



Hybridity, Anxiety, and Wombs of Destruction in Edgar Allan Poe's Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket

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Abstract

Within this essay, we argue that The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym by Edgar Allan Poe suggests the nascent United States was gripped by a great anxiety and that the novel functions as a gothic alternative to the traditional American bildungsroman penned by Cooper or Melville. Looking at Pym psychologically and thematically, we tease out a number of apparently unrelated themes within the novel, including masculine sexuality, feminine reproduction, racial and sexual hybridity, and human appetites for violence to show how the story mirrors national and cultural fears at the same time that it addresses those issues humorously and functions as the unconscious does. Taking our cues from Freud, we contend that in a non-linear fashion, Pym conveys anxieties about the future of the nation, particularly fears of domination, mass violence, and destruction.

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