

## **ALA 2018 – Herman Melville Society**

### **Bartleby Now**

This panel proposes to think about “Bartleby Now,” taking up what continental philosophers and American literary critics have long grappled with as the limit-case of the human. We are particularly interested in the ways that cognitive approaches to literature have shaped our return to the Bartleby problem. In light of Amit Pinchevski’s 2011 assessment of “Bartleby’s Autism” and Agamben’s still resonant reading of Melville’s scrivener as a subject of “pure, absolute potentiality,” what does the a critical and, indeed, popular attachment to Bartleby mean today?

To propose a paper, please submit a 250-word abstract and a 100 word bio to [wendyalee@nyu.edu](mailto:wendyalee@nyu.edu) by January 26, 2018.

### **Herman Melville and the Emergence of Trumpism**

Trumpism is a term coined to capture the emergence of the radical branch of Republicanism responsible for Trump's unorthodox journey to the White House. Given the relevance of American political values in Herman Melville's major works, this panel seeks papers that undertake the ways that Melville's publications address some of the enduring issues that have fueled Trump's presidency. What can Melville's art add to discussions in our historical moment relating to America's political landscape and president? Topics may include but are not restricted to gender; traditionalism; classism; race; mass-immigration; surveillance; white nationalism; monument removal; the rise of the alt-right; sexism; birtherism; fake news.

To propose a paper, please submit a 250-word abstract and a 100 word bio to [Jnoel@losmedanos.edu](mailto:Jnoel@losmedanos.edu) by January 26, 2018.

### **Melville in the Anthropocene (sponsored by the Melville Society and ASLE)**

Kathryn Yusoff's recent work on anthropogenesis and Timothy Clark's *Ecocriticism on the Edge* exemplify two critical tendencies, two senses of the idea of the Anthropocene. Clark argues that the Anthropocene “names a newly recognized context that entails a chastening recognition of the limits of cultural representation as a force of change in human affairs, as compared to the numerous economic, meteorological, geographical and microbiological factors and population dynamics, as well as scale effects” (*Ecocriticism* 21). This scalar gap is, for Clark, “crucial to defining the eventhood of the Anthropocene as a threshold concept. The predatory supremacy of global neoliberal capitalism would represent a further, exploitative intensification of this scalar disjunctiveness ... as a way of gaining power over human and nonhuman others” (*Ecocriticism* 151).

Yusoff draws on the work of Donna Haraway and Elizabeth Grosz to account for what is problematic in the idea of the Anthropocene itself as a means to critique the exploitative intensification it identifies. It contains “a form of Anthropogenesis a new origin story and

ontics for man that radically rewrites material modes of differentiation and concepts of life, from predominantly biopolitical notions of life toward an understanding of life's geophysical origination" suggesting "a more nuanced notion of 'geological life'" (3) but also a reinscription of human as Man and Man as world-maker, obfuscating "climate racism, social injustice in fossil fuels, and differentiated histories of responsibility through homogenization in a 'we' of the Anthropocene" (7). Ultimately, Yusoff suggests we "stay with the 'promise' of the Anthropocene as the configuring of an epochal moment of planetary thought, despite, and possibly because of all the explicit problems that make ... [it]... an easy target and malleable term" (8).

This panel welcomes papers that engage with any sense of the "malleable term" that the Anthropocene has become. Here we welcome theoretical work that engages with Melville's texts or readings of Melville that respond to the wide range of topics that are linked to the anthropocene: from climate, ecology, energy, geology, and meteorology to posthumanism, materialism, and broader questions of scale. Please send abstracts (one page or less) and CVs to Dr. Helena Feder ([federh@ecu.edu](mailto:federh@ecu.edu)) and Meredith Farmer ([farmerma@wfu.edu](mailto:farmerma@wfu.edu)) by January 20th.