

CALL FOR PAPERS

Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE)

American Literature Association 30th Annual Conference

May 23-26, 2019

Boston, MA

Close Reading Close Reading: A Methodology for the Anthropocene?

In these apocalyptic times, such seemingly refined or rarified concerns may appear unnecessary or worse: the proverbial fiddling before the flames, the production of more printed tinder in a literally burning world. But the term “Anthropocene” itself suggests that the careful examination of the form of thought may be more important than ever. We need to pay more attention, not less, to language and its many contexts of meaning.

In an increasingly polarized country and planet, from the torrents of partisan acrimony and hate speech to the ever-widening trench between the rich and the poor, *close reading* becomes much more than just another tool in the kit of critical practice. It is, despite its old New Critical use, the insistence that texts are always in context, that words have complex, entangled meanings which matter, that meaning itself is always embodied, even when printed on a page or digitized on a screen, and that people themselves, as sites and situations of meaning, matter. When facts themselves are routinely ignored or denied, when human and other animal life is systematically devalued or destroyed, close reading may be that which stands between ideologies and their endless reproduction, fascism and its goals. While Americans are more unequal, indeed father apart than ever, we are also growing closer—ecological disaster, slow and fast violence, puts us all in the same shrinking, sinking boat. How do we consider these valences of what it means to close read in the Anthropocene?

This ASLE (Association for the Study of Literature and Environment, www.asle.org) sponsored panel at the annual conference of the American Literature Association (Boston 2019) seeks six, ten-minute papers on this subject, considered in the context of *any* work of American literature and/or current American political/ecological discourse.

Please send 300-word abstracts and one-page CVs (as MS Word attachments only) to Professor Helena Feder (panel chair and organizer) at federh@ecu.edu by January 13, 2019. Please include your contact information, academic affiliation, and any A/V requests.

This ALA panel is sponsored by ASLE. While you do not need to be a member of ASLE to submit a proposed abstract for an ALA panel, presenters must be or become ASLE members before the ALA conference, by May 20, 2019 in order to participate in an ASLE-sponsored panel.