

be)(adonna\*

31

Fall 2002



***Mother, I***  
*(fragment of a film script)*

by  
**Chris Tysh**



deadly nightshade, a cardiac and respiratory stimulant, having purplish-red flowers and black berries

This film script is based on the novel, *Ma Mère* by Georges Bataille (1897-1962), first published in France in 1966 by Jean-Jacques Pauvert. Paris: Société Nouvelle des Editions Pauvert, 1966, 1979. English translation by Austryn Wainhouse. London and New York: Marion Boyars, 1989.

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# *Mother, I*

## *(fragment of a film script)*

A fairly long preamble constituted by a series of flashbacks pertaining to the primary family structure: i.e. number 3; the triangle. All these quick shots to be filmed before the credits appear.

The film would open with a brutishly obvious shot (or shots), to be more specific.

- 1) A young man in a darkened room startled by shouts. Opens door and posts himself in the corridor. Noise, indistinct shouts, scraping sounds, heavy breathing, silence.
- 2) A door opens: the father, red in the face, disheveled and swaying.
- 3) The father speaks to the son; an incomprehensible tenderness in the voice, a solicitude, absurdly boyish. We can't hear the words; a lingering close-up of the young man's incomprehension, bordering on terror.
- 4) The son walks in on father in nightshirt rushing after fully clothed mother. They fall to the floor; shouts. Camera follows young man to his room.
- 5) Father opens son's door by mistake; swaying, bottle in hand. When he takes notice of son, he drops the bottle. The liquor flows while young man's gaze is fixed upon his father who's clutching his head. The young man trembles with rage.
- 6) A view of a village church. Mother and son walk toward church in the early morning. A silent communion holds them. Their dark beauty is almost painful. The word adoration should make itself visible as an insistence on meshing these two against the intruder. It could be the name of the church (one of the words, that is), possibly followed by a didactic shot of a Madonna w/child painting (a close-up of mother's gaze, e.g. Bellini's series) which could in a proleptic fashion, indicate the measure of mother's pleasure.

Credits & all that jazz

(The designing principle of the credits ought to rest on the notion of letters, correspondence, etc. since the movie is about positionality, relay, about the one who stands in the place of desire.)

## Scene 1. Night. Interior.

Music begins, something religious, Georgian chant...

The camera reveals a large, beautifully appointed room which is both bedroom and study. Its opulence is undercut by an invisible, intangible sobriety; everything is perfectly in place—the ambient order is to counterpoint the emotional disarray of Pierre, the young man kneeling by his bed dressed only in his pajama bottoms. Perhaps a series of photographs adorning the wall will inject into the viewer the undeniable presence of terror that Pierre lives in and thrives by (cf. iconography of sacrifice, mutilation, “natural” eruptions dear to Bataille). He recites his prayer, eyes lowered, his speech stressing certain words which will function like a nursery rhyme (i.e. *mère/terre/terreur* or *pig/kill/will/age/edge/etc.*).

Terror unendingly renews with advancing age—  
Without end, it returns us to the beginning.  
The beginning that I glimpse on the edge of the grave  
Is the pig in me which neither death nor insult can kill.  
Terror on the edge of the grave is divine and I sink  
Into the terror whose child I am

## Scene 2. Int. Night. Pierre's bedroom

A tracking shot of a phantom bed, obfuscating disarray of white in the darkened room.

“Pierre!” spoken by a soft, feminine and imperious voice.

Framing the bed, the camera reveals movement in response to the insistence of the voice. There will be no repetition of the name. The young man sits up and reaches for a cigarette as if to watch a movie. Three different takes will mime the scene of the call:

- a) Flashback: a sick child looks at his mother who calls his name as if it were a question.
- b) Between sleep and wakefulness, Pierre acknowledges his name. The camera pans across the room, the next one, looking for the source of the voice.
- c) Pierre is dreaming and hears his name spoken by a woman's voice. The feeling it evokes resembles something unspeakable, beyond representation (the Real).

The next shot will make it clear that the “movie” is over and yet a bridge will have been established.

A close-up of Pierre extinguishing his Craven. When he looks up, someone bursts out laughing. The camera will start with the high heels and slowly go up the back of Pierre's mother. The shot should be equal in length to the obscene laughter of the mother. It is imperative to have the mother fill the screen. The son and his

wounded gaze have been deleted by her presence, self-sufficient, smutty and gorgeous. We do not see her face. This fetishistic avoidance inscribes the son's position (in back of her). (A bas-relief of Eurydice and Orpheus will highlight the tenuousness of this relationship and perhaps announce the impossibility of a *face-à-face*.)

**Scene 3. Int. Evening. Dining Room.**

Mother and son dine alone. Mother talks in an excited, light-hearted way. She is dressed in black.

Your father's gone to Brittany, to aunt Colette. No doubt, he will gamble and drink himself silly. I've had enough of his *enfantillages*. I'm staying home. You will keep me company, won't you? We'll go out on the town and now that you're such a handsome creature, they'll take you for my beau.

A laughter that follows these words echoes and again acts as a rhyme. A close-up of the deep red in the wine glass as if the Bordeaux were an explanation for these sudden revealings. Indexically, the camera will line up the wine, lips and nails in a vertical plane while Pierre recedes into the background.

**Scene 4. Int. Day. Pierre's room.**

A medium shot of Pierre standing in front of a full mirror. He is talking directly at it as if speaking (rehearsing) for a part.

Up till then I had never realized  
That she drank. I was soon to realize  
That she drank every day, in the same way.  
But that rippling laughter, that indecent  
Exuberance

**Scene 5. Int. Day. In the foyer of the house.**

Mother, putting on her gloves, speaking to Pierre, over her shoulder

I'm taking you to town tomorrow  
Until tomorrow night, my gallant lover

She kisses him lightly.

This scene will be shot several times in a misc-en-abyme structure so that the viewer gets a dizzying sensation yet is conscious enough to notice that during each take the kiss becomes more and more non-existent.

The last shot (taken from the hall, from above) shows Pierre as if trying to hold onto a spit of life which will forever elude him. The mother's obscene laugh will punctuate (bracket) this corridor scene.

#### Scene 6. Ext. Day.

This scene will establish not so much a reality effect as the sense that Pierre has a normal life apart from his mother's (torment). A long shot of a college building. Young men smoking cigarettes stand in the street in small groups discussing the exam. The camera will meet their faces with gentleness and a need to display their boyish infectious charm. Pierre comes out of the building and begins to speak with animation.

*L'acte gratuit*, hmph, I've been ready for that one since my first Ejaculation. What did you get?

The camera follows Pierre's gaze and frames his companion.

The state. Marx. Weimar. Stalin, hegemony. I gave him an earful.

They enter a café named *Everyday Life*. The group conversation resumes around the examination topics (to be described in fuller details). Pierre lights a cigarette and looks at the waitress waiting for his order. She speaks with a very pronounced Parisian prole accent.

What will it be, mon p'tit chou?

Overcome with a sudden inexplicable embarrassment, Pierre is unable to speak. He simply points to the next table's empty coffee cups. Medium shot of the back of the waitress walking away, swinging her hips toward the bar. The eruption of laughter returns Pierre to thoughts of his mother.

#### Scene 7. Ext. Evening.

Pierre returns home. Rings. Door. Maid. Hallway, etc. The suddenness of the dialogue takes center stage

Mother: It was sudden.  
Pierre: He's dead?  
Mother: Yes.

During the short pause, the camera descends her figure the way one would a steep incline. Close-up of hair, shoulder, arm, downward to the dark hem of her long skirts.  
Church bells in the distance.

Mother: We'll take the train to Vannes and then onto Segrais.  
We'll have to rent a car. Don't forget, you're supposed to be Overcome with grief. The servants expect this. There's no need to weep but lower your eyes.

Pierre leaves the drawing room. On the way to the bathroom, he once again recites, as from a script learned by heart.

Could I conceal the jubilation  
Which was mounting inside me  
Against the conventional sorrow  
That is bound up with the sly advent  
Of death  
I did not want my mother to age  
I wanted to see her set free  
Freed from her oppressor  
And also from the mad gaiety she took  
Refuge in and which made her  
Face lie. I wanted to be happy  
I even wanted this bereavement  
In which fate was enfolding us  
To flavor our happiness with the spell-  
Binding sadness that makes up  
The sweetness of death

The last words should coincide with Pierre's buttoning himself up.  
Water flush sounds. Fade. Windows streaming with rain. Inside the house, a maid wipes her face.

#### Scene 8. Ext. Night.

Filmed at great distance, through a filter, the car (carriage, hearse-like, limo, something huge and black) recedes from the viewer, shining with rain. This is the quintessential *drive* scene of the 19th century French novel. It remains less important to communicate the intertext than convey the obscure threat of what is not shown. The camera will tease the spectator with fetishistic morsels (voilette, glove, branch, cutting in) in order to highlight the

inescapably voyeuristic nature of any film enterprise. The to and fro of the receding car should connote the intermittency of desire by ushering in the famous *fort/da* reel.

#### Scene 9. Int. Night train.

In the drowning clutter of wheels, the softly breathing chest of the mother, sleeping as if all alone in her sex. A splendid match girl. Pierre standing in the corridor, cigarette in his right hand, gazes at his mother in the manner of a voyager looking at the darkened landscape. Softly he calls, *maman*. The night is stained with longing. Pierre turns to the window in the corridor and closes his eyes. The name of the dead father no longer a mutter between them.

#### Scene 10. Int. Day.

In a hotel restaurant, Pierre approaches his mother ensconced in a red banquette. A Bordeaux bottle already half-empty distracts him from looking up at her: tense with fatigue and a silent rage. This scene will be charged with the exaggerated hardness of glass and sterling, reflecting the sudden hatred. The shots will crisscross between them, cutting and stabbing the trembling Pierre, flushed by now like the one who says yes after the fact. She fills her glass, all noise and hostile gaze.

Pierre: Isn't it better for him? For you, too?

Mother: Shut up! What do you know about it?

Pierre begins to stutter an answer, failing to notice the queer smile which has come upon her face. Imperceptibly, the grand, cold opulence of the dining room has been spotted, degraded. The air is stale and their voices break the silence like cheap china.

Mother: I made his life hell. Didn't I? Go ahead, say it!

Pierre (in protest): He is dead and we shouldn't say anything against him. But your life was difficult.

Mother: You know nothing about my life.

She's drinking fast now, dead to the world, yet adamant not to drown the obscure matter closing up her throat. A tired, untidy waiter brings a new bottle.

Waiter: Feels like a storm coming up, he says looking up at the chandelier. Nobody answers him.

It will be the director's task (and the lead actress) to displace the



invisible, changing weather upon Mother's face: after the hardness vanishes from her features, an indescribable softness takes over.

Mother: Pierre, please, look at me!

Instantly, her countenance grows overcast and a look of horror possesses her while she struggles against a dizzy spell which lends her the frozen air of insanity.

The camera will attend to Pierre as an unbiased witness, simply recording his intense bewilderment, adjusting the rack of his torture by a close-up here and there. Spectator of his mother's hideous truth, he watches helplessly, prostrate by a governing panic.

Mother: You are too young and I shouldn't talk to you at all, but sooner or later, you will be wondering whether your mother deserves your respect.

Well, your father is dead now and I am sick and tired of falsehoods. I am worse than he. Much worse!

The camera pulls back in a reverse track as if to insist on the finality of the last words uttered by Mother. Perhaps a few notes of music will accompany this false ending.

The same scene but bathed in a much harsher, unflattering light. Forward track toward Mother, very close shot as she smiles a bitter, enigmatic, practically inexistent smile. Suddenly she grabs the neck of her dress with both hands and pulls it open.

Mother: Pierre, only you, have any respect for your mother who deserves none. Those men you saw in the salon, those pretty fops, who do you think they were?

Pierre is once again in this scene, caught in the snarls of his ignorance. Faint music covers his inability to answer.

Mother: As for your father, he knew. He just went along with it. The minute you were out of the house, those acting fools would stop behaving respectfully toward your mother. Look at her!

Between indecency and agony, her distraught smile transfixes Pierre. The camera, perfectly still, should "hold" the pair prisoner in its tight gaze for what will seem to the viewer like an uncomfortable amount of time. In a way, the weight of meaning elicited by this scene, will have appeared through the meshes of Mother's double, yet not identical, command. From me to her, what an abyss!

**Scene 11. Ext. Late afternoon.**

Camera sweeps the hotel grounds which darken suggestively under a sudden downpour, then frames dining room bay windows as they explode with lightning to disappear behind a mean curtain of rain. Thunder sounds rattle the veracity of this disingenuous tableau. What is to follow will be hailed with a certain suspicion as if the relation between cinematic language and the materiality of desire could only be secured in fantasy. To purchase this disavowal, the filmmaker may resort to any number of conventions at his/her disposal. The scene will have the whispered somnolence of an anonymous call in the night.

**Scene 12. Int. Evening. Pierre's room.**

Darkened bedroom has the unnerving semblance of a sick room. Lying in bed, Pierre, pale and disheveled, feebly raises himself as if to take his medicine. Pierre's mother, totally obscured yet more present than ever, wills him to suffer these words before he (and the audience) can divine her face

What I want is that you love me unto death.  
But I don't want your love unless you know I am  
repulsive, and love me even as you know it.

Fade to black. Music.

**Scene 13. Int. Evening. Pierre's room.**

Open window, stormy sky. Once again, a chiasmus will have operated. The hissing, whistling, panting and thunder boom one hears belong to the expressive weather, while Pierre's anguish remains silent. Without much thought, Pierre positions himself on the rug, arms outstretched like a supplicant. Did he dream it? Had she truly been in his room? Uttered those words?

For my part, it is in death I love you at this very instant.

A close-up of Pierre's mouth will turn him over like a lover's request as he quotes her words from memory:

But I don't want your love unless you know I am  
repulsive, and love me even as you know it.

Because it asks nothing of us save repeating a sentence in the

proper order, citation, this conjure trick of identity, functions along hallucinatory lines. The slow pan of the camera will underline Pierre's trance as he slips into his mother's words. Having spoken the other, he literally falls asleep, letting his tears fall where they may.

Scene 14. Int. Night. Pierre's room.

A tracking shot will sweep Pierre's bedroom and pause on its door, left slightly ajar. As though drummed by a single finger on a toy piano, a riveting song will accompany this "jeu de porte" amid the splashing rain and lightning. It will be the camera's task to endow the communicating door with its overwhelming oedipal charge. Swinging to and fro, buffeted by wind, (it will be) like a silent appeal in the night, coming ever so close, each time, to the sleeping young man or his mother next door, but not quite.

Fade to black. Continuation of same scene.

Sounds precede seeing and understanding. The loud and sudden opening of the door coincides with a fierce flash of lightning outside the hotel grounds. Awakened, Pierre hears bare feet moving in his room. It is his mother calling his name as she stumbles in the dark. He takes her in his arms. They cover each other with kisses. Her nightgown slipped off her shoulders, hair unloosened and drenched, she's reeling. Pierre helps her to a chair. She goes on talking. Raving, crying and smiling through her tears. It doesn't matter. It is over. Her gown restored to decency, she sits bent over as if about to vomit, her heart in her throat.

You're too good for me. Too nice. I deserve something else. I should find myself some stud who would do what he knows to do best. I'd much rather. Gutter filth, that's where your mother feels at home. You shall never know what horrors I am capable of. I want you to know, though. I love my filth. I've had too much to drink today. I think I better throw up. Even if I were to shit in front of you, do my worst in your presence, you'd still think me pure, wouldn't you?

Then that smutty laughter of hers cuffs his ears, slaps him upside the head, leaves him cracked. The camera frames him standing up, shoulders and head drooping. She gets up and starts toward her room. Another laugh makes her turn around and falter. She touches Pierre on the face

Forgive me. (lowers her voice) You must forgive me. I am disgusting and I've had a lot to drink. But I love you and respect you and I couldn't stand to go on lying. Yes, your mother is revolting, and you'll have to be very strong to overcome your revulsion.

Almost in a gasp, after a visible struggle, she brings out the rest.

I could have spared you all this, gone on lying. I could have treated you like an idiot. I am an evil woman, I am rotten and I drink, but you are not a coward. It took courage to tell you what I did. Think of that. If I've been drinking all night it's because I needed help and perhaps it was to help you. So now, please help me, take me into my room and lay me down to sleep.

Music at the cut.

#### Scene 15. Int. Later that night.

In a dark suit, Pierre returns to his room, dazed and worn out. Forward track towards his receding back, almost stumbling, tragic and desperately alone.

Fade.

#### Scene 16. Int. Night.

Placed under the sign of imposture, and what the French like to call representation, this scene will have the added merit of providing the viewer with a diegetic series, however spurious, marking the father's final departure—this dismissal of the father being the very condition of what the movie is about.

A close-up of Pierre in mourning in an empty theater. Without warning, the camera will cut to screen projecting a funereal procession, on foot from house to graveyard. Pierre's mother, swathed in black veil, priests, chanting. The camera will once again quickly cut to Pierre the spectator, getting unhinged by the mounting falsehoods of the situation: *son père impie et la veuve éplorée*. What a charade!

#### Scene 17. Int. Pierre's room. Night.

Pierre sits in same slumped position as before in the empty theater. The room is practically obscured save a thin light coming from the street. We follow Pierre's gaze which shreds everything he encounters. It will be a scene of internal accounting: whatever emerges undissolved will be inscribed on Pierre's tattered shield. The camera can slowly pan across the darkened room but what it can't show is Pierre's soul trapped in the double bind to both forget

and never be able to, the blinding light he suffered during the kiss. He kneels at the bottom of his bed and is heard saying his second prayer:

In the solitude I enter  
The norms of this here world  
If they subsist, do so to maintain  
An impossible feeling of enormity:  
This solitude, this indifference,  
It is God.

Like a semiotic rectangle, this scene will deploy its binaries with stabbing insistence. Whether it is used or not matters less than having tracked the booby trap arc between norms and enormity.

**Scene 18. Int. Day. Pierre's bedroom.**

In purely topological terms, this scene will recall a previous frame the viewer may have filed under the caption, "the sick child." Shutters. Bed. A deeply interior and private corporeality as if the outside world were an unopened letter. The camera walks the doctor to the door. He shrugs in the direction of Pierre's mother.

Nothing very serious; he'll be dancing the jig in no time.

Fade to black. Continuation of the same scene.

Pierre: I'm not sick.

Mother: I knew you weren't.

Pierre: I'm getting up now. I'll have lunch in the dining room, if it's okay with you.

A long shot locks their gaze, trying to outstare each other. Having gained nothing by the fake illness, Pierre's distress is no match for the terrifying hostility now facing him. Behind the flawless features, Pierre reads his mother's face like an open book.

After her shame in Vannes, she is making it up to herself, Pierre thinks. The smoldering memory of the outburst has exalted her and left in its wake an undiluted lavish scorn for anyone who fails to accept her as she is.

Mother: It is good to see you again, Pierre.

There's nothing wrong with you, you heard the doctor. I knew that. I told you so before; running away won't get you anywhere. First of all, that means stop running away from me. I know that you still feel a deep respect for me, but I will not have some sort of madness between the two of us. I

would ask you to go on respecting me as fully as ever in the past. You must remain the submissive son of the woman you know to be unworthy, do you hear?

Pierre: I was afraid you'd take my uneasiness as a sign of disrespect. I am weak. I am unhappy. (Pierre's eyes start tearing)  
Unhappy is hardly the word. There's more to it than that. I'm afraid.

Added to the hostility in her voice, Pierre now hears the unmistakable notes of suffering.

Mother: You are right to be. But your only chance lies in facing up to what frightens you. You shall get back to your studies. First though, you are going to help me. Your father left a mess in the house, I would like you to pull yourself together and deal with the chaos in his study. There are books and papers to sort through and arrange. I haven't the energy to take on the job myself and I don't want things left unattended any longer. Anyway, I have to go out. Kiss me goodbye.

As Pierre's mother readies herself to go out, the camera will return to the burning metaphor by closing up on her flushed cheeks. A quick pan gathers Pierre fixing his mother while she carefully puts on her hat and adjusts a black lacy widow's veil. In spite of the sumptuous evening gown, Pierre realizes that mourning is a poor alibi for the indecency of her beauty.

Mother: I know just what you're thinking. From now on, I'm not going to spare you. I made up my mind. I will not change my desires. You shall respect me as I am now. I am not going to hide anything from you. No more pretense; that, at last, is over with, and I'm glad.

Pierre (with genuine fervor): Nothing you could do would alter the respect I have for you. I may tremble as I utter these words but you know I say them with all the strength in my heart.

Mother exits in wild haste. Left alone, Pierre sifts his feelings which fold into a vicious pattern: on one hand, her addiction to pleasure, corruption, debauchery, nausea; on the other, the unappeasable purity of his worship. Delineated by the inexorable movement of his thoughts, Pierre literally slumps down to the floor where he meets the pendulum of his own terror the way one enters a long-awaited delirium. In other words, he lets go.  
Slow fade to black.

This black-out scene could of course be replaced with creative substitutes the director will only be too happy to furnish, provided s/he adhere to the tightening grip/release type of logic that Pierre's

torment commands. The iconography of mysticism, horror film and the like could be useful here.

**Scene 19. Int. Day. Father's study.**

The camera will pan across the study in a forensic way: ads, books of the widest variety, buttons, medicine bottles, gloves, dirty combs, heaps of handwritten accounts—all this obscene disorder will be swept, not so much in search of clues as to furnish a tangible décor wherein to camp Pierre's attempts at placing his father in a gallery of portraits. What had he been? A buffoon? A charmer? A poseur? A rapist? It is as if with each step he takes amid the dead chaos, Pierre is enacting a private, mental tribunal. A photo album will play the role of family chronicles: These could be rendered by accelerated film or on the contrary, stills which turn slowly as if by an invisible hand to reveal shapes and events forever conjugated in the double register of beauty and privilege. Only Mother's extreme youth and the savagery of desire will stamp this recollection with its charge of perversion. A voice-off narration could tally up the facts:

Married at fourteen.

Forced by the family.

He was the result of that affair Mother had before her marriage. The family had been obliged to marry the two young monsters, you understand.

Their wealth had provided for a good many things.

The little monster grew up amidst the chaos.

The camera faces Pierre as he opens the shutters, flooding the library with sunshine and moths flying out of the felt hats. Music will mark this seemingly significant move.

Pierre's extenuated face in a close shot as he examines the bookshelves. The camera locks on the removed books followed by a loud crash caused by the adjoining volumes which spill out in a dusty jumble. A close-up of Pierre's clenched teeth and reddened face announces the discovery: a heap of obscene photographs. It will be of utmost importance to avoid any gesture toward light-hearted or whimsical or comical treatment which would in any way diffuse the powers of horror which slash this scene.

The camera will establish the rushing confusion that seizes Pierre by feverishly alternating between the stack of pictures in his hands and Pierre's transparent face. We'll watch him rush out of the room, come back, stack them into high piles and survey their fall, strewn by the dozen every which way on the carpet. The insistent repetition of up and down, standing then crashing that this scene will have played out, should of course underscore Pierre's rising upheaval, involuntary breathing, compelling, like that mad moment he had taken his half-

naked mother in his arms. What the director will show of this swamp of obscenity will determine to a large degree the way the viewer will hail the whole picture. As this is not the place for a lengthy analysis, let us just say that the rhetoric of defilement present in this scene degrades and upholds the relationship to the father. It is in his filth that the son lies; it is his vileness that he borrows to strangle himself in a pleasure that is bestial and sublime. Bathed in full light, Pierre stares down at what he is grasping in his hand. He takes off his trousers and wraps himself in the dust. Fade to black.

**Scene 20. Int. Night. Father's study.**

A long shot takes in the half-naked, inert Pierre who has dozed off after his convulsive pleasure among the black and white photographs. His mother is knocking at the door:

I'll be right there

Pierre cries out in a panic, readjusting his clothes and shoving the pictures out of sight. He lets her in. She switches the light on.

I'd fallen asleep

In the silent interval that separates their voices, an intense and frightening crowd of thoughts assails them both: from fear to joy at the mutual horror's grip. The unshakable certainty of knowing that which drove her to ecstasy, now a soothing new bond between them.

Come to my room. I do not want to leave you by yourself. I shall be strong enough for two.

For Pierre, up from the death of infamy, his mother's warm and strangely calm voice is like the merciful forgiving of sleep.

**Scene 21. Int. Night. Corridor.**

This scene will have the brevity of a flash: just as Pierre is leaving the library, the camera will remind the one who looks back that in his haste he has overlooked some of the photos, still lying on the floor as if to speak the impossibility of their not having been there in their abject, all-inclusive presence. This instantaneous realization brings Pierre out of childhood, no longer able to blush on his mother's account.



**Scene 22. Int. Night. Mother's bedroom.**

Mother: I owe you no explanations. But in Vannes, I drank an awful lot. I'm asking you to forget it. Mind you, I'm not asking you to forget what I said. But I wouldn't have had the strength to say it, had your childishness—and what I was drinking—and perhaps, grief, not upset my bearings.

The camera will quickly pan to Pierre as if waiting for a reply but all he can do is lower his head.

Mother: I must talk to you now. I'm not sure I can help you but I'd much rather see you brought down even further than abandon you to the solitude I'm afraid you are seeking. I know you are terribly unhappy. You are also weak. Your father was the same way. You perhaps know that desire reduces us to pulp. But you do not yet know what I know.

Pierre: I would like to know what you know.

Mother: No, Pierre, you must not learn it from me. But you would forgive me if you knew. You would even excuse your father. And above all, you would forgive yourself.

A medium shot frames his silence and returns to the mother:

Now, you must start living.

The camera will momentarily reveal the passage from an inscrutable face to a perfectly ordinary smile which will intrigue Pierre even more. They both sit down as if nothing had happened.

Mother: You're not very cheerful. Me neither. Tell me about school.

Pierre obliges. Cut.

**Scene 23. Night. Pierre's room.**

Before going out, Pierre's mother comes to tuck him in, in an ironic and yet utterly beguiling image of nostalgia. In her tender ministrations, Pierre lies in bed like a victim after an accident. Once more, it will be the impossible task of the film maker to suggest that *la blessure du savoir* is linked to the castration anxiety which would explain the unbidden images of lost blood, waking up in bandages that press on Pierre.

Same scene. 3rd prayer

Before falling to sleep, Pierre will recite his 3rd prayer in a tone of someone rehearsing an "I told you so" speech:

God is the dread in me  
Of what was, of what is  
Of what will be so horrible  
That I must deny at all costs  
And with all my strength cry  
My denial that that was, that that is,  
Or that that will be, but I shall  
Be lying

#### Scene 24. Night. Int.

Left to his own devices while his mother is out of town, Pierre enters the painful apprenticeship of his new condition. Like a mental strip-tease, he tears the pious garments with which he had adorned her image. Under the chaste and martyred maternal figure Pierre now sees with disturbing clarity that it was his mother who had chased after his father and that it was she who delighted in going from one debauch to another. In a characteristic move essential to Bataille's entire philosophical system, Mother's monstrous impurity will be perceived through an inversion, linking her to light, truth and God. In other words, the fall into the hell of flesh must be apprehended through the stained windows of the church.

The director will choose the appropriate filmic analogue for Pierre's psychic insights. Stairways, windows, imaginary confession scenes could all usher in Pierre's entry into the pleasure of knowing. Punctuating this scene of learning, so to speak, will be Pierre's return to the library where he will take pride in debasing himself with some of the dirtiest pictures from his father's cache. A new tenderness for his father, the drunken clown will flash through him like a childhood scent. The scene should end with an image of Pierre weeping while he awaits his mother's return.

#### Scene 24. Ext. Night.

In the wee hours, a young man walks up a narrow street lined with prostitutes standing in doorways, walking a few steps from their spots, talking in animated voices, laughing, smoking and addressing Pierre as he must pass this maternal gauntlet. The scene should not betray its fantasmatic provenance and only the uncanny resemblance of the working girls to Helène will alert the viewer to Pierre's unconscious condensation process.

Whore 1: What will it be, mon p'tit chou?x  
Whore 2: We're not very gay tonight, are we?  
Whore 3: I'll make it go away, trust me.  
Whore 4: Let'em croak!  
Whore 5: This way to heaven, my sweet lad.  
Whore 6: Laughter is more divine  
Whore 7: And more elusive than tears.

Fade to black as the godly laughter of the last two prostitutes engulfs Pierre, swallows him like a communion host.

### Scene 25. Int. Morning.

Mother and Pierre are having breakfast . Insouciance, rings under his eyes, and a general bedraggled appearance.

Mother: Seriously, it's getting worse by the minute. We'll have to do something about it. Do you know what Rhea calls you?

Pierre: Rhea?

Mother: That's right, you haven't met her yet. You walked right past her the other day on the stairs. She's simply gorgeous and a great friend of mine. "How is the Knight of Sorrowful Countenance?" she said, referring to you.

Tonight we'll all go out together and I won't be in mourning. You two must get acquainted. It 's time you led a more social life. Be ready at five. We'll have some cocktails at home.

Pierre: Yes, mother (stammering).

Mother: I wouldn't call that the most enthusiastic response. If I can't count on you, I'll have to be wicked for both of us.

Pierre: Mother!

Mother: Your mother will have to be a bit rougher with you. (She reaches over to pinch Pierre's cheeks.) Show what you're made of! There's more to life than loving one's mother, being handsome and intelligent. You're too serious, darling. It's worrisome. Where will this seriousness get you if it shuts out the joy of the world?

Pierre: (Thinking of death and of crime, he covers his face with his hands.) You are quite serious yourself, mother.

Mother: Silly goose! Will you just look at him! Without your playfulness, you'd be all dull.

The meal continues in the same vein of gaiety. Pierre realizes that the system he built for himself is about to collapse and that there is a catch to his mother's jovial humor. He knows he will obey her without any questions asked.

Mother: Are you afraid?

Pierre: Why...no.

Mother: A pity.

She leaves the room with that same laughter trailing behind her like a shawl. Pierre remains in the dining room with his head bowed.



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