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“Let faith oust fact; let fancy oust memory”: Herman Melville’s resonating narrative legacy

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Herman Melville’s birthday (On August 1, 1819) was a foreshadowing gesture of the present special issue, having come out of a long –somewhat protracted— collaboration, which coincides with the original publication of *Moby-Dick: The Whale* on October 18, 1851. The *Journal of Narrative and Language Studies* takes the opportunity to celebrate Melville’s resonating myth of the human being at the threshold of posthumanism, which explored the human psyche and mysterious potentials from dignity to evil, having been protracted for centuries but eventually led to oblivion. Since the time when he thoroughly, painstakingly, peculiarly created *Moby-Dick*” and crafted a world of consuming human desire that represents the universal human condition, readers, writers, and artists have been enormously inspired to envisage, fancy, create,

design and produce verbal or nonverbal arts in the form of visual works or other means of imagination.

In 1983, Leland R. Phelps, a German Studies professor at Duke University, published the first survey of Melville's critical reception outside the United States. Herman Melville's *Foreign Reputation* examines critical works on Melville and lists editions, translations, and adaptations to assess Melville's impact on artists and writers in other countries. Highlighting the cultural importance of Melville's growing reputation, Phelps adds "[p]lays, opera librettos, motion pictures, and radio presentations based on works by Melville", arguing that "[s]uch adaptations can tell us something about another people from another cultural background and they may even tell us something we had not known about the works themselves" (Phelps xx).

In addition to attracting a great deal of critical study, Melville's multifaceted narratives from *Typee* (1846) to *Billy-Budd, Sailor* (1891/1924) have been creatively reinterpreted, reproduced, retold, re-envisioned, and revisited in narrative-based, cinematic, multimodal, intermedial realms.

This special issue on Melville's oeuvre provides a critical and reflective space for authors and scholars to share their original and insightful research. We invited papers that deliver cutting-edge methodologies to the study of Melville, media, and narratives, exploring, among other aspects, what John Bryant in "Textual Identity and Adaptive Revision: Editing Adaptation as a Fluid Text" calls "the critical distances between and among adaptive versions" (Bryant 49; emphasis in the original).

This special issue theorises and analyses Melville's narratives within a mediated context of twentieth—and twenty-first-century global cultural productions, such as films, the performance arts, paintings, music clips, etc. It seeks to trace creative, distorting, mimetic, and experimental responses to Melville's revived narrative legacy. Thus, we welcome articles that deal with such productions and reproductions by employing the methodologies of narrative studies, language studies, and media studies.

In the present collection, the readers will read experienced and young scholars 'Aboard Into the Sea' in a Melvillian spirit. We genuinely appreciate these authors' insightful discussions inviting the readers to reconsider narrative and cultural perspectives (e.g., moral/philosophical, ecological, ethnic, and feminist viewpoints) that Melville's narratives explore. The articles presented in this volume cover the narratological and cultural insights the readers gain from Melville's works, which use many cultural, medial, and narrative processes. Drawing implications from Melville's narratives, including suppressed subtexts, they creatively reinterpreted, reproduced, retold, re-envisioned, and revisited Melville. Also highlighted was Melville's impact on artists, including cinematic interactions (movies, films, series, advertisements, and other media productions) with Melville's works and the verbosity of a nineteenth-century author.

This special issue focuses on Melville's narratives and their awakening and resonating metaphors, which are still recurring within contemporary literature, film, visual arts, and cultural studies. This issue is aimed at foregrounding a spirited contribution to Melville scholarship. It brings together astute attitudes, erudite sensitivities, and striking sensibilities of scholarly colleagues with fancy and imagination, which, to put frankly, make them appreciate the Melville oeuvre more than expected. These articles do not solely explore the resonating

themes, motifs and patterns but also blend them with the elements of the arts and the media. As a critical author and keen storyteller, Melville represents consuming desires, conflicting forces and pluralistic voices of human life. His enduring legacy is erected on his resonating allegories and still inspires multifaceted adaptations and versatile works.

Alexandra Müller examines Melville’s “Bartleby, the Scrivener” from the perspective of cinematic narrative. She investigates how adaptation and incorporation strategies appropriate and recontextualize the original setting and recreate the story world, where a nineteenth-century office setting is transformed into a modern business environment. Muller discusses how the adaptations bring fresh perspectives on resistance and alienation in the contemporary world. Müller, referring to significant film adaptations and remarkable related works such as Miro Bilbrough (2001), Gerard Amsellem (2013), Andreas Honneth (2010), and Laura Naylor and Kristen Kee (2017), analyzes how these filmmakers translate Melville’s descriptive prose and verbal portrayal into visual and cinematic forms. Her paper delves into cinematic narrative techniques of “intermedial transposition”, and exhibits how the replication of first-person narration is achieved. The paper provides a significant analysis of the narrative incorporation of verbal and nonverbal texts in a way that helps underscore thematic exploration and representation.

Daniela José Cid Opazo represents how a graphic novel turns out to be a genuinely creative response to Melville’s *Bartleby* and explores a graphic novel adaptation of the influential character. Opazo argues that a graphic rendition in the fashion of creative synthesis significantly transcends traditional models and conveys a unique visual representation that critically engages the audiences with contemporary motifs and moral themes of success, hard work, duty imperatives, and personal autonomy within a business environment. The graphic response and creative imagination initiate a reflective vision of capitalist work ethics while connecting with Melville's original narrative.

Federico Bellini surveys recent Italian artistic engagements with “*Moby-Dick*.” Bellini features Melville's reinterpretations and reproductions through visual narratives, paintings and theatrical adaptation. Extracting a seventeen-minute bare-stage dramatic performance from the long epic presents a wooden box, inside which is an entrapped character stick to a ship's hold, provides the reader with an imaginary quest into Melville’s world. The narrative essence resounds with a critical shift from sombre reflection to reflective appreciation.

Antonella Rossini's article engages with visual adaptation from the perspective of Melville's moral paradigm and examines how specific renditions respond to Melvillian ontological assumptions and epistemological concerns. Delving into the implications raised by particular paintings, Rossini argues that visual narratives surpass existing conventions and offer new adaptation techniques. Reality, as such, is called into question, with particular references to Ishmael’s perception of the inner and outer worlds as part of his external and internal journey. The character’s figurative and literal are represented as having intellectual and perceptual communication through deconstructive and deconstructed discourses. Rossini’s contribution is significant in that it demonstrates that visual narrative sets up a dialogic reinterpretation of the verbal narrative discourse, blurring the generic lines between visual and verbal representation.

Nibedita Bandyopadhyay’s ecocritical reading of contemporary rewritings through the lens of the original narrative, *Moby Dick*, offers an outstanding analysis of Melville

reproductions from an environmentalist perspective. It is a call for awareness of marine conservation. Bandyopadhyay examines how zoocriticism and ecocinematic analysis can be incorporated to shed light on the critical reflection on the changing perceptions of the whale as a metaphor for monstrosity, a scapegoat figure, or as a sign of victimization. The study emphasizes the human plight in the wake of global warming, in the face of pollution, and at the threshold of anthropogenic threats.

Jaime Campomar's study discusses Hollywood's role in the emergence of Melville's oeuvre as pop-culture images observed in cinematic narratives. Analyzing movie narratives, Campomar demonstrates how these movies, though loosely based on Melville's previous narratives, recreate the Melvillian image within a pre-colonial context across the South Seas. Using the terminologies offered by fluid text theory and adaptation theories, the article uncovers how Melville's themes emerge as popular myths that carry and represent cultural memes.

Mikayo Sakuma's presents a study on a transcultural dialogue with Melville. This examination of Melville's tour de force, *Moby Dick*, a monumental allegory, draws on the elements of reinterpretation outside of the original context and recontextualizes the narrative within Japanese science fiction animation. True, the paper provides highly engaging findings of the case and keenly exhibits the universality of the story. The science fiction adaptation expands the limits of the setting, bringing about fresh yet striking outer space. It amalgamates continuities and discontinuities at a time and shifts in setting and time parallel with the thematic stability of the quest. The sea soars to outer space, exploring post-World War II and Cold War traumatic experiences in Japan. By locating the events in space, the adaptation addresses geopolitical anxieties, environmental transformations, passivist psychology, and critique of expansionism, thereby reproducing *Moby Dick* in a new framework with numerous sub-texts and sub-contexts.

Finally, we thank our co-editors Don Dingledine, Kyle Meikle and Paolo Simonetti for their refined interest and editorial support to steer the collaborative work throughout the process and initiate the present volume on Melville's works from cultural, medial, and narratological perspectives with creative, distorting mimetic, experimental and transformational gestures. Incidentally, we appreciate Shelley Fisher Fishkin's timely encouragement. Last but not least, our colleague Soner Kaya's meticulous work and complementary support were noteworthy here.