clarel* [1876], Melville finally expresses his repressed anger at Hawthorne, by having Clarel ventriloquize the author's inward rage at Vine, the reclusive pilgrim who, Walter E. Bezanson thinks, represents the now dead Hawthorne. From Vine, Clarel received a denial of his "caress" in "flesh."

But for thy fonder dream of love
In man toward man — the soul's caress —
The negatives of flesh should prove
Analogies of non-cordialness
In spirit. (2.27.124-28)

According to Haberstroh, "the insecure child in Melville came springing forth and leaped right into the lap of the somewhat reserved (and probably embarrassed) Hawthorne" (66). Haberstroh's cogent remarks bear out my assumption that Hawthorne must have symbolically resembled the substitute parent, the treacherous parent. This treacherousness in Hawthorne seems to have compelled Melville to obsessively and repeatedly seek him out, only to receive devastating effect.

Conclusion

In the previous work *Moby-Dick,* Ishmael survives the shipwreck through the agent, the agent functioning simultaneously as the maternal figure [the whaler named Rachel] and paternal [the captain of the whaler Gardiner]. The rescued Ishmael attains the status of a self-proclaimed narrator, compares himself to Job, and quotes from the Book of Job (1.14-19): "AND I ONLY AM ESCAPED ALONE TO TELL THEE." On the contrary, Pierre does not survive the catastrophe he brings about, declaring to Isabel, "in thy breast, life for infants lodges not, but death-milk for thee and me!" He kills himself by "tearing [Isabel's] bosom loose, seiz[ing] the secret vial nestling there" [for deadly poison] (360). His death is followed by Isabel's gasps that "All's o'er, and ye know him not!" (362). The remarks of "milk" and "breasts" imply that he has yet to become aware of how his women, especially his mother, have influenced his psych. Moreover, the remarks of "ye [including possible readers] know him not," suggest that Pierre has narrated only his false image to the readers (who in the end "know him not"). Unlike Ishmael, Pierre fails as a narrator, and through Pierre, Melville confessed that he was also a failure as a professional writer.

Ishmael finds the ideal paternal imago in Ahab — incidentally, Ahab seeks his paternal imago in the white whale, the imago to be erased from his psyche. Ishmael finds the maternal imago in Queequeg. Both Queequeg and Ahab appear

to be heroic and even comparable to omnipotent (demi)gods.[4] Ishmael and Ahab can imitate, assume, and even cannibalize the attributes of authoritative imagoes; Ishmael succeeds in setting about narrating Ahab's adventure, while Ahab, though losing his life, persistently harasses and heroically rebels against the monster. Meanwhile, Pierre retreats within the domestic sphere, and "returns home to find [the ideal imago] — perhaps just as he had suspected all along — safely, or treacherously, in the possession of Mother" (Sundquist 150). While retreating, Pierre (un)consciously finds his skewed imago in the phallic mother.

Just as Pierre is too deeply trammeled in Marianism to be independent therefrom, so was Melville too deeply trammeled in the parental imago to be independent from Hawthorne, the gender-wise ambiguous being. Melville tried in vain to find his reliable (phallic) imago in the parental substitute, Hawthorne, the icon of national bard and yet gender-wise ambiguous being, while Hawthorne deserted Melville, and throwing him into despair. It was too late for Melville to get over this traumatic experience. Melville/Pierre allowed the phallic authority of the Hawthornian/maternal imago to become wild and maximized. Paradoxically and unknowingly, Melville/Pierre had stuck fast to the imago, despite the initial need for independence.

Pretending to rebel against the patriarchy and allying with the maternal figure might allow the young man to seize the chance of playing a heroic anti-patriarchic fighter, and yet avoid direct confrontation with the oedipal problem. In the end this leads him to the phase where the mother of darkness [Mater Tenebrarum] replaces the mother of affection. Mater Tenebrarum evokes an image of sadistic mother who devours everything and forces her children to eat on unsavory dishes she makes. Psychologically, the neurotic oedipal man finds it difficult to cope with this negative image of the mother. In reaction, he projects it from his psyche to the outer world. Coincidentally, the society in which Melville/Pierre lived was a society fed on "women's sentimentality," a society where the female writers were hailed for their mawkish stories and enjoyed immense advantage from their sales and profits. Theoretically, Melville could have projected the negative maternal imago onto the middle-class gynocentric sentimental culture so as to temporarily soothe his discomfort, and this is what he did in *Pierre.* By doing so, he only accentuated his uneasiness.

Judging from the cannibalism in *Moby-Dick* and the incest in *Pierre,* Melville

could have been projecting the negative mother imago. In his research on primitive lifestyles (105), the anthropologist Lévi-Strauss observed that the devouring and dissecting of the totemic animal (the holy animal representing the ancestor) is symbolically relevant to incest: cannibalism and incest, both ambiguous as prohibited or requisite, are often fused to keep the unity of the primitive tribe. And, totem and incest have the same meaning in the language of the tribe: the genitalia of the elder sister.

By writing the cannibalism in *Moby-Dick* and the incest in *Pierre,* Melville might have been able to momentarily calm himself. Indeed, he would have, if only he had managed to maintain his relationship with Hawthorne, the producer of the alter mother/father imago. But Hawthorne, his only remaining hope, had gone. What awaited Melville after his separation from Hawthorne and the publication of *Pierre* was public denouncement: "*Pierre; or The Ambiguities* is, perhaps, the craziest fiction extant.... it might be supposed to emanate from a lunatic hospital rather than from the retreats of the Berkshire" [Charles Gordon Greene, unsigned review, *Boston Post.* 4 August 1852 (Branch 294-95)].

It is said that the psychotic is likely to return again and again to the same spot where he has lived through traumatic experience. Melville seems to have behaved similarly, obsessed with Hawthorne(-like) imago(es) by the end of his life. In my next paper on *Clarel,* the long poem from Melville's twilight years, I will prove Melville's lifelong obsession with Hawthorne.

Notes

1. All subsequent references to *Pierre* will be parenthetically included. *Pierre; or The Ambiguities.* Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern UP, 1971.
2. This paper is based on a presentation given at the 2009 Annual Convention of the Nathaniel Hawthorne Society of Japan.
3. Joyce W. Warren and Motoyuki Shibata call Pierre the American Narcissus.
4. To put it accurately, Ahab is at once both a hero and antihero. See chapter I of this thesis.

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Mock-Christ, Mater Tenebrarum, and Hawthorne: Disastrous Deification in Melville's Domestic Metafiction, *Pierre; or, The Ambiguities*

SASAKI, Eitetsu

In *Moby-Dick* (1851), Herman Melville arranged to have Ishmael rescued by the whaler named Rachel, the biblical maternal figure weeping for her children. Thus, Ishmael lives on, to narrate what he witnesses on the whaler *Pequod*. In his next fiction, *Pierre* (1852), the author has Pierre, the implied narrator, take over Ishmael's role and more deeply explore the domestic [mother-centered] sphere. The form of *Pierre* as a self-referential metafiction allows me to hypothesize that the grip of the mothers — the author's mother Maria Gansevoort Melville and Pierre's mother Mary Glendinning — induces both men to write and behave self-righteously. Nathaniel Hawthorne's abandonment of Melville while Melville wrote *Pierre,* more specifically, the traumatizing effects this abandonment had on Melville, allows me to further hypothesize that the maternal influence was maximized just at the moment when Melville's putative lover Hawthorne left him. While examining these hypotheses, I have attempted to elucidate that the driving forces of the two (implied) writers [the author Melville and the disguised narrator Pierre] are the imagoes of the mothers [Maria and Mary], and to prove that both imagoes, the mothers' and Hawthorne's, are interchangeable in the author's psyche.

For the verification of these hypotheses, I have exposed the fact that far from the traditional masculine hero, Pierre is anything but the Emersonian Self-Reliant Man. In the highbrow American middle-class society, the Emersonian ideal came to be rather falsely accepted. This gave birth to dozens of questionable socialistic communities, including the failed Brook Farm and the polygamous Oneida community. These communities were criticized by Hawthorne in *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), and also, most probably, by Melville in his

depiction of the suspicious residents of the Church of Apostles in *Pierre*. These facts could undermine Pierre's insistence of both independent thinking and autonomy from his mother-presiding family.

Some modernist-minded critics, however, have been misled into praising Pierre for his qualification as a buster of domestic Demiurges, and into uncritically accepting the implied narrator's admiration of Pierre as "the heaven-begotten Christ." Here, comparison between Melville's *Pierre* and its cinematized version, Karax's *Pola X* (1999), may help corroborate that Pierre is not chastising the Demiurge but rather unknowingly baptized with a Nazi-like mentality: exclusionism and ethnocentric anti-democracy.

The agent that maneuvers Pierre into misbelieving in the successful achievement of independence and Christ-like status is his own widowed mother. As a Mater Tenebrarum [Dark Mother] or mock-Virgin Mary, Mary Glendinning puts Rev. Falsgrave under her control, misuses her financial power, and thus abuses Christianity. In a word, the widowed Mary resorts to Marianism, an expression of faith not necessarily inadmissible to the domestic ideology and sentimental culture forged by the American middle-class Puritans of the day. In complacent and unconscious collaboration with his widowed mother Mary, Pierre formulates the American family romance, the romance made up of the foundling's father and unwedded mother.

Thus, we are convinced that Pierre falls under the sway of the phallic mother. By extension, we are justified in assuming that Melville was not merely manipulated by his mother, but also caged by the image of the gender-wise ambiguous Hawthorne, a figure who, in the eyes of Melville, must have symbolically resembled the substitute parent [maternal as well as paternal]. Consequently, we can safely argue that just as Pierre is too deeply trammeled in Marianism to gain independence, so was Melville trammeled by the image of Hawthorne; and that Melville stuck fast to the parental or Hawthornian imago.