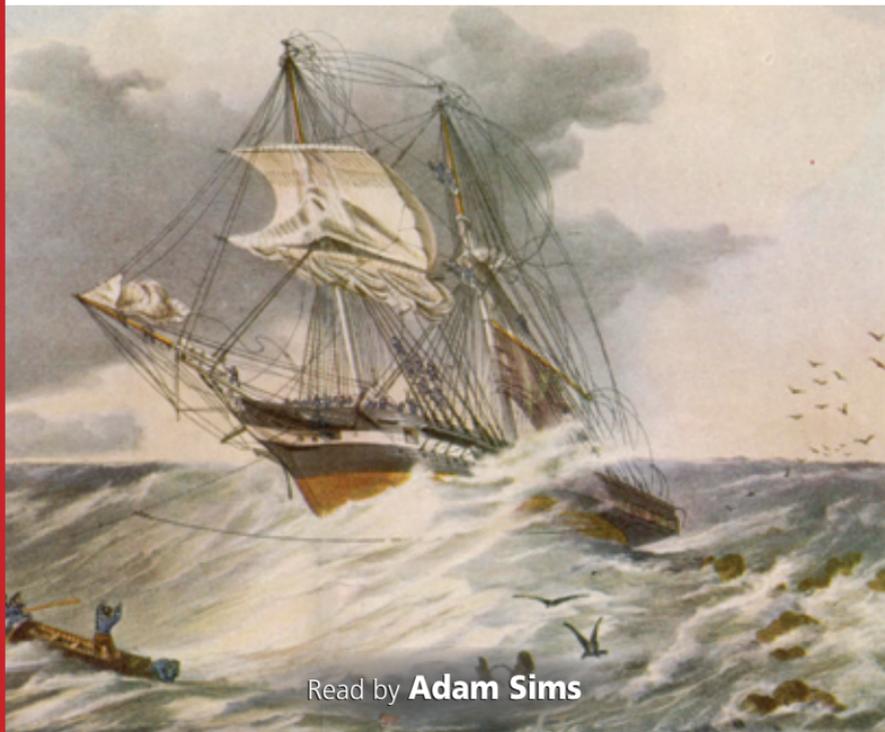


NAXOS
AudioBooks

CLASSIC
FICTION

Edgar Allan Poe
The Narrative of
Arthur Gordon Pym
of Nantucket



NA695312D

Read by **Adam Sims**

1	Preface	4:51
2	Chapter 1	7:48
3	It is hardly possible to conceive...	6:26
4	While the ship was yet in stays...	7:59
5	Chapter 2	8:10
6	After this narrow escape...	6:10
7	I remained three days and nights...	8:18
8	Had a thousand lives hung...	6:34
9	Upon standing erect...	5:42
10	Chapter 3	6:17
11	From the worst part of this dilemma...	7:03
12	I first observed an alteration...	7:28
13	Chapter 4	8:30
14	This man was the son of an Indian squaw...	8:26
15	Chapter 5	6:11
16	Having concluded to write...	4:32
17	The three men went away...	6:57
18	Chapter 6	5:53
19	When a partial cargo of any kind...	8:17
20	On the 2nd of July...	6:31

21	Chapter 7	7:32
22	Vessels in a gale of wind...	8:32
23	Chapter 8	6:47
24	The intense effect produced...	6:21
25	It was now about one o'clock...	6:30
26	Chapter 9	6:38
27	Shortly after this period...	6:03
28	We derived much comfort from taking...	6:36
29	Chapter 10	6:18
30	As our first loud yell of terror...	5:25
31	Chapter 11	5:41
32	I now found myself, as it were...	6:16
33	About noon Parker declared that he saw land..	4:23
34	Chapter 12	8:42
35	At length delay was no longer possible...	5:42
36	Peters now volunteered to go down...	6:13
37	Chapter 13	6:46
38	July 31st.	6:19
39	August 3rd.	6:26
40	August 5th.	5:20

41	Chapter 14	6:08
42	It was about six in the morning...	6:22
43	The great peterel is as large...	7:26
44	Chapter 15	6:51
45	These islands are said to have been discovered...	4:47
46	Chapter 16	5:47
47	In 1803, Captains Kreutzenstern and Lisiausky...	7:29
48	Chapter 17	6:32
49	January 17th.	6:18
50	Chapter 18	7:49
51	When the visitors had satisfied...	8:17
52	Chapter 19	5:17
53	As we approached the village...	6:32
54	Chapter 20	7:22
55	An agreement having been thus entered into...	7:33
56	Chapter 21	4:29
57	The breadth of the seam was barely sufficient...	5:36
58	Chapter 22	7:43
59	Toowit's descent left us at liberty...	7:45
60	Chapter 23	5:05

61	We found no great difficulty in reaching...	6:19
62	Chapter 24	7:31
63	We now found ourselves...	9:01
64	Chapter 25	7:04
65	March 3rd.	6:44
66	End note	6:43

Total time: 7:21:48

The Figures from Chapter 23 (Track 60)



Figure 1



Figure 2

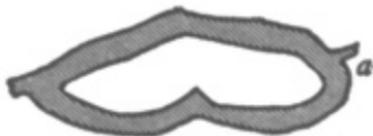


Figure 3

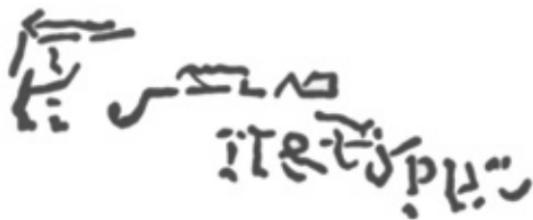


Figure 4



Figure 5

Edgar Allan Poe

The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket

Please note – elements of the plot are discussed in these notes.

Edgar Allan Poe was a journalist, editor, reviewer, poet and short-story writer, who became one of the most influential of all American authors. He opened up the newly independent country to the possibility of its own literature and created new genres of fiction, and after his death his work provided the primary source of some of the most inventive writing in the US or Europe, especially in the genres of the detective novel, science fiction and horror. *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* was his only novel. It begins as a dark, seafaring yarn; moves into a quasi-scientific exposition on the unknown worlds in the very southern

seas; and then becomes something very different indeed, almost mystical in its ambivalence and strangeness.

Much of Poe's reputation now rests on a handful of darkly imaginative short stories – *The Pit and the Pendulum*, *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, *The Tell-Tale Heart*, *The Masque of the Red Death* – and the poem *The Raven*. The hallmarks of his style that were to be so influential can be seen in all of these: a brooding melancholy, a sense of the inevitability of early death, and a morbid relish in the terrors of incarceration. These dark elements inspired the French symbolists in their praise of Poe as a man who illuminated untouched areas of the human psyche. His use of science or exploration as a springboard for spinning a story appealed to Wells and Verne, while

Arthur Conan Doyle was attracted by the capacity of the rational mind to untangle the apparently inexplicable, as well as a rather buccaneering sense of adventure. *Arthur Gordon Pym* includes many of these. But it also contains something much less clear, something that Herman Melville was to develop in *Moby Dick*: a voyage that is more than the purely physical, after a quarry that is perhaps intangible.

Arthur Gordon Pym is told in a straightforward, first-person narrative, with no dialogue, and recounts the adventures of the young Arthur as his fascination with the sea drives him to sneak away from home for a night-time sail with his friend Augustus. His yearning for the sailor's life is undiminished by narrowly escaping death on this first foray onto the deep, and he again contrives to leave home and join Augustus on board a whaling ship, the *Grampus*, as a stowaway. But mutinous events on deck keep him in suffocating hiding until he is eventually discovered – and an even more hazardous expedition begins. The mutineers split into two camps; there is murder and callous butchery; and finally

the few survivors are left helplessly at sea with no protection from the elements and little prospect of survival. After various gruesome ordeals have left just two people alive, they are rescued by a trading ship from Boston. The ship is heading south to hunt for seals and do business, but the captain is persuaded that there is also a chance to head into uncharted waters yet further south. In doing so, they encounter an initially friendly race of unknown peoples on the temperate island of Tsalal. However, these people, who are terrified of the colour white, are revealed as murderously traitorous. Pym and his friend escape, and head yet further south. Instead of becoming colder, the water and the weather warm up; a steady and increasing fall of something like white ash occurs; and they are heading towards what appears to be a huge waterfall when a figure in white steps out before them. The novel ends there, and the book is concluded with a note explaining the meaning behind some carvings and the shapes of caves found on the island of Tsalal.

The opening chapters were originally

published in serial form early in 1837, and were claimed to be a genuine travelogue. But Poe lost his job at the magazine which published them and moved to New York where he completed the book. This accounts for the rather strained device of the preface where Pym – ostensibly the narrator – explains why certain portions of the book appeared earlier under Poe’s name. This conflating of fact and fiction was a typical trope of the author, and underlies much of the work. Poe took substantial chunks of the book from existing reports of trading in the southern oceans and used them to give credibility to his descriptions. But there is another, more autobiographical element to the story. For a start, the names Arthur Gordon Pym and Edgar Allan Poe are sufficiently similar to suggest the author is at least to be associated with the narrator. Then there is the mention of ‘Edgarton’, the suggestive shapes of the caves which Pym enters, and the fact that the natives of Tsalal cry ‘Tekeli-li!’ (as the Poe specialist at Penn State DuBois, Richard Kopley, notes, Poe’s mother, an actress, had appeared in a play called *Tekeli*). These

elements added to the deeply uncertain nature of the book’s conclusion and have led to a wide and continuing diversity of opinion on how to interpret the work. Is it purely an adventure story or a journey of metaphorical discovery – either as a person or as an individual? Is it about race – the blackness of the treacherous Tsalal people contrasted with the whiteness towards which Pym sails? Or are the tales of Pym’s struggles an attempt to write an existential narrative about the constant threat of death? Poe’s own life offers material enough.

He was born in 1809 but was orphaned by the age of three and never fully adopted by his foster-father. Effectively cut off without a penny, and determined to make his living by his writing, he was frequently in penury. His sister was mentally ill, and his brother died of alcoholism; although Poe himself was not an alcoholic, drink was a serious problem for him. He could barely tolerate it, but went through periods when he drank regularly. As a result, he struggled to keep down a job, and one editor gave him a second chance only as long as he

was at least sober before breakfast. He was almost constantly moving from place to place and magazine to magazine, while dreaming of owning and running a national literary journal. He was never, in truth, capable of such an enterprise.

There was not much relief in his romantic life, either. He was either attracted to women who were unattainable, or tubercular, or both. His early life was scarred by the deaths of his mother, his foster-mother and a mother figure in the form of a friend's mother for whom he had developed a teenage crush. He married his cousin Virginia (whom he called 'Sissy') and lived with her and her rather dominant mother, Maria.

He died in 1849, having endured some years of profound mental strain, exacerbated by Virginia's death two years previously. His death was as darkly mysterious as many of his tales. He died in Baltimore, but was supposed to have been travelling to New York; his whereabouts for three days beforehand are unknown; he was found almost insensible and wearing someone else's clothes; and it has never been established what killed

him – theories range from any number of illnesses to drugs, alcohol, mugging or rabies.

But this pained life was allied to a powerful imagination, a belief in the value of art, and a romantic morbidity that saw an inextricable link between beauty and death. Poe was also a gifted editor, an acerbic reviewer and talented journalist, with a capacity to write stories that tapped into the public's imagination, leaving readers thrilled and intrigued. There is often much left unsaid in his fiction – his characters are rarely explained, their motives unclear, the reason for the frequent desolation never explored. But none of his other works quite prepares the reader for the shift in tone at the end of *Arthur Gordon Pym*. Whatever the reasons behind it, whatever inchoate imaginings lay beneath this extraordinary tale, Edgar Allan Poe created at once a typically gripping yarn and one of the most enigmatic stories of the sea.

Notes by Roy McMillan



Adam Sims trained at LAMDA. His recordings for radio include *Wenny Has Wings*, *The World According to Humphrey* and *The Salamander Letter*, all for the BBC. Film and theatre credits include: *Band of Brothers* (HBO), *Lost in Space*; *The Madness of George III* (West Yorkshire Playhouse), *Alice in Wonderland* (Royal Shakespeare Company), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Regent's Park) and *Snake in Fridge* (Manchester Royal Exchange), for which he won the award for Best Actor at the Manchester Evening News Theatre Awards. He features in Murakami's *after the quake* for Naxos AudioBooks.

Credits

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Edited by JD Evans

End note read by Garrick Hagon

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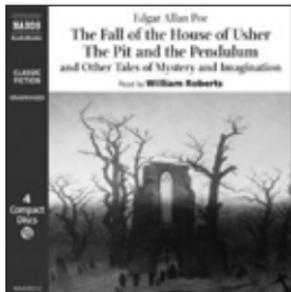
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Edgar Allan Poe
The Narrative of
Arthur Gordon Pym
of Nantucket

Read by **Adam Sims**

'Mutiny ... butchery ... shipwreck ... cannibalism ... massacre ... adventures'

The original frontispiece of *Arthur Gordon Pym* was keen to emphasise the thrilling and macabre elements of Edgar Allan Poe's only complete novel; it certainly is a powerful story, a voyage on the American brig *Grampus* sparking drama at sea.

Wanting to accompany his friend Augustus, the young narrator stows away on the ship. He finds himself assailed by both natural and man-made dangers as the contrast of storms and becalmed conditions is reflected in the human tensions between captain and crew that boil over into mutiny, privation and revenge.

But pure adventure is transformed by Poe's fantastical imagination as the journey takes an unexpected turn into the ethereal and enigmatic.

A fascinating and often neglected masterpiece.



Adam Sims trained at LAMDA. He has appeared in many radio, television and theatre productions, including *The Salamander Letter*, *Band of Brothers* and *Alice in Wonderland* for the Royal Shakespeare Company. He features in Murakami's *after the quake* for Naxos AudioBooks.

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UNABRIDGED**

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