

Herman Melville Society
ALA 2024

Melville and the Gods

“Religion” can seem far too domesticated a term for the wild and heterodox turbulences of spirit that animate Melville’s corpus. From the conspicuous Catholicism mantling the faltering Captain Delano to the aspects of Islam that wend through “Clarel” to the Calvin-haunted struggles aboard the Pequod, the figures in Melville’s writing are forever worrying over the fate of the gods in a world of expanding secular dominion – a worry that italicizes matters of “belief,” yes, but also of sex, capital, racialization, and the formation of “literature” itself. This panel investigates Melville’s fraught encounters with divinity and its harbingers, as well as with the many structures of sociality built around practices of worship, from scenes as claustrophobically local as Wall Street copy offices out to the globe-traversing orders of secular empire. Please submit a 250 word abstract and 100 word professional bio to Peter Coviello (coviello@uic.edu) by January 26, 2024.

Melville's Intertextualities: The Varieties of Influence

Though a moribund topic for several years, literary influence has been making a comeback. Titles signaling this renewed interest include Reginald Wilburn’s *Preaching the Gospel of Black Revolt: Appropriating Milton in Early African American Literature* (2014); Caroline Chamberlin Hellman’s *Children of the Raven and the Whale* (2019); Daniel Hack’s *Reaping Something New: African American Transformations of Victorian Literature* (2017); Gary Schmidgall’s *Containing Multitudes: Walt Whitman and the British Literary Tradition* (2014); *Transatlantic Women: Nineteenth-Century American Women Writers and Great Britain*, edited by Beth Lynne Lueck, Brigitte Bailey, and Lucinda L. Damon-Bach (2012); a 2022 edition of *Leviathan: A Journal of Melville Studies* guest-edited by the French scholars Ronan Ludot-Vlasak, Édouard Marsoin, Cécile Roudeau focuses on Melville’s “intertextual veerings” among other topics; and David Greven’s forthcoming book *All the Devils Are Here: American Romanticism and Literary Influence* (Virginia, 2024) focuses on Shakespeare’s and Milton’s influence on Melville among other writers. This panel explores the ways that influence and intertextuality help us to understand Melville’s writerly aims and the ways that subsequent writers and artists have made use of his work. In particular, keeping in mind Ta-Nehisi Coates’s praise of Melville as “an author I admire,” whose “sentences becomes physical,” this panel considers the ways that BIPOC, female, and queer writers have been influenced by Melville in ways that defy his longstanding reputation as a masculinist author chiefly concerned with white homosocial spaces. Please submit 250-word abstracts and 100-word professional bios to David Greven (dgreven@mailbox.sc.edu) by 24 January 2024.