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## Inland/Oceanic Imagination in Melville's *Redburn*: Expansion and Memory in the Political Climate of America

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### INTRODUCTION: SPACE AND MEMORY

In *Transpacific Imaginations*, Yunte Huang argues that a specific space has a specific kind of sedimentation of memory: “I do not mean simply that each Pacific nation, culture, or island . . . has distinct memories of the past. What concerns me rather is *the different ways of enunciating the past and projecting the future* with respect to a distinct sense of historicity” [italics added] (3). In addition to focusing on the Pacific, I would like to discuss two specific spaces of nineteenth-century America: the North American continent, across which the United States was rapidly expanding, and the Atlantic Ocean, across which the nation tried to identify itself against its mother country. Each space, inland and oceanic, is imbued with a sense of the future in addition to “distinct memories of the past.” It is this dual function of memories that underscores the significance of “the different ways of enunciating the past and projecting the future.”

In this article, I discuss the psychological impact of space and memory on the people who lived in nineteenth-century America, which was undergoing rapid transformation both geographically and ideologically. Constant changes in both the boundaries of US territory and relations with the

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continent across the Atlantic made a coherent discourse of nationhood impossible. In such a state of constant transition, memory of the past is continuously overwritten, and the influence of previous experience cannot be directly tied to the contemporary reflection of memory. Therefore, “the ways of enunciating the past and projecting the future” is an essential topic for a discussion of the function of memory during the age of expansion in nineteenth-century America.

I will here address Herman Melville’s fourth novel, *Redburn* (1849). In 1845, John L. O’Sullivan published an article, “Annexation,” that aroused a spirit of expansionism among the American people under the slogan “Manifest Destiny.”<sup>1</sup> *Redburn* was, thus, published in the midst of a political climate of expansionism that was carried out on a contiguous space of land and promoted by “inland imagination” (7). Melville’s autobiographical novel, however, was prompted by another type of expansionism, one that covered spaces not contiguous to the North American continent, that is, the ocean. The mix of inland and oceanic imagination in *Redburn* represents the political climate of America in the 1840s.

#### I. EXPANSION IN THE AMERICAN IMAGINATION

It is widely assumed among Americanists that expansionism is one of the most essential forces in American history. No country had grown so rapidly and globally as this one starting from small pieces of land settled by English planters to a country extending not only across the North American continent but also across the ocean. Unlike its mother country, England, which once expanded and shrunk dramatically, the United States has so far kept spreading out without losing any land throughout its history. Therefore, space expansion has been the basic type of movement for the United States, both in political climate and cultural discourse.

This unprecedented rapidity and linearity of expansion brought idiosyncratic perceptions of space to the minds of the American people. By imagining the extent of space they had come to occupy during each step of their nation’s history, Americans have told their unique narratives. Julius W. Pratt, a representative scholar of American expansionism, in reviewing the history of American territorial expansion, wrote, “For every step in that process, ingenious minds have found the best of reasons” (9). To seek the reason for an action, especially in the political sphere, narratives of each case have been invented by the promoters to validate what the nation has done or is about to do. Some call this process narrative ideology, while

others call it cultural myth making. Pratt points out that expansionists living in various periods of American history have invoked specific narratives, such as “a God of Nature, a God of Democracy, a God of Evolution, and a God of Business” (17).<sup>2</sup>

Whatever narrative is advocated, all the narratives share one motivation under the surface of their discourse—justification. Research on American expansionism has mainly focused on this aspect of the narrative—why the actions are necessary at a certain historical phase and how pious/economic/political reasons are found to sanction territorial acquisition.

In the course of US history, there have been two periods during which the national movement of expansion was conspicuous: the early nineteenth century and the turn of the nineteenth century. The former is called the “Westward movement,” and it was triggered by the Louisiana Purchase (1803), which doubled the size of the United States. It was accelerated by the political slogan of Manifest Destiny. Charles Vevier, a diplomatic historian, argues that American continentalism “viewed much of North America as a stage displaying the evolving drama of a unique political society, distinct from that of Europe and glowing *in the white light of manifest destiny*” [italics added] (18). The people of this period believed and put forward the idea that the divine hand of God reserved the North American continent for a democratic nation.

After the Civil War, according to Pratt, the expansionist program seemed to collapse, “followed by a general loss of interest in such enterprises” (13). At the end of the nineteenth century, however, the movement of expansion recovered its momentum. The Spanish-American War of 1898 raised popular consciousness and political interest in expansion, stimulated by Alfred Thayer Mahan’s popular argument about sea power being an essential element of national greatness.

These two bursts of expansionism in American history differ in terms of the space of their performance. The expansionism of the early nineteenth century was enacted solely on land, that is, the space of the North American continent, whereas the latter period covered global spaces interrupted by seas such as the Caribbean and the Pacific. How is the narrative of expansion made when the action of extending territory is carried out over a contiguous space? Likewise, what kind of imagination is necessary for inventing a narrative of acquisition of a space not contiguous to the space in which one is? The narrative of the former is formed by *inland imagination* and that of the latter by *oceanic imagination*. Let us examine the mental image of the territorial space formed in each case of expansion.

## II. THE INLAND IMAGINATION OF YOUNG REDBURN

*Redburn* is a drama of a young man's voyage across the Atlantic on a merchant ship. At the beginning of the story, the narrator states how he decides to go to sea, prompted by "a vague prophetic thought, that I was fated, one day or other, to be a great voyager" (11). Reading the ship advertisements in New York newspapers, Redburn reports, "To my young *inland imagination* every word in an advertisement like this suggested volumes of thought" [italics added] (7).<sup>3</sup> This young boy, who has just moved from an inland village on the Hudson River, likes to dream about foreign towns that he has never been to, especially those in Europe. Redburn describes how he created mental images of scenes of foreign countries: "All these my imaginations were wonderfully assisted by certain shadowy *reminiscences* of wharves, and warehouses, and shipping, with which *a residence in a seaport during early childhood had supplied me*" [italics added] (8). Recalling past events supplies young Redburn with the power of imagining countries across the ocean. What connects his mental image of faraway towns to reality? We are informed of the way these reminiscences were kept by Redburn, who "*remembered* standing with his *father* on the wharf when a large ship was getting under way, and rounding the head of the pier" [italics added] (8). It is Redburn's father who connects, in the imagination of the young son, the image of a strange town to the reality. His father, an importer in New York City, "had several times crossed the Atlantic on business affairs" (9). Through experiences shared with a person who had actually been to Europe, Redburn could invent the image of what he has never seen in reality. Redburn remembers *his father's memories*.

In his youth, his father used to tell Redburn about his perilous experiences of voyages along with describing scenes of towns on the other side of the Atlantic. Redburn, now the matured narrator telling the story, recalls his young imagination of the sea: "Indeed, during my early life, most of *my thoughts of the sea were connected with the land*; but *with fine old lands*, full of mossy cathedrals and churches, and long narrow, crooked streets without side-walks, and lined with strange houses" [italics added] (9). In Redburn's imagination, the sea was firmly connected with the impressions he received in his native town where he lived with his father.

At this point, I would like to consider the reason why Redburn calls his own imagination an *inland imagination*. Specifying his young reveries as "inland," Redburn defines his thoughts of faraway space across the ocean as the imagination of a person standing on land on which he expects to find old

churches, narrow streets, strange houses, and so on. The feet of the person who imagines foreign space are on his native soil (on land). The contiguity provided by standing on the land, where we can feel connected with what surrounds us, makes the connection of the signifier and the signified possible. Thus, Redburn, on his native land, is able to project the familiar things he sees into what he expects to see in foreign space. He never thinks there will be a fatal discrepancy between what he imagines on his own land and what he will see on the other side of the ocean.

With continuity over time and space, we assume that two objects will remain next to each other. The connection between what one sees and what one saw or might see is taken for granted. Our mind remains stable, and the self is filled with a feeling of wholeness in both time and space. This is why Redburn is able to think, before he has even traveled, about “telling his own adventures to an eager auditory” (11) after he returns from his voyage. Young Redburn used to listen to his father telling his stories, entertaining strange gentlemen over wine after dinner. Repeating what his father did, Redburn tries to declare the continuity of his identity before and after his voyage to Europe.

Before his voyage to Liverpool, Redburn, who longs for faraway lands, easily imagines himself strolling down the streets of a foreign town. There is no split between his two selves, the one in his hometown and the other in the future in the strange town. For Redburn, the image (the signifier) coincides perfectly with the thing (the signified): he never doubts that he can find buildings and streets in Liverpool at the same spots where they are located in the guidebook his father left for him.

### III. THE GUIDEBOOK AS THE VACANT CONTAINER OF IDENTITY

The bond between Redburn and his deceased father is located in the odd volumes in his father's library, among which is “a collection of old European and English guide-books which he had bought on his travels, a great many years ago” (155). In his childhood, Redburn spent much time reading these guidebooks, studying the descriptions of foreign countries, and gazing at the pictures. When he leaves home in his inland hometown for New York, he chooses one of the guidebooks, *The Picture of Liverpool*, and takes it along in case he is ever on board a ship going to Liverpool.

During Redburn's eventual transatlantic voyage to Liverpool, the guidebook remains an identity prop for a son who plans to retrace his father's footsteps. He reads the history of the town thoroughly and masters

the columns of statistics about the population so enthusiastically that he “began to think he had been born in Liverpool” (166). Familiarizing himself with the map of Liverpool, he seems to acquire a space orientation that makes him feel native to the foreign town. At this moment, Redburn believes that he has succeeded in building a proper *mental map* of the town he is going to visit.<sup>4</sup>

What gives Redburn the confidence that he exists in this imaginary space is the hard work he has done of making correspondences between the verbal descriptions in the guidebook and the book’s illustrations. Perusing the descriptions of public edifices in Liverpool, he “scrupulously compared the text with the *corresponding* engraving, to see whether they *corroborated* each other” [italics added] (165). By associating the words in the old morocco guidebook with the real corners of the town he is going to visit, Redburn is satisfied with the fidelity of the signs and their referents.

Before landing on the soil of Liverpool, Redburn takes out his guidebook “to see how the map would compare with the identical place itself” and becomes puzzled to find that the actual objects he witnesses bear no resemblance to those in the guidebook. Trying not to doubt the credibility of “the family servant who had so faithfully served his own father” (166), Redburn lands in Liverpool.

The happy correspondence of the signifier and signified further collapses during his first walk in the town. Strolling around Liverpool, the son finds himself on Hall Street that his father marked in the guidebook. Redburn’s heart is filled with affectionate emotions for his father, as the bond between the information in the guidebook and real objects seems to be united firmly, just like the father-son bond. This happy expectation does not last long, however, as Redburn is deeply disappointed when he is to not be able to locate Riddough’s Hotel, where “his father had stopped, slept and dined, smoked his cigar, opened his letters, and read the papers” (171).

It is at this moment that “a new light broke in upon him concerning his guide-book” (171). When the authority that had guided the son turns out to be useless, the bond between the signifier and the signified dissolves. In Lacanian terms, the Name-of-the-Father that presides in the Symbolic Order is missing, and the identity of the son is lost.

The semiotic blow strikes Redburn not only at the disappearance of the signified but also by the confusion of the signifying process of the place in the town. It is the Liverpool customhouse that gives a fatal blow to Redburn’s competence in recognition.

Walking through the town with his guidebook, Redburn “found himself

before a spacious and splendid pile of sculptured brownstone; and entering the porch, perceived from *incontrovertible tokens* that it must be the Custom-house" (172). Taking out his guidebook again, Redburn is surprised to find that "he was entirely mistaken with regard to this Custom-house; for precisely where he stood, 'The Old Dock' must be standing" (173).

Originally, at this spot stood the "pool" that was made into the Old Dock. After being filled up with mud, the site was rebuilt for the customhouse standing before Redburn with "incontrovertible tokens." Redburn understands the reason for this signifying confusion by collecting pieces of information indicating that the site originally stood as the "pool" and was made into the "Old Dock" for shipping and that after being filled up it became the site of the customhouse.

Christopher Hager gives a convincing argument about the symbolic environment of Redburn's experience in Liverpool. Hager explains the incongruousness of the two representations of the same spot—one denotes it as "dock" and the other denotes it as "customhouse": "Both the dock and the customhouse are sites of commerce, only at different stages of economic development" (317). The conjunction of the signifier and signified are performed differently at different stages of the history of the town. The site used to be connected with the dock when it was used for shipping commodities, and it is now joined to the customhouse, where another activity of commerce is taking place.

This episode about the accuracy/inaccuracy of the descriptions in the guidebook of Redburn's father sheds an interesting light on my discussion of inland/oceanic imagination. In addition to Hager's argument that the place is denoted differently in the course of history, I would like to say that the site gets synchronic connotation in terms of space, one inland and the other maritime. A density of ships at the dock represents the *sea*, while a building of brownstone at the customhouse indicates *land*. The guidebook talks about the first impression that strikes the stranger visiting the dock as "*the singularity of so great a number of ships afloat in the very heart of the town, without discovering any connection with the sea*" [italics Melville's] (173). Is this site one of the sea or the land? Finding the customhouse, which signifies the land, at the place where ships, the representation of the sea, should have been, Redburn's confidence in signification totters and collapses in semiotic confusion.

When Redburn is on his way to Liverpool, given his familiarity with the map in the guidebook, he feels as if he is going to see his native town. "Redburn then" inhabited both his father's town and his own real space

where “Redburn now” is at the same time. However, after landing in Liverpool, his plenary experience of self is forced into crisis. When he finds the guidebook unreliable, Redburn loses his confidence about navigating the space of the foreign town. In Liverpool, he finds his own self bound neither to time nor to space. The entire experience of the guidebook is, according to Hager, “confounding” to Redburn, who might be diagnosed with “the problems of fluctuating geopolitical identity” (310). The guidebook turns out to be distant from the reality in which he actually lives. The precious guidebook bound in green morocco has become “the vacant space of self-knowledge” (321).

#### IV. THE ATLANTIC AS THE SITE OF TRANSFORMATION

What happens to the imagination of young Redburn after his transatlantic voyage and his landing on the soil of England? In other words, what does he find missing in the town where he was looking forward to encountering the memories of his father?

Redburn acknowledges the loss of the referential competence of the language in the guidebook that his father left for him. The son feels that the memories of his father suffer from being polluted by signifying incompetence and that the correspondence between the sign and the referent breaks down. It is at this event that the ligament joining him with his father is torn, and the son is left alone without the referential support of his father. In this way, young Redburn loses the semiotic integrity that supported his own identity as a result of his transatlantic voyage to England.

To view the conflict in his symbolic environment, let me analyze the semiotic confusion concerning the site Redburn visits to locate the place of the “Old Dock” on a page of the guidebook. As mentioned, he is surprised to find the customhouse where, according to the authority of his guidebook, “‘The Old Dock’ must be standing” (173).

This place is denoted as a “dock,” signifying the “sea,” and, at the same time, there is “a building of a Custom-house,” signifying “land.” It is true that the site, chronologically, holds two different representations in the course of its history, but these two ways of signification make Redburn’s imagination confused between that of land and that of sea.

Facing two different significations at one spot can bring fatal damage to the function of a person’s memory. An effective memory system, according to Johnathan K. Foster, who worked in the field of memory and memory disorders, involves three steps: (1) *encoding* information, (2) *storing* or



retaining that information faithfully, and (3) *retrieving* or accessing that stored information (25).<sup>5</sup> In the case of the guidebook to Liverpool, the information has already been encoded and stored by the author of the guidebook, which Redburn tries to use for his own orientation to the town.

Though the pieces of information—geographical, historical, and cultural—were encoded and stored not by his father but by the editor, Redburn treats the guidebook with affection as if it were part of his father. He addresses the guidebook, which has turned out to be useless to Redburn as an introduction to Liverpool, “Poor old guide-book . . . I will not use you with despite, old Morocco! and you will yet prove a trusty conductor through many old streets in the old parts of this town” (172).

The information in the guidebook represents the sacred memory of his father, and so the son never discards it as useless. Foster says, “What people remember is mediated by their emotional and personal commitment to—and investment in—the original to-be-remembered event” (12). “The original to-be-remembered event” in Liverpool, for Redburn, is what his father once experienced in the town. The emotional and filial commitment to the memory of his father should have been easily accessed when Redburn walked around Liverpool with the guidebook in his hand.

It is at the third stage of memory—retrieving the stored information—that the function of memory fails in Redburn’s experience. Searching for the Old Dock, Redburn is led to a different representation that bears no connection to the sea. With Redburn’s failure to retrieve the original to-be-remembered object, the link between Redburn and his father is severed. The contiguity of the sign and its referent collapses when Redburn finds the words “the Old Dock” in his guidebook connected to the huge brownstone building in front of him.

The contiguity of the sign and its referent have provided the son with an emotional and filial tie with his father. If the sign, “the Old Dock,” on the page of the guidebook were to be contiguous with the real spot in Liverpool, Redburn could confirm a palpable connection with the experience of his father. This is how Redburn’s imagination works, and he calls his own imagination an “inland imagination” that functions on a contiguous space—the continent of North America.

It is notable that the dysfunction of signs occurs after Redburn makes a transatlantic voyage. How does the huge ocean strike Redburn’s geographical imagination? His inland imagination suffers from radical changes when he is crossing the Atlantic, a vast space of water that exists between his native land and England.

In the text of *Redburn*, the term *Atlantic* appears twenty-three times. Interestingly, these twenty-three *Atlantics* are divided into two kinds of usage: thirteen *Atlantics* are used as the objects of either a verb, “cross,” or preposition, “across,” whereas the other ten *Atlantics* appear with adjectives denoting huge spaces such as “wide,” “great,” and “broad.” Of the thirteen *Atlantics* after “cross” or “across,” five are the objects of the verb “cross,” and eight follow the preposition “across.”<sup>6</sup> In both usages, the oceanic void between the two continents—North America and Europe—is the critical space where something fatal happens to Redburn. His relation to his father disappears, and the semiotic environment changes dramatically. After he steps on the soil of England, his “inland imagination” suffers from fatal damage and stops functioning to link his mental image to the object in reality. This is why he gets confused when he finds not the customhouse but the Old Dock. Redburn’s self becomes riven when his father’s guidebook turns out to be unreliable. For Redburn, referential contiguity as well as his filial bond to his father dissolves after the voyage across the Atlantic.

Both the verb “to cross” and the preposition “across” presuppose movement from one side to another. In changing one’s position, the person who moves transfers himself from his native space (one side) to a foreign space (the other). In the case of Redburn crossing the Atlantic onboard the *Highlander*, bound for Liverpool, he found retrospectively that he is forced to discard his idealized view of the world as well as his total feeling of the self after finding the guidebook unreliable. In other words, Redburn is transformed when he crosses the fatal space where the function of his inland imagination stops working.

Ten *Atlantics* in the novel are preceded by the adjectives “broad,” “wide,” and “great,” depicting the notion of expansion.<sup>7</sup> The huge space between the two continents is covered with a *broad* ocean, including a *wide* variety of things, thus appearing *great* to the self who is floating upon it. The protagonist, who finds himself in an identity crisis, gets disorientated by the expanse of the ocean, which turns out, in retrospect, to be the site of his transformation.

## V. TRANSFORMATION, TRAUMA, AND EXPANSION

Because the father-son relation is an important theme in *Redburn*, I would like to cite serious biographical events concerning fatherhood in Melville’s life. In 1832, when Melville was twelve, his father, Allan Melville, died suddenly. In 1867, Herman, now father of two sons, found his son Malcolm

dead in his bedroom with self-inflicted gunshot wounds. John Bryant, a leading Melville scholar, locates “two wounds: the son who lost a father; the father who lost a son” in the life of Melville and finds the two father wounds a “significant grounding for our thinking about Melville’s creativity” (204).

How is the father wound announced in the text of *Redburn*? Bryant emphasizes the meaning of the wound in this autobiographical novel and points out the narrative strategies of telling the story. As *Redburn* is told by a narrator recounting his juvenile experience much later after he has returned from his voyage, “the modulations of voice between the angry boy (then) and the older, still boy-like man (now) are evident” (206). The discrepancy between the two personalities means that Redburn’s competence in recognition collapsed during his voyage to Liverpool and that this transformation leaves “the ineradicable scar” (206) in the protagonist as a trauma.

Trauma is a special kind of memory that causes anxiety in one’s mind. The most important feature of trauma is that the memory is frozen deep down so that it is almost forgotten. It demands a repetition of the actual scene in which the shocking event has occurred. Bryant uses the trauma theory of Cathy Caruth to investigate the narrative strategy of *Redburn*. Caruth defines trauma in her classic book *Unclaimed Experience* “as the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events *that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later* in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena” [italics added] (91). There are two positions concerning traumatic experience—one is when the person encounters “an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events.” and the other is when that person suffers later from “repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena.” In one position, the person present at the shocking events cannot “fully grasp [them] as they occur,” and in the other position, the person has to return to the scene to encounter the event and grasp its real meaning. This is the task called “working through” in the field of psychoanalysis. Caruth recommends that we listen to “a voice that is paradoxically *released through the wound*” [italics added] (2).<sup>8</sup>

*Redburn* consists of the same narrative structure as that of trauma in which the memory of it is voiced by/through the voice of the other. This autobiographical novel is narrated by a mature narrator (Redburn-now) remembering and telling the events that an immature sailor (Redburn-then) went through. Bryant argues that “these necessary oscillations of then and now, self and other, emerge in aestheticized versions of the wound evident in one of Melville’s narrative strategies” (206). If transformation of the self

brings transformation to the identity of Redburn, we should listen to the voice of otherness that comes from the father wounds of both Redburn and Melville in the working through of trauma.

About the correspondence between literary text and the society into which the text is introduced, Cathy Caruth mentions “the ways in which text of a certain period . . . both speak about and speak through the profound story of traumatic experience” (4). If traumatic experience of a certain individual is spoken through the voice of a sailor in *Redburn*, how does the text itself “speak about and speak through the profound story of traumatic experience” of the period into which Melville brought this text in 1849?

The nineteenth century in America was a period of expansion not only of territory but also of the idea of democracy, which was advocated under the policy of Manifest Destiny. The American ideology of equality and opportunity led to a positive outlook, whereas survival in a democratic society caused hidden anxiety about identity in people’s minds.

Bryant binds the dark side of people’s psychology in nineteenth-century American society to the anxiety of transformation. To live in a democratic culture in which “perpetual revolution” is taking place, people are required to undergo “a perpetual redefinition of identity” (203). Thus “trauma and transformation were wedded” (203) in the texts of Melville; we can witness how characters such as Ahab, Ishmael, Pip, as well as our protagonist, Redburn, work through the trauma of self-transformation, not only of themselves as individuals but also generally of the democratic society of the period.

“Young America” is a cultural metaphor for mid-nineteenth-century America; it stands for a fresh air of rapid growth in a young nation.<sup>9</sup> The Young America movement is one of the most exciting intellectual movements in American history. However, the national development with territorial enlargement, which caused necessary transformation of the nation, turned out to bring despair as well as hope to people living during the period. In *Young America: The Flowering of Democracy in New York City*, Edward L. Widmer mentions “a dark side” of Young Americanism as “one that would manifest itself as increasingly unsavory things were done in America’s name during the late 1840s and 1850s” (14). In Widmer’s argument, the movement of Young America “metamorphosed” into “a call for more territory, unleashing tensions over slavery and exposing democracy to ridicule” (14). It is notable that not only the nation itself but also the slogan promoting the nation changed (metamorphosed), not only in its form

but in its nature in the social currents of the period. Transformation is the undercurrent of an anxious society.

Another aspect of the dark side of the Young America movement of expansionism is the transformation of the identity of the nation, which started from an idealistic ideology of revolution in the eighteenth century. In *Redburn*, a heavily contextualized text concerning the political and cultural climate of 1840s, Hager discovers “a kind of multidimensional entropy—a leaching of meaning by spatial expanse and estrangement from origins” (311). The imperial expansion of the period partook of unuttered anxiety among the Young Americanists, who felt themselves estranged from the origins of the nation.

Melville, together with his contemporary writers such as Hawthorne and Whitman, lived “in a hyperpolitical time” in which, according to Widmer, “the very principles of the Revolution seemed to be at stake in a way they never had previously” (26). Thus, expansion and transformation are linked through anxiety brought about by the traumatic transformation of the national identity.

## VI. THE PACIFIC AND GLOBAL EXPANSION

The Atlantic is a dead space where the inland imagination of Redburn suffers fatal destruction. What about the Pacific? In the whole of *Redburn*, the term *Pacific* appears three times, and all of them are embedded in the context of whaling.

At the end of the text, recalling his first voyage across the Atlantic, Redburn, now the matured narrator, recounts that “years after this, I found myself a sailor in the Pacific, on board of a whaler” (339). In the next paragraph, an Englishman, “who had now been in the Pacific several years,” informs Redburn of the tragic end of his long-lost friend, Harry Bolton. This Englishman discloses that Harry fell over the side of a whale boat and was crushed between the ship and a whale. With this episode, Redburn terminates his story: “But yet, I, Wellingborough Redburn, chance to survive, after having passed through far more perilous scenes than any narrated in this, *My First Voyage*—which here I end” (340). *My First Voyage* is the subtitle of *Redburn*. We find that Redburn, who survived his younger days, is now onboard a whaling ship in the Pacific telling the story of his voyage across the Atlantic. The text is told/written by Redburn-Melville, who has “passed through far more perilous scenes than any narrated in this.” It can be said that by “far more perilous scenes” Redburn/Melville means

those depicted in his fifth novel, *Moby-Dick*, in which only Ishmael survives the destruction of the *Pequod* to tell the story. To this is added another piece of information known to scholars—that Melville himself had cruised the Pacific on whale boat in his younger days. The fact that both the narrator and the writer have gone on transpacific voyages and that they retrospectively tell and write the memory of their experiences on the Pacific gives a different dimension to the imagination of space in *Redburn*.

Redburn voyages across the Atlantic linearly to his destination, Liverpool. In contrast, the voyagers who enter the Pacific such as young Melville, Ishmael, and other sailors onboard whaling boats, wander the ocean without any destination. While Redburn sailed back to his home in North America, Tommo of *Typee*, a sailor on a ship cruising the Pacific, complains that he is not sure when and how he will get back to his home. Sailing the Pacific is traveling on the vast ocean without an itinerary. How does this experience of moving aimlessly on the sea influence the imagination of Melville's contemporary Americans?

Concerning the cultural connotations the Pacific had in American society in the 1840s, Hsuan L. Hsu argues: "As the world's largest ocean and the one least traversed by Euro-American shipping, the Pacific held forth *a promise of global unity and mobility*" [italics added] (130). It seems that the terms *unity* and *mobility* contradict each other: unity requires fixation, and mobility prefigures fluctuation. It is the contradictory relation between these two concepts, however, that underpins the feeling promoting expansionism in nineteenth-century America. In *unity* people dreamed imperialist visions of the United States, whether implicitly or explicitly, while in *mobility* they enacted their cosmopolitanism.

While inland expansion promoted by westward movement occupied the space of the North American continent, another expansion was going on globally in a different space—in the Pacific. Hsu argues that "in the mid-nineteenth century, improved technologies of transportation, communication, and warfare enabled the USA to expand not only to the coast of California but further into the Pacific *with a momentum that seemed destined to span the globe*" [italics added] (131). To *span* means to extend over something. The United States of America as a nation extended over the boundaries of the continent and reached into the space across the ocean, that is, globally. Expansion, according to Hsu, proceeded into a second stage in which the horizontal enlargement of the land mass shifted to the vertical acquisition of space across the Pacific.

We establish our spatial position in relation to our surroundings, and where a country begins or ends can have an impact on the political perception of a nation's people. In emphasizing the importance of geographic mental maps on policymaking in the latter half of the twentieth century, Luis da Vinha states that "it was only in the 1980s that a systematic effort to 'operationalize' the concept of mental maps in foreign policy analysis was undertaken, beginning with Alan Henrikson's essay 'The Geographical "Mental Maps" of American Foreign Policy Makers'" (5). The ideas that behavioral geographers such as Henrikson have brought into the area of foreign policy analysis permit us to understand the spatial relationship between the environment and a person involved in a particular community in a particular period.<sup>10</sup> In nineteenth-century America, the mental map was constructed and reconstructed with the same rapidity as the nation expanded. In the course of this process in the mid twentieth century, the palpable contiguity of the land mass was replaced with the metaphysical contiguity of intercontinental space, which brought a dynamic change of mental map to the national identity of the United States.

#### CONCLUSION: EXPANSION AND MEMORY

During his round-trip voyage to Liverpool, Redburn uses the terms, Western and Eastern Hemisphere several times.<sup>11</sup> The course of his transatlantic voyage is not a *horizontal movement* between two cities but a changing position from one half of the globe, *vertically divided*, to the other half. The narrator, a matured Redburn, and the writer, Melville, have sailed both the Atlantic and the Pacific when they tell/write *Redburn*. The terminology of hemispheres can only be used by those who have experience in moving from one half of the globe to the other.

Hemispheric imagination is triggered by oceanic voyages, in the course of which explorers have often gained access to new space on a global scale. It is this global perspective of the Pacific that *Redburn* provides to readers. Young Redburn, whose inland imagination is expanded by his first voyage across the Atlantic, grows into a mature narrator onboard a whaling ship in the Pacific—he has acquired an oceanic imagination inspired by his global perspective.

The space in Melville's fourth novel, *Redburn*, is represented by the imagination of a writer who has not only traveled globally but who is also conscious of the political climate of nineteenth-century America. In this

climate, the mental image of space, combined with the territorial desire for expansion, was formed in both inland and oceanic imaginations. As for the inland imagination, which is motivated by contiguous enlargement on land, it is notable that *Redburn* was written just after the largest US territorial acquisition, one of more than half a million square miles from Mexico in 1848. The rapid expansion of the land mass of the nation helped the people of Young America to envision further geopolitical expansion.

At the same time, oceanic imagination was gaining momentum for oceanic imperial expansion, inspired by two historical events in the early nineteenth century: the claiming by an American naval captain of Nuku Hiva (now one of the Marquesas Islands) as a US possession in 1813, and President Monroe's speech of 1823 in which he declared the Western Hemisphere immune from political intervention from the Eastern Hemisphere.<sup>12</sup>

In the introduction to this article, I noted that the trend of expansionism came to American society in two waves: first in the early nineteenth century and then at the turn of the nineteenth century. Historians see the former as an expansion in the North American continent that terminated when it reached the coast of California, and that the expansion of the latter period extended overseas in the Pacific to acquire the islands of the Far East, the Philippines.

It is natural that *Redburn*, published in 1849, is viewed as a text that represents the first trend of expansionism supported by the contemporary politics—westward movement, the contiguous enlargement of the land mass territory. However, as I have discussed, we find another kind of expansionism in Melville's text, which spans the globe in areas not contiguous to the native soil of American people. *Redburn* is a text that is infused by both inland and oceanic imagination. The former triggers expansionism within the North American continent and the latter opens up the global expansion going on in intercontinental spaces.

At this point, I would like to pay attention to the original momentum that motivated European people to reach the "unoccupied" land on the other side of the Atlantic. They sailed out toward the west. It is said that people have been directed westward throughout America's history, but the radical westward movement began with westward voyages from Europe to the American continent.

The tendency toward an expansionist psychology is inherent throughout American history. If the stimuli of expansionism is under the surface of all the discourses expressed in the course of American expansion, how does cultural memory work in each period? Frederick Bartlett, in his



*Remembering*, argues in regard to the way people construct their own memories that we are apt to impose meaning on what we observe in an attempt to find meaning in the real world. It is on the third stage of remembering that history as a cultural discourse heavily depends. Recall that memory involves not just taking in and storing information but having the ability to retrieve it as well. We may reconstruct memory from the parts that we actually remember and from what we know or believe must have happened. In the history of America, including the original event of coming from Europe to the New World in the seventeenth century, the rhetoric of expansion has been constructed and reconstructed by retrieving the memory of what people of each period saw, according to the different influences that were present on each occasion of retrieval.

#### NOTES

This article is partially based on a paper, "Inland/Oceanic Imagination in Melville's *Redburn*: Space in the Political Climate of America in the 1840s," that I delivered at the Eleventh International Melville Conference at Kings College, London, June 30, 2017.

<sup>1</sup> O'Sullivan focused on the question of the annexation of Texas in his article "Annexation" in *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review* (July–August 1845), but in fact he was promoting his Democratic Party to adopt a program of expansion that would claim the entire North American continent.

<sup>2</sup> "God of Nature" refers to geographical determinism; "God of Democracy," to so-called Manifest Destiny; "God of Evolution," to the idea of racial superiority; and "God of Business," to divine sanctioning of taking the Philippine Islands in 1898.

<sup>3</sup> Another item that fed Redburn's imagination was "an old-fashioned glass ship about eighteen inches long and of French manufacture" (12). This glass ship was brought home by his father thirty years earlier as a present for a great-uncle of Redburn's, Senator Redburn Wellingborough, after whom he was named.

<sup>4</sup> In "Geography for GIS," Robert Slobodian explains that "cognitive mapping seeks to understand how people perceive their spatial environment and how those perceptions get translated into actions. The reality of space sometimes gets set aside as people operate on their understanding of reality as it exists in their own mental maps." <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/5t16s9sk#page-1>.

<sup>5</sup> Foster emphasizes the importance of the third stage; "So memory involves not just taking in and storing information, but the ability to retrieve it too" (25).

<sup>6</sup> The subjects of the verb "cross" are Redburn's father, Redburn himself, the sailors onboard the *Highlander*, and Harry Bolton, a friend of Redburn's.

<sup>7</sup> "For far away and away, stretches the *great* Atlantic Ocean" (42); "he had stood there, though now the ship was so far away on the *wide* Atlantic Ocean" (80); "Bless my soul! and here I am on the *great* Atlantic Ocean" (89); "the whole *broad* Atlantic being between them"(142); "Where'er his shores the *broad* Atlantic waves" (162) [italics added].

<sup>8</sup> Caruth emphasizes the meaning of *listening* and *witnessing* in the introduction to

*Unclaimed Experience:*

Each one of these texts [discussed by Caruth] engages, in its own specific way, a central problem of *listening*, of knowing, and of representing that emerges from the actual experience of the crisis. . . . If traumatic experience is an experience that is not fully assimilated as it occurs, then these texts, each in its turn, asks what it means to transmit and to theorize around a crisis that is marked, not by a simple knowledge, but by the ways it simultaneously defies and demands our *witness*. (5)

We now understand that in writing this book on trauma the author tried to “speak about and speak through the profound story of traumatic experience” (4), that is, to work through her own trauma.

<sup>9</sup> Edward L. Widmer separates Young America into “two very different groups,” which he calls Young America I and Young America II. The former “strove for the flowering of democracy, promoting culture and ideas,” and the latter “stood for its deflowering, misleading people through empty promises and slogans designed to steal land and treat human beings like chattel” (15).

<sup>10</sup> Henrikson defines a mental map as “an ordered but continually adapting structure of the mind-by reference to which a person acquired, codes, stores, recalls, reorganizes, applies information about his or her large-scale geographical environment. (177)”

<sup>11</sup> In chapter 27, the people onboard the *Highlander* see Ireland, and they encounter the first foreigner, who tries to cheat them and escapes. Redburn says, “Here, then, was a beautiful introduction to *the eastern hemisphere*; fairly robed before striking soundings” [italics added] (159). Two other instances in which the term hemisphere is used are in chapter 33: “On this *Western Hemisphere* all tribes and people are forming into one federal whole” [italics added] (216); and in chapter 51: “The last we should see *the Eastern hemisphere* was now in plain sight, and all the rest was broad ocean” [italics added] (335).

<sup>12</sup> President Monroe used the term *hemisphere* in his speech on December 2, 1832: “We should consider any attempt on their part [i.e., European powers] to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety.”

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