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Pola X *Chicago Reader, 10/6/00, p. 2*

I haven't read Herman Melville's *Pierre, or the Ambiguities*, but it's reportedly director Leos Carax's favorite novel. What there is of a plot to this 1999 modern-dress adaptation, which Carax wrote with Lauren Sedofsky and Jean-Pol Fargeau, concerns a wealthy author (Guillaume Depardieu, son of Gerard) living in Normandy in semi-incestuous content with his mother (Catherine Deneuve). Upon encountering a soulful eastern European war refugee (Katerina Golubeva) who claims to be his half sister, he runs out on his wealthy fiancée (Delphine Chuillot) and retreats to a funky part of Paris to write another novel. There's clearly some sort of self-portraiture going on here. A 19th-century romantic inhabiting

a universe as mythological as Jean Cocteau's, Carax (*Boy Meets Girl, Bad Blood, The Lovers on the Bridge*) has a wonderful cinematic eye and a personal feeling for editing rhythms, and his sense of overripeness and excess virtually defines him. He's as self-indulgent as they come, and we'd all be much the poorer if he weren't. Characteristic of his private sense of poetics is this film's final dedication, near the end of the closing credits, "to my three sisters"—it appears on-screen for less than a second. *Pola*, incidentally, is the acronym of the French title of Melville's novel; *X* alludes to the fact that Carax used the tenth draft of the script. 134 min. Fine Arts.

—Jonathan Rosenbaum