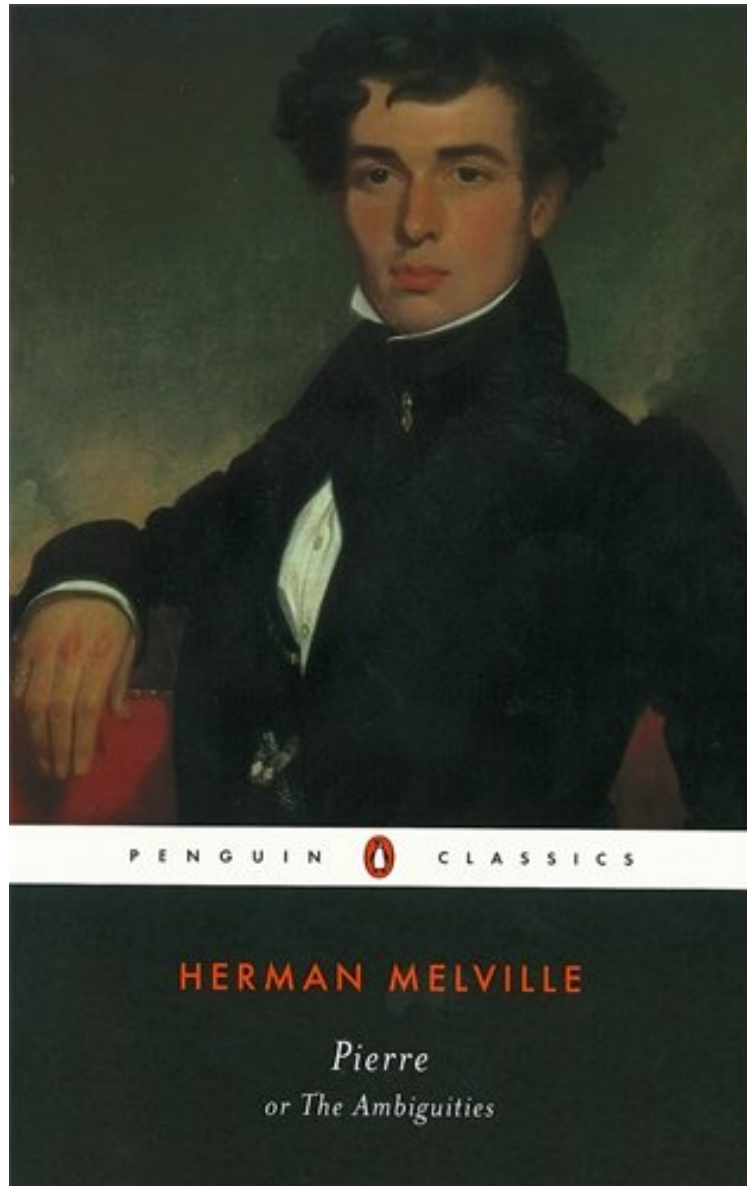


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Pierre: or, The Ambiguities (Penguin Classics)

Herman Melville

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Herman Melville : Pierre: or, The Ambiguities (Penguin Classics) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Pierre: or, The Ambiguities (Penguin Classics):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Oh, Ambiguity! By DAAYou, dear reader of this lonely review, see that no one has reviewed this book because, here I am half way through this book's life's journey and feeling woefully

inadequate, the book is a wonderfully horrifying challenge. It is another of Melville's masterpieces that, because it's like *Moby-Dick* but difficult, people even in Melville's time---you know, a time with literate, rounded people who were sans internet and television and avec imagination---did not or could not or would not appreciate. The language is incredibly purple and one senses---I will happily confirm this sensation upon second and third readings---Melville is almost delightfully mocking that which he is also creating as an homage to a sensibility current and popular in his time. Melville is required reading and this book will hurt you but it will hurt in all the right ways. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. but it is beautiful. I can't tell you what it is about By Publius This can be a difficult work, but it is beautiful. I can't tell you what it is about, because that is part of what it is about - the difficulty of communication. 4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Not an easy read By Daniel Crumbo This is Melville's attempt at writing a domestic, almost American gothic novel in a distinctly Hawthornian vein. It doesn't work as such. He began it while elated and dreaming about the recognition he was going to finally receive from what he considered to be a masterpiece, which was some book about a whale or something. When *Moby-Dick* flopped, Melville was hard at work on *Pierre*. The confidence he began the book with fizzles and, helped along by a preposterous deal forced on him by his publishers, the second half or so of the book is a bitter, misanthropic mess. Hershel Parker has restored what he calls the Kraken edition, which is the more coherent version he first brought to his publishers. This version is the one that was first published, and contains about 160 pages of additional material, including a tacked-on plot about *Pierre* being a writer, and some thinly veiled jabs at his publishers and former friends. It ends up reading like Edgar Allan Poe doing Jane Austen in one of his indignantly vengeful moods.

'Ambiguities indeed! One long brain-muddling, soul-bewildering ambiguity (to borrow Mr. Melville's style), like Melchisedeck, without beginning or end-a labyrinth without a clue - an Irish bog without so much as a Jack o'the'lantern to guide the wanderer's footsteps - the dream of a distempered stomach, disordered by a hasty supper on half-cooked pork chops." So judged the *New York Herald* when *Pierre* was first published in 1852, with most contemporary reviewers joining in the general condemnation: 'a dead failure,' 'this crazy rigmarole,' and "a literary mare's nest." Latter-day critics have recognized in the story of Melville's idealistic young hero a corrosive satire of the sentimental-Gothic novel, and a revolutionary foray into modernist literary techniques. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

From *Library Journal* This was Melville's 1852 follow-up to the then flop *Moby Dick*. His publishers, fearing they had another failure on their hands, forced Melville to make additions to the text before they'd publish it. Melville later referred to the original, shorter version as his "kraken" book. Editor Parker has here restored the psychological novel to Melville's intended form. The text is buttressed with 30 full-color illustrations by Maurice Sendak. For serious literature collections. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. From the Back Cover "Ambiguities indeed! One long brain-muddling, soulbewildering ambiguity (to borrow Mr. Melville's style), like Melchisedeck without beginning or end - a labyrinth without a clue - an Irish bog without so much as a Jack o' th'-lantern to guide the wanderer's footsteps - the dream of a distempered stomach, disordered by a hasty supper on half-cooked pork chops". So judged the *New York Herald* when *Pierre* was first published in 1852, with most contemporary reviewers joining in the general condemnation: "a dead failure", "this crazy rigmarole", and "a literary mare's nest". Latter-day critics have recognized in the story of Melville's idealistic young hero a corrosive satire of the sentimental-Gothic novel, and a revolutionary foray into modernist literary techniques. As William Spengemann writes in his introduction to this edition, "For anyone who, being aware of the culture of modernity, is curious about its origins, *Pierre* ranks with Coleridge's 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner,' Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*, and the poems of Emily Dickinson as one of the privileged places where the dead past can be seen giving way inexorably to the living present". About the Author Herman Melville was born in August 1, 1819, in New York City, the son of a merchant. Only twelve when his father died bankrupt, young Herman tried work as a bank clerk, as a cabin-boy on a trip to Liverpool, and as an elementary schoolteacher, before shipping in January 1841 on the whaler *Acushnet*, bound for the Pacific. Deserting ship the following year in the Marquesas, he made his way to Tahiti and Honolulu, returning as ordinary seaman on the frigate *United States* to Boston, where he was discharged in October 1844. Books based on these adventures won him immediate success. By 1850 he was married, had acquired a farm near Pittsfield, Massachusetts (where he was the impetuous friend and neighbor of Nathaniel Hawthorne), and was hard at work on his masterpiece *Moby-Dick*. Literary success soon faded; his complexity increasingly alienated readers. After a visit to the Holy Land in January 1857, he turned from writing prose fiction to poetry. In 1863, during the Civil War, he moved back to New York City, where from 1866-1885 he was a deputy inspector in the Custom House, and where, in 1891, he died. A draft of a final prose work, *Billy Budd, Sailor*, was left unfinished and uncollated, packed tidily away by his widow, where it remained until its rediscovery and publication in 1924. William C. Spengemann is the Hale

Professor in Arts and Sciences and Professor of English Emeritus at Dartmouth College. He edited the Penguin Classics edition of Nineteenth-Century American Poetry.