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Frozen: On translating Jules Verne's the ice sphinx

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Flynn, Chris

Abstract: As Paul Theroux travels across the Americas by train in *The Old Patagonian Express* (1979), he reads, for the first time, Edgar Allan Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838). This nightmarish seafaring tale was the sole novel-length story the Gothic romanticist wrote. Unexpectedly frightened by the tale, in

particular a scene in which a ghoulish ship of dead men passes the protagonist's vessel in the midst of a storm, a cadaver beckoning to young Arthur Pym from the rigging in which it is trapped, Theroux is compelled to explore the story further. In doing so, he discovers a sequel to Pym was written some fifty-nine years after its publication, long after Poe's demise, by one of his greatest fans, Jules Gabriel Verne. Resolving to seek it out upon his return home to Massachusetts, Theroux continues his own epic journey, dropping in to visit the blind and elderly Jorge Luis Borges in his pitch-black apartment in Buenos Aires. Borges gives Theroux an impromptu tour of his extensive private library.



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