

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Parody of Christian Allegory in Melville's *Pierre or, the Ambiguities*

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Letter of Recommendation

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled "Parody of Christian Allegory in Melville's *Pierre or, the Ambiguities*" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Mr. Rajiv Gautam, has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

The present research is based on Herman Melville's novel *Pierre or, the Ambiguities* to see how Melville has parodied Christian allegory. The novel focuses the relationship between father and son where both characters are identically named. This sort of relationship between father and son implies that of God and Adam but it becomes problematic when son knows that the father had long ago seduced and abandoned an innocent young woman. The novel also presents the similarities of different Christian texts, like Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Dante's *Divine Comedy* as well as *Inferno*, as the example to prove it as an allegorical text, and at the same time it subverts the ideas of those texts. As a result, it creates humour with the idea that if there is God and if He is the source of all then He must be the primary source of evil.

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I. Melville and the Themes of Christianity

Melville carries out one of the most impressive performances in the history of American literature. Among other novelists and transcendentalists— Walt Whitman, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, Emily Dickinson— he is also one who represents the first great literary generation produced in the United States. Stephen Mathewson says, "Melville selections immediately follow the Hawthorne selection, and here we see the twentieth-century tendency to join Hawthorne with Melville as spiritual and intellectual contemporaries" (245). Instead of carefully defining realistic characters through a wealth of detail, as most English or continental novelists do, Melville shapes heroic figures larger than life, burning with mythic significance.

Melville's texts are unified by themes and techniques that allow readers to trace the remarkable development of his literary skills during the brief period. Lewisohn observes Melville's works that "constitute one of the important curiosities in literature" (qtd. in Mathewson 247). All Melville's major themes spring from his lifelong concern with the question of authority. Individual liberty is one recurrent theme that derives from Melville's interest in authority. Writing at a time when slavery was the most discussed political issue in the United States, Melville examines the struggle for personal liberty from a variety of viewpoints, acknowledging the necessity of liberty to human development while warning against its abuse. Melville's young protagonists strain against the limitations imposed by authoritarian rule, usually represented by tyrannical ship captains. They also dream of escaping the moralistic restrictions of societal codes. Ironically, their positions as common seamen make Melville's protagonists both rootless wanderers of the open seas and victims of the most repressive working conditions in nineteenth century America.

The extent to which an individual should subordinate personal desires in order to

be civilly obedient is another theme that evolves from Melville's consideration of authority. Melville's novels demonstrate his sensitivity to the social ills of his time and his commitment to protesting injustice. He chastises Christians for supporting the imperialistic and racist actions of missionaries in *Omoo*, satirizes the inefficiency of bureaucrats in *Mardi*, deploras governments' failures to meliorate urban poverty in *Redburn*, and argues against the naval policy of flogging in *White-Jacket*.

Divine authority is another important theme for Melville. After visiting Melville in Liverpool in 1856, Nathaniel Hawthorne writes that Melville "can neither believe, nor, be comfortable in his unbelief; and is too honest and courageous not to try to do one or the other" (qtd. in Magill 7). Melville does not ignore the reality of evil in the world nor he easily accepts the authority of a paternalistic God; thus, he imagines a character such as Ahab (in *Moby-Dick*), who tries to strike at the mystery of omniscience in the form of the white whale, but he shows how such unbending pride leads to destruction. Like his weary pilgrim in *Carel*, Melville unsuccessfully pursues a divine authority that he accepts wholeheartedly.

Most critics discuss Melville's more elusive and ambiguous books in terms of allegory. It is ironic that the same ambiguity is one of the primary reasons for the twentieth-century revival of inquiry into his art. Contemporary critics seem to think that a key or a system of analysis is necessary to unlock the mysteries of Melville. The most popular system of analysis applies to his works is the allegorical system. We can apply this in his novels *Mardi*, *Moby-Dick* and *Pierre or, the Ambiguities*. Edward A. Bloom points out that "Melville is an avid reader of Dante" (165) which discusses the concept of insight symbolism used by Dante in the *Divine Comedy* and the medieval example of multiple meanings.

Use of parody is also another most prominent technique of Melville. In theme and style this sort of novel mocks the allegorical elements, especially Christian, and the cheerful pastoral romances of the then time. The best example is *Pierre or, the Ambiguities* where the protagonist ambiguously handles the elements of Christian allegory in order to invert and challenge conventional meanings.

In short, in his earlier works, Melville freely uses informative passages taken from other sea narratives or scientific works, exposition that he interjects to increase his narratives' credibility and to respond to his readers' desire for information about the exotic lands and people he describes. In later works, Melville's writings are more allusive, reflecting his voracious reading in theology, history, philosophy, and literature.

Melville generally uses allegory in his novels and again hints some clues to mock the same allegory. His novel *White-Jacket* is both a sea adventure and a powerful social critique of biblical theme. For the latter, Kris Lackey says, "The biblical theme driving *White-Jacket* is that the man-of-war world operates on a set of principles repugnant to any Christian who sincerely accepts the commands of Jesus in Sermon on the Mount" (248). Based on Melville's own experiences, the novel also explores the fascinating and often harrowing world of a naval fighting ship, the *Neversink*. The ship becomes for Melville a microcosm of America itself; its hierarchy, social divisions, and cruel practices suggest larger injustices, including slavery.

The novel *Mardi* is also a well-known work of Melville. Ostensibly a tale about a voyage in the Pacific that goes horribly wrong, *Mardi* shows Melville spreading his literary career. There are episodes dealing with war, law, and academia, as well as running gags aplenty that demonstrate a good sense of humor which is seldom ascribed to Melville. For fans of extravagant philosophical fiction, *Mardi* presents a party of loquacious travelers conducting lively discussions on subjects like astronomy, ethics,

religion, and prophecy. James E. Miller calls *Mardi* "an abortive allegory, most interesting as a kind of exercise in preparation for writing *Moby-Dick*" (36). He suggests that the novel is an allegorical search, but sees the object of the search as more than that which is lost in the fall. For Miller, Taji is a young seeker who strives to look behind the many masks which hide the terrible faces of the world. Taji's search for Yillah is man's yearning for all that is unattainable in this world. Miller agrees that there is a mingling of satire and allegory in the voyages to the various countries. Island follows island in a phantasmagorical, dreamlike sequence of several hundred pages, allegory sliding into satire, satire slipping into allegory.

After writing *Mardi*, Melville temporarily discards the dark and light maidens as objectives for an allegorical quest. He delves deep into the human consciousness to discover the white whale in which he transforms into the ambivalent and elusive *Moby-Dick*. William S. Gleim presents one of the most extensive interpretations of the novel as allegory. He suggests that "the story is an allegory of Man's quest to conquer fate" (1). The novel is based on two stories which are analogous and parallel; the surface story deals with material things, and the abstract story hides in parables, allegories, and symbolism. The surface story deals with the whale hunt but the story which it hides, according to Gleim "tells of a supernatural adventure to carry out the most original and daring scheme for setting this world right that has ever been invented" (2). It contains hidden allegory. It is the duty of the reader to discover the meaning of the hidden allegory. Because of the high degree of interdependence between allegory and symbol, the readers are naturally required to discover the meaning of Melville's symbolism.

The novel, *Moby Dick* is evidence that Melville intends it to be little more than a factual account of the whale fisheries in the South Pacific with firsthand tales of adventures on a whaler. When it completes two years after its beginning, it becomes a

puzzling, intricate devise of literary work in which a white whale is the central character. Around this central figure, Melville weaves symbolism, speculation, philosophy, and allegory on life, God, man, and the human condition. William S. Gleim again says, "The white whale is the symbol of fate" (2). In short, Melville has created an epic romance that stood at the brink of becoming mythology. The white whale, actually, is the allegorical emblem of God and though their motivations differ, both Ishmael and Ahab seek the whale as Thompson indicates that "Melville allegorically ridicules the Christian concept of God by representing him as a monstrous being which is ubiquitous and immoral" (127). Ahab's three officers each represent a distinct attitude toward whaling which contrasts with Ahab's central or dominant attitude. Allegorically, of course, each mate's attitude toward whaling suggests his attitude toward God. In fact, here, the novel mocks Christian allegory and makes a parody.

Pierre or, the Ambiguities is another equally important work of Melville. When it is published, it is condemned by contemporary reviewers, and readers since then have difficulty in understanding the book and in determining Melville's intent. Critics still differ widely, with some regarding *Pierre* as a failure and others praising it as Melville's masterpiece. In short, this novel has drawn the attention of numerous critics. After the study of the novel, Roger Hecht examines the element of anti-rent war rent politics and says:

Anti-Rent politics are not the obvious element of the novel.

Believed by many critics to be Melville's attempt to write a popular novel that would appeal to middle-class women, *Pierre* begins as a benign, sentimental romance. Pierre Glendinning, sole heir to his family's patronymic and property titles, appears to live a charmed life on the family estate, Saddle Meadows. (38)

Hecht argues that *Pierre* begins as a benign, sentimental pastoral romance. Sandwiching the love stories and the hero's tragic fall are specific references to the anti-rent conflict, including the use of military force to suppress the rent strike and the grievances of farmers who are bound by lease agreements to unproductive lands.

An intensely personal work, this novel reveals the somber mythology of Melville's private life framed in terms of a story of an artist alienated from his society. The artist, Pierre Glendinning, is a well-to-do young man. When he discovers that he has an illegitimate half sister, he tries to provide for her by taking her to live in New York City, where they live in poverty as he attempts to make a living as a writer. He ultimately destroys both of their lives as well as that of his fiancée. There is a humiliated response to poverty that Melville experiences during his youth and the hypocrisy he finds beneath his father's claims to purity and faithfulness. His mother he has idolized; yet he finds the spirituality of her love which is betrayed by sexual love. Beverly A. Hume argues that by comparing Lucy to Queens and feather-shaking actresses and classifying all as creatures of high degree, the narrator barely conceals his contempt for men who place women at such idealize heights:

Now, since we began by talking of a certain young lady [Lucy] that went out riding with a certain youth; and yet find ourselves, after leading such a merry dance, fast by a stage-house window; this may seem rather irregular sort of writing. But whither indeed should Lucy Tartan conduct us, but among mighty Queens, and all other creatures of high degree. (25)

Hume gives the emphasis on narrator's irony which is directed again young beautiful lady that offers a sharp contrast to Pierre's hopelessly idealize version of Lucy's angelic nature.

In the novel, Melville gives readers a main character Pierre with whom they at first identify as an intelligent young man. Then they suspect about his motives and actions

because he marries with his own half-sister, Isabel. And finally, they feel that his marriage is only to make Isabel as a legitimate girl. Although Pierre tries to base his actions (such as his relationship with Isabel) on what he thinks are firm moral principles, his shooting of Stanly and his suicide demonstrate that he is, in fact, thrown by the winds of emotion. The entire novel moves around the issue of ambiguities so it is well to remember its alternate title, which might well have been its only designation: *The Ambiguities*.

Melville himself personifies the protagonist in the novel. Like Pierre, Melville has cast out as a young man, although in Melville's case it is for less dramatic reasons. In any case, the difference is just as stark for Melville as for Pierre. Melville also believes that the writer is himself originally a reader of his text. Sometimes he personifies as a fictional character and other times he himself calls the reader of his work so the critic Edgar A. Dryden finds problem of reading in his novel and says:

Pierre is a book about reading and writing, about the consumption and production of literary texts – a double problem that fascinates Melville from the beginning to the end of his writing career. For unlike some of his romantic contemporaries he does not regard reading as a passive and parasitical activity that is the pale complement or the original and glamorous act of creation itself. (146)

For Dryden, the book is related to reading and writing. It is about consumption as well as the production. He says that Melville's writing career begins with problem and ends with same thing, that is, problem so he finds double problem in his book *Pierre* also.

Melville is interested in the idea of exploring human psychology and in seeing how good can turn into evil in unpredictable ways. Insights develop through research into the psychology of incongruity can be useful in understanding both in the novel and the

history of extreme responses to the novel. Paul Lewis examines the psychology of incongruity in the novel *Pierre* and says:

It is ironic that *Pierre*, a work about a person destroyed by his inability to accept the incongruous as a life principle, has often been misread or abused by critics unable to accept incongruity as a principal in art. This critical failure is seen most clearly in contemporary reviews of the novel, although the nineteenth-century emphasis on the formal and philosophical confusion of work continues to color modern readings. From the start critics have concerned on why *Pierre* the novel fails; themselves failing to see that a far more interesting and valid question is why Pierre the character fails. (185)

Lewis analyses the challenges and dangers of incongruity and emphasizes on protean ideas and relationships in the novel. Contemporary critics only talk about the failure of the novel but they do not see the elements of the failure of the character Pierre which he likes to call irony.

Aaron McClendon examines John Sullivan Dwight's transcendental music theories and how the author turn to music in his novel *Pierre or, the Ambiguities* engages with those theories. Music is thought to be a transcendent medium of expression related to our invisible and real self. When Isabel and Pierre first meet, it is subtly apparent that music plays a significant role. Isabel's low sweet half sobbing voice is initially describes as imbue with more than natural music. The attribution of music to Isabel's voice is significant. This gives knowledge that accounts for the ironic success that Melville employs music in the novel through the written word. Delight's contention is that music can approach, if not indeed reveal the soul, stands as one of the stronger attestations of music's expressive and representational power. It highlights the sound beyond a linguistic

utterance as the modicum of expression. In this examining process of Dwight's transcendental music McClendon says:

In *Pierre* music emerges as an alternative form of expression. At the time, music was considered the ideal human expression, the means by which to achieve the most perfect and profound philosophical utterance. More than just thematizing *Pierre*, certain passages in the work reflect Melville's own fraught relationship with the written word as a mode of expression. Melville's struggle with the process of writing also displays his difficulty with expressing truth via language. (23)

For McClendon, from the beginning of the novel Melville believes in seeking and uttering truths even if he feels they exist beyond the written word. Here human expression could somehow approach and ultimately reveal philosophical understanding which is attached upon Dwight.

In *Pierre*, a different taste for scenery is cultivated. The landscape of Saddle Meadows is neither tractable nor nourishing. Pierre chokes on scenery. The American land is represented as an example of Eden not with others so Samuel Otter outlines the American viewers and their verbal and visual depictions of American scenery and its association focused on Northeastern landscapes:

The American land is represented not as the site of historical struggle between competing interests, not as the arena in which entire populations were displaced and enslaved, but as Eden paradoxically urging its own manipulation and destruction. By contrast, the fraught landscape of *Pierre* presents a hyperbolic version of the 'picturesque project' in which the tropes of the rural celebration are presented to revealing—and sometimes suffocating—limits, the American boast is turned inside out, and allusions

proliferate to the struggles that mark the 'history' of the American land.

(57)

Otter argues that the exorbitance of Melville's representations of Saddle Meadows is a response to the antebellum picturesque projects that effort to construct and empower the American difference through representations of the land.

In this way, the above mentioned critics have undergone diverse sorts of readings and interpretations. Despite this multiplicity of interpretations, the present research is focused on the novel, *Pierre or, the Ambiguities*, as a parody of Christian allegory. In order to prove this, the second chapter will be centered on the theoretical aspects that include mainly a concept of allegory as well as Linda Hutcheon's concept of parody.

II. Parody of Allegory

Allegory

Allegory is a form of extended metaphor, in which objects, persons, and actions in a narrative, are equated with the meanings that lie outside the narrative itself. The underlying meaning has moral, social, religious, or political significance, and characters are often personifications of abstract ideas such as charity, greed, or envy. In this way, an allegory is a story with two meanings, a literal meaning and a symbolic meaning.

Allegory is also the representation of abstract ideas or principles by characters, figures, or events in narrative, dramatic, or pictorial form. Allegory in literature is a symbolic story that serves as a disguised representation for meanings other than those indicated on the surface. The allegory is closely related to the parable, fable, and metaphor, differing from them largely in intricacy and length. Allegory communicates its message by means of symbolic figures, actions or symbolic representation. The principal technique of allegory is personification, whereby abstract qualities are given human shape as in public statues of liberty or justice. In written narrative, allegory involves a continuous parallel between two (or more) levels of meaning in a story, so that its persons and events correspond to their equivalents in a system of ideas or a chain of events external to the tale. In this connection Barbara E. Johnson says:

Allegory consists in a proposition with a double meaning, both a literal meaning and a spiritual (conceptual) meaning together, through which one presents a thought through the image of another thought, which can properly make the first more perceptible and striking than if it were presented directly and without any sort of veil. (67)

For Johnson, allegory presents symbolic story that serves as a disguised representation for meanings other than those indicated on the surface.

The concept of allegory, according to Edwin Honig, views the world as an intrinsic relationship of participating objects and beings wherein, by attribute or action, each discloses the typical likeness and unlikeness in every other object and being. Thus the concept constantly defines or conceives of states of separateness and togetherness, oppositions and unities. But in practice, or in full consummation of its aim, literary allegory dispenses with the concept of allegory in order to transcend its fixities, that is, in order to achieve fictional fulfillment. For just as the concept of allegory is based on insight symbolism so it is only a dogmatic or programmatic brand of realism which is antagonistic to literary allegory. Such realism is without a symbolic foothold in reality. It denies the representative confuses the universal with the particular and overlooks the moral qualifications that make experience meaningful. Although allegory is usually considered synonymous with other kinds of trope as Honig says, "It obviously has served a more comprehensive function than other tropes through interpretation or by means of particular interpretations impacted into an imaginative view of the materials of life and fiction" (14).

St. Augustine's allegorical interpretive model is developed as an attempt to discipline rhetoric in his own culture. He has disciplined rhetoric by "subordinating its use and study in relation to the priori truths of the New Testament and by placing allegorical interpretation as the highest form of understanding available only to the most worthy and qualified" (qtd. in Pendergast 273). The main proponents are the Stoic philosophers (third century BC onwards), who have used it for the illustration and corroboration of their doctrines, and from them derive the surviving collections of allegorical interpretations of Homer. That is why, it is said that allegory enters Christian literature from Stoic source. While talking about Christian literature John S. Pendergast talks about Christian allegory and says:

Allegory by its very nature implies a literal truth *prior* to the figuration of the idea in the language of the allegory. Readers of an allegorical text must have enough knowledge to move between the 'Real', doctrinally literal meaning and the poetic figuration; allegory, therefore, is useful for teaching the 'worthy' and 'able'. Readers become 'worthy' of the truth when they accept that the Bible as a whole must be read in accordance with the New Testament, an act of interpretation which requires allegory's ability to read outside the 'literal' text. (278)

For Pendergast, allegory implies a literal truth from its very nature. The readers, who are planning to read allegorical texts, have knowledge about literal meaning as well as poetic figuration.

The etymological meaning of the word is broader than the common use of the word. Though it is similar to other rhetorical comparisons, an allegory is sustained longer and more fully in its details than a metaphor, and appeals to imagination, while an analogy appeals to reason or logic. The fable or parable is a short allegory with one definite moral.

According to Aquinas, there are four categories of allegory used in the Middle Ages, which has originated with the Bible commentators of the early Christian era. The first is simply the literal interpretation of the events of the story for historical purposes with no underlying meaning. The second is called typological, which connects the events of the Old Testament with the New Testament; in particular drawing allegorical connections between the events of Christ's life with the stories of the Old Testament. The third is moral (also called tropological), which is how one should act in the present; the moral of the story. The fourth type of allegory is anagogical, dealing with the spiritual or mystical as it relates to future events of Christian history, heaven, hell, and the last

judgment; it deals with prophecies.

According to Gordon Teskey, allegory, which is translated in Latin by *inversio*, either presents one thing in words and another in meaning, or else something absolutely opposed to the meaning of the words. To prove this idea he says:

Allegory is, at this level, the creative but also nauseating drive to force heterogeneities together, even as these struggle to break free and die on their own. We can watch them as they effect what the Neoplatonists called the copulation of the world: subject and predicate, idea and substance, mind and nature, institution and body, ethos and history, promise and act, human and inhuman, doing it like wolves. (407)

The characters in an allegory usually have dual personalities that are the embodiments of moral qualities and other abstractions. A great variety of literary forms have been used for allegories. The medieval morality play *Everyman*, personifying such abstractions as Fellowship and Good Deeds, recounts the death journey of Everyman. John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, a prose narrative, is an allegory of man's spiritual salvation. Spenser's poem *The Faerie Queene*, besides being a chivalric romance, is a commentary on morals and manners in Sixteenth-century England as well as a national epic. Milton's *Paradise Lost* is also the true picture of allegory because many critics comment this poem as a political allegory that deals with the issues of freedom that Milton has concerned himself with during the revolution; as an unorthodox depiction of the Christian God and his treatment of humankind; as a thesis on predestination; and as a study of the epic hero in a Christian context. This epic allegorically represents the biblical figures Adam and Eve so it is also said that the history of allegory is as old as Bible. *Hamlet* is equally an important work of Milton. Likewise, Dante also uses allegory in his works *Divine Comedy* and *Inferno*. To elaborate this idea Charles S. Singleton talks about

Dante's allegory as:

If we take the allegory of the *Divine Comedy* to be the allegory of poets (as Dante understood that allegory in the *Convivio*) then we shall be taking it as a construction in which the literal sense ought always to be expected to yield another sense because the literal is only a fiction devised to express a second meaning. In this view the first meaning, if it does not give another, true meaning, has no excuse for being. (81)

Dante also defines allegory as a means to give double meaning. Although allegory is still used by some authors, its popularity as a literary form has declined in favor of a more personal form of symbolic expression.

The term allegory at the present time has become the part of modern vocabulary because it shares many other critical terms like romanticism, classicism, baroque, and so on. Being based on these ideas the critic Joseph A. Mazzeo says:

The term 'allegory' has certainly become one for literal scholars to conjure with and, in an extended sense, has become part of modern critical vocabulary. It has shared the destiny of other important critical terms-romanticism, classicism, baroque-in that it has come to signify a fairly wide spectrum of phenomena, which upon close inspection would appear to be quite different from one another. (1)

For Mazzeo, allegory really has become one of the most important parts of modern vocabulary. It does not go alone because it has shared different critical terms. With these different critical terms it signifies fairly wide spectrum of phenomena.

Many critics have provided the definition of allegory but some have also talked about the function of allegory in their own way as a means to connect the matter in an appropriate way. In this process Morton W. Bloomfield says:

One of the basic functions of allegory is to make literary documents relevant. Historically, the allegorical method as the West knows it was developed in Alexandria to interpret 'properly' Homer, and somewhat later there and in Palestine to interpret 'properly' the Old Testament, so that it could be seen as the foreshadowing and prediction of Christ of the future kingdom of God. Allegory in this sense is the seeing of the significance of a literary work beyond its meaning. (301)

For Bloomfield, the most important function of allegory is to make literary documents relevant. With this function he defines allegory as a means to see the significance of literary work than that of its real meaning that is either for serious purpose or just to create fun.

In fact allegory comes to give the symbolic meaning of the story that serves as a disguised representation for meanings other than those indicated on the surface. Literary critics often argue as to whether characters are meant to be allegorical, real or stereotypical. Often literary characters can be read in multiple ways. So, allegory in present day adds layers of depth to artwork, since artistic figures or literary characters can be meant to be both real and symbolic. Looking for such symbolism can be a fun or challenging process depending upon the artwork. Typically, modern allegory often reveals the artist's intent or worldview. It is part of the subtext that gives the reader, viewer or observer information regarding an artist's vision of not only how the world exists, but also how it might exist.

Parody

Like allegory, parody is another composition that imitates or misrepresents somebody's style, usually in a humorous way. It is a mocking imitation of the style of a literary work which ridicules the stylistic habit of an author by exaggeration. It is also

called a satirical mimicry. The Oxford English Dictionary defines parody as imitation "turned as to produce a ridiculous effect" (qtd. in Hutcheon 32). It is related to burlesque in its application of serious styles to ridiculous subjects and to satire in its punishment of eccentricities, and even to criticism in its analysis of style. It mercilessly exposes the tricks of manner and thought of its victim and therefore cannot be written without a thorough appreciation of the work it ridicules. As a branch of satire, its purpose may be corrective as well as derisive.

Parody is mainly used in poems in ancient times. In ancient Greek literature, a *parodia* refers a narrative poem imitating the style and prosody of epics "but treating light, satirical or mock-heroic subjects" (qtd. in Denith 10). Indeed, the apparent Greek roots of the word are *para-* (which can mean beside, counter, or against) and *-ody* (song, as in an ode). Thus, the original Greek word *parodia* has sometimes been taken to mean counter-song which imitates the original one. The main cause is that *par-* also has the non-antagonistic meaning of beside, "there is nothing in *parodia* to necessitate the inclusion of a concept of ridicule" (qtd. in Hutcheon 32). Except Greeks, Roman writers also have explained parody as an imitation of one poet by another for humorous effect.

As long as the origin of parody concerns, it is used from ancient times. The word parody is said to derive from an ancient Greek word meaning mock song. Aristotle has referred to it in his *Poetics* and attributes its invention to Hegemon of Thasos. So, Hegemon is supposed to be the first person to introduce parody in theatre in fifth century BC.

In fact, parody is a lively and engaging introduction to a crucial concept in contemporary literary and cultural studies, making even the most complex debates accessible to readers of all levels. According to Simon Dentith, "Parody is everywhere in contemporary modern culture. It runs through literature, theatre and television,

architecture, film and even everyday speech. It is also at the heart of contemporary literary and cultural theory" (154).

Some critics have viewed parody as a more important literary form than burlesque, but traditionally parody is regarded as a species or subclass of burlesque. Parody at its best deals with sophisticated stylistic techniques, while burlesque is often cheerfully vulgar. One wonders if it is the overtly serious critics who prefer the former. Parody is attractive not only for considerations of taste, but also because it is more interesting in the challenges it presents, in its nature as a meta-fiction which raises questions about such theoretical issues as the process of writing, the role of the reader, the role of authority, and the social context of the text. Because the success of parody depends not only on the reader understands of the text, but also on the recognition of the source-text. It is based on and the comical twist or reversal of those cultural values embedded in the source-text, the readerly transaction is complex. And the parody itself of course reinstatiates the source at the same time that it subverts it.

The nature of parody continues to be a matter of discussion. On the one hand, it is seen as a highly reflexive form that celebrates textuality. Macdonald praises parody as "an intuitive kind of literary criticism, shorthand for what 'serious' critics must write out at length. It is method acting, since a successful parodist must live himself, imaginatively, into his parody" (22). It is using the impetus of the opponent to defeat him, although 'opponent' and 'defeat' are hardly the words. Most parodies are written out of admiration rather than contempt. His positive view of the form is not universal, however, even among those who enjoy parody. Brett warns that "one must never forget the dependent nature of parody. It is a parasitic art and, though it can hold up the eminent to ridicule, without them it could not exist" (25). To some extent the reaction that a parody draws depends on the critic's opinion of the work it imitates. It may also depend on the critic's

attitude towards current ideology, for it is undeniable that parody is a subversive form.

Parody in literature is a comic or satirical imitation of a piece of writing, exaggerating its style and content, and playing especially on any weakness in structure or meaning of the original. It is related to postmodernism. In a broader sense, it is a part of postmodernism. The fundamental confrontation of postmodernism, according to Hutcheon, is that of documentary historical actuality with "formalist self-reflexivity and parody" (7). In contemporary usage parody is a work created to mock, comment on, or pokes fun at an original work, its subject, author, style, or some other target by means of humorous, satiric, or in ironic imitation. According to Hutcheon, "Parody-often called ironic quotation, pastiche, appropriation, or intertextuality-is usually considered central to postmodernism, both by its detractors and its defenders" (89). With the definition of parody Hutcheon adds, "Parody may choose to be satirical in intent; hence the aim of ridicule claimed in dictionary definitions" (204).

The very choice of text to be parodied, of course, implies a critical act of evaluation on the part of the parodist. The judgment is in no way restricted to the negative; Fowels finds much to respect in the Victorian manner and mode he so deftly, if self-consciously, parodies in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Only when parody is linked with a satiric intent is the evaluation implied likely to be a negative one, in a moral even more than literary sense. While theorists have seemed willing to grant parody this critical function, they often seek to reduce its seriousness by the introduction of such terms as 'sportive' or 'deflationary' (qtd. in Hutcheon 208). Hutcheon adds about the necessity of parody as:

Parody is of necessity a sophisticated literary form. The author- and then the reader- effects a superimposition of texts, an incorporation of old into new. The parody itself then becomes in a sense bilingual synthesis. In this

it would differ from pastiche or even adaptation, both essentially monolingual forms which bring about no synthesis and reveal no respect for the borrowed text. (202)

Parody, on the view of Hutcheon, is a necessary thing to make a sophisticated literary form because another form like pastiche cannot bring synthesis. It is only parody that brings synthesis so it can be studied in a sense of bilingual synthesis.

Parody contests our humanist assumptions about artistic originality and uniqueness and our capitalist notions of ownership and property. Through the process of reproduction, it works to foreground the politics of representation. It is both deconstructively critical and constructively creative, paradoxically making us aware of both the limits and the powers of representation in any medium as Hutcheon says:

While such an act of parody is one of incorporation, its function is one of separation, of contrast. Unlike mere isolated allusion, parody requires that critical distance. If the reader does not notice, or cannot identify, an allusion (or even a quotation), he will merely naturalize it, adapting it into the context of the work as a whole. In the more extended form of parody, such naturalization would eliminate the form itself, in that the work would not be read as a parody of a backgrounded text at all. (203)

For Hutcheon, the function of parody is separation because it requires critical distance. Through this distance one can make parody in his/her texts and if a reader does not notice such distance then s/he only naturalizes the text from the surface level and cannot understand the implied meaning.

Actually, parody is a frequent ingredient in satire and is often used to make social and political points. It has been challenged as copyright infringements on the original works, particularly since some have reaped terrific profits. According to Hutcheon, it

comes in literary texts to give superiority:

Parody has perhaps come to be a privileged mode of postmodern formal self-reflexivity because its paradoxical incorporation of the past into its very structures often points to these ideological contexts somewhat more obviously, more didactically, than other forms. Parody seems to offer a perspective on the present and the past which allows an artist to speak to a discourse from within it, but without being totally recuperated by it.

(Poetics 35)

For Hutcheon, parody uses historical memory and its aesthetic introversion to signal a kind of self-reflexive discourse which is always inextricably bound to social discourse. It marks its paradoxical doubleness of continuity and change as well as authority and transgression.

Postmodernism's political assertions, according to Hutcheon, occur in the context of parody; hence her devotion of a chapter to the exploration of its politics, which she interprets as a deconstructive effort to revise or reread the past in paradoxical ways that simultaneously affirm and challenge historical representations. Hutcheon argues cogently and well, but in her relegation of the politics of postmodernism to the realm of parody (even if it is parody doing serious work), she forecloses the possibilities of examining the ideological dimensions of her subject in other ways. The sharply defined contours of her argument lend it a repetitive quality, her chapter on parody mostly a reiteration of her earlier discussion of postmodernism's complicitous critique or "double-coded politics" (97). As form of ironic representation, parody is doubly coded in political terms. It both legitimizes and subverts which it parodies. It can be used as a self-reflexive technique that points to art as art, but also to art as inescapably bound to its aesthetic and even social past. Its ironic reprise also offers an internalized sign of certain self-consciousness about

out culture's means of ideological legitimation. Parody becomes a way of ironically revisiting the past-of both art and history. Hutcheon writes:

It is interesting that few commentators on postmodernism actually use the word 'parody'. I think the reason is that it is still tainted with eighteenth-century notions of wit and ridicule. But there is an argument to be made that we should not be restricted to such period-limited definitions of parody and that twentieth-century art forms teach that parody has a wide range of forms and intents-from that witty ridicule to the playfully ludic to the serious respectful. (*Politics* 90)

Hutcheon here argues that some commentators in the postmodern time also use the word parody and the cause, according to her, is because of previous notion. For her, in twentieth century the form of parody is more than wit and ridicule. Like all literary texts, a parody also requires a reader, a coworker in actualizing or concretizing-bringing to life-the world of words. The task of reader in completing the meaning of a parodic text is somewhat more complex than usual. In addition to the usual literary codes, the reader must recognize that what s/he is reading is a parody and to what degree and of what type. S/he must also of course know the text being parodied if s/he is to read it as other than any piece of literature.

Parody does not disregard the context of the past representations it cites, but uses irony to acknowledge the fact that we are inevitably separated from that past today. For that Hutcheon talks about modernist and postmodernist form of parody and says:

Of course, parody was also dominant mode of much modernist art, especially in the writing of T.S. Eliot, Thomas Mann, and James Joyce and the painting of Picasso, Manet, and Magritte. In this art, too, parody at once inscribed convention and history and yet distanced itself from both.

The continuity between the postmodernist and the modernist use of parody as a strategy of appropriating the past is to be found on the level of their shared (compromised) challenges to the conventions of representation.

(Politics 95)

Parody is also the most important part of modernist writing. This trend is continued in postmodernist form of writing but postmodernists have added more than that of modernist trend.

According to Hutcheon, Parody also contests our humanist assumptions about artistic originality and uniqueness and our capitalist notions of ownership and property. Here, she links parody with politics. She sites Latin American fiction as an example and says:

When parody and its politics are discussed, it is not only this kind of visual art that should be considered. Latin American fiction, for instance, has consistently underlined the intrinsically political character of parody and its challenges to the conventional and the authoritative. The politics of representation and the representation of politics frequently go hand in hand in parodic postmodern historiographic metafiction. *(Politics 99)*

Here, Hutcheon says that in terms of historiographic metafiction, postmodern parody is a kind of contesting revision or rereading of the past that both confirms and subverts the power of the representations of history. Parody in the past of art is not nostalgic; it is always critical and ironic. Parody, as she defines, is paradoxically making us aware of both the limits and the powers of representation in any medium.

The critics Roger J. Kreuz and Richard M. Roberts also talk about satire, parody and irony. They argue that satire and parody are literary genres and irony is not a literary genre because irony is a method through which certain communicative goals are

accomplished. The concept of irony, according to them, is understood in terms of four distinct subtypes: Socratic irony, dramatic irony, fatal irony and verbal irony. Among them, a subtype of verbal irony is sarcasm "in which the attitude expressed is typically negative and directed toward an individual of a group" (99). Parody is also similar to sarcasm because in parody the entire subject is treated in a contradictory manner. They further mention:

Parody can be thought of as imitation, intended to ridicule or to criticize.

Definitions of parody can be confusing; one authority defines parody as a form of burlesque, whereas others consider burlesque a form of parody. It may be helpful, therefore, to evaluate parody in terms of ironic features, as we have for satire. (102)

For Freuz and Roberts, parody is taken as an imitation for the purpose of ridicule. Parody does not require irony but irony is often found in the works of parody. Irony is not a literary genre rather it is a device that is used in a variety of genres. Parody is also that type of genre which shares several salient features with irony. Successful parody requires a reader to construct multiple mental representations.

So, parody is particularly apt representation strategy for postmodernism. It is "a strategy once described as the use of parallel script rather than original inscription" (qtd. in Hutcheon 113). Out of installing and ironizing, it signals how present representations come from past ones and what ideological consequences derive from both continuity and difference.

From the aforementioned ideas, it is apparent that allegory and parody are two literary devices. On the one hand, allegory communicates its message through the means of symbolic figures, actions or symbolic representation. On the other, parody is a value-problematizing, de-naturalizing form of acknowledging the history (and through irony,

the politics) of representation. It is not ahistorical or de-historicizing but signals how present representations come from past ones and what ideological consequences derive from both continuity and difference. It does not disregard the context of the past representations but uses irony to acknowledge the fact that we are inevitably separated from the past. Parodic strategies are often used by feminist artists to point to the history and historical power of those cultural representations, while ironically contextualizing both in such a way as to deconstruct them. So, within these frameworks of allegory and parody, the novel will be interpreted and analyzed in the third chapter to show the parody of Christian allegory in Melville's *Pierre or, the Ambiguities*.

III. Parody of Christian Allegory in Melville's *Pierre or, the Ambiguities*

***Pierre or, the Ambiguities* as Christian Allegory**

The novel is focused on the relationship between father and son where both the characters are identically named as Pierre. The relationship between father and son implies that of "God" and "Adam" (168) but it becomes problematic when son knows that the father had long ago seduced and abandoned a beautiful young French girl who left him a sister named Isabel. After knowing this fact Pierre forgets his engagement with Lucy Tartan and follows the Christian idealism to redeem the sin of his father.

Pierre as a religious man finds that his sister has become a forlorn social outcast so it is his duty to redeem his sister which also gives justice upon his father's soul. The elements of the soul are divided into relationships of the mother (Mrs. Glendenning) and the son (Pierre), the father and the son, the brother and the sister, and the young man and his betrothed. These elements are not simple in their relationships because the brother and sister have different mothers. With the coming of consciousness of the tragedy of life, the brother takes his sister as a wife. "For surely a gentle sister is the second best gift to a man; and it is first in point of occurrence; for the wife comes after. He who is sisterless, is as a bachelor before his time. For much that goes to make up the deliciousness of a wife, already lies in the sister" (27).

From the very beginning of allegory, Pierre personifies the Puritan American soul and Mrs. Glendenning becomes a symbol of those elements of Pierre's environment that have far fashioned his life. Lucy Tartan is a symbolic element of Pierre's soul that appears to be pure and good. Hence Pierre, or the Puritan American soul, is only partially developed. He is waiting for the awakening of the "dark hemlock" (64) of his soul. Isabel is the first manifestation of the dark half of the Puritan American soul. Naturally she and Lucy are opposite parts of Pierre. Lucy is the pure conscious part that is approved by his

mother, and Isabel is a soul-image of an awakening universe and consciousness of the tragic part because Isabel and Pierre are born of the same life-spring.

Father Pierre is "a noble, god-like being, full of choicest juices; made up of strength and beauty" (52). He is the personification of God because "Pierre's soul the cherished conceit, that his virtuous father, so beautiful on earth, was now uncorruptibly sainted in heaven" (94). The father is as ambiguous as the original source of the soul. Pierre gains knowledge of the tragedy of life (the product of his father's immorality), and becomes aware that his mother (the complex of social instincts) could not survive with this knowledge. Isabel's story is a tale of the birth and growth of an enlarged consciousness. She tells her brother how she came to be lodged in a lunatic asylum, how she is surrounded by strangely demented people. She is wandering to get her real identity. Thus it is in that the awakening consciousness of the soul is closely and dangerously beset, in its lonely infancy, by the undifferentiated and demented seeming forms of the collective unconscious.

As Isabel tells her story, Pierre is awakened with spiritual recognition; the dark side of his soul bursts forth. The period between the two stages of the soul's initiation or the time between Pierre's first and second meeting with Isabel is very important. In this period the consciousness is able to adjust itself to its new experience. Pierre establishes "mysterious girl" (64) Isabel as his wife rather than as his sister because he recognizes her as a soul image. It is always with the soul image in human form that the lover wishes to unite. On the surface level, they are lover and beloved but in the deeper level they are only brother and sister which is purely an allegory.

Pierre comes to this decision soon after his first meeting with Isabel, and the decision reflects the complete adjustment of the expanded soul to its new awareness. He announces with his fiancée "Lucy, I am married" (215) but when Pierre announces his

marriage to Lucy, his earlier consciousness of a happy and innocent world falls. Experience wins over innocence and the Puritan American soul risks the death of part of its self for greater knowledge. This sacrifice is a foreshadowing of the ultimate results of the initiation of the innocent soul into the tragedy of consciousness, that is, ultimate destruction.

The novel is about the allegorical story of a young man, Pierre. He only thinks about the life of sister but not about mother and fiancée. He has understood well that his mother does not like illegitimate child so he is ready to leave home to save the life of his sister. He is also guided by heavenly power because his father is already there in heaven:

Pierre is young; heaven gave him the divinest, fresh form of a man; put light into his eye, and fire into his blood, and brawn into his arm, and a joyous, jubilant, overflowing, up-bubbling, universal life in him everywhere. Now look around in that most miserable room, and at that most miserable of all the pursuits of a man, and say if here be the place, and this be the trade, that God intended him for. (341)

Pierre is the Demigod whose parentage is half heavenly and half earthly. His father is Deity whereas his mother is haughty. Due to this heaven has given him the divinest power.

H. Bruce Franklin and Harold Bloom say that "the story of Pierre, the hero of *Pierre or, the Ambiguities*, is the story of a Christian youth, who, by trying to become symbolically and ethically a new Christ, becomes symbolically and ethically a pagan god; who, in trying to be a savior, becomes the destroyer of all that he tries to save" (70). For them, the story opens by showing Pierre in a pastoral paradise and in an idyllic romance but with the arrival of Isabel, probably Pierre's illegitimate half-sister, all those romances end.

In the allegory, abstract truth, to follow which a righteous man has sacrificed his world, proves at last to be ambiguous, casting two shadows: "Vice and Virtue" (310). The tragic course of Pierre—the Demigod who seeks to recover his lost heaven—proves the indisputableness of Melville's maxim.

The novel is an allegory in which Melville also parodies his own idealistic self. Pierre personifies Melville's inner spiritual self, and Pierre's wealthy cousin, Glen Stanly personifies Melville's public self. Glen is also the heir of Mrs. Glendenning and suitor for the hand of Lucy with whom Pierre still loves. Due to this Pierre murders Glen and when he murders him, his spiritual self is allegorically annihilates his public self. Pierre and Plotinus Plinlimmon represent the unresolved conflict that must have raged constantly in Melville's mind: the conflict between reasonable compromise and unreasonable absolutism. Melville never, however, precisely defines the relation of these two opposites to himself. For this reason, these allegorical personifications of abstractions are particularly crucial to the ambiguities of Pierre. Ultimately, this is an admirable statement of the worldly obligation of man in Christian terms of an impossible ideal, or it is a relativistic doctrine which denies spiritual and moral obligations.

Pierre's idealism personifies the best thing of world and gives the lesson that an individual must follow Christian principles. This philosophy ultimately results in the death of Pierre's mother, the murder of a cousin, the death of Lucy, and the suicides of Pierre and Isabel. Pierre is not forced to accept this philosophy but it is an alternative plan for action which is presented by Plotinus Plinlimmon. During the journey to the city with Isabel, Pierre finds a paper clutched in his hand. It is "El", or "If"--the pamphlet by Plinlimmon and the potential corrective to all Pierre's woes. The figurative basis for the pamphlet is time and longitude. Greenwich or chronometrical time is the truth of Christian heaven; Chinese or chorological time is the truth of the world. Plinlimmon

maintains that in the world, "the soul of man is further removed from God and Heavenly truth than the chronometer carried to China is from Greenwich" (245). The man in China should not attempt to regulate himself by Greenwich or heavenly time. True Christianity is possible only in heaven, not on earth so moral doctrine of Christianity on earth is found false:

The only great original moral doctrine of Christianity (i.e. the chronometrical gratuitous return of good for evil, as distinguished from the horological forgiveness of injuries taught by some of the Pagan philosophers), has been found (horologically) a false one; because after 1800 years' inculcation from tens of thousands of pulpits, it has proved entirely impracticable. (249)

The highest desirable earthly excellence is expediency. Pierre's error provides a commentary on almost every facet of Pierre's life that the idealistic world of Pierre's mind is false, overwrought, artificial is revealed significantly in many ways, especially in religious imagery which Pierre wrongly applies to a practical world that should never be spoken of in ideal religious terms. To assume that the worldly, the horological, is Edenic and godly is to belittle the spiritual, to blaspheme, to commit the sin of pride, to fall as Lucifer does by equating God and the infinite with lesser beings.

Pierre attempts to be a Christ and his misconceived idealism is actual cruelty that results in disaster. Plinlimmon is attractive and repulsive. He is "gently-smiling and most miraculously self-possessed, non-benevolent man" (329). He never works, never reads, and never writes. He loves wine better than books. Melville carefully displays his flaws. Pierre, on the other hand, is marked by no such minor flaws, but his belief that he can live according to chronometrical time accomplishes his destruction.

If Plinlimmon states Melville's theme in *Pierre*, the reader must see that some

expediency and reconciliation is necessary for sanity and existence. Pierre does not remain sane; he commits suicide as a result of errors that begins in what he thinks is an absolute truth. Actually Plinlimmon allegorically indicates that Melville, intellectually at least, is realizing the validity of philosophical compromise.

Lewis Mumford sees the novel as a kind of alter ego for Melville and suggests that the failure of the novel as a work of art gives the reader license to deal with it as biography. Mumford suggests that *Pierre* is a kind of sexual allegory that reveals the nature and direction of Melville's artistic development. Lucy seems to personify the naive writings of Melville's youth, which promised him happiness, and Isabel is the darker consciousness that "goads him to all his most heroic efforts, that goads him and baffles him, leaving him balked and sterile, incapable of going further in literature" (151).

The relationship of Pierre with Isabel is also a perfect example of allegory that shows him (Pierre) making an effort to go on with his literary career, living under the form of marriage with Isabel, but unable, through the very nature of their relationship to enjoy the fruits of marriage. He defies the world for this dark mysterious girl; and what she is ready to give him in return the world regards as an abominable sin because "through his father's sin that father's fair fame, now lay at the mercy of the son, and could only be kept inviolate by the son's free sacrifice of all earthly felicity" (208). Melville has hoped that his earlier writings (personifies by Lucy) and his heroic writings in Isabel can live side -by-side.

There are, however, other reasons that *Pierre* may be called an allegory of the author himself. To prove this there is a surface meaning and a secondary or abstract meaning. Pierre is more than a young country gentleman who meets disaster. He is a soul experiencing the horrors of initiation into maturity. He is a conscious man being destroyed by a philosophical dilemma. Lucy, Isabel, his mother, and Plinlimmon

personify various facets of the soul's maturation process. Pierre is an important phase in the development of Melville's life. When Pierre goes to New York City with Isabel then he starts writing for name and fame but at last his career as a novelist fails. In the life of Melville same thing happens. His career as a novelist fails at last with the publication of this novel. From the surface this is a failure of Pierre but in the deeper level it is the failure of novelist himself. That is why, the characters literally are the abstractions, and they provide definite keys to the hidden meanings.

The novel is also known as the craziest fiction extant where the amount of trash in the novel is infinite. The twentieth century brought more objective considerations of the novel and critics began to view the novel as an extremely complex composition. This suggests that the novel includes many calculated attempts to shock Melville's mid-nineteenth-century reading public. It does not mean that this is Melville's primary purpose in the novel but the novel establishes a light surface level of meaning, on which dark allegorical insinuations depend.

In the novel, Pierre believes that conventional Christianity does not offer a high enough standard of conduct, and he sets for himself the goal of true Christ-like behavior. When Pierre and Isabel escape to New York, he finds by chance a philosophical lecture on "Chronometricals and Horologicals" (330). The author of this discourse on time argues that the perfection of the chronometer makes it an imperfect timepiece for ordinary purposes and people (Christ is a chronometer). A horologue, which is adjustable to local standards, is more practical. Pierre aspires to follow chronometric time but, despite his high moral principles, ends in destroying those around him as well as himself. Melville develops the theme of the ambiguous nature of good and evil through Pierre, but he also takes the help of the story of Isabel's childhood, and Pierre's relationship with his manipulative mother. Again and again, Melville focuses on the mix motives and the

murky reasoning of the major characters of the novel. "But with men of self-disdainful spirits; in whose chosen soul heaven itself hath by a primitive persuasion unindoctrinally fixed that most true Christian doctrine of the utter nothingness of good works" (165).

Even the treatment of nature proves problematic, Pierre rhapsodizes about the scenery of his native upstate New York and in part derives his optimistic philosophy from it, but discussions of nature often turn into satire. The structure of the novel also supports the idea of ambiguity because the novel does not provide single meaning. Therefore, the alternate title *The Ambiguities* is applicable in the novel. There are numerous shifts in tone and style, characters take on different roles with each other, narrative voices change over the course of the work, and there is a sharp change in the novel as the locale moves from rural upstate New York to the wasteland of New York City.

In the novel, Melville incorporates the thematic patterns of different Christian allegories for purposes of comparison and contrast with Pierre's allegorical experience. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Milton's *Paradise Lost* are frequently alluded to, both by Pierre and in Melville's authorial intrusions. In the beginning of the novel, Pierre is a genuine idealist much like the hero of *Pilgrim's Progress*. At the end of the story, Pierre does not, however, earn salvation as does Bunyan's hero. Rather than salvation Pierre's life turns in destruction. Another character named Christian struggles to escape from a bog or swamp. The story of his difficulty is a symbol of the difficulty of leading a good life in the bog of this world. The bog is a metaphor or symbol of life's hardships and distractions. Similarly, when Christian loses a heavy pack that he has been carrying on his back, this symbolizes his freedom from the weight of sin that he has been carrying.

The conception of female sex, which is crucial in the characterization and the fate of Pierre, animates the whole story of *The Divine Comedy* whose author is one of the

chiefly responsible for introducing it into literature. The action of the poem is initiated as Nathalia Wright says "when in Paradise the Virgil sees Dante lost in the Gloomy wood and commends him to Lucia, who calls him to the attention of Beatrice, who sends Virgil to his aid. A connecting link between Melville's work and Dante's at this point is the name of Lucia or Lucy"(168). In the novel Lucy is more clearly a minister to Pierre in hell in the second part, when she joins him in the city. But this development which takes place in the winter, a season of special significance in relation to the lowest circle of Dante's hell, is forecast in the first part when Pierre predicts that Lucy's voice will find him though he is in "the Boreal realm" and she promises to warm him in her bosom though she sits down "on Arctic ice-floes, frozen to a corpse" (43).

A consideration of Pierre in the light of the *Inferno* also helps to explain the fate of Melville's hero. According to Wright, he does not, like Dante, have a guide on his journey comparable to Virgil, who represents reason. Before he even visits Isabel he rejects the head in favour of "The heart! the heart! . . . God's anointed . . ." (107). Whereas Dante is repeatedly saved from perils in hell by Virgil or reason, Pierre is involved in one difficulty, danger, and sin after another as a result of decisions made at the level of the feelings. Unlike Dante, too, Pierre does not have the aid of a woman. Both entertain conceptions of the opposite sex as otherworldly, but for Dante this sex is a source of power and salvation. For Pierre it is not. Pierre's conception is possibly evidence of his sexual relation which in turn is partly responsible for his decision to abandon Lucy and to assume the relationship of brother and the masquerade of husband to Isabel.

Melville's obvious dependence on Dante reflects a true concept of polysemous art. Melville seems, however, to be more concerned with the presentation of his moral or didactic truths than with the esthetic demonstrations of these truths. His frequent authorial intrusions provide editorial commentary on all of Pierre's actions. The ambiguity of the

novel is also necessarily a result of the allegorical principle; Pierre, as a personification of an abstraction remains true, as do the other characters. The ambiguity is in essence the subject of the novel. The expression "Then, for the time, all minor things were whelmed in him; his mother, Isabel, the whole wide world; and one only thing remained to him;— this all-including query— Lucy or God?" (213) in the novel also signifies ambiguity. Here there seems to be a reversal of Melville's use of allegory. In *Pierre* the allegory tends to clarify and define the ambiguities of life.

Milton's great blank-verse epic poem, *Paradise Lost* retells the biblical story of Adam and Eve and their fall from paradise. Adam and Eve are first human parents of the world. They, actually, are brother and sister but they play the role of husband and wife. When they do not follow the order of God and eat an apple then they are forced to live on earth with full of suffer. In the same way, Pierre and Isabel are brother and sister but they announce them husband and wife. They also move to New York City from the village where they get suffering.

Pierre is one of the young pierces into truth. But he is at least as much frustrated as disillusion since he finds in *Hamlet* both the insinuation that he has no one to strike and a taunt for faltering in the fight. He therefore tears the pages of the both works into shreds. Promptly he curses his fate anew, however, "all the fiery floods in the *Inferno*, and all the rolling gloom in *Hamlet* suffocate him at once in flame and smoke" (201) and he dashes himself "in blind fury and swift madness against the wall" (202). The next morning he makes his decision to feign marriage with Isabel and take her together with Delly to the city.

The allegorical story about the education of the hero and his journey goes awry. Melville develops his allegory through implied analogies. Pierre is named for his worshipped father who is dead and supposedly resides in heaven. Pierre's discovery of his

father's indiscretion insinuates, allegorically, the possibility that Pierre's father in heaven may also be stonyhearted enough to abandon Pierre. This is the thing that Melville utilizes the Christian allegory is obvious in Melville's authorial intrusions concerning the growth of the Christian hero. When Pierre suffers his initial hours of anguish after his discovery of Isabel's existence, he discovers that humanity and the deity have deserted him:

That hour of the life of a man when first the help of humanity falls him, and he learns that in his obscurity and indigence humanity holds him a dog and no man: that hour is a hard one, but not the hardest. There is still another hour which follows, when he learns that in his infinite comparative minuteness and abjectness, the gods do likewise despise him, and over him not of their clan. Divinity and humanity then are equally willing that he should starve in the street for all that either will do for him. (335)

The given passage talks about two hours of human life in the case of Pierre. On the first hour, humanity fails and makes him a non-human being. On the second, he learns his infinite comparative minuteness and abjectness. The purpose of two hours is to make the text allegorical.

Although the literary game of allegory had gone out of fashion before Melville began to make unconventional adaptations of it, the basic ground rules of the game are familiar. Melville uses the physical images, characters, and actions in a narrative which handles the abstract and even metaphysical meaning.

***Pierre or, the Ambiguities* as Parody of Christian Allegory**

Melville reinforces his anti-Christian allegory by showing that Pierre is victimized by inner as well as outer forces. Pierre's physical attraction to Isabel is presented as a divinely implanted gift which paradoxically helps to betray Pierre's divinest spiritual

impulses. Melville challenges the Christian doctrine through mock that man is made in heaven by asking why man should catch glimpses of hell. It seems that on the allegorical level the same challenge is extended; if there is God and if He is the source of all, and then he must be the primary source of evil. In essence it is God's fault that evil overtakes Pierre. Melville parodies the fall of Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost*. Milton leaves the reader with the understanding that the sin lies entirely with Adam and Eve. Melville tells the reader that Pierre and Isabel are betrayed into their incestuous relations by inner, God-given forces. It is also said that "the sins of the father shall be visited upon the children to the third generation" (127).

Melville finds many ways, here, of making us well aware that he is particularly answering Milton's assurance concerning how the question is answered. He is paving the way for a parody of the meaning illuminated by Milton in the crucial event of the fall of Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost*. Pierre and Isabel are playing the opposite role of Adam and Eve for Melvillian purposes of thematic comparison and contrast. In terms of thematic difference, Milton's larger context prepares us for understanding that the fault lies entirely with Adam and Eve but Melville prepares us for understanding that Pierre and Isabel are betrayed and victimized into incestuous relations by inner forces which are God given but beyond their understanding or control. They are represented as being betrayed and overwhelmed by their divinely given and yet hitherto undiscovered sexual impulses, just at the moment when the innocent Pierre is explaining the sacrifice he is prepared to make for the innocent and already victimized Isabel, through the little white lie of pretending that they are married to each other. Pierre begins his explanation, "One way- one way- only one! A strange way, but most pure. Listen. Brace thyself: here, let me hold thee now; and then whisper it to thee, Isabel. Come, I holding thee, thou canst not fall" (225). Melville further adds:

The girl moved not; was done with all her tremblings; leaned closer to him, with an inexpressible strangeness of an intense love, new and inexplicable. Over the face of Pierre there shot a terrible self-revelation; he imprinted repeated burning kisses upon her; pressed hard her hand; would not let go her sweet and awful passiveness. (225)

In the above passage it seems that Pierre kisses upon Isabel but it is not true in reality because they are only acting as a lover and beloved. The expression "would not let go her sweet and awful passiveness" gives such factuality. Pierre is only pretending her as a beloved and this sort of pretending mocks the reader.

The novel *Pierre* mocks Christian allegory like that of the suggestion of Dante which provides a key to the construction and meaning of the novel. On his way back to Saddle Meadows, Pierre realizes that though his heart is firm in its intent, his mind is assault him with doubts that might prevent his taking action. In the profoundly silent heart of a house full of sleeping serving men and maids, Pierre now sits in his chamber before his accustomed round table still toss with the books and papers which, three days before, he had abruptly left, for a sudden and more absorbing object. Uppermost and most conspicuous are the *Inferno* of Dante, and the *Hamlet* of Shakespeare which Melville adds as:

His mind was wandering and vague; his arm wandered and was vague.

Soon he found the open *Inferno* in his hand, and his eye met the following lines, allegorically over scribed within the arch of the outgoings of the womb of human life:

Through me you pass into the city of Woe,

Through me you pass into eternal pain.

Through me among the people lost for aye.

All hope abandon, ye who enter here. (198)

This passage prepares the reader for Pierre's allegorical departure to the city. It is not just any city that Pierre will go to. It is the city of Woe, the city of Dante's *Inferno*. Melville establishes Pierre as a nineteenth-century Jesus, but not as an ethereal being. He is a flesh and blood man. In a framework of Christian allegory Melville sends his Christ-figure into the world of reality to encounter and inspect evil.

"Pierre was not only his father's only child, but his namesake" (98). When Pierre rides into the city he is accompanied by his Dark Angel, Isabel. The flaw that causes Pierre's abandoned situation is basically that Pierre is a human being and no more. By consequence, each verse allegorically over scribed within the arch of the outgoings of the womb of human life is to prove horribly true. Pierre is no Christ, and being without the Divine Sanction that saved Dante, he is but one more earthly soul passing into perdition. Melville explains the importance of Dante's *Inferno* to Pierre's developing consciousness.

Pierre is not mature enough to embrace the darker realities which he encounters in Dante and in life. Melville seems to suggest that *Pierre* and the *Inferno* are similar in that their horrible allegorical meanings lie not on the surface but in the larger implications of secondary meanings.

Actually, Melville's allegorical uses are calculated to parody and invert the procedures and meanings of Christian allegory. At the start of the text, Pierre is a genuinely devout idealist whose name might literally be the same like that of Bunyan's hero. At the end of the story, Pierre has become convinced that he has been awarded an unearned damnation, rather than salvation that he has been betrayed, disowned by man and God.

According to the critic Carol Colclough Strickland, readers find mystery in Melville's novel *Pierre*. The mystery lies in the contrast between the artfully controlled

style and structure of the novel. Critics have attempted to explain this apparent regression as Strickland says, "in craftsmanship by noting in the novel Melville's satiric purposes in outbursts of juvenile overwriting, which reflect the hero's immaturity, and by detailing Melville's intentional thought of the style and substance of conventional romanticism" (302). But there is further evidence of authorial control in the novel and the recurrence of motifs of imagery lends a degree of unity and coherence which shows that the hand of the novelist is still operating to shape the novel.

Melville's attitude towards his hero keeps changing as Pierre keeps changing. It is possible to suppose that Melville's ultimate purpose is to define his positive meanings in terms of opposites that Melville wishes to present Pierre as having made mistakes for which Pierre alone is responsible; that Melville thus joins Milton by implying, "Whose fault? Whose but his own" (xv). Such a Christian interpretation of Melville's ultimate meaning in the novel has been made frequently. The mistake in it is obvious, and the correctives for such a mistake is found in the novel by any reader who takes the trouble to notice how Melville's allegorizing procedures mockingly parody those of Christian allegory.

As always in allegory the game is developed through implying analogies to create humour. But because Melville ambiguously handles elements of Christian allegory in order to invert and challenge conventional meanings. Even the initial analogies have occurred almost pun. It is clear that Pierre is named after his father and that he worships his father, who is in heaven now. The son eventually makes the disillusioning discovery and says, "One time may father did indeed cherish some passing emotion for the beautiful young Frenchwoman" (108). The allegorical values have thus initially insinuated foreshadow the possibilities that Pierre's father in heaven may also be stonyhearted enough to abandon Pierre within the givens of this dark allegory.

Melville uses the conventions of Christian allegory for subversive purposes to mock others. As a follower of Christianity, Pierre worships his father who is in heaven now. In his eye, the father has always seemed perfect as a God. But one day the son makes disillusioning discovery that his father had seduced a woman. The allegorical values, thus initially insinuated, foreshadow the possibility that Pierre's father in heaven is also stonyhearted enough to abandon him. So, to make a parody the novelist ambiguously handles the element of Christian allegory and writes:

There now, do you see the soul. In its germ on all sides it is closely folded by the world, as the husk folds the tenderest fruit; then it is born from the world-husk, but still now outwardly clings to it;—still clamors for the support of its mother the world, and its father the Deity. But it shall yet learn to stand independent, though not without many a bitter wail, and many a miserable fall. (335)

In the given passage, Melville gives his own interpretation of allegorical meanings already operative and concerning the growth as well as education of the Christian hero named after the father which is really a parody.

In the novel, the main artistic fault in such pointed authorial explanation of underlying meaning is clear because the author does not sufficiently trust his art to convey those meanings through the conventional indirections which always imply more than it stated. Nevertheless, the reader who notices this fault may at least gain the advantage of finding in it some corroboration of dark meanings which may have been puzzling up to this point in the narrative, merely because they were ambiguously insinuated. To support this Melville writes in the novel:

Here, then, is the untimely, timely end; – Life's last chapter well stitched into the middle; Nor book, nor author of the book, hath any sequel, though

each hath its last lettering! – It is ambiguous still. Had I been heartless now, disowned, and spurningly portioned off the girl at Saddle Meadows, then had I been happy through a long life on earth, and perchance through a long eternity in heaven! Now, 'tis merely hell in both worlds. (402)

Melville's way of representing Pierre is being victimized by inner and outer forces. Here the convenient illustration of related strategies is found by Melville's reinforces in anti-Christian meaning. Writing with caustic awareness his reading public is not only piously Christian but also sternly prudish. Melville quite brazenly and sarcastically represents Pierre's sexual drive as a divinely implanted gift which paradoxically helps to betray Pierre's divinest spiritual impulses. For this Melville further writes:

So beautiful, so mystical, so bewilderingly alluring; speaking of a mournfulness infinitely sweeter and more attractive than all mirthfulness; that face of glorious suffering; that face of touching loveliness; that face was Pierre's own sister's; that face was Isabel's; that face Pierre has visibly seen; into those same supernatural eyes our Pierre had looked. Thus, already, and ere the proposed encounter, he was assured that, in a transcendent degree, womanly beauty, and not womanly ugliness, invited him to champion the right. Be naught concealed in this book of sacred truth. (135)

Melville here establishes the fact that Pierre had seen and admired the mysterious beauty of Isabel before he knew she was a blood relative. He also, as a narrator, makes the sarcastic observations.

Many readers do not want to discover Melville's bitterly and sarcastic insinuations. These kinds of difficulties are created by the moralizing digressions which

invoke biblical passages. The ultimate goal is not other rather mockery so Melville writes, "Now alive as he was to all these searching argumentative itemizings of the minutest known facts any way bearing upon the subject; and yet, at the same time, persuaded, strong as death, that in spite of them" (168). Pierre is now alive to know all about his father's sin but this reality ultimately takes him to the death bed. The novelist, again, ambiguously handles the Christian ideas in order to create humour:

Isabel was indeed his sister; how could Pierre, naturally poetic, and therefore piercing as he was; how could he fail to acknowledge the existence of that all–controlling and all–permeating wonderfulness, which, when imperfectly and isolatedly recognized by the generality, is so significantly denominated The Finger of God? But it is not merely The Finger, it is the whole outspread Hand of God; for doth not Scripture intimate, that He holdeth all of us in the hollow of His hand? – and Hollow, truly! (168)

In the given passage, Melville gives enough hints and warnings to prepare the reader for the best and worst of the novel. It is the Finger of God, of course, that inscribes the Tablets of Stone given to Moses on Mount Sinai and that furnishes Christ with the power to give speech to the dumb. Inscribed within all cultural constructs, then, and within language itself is a radical absence suggesting as an original loss. Actually Pierre fails to acknowledge his existence. He becomes the puppet of the hand of God and tries to be a lonely virtuous guy in the human world. As a result, he cannot handle the existing norms and values according to Christian religion.

The novel gives many hints to prove it as an example of parody. For that Melville uses Christian allegory for subversive purpose. "When Pierre was twelve years old, his father had died, leaving behind him, in the general voice of the world, a marked

reputation as a gentleman and a Christian; in the heart of his wife" (93). Due to this Pierre, motivated by his genuinely lofty Christian idealism, decides to take on himself, and thus to redeem, the sins of his father.

Thus, in the novel, Melville ambiguously handles the elements of Christian allegory. Pierre all the time tries to be a sane. He wants to avoid sin from his life as well as family. Due to this, when he knows Isabel as his father's illegitimate daughter then he forgets his past life and even his engagement with another lady, and runs after her. He reacts to the story by devising a remarkable scheme to preserve his father's name, spare his mother's grief and give Isabel her proper share of the estate. He announces his marriage with her and lives a sorrowful life in New York City. As a result, he fails to handle Christian elements in a proper way and creates parody to mock the readers.

IV. Conclusion

Melville takes the help of different Christian texts to make his text allegorical. He makes an analogy of the protagonists with the Christian characters. At the beginning, the protagonist, Pierre is a devout and idealistic young man who lives with his widowed mother in the northern part of New York State. Although his father has been dead for several years, his mother possesses the strength and competence to manage the large estate. But the complication occurs when he knows the painful discovery that his late father once has seduced and abandoned a beautiful young woman. He also discovers that his father has left a daughter named Isabel before him as a token of love. Motivated by his genuinely lofty Christian idealism, he decides to take this on himself to redeem the sin of his father. In a sense, he plays the role of savior as a messenger of God. He pretends to marry with her but their marital life cannot go longer because he cannot manage his relation with her and as a result his life turns into destruction.

To prove his text allegorical, Melville takes the help of Christian texts like Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and Dante's *Divine Comedy* as well as *Inferno*. Allegorically, *Pilgrim's Progress* of course represents the basic process by which any Christian believer achieve salvation by overcoming the hindering vicissitudes of the world, the flesh and the Devil with God's grace as he makes the journey through life and death to heaven. Pierre and Isabel are also compared with Milton's Christian characters Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve do not obey the God and eat prohibited fruit in the Eden garden. As a result, God takes them to the earth where they get much suffering. In the same way, Pierre does not obey his mother and as a result, he has to leave home. He goes to the New York City with Isabel. They have to struggle for survive there so they also feel suffering. Likewise, Pierre is compared as nineteenth-century Jesus who goes to the city of Dante's *Inferno*.

Melville, in the novel, uses two meanings: literal and symbolic to make the text allegorical. In the literal level, the whole story moves around its main character Pierre. He is guided by Christian idealism so all the time his ultimate goal is to avoid sin from his life. When he knows that his father has left an illegitimate daughter before him then he moves his mind to save that girl from the sin. He pretends her as a wife and starts new life with her in the New York City. He gets life barren and difficult there. Force to rely upon his own resources, Pierre resolves to become a novelist. After much difficulty, he manages to find a publisher who agrees to take his unwritten novel and to advance him enough money to live. But he cannot produce a good work and his career as a novelist also fails. In the symbolic level, this is not the story of Pierre but it is the story of Melville himself because critics comment him by saying that his career as a novelist fails with the publication of this novel.

The alternate title *The Ambiguity* is also the justification for the use of allegory because to understand the text clearly the main title is not sufficient and we have to take the help of alternate title. Pierre plays ambiguous role in the novel because he wants to be sane all the time but at last his trying to be sane turns into sin.

Melville not only uses allegorical elements in his novel but he ambiguously handles those Christian allegories to make parody. The purpose of symbolic meaning is only to mock others. His use of alternate title not only makes the text allegorical rather it creates humour. He also uses different Christian texts for subversive purposes to create humour. At the beginning, Pierre is genuinely devout idealist whose name is literally same like that of Bunyan's hero. But at the end of the story, Pierre has become convinced that he has been awarded an unearned damnation rather than salvation which is a hint of parody. Melville also uses the opposite role of Pierre and Isabel with Adam and Eve because they are the cause of divinely and hitherto undiscovered sexual impulses.

Christianity takes incestuous relation as an evil thing. Here, Melville prepares us for understanding that Pierre and Isabel are betrayed and victimized into the incestuous relations by inner forces which are beyond their control. He even challenges God by saying that if there is God and if He is the source of all things then He must be the primary source of evil. Pierre is the man of flesh and blood who goes to the city of Woe leaving his actual accommodation which in a parodic sense is the city of Dante's *Inferno*.

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