Rutkowski
references for “Bartleby”

directions: for Friday (10/14), choose two of the allusions below (not one of the simpler, factual definitions), locate the reference in the story and decide why you think Melville used this particular allusion in his story.

**Astor, John Jacob.** (1763 -1848) made a fortune in fur trading and real estate. He is the founder of what became known as the Astor family. By 1800 he had amassed nearly a quarter of a million dollars, and had become one of the leading figures in the fur trade. As the cost of fur went up due to over trapping, and the demand went down due to changing fashions, Astor turned his sights on New York City real estate. At the time of his death, Astor was the wealthiest person in the United States, leaving an estate estimated to be worth $20 million. On his deathbed Astor indicated his greatest regret was that he had failed to purchase the whole of Manhattan. At one point during his childhood, Herman Melville’s family were neighbors with the Astors in Manhattan.

**Byron:** (1788-1824). famous English poet. In both his works and his life he created the “Byronic hero” – a defiant, melancholy young man, brooding on some mysterious, unforgivable sin in his past. The heroes of Byron’s poems are generally swashbuckling brigands who perform heroic feats.

**chancery:** a record office for public archives or those of ecclesiastical, legal or diplomatic proceedings.

**Cicero:** (106-43 BC) Roman orator, statesman, and man of letters. Known chiefly as his brilliance as an orator – a master of the Roman art of pleading as well as a master of the equally Roman art of politics.

**Colt-Adams murder:** A sensational murder case in New York City in 1841. In mid-afternoon of September 17, 1841, Samuel Adams, the proprietor of a printing shop told an acquaintance that he was going to call on John C. Colt, who owed him money in connection with the printing of the latter’s work on bookkeeping. He then vanished from sight. Five days later the New York Tribune briefly noted the disappearance and put out a call for information. On Sunday, the 26th, Adams's body, was found crated on board a ship on its way to New Orleans. Colt was charged with the murder of Adams. The murder and the subsequent trial created a sensation unprecedented in the annals of New York City crime. After an initial denial, the defense admitted that Colt had killed Adams with a hatchet, insisting that the act had been committed in self-defense. It was admitted, too, that Colt--a brother of Samuel Colt, the inventor of the revolver--had boxed the body and had it carted off to the boat. The jury's decision that Colt should be hanged did not bring an end to the excitement. All avenues of appeal were tried. Prominent citizens publicly took sides. New testimony was offered in the press. In mid-November Governor Seward turned down the final appeal for clemency. On November 18th, the day set for the hanging, Colt was married to Caroline Henshaw, his mistress, thus legitimizing the daughter who had been born shortly before the trial. When, a few minutes before four, officials entered Colt's cell to conduct him to the gallows, they found him dead, a knife through his heart. That the death-wound was self-inflicted was clear; how Colt had got the weapon was not. At about this time fire broke out in the wooden cupola of the Tombs Prison, a circumstance later viewed by some as a diversion to effect the escape of Colt.

**dun:** a creditor
Edwards, Monroe. (1808-1847). early Texas slave smuggler and forger, son of a once wealthy plantation owner, Moses Edwards, was born in Danville, Kentucky, about 1808. He was finally arrested and placed in the Tombs prison in New York. His trial was a celebrated one, with lengthy reports of each day's testimony printed in the *New York Daily Tribune* and other newspapers. Edwards retained celebrated lawyers but was found guilty. He was sentenced to Sing Sing prison. After an escape attempt in 1847 he was severely beaten by prison authorities and died.

**ginger nut:** a ginger-snap cookie. They are made with dried powdered ginger root, anise and other spices. They are sold worldwide and have a long history, probably dating back to medieval fairs.

**kings and counselors:** from the Book of Job

3:1 After this opened Job his mouth, and cursed his day.
2. And Job spake, and said,
3. Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived.
4. Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let light shine upon it.

[...]
11. Why died I not from the womb? why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly?
12. Why did I the knees prevent me? or why the breasts that I should suck?
13. For now should I have lain still and been quiet, I should have slept; then had I been at rest.
14. With kings and counselors of the earth, which built desolate places for themselves.

**Marius** (157-86 BC): Roman general, consul, and leader of republican Rome’s popular party. Born of plebian stock, Marius was a lifelong, fanatical foe of the privileged aristocracy. After a brilliant career as soldier and strategist, he won the Roman consulate. Soon after, he led a successful campaign against the African prince Jugurtha. It was here that his career first intercepted that of the aristocrat Lucius Conelius Sulla, the man who was to become his mortal enemy. Through 15 years, Marius and Sulla vied for popular acclaim. In 90, after the Social War had been successfully concluded, Roman civil war broke out. For four bloody years thereafter, Rome was the pawn of these two ruthless generals. As one rival recovered, the other’s supporters were purged. The reprisals did not end with the death of Marius but continued until Sulla was absolute master of Rome.

**Petra**: (rock in Greek) is an archaeological site in Jordan, lying in a basin among the mountains which form the eastern flank of Wadi Araba, the great valley running from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Akaba.

**scrivener:** (or scribe) is an ancient profession, a person who could read and write. This usually indicated secretarial and administrative duties such as dictation and keeping business, judicial, and history records for rulers such as kings, nobility, temples, and cities. Later the profession developed for example into public servants, accountants, and lawyers. By the nineteenth century, it basically meant “copyist”: for a world without Xerox machines, and when various things (laws, business deals, etc.) required multiple copies of a document, they had to be done by hand.

**Spitzerberg:** a variety of apple