

The Eleventh International Melville Society Conference: Melville's Crossings King's College London, June 27-30 2017

When Herman Melville came to London in 1849 as a suddenly successful travel writer, lauded on both sides of the Atlantic, he entered into a complex cultural economy that would define his later work. Although he was ostensibly in the old world to hawk his new book, he benefitted from the trip in ways that were less professional than aesthetically transformative. As he browsed the bookshops and witnessed, alternately, the grand imperial splendour of Victorian London and the rankness of uncontrolled industrialisation, he picked up a series of crucial scenes and literary topoi that would shape his future work. From Thomas Carlyle to the bachelors of Temple to the art galleries to the phantasmic world of poverty that percolated into *Israel Potter*, Melville's second trip to Britain gave him the raw source material that launched the second phase of his career.

At the 2017 Melville Conference, we want to explore questions that emerged from his trips to London and Great Britain. Located by the Thames in the heart of the city, a mere ten minutes walk from 25 Craven Street where Melville stayed in 1849, King's College London's location will act as a starting point for a series of broader conceptual problems and issues. As a starting point, the London setting will allow for the reconsideration of the place of a number of problematic and less-discussed transatlantic texts and figures in Melville's oeuvre: from *Redburn* to *Israel Potter* to "The Paradise of Bachelors," to Gansevoort Melville and Herman's British sailing companions, the conference offers the chance to cast light on some more obscure moments of his life and works.

There are also wider conceptual issues at stake. For us, the word "crossings," more than any other, defines how Melville related to Great Britain. Crossing the Atlantic generated a series of other critically complex crossings: these include gender transgression, racial reversals, national boundary blurring, questions of copyright violation and illicit book circulation, class inversions, Atlantic literary collisions, textual crossings out, political reformations, and much more besides. In the spirit of the conference, we will welcome responses that consider the transatlantic frame of the long nineteenth century more generally, as well as papers that engage with the dynamics of transgression implied by the word "crossing."

In addition to traditional 15 to 20 minute seminar papers, we invite creative approaches to the conference format. We will be running focused seminar sessions and also invite pecha kucha presentations, lightning panels, roundtable proposals, and panel submissions. We are particularly interested in panels and roundtables that cross international borders in terms of their participants and which feature colleagues at different stages of their academic career. Panels require four presenters and need to leave time for discussion (panels are 90 minutes long).

Please submit proposals by **September 15th 2016** to melvilleatkings@gmail.com. In the subject line please use the format [proposal type, surname e.g. Paper, Smith] and save the file in the format [surname, first name]. Please direct any informal questions to this address or to the organisers [Ed Sugden \(edward.sugden@kcl.ac.uk\)](mailto:edward.sugden@kcl.ac.uk) and [Janet Floyd \(janet.floyd@kcl.ac.uk\)](mailto:janet.floyd@kcl.ac.uk). Please limit paper proposals to 250 words, panel proposals to 1000 words.