

Remapping Melville's Liverpool: Reading *Redburn* in Malcolm Lowry's *In Ballast to the White Sea*

On 7 June 1944, a fire gutted the cottage in British Columbia in which the British novelist Malcolm Lowry was living with his second wife Margerie. Lowry saved the manuscript of his best known novel, *Under the Volcano* (1947), but the fire destroyed the manuscript of an earlier work, *In Ballast to the White Sea*.¹ The novel was thought to be lost entirely until, in 2003, the executors of the estate of Lowry's first wife, Jan Gabriel, deposited an edited typescript of a draft from 1934-36 in the New York Public Library: an edition based on this version was published in 2014.² This essay argues that the recovery of *In Ballast to the White Sea* is important for those interested in Melville's influence on and reception by twentieth-century writers, as well as those interested in Lowry's writing.³ The recovered text shows *In Ballast* to be the first attempt to address *Redburn* as more than "autobiography, with only the faintest disguises," as Lewis Mumford called it in 1929 (71), predating William Gillman's influential study of *Redburn* as fiction by around 15 years.⁴

Lowry anticipated later twentieth and twenty-first century critics by approaching *Redburn* as a novel that imaginatively maps modernity's compressions of time and space onto the built environment of Liverpool. Through examining how Lowry reworks the

¹ I would like to thank Lowry expert Colin Dilnot, who told me about the connections between Melville and Lowry and *In Ballast to the White Sea*, and my colleagues Ruth Livesey and Judith Hawley, who gave me invaluable feedback on this essay.

² The draft was edited by Gabriel, from a draft Lowry left with her mother in 1936. What happened to the original draft is unclear. The editor of the 2014 edition, Patrick McCarthy, observes that Gabriel's revisions "simultaneously preserve and transform Lowry's text" (xliii). Although his edition attempts to restore Lowry's intentions for the 1936 draft, Lowry almost certainly worked on the novel after 1936, so the recovered version may not resemble the manuscript that was lost. For a full account of the probable composition and the editing of *In Ballast*, see McCarthy ix-xxi, and xxxv-xlv.

³ While Lowry scholars have examined his intertextual references to Melville (see, for example: Ackerley; Cross), Melville scholars have ignored Lowry as a reader of Melville. One exception is A. Robert Lee, who makes limited mention of Lowry in an essay on Melville's global reception (42-43).

⁴ Gilman's appendix on *Redburn*'s reception details how the book was treated as autobiography during the 1920s and 1930s.

Liverpool sections of *Redburn* (1849) in *In Ballast*, I argue that Lowry understood Melville as a theorist of the type of space that Michel Foucault would later define as “heterotopia”: a real place in which “all the other real sites that can be found within the culture are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted” (24). Lowry employs Melville’s writings to disorder time and space, so that Liverpool’s built environment can embody the “breakdown” of the entire world that his protagonist, Sigbjørn Tarnmoor, perceives (Lowry, *In Ballast*, 81).⁵ These intertextual references mirror, and therefore call attention to the techniques that Melville himself uses to represent Liverpool as heterotopia in *Redburn*, where he renders the city as a palimpsest of real-and-imagined elsewherees that resists conventional cartography. As such, Lowry’s remapping of Melville’s Liverpool frames *Redburn* as a text that theorizes the problems of and possibilities for representing space in modernity.

The first section of this essay outlines Lowry’s fascination with Melville, and suggests how he might have encountered Melville’s writings, and *Redburn* in particular. This account serves as a reminder that Melville was not forgotten amongst British sea fiction enthusiasts and schoolboys in the early twentieth century (two groups that had a high probability of intersecting). I also unpick Lowry’s attempts to disguise his knowledge of Melville, and suggest that they result from Lowry’s fears of being accused of plagiarism. After establishing that Lowry almost certainly knew more of *Redburn* than he claimed, I explore how Lowry rewrote the Liverpool section of that novel in *In Ballast*. Building on the work of the editors of the new edition of Lowry’s text, who trace many of the borrowings from Melville, I argue that, taken as a whole, Lowry’s engagements with *Redburn* map not only *Redburn*’s Liverpool, but Melville’s techniques for representing modernity. Together with his correspondence, *In Ballast* demonstrates Lowry’s knowledge of scholarship by

⁵ Sigbjørn’s surname comes from “Salvator R. Tarnmoor”, the fictional author of Melville’s “The Encantadas” (Melville, “The Encantadas, or Enchanted Isles” 311).

Mumford, Raymond Weaver, and D. H. Lawrence and suggests that he, too, saw Melville as a proto-modernist. At the same time, Lowry also originates a reading of Melville in which his engagement with his contemporary nineteenth century is as important as his mysticism, and in which Melville maps transformations of space in his own time, rather than existing apart from his historic moment.

Malcolm Lowry as Melville Critic

Lowry had, to borrow his description of one of his own characters, a “hysterical identification with Melville” (*Sursum* 1:249). He declared this affinity with Melville at length in March 1950, in a letter to the Canadian writer and broadcaster Derek Pethick, who was planning a radio programme about Lowry. Lowry responded to Pethick’s question about the influence of *Moby-Dick* on *Under the Volcano* by stating that that his identification was with “Melville himself and his life:”

This was partly because I had sailed before the mast, partly because my grandfather had been the skipper of a windjammer who went down with his ship – Melville also had a son named Malcolm who simply disappeared – purely romantic reasons like that, but mostly because of his failure as a writer and his whole outlook generally. His failure for some reason absolutely fascinated me and it seems that from an early age I determined to emulate it in every way possible – for which reason I have always been very fond of *Pierre* (even without having read it at all) (Lowry, *Sursum*, 2:207-8).

The focus on Melville’s “failure” and his biography initially appears to align Lowry’s approach to Melville with that of the Revival critics, whom, as Jordan Stein notes, made “the reconstruction of Melville’s life [...] absolutely pivotal to the critical conversation surrounding his writings” (126). Moreover, Lowry scholars usually suggest that Lowry’s real interest was in Melville’s life, locating Lowry’s borrowings from Melville as the actions of passionate sympathizer with Melville the man, rather than an astute critic of Melville’s

works.⁶ However, as well as demonstrating Lowry's detailed, if sometimes faulty, knowledge of Melville's life, this statement shows Lowry's penchant for being economical with the truth: his grandfather was a seaman but not a "skipper," and did not "go down with his ship" but was either lost at sea or died of cholera. Lowry scholars frequently note that his self-mythologizing, blurring of lines between himself and his characters, and outright lying make it difficult to take Lowry at his word – and his claims for his knowledge of Melville are no exception.

In the March letter, Lowry maintained that *Under the Volcano* was "not patterned after Moby Dick (the book) which I never studied until recently (and it would seem not hard enough)," adding in another letter to Pethick in October that he and Margerie had "discovered the fact that we did not have a copy of Moby Dick in the house till about six months before our fire and gave it away as a Christmas present!" (Lowry, *Sursum* 2:288). This statement implies unfamiliarity with *Moby-Dick*, but his older brother Russel remembered their childhood home on the Wirral peninsula in North-West England having "plenty [of books] including Poe's *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*, Melville's *Moby Dick*, Rabelais and Arthur's volumes of Shakespeare" (Bowker 24). Lowry biographer, Douglas Day claims that Lowry arrived at his public school in 1923, aged 14, with "an almost awesome knowledge of the [...] sea novels of Melville and Conrad;" Day provides no direct evidence for this claim, but Melville's reputation in Britain as a writer of sea fiction makes it very possible that Lowry, who was always fascinated by the sea, read more than one of his works as a schoolboy (Day 80). Lowry had certainly read Melville by the time he went up to Cambridge in 1929, and had also discussed Melville with his mentor, the American writer Conrad Aiken. Gabriel claimed that when Lowry came to write *In Ballast* in 1934, he was so fascinated by

⁶ See, for example, Gordon Bowker, who argues that "it was Melville's life rather than his works with which Lowry identified" (86).

Melville that upon arriving in New York, he demanded they “sail at once for New Bedford, which he envisioned as a nineteenth-century whaling village” (Gabrial 2000 69).

Even when denying direct connections between *Moby-Dick* and *Under the Volcano*, Lowry ties together Melville and *In Ballast to the White Sea*. The fire that Lowry mentions when he describes the absence of *Moby-Dick* from his house is the fire that destroyed the manuscript of *In Ballast*. Its insertion into Lowry’s account of his esrtwhile copy of *Moby-Dick* is strange, because the fire did not destroy that book. The fire appears seemingly because of the association between Melville and *In Ballast*, which, Lowry mentions in the October letter, “In Ballast, the book that was burned, was written in 1934, when though I identified myself to some extent with Melville, by God, I had not the intelligence to understand the passages you quote, believe it or not!” (*Sursum* 2:288).⁷ By inserting the fire into the story of his *Moby-Dick*, Lowry implies that the fire both destroyed *In Ballast* and purged Melville’s presence from his house, even as the fire and the loss (via gifting) of *Moby-Dick* were entirely separate events. In Lowry’s reconstruction, the destruction of *In Ballast* is aligned with the destruction of the physical evidence of the influence of Melville’s writing on Lowry’s own books. Lowry could thus maintain that “the identification on my side, if any, was with Melville and his life,” rather than with Melville’s work (*Sursum* 2:207).

This obfuscation about his knowledge of *Moby Dick* makes it difficult to trust Lowry’s claims about when he first read *Redburn*. Writing in 1943 to the Canadian writer and filmmaker Gerald Noxon, whom he had met at Cambridge, Lowry mentions having “read, for the first time, *Redburn*, the chronicle of Melville’s first voyage” (*Sursum*, 1:429). He repeated a similar claim to Pethick in August 1950, observing that while he himself had described the Nelson Monument on Liverpool’s Exchange Flags in *In Ballast* that Melville

⁷ Only Pethick’s July letter Lowry survives where he describes some similarities between Lowry and Melville, but it remains unclear if Lowry is answering that letter or another, and consequently, to which passage from Melville Lowry is referring.

also depicts in *Redburn*, “I hadn’t read *Redburn* then” (*Sursum*, 2:277). It is hard to believe Lowry here. It is true that for many of *In Ballast*’s direct quotations from *Redburn*, Lowry could have relied on Mumford’s 1929 biography, which Lowry scholar Chris Ackerley suggests was the source of the quotation from Melville’s “Pebbles” that also appears in the text (23). However, the extent of Lowry’s engagement with the Liverpool section of *Redburn*, which I discuss in detail below, makes it unlikely that Lowry was familiar with Mumford alone. As a teenager, Lowry could have got hold of a copy of *Redburn*: three editions were published in Britain between 1922 and 1925, when Lowry was in his teens and avidly consuming sailor stories.⁸ Furthermore, Lowry was at the height of his Melville obsession when at work on *In Ballast*, a fact he downplayed in 1950 by writing that he “identified myself *to some extent* with Melville” (italics mine). Gabriel adds that while writing *In Ballast*, “we ‘lived’ at the New York Public Library” (78). It is difficult to imagine that in the midst of writing a novel with a section set in Liverpool that directly referenced Melville, Lowry did not take time to look in a well-stocked library for a copy of *Redburn*. Indeed, the reference to *Redburn*’s “gaff-topsail-boots” that the editors of *In Ballast* identify in Chapter 3 is so specific that Lowry may even have been writing with a copy of *Redburn* close by (Lowry, *In Ballast*, 39).

Furthermore, Lowry’s first novel *Ultramarine* (1933) was also a reworking of *Redburn* that tells the story of a first voyage from Liverpool, rather than to Liverpool. Like Wellingborough *Redburn* and like Lowry himself, the protagonist Dana Hilliott is a middle-class young man who ships as an ordinary seaman, and is mocked by the crew for his inexperience and perceived airs.⁹ The publication of *Ultramarine* also marked the start of Lowry’s anxieties about being accused of plagiarism, which may explain why he claimed to

⁸ London editions were published by Constable in 1922, Johnathan Cape in 1924, and Jarrolds in 1925. For a list of early twentieth century editions of *Redburn*, see Gilman 366.

⁹ Dana Hilliott is almost certainly named for Richard H. Dana Jr., author of *Two Years Before the Mast* (1840), another American sea-narrative that Lowry enjoyed.

have read *Redburn* after both that novel and *In Ballast* were written, despite *Redburn*'s evident influence on both.¹⁰ These anxieties are displayed in *In Ballast* itself. The protagonist, Sigbjørn Tarnmoor, is deeply unsettled by finding a novel by a Norwegian writer, William Erikson, that is identical to the novel that Sigbjørn himself is planning. Although Erikson is most obviously a cipher for the Norwegian writer Nordahl Greig, whose *The Ship Sails On* (1924, English translation 1927) was another inspiration for *Ultramarine*, the letters that Sigbjørn writes, but does not send, to Erikson borrow from Melville's letters to Nathaniel Hawthorne. Lowry begins Sigbjørn's first letter by quoting Melville's "Whence came you, Hawthorne?", later transforming it into "Whence came you Benjamin?" (the hero of Erikson's novel) (Lowry, *In Ballast*, 42, 52). If *In Ballast* displays Lowry's anxieties about Greig's influence, then it simultaneously displays anxieties around the influence of Melville. Indeed, Lowry wrote in 1951 that Sigbjørn's book was "a sort of Moby Dick" though "concerned less with whales than with the fate of the individual living characters" on the ship (*Sursum* 2:418).

Lowry's fears of being caught plagiarizing resonate with Elizabeth Renker's reading of Melville's "anxieties about his printed sources" and about *Typee* being "made of written marks and not of the world of experience" (Renker 16).¹¹ They also explain Lowry's efforts to burn the evidence of his reading of Melville – in letters, if not in fact – and why never tried to rewrite *In Ballast*, and never asked his ex-wife for the copy he had left with her mother.¹² The result of Lowry's actions, or lack thereof, is that scholars have accepted Lowry's

¹⁰ Lowry was concerned that *Ultramarine* would be received as derivative of Aiken's, *Blue Voyage* (1927), and Nordahl Grieg's *The Ship Sails On* (1924, English translation 1927), which I discuss further below. Lowry feared being called a plagiarist throughout his life, but especially after he was accused of imitating Charles R. Jackson's *The Lost Weekend* (1944) in *Under the Volcano*, despite Lowry's novel having been accepted before Jackson's was published.

¹¹ Renker's account of Melville's intense psychological responses to his methods of composition is very similar to Sherrill Grace's description of Lowry as "obsessed with, haunted by, yet thoroughly devoted to, the idea of plagiarism" (103).

¹² McCarthy suggests that Lowry did not simply forget the earlier manuscript, but "preferred the legend of the tragically burnt novel to the difficulties of revising an incomplete typescript" especially of "a novel that was closely associated with *Ultramarine*, which by then he had disowned" (xxi).

assertion that he cared more for Melville's life more than his works, and have read his borrowings from Melville as homages by a devoted fan, rather than serious critical engagement. The recovered text of *In Ballast* complicates this position as the book functions as sustained analysis of the Liverpool segments of *Redburn*. Tracing Lowry's re-writings of Melville reveals that this analysis *Redburn* centers on Melville's representation of Liverpool as a place that is both real-and-imagined, in which the physical cityscape acts as a palimpsest for various times, embodies places other than itself. Reading *In Ballast* alongside and as criticism of *Redburn* thus reveals Melville's understanding of modernity as a spatial phenomenon, and Melville's experimental techniques for rendering this phenomenon in prose.

Reading *Redburn* in *In Ballast to the White Sea*

In Ballast to the White Sea opens in Cambridge in the early 1930s, where undergraduate Sigbjørn Tarnmoor – son of a Liverpool shipping company owner and his late Norwegian wife, and version of Lowry – is set adrift by disturbing events. First, he discovers Erikson's novel and begins to question the uniqueness of his own experiences. Second, two liners from his father's shipping company sink with large loss of life, and in circumstances that suggest that the company is putting profit before safety. Sigbjørn discusses the wrecks with his older brother Tor, arguing that they are "supernatural manifestations of some kind, of change, or revolution," amidst civil war in Spain and the rise of fascism in Germany and Italy (Lowry, *In Ballast* 29). The brothers quarrel about the nature of evil, and about Nina, a young woman whom they have both pursued romantically; Tor tells Sigbjørn that he is contemplating committing suicide, and Sigbjørn, angered, challenges him to do so. Tor then kills himself, and Sigbjørn returns home to Liverpool to see his father. Here, he also meets Nina, who is leaving for America, and they discuss the political and social turmoil in Europe. Sigbjørn

signs on as a trimmer on a ship sailing from Preston to Archangel – hence the novel’s title – but the ship is diverted to Aalesund [Ålesund], Norway, leading Sigbjørn to a disappointing meeting with Erikson in Oslo with which the novel concludes.

Echoes of *Redburn* are visible even in this brief summary. Both novels address grief, the relationship between fathers and sons, the nature of experience, and the fate of the individual in an unfeeling, globalized and unstable world. Along with these broad connections between the two texts, *In Ballast* engages with *Redburn* at a more detailed level, as Lowry uses Melville’s real life visits to the city in 1837 and 1857, and *Redburn* to scaffold the Liverpool section of his text. Sigbjørn walks around the city, first with his father and then alone, wracked with grief and guilt over Tor’s suicide, confused by his feelings for Nina, uncertain about his father’s role in the shipping disasters, and anxious about the fate of the world and his place in it. Although described by Lowry as “aimless”, Sigbjørn’s walks retrace Redburn’s “prosy strolls” around the city (Lowry, *In Ballast* 63; Melville, *Redburn* 151). Like Redburn, Sigbjørn and his father set out from the statue of Nelson on Exchange Flags. They follow Redburn down Dale Street and Lord Street, even encountering a “mass worker’s meeting” that substitutes for the crowd around Melville’s “pale, hollow-eyed” Chartist (Lowry, *In Ballast* 64; Melville, *Redburn* 205). Where Redburn walked to trace the footsteps of his dead father, Sigbjørn traces Redburn’s footsteps alongside his father and faces the loss of the man he believed his father to be.

In Ballast positions Melville as a writer who maps metaphysical questioning onto his existence in and trajectories through the physical world. As father and son stand at the foot of the Nelson Monument, Captain Tarnmoor uses *Moby-Dick* to speculate on the existence of a “blind malicious force” in the world, a question that Sigbjørn and Tor debated earlier (Lowry *In Ballast*, 60). He then suddenly observes, “By the way, Melville stood here, wandered about here, in this very place. Liverpool,” before suggesting that *Moby-Dick* may have

“start[ed] here where his great creator wandered” (60-61). This alignment of Melville’s philosophy with the places he inhabited is distinct from Lawrence’s reading of Melville, which sharply distinguishes between man and author.¹³ It does, however, echo the biographical readings of Weaver and Mumford. These studies took *Redburn* as autobiography, inserting extracts into their accounts of Melville’s real first voyage to Liverpool in 1837. Captain Tarnmoor similarly amalgamates Melville and Redburn, when he observes of Melville that “the *Baltimore Clipper* disillusioned him. Riddough’s Hotel, where his father had stayed, and which he couldn’t find – and where was it anyhow? – what was the next embitterment? The starving woman in the cotton warehouse” (61). Mumford’s biography, which begins with a chapter called “Bitter Morning,” likely influenced Lowry’s reading of Melville’s “embitterment,” but Weaver also describes *Redburn* as “written in embittered memory” (Weaver, *Mariner*, 79). Lowry differs by making *Redburn* and Liverpool central to Melville’s creative trajectory and his attention to the text’s representation of place. The Revival critics read *Redburn* as an autobiographical account of boyhood, and, in a large part, a book for boys themselves.¹⁴ Lowry, instead, reads *Redburn* as a mature aesthetic achievement, and a novel about the nature of space and place in a globalized world.

In both quoting from *Redburn*’s account of Liverpool and mirroring Melville’s techniques for depicting the city as a real-and-imagined place, Lowry implicitly frames *Redburn* as an interrogation of space in modernity. He thus anticipates Wyn Kelley and Robert Tally’s more extended criticisms of the novel as an exploration of the changing nature of urban space, and its illegibility and resistance to mapping (Kelley 125-31; Tally 109-113). Lowry echoes Melville’s depiction of Liverpool as what Michel Foucault would later define as a “heterotopia:” a real place (unlike a utopia), but one that is “capable of juxtaposing [...]

¹³ Lawrence argued that Melville “the artist was so *much* greater than the man. The man is a rather tiresome New Englander of the ethical, mystical, transcendental sort” (146).

¹⁴ Both Weaver and Mumford refer to the English poet John Masefield, who described *Redburn* as “a boy’s book about running away to sea” but also his favourite of Melville’s works (Weaver 79).

several spaces, several sites that are themselves incompatible (Foucault, 25). Melville's descriptions of Liverpool resonate with Foucault's description, and connect the city's heterotopic qualities to its place at the centre of global commerce. In his remapping of Melville's Liverpool, Lowry mirrors both Melville's vision of Liverpool and the techniques through which he achieves it.

Rendered through a combination of specific local detail and spatial hybridity, Melville's Liverpool is both somewhere and elsewhere. Drawing on the real *Picture of Liverpool* (1808) and his first-hand knowledge of the city, Melville weaves intricate descriptions of Liverpool's cityscape into Redburn's walks around the town. Yet at the same time, Redburn is disappointed to find that Liverpool's warehouses look like those on "South Street, in New York" and articles sold in the market look resemble those at "Fulton Market, New York" (Melville, *Redburn* 127, 203). Rather than a special relationship with New York, these observations form part of Liverpool's more general capacity to embody other places. This heterotopic quality is exemplified by its docks, each of which is both "a walled town" and "an epitome of the world" (165). The dock walls are great "China walls of masonry," while the docks themselves "recall the great American chain of lakes" (161). Elsewhere, the plan of Liverpool in Redburn's guidebook is "like the map of Boston, Massachusetts" (152), and Redburn describes viewing the Old Dock, now filled in with stone, "with a feeling somewhat akin to the Eastern traveller standing on the brink of the Dead Sea. For here the doom of Gomorrah seemed reversed, and a lake had been converted into substantial stone and water" (158-59). It is the modernity of the city – its recent developments, such as the docks and the warehouses, and its commercial spaces – that most provokes these dizzying distillations of the global into the local. Melville maps the spatial compression and connectivity of global commerce onto the structures that such commerce engenders and on

which it relies, projecting a changing experience of space in modernity through the fabric of the built environment.

Following *Redburn*, *In Ballast* merges Liverpool's architecture into that of other places as Sigbjørn walks in Redburn's footsteps. The buildings function like the ships that leave from port, connecting the city to other locations around the globe. After watching a film about the Russian Revolution in a local cinema, Sigbjørn walks with his father "down past the Washington Hotel to the isthmus of Manchester Street, a vision of Leningrad still super-imposed upon Liverpool in his mind's eye" (Lowry, *In Ballast* 69). The description of Manchester Street as an "isthmus" emphasises Liverpool's blurring of the boundary between land and sea. Although the "super-imposed" images evoke the dissolve transitions of film, they also recall Melville's depictions of the cityscape. Only moments later observing a crowd of working men "drifting down towards the Mersey", Sigbjørn is violently reminded of the "procession of the cripples, the halt, and the lamed at Lourdes," that he sees as symbolic of the "halting gait of the old world," heading towards revolution, destruction or both (69). By layering places at the clash of the old and new, Sigbjørn condenses the wider instability and decay in the Western world into Liverpool, just as he believes that Tarnmoor shipping disasters presage greater, global tragedy. But at the same time, Lowry echoes Melville's alignment of spatial hybridity and multiplicity with the march of modernity.

If Lowry implicitly echoes Melville's descriptions of Liverpool as somewhere and elsewhere, he explicitly references *Redburn* when exploring the city as a real-and-imagined place. Through Melville, Lowry renders the built environment as a palimpsest that allows moments of contact between the Liverpool of the novel's present and its real and fictionalized pasts. On his second walk around this city, this time alone, Sigbjørn enters the Baltimore Clipper, the tavern in which Redburn resides while in Liverpool. Sitting "with the ghosts of Melville and Redburn to keep him company," Sigbjørn observes that "the tavern had scarcely

changed since Melville's day" (Lowry, *In Ballast* 80, 81). Lowry blurs past and present when Sigbjørn observes the Clipper's "walls covered with a paper representing an endless procession [sic] of vessels of all nations circumnavigating the apartment," weaving Melville's words into his novel (*In Ballast* 81; Melville, *Redburn* 133). Lowry's choice to borrow the description of the wallpaper's "vessels of all nations" emphasizes Liverpool's place as a hub of global capital in both the mid-nineteenth and the first third of the twentieth-century. But the focus on "wallpaper" also introduces the idea of the city as a palimpsest, in which one moment in time is layered over another, allowing past "layers" to peek through. Sigbjørn experiences the Clipper as a confluence of its physical reality and its representation by Melville, and it is through this moment of contact between his present and Melville's fictional past that Sigbjørn confronts the "decay at the centre of it all," that is, the "breakdown" of the entire capitalist world order than seems to be encapsulated in the city and in the (possibly deliberate) wreckage of his father's ships.

As well as borrowing from Melville's text, Lowry also borrows one of Melville's techniques for representing Liverpool: a synthesis of representation and reality that transforms Liverpool into something like a simulacra. Sigbjørn tests his Liverpool against Melville's, finding the Clipper "just as [Melville] had written," with representation preceding, and setting the standard for, reality (Lowry, *In Ballast* 81). In doing so, he echoes the subordination of reality to representation that begins in *Redburn* when the Highlander pulls into port. Through concentrated study of his father's guidebook, Redburn has "so impressed every column and cornice [of Liverpool] in my mind" that he has "no doubt of recognizing the originals in a moment," but as he approaches the city this distinction between printed "impression" and the physical "original" falters (Melville, *Redburn* 151). As the Highlander approaches port, Redburn peers into the Mersey mist, "trying to summon up some image of Liverpool, to see how the reality would answer to my conceit" (126). Like the outline of the city, the meaning

of this sentence is ambiguous. The “image of Liverpool” might be the real city that Redburn is attempting to see through the mist so that he can compare it to his “conceit,” but it might just as easily be an “image” conjured in his mind’s eye, that he plans to compare to the real city in front of him. Even as Redburn attempts to divide and compare Liverpool’s representation and reality, he articulates the impossibility of separating the two.

The co-mingling of representation and reality continues after Redburn enters Liverpool. Although he recognises the Lyceum immediately, Redburn stands “awhile on the opposite side of the street, gazing at my picture [in his guidebook], and then at its original” (Melville, *Redburn* 207), experiencing the Lyceum by viewing reality and image simultaneously. The overlap between representation and reality becomes more disorienting, when Redburn encounters a Moorish arch constructed in a railway tunnel on the edge of the city, and is overcome by “an undefinable feeling, that I had previously seen the whole thing before. Yet how could that be? Certainly, I had never been in Liverpool before” (206). Redburn experiences the real city as a replication, and only finds an explanation for this curious sensation when, after returning to America, he is “glancing over an old number of the Penny Magazine” and sees “a picture of the place to the life; and remembered having seen the same print years previous” (206). Lowry’s scene in the Baltimore Clipper echoes this moment in which Liverpool’s circulation in print creates an uncanny sense of *deja-vu*.

As he leaves the Tavern, Sigbjørn asks “which way would you go, Melville, if you were alive?” (Lowry, *In Ballast* 83). The question is metaphorical and literal: should Sigbjørn seek out Erikson, will he become a writer, and what does his future hold, but also should he go to sea, and where and how can he locate himself in Liverpool, and this new world? But the question is also yet another reworking of Melville’s “whence come you, Hawthorne?” reinforcing that, for Lowry, Melville was a writer who “identified himself” with Hawthorne, in the same way that Sigbjørn identified himself with Erikson, and Sigbjørn and Lowry identify

themselves with Melville (Melville, *Correspondence* 212, Lowry, *In Ballast* 42). Lowry's mapping of creative legacies through intertextual reference is an anxious response to his own concerns around plagiarism, but it is also an insightful response to Melville's works. Lowry celebrates Melville without claiming his absolute originality, a claim that Weaver, Mumford and Lawrence make insistently. In contrast, by mapping the relationship between Sigbjørn and Erikson onto the relationship between Melville and Hawthorne, Lowry locates Melville as a literary imitator, even as he models *In Ballast* on *Redburn*. Although Lowry was unlikely to have known about Melville's extensive use of source materials when he wrote *In Ballast*, he seems to have recognized Melville as a writer who, like himself, created "an echo-chamber of voices, real and fictional" through borrowings, allusions and imitations (Grace 111).¹⁵

The idea of Melville as both imitator and model to be imitated is central to one substantial difference between the Liverpool sections of Melville and Lowry's novels. While *Redburn* finds it impossible to retrace his father's footsteps, Sigbjørn navigates by following in Melville's. Upon leaving the tavern Sigbjørn daydreams a distorted version of the conversation between Melville and Hawthorne that took place when Melville visited Hawthorne in Liverpool in 1857. Playing the part of Melville, Sigbjørn blurs the voice of a Cambridge undergraduate with Hawthorne's report of Melville's speech, and lines from *Moby-Dick*: "the truth is, old fellow, my tripos – sorry, hypos! – has the upper hand of me again, once more I bring up the read of every funeral I meet...The truth is I had pretty well made up my mind to be annihilated. I -" (Lowry, *In Ballast* 84).¹⁶ However, just as Liverpool, Sigbjørn and even Lowry's text, with its dashes and incompletions, threaten to collapse into the "breakdown" on which Sigbjørn has fixated, Melville provides a way to traverse this heterotopic cityscape. Through the imagined conversation, Sigbjørn arrives "facing the ocean" and realises he must

¹⁵ *In Ballast* predates Charles Anderson's documenting of Melville's sources for his South Sea narratives and Willard Thorp's identification of the real *Picture of Liverpool*.

¹⁶ A "Tripos" is a series of examinations that a Cambridge student takes to qualify for bachelor's degree.

go forward to sea and to Erikson, answering his earlier question about which way to go (84). The chapter resolves to a point of stability, as Sigbjørn comes back to the real world, physically angled towards the voyage to Norway, and recites some (misquoted) lines from Melville's "Pebbles." The moment at which Sigbjørn orients himself in Liverpool's heterotopia, and in the tumultuous world that the city embodies, is the moment at he comes closest to Melville, not only following in his footsteps, but reciting his words. Echoing "The Lee Shore" from *Moby-Dick*, Sigbjørn realises that there is no "succor" for him in port; caught in the gale of circumstance, his only choice is to go to sea. Moreover, it is Melville who has both directed Sigbjørn towards the sea, and helped him plot a course through the unsafe Liverpool shore, just as Melville's efforts at writing the city guide Lowry's representations of it almost a century later.

Reading back from *In Ballast* to *Redburn* shows how Lowry used *Redburn* a guidebook for mapping experiences of modernity onto the contours of place in the early twentieth century. To do so, Lowry had to understand Melville as a theorist of space and place. Lowry thus gives a different reading from critics like Weaver and Mumford, even as his own engagements with Melville are shaped by their works. Although Lowry does not altogether depart from an autobiographical approach to *Redburn*, he positions *Redburn* as a novel about the experience of place in a globalized world, rather than a text about boyhood. In doing so, he anticipates the concerns of later critics, suggesting that spatially-oriented readings of Melville have a pre-history that scholars have not yet traced.

At the same time, Lowry's layering of Melville's representation of Liverpool with Sigbjørn's experiences in the present call attention to moments at which a similar blurring of representation and reality takes place in *Redburn*, and which critics have overlooked in favour of more prominent spatial set pieces in which the physical city diverges from its representation in *Redburn*'s guidebook. Rather than concentrating on how Liverpool defies representation,

Lowry's reading of *Redburn* is one in which Liverpool exists as representation as much as reality, for *Redburn* as well as for Sigbjørn. In this reading, *Redburn* is a more experimental work than most critics, from the Revival to the present, have suggested. Such a reading might provide a starting point for charting as yet unexplored connections between *Redburn* and Melville's other writings: reading Liverpool as a prototype for the real-and-imagined Jerusalem of *Clarel* (1876), or *Redburn* itself as a trial for the proto-postmodern techniques Melville would develop in *The Confidence-Man* (1857). Recovering *In Ballast*, therefore, both reveals a new line of Melville reception in the early twentieth-century and opens up new avenues for scholars of the present.

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