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「ピエール」ーメルヴィルの海から陸への転換

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Pierre: Melville's Change from the Sea to the Land*

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I. Introduction

Pierre, which was written right after *Moby-Dick*, seems to be Melville's turning point in his series of novels. Most novels before *Pierre*, such as *Typee* (1846), *Mardi* (1849), and *Moby-Dick* (1851), are largely sea stories. As their sub-titles – "A Peep of Polynesian Life" for *Typee*, "A Voyage Thither" for *Mardi*, and "The Whale" for *Moby-Dick* – also show us, these early novels deal with life on the sea or life in the isolated Polynesian islands, far from civilization, and seeking the universe through nature. In *Pierre*, Melville's world comes to the land, where he deals with social and ethical problems. The stories after *Pierre*, such as "Bartleby" (1853) and "The Bell-Tower" (1855), follow the same pattern as *Pierre*. Unlike *Typee*, *Mardi* and *Moby-Dick*, those short stories after *Pierre* deal with terrifying city life.

Pierre is divided into two parts – the scene of Saddle Meadows and that of New York City. The scene of Saddle Meadows, which is the first part of the novel, represents the pastoral paradise. In the last half of the novel, the city life of Pierre, Melville gets into the land story proper which is symbolized by the rock imagery. Two scenes of *Pierre*, Saddle Meadows and New York City, epitomize Melville's change of the story from the sea to the land. H. Bruce Franklin says: "*Moby-Dick*, the sea story, moves toward the symbolic demon who glides through the sea of life; *Pierre*, the land story, glides incessantly among symbolic rocks."[1] As Franklin indicates, the image of the sea in *Moby-Dick*, as well as in other novels before *Pierre*, is bound to the image of the rock on the land in *Pierre*. Therefore, to analyze the structure and theme of *Pierre* is to see Melville's change from the sea to the land.

II. Saddle Meadows: The image of the sea

Before Melville shifts his sea story entirely to the land story, he sets Saddle Meadows as an intermediate buffer from the sea to the land in the beginning half of the story. Melville still seems to adhere to the image of the sea in the scene of Saddle Meadows. In fact, the image of the wide opened meadow itself is like the wide opened ocean. Its hills of the grasses waved by the wind also remind us of the waves of the ocean. Harry Levin interprets these resemblances this way; "Yet the ocean itself resembles a prairie; the waves are its hills and valleys; the particles of brit are its fields of wheat."[2] The pastoral paradise of Saddle Meadows is, indeed, just like the primitive and unfallen world of the Typee Valley or the South Sea islands of Mardi.

The image of the sea is primarily the maternal body in the cycle of the organic universe. In "Ecclesiastes," this image of the sea is described as, "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever . . . . All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again."[3] However, we also have to know that behind the mild and maternal image, the sea embodies the tormenting and rigorous image which expresses the difficulties of our life, just like the cannibalism existing behind the paradise of Typee Valley. In the first chapter of *Moby-Dick*, Melville clearly describes this dualistic image of the sea as follows: "And still deeper the meaning of that story of Narcissus, who because he could not grasp the tormenting, mild image he saw in the fountain, plunged into it and was drowned. But that same image, we ourselves see in all rivers and oceans. It is the image of the ungraspable phantom of life; and this is the key to it all."[4] Ahab's tragedy takes place in this tormenting sea in which the God-incarnate White Whale dwells as the "ungraspable phantom of life." Melville continues, "Consider the subtleness of the sea; how its most dreaded creatures glide under water, unapparent for the most part, and treacherously hidden beneath the loveliest tints of azure. Consider also the devilish brilliance

and beauty of many of its most remorseless tribes, as the dainty embellished shape of many species of sharks. Consider, once more, the universal cannibalism of the sea; all whose creatures prey upon each other, carrying on eternal war since the world began."[5] If this dualistic image of the sea is generally applicable, the scene of Saddle Meadows, which represents the image of the sea as an intermediate buffer before getting into the terrifying city, must also have the dualistic images in it: images both mild and tormenting.

In the delightful countryside of Saddle Meadows, that is to say, in the middle of a pastoral paradise, Pierre's life is cheerful, joyous and happy. The world of Saddle Meadows reflects Pierre's naive idealism and innocence. Pierre is in the middle of the garden of Eden. As Charles Moorman says, "Pierre, innocent and high-spirited, stands guarded by his heritage and his feudal world in the mist of an American Eden."[6] Saddle Meadows is the garden of Eden before the Fall. Pierre's relation with his mother in this garden is also the ideal of the one world family before the Fall. They call each other brother and sister by "a perfect confidence and mutual understanding at all-points."[7] His mother is a pious, noble and beautiful woman with the "triumphant maternal pride of the widow" (p. 25). Early love scenes of Pierre with Lucy are also the ideal in this garden of Eden, Saddle Meadows. Lucy, a girl with red cheeks, blue eyes and blonde hair, is just like an angel in the garden of Eden. Pierre's mother expects him to marry Lucy and says, "but you, Pierre, are going to be married before long, I trust, not to a Capulet, but to one of our Montagues; and so Romeo's evil fortune will hardly be yours. You will be happy" (p. 39). Young Pierre is surrounded by these perfect circumstances. The green color of Meadows signifies not only the fertile nature but also young America, as Moorman has already regarded it as "an American Eden." This Eden-like pastoral paradise of Saddle Meadows is the image of the mild sea, relating to the organic universe which symbolizes the maternal body, namely, the mild sea image.

However, here we have to remember that the mild sea embodies the tormenting element behind it. Melville already indicates this tormenting sea image when he begins the story: " There are some strange summer mornings in the country, when he who is but a sojourner from the city shall early walk forth into the fields, and be wonder-smitten with the trance-like aspect of the green and golden world. Not a flower stirs; the trees forget to wave; the grass itself seems to have ceased to grow; and all Nature, as if suddenly become conscious of her own profound mystery, and feeling no refuge from it but silence, sinks into this wonderful and indescribable repose" (p. 23). A flower does not stir, the trees forget to wave, and the grass ceases to grow. All nature seems to have sunk into a deep sleep. This opening scene seems to sound like the deadly silence before a strom. In this beginning passage, we come to know Melville's undertone of the stony silence of the sterile city, which follows to the scene of Saddle Meadows, as well as the tormenting sea image.

The other undertones for the sterile city indicating the dark fate of Pierre are Romeo and Dante's "Inferno." When his mother contrasts Pierre's marriage to Romeo – Romeo who is not marrying a Capulet but one of his own Montagues –, Pierre sympathizes with Romeo, and says, "The more miserable Romeo!" (p. 39) In these conversations of Pierre and his mother, Melville indicates that Pierre will follow Romeo's fate. Also, Pierre is the reader of Dante. He is fascinated by Francesca's face. In Canto V of "Inferno," Paolo and Francesca are put in the Second Circle from which Hell proper begins. Due to the adulterous relationship with her husband's younger brother Paolo, Francesca is put into Hell proper. To Pierre who is fascinated by Francesca, even her mournful face becomes ideal. Pierre says, "Francesca's mournful face is now ideal to me. Flaxman might evoke it wholly, – make it present in lines of misery – bewitching power" (p. 66).

Romeo and Francesca throw a shadow on the fate of Pierre dealing with

his future with Isabel. Especially, the passage from the "Inferno" – "Through me you pass into the city of Woe;/ Through me you pass into eternal pain;/ Through me, among the people lost for aye." – foretell the difficulties of Pierre with Isabel in the city. Pierre drops this "fatal volume" from his hand, and his heart is occupied with terrifying hollowness. All these elements – the opening passages of the novel, Romeo's fate, and Dante's "Inferno" – present the tormenting sea image behind the scene of the pastoral paradise of Saddle Meadows and foretell Pierre's hard life in the future. Even in this Eden-like Saddle Meadows, Melville tactically sets the undertone of terrifying city life.

When the sin of Pierre's father is revealed, the tormenting sea image reveals its contour clearly. The mild sea image which was dominating Saddle Meadows changes entirely to the tormenting sea image at this point. Until his father's sin is revealed, Pierre was celebrating his happy life in the wonderful surroundings, even though the undertone of the tormenting sea image was behind it. He was just like a chivalrous hero too. William E. Sedgwick says that he was "like Hamlet as Ophelia remembered him before his father's death."[8] However, Pierre's life changes entirely when his father's sin is revealed, just as Hamlet changed after his father's death.

III. Pierre's life in New York City: The image of the rock

Pierre's father died when Pierre was twelve years old. He was a perfect gentleman and a Christian. In Pierre's mind, his father's image was spotless and saintly with manly beauty and benignity.

However, the God-like, saintly father had committed a serious sin in his younger days. This sin which changes Pierre's life is the fact that he had an illegitimate child before his marriage and abandoned this child at a farm house in a neighboring village. This illegitimate child, Isabel, claims herself as his half sister, and says in her letter, "Pierre Glendinning, thou art not

the only child of thy father; in the eye of the sun, the hand that traces this is thy sister's; yes, Pierre, Isable calls thee her brother – her brother!" (p. 89) What a shocking fact would this be to Pierre who had believed that he was the only child of his saintly father! Now, the father's spotless shrine falls to the ground. Pierre removes the portrait of his father from the wall and says, "I will no more have a father" (p. 113). Pierre agonizes and at the same time, determines to save Isabel from her miserable situation. He says, "Oh! Isabel, thou art my sister; and I will love thee, and protect thee" (p. 91). Since Pierre knows that his mother is too pious and noble to accept her husband's sin and an illegitimate child as well, he takes Isabel to his mother and introduces her as his wife. As a natural result, he is cast out of his home by his deeply shocked mother. Pierre leaves his mother, his virtuous fiancèe Lucy, and his country paradise, and moves into the city with isabel. This departure of Pierre to the city is Melville's departure to the land story from the sea story. The sea images – mild and tormenting – in Saddle Meadows are entirely shifted to the rock image of the city. This departure to the city is also Pierre's departure from an innocent world to the world of adults. The journey to the city takes the process of initiation: innocent world → troubles → evil tempters → realization of the reality of life. Hawthorne uses this journey imagery as a metaphor in most of his stories. Pierre's experiences on his journey is just like Robin's in "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," who also comes to the city from the innocent world to seek his kinsman and finally realizes the reality of life through the experiences of many difficulties.

Pierre's first experience in the city is the trouble with the coachman. The coachman leaps to the pavement and springs ahead of the horses in his sudden wrath, and "violently reined back the leaders by their heads" (p. 267). When he is about to strike at Pierre, he is stopped by a policeman. This madness of the coachman occurred just because Pierre did not know the

number of the house to which he should go. This first experience caused much trepidation in Pierre and Isabel who were completely ignorant of the city life. At the inn, when Pierre asks people to help him bring some trunks, the three "noddies" stare hard and help him for money. The innkeeper is also very suspicious and avaricious. He wonders whether or not Pierre has enough money for the rent. His eyes are fastened with eagerness on Pierre's purse. When he notices that Pierre has enough money, he becomes polite and says, "Their diplomas are their friends; and their only friends are their dollars; you have a purse-full of friends. – We have chambers, sir, that will suit you" (p. 279). Even Glendinning Stanley, who is Pierre's cousin and is supposed to take care of Pierre in the city, neglects Pierre. Pierre asks to see Stanley, but the landlord of the apartment never answers him. Pierre finally cries out, "Glendinning Stanley, thou disown'st Pierre not so abhorrently as Pierre does thee. By heaven, had I a knife, Glen, I could prick thee on the spot; let out all thy Glendinning blood, and sew up the vile remainder. Hound, and base blot upon the general humanity!" (p. 274) Pierre realizes how cold humanity is in city life.

The city is, in fact, a terrifyingly immoral world. The paved streets, brick houses and walls – all these symbolize the inhuman coldness and emptiness like a stone. Isabel's first cry when they arrived at the city represents this emptiness of the city: "Think'st thou, Pierre, the time will ever come when all the earth shall be paved? . . . this silence is unnatural, is fearful. The forests are never so still" (p. 266). This stony silence and the "unnatural" and "fearful" image of the city are the ones that we can see in Melville's later works after *Pierre*, such as "Bartleby." Bartleby's mechanical repetition of copying papers in the office symbolizes the monotonous and inhuman life in the city. "Bartleby" is, in a sense, a tragedy of a man who is absolutely alone and hopeless in city life – life on Wall Street in New York. In these inhuman surroundings, Bartleby himself is

becoming a stone-like man. In the inhuman coldness and emptiness of city life, Pierre is also becoming a stone-like man signifying nothing. Pierre just sits in his room from morning until evening. Thanksgiving comes, but Pierre sits there in his room. Christmas and New Year's come, but Pierre still sits in his room all day long. Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's have no meanings to Pierre. "Nor Bell, Thank, Christ, Year;– none of these are for Pierre. In the midst of the merriments of the mutations of Time, Pierre hath ringed himself in with the grief of Eternity" (p. 343). Through the life of Pierre in the city, Melville develops his story in a more social and realistic way.

The life of Pierre in the city is surely tormenting. Cut off from his heritage of Saddle Meadows, he lives in a cheap apartment house and earns a living through his literary works to support Isabel and Delly. He has a poetic talent and at Saddle Meadows occasionally contributed his works to the magazines, such as "The Tropical Summer: a Sonnet," "The Weather: a Thought," and "Life: an Impromptu." Now, he tries to write a full length novel dealing with something like an absolute truth. He is successful as a writer for a while. However, even this literary work is cut off by the publisher. The publisher, who was probably encouraged by Glendinning Stanley, refuses Pierre's manuscripts, and says, "You are a swindler..... Our great press of publication has hitherto prevented our slightest inspection of our reader's proofs of your book" (p. 398). Stanley, who repeatedly harrases and insults Pierre, inherits the Saddle Meadows estate after the death of Pierre's mother and becomes the suitor of Lucy. All the efforts of Pierre turn out negative. He sinks deeper and deeper into disillusionment and increases his gloom in the unsympathetic coldness of city life. Pierre, who was primarily dominated by a pastoral paradise, is now dominated by his urban surroundings and realizes not only the terrifyingly immoral city life but also reality of life itself. However, Pierre is too naive to confront these

gigantic social and ethical evils. In the deep conflict and in the desperate situations, he finally cries out, ". . . the fool of Truth, the fool of Virtue, the fool of Fate, now quits ye forever!" (p. 400) The only way that the defeated man can take is the self-destructive way. Pierre rises up, saying, "Here I step out before the drawn-up worlds in widest space, and challenge one and all of them to battle!" (p. 399) Pierre, who has given up his virtue and fate, empties his pistols into Stanley and kills him. He is taken to prison. The stony cell of prison is the ultimate image of rock indicating that Pierre himself is, as his name has already indicated, [9] becoming a stone-like man signifying nothing.

Lucy and Isabel visit Pierre in Prison. Isabel claims that she is the murderer, speaking out to Pierre, "Oh, ye stony roofs, and seven-fold stony skies! – not thou art the murderer, but thy sister hath murdered thee, my brother, oh my brother!" (p. 403) When angel-like innocent Lucy knew the fact that Isabel was the half-sister of Pierre, she is shocked to death at the feet of Pierre. Pierre and Isabel follow Lucy, and empty a vial of poison and shiver on the floor, too. Isabel falls on Pierre's heart. Her long black hair covers Pierre just as ebony vines cover the field.

IV. Conclusion: Melville's change to a Hawthorne-like land story

The ending of *Pierre* is catastrophe. Melville designs the story in a realistic way centering a Calvinistic conscience on social sin. *Pierre* is a rather Hawthorne-like land story dealing with Calvinistic Puritan conscience which has brought darkness on Hawthorne's heroes and heroines. In fact, what entirely dominates *Pierre* in the last half of the story is the darkness of Pierre's mind as well as of the city. A little before he wrote *Pierre*, Melville says about this darkness in "Hawthorne and His Mosses": ". . . this great power of blackness in him derives its force from its appeals to that Calvinistic sense of Innate Depravity and Original Sin, from whose visitations, in some

shape or other, no deeply thinking mind is always and wholly free." [10] Melville continues: "Now it is that blackness in Hawthorne, of which I have spoken, that so fixes and fascinates me."[11] Under the influence of Hawthorne, Melville apparently approaches the more inner side of human nature in *Pierre*. The gloom and the darkness of *Pierre* in the last half of the story are just like those in *Scarlet Letter*, in "Young Goodman Brown," in "The Minister's Black Veil," and so on. Pierre's inner conflicts and struggles with his father's sin are like Dimmesdale's, Goodman Brown's and Hooper's, although Pierre himself did not commit sin. The darkness and blackness are also reflected in the existence of Isabel. She is, like Hester Prynne, the black-haired and large black-eyed girl of mystery. Her low interior voice also mysteriously echoes in the room. When she plays the guitar, her long hair falls over it like a "dark shower of curls," and the sounds hover in the mournful and unintelligible but delicious melodies in the room. Occupied by mystic impression, Pierre cries: "Mystery! Mystery!/ Mystery of Isabel!/ Mystery! Mystery!/ Isabel and Mystery!" (p. 155) Isabel is the big contrast with Lucy.[12] Lucy, who has blonde hair, blue eyes and red cheeks, was an angel-like figure in the pastoral paradise of Saddle Meadows. Her existence had increased the image of the mild sea in that pastoral paradise. Isabel's appearance, as the revealed sin of Pierre's father, changes the pastoral paradise to the tormenting sea image. Saddle Meadows turns into a world gloomy and dark to Pierre at this point. When Pierre and Isabel move to the city, the world of the novel is finally changes to a Hawthorne-like land story.[13] The "blackness" in Hawthorne is transfered to Pierre and Isabel and to their lives in the city in *Pierre*.

After coming back to the land story from the sea story, Melville focuses *Pierre* on social sins and ultimately approaches the origin of the myth of the Fall of Man. Pierre's tragedy is primarily caused by his father's sin which is one of the ugliest social sins. The sin of his father, like original sin, is the

fatal blow in Pierre's mind. To redeem his father's sin by saving Isabel, Pierre leaves the romantic Eden and experiences a sort of crucifixion in the terrifyingly immoral city. Melville effectively uses the two scenes – Saddle Meadows and the city – to clearly show Pierre's downfall from the pastoral paradise to the hellish city. The downfall of Pierre symbolizes the archetypal pattern of the Fall of Man. Pierre is, in fact, an Adam-like figure in the modern context of city life. His heroic actions to save Isabel are derived from his innocent righteousness and God-like love as well as from a young idealism.

However, Pierre might have pursued his fatal mission too far. His tragedy dwells in it. As Charles Feidelson says in the Note to *Moby-Dick*, "Just as Narcissus was drowned in the fountain, any man who pursues the image too far will lose his sense of what he is . . . in the infinite possibilities of 'life'."[14] "The image" that Pierre pursued too far is, of course, the Christian ideal of a Calvinistic conscience dwelling on social sins. Harry Levin says, "Pierre, the landman, is metaphorically drowned."[15] In this sense, Pierre comes very close to the figure of Ahab. Ahab also loses his senses because of his monomaniac pursuit of the White Whale. The "ungraspable phantom of life," which is the image of the tormenting sea as Melville has already mentioned, is directly related to the "snowly phantom" of the White Whale. Ahab could not see that the White Whale was actually representing Nature, that is to say, the dignity of God, and regarded Him as the "great demon of the sea" that had taken off his leg. Ahab could not realize that his monomaniac pursuit of the White Whale as transgressing the dignity of God.

In contrast to Ahab, however, Pierre, who is an innocent, naive, and Christ-like figure, is transgressed by the terrifyingly immoral and hellish city, and ends his life in catastrophe. After having portrayed the disaster of an egocentric transgressor, Ahab, on the sea, Melville has apparently changed his hero to a sympathetic and Christ-like young idealist on the land.

Notes

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1. H. Bruce Franklin, *The Wake of the Gods: Melville's Mythology* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963), p. 100.
2. Harry Levin, *The Power of Blackness* (New York: Knopf, 1958), p. 204.
3. Ecclesiastes, 1: 4-7, *Holy Bible* (Chicago: The Gideons International, 1958), p. 611.
4. Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc., 1975), p. 26.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 363-364.
6. Charles Moorman, "Melville's *Pierre* and the Fortunate Fall." *American Literature*, XXV (1953), p. 17.
7. Herman Melville, *Pierre* (New York: New American Library, Inc., 1964), p. 25. All the page references in this paper are to this edition.
8. William E. Sedgwick, *Herman Melville: The Tragedy of Mind* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1962), p. 139.
9. The word "pierre" in French means a stone.
10. Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," *The Portable Melville* (New York: The Viking Press, 1952), p. 406.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 407.
12. Melville's description of Isabel is much like Poe's Gothic type of setting and characterization. The contrast of Lucy and Isabel is also exactly the same that we can see in Rowena and Ligeia in "Ligeia." Ligeia is, like Isabel, the black-eyed and black-haired mystic lady, while Rowena is, like Lucy, the blue-eyed, fair-haired and rose-like cheeked lady. Ligeia's mystical ambiguity captures the mind of the narrator and brings him into the dark world.
13. Melville briefly returns to the scene of the sea at about the end of *Pierre* (Book XXVI). Pierre, Isabel, and Lucy row the boat on the bay. However, this is not the sea we see in *Typee*, Mardi or *Moby-Dick*. The motion of the waves reflects Pierre's perturbation of mind and only brings him the vague reminiscence of the story of Isabel. The image of the sea here is much like the land on which all kinds of social sin and evil take place.
14. Charles Feidelson, Jr., "Note" to *Moby-Dick* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc., 1975). p. 26.
15. Harry Levin, *The Power of Blackness*, p. 184.

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