



Pierre, Or, The Ambiguities [with Biographical Introduction]

Herman Melville

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Herman Melville (1819-1891), now at the center of the American literary canon, was wildly dismissed for this labyrinthine effort. With the Boston Post writing upon its release, "it might be supposed to emanate from a lunatic hospital rather than from the quiet retreats of Berkshire." Perhaps Melville's most difficult and wildly textured work, "Pierre: Or, The Ambiguities", (1852) to this day evades easy categorization or critical interpretation. Now seen as an ambitious foray into proto-modernist composition, the text was initially met with utter consternation and was a commercial failure. Published a year after his magnum opus "Moby Dick, or, The Whale", "Pierre" tracks the nineteen year old Pierre Glendinning through his life in New York City as a fledgling novelist. Mr. Melville himself can be seen in the melodramatic life of Pierre. Wrestling with the literary trends of transcendentalism that pervaded his day, the novel, on some level, also parodies the gothic tradition of grand morality. But it is this

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