PORT TOWNS AND URBAN CULTURES

International Histories of the Waterfront, c.1700—2000

Edited by BRAD BEAVEN, KARL BELL and ROBERT JAMES

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Brad Beaven • Karl Bell • Robert James
Editors

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Port Towns & Urban Cultures www.porttowns.port.ac.uk
September 2015

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Notes on Contributors

Brad Beaven is a Reader in Social and Cultural History at the University of Portsmouth. He has written widely on British popular culture in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He is the author of two monographs *Leisure, Citizenship and Working Class Men, 1850–1945* and *Visions of Empire. Patriotism, Popular Culture and the City, 1870–1939*. He leads the University of Portsmouth's Port Towns & Urban Cultures research group and is currently working on London's sailortown during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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Jo Byrne has recently completed her PhD in History at the University of Hull's Maritime Historical Studies Centre, focussing upon Hull's distant-water trawl fishery in the aftermath of the 1976 Cod Wars. Her work is interdisciplinary, embracing cultural geography and heritage curatorship. She has 20 years of professional experience as a heritage and built environment practitioner, with roles including project management, advice, policy, and outreach. Although diverse, Jo's work is linked by the themes of time and place and she has a keen interest in the contribution of cultural heritage to 'sense of place' and social well-being.

Paul Gilchrist is Senior Lecturer in Human Geography in the School of Environment and Technology at the University of Brighton. His research focusses on the geographies of sport, leisure, and popular culture. He has published on a range of themes, including leisure theory and the social regulation of public space, countercultural and lifestyle sport, histories of mountaineering, and the politics of countryside recreation. He is co-editor of *The Politics of Sport: Community, Mobility, Identity* (2011) and *Coastal Cultures: Liminality and Leisure* (2014). His current research, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, investigates the cultural heritage of European minor waterways and canals.

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Hanna Hagmark-Cooper is the director of the Åland Maritime Museum on the Åland Islands. She has a BA from the University of Lund in Sweden and an MA and PhD from the University of Hull, UK. She has published several articles and two books. Her latest book, *To Be a Sailor's Wife,* was published in 2012. In 2014 she was a visiting research fellow at Greenwich Maritime Institute, University of Greenwich, UK. Her current research explores the changing ideas of fatherhood in the late twentieth century and its impact on seafarers becoming fathers in the 1970s and 1980s.

Isaac Land is an Associate Professor of History at Indiana State University. He is the author of *War, Nationalism, and the British Sailor, 1750–1850* and writes the Coastal History Blog for the Port Towns and Urban Cultures website.

Tomas Nilson received his doctorate in 2004 from the University of Gothenburg. He is now senior lecturer at Halmstad University and an affiliate at the Department of Historical Studies at the University of Gothenburg. He wrote his thesis on Swedish businessmen, social networks, and ideas of success in the period 1890–1920. Nilson has written about technology transfer between Sweden and Britain in the 1850s and on 'techno-images' in Swedish technological journals. Lately his interest has turned towards maritime history. He has published articles on fictional descriptions of sailors and life at sea during the interwar period, sailor tattoos as an identity marker, and views on seafarers held by the consular services and the Seaman´s Mission. He is now co-editing a textbook on Swedish maritime history, due for publication spring 2016.

Tytti Steel PhD is an ethnologist and a postdoc researcher at the University of Helsinki. Her research interests include maritime working life, intersectionality, multisensory experiences, and collaborative ethnography. Tytti Steel has worked as a curator at the Maritime Museum of Finland.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Brad Beaven, Karl Bell, and Robert James

The cultural life of port towns has largely remained a hidden history. Ports, as liminal urban spaces where communities lived and worked, have been foreshadowed by conventional historiography that analyses these for their global trade and imperial networks.[1] However, the waterfront was the intersection of maritime and urban space and the port town was often a unique site of cultural exchange that both reinforced and challenged local, national and imperial boundaries.[2]

The aim of this book, through the exploration of a series of ports from around the globe, is to advance our understanding of how the port was a crucible for the forging of distinctive urban and maritime identities. Moreover, it will examine the port's relationship with its urban hinterland together with the cultural connections that may have existed between international ports. Ports commonly shared land-based maritime districts or 'sailortowns' that

[1] Jackson, G. (2000), 'Ports 1700-1840', in P. Clark (ed.) *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain. Volume II, 1540–1840*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 705–731.

[2] Leggett, D. (2011), 'Review essay: Navy, Nation and Identity in the Long Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Maritime Research*, 13,152; Broeze, F. (1985), 'Port Cities: The Search for an Identity.' *Journal of Urban History*, 11:2, 209–225.

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were associated with drink, sex and money lending services.[3] These localities were populated with cheap boarding houses, brothels and 'low' entertainment venues that were usually concentrated along one main thoroughfare. Thus, for example, London's Ratcliffe Highway, Gothenburg's Herring Street and Hamburg's Hopfenstrasse acquired, among seamen, an international notoriety.[4] Sailortowns' pubs and boarding houses also enabled sailors to tap into a maritime network of shipping news, job opportunities and local information that they relied upon to navigate themselves around their temporary urban home. However, this transient and international workforce, which was concentrated in streets close to the waterfront, provoked fears that sailortowns operated beyond the moral boundaries of civic life.[5] One religious missionary of Portsmouth's Queen Street claimed that 'if you have penetrated into the dens of lust and violence which are closely packed within the slice of brick and mortar that lies between St George's Street and Queen Street, your head will have been sickened'. He added that the district had become 'infamous from the Baltic to Japan'.[6] Sailortowns, then, exuded 'otherness' where visitors were confronted with a strange urban-maritime culture that was both exotic and dangerous. This book will seek to uncover the social and cultural dimension of port life and the shared maritime traditions that linked port town cultures.

In reviewing the literature on seafarers, Robert Lee has called for research to focus on the seafarers' urban world as both urban and maritime historians have tended to neglect sailors' familial ties and social relationships with those ashore.[7] Instead, historians have been more inclined to explore ports through tracking their urban and commercial development. Indeed, ports have traditionally presented historians with an opportunity to analyse global business and trade networks and the importance of imperial systems. Recently, Karen Wigen has noted that 'when not ignored altogether,

[3] Hugill, S. (1967), *Sailortown* (London: Routledge Kegan Paul), p. xviii.

[4] Hugill, *Sailortown*, p. 140; note on terminology: while recent commentators favour the use of 'seafarer', contemporaries such as Charles Booth and census enumerators consistently employed the term seamen or sailors. See Moon. L, (2015), 'Sailorhoods': sailors and sailortown in the port of Portsmouth c. 1850–1900 (University of Portsmouth, unpublished PhD thesis), pp. 11–12.

[5] Bell, K. (2014), 'Civic spirits? Ghost lore and civic narratives in nineteenth century Portsmouth', *Cultural and Social History*, 11: 1, 51–68; Beaven, B. (2015), 'The Resilience of Sailortown Culture in English Naval Ports, c. 1820–1900', *Urban History*, 43: 1, Feb 2016, pp. 72–95. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0963926815000140

[6] Shutte, R. N. (1866), *The Mission of the Good Shepherd* (Portsea), p. 2.

[7] Lee, R. (2013), 'The Seafarer´s Urban World: A Critical Review', *Journal of Maritime History*, 25: 23, 27.

maritime topics are routinely relegated to subfields on shipping or migration, pirates or fisheries'.[8] Likewise Gordon Jackson's historiographical study on ports found that most histories focussed on the development of port facilities, port-based industries, trade, labour and urban elites as the key areas that historians have focussed upon.[9] More recently, ports have taken a greater prominence in imperial, Atlantic and global histories. For example, Sheryllynne Haggerty et al.'s recent edited volume on Liverpool argued that the city's important connection with the colonies in trade, business, commerce and culture had been consistently underplayed. This significant collection of essays demonstrates how the city's port placed Liverpool at the heart of an international imperial system.[10]

Thus, the history of ports has traditionally been researched from a mercantile perspective and focussed on the connections between European and transatlantic ports through the analysis of trading routes and business ties.[11] This overwhelming emphasis on the merchant port has ensured that the cultural history of naval ports has largely been neglected. The bias towards the merchant seamen ashore has been compounded by the widespread assumption that naval sailors' influence in port towns was minimal.[12] Jackson has argued that because 'sailors were only drafted into the navy during wartime there was no proportionally large band of them within dockyard populations'.[13] Moreover, urban and maritime historians have tended to leave naval history largely in the hands of naval historians whose research interests invariably lie in the organisation and mobilisation of military personnel.[14] This book intends to break down this dichotomy

[8] Bentley J. H., Bridenthal, R. and Wigen, K. (eds.) (2007), *Seascapes: Maritime Histories, Littoral Cultures, and Transoceanic Exchanges* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii), p. 1.

[9] Jackson, 'Ports 1700-1840', pp. 705–731.

[10] Haggerty, S., Webster, A. and White, N. J. (eds.) (2008), *Empire in One City? Liverpool's Inconvenient Imperial Past* (Manchester: Manchester University Press).

[11] Jackson, 'Ports 1700-1840', pp. 705–731.

[12] Leggett, 'Review essay: Navy, Nation and Identity', 152.

[13] Jackson, 'Ports 1700-1840', 721.

[14] Rodger, N. A. M. (1986), *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London: Collins); McKee, C. (2002), *Sober Men and True: Sailor Lives in the Royal Navy, 1900–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). However, a new historiography is beginning to emerge as Mary Conley and Jan Rüger have explored the nature of naval authority, the ritual and pageantry of shipbuilding and the creation of the naval sailor as a late nineteenth century imperial icon. See Rüger, J. (2007), *The Great Naval Game. Britain and Germany in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Conley, M. A. (2009), *From Jack Tar to Union Jack. Representing Naval Manhood in the British Empire*,

within maritime history and draw upon case studies in both merchant and naval ports to explore the contrasts and connections between maritime communities and their urban hinterlands.[15]

This book will offer a new and challenging perspective on the port by exploring the formation of port town identities through a range of cultural forms in a variety of national settings. It will focus on the two core themes: (i) the nature of urban-maritime cultures, and (ii) representations of the port town. In doing so it highlights the ports' intriguing liminal nature, located as they are at the border of land and sea. Through its broad, international focus, this book will demonstrate how port towns were open to a rich array of cultural exchanges derived from both domestic terrestrial and transnational maritime influences.

The two thematic sections are ordered chronologically. Demonstrative of the collection's wide-ranging geographical and temporal scope, the chapters journey from eighteenth-century South Africa to mid- and late twentieth-century Scandinavia, by way of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European and Antipodean port towns. They are also demonstrative of the innovative ways in which the contributors have attempted to locate and reveal the multitudinous voices, experiences, and understandings of port towns across time and around the world. The contributors draw upon a rich array of sources to facilitate this, including police and judicial records, local and regional press reports, accounts from morality campaigners and social investigators, ecclesiastical commentary, songs, maritime and urban 'superstitions', civic celebrations and ceremony, architectural styles, tourist guides, and the oral and written testimony of port town inhabitants. As such this collection advances multifarious models of, and approaches to, the port town as a dynamic cultural nexus. Unlike previous urban and maritime histories of ports, this book argues for the value of understanding port towns as cultural entities in their own right, shaped by their geographical locality and cultural plurality, as something more than simple nodal points in broader national and transnational economic networks.

Urban-Maritime Cultures

This first theme explores the nature and character of land-based maritime culture, its often idiosyncratic fusion of domestic and transnational influences, and the exchanges and interaction between seafarers, local

1870–1918 (Manchester: Manchester University Press); Redford, D. (2010), *The Submarine: A Cultural History from the Great War to Nuclear Combat* (London: Tauris).

[15] Konvitz, J. (1993), 'Port Cities and Urban History', *Journal of Urban History*, 193:3, 115–120.

landlubbers and the port hinterland. While the notion of sailors ashore still remains something of an underexamined issue in maritime historiography, the chapters in this section demonstrate a broader, more ambitious engagement with the liminality of port towns, probing the ways in which their cultures were constructed from within and without, from the influences of land and sea.

Urban-maritime cultures were not necessarily as schizophrenic as the term may first suggest. Port towns formed a cultural confluence through which flowed and churned concerns and attitudes drawn from both inland and the sea. They frequently embodied the outflow of ideas from the hinterland, acting as sites where the flotsam of contemporary anxieties relating to developing urbanisation gathered. Given their (often justified) reputation for hard drinking, prostitution, and an exuberant and excessive leisure culture, port towns often provoked an intensified fear and response from national and local authorities concerning familiar issues such as public health and immorality, particularly if they threatened commerce or naval efficiency. Yet at the same time they also drew concerns relating to the inward flow of a multitude of maritime influences, drawn from the vast, shared continents of the oceans. As points of ingress from and egress to the wider world, they were sites for facilitating the dynamic exchange of goods, services (legal and illicit), ideas, beliefs, stories, and potentially less desirable things such as epidemic diseases; they marked the transition from work to leisure, from confinement to temporary liberation, and vice versa. As places of homecoming they were locations where their land-bound communities frequently looked out to the water and dwelt upon the risks of maritime endeavours, while mariners looked to the land for its promise of safe return, comparative liberty, and pleasures often long denied.

This confluence of outward and inward dynamics energised port town localities, granting them a distinctive cultural richness and vitality. Urban-maritime cultures offer the historian an opportunity to explore where cultural influences come from, how they variously jarred or merged in specific spatial localities, and ultimately how they become part of a gestalt culture embodied within the life experiences and representative imaginings of port towns. They illustrate how maritime practices and mentalities seeped into the city and how seafarers took their land-learned cultures with them to sea. Urban-maritime cultures are sites where domestic and far-flung foreign cultures from overseas met and cross-fertilised.

A number of themes emerge from the chapters in this section. These include a persistent, underlying concern with urban anxieties and maritime

'otherness', tensions between the cultures within sailortowns and the broader, authoritative urban power structures in which they coexisted, and the frequently fluid nature of personal and collective identities in the waterfront city. Firstly then, port town cultures were simultaneously constructed from within and without, generating iconic representations (both positive and negative) that derived from, but also vied with, the realities of lived urban-maritime experiences. Paul Gilchrist's exploration of song writing and maritime cultures in nineteenth-century Newcastle considers the shaping of social attitudes towards and representations of sailors, and the relationships between the everyday experiences of life in a port town and life at sea. Through its overview of poetry and song written by maritime workers, the chapter shows how sailors enjoyed a dual position from local versifiers, as both object of attachment and patriotism while also being subject to comic description and satire. Karl Bell's chapter explores the role of religion and religiosity in shaping representations of anxieties and enacted notions of otherness in Victorian Portsmouth. It examines the ways in which the rhetoric of religious authorities and moral reformers helped construct an image of Britain's premier naval town as a godless void, a place of heathen 'depravity'. Moving 'within' the town's community, it then considers Portmuthians' and naval seamen's popular religious mentalities, arguing that this fusion of Christian and 'superstitious' beliefs and practices offered sailors and their land-based families a sense of comfort and control over anxieties about the 'otherness' of life at sea.

The second key theme, the way port town cultures were shaped, negotiated, and policed through a web of civic, popular, moral and local narratives and discourses, is most evident in the contributions from Tomas Nilson and Tytti Steel. Nilson examines sailors and male violence in Gothenburg's sailortowns between 1880 and 1930. During that period Gothenburg became the largest commercial port town in Sweden, mainly due to extensive redevelopment of the harbour to facilitate larger ships. Gothenburg developed at least three different sailortowns during the period of his study. By using police records of the first and fourth precincts (the location of the three sailortowns), Nilson explores the behaviour of seamen ashore, and, more broadly, engages with the public debates concerning alcohol and the activities of the Seamen mission, which informed how those behaviours were viewed, constrained and managed. Steel's essay explores the relationship between sailors and local people in the Finnish cargo harbours of Helsinki and Kotka in the aftermath of the Second World War. Although rather isolated from Western

Europe in this period, Finland's harbours were open places of meeting and exchange between local women and foreign sailors. Steel's examination of the transnational nature of ports illustrate how Finnish women on the waterfront were subjected to complex moral and legal attitudes that forced them to negotiate a fine line between gaining respectability and being suspected of prostitution, and thus being cast permanently as a moral destitute; by engaging with sailors, the maritime 'other', local women risked othering themselves.

Finally, and appropriately to the liminal nature of urban-maritime spaces, port towns were sites of shifting cultural identities. As Nigel Worden, John Griffiths and Tytti Steel demonstrate, this could apply to sailors as they transitioned from sea to land, to the women who had relationships with them, and, more abstractly, to the mutable strength of port towns' imperial allegiances. Worden's study of eighteenth-century Cape Town examines how sailors' identities shifted in the context of being on land or at sea. He argues that, once ashore, sailors were disadvantaged in comparison to their status aboard ship by a lack of kinship contacts, ethnic and linguistic differences resulting from their European origins, and limited experience as transients within a colonial society. Using judicial records, Worden's study of conflict and honour in a colonial port town demonstrates both the transnational and transitional character of sailor culture and identity in the eighteenth-century Atlantic and Indian Ocean worlds. John Griffiths's essay questions the extent to which Antipodean port cities sustained an imperial cultural identity between the 1880s and 1939. Through an exploration of crowd behaviour during the South African War of 1899 to 1902, celebrations on the imperial calendar, imperial loyalty leagues, and the staging of international exhibitions in the port city, Griffiths argues that imperial values implanted themselves in rather shallow soil. Increasingly challenging the cultural influx from the heart of the Commonwealth were the maritime cultural influences of the Pacific, especially from the USA as it increasingly made its presence felt in Antipodean port towns in the era of the Second World War.

Representations and Identities

The second section of the book examines depictions of port towns across the globe, along with the people who lived, worked, visited, and were entertained within their urban-maritime environments. While cultural representations of the port and its inhabitants remain an underdeveloped

theme in urban and maritime history, the chapters in this section portray these maritime spaces as vibrant cultural melting pots where these representations were constructed, disseminated and challenged. The contributors explore how seafarers identified themselves in these land-based environments, as well as the ways in which those living in these port town localities viewed their fixed and transient sailor populations. Identities are, however, forged from 'above' as well as 'below', from 'without' as well as 'within', and these chapters also investigate how outsiders viewed the seafarers and local inhabitants of these port side communities, revealing how they offered cultural representations that spoke at a more national and imperial level, and where the port town communities' sense of 'otherness' was never far from the surface.

Port towns have often been identified as sites of national prestige, principally due to their military or commercial importance, and as such, any questionable activities that took place within them were thrown into sharper relief than if they had occurred in more landlocked regions. Unease and anxiety caused by the raucous and at times criminal behaviour of sailors and local inhabitants in the port towns' sailortown districts, and the authority and power structures that sought to deal with such behaviour, emerge as major themes within this section. Seafarers have long been known for their bawdy and drunken behaviour ashore and port towns have long-standing associations as dens of iniquity where such behaviour thrived, often fostered by the local inhabitants' encouragement for pecuniary benefit. These elements are captured most visibly in Brad Beaven's chapter on Ratcliffe Highway in nineteenth-century London. Drawing on contemporary reports and local newspapers, Beaven describes how social investigators were simultaneously attracted and horrified by the activities taking place in this maritime location, revealing that their explorations into this urban space were often little more than prurient voyeurism of its exotic 'otherness'. Beaven suggests that the shifting attitudes towards bawdy behaviour in this sailortown district over the course of the century operated as a metaphor for changing class and gender relations in Britain at the time. Concerns over coarse behaviour in these sailortown locations were echoed in the naval port town of Plymouth, the subject of Robert James's chapter. James charts the perceived descent of Plymouth's sailortown district into a sink of immoral behaviour that ensured it became the subject of escalating dialogue among social commentators and civic leaders during the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, all of whom were eager to sanitise the types of leisure activity on offer in

the town. However, James shows how changing, more positive, official images of the Royal Navy led to the naval sailor being appropriated in the twentieth century as a cultural symbol in which to foster notions of masculinity and patriotism in the wider port town community.

The mechanisms of authority and control evident in Beaven's and James's chapters are shown to have operated at a more forceful level when dealing with behaviour of a more menacing kind. William M. Taylor's contribution exposes the port town as an ideal site in which fears of criminality could flourish due to the transient nature of much of the local population. However, Taylor reveals that they were equally sites where draconian measures could be taken to protect the maritime space from the dangerous forces that were deemed to prey on its inhabitants and transient communities. Taylor's chapter explores the connections between the port and deviant aspects of material accumulation in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century London, focussing particularly on those engaged in handling cargo in the port, legally or otherwise. He reveals how the construction of the enclosed (walled and secured) docks in the years following the Napoleonic war acted as a 'fortress' to curb any illicit transactions. The authorities' attempts at cleansing these urban-maritime spaces of their less salubrious identities are shown in even greater detail in Vivian Bickford-Smith's chapter examining the work of civic leaders in Durban, South Africa, as they tried to transform the port into a tourist destination between the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries. Bickford-Smith reveals that while the city's tourist guides promoted the port's evidently 'unique' customs and 'local colour', they also greatly sanitised its history, playing down its more sordid past and partly concealing its role as a major port and industrial centre.

Hanna Hagmark-Cooper's contribution examines more positive representations of port town communities by focussing on the network of sailors' wives in the Finnish Aaland Islands in the twentieth century. Through a body of oral and written testimonies, she explores the representation of the seafarers' wife as independent and formidable characters in community life when their husbands were away. Hagmark-Cooper uses these testimonies to tease out the various discourses upon which seafarers wives drew both at the time the events were experienced and when they were related. In doing so she demonstrates the extent to which social ideals fed into subjective identity, and how common discourses were constructed and sustained through individual narratives.

The shifting cultural representations of the port town community and environment are equally evident in the final chapter of this section, in which Jo Byrne reveals how closely bound the identities of these urban-maritime settings are to the labours that went on both within them and at sea. Drawing upon a body of oral history testimony, Byrne explores the loss of identity felt by the maritime community of Hull, UK, when the town's staple industry, distant-water trawling, catastrophically declined in the late twentieth century. Byrne reveals how the locals' sense of communal identity, cultivated by the port's distinct sailortown—or 'trawlertown'—district, vanished once its industry died. Without its fishing fleet, Byrne argues, the rhythms and the culture of the port disappeared, and once the town's relationship with the sea was broken, its identity was irrevocably lost.

The collection concludes with Isaac Land's assessment of how the notion of the coastal zone can better facilitate our understanding of urban-maritime cultures, historical and contemporary. To do this he proposes three types of 'coastal-urban forms': the urban foreshore, the urban offshore, and the urban estuary. This innovative conceptual framework enables us to start moving beyond narrow, singular categories such as 'sailortown', the 'waterfront', and, perhaps most challengingly of all, even the 'maritime' itself. In doing so, this collection seeks to depart from the harbour of familiar historiographical approaches to the urban-maritime context, turning instead towards the enticing but as yet unseen horizon of future developments in the field.

PART I

Urban-Maritime Cultures

CHAPTER 2

Strangers Ashore: Sailor Identity and Social Conflict in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Cape Town

Nigel Worden

In February 1736 17 ships of the VOC (Dutch East India Company) return fleet, with over 1,300 men aboard (at least 1,000 of them sailors), had been in Cape Town's Table Bay for the unusually lengthy period of over 7 weeks.[1] Tensions rose with so many men kicking their heels, little money left to spend and eager to set sail for home. The result was that 'sharp fighting and tumult broke out between the soldiers and the sailors, freely carried out with violence on both sides'.[2] Details of this episode are unfortunately not recorded, but it was symptomatic of a number of incidents of conflict between sailors and soldiers in Cape Town in the mid-eighteenth century in which sailors were singled out as targets of

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[1] Fifteen ships of the return fleet from Batavia arrived at the Cape on 22 December 1735 (a couple of stragglers joined them in early January) and they only left on 1 March 1736 after a period of 9 weeks. They were joined by another two ships that arrived from Bengal on 5 February. See J. R. Bruijn, F. S. Gaastra and I. Schöffer (1979–87), *Dutch-Asiatic Shipping in the 17th and 18th Centuries.* 3 vols. (The Hague), vol.3, pp. 326–9.

[2] Cape Archives (hereinafter CA), Council of Justice (hereinafter CJ) 340, 66v., *vertoog* of Fiscal van der Henghel, 19 April 1736. I am grateful to Gerald Groenewald for drawing my attention to this and for providing a transcription of some of the evidence.

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attack. This chapter uses examples of such conflicts to explore the distinct nature of sailor experience and identity in Cape Town. It examines the seasonal nature of sailor presence in the town en route between Europe and Asia and the contrast this entailed with soldiers, the reversal of the relative sense of security and authority that sailors and soldiers each felt on board ship once they were ashore, and the differences in social contact and access to local networks that soldiers and sailors encountered in the town and its hinterland.

Established in 1652 at the tip of Africa as a refreshment post for ships travelling between Europe and Asia, Cape Town was by the 1730s a key component of the VOC's system of Indian Ocean trade and colonisation. It was characteristic of what John Gillis has described as typically Dutch 'alongshore empire' with ship provisioning and repair functions centred on the harbour and a hinterland whose prime economic function was to serve the port. In this it was more akin to North American ports than to Latin American colonial towns with their focus on the plaza or town square.[3] With a total of 1,000 Company employees stationed in the town in 1731, it ranked sixth among the VOC posts in terms of its official establishment.[4] In addition to this was a growing population of free burghers, slaves of Asian and African origin, freed slaves and their descendents (many females of whom married burghers, Company officials or lower-ranking employees), European and Asian convicts transported from Batavia and Ceylon, and a small number of indigenous Khoi and San. In 1731 the total recorded population of Cape Town came to some 3,000.[5] Although this was small in comparison to many of the port cities of the Atlantic and Indian Ocean at the time, the town was becoming a more complex society by this period. A generation of locally born settlers of European origin existed and there were clear divisions of wealth and status

[3] J. Gillis (2012) *The Human Shore: Sea Coasts in History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), p. 86 and 109.

[4] F. Lequin, *Het personeel van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie in Azië in de 18e eeuw, maar in het bijzonder in de vestiging Bengalen*. 2nd. edition (Alphen aan den Rijn, 2005), pp. 238–43. 1731 was the only year in the VOC period for which there is a reasonably accurate census of the town as distinct from its rural hinterland.

[5] N. Worden, E. van Heyningen and V. Bickford-Smith (1998) *Cape Town: The Making of a City* (Hilversum and Cape Town: David Philip), p. 50.

among the population in which race and gender played an important but by no means absolute role.[6]

This, however, was not all. In common with port towns elsewhere, a large number of temporary visitors came ashore from vessels lying in the harbour. The number of ships visiting the Cape varied in any one year, but the decades of the 1730s saw the highest number of voyagers on VOC vessels travelling between Europe and Asia.[7] In 1731 32 outward-bound ships weighed anchor with 6,766 men on board.[8] The number aboard the 33 returning ships is less fully recorded, although we know that they included at least 4,994 sailors, soldiers and craftsmen (as well as 301 *impotenten* or people who had been released from active VOC service and 126 passengers).[9] This excludes foreign ships, which in the 1730s–50s added about another 25 % to the total.[10] Moreover their arrival was not spread evenly through the seasons. Most arrived from Europe in March–May or else later in the year, avoiding the rough weather of winter from June–August, while the returning ships from Asia clustered between late December and April. The average length of stay at the Cape in the 1730s was 24 days.[11]

Not all of these visitors went ashore for long. Many of the crewmen were kept at work maintaining the vessels and loading supplies. In at least one case a sailor refused to disembark for fear of losing all his money at the notoriously expensive Cape settlement.[12] Most however passed at least some of their time in the town. Shore leave was regarded as a privilege rather than a right, although in practice almost all crewmen obtained it and, as in the case of Portuguese sailors in colonial and foreign ports, they 'swarmed ashore at the first opportunity'.[13] Such temporary sojourners do not appear in the official lists and tallies of the archival records. But they do make their presence

[6] For recent studies on these themes, see N. Worden (ed.) (2012), *Cape Town between East and West: Social Identities in a Dutch Colonial Town* (Johannesburg and Hilversum: Verloren b.v., uitgeverij).

[7] During the decade as a whole 74,300 voyagers arrived in 375 ships. See Bruijn, Gaastra and Schöffer, *Dutch-Asiatic Shipping*, vol.1, p. 163.

[8] Bruijn, Gaastra and Schöffer, *Dutch-Asiatic Shipping*, vol.2, pp. 414–421.

[9] Bruijn, Gaastra and Schöffer, *Dutch-Asiatic Shipping*, vol.3, pp. 298–305.

[10] M. Boucher (1985) *The Cape of Good Hope and Foreign Contacts, 1735–1755*, (Pretoria: University of South Africa), p. 5.

[11] Bruijn, Gaastra and Schöffer, *Dutch-Asiatic Shipping*, vol.1, pp. 68–9.

[12] R. van Gelder, *Naporra's omweg: het leven van een VOC-matroos, 1731–1793* (Amsterdam and Antwerp, 2003), pp. 285–7 and 380–2.

[13] A.J.R. Russell-Wood (1983), 'Seamen Ashore and Afloat: The Social Environment of the Carreira da India, 1550-1750', *The Mariner's Mirror*, 69, 39.

felt in the rich documentation of the Council of Justice, usually when they were involved in brawls and fights in the taverns and streets of the settlement, or when they deserted from their ships. It was then that the distinctive nature of sailor experience in Cape Town was most clearly revealed.

The nature of such records emphasises conflict among lower-ranking men—for they were overwhelmingly male—typical of seaports. But cases of conflict detailed in these petty criminal cases can illuminate more than casual or random violence and reveal broader patterns of behaviour and identity. In particular they point to a distinctive identity among sailors, a group of Company employees that have been largely ignored by Cape historians whose rather insular perspective instead focussed on the permanent inhabitants of the town.[14] As is also now well recognised, following the pioneering work of Marcus Rediker, sailors in the early modern Atlantic world formed part of a distinctive culture and tradition.[15] These arguments relate to sailors in national navies rather than trading companies. VOC sailors often had a less established career in a distinctive cultural milieu and, as Gaastra has argued, it was seen as somewhat shameful for a Dutch sailor to be forced to enter the lower paid and more temporary employment of the VOC.[16] But, given the conflicts between sailors and soldiers in Cape Town, VOC sailor experience and the ways in which they were regarded by other lower-ranking Company employees warrants examination.

The men who came ashore at Cape Town from Company ships were a mixed assortment. A handful were passengers, others military and naval officers and artisans, but the large majority were rank and file soldiers and sailors. They arrived in a rough proportion of two sailors to every soldier on outward vessels and a figure closer to 5:1 on the return ships, a reflection

[14] This is beginning to change with a growing awareness of the transnational and transoceanic character of Cape Town in the eighteenth century. See for example K. Ward (2007) '"Tavern of the seas"?: The Cape of Good Hope as an Oceanic Crossroads during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries' in J. Bentley, R. Bridenthal, and K. Wigen (eds.), *Seascapes: Maritime Histories, Littoral cultures, and Transoceanic Exchanges* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press), pp. 137–52.

[15] M. Rediker (1987) *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); P. Linebaugh and M. Rediker (2000) *The Many-headed Hydra: The Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (London: Verso).

[16] F. Gaastra (1997) 'Labour Conditions' in P. van Royen, J. Bruijn and J. Lucassen (eds.), *"Those Emblems of Hell"?: European Sailors and the Maritime Labour Market, 1570–1870*, (St. John's, Newfoundland: International Maritime Economic History Association), p.37.

of the high mortality rate of VOC soldiers in Asia.[17] Those soldiers on their way home were familiar with the ways of the VOC world and were making a second return visit to the Cape, but the majority who were en route to Asia, many of them German and Scandinavian speakers, were away from Europe for the first time, bewildered by the novelty of their experience and by the shock of their lengthy and sometimes traumatic journey.[18]

Some of the men who came ashore did not continue their journey to Asia. Usually between 5 and 20 soldiers, depending on demand, from each incoming VOC ship were commandeered to complete their contracts at the Cape where they manned the garrison and Company outposts and occasionally worked as *knegt* overseers on settler farms. Some subsequently stayed permanently and became burghers.[19] Sailors were rarely removed from the ships in this way, although a small number were posted on shore at the wharf.[20]

The experience of the sailors differed from those of soldiers in a number of other ways. Most would have had some previous experience of life aboard ship, many on previous voyages with the VOC.[21] A much higher percentage of sailors than soldiers were of Dutch origin: some 60 % as opposed

[17] In 1731 there were 3989 sailors and 2140 soldiers on outward ships. See Bruijn, Gaastra and Schöffer, *Dutch-Asiatic Shipping*, vol. 2, pp. 414–421. Figures are not complete for the returning ships but of those recorded in 1731, there were 1108 sailors and 231 soldiers. See Bruijn, Gaastra and Schöffer, *Dutch-Asiatic Shipping*, vol.3, pp. 302–5.

[18] For the effects of this experience see, for example, R. van Gelder (1997) *Het Oost-Indisch avontuur: Duitsers in dienst van de VOC* (Nijmegen), pp. 149–72; H. Ketting (2002) *Leven, werk en rebellie aan boord van Oost-Indiëvaarders 1595–1650* (Amsterdam); N. Penn (2007) 'The Voyage Out: Peter Kolb and VOC Voyages to the Cape' in E. Christopher, C. Pybus and M. Rediker (eds.), *Many Middle Passages: Forced Migration and the Making of the Modern World* (Berkeley: University of California Press), pp. 72–91; N. Worden (2009), '"Below the Line the Devil Reigns": Death and Dissent Aboard a VOC Vessel', *South African Historical Journal*, 61:4, 701–29.

[19] Of the 127 soldiers stationed at the Cape who had arrived in 1730–1 (see n.18 above), 16 worked as *knegts* and 4 became burghers. Forty-one completed their contracts in the garrison and then returned home, while 36 went on to other parts of the VOC empire in Asia. Twenty-four died in service as soldiers, and 6 deserted. Calculated from analysis of the Cape muster roll (NA, VOC 5179) and *scheepsoldijboeken*.

[20] For a preliminary demographic analysis of soldiers and sailors posted at the Cape establishment, see J. Parmentier and J. de Bock (2007) 'Sailors and Soldiers at the Cape: An Analysis of the Maritime and Military Population in the Cape Colony During the First Half of the Eighteenth Century' in N. Worden (ed.), *Contingent Lives: Social Identity and Material Culture in the VOC world* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town), pp. 549–557.

[21] J. R. Bruijn (1997) 'Career Patterns' in P. van Royen, J. Bruijn and J. Lucassen (eds.), *"Those Emblems of Hell"*, pp. 27–30.

to 30 % of soldiers.[22] The remainder came primarily from the Baltic. They were experienced in the seafaring traditions of the maritime provinces, if not necessarily on long-distance voyages to Asia. Unlike soldiers, many of whom by the eighteenth century came from inland northern and central Europe and whose hope (usually unfulfilled) was to make a quick profit in the East and return home, sailors tended to see their work aboard ship as a more permanent activity.

Certainly the experience of life on board before arrival at the Cape played a key role in the distinctiveness of sailor identity and the ways in which they were viewed by other Company employees. VOC vessels differed from merchant naval ships of the period in that soldiers and sailors lived and worked together in close proximity. However, they were still differentiated. As the more experienced crewmen, the sailors were at an advantage over the usually wholly inexperienced (and sometimes terrified) soldiers. Soldiers were obliged to undertake watch duty and occasionally other tasks on board.[23] Sailors often complained that they were incompetent seamen, while the soldiers in turn resented having to undertake ship's duties, especially during crises such as bad weather, or (as was not infrequently the case) when high mortality led to a shortage of hands. [24]

Rivalries under these circumstances were both spontaneous and ritualised. The boisterous rites of passage on entry into the southern Atlantic were usually carried out by sailors with the novice soldiers as targets. Aboard *Loenderveen* in 1732, one sailor terrified the impressionable soldiers by informing them as they crossed the Equator that 'Now the devil rules, there is no God any more'.[25] In short, the experience of seaboard life had done little to change the situation since the outward-bound Governor

[22] J. R. Bruijn and J. Lucassen (eds) (1980) *Op de schepen der Oost-Indische Compagnie: vijf artikelen van J. de Hullu ingeleid, bewerkt en voorzien van een studie over de werkgelegenheid bij de VOC* (Groningen), p. 21; Bruijn, Gaastra and Schöffer, *Dutch-Asiatic Shipping*, vol.1, pp. 146–7; D. de Iongh (1950) *Het krijgswezen onder de Oostindische Compagnie* (The Hague), p. 79.

[23] R. Raven-Hart (n.d) *Germans in Dutch Ceylon* (Colombo: Colombo National Museum and Ceylon Government Press), p. 2 [citing Behr, 1644] and pp. 29–30 [citing Schweitzer, 1675–6].

[24] All of these were factors in the *Loenderveen* conflicts. For analysis of life and tensions aboard VOC vessels, see C. Boxer (1963), 'The Dutch East-Indiamen: Their Sailors, Their Navigators, and Life On Board, 1602-1795', *The Mariner's Mirror* 49:2, 93–5, and 101, and n. 18 above.

[25] *relaas* of soldaat Johannes Fijsel van Valkenauw, 8 January 1733, CA, CJ 337, 137r. For analysis of this voyage see Worden, '"Below the Line".

Aert Geysels wrote to the Amsterdam *kamer* from Table Bay a hundred years earlier: 'the sailors are the deadly enemies of the soldiers'.[26] It is scarcely surprising that these rivalries were transplanted on to land once the ships arrived in Cape Town.

On shore the relative position of soldiers and sailors was reversed. Studies of sailors in port, both in the early modern period and more recently, have suggested that a high degree of seamen solidarity existed: 'in his free time ashore the seaman has to associate with his work colleagues, or he must go alone in a strange environment'.[27] The only people on shore with whom they had some affinity were those sailors who had been posted to work on the wharf at Table Bay. These were Company sailors who were allocated to longer periods of duty ashore of between 1 and 3 years, usually working with the outward and return fleets when they were in harbour. They were relatively few in number, but it does appear that they associated more readily with the visiting sailors. Being a stranger ashore at the Cape was less of a problem for many of the soldiers from the ships because they were able to fraternise with the sizeable Cape Town garrison. Many found associates from the same or nearby places of origin in Europe, especially the German-speaking territories, with whom they had a common background and language. Soldiers ashore were thus often in a less alien social environment than sailors and merged more readily with those stationed at the Cape.

Soldiers and sailors headed for many of the same places as soon as they landed. The small size of Cape Town meant that there were not distinctly demarcated districts before the mid-eighteenth century. There were some places that were particularly associated with soldiers, notably the Castle and the Parade Ground, while the wharf was the area where sailors tended to congregate. However, the usual destinations for seamen on shore were any places where drink, women, and preferably both, were available. Otto Jansz van Groningen and his sailor mates from the newly arrived ship *Snuiffelaar* persuaded a local boatman to take them ashore on the first evening they arrived and they went drinking 'as soon as they had set foot on land'.[28] In the many taverns, poorer houses and workshops throughout the settlement visiting crewmen encountered the whole range of Cape Town's diverse underclass, both resident and visiting—soldiers, Company

[26] As cited in Boxer, 'Dutch East-Indiamen', 101.

[27] V. Aubert and O. Arner (1958–9), 'On the Social Structure of the Ship', *Acta Sociologica*, vol. 3–4, 203.

[28] CA, CJ 334, *relaas* of Otto Jansz van Groningen, 13 July 1730, 73r.

artisans, slaves, free blacks, Chinese traders, convicts and ex-convicts, as well as burghers and free settlers. Doubtless on many occasions their participation in Cape Town's informal low life was uneventful. However, unsurprisingly in an environment of young males with little to do but drink and quarrel, large numbers of fights occurred.

Visiting sailors were a prime target for attack, leading the Fiscal (the Company official responsible for prosecuting criminal cases) to comment in 1734 that 'many sailors …cannot sometimes readily walk in safety along the Company's streets'.[29] Often such attacks came from soldiers stationed in the garrison and were caused by specific clashes over women, drink or accusations of theft. These were sometimes spiced with insults of a more generic nature. Thus in November 1731 Jacob Smit van Amsterdam and his *maat* Claas Jacobsz Backer van Harlingen, two sailors from the outward-bound ship *Oostrust*, were attacked by three soldiers from the Cape garrison while drinking in a house that served as an informal *shaggerij*. The soldiers were thrown out by the owner, but then lay in wait and besieged the sailors in the house for several hours before the latter were escorted back to their lodgings by one of the owner's slaves. In their defence, the soldiers claimed that the sailors had insulted them by stating that they and the whole Cape garrison were 'scoundrels and Cape pickpockets'.[30]

Another such incident took place some 20 years later. In December 1751 Corporal Hendrick de Ridder, who was garrisoned at the Castle and in charge of the night patrol, arrested two sailors from the *Schuijlenburg*, Carel Gustaaff Appelboom van Stockholm and Marten Leeman van Danzig, as they left a bar at 11 pm, on the grounds that they had stayed out after the 10 pm curfew. Dragging them back to the Castle, he proceeded to beat them up until the early hours of the morning, shouting, 'Here, we've caught a couple of wolves, seize them!'[31] In his defence de Ridder said that he had observed the sailors in the area of the Company garden, that they were drunk and looked as if they 'may have caused some disturbance' and that Appelboom had sworn at him. To this de Ridder replied, while beating Appelboom with a cane, that they 'were with Christians and that no swearing was understood by the watch'.[32]

[29] CA, CJ 338, *Dictum ter rolle*, 20 May 1734, 119v.

[30] CA, CJ 335, *Eijsch* in case of Laurens Barmania / Burmanije van Loropsand, 22 November 1732, 326–28. The quotation is from the *relaas* of Burmanije, CJ 335, 16 November 1731, 335–8. See also n.25 for this case.

[31] CA, CJ 360, *relaas* of *matroos* Maarten Leeman van Dantzig, 6 January 1752, 10v.

[32] CA, CJ 360, testimony of Hendrick de Ridder, 4 January 1752, 29r.

This statement is of interest for several reasons. Firstly, it may seem unlikely that soldiers in the garrison would be unfamiliar or offended by swearing. However, an intriguing feature of a sailor culture that occasionally surfaces in the records is that of language. A distinctive crewman's 'rough' language existed in the Anglo-Atlantic world, 'not merely foul-mouthed but lacking in deference'.[33] Similar forms emerged in the Dutch-Germanic trading encounters of the Atlantic and Indian Ocean. Dutch sailors ashore in Cape Town certainly used *zeelijke woorden* (sailor's words) although it is not clear that these were confined to the use of sailors alone. In one case, the sailor Jurgen Hendrick Keijzer van Hamburg complained that a *soldaat*, Frans van der Stort, who had arrived in Cape Town onboard a different ship, hurled abuse at him with 'many uncouth seaman's words'.[34]

Secondly, de Ridder identified himself and his company of fellow soldiers as '*Christenen*'. This term was usually used by Cape inhabitants of European origin to distinguish themselves from the indigenous Khoisan and slave 'heathen' of the colony.[35] By insinuating that the sailors were not behaving as *Christenen,* de Ridder was placing them outside the social and cultural world with which soldiers identified themselves. Appelboom's fellow sailor Maarten Leeman van Dantzig's appeal to de Ridder to stop beating Appelboom was significant in this regard: 'don't hit him, he is a fine (*hubs*) man, he wouldn't harm a child'.[36] A *hubs* man (a Dutchified form of the German *hübsch* meaning 'a fine man' and translated in Leeman's testimony as *braaf* or 'honourable') was part of civilised society and was not to be treated in this way. But it took a fellow sailor to make this defence. In de Ridder's eyes, the sailors were not *Christenen*.

As such, sailors could readily offend those members of the lower orders of Cape Town who saw themselves as superior *Christenen*. In March 1740, Godfried Bouer van Gosselaar, a German soldier stationed at the Castle, claimed that he was walking at night past the *tapperij* (tavern) at widow Campher's house near the Company stables, when he saw three sailors

[33] Rediker, *Between the Devil*, p. 168.

[34] *relaas* of *matroos* Jurgen Hendrick Keijzer van Hamburg, CA, CJ 337, 54.

[35] That the term referred to origins rather than faith is shown by the fact that baptised slaves and Khoi were not referred to as *Christenen*. For discussion of the term and its usage in the VOC Cape see R. Elphick and H. Giliomee (1989) 'European Dominance at the Cape, 1652-c.1840', in R. Elphick and H. Giliomee (eds.), *The Shaping of South African Society*, 1652–1840, (Cape Town: Longman), p. 523.

[36] CA, CJ 360, *relaas* of Hendrick Otto Wolters van Hamburg, soldier in the garrison, 14r. The phrase is akin to the English 'he wouldn't harm a fly'.

who he did not know standing on the *stoep*. The sailors said to each other, 'Here comes another soldier'. When he asked 'True, what do you make of that?' the sailors simply replied 'Hit him!' and laid into him before running off. Several of Bouer's *scheepsvrienden* (i.e. other soldiers who had been his particular supporting friends aboard ship on his outward journey) rallied to his defence and hunted down the sailors in another *tapperij*, whom they challenged to a fight and in the process trashed the house. When the case came to court, the Fiscal blamed Bouer's overdeveloped sense of 'esteemed German honour' for the episode: 'had he simply walked by quietly then the whole business would not have happened' but instead 'as a soldier he had to have his revenge on the sailors'.[37]

The Fiscal had put his finger on a key element of identity that was especially strong among VOC employees who came from German-speaking territories, that of honour. It is becoming increasingly apparent that honour played a central role in the determination and maintenance of status in Cape colonial society, not only among its upper echelons but also among the lower ranks.[38] The predominantly German-speaking soldiers of the garrison appear to have been particularly sensitive to slights or challenges from sailors who they regarded as being of lower status to themselves and which thereby offended their sense of honour.

Spierenburg has analysed the way in which fighting in early modern Amsterdam was a recognised mechanism for dealing with conflicts, insults and challenges to honour among men of the lower social ranks and was characteristic of masculine popular culture.[39] Not only were VOC sailors part of the working environment of a ship that was confined to men alone but, in contrast to most port cities and colonial settlements, they also found themselves in a primarily male environment once ashore in Cape Town. The dominating presence of the garrison and the absence of an indigenous or immigrant settlement of a more balanced gendered compo-

[37] CA, CJ 345, *Dictum ter rolle* in case of Godfried Bouer, 31 March 1740, 14–19. The quotations are from 16v. and 17r.

[38] R. Ross (1999), *Status and Respectability in the Cape Colony, 1750–1870: A Tragedy of Manners* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); N. Worden (2014) 'Unbridled Passions': Honour and Status in Late 18th Century Cape Town' in C. Strange, R. Cribb and C. Forth (eds.), *Honour, Violence and Emotion in History* (London: Bloomsbury), pp. 89–106.

[39] P. Spierenburg (1998) 'Knife Fighting and Popular Codes of Honor in Early Modern Amsterdam' in P. Spierenburg (ed.), *Men and Violence: Gender, Honor, and Rituals in Modern Europe and America* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press), pp. 103–27.

sition meant that Cape Town's resident population was overwhelmingly male. This was even more acutely so when the fleets were in harbour.[40] Women usually feature in the records on the margins, as tavern keepers or as prostitutes. Sailors thus inhabited a strongly homosocial world in which manliness was expressed in 'rough' work cultures, whoring and hard drinking and in which conflicts of interest easily turned into physical violence. On shore sailor masculinity competed with that of soldiers and landsmen.[41] In the process both soldiers and sailors used their distinct identity to challenge each other and to seek support from their fellows. Thus soldiers castigated sailors ashore as rival outsiders to be kept at bay.

As those excluded from the *Christenen*, how did sailors interact with others in the town who were similarly outcast, the slaves? There was no common ethnic identity. Until late in the eighteenth century, VOC sailors on both the outward and the home fleets were European in origin and I have not yet found evidence of Asian seamen ashore in Cape Town.[42] An exception was the enterprising escape of two Cape-born slaves on separate occasions in 1751–2 aboard vessels in the harbour, one of whom passed himself off as a sailor from St. Helena.[43] But cross-racial socialising was well established in the tavern culture of early Cape Town, where Asian and African slaves, free blacks and Chinese traders and exiles associated with soldiers and sailors.[44] This did not prevent slaves from reporting sailors who had committed crimes, such as theft or desertion, to the authorities.[45] Sailors, as temporary visitors, were not integrated into the underground networks of the

[40] Worden, Van Heyningen and Bickford-Smith, *Cape Town*, p. 50. In 1731 there were also more men than women in the free burgher population, as well as among the imported slaves and convicts.

[41] For explorations of this in the context of nineteenth-century British seamen, see V. Burton (1999) '"Whoring, drinking sailors": Reflections on Masculinity from the Labour History of Nineteenth-Century British Shipping', in M. Welsh (ed.), *Working Out Gender* (Aldershot: Ashgate), pp. 84–101.

[42] Asian sailors were only recruited for the VOC return fleets from the 1780s when there was an acute shortage of European seamen. See Boxer, 'Dutch-East Indiamen', 86; Bruijn and Lucassen, *Op de schepen*, p. 22; I. Dillo (1987–8), '"Omtrent de zwakken staat der zeevarende": het zeevarend personeel van de VOC, 1783-95', *Leidschrift*, 4, 23–40.

[43] Both made the mistake of enlisting as VOC crewmen and were recognised and caught when they returned to Cape Town several years later. See Worden and Groenewald, *Trials of Slavery*, 285–8 and 302–5.

[44] W. Dooling (1994), 'The Castle: Its Place in the History of Cape Town in the VOC Period', *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, 7, 9–31.

[45] For examples, CA, CJ 12, case of *matroos* Frederick Christiansz., 11 May 1730; CA, CJ 20, *Rollen*, case of *matroos* Hendrick Pennink van Uijhegt, 3 July 1738, 61–3.

Cape settlement. There was one incident where sailors hurled racial abuse at the slaves of the Fiscal, calling them *verdoemde swarte aepen* ('damned black apes') when they refused to allow the drunken men into the Fiscal's house to lay a complaint, but the fact that they then challenged them to a fight (rather than simply attacking them directly) may have shown that they viewed them more as equals than as servants.[46] The Fiscal's slaves anyway got the better of them by accepting the challenge and making as if to accompany the sailors to open ground where they could fight, but in fact delivering them into the hands of the authorities. Scholars have argued that sailors associated with slaves in American ports and supported their aspirations for freedom.[47] The impact of the ideological ferment of the late eighteenth-century Atlantic on the underclass of the Cape is clear: for example, in 1808 two Irishmen who had served on board British naval ships were a catalyst for the colony's only major slave uprising.[48] There is a tantalising hint of collusion between sailors and slaves from earlier in the century. Two sailor deserters were captured by the *landdrost* in the Picquetbergen in 1738. He reported that they were planning to incite a party of slaves to 'make their way to a Portuguese settlement' although he had no firm evidence of this and the men of course denied it.[49]

The existence of *drosters* (runaways) was of concern to the Cape authorities. Slaves who escaped from their owners and soldiers who deserted from the Cape Town garrison formed the majority, but some sailors were also among their number. The records for the 1730s show that some 45 sailor deserters were punished during the decade.[50] Of those whose ships could be identified, 26 were from outward-bound vessels and 8 from the return fleets. Unlike the soldiers stationed at the Cape, they lacked the contacts or local geographical knowledge to get very far. Most are better described

[46] CA, CJ 337, request from Fiscal, 5 February 1733, 6–8.

[47] J. Lemisch (1968), 'Jack Tar in the Streets: Merchant Seamen in the Politics of Revolutionary America', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 25:3, 380; Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many–headed Hydra*, pp. 179–88 and 199.

[48] On the 1808 revolt, see K. Harris (1988), 'The Slave "Rebellion" of 1808', *Kleio*, 20, 54–65, and N. Worden (2010) 'Armed with Ostrich Feathers': Cultural Revolution and the Cape Slave Uprising of 1808', in R. Bessel, N. Guyatt and J. Rendall (eds.), *War, Empire and Slavery, 1770-1830* (London: Palgrave), pp. 121–38.

[49] CA, CJ 20, *rollen* 13 March 1738, 19–22.

[50] These figures and the comments that follow are drawn from reports in the Council of Justice Criminal *rollen*, CA, CJ 12–20.

as 'stragglers' rather than determined deserters.[51] They were only absent for a few days and did not leave the town, usually claiming drunkenness or a hangover as the reason for missing their departing ship. A few new arrivals reported that the experience of their outward voyage had been so bad that they were reluctant to return to their ship for the onward journey to Asia. A common cause of complaint was bad provisions or ill-treatment by officers. Johann Frederikus Spannhoek van Paderborn, who deliberately missed his ship's departure in 1736, said that this had been his first voyage to the Cape and he had not realised how long the journey took.[52]

There were very few sailors who deserted for longer periods into the interior regions. When this did happen it was because they had committed a more serious crime and hence were fugitives from justice.[53] To an outsider, Cape Town was part of an isolated settlement and not one in which most sailors wished to be for longer than necessary.[54] In contrast to the prospect of wealth and adventure that awaited runaways in Asia, they had little reason to desert.[55] Sailors on the return fleet to Europe had especially little incentive to remain at the Cape.

A rare exception was Bartolomeus Bilo van Hamburg, a German sailor who arrived on the outward-going ship *Stijkbolle* in 1729 and deserted for 3 years until he was apprehended by a burgher near Rondebosch.[56] It is not known how such runaways survived, although general labour shortages in the farming districts meant that they might have found ready casual employment with no questions asked. One enterprising sailor deserter obtained food and shelter from inland farmers over a period of 6 weeks in 1736 by claiming that he was working on behalf of the *equipagemeester,* thus raising the prospects of soliciting orders for provisions. [57]

[51] This follows the terminology used by N. A. M. Rodger (1984), 'Stragglers and Deserters from the Royal Navy during the Seven Years' War', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 57, 56–79.

[52] CA, CJ 18, 9 January 1736, 3–6.

[53] For example, Augustus Scheffelaar, *matroos*, was accused of manslaughter in June 1733 and fled into the interior, CA, CJ 337, 197–214 and CJ 785, 287–90. He remained on the run several months later and I have not found evidence that he was ever recaptured.

[54] This parallels the low sailor desertion rate in other isolated ports, such as Gibraltar. See Rodger, 'Stragglers and Deserters', 59.

[55] For Asia, see G. V. Scammell (1992), 'European Exiles, Renegades and Outlaws and the Maritime Economy of Asia, c.1500-1750', *Modern Asian Studies*, 26, 641–661.

[56] Bartolomeus Bilo van Hamburg, CA, CJ 14, 27 March 1732, 22–24.

[57] Pieter de Vriend van Brabant, CA, CJ 18, 27 September 1736, 64–5.

The numerous cases of bands of soldier *drosters* in the judicial records rarely included sailors. When sailor runaways did converge in groups it tended to be with fellow seamen and for briefer periods. In one case in March 1738, a group of nine *drosters* who had gathered in the *tuinen* at the foot of Table Mountain and who had been on the run for between 14 days and a month consisted of three sailors from passing ships, three from the local *landsboot*, one serving on the wharf, one who ran away from the Company Hospital and a Dutch convict who had just arrived from Batavia.[58] Runaway sailors, it seems, trusted and associated with each other in a further indication of their identity as a distinct group ashore.

The evidence from the judicial records of this period thus suggests that the conflicts between soldiers and sailors in Cape Town were not only those of men in an environment where drink flowed and rivalries flared. Many of the cases reveal fundamental distinctions between visiting sailors and the soldiers on shore, based on differential experience onboard ship, of status on land and of a highly developed sense of honour, especially among German-speaking soldiers. In the context of a port where masculine codes of loyalty and honour produced physical violence, sailors found themselves particularly vulnerable as targets of attack. The result was that solidarities produced by their common experience onboard ship was accentuated when they found themselves as a vulnerable minority in Cape Town to produce a distinct sense of identity as 'strangers ashore'.

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[58] CA, CJ 20, 27 March 1738, 26–29.

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CHAPTER 3

‘Hail, Tyneside Lads in Collier Fleets’: Song Culture, Sailing and Sailors in North-East England

Paul Gilchrist

This chapter explores the songs and poetry of Tyneside sailmaker Robert Gilchrist (1797–1844).[1] Gilchrist was part of a local bardic community drawn from the working people of the North-East and one of the more prolific songwriters and poets operating in early nineteenth-century Tyneside. The River Tyne, North Sea, and the comings and goings of maritime travellers and seaborne mercantile traffic have long featured in the repertoires of the region’s singers and poets. Songs, in both their print and oral forms, exposed the everyday life of a port town. Gilchrist and his contemporaries endowed the region with numerous compositions in this regard. This chapter shows that their songs are valuable historical documents to understanding the interactions between urban and maritime cultures and in particular to learning how representations of and social attitudes towards sailors and river workers coalesced. Among Gilchrist’s known outputs are verses that articulate cultural and economic impacts of sailing on the local community and these are utilised here. Through a selective textual analysis of Gilchrist’s key compositions, the chapter illustrates that North-East seamen and keelmen enjoyed a dual position from

[1] Robert Gilchrist is my great-great-great-grandfather.

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local versifiers, being both object of attachment and patriotism and subject to comic description and satire. The following section provides a broad discussion of the representation of sailors in Tyneside verse in the early nineteenth century, before focussing upon the work of Robert Gilchrist.

Sailors and Sailing in Tyneside Song

The North-East is a distinctive area of England, covering the historic counties of Durham and Northumberland. The most populous town (now city) in the region is Newcastle-upon-Tyne; a port town that sits on the north bank of the Tyne, opposite the smaller settlement of Gateshead, and that is located just over 8 miles from the North Sea. These towns once enjoyed strong maritime and mercantile links to other east coast port towns such as Peterhead, Berwick-upon-Tweed and Whitby. The shipping of coal was a major part of the town's economic life. Collier fleets travelled up and down the east coast to supply a rapidly expanding London with "black diamonds" hewn from mines in the Tyneside hinterland. Coal dominated the region's industry and mining was the foundation for Newcastle's prosperity from the sixteenth century on into the twentieth. The coal trade financed 'not only a vast return trade in foodstuffs and commercial goods but also the circulation of capital and credit that supported local industry'.[2] Newcastle's Quayside was the thriving hub of river-borne commerce along the Tyne and merchants imported and exported a range of goods: timber and flax from the Baltic, wines from Portugal, and luxury goods such as spices and indigo.[3] The river frontage encompassed warehouses, merchant houses, outdoor markets, inns and taverns, and civic institutions along its length. Behind these buildings ran a warren of chares; dark and narrow lanes inhabited by tempting females and boarding houses that accommodated a rich variety of characters.[4] The 'kee' was the province of the working people of Tyneside. By the 1850s it had become home to a large Irish immigrant population, many of whom had escaped the Irish Potato Famine (1845–1852), clustered in the squalid waterfront area of Sandgate. The Quayside was a lively place

[2] J. Ellis, J (1984) 'A dynamic society: social relations in Newcastle upon Tyne 1660-1760'. In P. Clark (ed.) *The Transformation of English Provincial Towns 1600–1800* (London: Hutchinson), p.193.

[3] A.W. Purdue (2011) *Newcastle: The Biography* (Stroud: Amberley), p.119.

[4] E. MacKenzie, E. (1827) *A Descriptive and Historical Account of the Town and County of Newcastle upon Tyne* (Newcastle: MacKenzie & Dent), p.164.

full of 'comers and goers', various types of migrant and travellers, including sailors, who for significant periods of the year enjoyed the comforts of town living.[5] According to one local diarist, writing in 1837, this was '… where the busy wheels of Trade ply their unwearied course' and the casual visitor could observe before them a large number of vessels thronging the river, steam packets scudding over its surface in all directions, all the time being serenaded by a choir of fish wives.[6]

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the activities of the Quayside and river Tyne were recorded in song. Seamen and keelmen were featured in verse produced in the North-East and were stock characters drawn upon by local entertainers to amuse audiences.[7] Song was an important cultural resource; a means of entertainment and an instrument through which the everyday experiences of life in a port town and life at sea were expressed. Songs divulged how roving seafarers found hedonistic pleasures in sailortown, communicated both heroic and tragic news from the seas, and voiced more prosaic realities of the impacts of absent mariners upon the emotional and economic resilience of the family unit.[8] Indeed, one might argue that the songs provided Tyneside with a discursive coherence as a port town entity, contributing to a 'sense of place'; a shared culture with a specific history relative to the riverine and maritime economy. However, the majority of Tyneside songwriters operating in the early nineteenth century worked in trades and occupations at a remove from the area's key port and sailing industries. They were drawn from a cadre of small businessmen, artisans, clerks and traders located in and around Newcastle.[9] Among their number were a few fractionally maritime quayside workers and businessmen where the location of their premises or nature of their work put them into daily contact with captains and sailors. This

[5] R. Samuel (1973) 'Comers and goers'. In H.J. Dyos & M. Wolff (eds.) *The Victorian City, Images and Realities, Vol. 1* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd), pp.123–160.

[6] N. McCord (2000) 'Victorian Newcastle observed: the diary of Richard Lowry', *Northern History*, XXXVII, p.241.

[7] R. Colls (1977) *The Collier's Rant: Song and Culture in the Industrial Village* (London: Croom Helm); D. Harker (1972) 'Thomas Allan and 'Tyneside song", in *Allan's Illustrated Edition of Tyneside Songs* (Newcastle: Frank Graham): lii-xxix; D. Harker (1981) 'The making of the Tyneside concert hall', *Popular Music*, 1: 26–56.

[8] I. Land, (2009) *War, Nationalism, and the British Sailor, 1750–1850* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), pp.45–53.

[9] Harker, 'Thomas Allan and 'Tyneside song".

included timber merchant Thomas Thompson (1773–1816) and quayside clerks John Selkirk (c.1783–1843) and James Stawpert (c.1775–1814).[10]

Newcastle was the chief provincial centre for the production and printing of chapbooks and broadsides in the early nineteenth century. Publishers were keen to supply an increasingly literate population with new songs.[11] As subject matter and theme, sailing and seafaring songs contributed only a small amount to local verse.[12] However, songs with a maritime theme were frequently printed, in garlands, chapbooks and more ephemeral street literature. Nationally known folk songs such as 'The Rambling Sailor' and 'The New York Trader' were included in locally printed chapbooks.[13] It was also common for songs to be adapted through a subtle change of place names in the verse and to be set to local tunes.[14] Publishers circulated chapbooks on the wave of national interest in naval affairs, occasioned by victories such as Trafalgar.[15] By the turn of the century Tyneside balladeers began to take sailors as their muse. William Stephenson (1763–1836), one of the earliest Tyneside songsters, produced 'The Skipper's Wedding', which mentioned a series of local characters present at the celebrations, and James Stawpert composed 'John Diggons', a song about local hero Admiral Collingwood, which appeared as a broadside in 1806.[16]

Sentimental themes were common too, stressing the sorrows of parted lovers and anxieties over the loss of a loved one. *The Sailor's Songster*, a slim chapbook of 20 songs produced by J. Marshall in 1810, contained several songs on these themes, including John O'Keeffe's (1747–1833)

[10] See T. Allan (1972 [1891]) *Allan's Illustrated Edition of Tyneside Songs and Readings*. Revised Edition (Newcastle: Thomas and George Allan).

[11] M. Vicinus (1975) *Broadsides of the Industrial North* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Frank Graham).

[12] See P. Wood (2014) 'The Newcastle song chapbooks', in D. Atkinson & S. Roud (eds.) *Street Ballads in Nineteenth-Century Britain, Ireland, and North America: The Interface between Print and Oral Traditions* (Farnham: Ashgate), pp.59–76.

[13] Ibid., p.67.

[14] For example, 'Sally's love for a sailor' (c. 1800–1815). Anon. In the local version the line 'As careless I wandered down London street', has been changed to 'As carelessly I walked down upon Newcastle Quay'. John Bell Collection of Local Songs, Newcastle University Specialist Collections.

[15] For example, *The Thrush. A New Song Book* (c.1804-1810), contained "Celebrated songs" including 'The Death of Nelson', 'The Battle of Trafalgar', 'The Battle of Salamanca', 'The Wounded Hussar', 'The Soldier's Funeral' (J. Marshall, Newcastle-upon-Tyne).

[16] Wood, 'The Newcastle song chapbooks', p.68.

'Sweet Poll of Plymouth' and 'Tom Starboard' by Thomas Knight (d. 1820).[17] While these ballads were ubiquitous, other songs reflected more specific local concerns of the unease of living in a port, telling of the fear of impressment and its effect upon domestic survival. A regional favourite, 'Here's the Tender Coming', captures this feeling of distress:

> Hide thee, canny Geordie, hide thyself away;
>
> Hide thee till the tender makes for Druid's Bay.
>
> If they take thee, Geordie, who's to win our bread?
>
> Me and little Jacky: better off be dead.

Street literature such as broadsides and slips were circulated as a more immediate response to economic threats faced by the sailing community. These cheap publications often featured reused woodcuts of ships to market the material to the public. Songs were important cultural resources through which grievances could be aired and public sympathy won in hard times. The demobilisation of the Navy following Waterloo affected North-East England deeply[18] and songs such as 'The New Neglected Tar' and 'The Seaman's Complaint' helped to voice the dismay of loyal Jack Tars left discarded and unemployed: 'We've shed out blood for England's guid / An' what returns for a 'that'. Other songs protested against the use of foreign mariners, pursued claims for fair wages, and put the cause of strikers.[19]

Tyneside songsters were removed from the wooden world of the ship. As such, their compositions tended to circulate provincial attitudes that set sailors apart, treating them as 'other' in their satirical portraits. A favourite local subject for Tyneside song was the keelmen—a close-knit community of river workers who took coal from the banks of the Tyne in shallow-draught keels to waiting collier ships. The majority of keelmen lived by the water's edge in areas such as Sandgate, a densely populated, polluted and impoverished community described as Newcastle's Wapping.[20] By

[17] Ibid., p.69.

[18] E. MacKenzie, *A Descriptive and Historical Account*, p.78. See also, D.J. Rowe (1968) 'The strikes of the Tyneside keelmen in 1809 and 1819', *International Review of Social History*, 13(1): 58–75; N. McCord (1968) 'The seamen's strike of 1815 in North-East England', *The Economic History Review*, 21(1): 127–143.

[19] Examples here include 'Tyne Cossacks' (c.1815) and P. Dennison's 'Touch on the Times'. John Bell Collection of Local Songs.

[20] J. Ellis (2001) 'The 'Black Indies': the economic development of Newcastle, c.1700-1840', in R. Lancaster and B. Colls (eds.) *Newcastle Upon Tyne: A Modern History* (Chichester: Phillimore), p.6.

the early nineteenth century a group of petit bourgeois songsters, drawn from artisans, clerks and small businessmen, chiefly from Newcastle, featured keelmen regularly in their compositions. Where some songs, such as Thomas Thompson's 'The New Keel Row' offered positive representations of keelmen as homespun family men, the majority, according to Rodney Hermeston's survey of Tyneside song in this period, abided a comic genre and frequently emphasised 'rough' character traits such as swearing, aggressiveness, drunkenness, pleasure-seeking, irresponsible spending, illiteracy and low intelligence.[21] Colourful stories of humorous escapade, mishap and misadventure were produced, lending weight to Robert Colls's notion of the coalescence of regionally shared 'social fools', with keelmen and miners characterised as 'bumpkins and "reet charactors", loyal and ignorant and generally drunk'.[22]

Several examples are illustrative.[23] 'Tars and skippers' (1829) by Thomas Marshall combines a Burke and Hare-inspired bodysnatching escapade of drunken and dim-witted sailors to comic effect. William Armstrong's 'The Jenny Hoolet' recalls a superstitious skipper who sought to confront the ghost of Lizzie Mudie—an ominous apparition that signalled an approaching tragedy to those who sailed on the Tyne. Hearing strange noises, the skipper attempts to kill the ghost, but the ghost turns out to be nothing more than a Jenny Hoolet (an owl), much to his embarrassment. 'The Sailor's fraud on Shields Road; or, the driver taken in', tells of a group of drunken sailors stationed at North Shields who jump from a cart without paying the driver for their ride to Newcastle. Unaware, the driver continues on the journey, learning only too late that the 'birds were all flown!' Tragicomic songs were also popular, with tunes such as 'The Sandgate Girl's Lamentation', undercutting the image of the drunken sailor. In this song a grim picture of domestic violence is painted. The regrets of marrying a keelman, 'an ugly body, a bubbly body, an ill far'd ugly loon' are heard, as the keelman's young wife is kicked down the stairs.

Songs in this period would have originally been performed to limited audiences. Early nineteenth-century Tyneside poets and songsters mostly wrote for their own amusement and sang at social meetings among their

[21] R. Hermeston (2014) 'Indexing Bob Cranky: social meaning and the voices of pitmen and keelmen in early nineteenth-century Tyneside song', *Victoriographies*, 4(2), pp.164–165.

[22] Colls, *The Collier's Rant*, p.26.

[23] See Allan, *Tyneside Songs and Readings*.

friends, or to entertain fraternal or supper clubs that met after work.[24] To some critics, in particular the Marxist historian of popular culture David Harker, the satirical portraits of Tyneside's working people in this period are patronising depictions, written from a position that lacked genuine involvement in the life of the lower town community (which abutted the river), and intended for middle-class audiences of the more respectable upper town. The frequent depictions of keelmen and sailors—in common with the portraits of pitmen—as drunken, illiterate, and intellectually stunted, argues Harker, was a product of a class-based politics that reflected the songster's own social position and aspirations.[25] Nevertheless, many of these songs would be printed and circulated in regional song collections, particularly from the mid-century onwards, and included in repertoires of early music hall performers. Song collectors, folklorists and antiquarians operating in the late Victorian era kept these elements of popular cultural life in circulation, preserving a set of social and cultural meanings of characters and events that projected, writes Patrick Joyce, 'a rather homogeneous, extra-local popular culture' celebratory of its people.[26] While there is an ongoing debate on the degree to which the songs were satirical or celebratory, prejudiced or populist, or representative of divergent audience tastes and expectations,[27] our understandings need to address both oral and print cultures and pay closer attention to the composers and performers that shaped and circulated representations of seamen and keelmen throughout the region.

Robert Gilchrist: Tyneside Sailmaker and 'Broadside Balladeer'

Robert Gilchrist was born in Gateshead on 8 September 1797. He followed in the footsteps of his father, John, to become a sailmaker. Alongside wooden shipwrights, caulkers and riggers, sailmakers belonged to a class of skilled artisans essential to the shipbuilding industry and the economy of the port town.[28] Under Eric Hobsbawm's schema, sailmakers could

[24] Harker, 'The making of the Tyneside concert hall', pp.41–43.

[25] Harker, 'Thomas Allan and 'Tyneside song"'.

[26] P. Joyce (1991) *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class 1848–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p.233.

[27] Hermeston, 'Indexing Bob Cranky'.

[28] M. Hirsch (1985) 'Sailmakers: the maintenance of craft tradition in the age of steam', in R. Harrison and J. Zeitlin (eds.) *Divisions of Labour: Skilled Workers and Technological*

be classed as 'labour aristocrats'. They took pride in their possession and maintenance of ancient craft skills and enjoyed a sense of superiority over unskilled labourers in the social structure of Tyneside port workers.[29] A sailmaker would learn his trade as an apprentice, beginning at the age of 14. During his apprenticeship he would learn stitches and how to produce accurate cuts of canvas cloth, develop a working knowledge of sail types, and an understanding of how to measure masts and yards. Several men would have worked in the sailmaking lofts to cope with the business. Robert served out his apprenticeship on 11 November 1819 and paid £2 16s 8d for his membership of the Incorporated Company of Sailmakers and joined his father's business on the Quayside.[30] Sailmaking was a trade with a fluctuating business cycle. The volume of work would steadily increase during the winter or when weather was so poor that the ships could not put to sea. As Land reminds us, ships spent a considerable amount of time in port, waiting for cargo, loading and unloading, and making repairs for the next voyage.[31] Sailmakers, shipwrights and riggers would be kept busy and many ships would be laid up for dry-docking, or put on the slip to have their bottoms caulked, coal tarred and blackleaded. In 1827 no less than 862 ships were registered at the Newcastle Custom House, one-sixteenth of the entire shipping of the country, so work for sailmakers would be steady; a situation that altered rapidly with the arrival of steamships and the eclipsing of sail power later in the century.[32]

Gilchrist spent his working life as a sailmaker, taking over from his father who died in 1829. Yet, as a short posthumous biography noted, sailmaking was not Robert's true calling. He started writing poetry from a young age and found support in the company of the 'three founders of Tyneside song', Thomas Thompson, John Selkirk and John Shield. He was held in high regard, receiving a silver medal in appreciation of his poetic efforts in 1818.[33] Gilchrist wrote both poetry and song, producing verse that was sentimental or religious, where his song was inclined towards comic

Change in Nineteenth Century Britain (Brighton: The Harvester Press), p.89.

[29] E. Hobsbawm (1979) *Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson), pp.272–315.

[30] 'Admissions certificates to the Incorporated Company of Sailmakers', Tyne and Wear Archives (TWA), Newcastle-upon-Tyne, GU/SL/4/667/3.

[31] I. Land (2002) 'The many-tongued hydra: sea talk, maritime culture, and Atlantic identities, 1700-1850', *Journal of American and Comparative Cultures*, 25(3–4), p.414.

[32] Hirsch, 'Sailmakers'.

[33] Allan, *Tyneside Songs and Readings*, p.169.

and satirical portraits of local characters, written in local dialect. His first volume of poetry, *Gothalbert and Hisanna*, was published in 1822. This was followed by the *Collection of Original Songs, Local and Sentimental* in 1824, to which an expanded second edition followed later that year, with the title slightly altered to *A Collection of Original Local Songs. Poems*, a bound volume of 84 compositions followed in 1826. All were printed as chapbooks by local publishers. A small number of compositions were unpublished, yet in all, Gilchrist's surviving output of poetry and song numbers slightly over 120 original pieces, ranging from a few lines to 24 pages in length. His verse was printed on broadsides, too, and occasionally featured in the 'poetry corner' of local press, including *The Newcastle Journal*, *Tyne Mercury*, *The Newcastle Courant*, and W.A. Mitchell's *Newcastle Magazine*. Many of Gilchrist's songs, drawn from his 1824 collection, upon which a biographer noted his fame largely rested,[34] were republished in local anthologies in his lifetime and beyond.[35] The reproduction of his work provided Gilchrist with a degree of local fame. Richard Welford, who produced three volumes of biographies of notable and celebrated people in the North-East, included a biography of Robert Gilchrist and called him 'a Tyneside bard of some celebrity in his day, and certainly one of the brightest of the race'.[36] Even into the twenty-first century he is remembered as 'the great broadside balladeer' of the town.[37]

By the 1830s Robert Gilchrist began to regale numerous public events with his witty and satirical compositions.[38] This was concurrent with a change in his civic status. Gilchrist became Steward of the Incorporated Company of Sailmakers (1829–1830, 1833–1844),[39] subsequently elected to the Herbage Committee, which defended the rights and privileges of Newcastle's freemen and oversaw the management of the Town Moor. Following the Poor Law reforms of 1834 and the creation of the

[34] *The Monthly Chronicle of North-Country Lore and Legend*, May 1888, p.234.

[35] These included Fordyce's (1842) *Newcastle Song Book*, Joseph Robson's (1849) *Songs of the Bards of the Tyne*, Joseph Crawhall's (1888) *A Beuk O'Newcassel Sangs*, and Allan's (1891) *Tyneside Songs and Readings.*

[36] R. Welford (1895) *Men of Mark 'Twixt Tyne and Tweed*. Volume II (London: Walter Scott), p.295.

[37] D. Bell (2006) *The Folk Doon on the Kee (Characters of Old Tyneside)* (Newcastle: Jagram Publications), p.9.

[38] For instance, Gilchrist 'sung with great applause' at the opening of the Grainger Market on 22 October 1835. *Newcastle Journal* 24 October 1835; see also, *Newcastle Journal*, 27 May 1837.

[39] Company books of the Incorporated Company of Sailmakers, TWA, GU/SL/2/2.

Newcastle-upon-Tyne Poor Law Union in September 1836,[40] Gilchrist was elected to the Board of Guardians, representing the populous All Saints' Parish between 1838 and 1842 and was appointed to a committee that oversaw the construction of the Newcastle Workhouse.[41] Through these positions Gilchrist became known to Newcastle's civic elite. He used his talents to pen verse for special occasions. For instance, as Steward of the Incorporated Company of Sailmakers he had a prominent role in Newcastle's Barge Day ritual, being forefront on the Steward's steam packet and performed especially composed songs on the boat and at the celebratory dinners that followed.[42] Gilchrist died of stomach cancer at home in Shieldfield Green, Newcastle, on 11 July 1844, though he continued to produce verse until the last few months of his life.

Mid-Victorian Tyneside songsters such as George Ridley (author of 'The Blaydon Races'), Ned Corvan and Joe Wilson have been studied extensively, all three being music hall performers who entertained the expanding industrial working-class community.[43] Recent scholarly interest has been directed towards mining poetry in the region, with studies of Thomas Wilson, Joseph Skipsey, Thomas Blackah and Robert Watson.[44] While these studies are valuable they have tended to marginalise other composers and writers located in fractionally maritime industries and occupations. Less attention has been paid to the preindustrial poets and songwriters operating in the early nineteenth century; a situation reinforced by waves of folk song revivals that have generally utilised material from later Victorian and twentieth-century Tyneside. Gilchrist has received some scholarly comment, most notably from historians Robert Colls and David Harker, who refer to Gilchrist's song within larger studies of class and song in the North-East, though they only deal

[40] N. McCord (1969) 'The implementation of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act on Tyneside', *International Review of Social History*, 14(1): 90–108.

[41] Newcastle Poor Law Union Minutes 1836–1845, TWA, PU.NC/Accession 359.

[42] Allan, *Tyneside Songs and Readings*, p.176. For more on the Barge Day rituals see, G.J. Milne (2006) *North East England 185–1914: The Dynamics of a Maritime-Industrial Region* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press), pp.104–106.

[43] Colls, The Collier's Rant; Harker, 'The making of the Tyneside concert hall'; D. Harker (1986) 'Joe Wilson: "comic dialect singer" or class traitor?'. In J.S. Bratton (ed.) *Music hall: Performance and Style* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press), pp.110–130; D. Harker, (2012) *Gannin' to Blaydon Races! The life and times of George Ridley* (Newcastle: Tyne Bridge Publishing).

[44] B. Keegan (2011) "Incessant toil and hands innumerable': Mining and poetry in the Northeast of England, *Victoriographies* 1(2): 177–201; Hermeston, 'Indexing Bob Cranky'.

with Gilchrist's more popular (and reproduced) songs and not his wider body of work. The following section provides some examples of his verse about sailors, sailing and the sea drawn from his most noted songs and poetic efforts, which were published in the bound volumes mentioned above and in the local press.

Robert Gilchrist's Maritime Verse

'The Amphitrite', also known as 'The Skipper's Erudition', was one of Gilchrist's most popular songs. Set to the tune of *Gee-ho! Dobbin*,[45] the song tells the story of a keelboat and its crew. Gilchrist commented that 'The following production records some of the ludicrous mistakes made by the intrepid navigators of the coal keels. They are a healthy race of men, and for strength and activity have long been justly famous. Intelligence is making rapid advances among them.'[46] The song centres on a hungover crew of keelmen who forget the name of the collier brig they were supposed to deliver coals to, 'The Amphitrite', so decide to shout to moored ships up and down the Tyne in search of the correct vessel.[47] The skipper thought it was the Empty Kite,[48] and so the crew progress up the river, blaring "The Empty Kite, ho!" Unsuccessful, the skipper sends two of the crew into Newcastle to ask for the correct name. While they sat in a public house, they overhear a 'Dandy' use the word 'Appetite' and convinced this is the name of the brig, they canter back to Shields, calling 'The Appetite, ho!'. The final passage reads:

> Then into the huddock weel tir'd they all gat,
>
> An' of Empty Kite, Appetite, lang they did chat,

[45] *Gee-ho! Dobbin* was a catchy old English dance tune to which countless broadside songs had been set (some quite bawdy—that is, 'The Buxom Dairy Maid'), which had been popularised in the comic ballad opera *Love in a Village*, by Thomas Arne and Isaac Bickerstaff in 1762. Many local songsters adopted the tune; it is found in William Mitford's 'Cappy, or the Pitman's Dog', 'The Jenny Hoolet; or, Lizzie Mudie's Ghost' by William Armstrong and 'Newcastle Wonders' by Robert Emery. Mrs Micawbar is caught singing the song, later, in Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield*.

[46] Allan, *Tyneside Songs and Readings*, p.186.

[47] 'The Amphitrite', writes Colls, 'was one of the more famous of the river's brigs, two hundred and twenty-one tons, she was built in 1776 at Shields'. Colls, *The Collier's Rant*, p.200.

[48] 'Kite' is a dialect word for stomach; its use in this context shows the captain to be thinking with his belly rather than his brain.

When the skipper discover'd – (mair wise than a king)

Though not the syem word, they were much the syem thing.

The song works with prevailing stereotypes of local 'social fools' in its depiction of the keelmen as drunkards, illiterate, unintelligent and prone to malapropisms.[49] A later writer commented that 'The Amphitrite' was a well-worn local joke. Other Tyneside songsters had used the comic device; another describes keelmen looking for a ship called Swan, which 'was like a geuse but not a geuse', for instance.[50] These songs worked on a stereotype of burly keelmen, possessed of a mammoth appetite, an unconquerable thirst and an astounding ignorance. Gilchrist was not alone in perpetuating this image. William Armstrong's 'The Skipper in the Mist' tells the story of the captain who lost his reckoning in the mist not far from Gateshead and declared he smelt salt water and could see Marsden Rock. The skipper decides to drop anchor 'For fear we be nabb'd by the French privateers!' only to discover when the weather cleared that they were still on the Tyne, moored off the banks of Gateshead.[51] That Gilchrist should satirise keelmen by employing common stereotypes and through a caricatured rendering of dialect can partially be explained by the performative contexts of urban leisure culture in early nineteenth-century Newcastle. The songster was called upon to entertain friendly societies and fraternal orders, of which the vast majority of the working population of Newcastle were a member.[52] Caricatures of keelmen and sailors, alongside miners and Quayside eccentrics,[53] were ways of winning over an audience and ensuring repeat business for a community abundant with versifiers.

However, as many literary critics and scholars have noted, the labouring-class poet often worked in a dual voice. Where dialect song conveyed satire, character and local commentary; poetry was written in a different way, in Standard English and borrowed from other poetic narratives and tradi-

[49] Hermeston, 'Indexing Bob Cranky', p.164.

[50] R.W. Johnson (1895) *The Making of the Tyne. A Record of Fifty Years' Progress* (London: Walter Scott), p.300.

[51] In a similar vein, see 'The Skipper's Mistake' (anon) in *The Shield's Song Book, Being a Collection of Comic and Sentimental Songs, Never before Published*. This songbook was 'Written by the Gentlemen of the Neighbourhood' and printed by G.W. Barnes of South Shields, in 1826. Newcastle Central Library.

[52] Harker, 'The making of the Tyneside concert hall'.

[53] On 'Newcastle's 'eccentrics', see J. Gregory (2005) '"Local characters": eccentricity and the North East in the nineteenth century', *Northern History*, 42(1): 164–187.

tions, particularly Romanticism.[54] Several pieces in Gilchrist's collection of *Poems* address maritime themes. 'Written at sea' and 'A scene at sea; written at midnight' place Robert Gilchrist on a ship's deck. A note accompanying the latter describes Gilchrist being enraptured with the voyage:

> I came on deck at midnight, the weather was very boisterous, but the prospect around was so novel to me, that, struck with the sublimity of the scenery, I expressed myself in terms of admiration of it to the captain of the vessel. He made me no answer; but a look of surprise, and a silent shrug of the shoulders, convinced me that he was amazed at the oddness of my taste.[55]

The comment marks the labouring-class poet as different and out of place. Robert Gilchrist the sailmaker, although from the same mercantile network, is juxtaposed to the captain in outlook and sensibility.

A trope common to maritime adventure narratives was the fashioning of a tale of discomfort and danger. To the Romantic traveller a seaborne journey was designed to give insight and knowledge, to prove the limitations of the self and powers of endurance.[56] The song 'Voyage to Lunnin', works within this oeuvre as Gilchrist portrays himself as a suffering traveller. In several places Gilchrist's social distance from sailors is emphasised. As he passes collier vessels returning to Newcastle he hails 'Tyneside lads', the 'lords upon the ocean', tough and fearless patriots. However, he shows himself as lacking in the requisite qualities of the sailor. The song reports the passengers getting seasick as the ship hits rougher waters off Robin Hood's Bay. Gilchrist forsakes the Yorkshire pudding being enjoyed by his sailing companions ('Maw heed swam roond, whene'er aw thowt/ Upon a fat pan-soddy'). The feeling of seasickness lays bare the distance between seasoned seafarers and landlubbers. While he enjoys the conviviality of the voyage, his body is just not designed for heavy seas. However,

[54] The labouring-class poet faced a quandary in the reception of their work. Keegan and Goodridge note, 'For polite audiences, dialect poetry was "interesting", whereas publishing poetry in polite idioms was presumptuous, or even politically suspect.' Where popular songs received audience approval, the social position of the composer compromised the ability to be accepted in more refined company. B. Keegan and J. Goodridge (2004) 'Clare and the traditions of labouring-class verse'. In T. Keymer and J. Mee (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to English literature 1740–1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p.281.

[55] R. Gilchrist (1826) *Poems* (Newcastle: W. Boag), pp.87–87.

[56] C. Thompson (2007) *The Suffering Traveller and the Romantic Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp.40–44.

the dichotomy between maritime and urban dwellers is elided through the use of 'lads', which helps to claim a common cultural identity.[57] This is achieved also through a pervasive sense of home that is invoked when Gilchrist namechecks familiar Quayside characters—well known to visitors of the town—as the ship departs the 'cannie kee', and a sense of pride in the muscular readiness of the Tyneside crew to defend the nation: 'Come England's foes—a countless crew, Ye'll gie thor gobs a scummin'.[58]

The heroic qualities of sailors are emphasised elsewhere. 'The Loss of the Ovington', a poem added to his *Collection of Original Local Songs,* was written to mark the rescue of The Ovington, a trade ship that was wrecked on 13 October 1822 off Marske Sands, near Redcar.[59] We find Gilchrist located on the shore, keenly observing the spectacle of the doomed ship. This is a nightmarish scene, a 'war of elemental rage', as red-forked lightning flashes, a tempest rages, rain lashes the main, and seas yawn around the boat, threatening oblivion. Gilchrist imagines the crew in action, under the guidance of Captain Thomas Waters, to whom the poem is dedicated. Shipwrecks were a cultural fascination throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Not only did the loss of a ship impact on the livelihoods of those connected to supplying and refitting the vessels, shipwrecks were also a form of cultural anxiety. According to Carl Thompson, shipwrecks questioned the self-image of Britain as a maritime nation blessed by Providence; they undermined this confident self-image.[60] 'The Loss of the Ovington' offers a form of assurance that qualities of courage and leadership reside in a Northumberland crew. The captain stiffens the resolve of his men and brings 30 years of maritime knowledge to bear as the crew and passengers are guided to safety.

Her bold commander, with a mind inured

To cope with dangers, firm and unsubdued –

In him each drooping heart felt reassured,

And every failing effort still renewed –

[57] R. Hermeston (2011) "The Blaydon Races': lads and lasses, song tradition, and the evolution of an anthem', *Language and Literature*, 20(4): 269–282.

[58] There are parallels here to older verse, for instance, 'A Song in Praise of the Keelmen Volunteers'. J. Bell (1812) *Rhymes of Northern Bards* (Newcastle upon Tyne), p.86.

[59] The ship was carrying cargo valued at £40,000 from Newcastle to London. http://www.redcar.org/shipwrecks-part-1/

[60] Thompson, *The Suffering Traveller.*

The possession of natural courage among North-East seafarers extended to her most famous daughter. Robert Gilchrist wrote two sonnets in tribute to the heroism and life of the Northumberland lifeboatwoman Grace Darling. His 'Sonnet to Miss Grace Horsley Darling—The preserver of the passengers saved from the wreck of the *Forharshire* steam-packet' was published in the *Newcastle Journal* on 22 September 1838, making it one of the earliest—if not the earliest—celebrations of Darling's courage. Gilchrist's sonnet followed a week after the first detailed account of the heroic rescue appeared in the *Newcastle Courant* of 14 September 1838, and was one of a number of poems composed by private individuals in the weeks that followed the news.[61] As one local observer later commented of Darling's heroic rescue: 'Seldom has any solitary incident in the annals of shipwreck occasioned such general excitement, or called forth so much heartfelt admiration among all classes of the community.'[62] The intense media interest that followed news of the deed saw journalists, playwrights, novelists, balladeers, sculptors, potters, and painters all clamour to celebrate Grace's heroism and to take advantage of the commercial opportunities the story provided.[63] In publishing Gilchrist's sonnet, the *Newcastle Journal* was swept up in the story, utilising the talents of a local poet to convey a sense of regional pride.[64] But what is most telling to the social construction of seafarers is the juxtaposition at work in the 'poetry corner' of this particular issue. Beneath Gilchrist's sonnet the *Journal* reproduced Thomas Hood's 'Sonnet to a decayed seaman'. The sonnet honours a sailor who had shown service to the nation but was now a crippled veteran, 'thrown on shore, like a mere weed of the ocean'. Contrast this with

[61] 'Newspaper cuttings of Tyneside songs and miscellaneous subjects', folder 11, Thomas Allan Collection, Newcastle City Library. A letter to Allan from John Robinson (n.d.) reveals that John Luke Clennell wrote a song about Grace Darling published in November 1838 and 'D.D.M.' had a poem published in the *Gateshead Observer* on 20 November 1838. William Wordsworth wrote his famous poem 'Grace Darling' in March 1843, which was published by seven newspapers in April 1843. See J. Von Dan (1978) 'The publication of Wordsworth's 'Grace Darling'', *Notes and Queries*, CCXXIII: 223–225.

[62] 'Grace Darling', *The Montly Chronicle of North-Country Lore and Legend*, June 1888, p.267.

[63] H. Cunningham (2007) *Grace Darling: Victorian Heroine* (London: Hambledon Continuum), pp.29–48.

[64] On the mediating role of the local poet, see K. Blair (2014) '"A very poetical town": newspaper poetry and the working-class poet in Victorian Dundee', *Victorian Poetry*, 52(1): 89–109.

Gilchrist's image of Grace Darling, the 'illustrious maid', who confronted the 'Terror of the waves' undaunted.

Grace lived little more than 4 years to see the harvest of her fame and died of tuberculosis on 20 October 1842. She was buried in Bamburgh 4 days later, the graveyard 'crowded with strangers, both rich and poor, many of whom had come a long way'.[65] Her death was an occasion in which Gilchrist felt compelled to write a further sonnet. His 'Sonnet on the Death of Grace Darling' appeared in the *Newcastle Journal* on 29 October 1842, again noticeable for its swift composition and publication. It is reproduced in full:

Fair vestal of yon solitary rock,

Henceforth a monument to thee alone;

Surrounded by each tempest's whirl and shock,

And by the wild wave's melancholy moan,

How I recal thy pleasing placid look,

The certain index of a mind at ease;

Calm and untroubled as a limpid brook,

In peaceful contrast with the stormy seas.

And art thou dead? – then life hath one charm less,

Methinks this world's fair scenes begin to fade,

And earth, despoiled of so much loveliness,

Desponding mourns o'er thy departed shade,

So brief hath been thy time; – and yet, to me,

They die not early who have lived like thee.

While it cannot be certain that Gilchrist visited Grace Darling, he would have been familiar with her image, reproduced in various forms over the ensuing 5 years. The sonnet repeats perceptions of Grace possessing a 'pleasing placid look', being neither unbeautiful nor stressing her agency.

[65] *Berwick Advertiser*, 29 October 1842.

The emphasis is once again upon her feminine nature, 'Fair vestal of yon solitary rock', her passivity, 'mind at ease', 'calm and untroubled', which contrasted with the tempestuous seas around her. The fictional embellishments that would haunt Darling's story—that Grace heard the cries of the sailors and that Grace persuaded her father to row out with her to rescue them—are entirely absent. The final line approvingly notes her early death, a demise that secured her status as a national heroine and maiden of the rocks. As one later writer put it, 'She died in that beautiful period of her life when all seems hallowed, so that the heart turns to her in her loveliness, beauty, innocence, and purity, and venerates her as a gem of virtue and a true heroine.'[66]

Gilchrist's sonnets of Darling are divested of the dialect language of popular song to respectfully celebrate the unusual pluck of one connected with the sea. The celebration of the muscular patriotism of North-East sailors is set aside as provincial pride is extended to seafarers irrespective of gender. Gilchrist penned other dedicatory and memorial verse within a year of Darling's death. Laments to Mayor of Newcastle Archibald Reed and to Captain Thomas Porteus were also featured in the *Newcastle Journal*. These were the last known works published during Robert Gilchrist's lifetime.[67] Where his verse celebrated fellow poets, friends and Quayside acquaintances in the 1820s, these final poems betrayed his Janus-faced identity, as a man connected to the civic life of Newcastle and to the sea. What is conveyed as one surveys his entire output, not just his more popular songs, is a deep-seated communal pride conveyed in different literary and performative forms.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how song is an important source of evidence for understanding the cultural attitudes and representations of sailors and associated maritime workers that circulated in the North-East of England in the early nineteenth century. Songs and other forms of lyrical composition could render working people in ways that perpetuated stereotypes, yet

[66] T. Arthur, T. (1885 [1st ed. 1875]) *The Life of Grace Darling, the Heroine of the Farne Islands* (London), p.101.

[67] 'To the memory of the late Archibald Reed, Esq.', *Newcastle Journal*, 28 January 1843; 'On the death of old Thomas Porteus, R.N.', *Newcastle Journal*, 11 March 1843.

they were also a means of celebrating local characters and honouring heroic achievement. The oral traditions of popular culture and the high-culture aspirations of a printed literary culture expressed and extended meanings central to the region's relationship to the sea (and water). Indeed, one might argue that the songs provided Tyneside with a discursive coherence as a port town entity, contributing to a 'sense of place'; a shared culture with a specific history relative to the riverine and maritime economy. The urban fabric of Newcastle—its streets, alehouses, supper clubs and music halls—was permeated with songs and verse about the lives and experiences of the region's working people through compositions that were to be enjoyed by denizens of all classes. Tyneside songsters and labouring-class poets such as Robert Gilchrist were essential to developing cultural identities and meanings of what it was like to live in a port town, fashioning and transmitting images of the people, which while not to everyone's taste, or even politically suspect in some instances, responded to a demand to be entertained and amused. While Gilchrist could be considered as a fractionally maritime observer of Quayside comers and goers, he was not writing in a tradition of sailmaker poetry (if one ever existed) that might be attributed to other occupational groupings.[68] The sobriquet 'sailmaker poet' was never sought. Nor was his verse politically 'radical': there is no evidence he used compositions to advance the causes of working people on the Tyne, or the socially and economically estranged. It would be a later generation of Tyneside songsters that created a more sympathetic view of sailors and keelmen, expressing their hopes and aspirations, interests and follies, in terms that placed the songster within the community rather than a viewer from the outside.[69] Rather, Gilchrist's poetic voices, in both dialect song and Standard English poetry, demonstrate the different ways in which locality could be celebrated and recorded for posterity. The urban contexts of a developing middle class, growth of cultural institutions, evening leisure culture, extensive local press and publishing industry, are important to understanding the audiences for whom verses

[68] See, for instance, B. Keegan (2001) 'Cobbling verse: shoemaker poets of the long eighteenth century', *The Eighteenth Century*, 42(3): 195–217.

[69] Ned Corvan (1830–1865), the Tyneside music hall singer and performer, for example, continued the tradition of comic song, but also used song to articulate political sympathies. This he achieved through the publication of '£4. 10s. Or, the Sailor's Strike' and 'The Funny Time Comin' on a broadside to support the 1851 seaman's strike. I. Peddie (2009) 'Playing at poverty: the music hall and the staging of the working class'. In A. Krishnamurthy (ed.) *The Working-Class Intellectual in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Farnham: Ashgate), pp.241–243.

were produced, and how representations of seafaring, sailors and keelmen circulated around Tyneside. Robert Gilchrist may not be a nationally known or significant poet, indeed his verse was never popular beyond the North-East, but he is a useful guide to understanding the social and cultural impacts of life in a port town.

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CHAPTER 4

‘They Are Without Christ and Without Hope’: ‘Heathenism’, Popular Religion, and Supernatural Belief in Portsmouth’s Maritime Community, c.1851–1901

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Victorian Portsmouth was a site of multiple, emotive representations that informed a host of narratives about how contemporaries should think about Britain’s premier naval town. Its most predominant national image, one the town closely identified with, was as the home of the Royal Navy. Yet beneath a surface swell of militaristic, nationalistic and imperialistic bombast were more negative undercurrents informed and inflected by that prominent role. Familiar urban anxieties, common in and perhaps largely appropriated from representations of inland industrial towns, met and merged with concerns about the moral fibre of naval servicemen, still popularly defined in the mid-nineteenth-century imagination by the stereotype of ‘irresponsible, drunken, gallivanting tars who became social dangers once ashore’.[1]

To address the construction, operation, and misunderstandings of these negative representations this chapter explores orthodox religious rhetoric and popular religious praxis in Portsmouth in the second half of the nineteenth century. Previous studies of Victorian sailors, religion and

[1] M. A. Conley (1999), ‘“You Don’t Make a Torpedo Gunner Out of a Drunkard:” Agnes Weston, Temperance and the British Navy’, *The Northern Mariner*, IX:1, 1–22, 1.

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port towns have tended to restrict themselves to a focus on formal religion and the efforts of urban missionaries to Christianise naval servicemen and, more broadly, the sailortown communities in which they dwelt.[2] However, Christopher Magra and Marcus Rediker's works on eighteenth-century transatlantic mariners have suggested the existence of a broader religious mentality, a bricolage that incorporated Christian devotion, belief in providence, and elements of maritime folkloric 'superstition'. Historians such as Owen Davies, Bob Bushaway, and myself have drawn attention to the magically inflected nature of nineteenth-century 'popular' or 'alternate religion' as it existed inland, in cities, towns and countryside.[3] This chapter combines both approaches, demonstrating how the focus on port town missionary work informed an external view that largely obfuscated the existence and function of popular religious practices within maritime communities.

By working with a broader conception of religiosity, it will be argued that historians can gain insight into important distinctions (and connections) between how port towns were perceived from 'outside' or 'above', and how their inhabitants, afloat and ashore, experienced life from within. The chapter begins by considering how ecclesiastic agents shaped representations of Portsmouth as a site of immorality and heathen 'otherness'. Adopting the view that 'sailors' religious values represent an ideological link between sea and shore', it then examines mariners and port-dwellers' popular religious beliefs, their providential worldview and magical 'superstitions'.[4] Finally, it suggests that elements of both these popular beliefs

[2] See, for example, Conley, 'Torpedo Gunner', R. Blake (2014) *Religion in the British Navy, 1815–1879: Piety and Professionalism*, (Woodbridge: Boydell Press), and B. Beaven (2012) *Visions of Empire: Patriotism, Popular Culture and the City, 1870–1939*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press).

[3] See C. P. Magra (2007), 'Faith at Sea: Exploring Maritime Religiosity in the Eighteenth Century', *International Journal of Maritime History*, XIX:1, 87–106; M. Rediker (1987) *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700–1750*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); O. Davies (1999) *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture, 1736–1951*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press); B. Bushaway (1995) '"Tacit, Unsuspected, but still Implicit Faith": Alternative Belief in Nineteenth-Century Rural England', in T. Harris (ed.), *Popular Culture in England, c.1500-1850* (London: Macmillan), pp. 189–215; K. Bell (2012) *The Magical Imagination: Magic and Modernity in Urban England, 1780–1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 50–60.

[4] Magra, 'Faith at Sea', 88.

and their critical representations found resonance in the practice and perceptions of spiritualism in late nineteenth-century Portsmouth.

Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, religious authorities and moral reformers repeatedly portrayed Portsmouth as a godless void mired in hedonism and heathenism, thereby perpetuating and reinforcing a common representation of sailortown communities. Concern was particularly focussed on Portsea, a notably poor, working-class area of Portsmouth that was also the location of the sailortown district in this period. In his 1851 report, *A Letter on the Spiritual Necessities of Portsea,* Joseph Wigram, Archdeacon of Winchester, declared 'the religious destitution of Portsea, within and without the walls, is most deplorable'. Seeking to create a spiritual aid fund that would enable a programme of church building and to pay for a curate to be stationed in this part of the town, he described it as 'this desolate portion of the Lord's vineyard', one where 'multitudes of children' went unbaptised and God was 'not known by many of the people'.[5]

As in other Victorian cities, Wigram's concerns about the 'deficiency in the spiritual provision' of Portsea were informed by and fused with a broader range of social concerns relating to morality, popular education and public health. They were also explicitly connected to its naval role. Wigram declared 'The situation of the port, with … its peculiar claims to favour as a naval depot of GREAT BRITAIN (sic), increase the painful feelings with which its present condition is viewed'.[6] Noting how 'the poor superabound … under circumstances unhappily calculated to produce the greatest moral evils' he highlighted how all the 'vices connected with garrison and seaport towns grievously prevail'. There were, he noted, an estimated '360 beer shops, and 236 public houses in the island of Portsea … accommodation for 24,000 people; while in churches and chapels together, it does not much exceed that for 12,000: intemperance to religion in the proportion of two to one.'[7] Nor was it simply to the present that he directed his concerns. Portsmouth's economic orientation towards serving the Admiralty and the state retarded the development

[5] J. Wigram (1851) *A Letter on the Spiritual Necessities of Portsea* (London: The Operative Jewish Converts Institution), p. 5, 12–13, and 29.

[6] Wigram, *Spiritual Necessities of Portsea*, p. 11. These associations took literal form; Wigram's publication on the spiritual health of the town was appended to an account of Robert Rawlinson's 1851 report on Portsmouth for the Board of Health.

[7] Wigram, *Spiritual Necessities of Portsea*, pp. 12–13.

of an influential commercial middle class in the town.[8] With a lack of steerage from either the church or the local bourgeoisie the fear was that Portsmouth's lower classes would drift, rudderless and immoral, onto the rocks of their own destruction. As Father Dolling, a clergyman resident in Portsea in the 1880s and 1890s observed, 'Strive as hard as you might to improve environment, to conquer even heredity, unless you have changed character, man is bound to remain helpless'.[9]

Commentators like Wigram and Dolling repeatedly set the sparseness of the town's religious provision against the abundance of sinful behaviours that were perpetrated in its many taverns and brothels. Their descriptions frequently tended towards hyperbole, their allusions loaded with biblical connotations. Wigram declared 'the lasciviousness and unchastity are fearful' and 'these overflowings of ungodliness are increase[ed], from time to time, by the dispersion of the enormous crews of our line-of-battle ships, excited by release from long-continued restraint'; sailors who had accumulated wages at sea were said to go ashore 'like sheep to the slaughter, the prey of the agents of Satan'.[10] Yet naval seamen were not necessarily the innocents Wigram portrayed them to be. As the *Hampshire Advertiser* commented in 1844, 'religion is rather against the efficiency of a service such as our navy' for sailors 'must "have some of the Devil in them,"—to do their work well.'[11] It was not simply that God was absent in Portsmouth; rather, the sinful activities of the naval rank and file who protected a self-identifying Christian nation, and the town's publicans and prostitutes who serviced their needs, repeatedly turned Portsea's sailor-town into Satan's town with each exuberant bout of shore leave.

Richard Blake has suggested that Anglican seaport ministries generally 'neglected the whole maritime entity—mothers and children as well as seafarers—leaving sailors with scant Christian knowledge when they went to sea at an early age'. As such, port towns had a propensity to become 'a spiritual wasteland'.[12] However, in the second half of the nineteenth century Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists, Bible Christians, and the Catholic

[8] See J. Field (1986) 'Wealth, Styles of Life and Social Tone amongst Portsmouth's Middle Class, 1800-1875', in R. J. Morris (ed.), *Class, Power and Social Structure in British Nineteenth-Century Towns* (Leicester: Leicester University Press), pp. 67–106.

[9] R. R. Dolling (1903), *Ten Years in a Portsmouth Slum* (London: S.C. Brown, Langham), p. 23.

[10] Wigram, *Spiritual Necessities of Portsea*, p. 13.

[11] *Hampshire Advertiser*, 28th December 1844, 5.

[12] Blake, *Religion in the British Navy*, pp. 31–32.

Church all made efforts to reclaim Portsmouth for God. While the instigation of local missions, church and chapel building, and various educational and outreach initiatives formed part of a larger ecclesiastical response to urban expansion in this period, it was also driven by particular concerns for conduct and morality in this key naval town.[13] The Reverend Reginald Shutte established his Mission of the Good Shepherd in Portsea in 1866, a new Catholic Cathedral and diocese were established in 1882, and Father Dolling took charge of St Agatha's Mission in Portsea from 1885. Yet even amidst these efforts, in 1882 the *Hampshire Telegraph* reported 'the present non-attendance of seamen in the churches of Portsmouth is most lamentable, and requires some speedy and trenchant remedy'.[14] The real issue was not so much provision as mariners and locals unwillingness to engage with religious institutions.

Unsurprisingly then, Wigram's pessimistic tone continued to be repeated in later publications by local clergymen. In 1870 Shutte wrote of how, having 'penetrated into the dens of lust and violence which are closely packed within the slice of brick and mortar that lies between St. George's Square and Queen Street', the urban missionary would discover 'the dirt and misery and sin' of that 'most depraved of the classes that haunt these lanes and alleys'. With regard to the fallen women he was attempting to save, he wrote, 'Their name is legion … each one seems fouler than the last'.[15] Shutte's commentary is indicative of a contemporary ecclesiastical rhetoric that tended to emphasise despair rather than redemption.

Writing of almost a family tradition of prostitution in Portsmouth, in the 1890s Father Dolling argued that the town's young women 'sinned, because their mothers had sinned before them, oftentimes their grandmothers too, unconscious of any shame in it'.[16] Echoing Wigram's earlier realisation that the spirit that moved most freely through Portsea was more of an alcoholic than religious variety, he added, 'Oh that the bishops had the energy of the brewers! Oh, that the clergy had the persistency of the publicans! … I pray you realize how many places would be virtually heathen if the Church of England was the only representative of God in England'.

[13] See N. Yates (1983) *The Anglican Revival in Portsmouth* (Portsmouth: Portsmouth City Council), and W. D. Cooper (1973) *Methodism in Portsmouth 1750–1932* (Portsmouth: Portsmouth City Council), pp. 10–12.

[14] 'Churchwardens and Seamen', *Hampshire Telegraph*, 10th June 1882, 7.

[15] R.N. Shutte (1866), *The Mission of the Good Shepherd*, *Portsea*, (Portsmouth City Record Office ref. 800.9/2/2), 2–3.

[16] Dolling, *Ten Years*, pp. 17–18.

To drive the message home, Dolling even indicated that local boys were known to 'eat raw meat and drink blood', a sensational allusion to cannibalism based upon the prosaic fact that there were large numbers of slaughterhouses in Portsea.[17] Unlike Wigram, these later clergymen were resident in Portsmouth and therefore not so overtly outsiders. Nevertheless, as the above suggests, they were not averse to advancing dramatic representations that gave the sense that missionary work in the Portsea parish was as foreign and dangerous as any conducted elsewhere in the empire. They still observed their parishioners through a lens that had been developed externally, and not simply through class differences. Brad Beaven has recently suggested that these urban missionaries, especially Dolling, had their interpretation of Portsea informed by narratives and representations learned and told in their former parishes in the East End of London.[18]

This clerical rhetoric of ungodliness, orientated towards constructing a sense of 'otherness' about Portsea's sailortown, took several forms. Firstly, it informed a sense of spatial difference, sketching out an immoral typography that was reiterated in the local press and antiquarian studies. If clergymen were naturally prone to employing a biblical rhetoric, lay commentators alluded to a more pagan idiom. Local historians F. J. Proctor and William Gates, claimed that in the nineteenth century the Point in Old Portsmouth had been 'the nightly scene of Bacchanalian orgies and tumults' while Old Portsmouth's Free Mart Fair had 'degenerated into a fortnight's saturnalia' before it was abolished by an Act of Parliament in 1847.[19] 'The Devil's Acre', an emotive name given to The Hard by temperance campaigners in the 1890s, epitomised the idea of an immoral spatial otherness.[20] Perhaps more threatening yet, the ungodly could not be kept penned within Portsea's sailortown. With the removal of the town's former walls and fortifications from the 1870s, the sailortown district shifted in the late nineteenth century, gradually moving from around Queen Street in Portsea to Commercial Road and the new civic centre in Landport. Father Dolling drew attention to the dangers to young women in Commercial Road while Prospect Road 'was regarded as a very evil

[17] Dolling, *Ten Years*, pp. 20–21.

[18] See Beaven, *Visions of Empire*, pp. 56–59.

[19] F. J. Proctor (1931) Reminiscences of Old Portsmouth (Portsmouth: Proctor), p. 202. W. G. Gates (1987) *The Portsmouth that has Passed* (Horndean: Milestone), p. 320.

[20] This term was itself indicative of the transference of urban anxieties from one city to another. Charles Dickens had earlier labelled the Westminster slum the 'Devil's Acre'. See 'The Devil's Acre', *Household Words*, 22nd June 1850.

resort and shunned by decent people after dark'.[21] Suggestive of a sense of corruption that was as much moral as environmental, Gates recorded that it 'was a common local saying that "in Gold Street your gold would tarnish, in Silver Street your shillings would turn blue, and in Copper Street your pennies would be covered with verdigris"'.[22]

These moralised geographical representations fused with another morally inflected discourse in Portsmouth in this period. Accompanying the town's later nineteenth-century civic gentrification was the Royal Navy and naval moral reformers' attempts to foster a more disciplined, respectable, and, ideally, Christian seaman. Agnes Weston's Royal Naval Temperance Society sought to align temperance and Christian faith to naval efficiency and national strength. To encourage this she established a Sailors' Rest in Commercial Road, Landport, in June 1882; its rather opulent design intended to rival the attractions and 'potent charms' of public houses.[23] The Rest was later extended to Chandos Street through purchasing a public house, Weston seemingly attempting to reclaim a moral space, building by building, amidst a larger immoral terrain. Although first and foremost intended as sanctuaries from the sinful temptations of the district, they also provided a place whereby moral reformers like Weston could begin the work of saving sailors' souls.[24] Yet these small, philanthropic efforts to change the nature of Portsmouth's sailortown were undermined by a more general problem, one brought to light by the *Hampshire Telegraph* in the very month the Rest opened. It reported that even if seamen wanted to attend church they were being turned away by churchwardens who retained seats for local residents. The naval mariner's transient lifestyle seemed to render him a nonlanded, nonlocal 'other', at least in the eyes of the town's more officious churchwardens. The article stated 'Churchwardens and crimps have from time immemorial been the twin enemies of sailors' souls' for the former denied the sailor access to the church, driving him back into the street and into the waiting hands of the crimp who would ferry him into the public house. It called for the Naval

[21] Gates, *Portsmouth that has Passed*, p. 373, and Dolling, *Ten Years*, p. 40.

[22] Gates, *Portsmouth that has Passed*, p. 317.

[23] 'Opening of a Sailor's Rest and People's Café at Landport', *Hampshire Telegraph*, 17th June 1882, 7. Indicative of the fact that Portsmouth was not an exception with regard to religion and naval town anxieties, Weston had established a similar institution in Devonport, Plymouth, in 1876.

[24] See Agnes Weston (1909) *My Life Among the Blue Jackets* 2nd edn (London: James Nisbet), p. 122 and 126, and Conley, 'Torpedo Gunner', 7–10.

Church Society to 'contend for the admission of sailors to [Portsmouth's] churches … on equal terms with the most favoured landsmen', and that 'all seaport churches' should be made 'free and open to all comers, whether wearing blue jackets, red tunics, or brown coats'.[25]

A second way of constructing notions of otherness was through representations of domestic 'heathenism'. If sinful activities were used to delineate immoral spaces the association with notions of heathenism alluded to different temporalities within those spaces. As with missionaries' use of the term in far-flung outposts of the British Empire, heathenism attracted a cluster of negative associations linked to backwardness, ignorance, superstitious belief, and a lack of rational thought.[26] The heathen, domestic or otherwise, was thoroughly unmodern. This representation was echoed in press and clerical condemnation of a muted but seemingly tenacious popular faith in magical beliefs in the nineteenth century, one that raised doubts about the progressive 'march of intellect' among the lower classes.[27] Circumstantially at least, port towns were arguably more prone to being sites of 'superstitious' belief than comparative urban centres for, as one contemporary newspaper put it, while it was 'perhaps untrue to assert that every sailor is more superstitious than a landsman, it is nevertheless a fact that a considerable number of superstitions have … gathered around the calling of those whose business in life is with the great waters'.[28] For example, a common piece of maritime folklore was that the possessor of a caul, the membrane that enclosed a foetus in the womb, would be protected from drowning. Nineteenth-century newspapers carried advertisements for the sale of cauls, although a contributor to *Folklore* noted in 1917 that demand for these apotropaic charms had lessened since 'Nelson's time'; whereas they had fetched £20 in the early nineteenth century, by the Edwardian period they were selling for two shillings.[29]

Beyond this type of magical 'superstition' a more genuine 'heathenism' was alluded to in the body of maritime lore and ritual to which

[25] 'Churchwardens and Seamen', *Hampshire Telegraph*, 10th June 1882, 7.

[26] For evangelical conceptions of heathenism in this period, see A. Witmer (2014), 'Agency, Race and Christianity in the Strange Career of Daniel Flickinger Wilberforce', *Church History*, 83:4, 884–923.

[27] See Bell, *The Magical Imagination*, pp. 117–149.

[28] 'Sailors' Superstitions', *Liverpool Mercury*, 26th December 1895, 3.

[29] Anon. (March 1917), 'The Belief in Charms,' *Folklore*, 28:1, 98–99, 99. Prices revived as a result of submarine warfare in the First World War. Cauls were 'being sold at the London Docks for £2 10S' in 1917.

nineteenth-century mariners still paid at least token observance to, traditions that evoked deities beyond the Judeo-Christian conception. Sailors were said to view Wednesdays as among the most favourable days to begin a voyage because 'Wodin, the chief god of the Vikings, was the particular protector of all mariners' and because 'Wednesday is from Wodin's Day' it was 'regarded by seafarers as the luckiest day of the week'.[30] Whistling aboard ship was believed to invite gales as 'the god of the wind might think he was being mocked and would then very likely become furious'.[31] When it came to burials at sea, it was believed that the firing of a volley of gunshots not only honoured the deceased but scared away 'evil spirits' that may have gathered to take the dead sailor's soul.[32] Mariners did not necessarily have to believe in the actuality of these various deities and supernatural entities to receive a casual accusation of heathenism. As the *Hampshire Telegraph* noted, 'The difference between our credulity and that of past centuries is … that credulity then took a respectable form, whereas now it is disreputable. It was a virtue, and included a pious and reverential feeling; now, it is a sin concealed and consequently cherished. It was a religion—[now] it is a superstition'.[33] Such an interpretation suggests much maritime folkloric ritual may once have had a religious origin that had subsequently become lost or degraded over generations. As late as 1928 it was stated: 'The superstitions of bygone ages, of pagan antiquity and of Christian medievalism, are not yet extinct among the seafaring communities of our own days and have only been modified'.[34]

These 'superstitious' propensities were to be found ashore as much as aboard ship. F.J. Proctor cited the example of the appearance of 'a celebrated comet' as evidence of the town-dwellers' superstitious nature, noting that it generated such alarm that Portsmouth's 'streets and bastions were nightly lined with people deeply tinctured with false faith, fervently discussing the prophecies of Mother Shipton, and anxiously wondering whether the end of the world was coming'.[35] Naval mariners' families

[30] P. D. Jeans (2007), *Seafaring Lore and Legend* (Camden, Maine: McGraw-Hill), p. 309.

[31] Jeans, *Seafaring Lore*, p. 313.

[32] A.B. Campbell (1956) *Customs and Traditions of the Royal Navy* (Aldershot: Gale and Polden), p. 38.

[33] 'The Earthquake', *Hampshire Telegraph*, 17th October 1863, 3

[34] A. Rappoport (1928) *Superstitions of Sailors* (London: Stanley Paul), p. 256.

[35] F. J. Proctor, *Reminiscences of Old Portsmouth*, p. 12. Mention of Mother Shipton's prophecy suggests this comet appeared in 1881, the year she allegedly predicted the world would end.

were naturally anxious about their menfolk, given that their occupation combined the dangers of military service with the risks of seafaring.[36] Contemporaries such as Father Dolling recognised the economic hardship suffered by the wives of Portsmouth's naval servicemen. They had to endure delays in receiving their husband's pay while trying to find work, usually piecemeal corset-making work, in the town's glutted unskilled female labour market. Dolling's fear was that such circumstances always threatened to drive the desperate mother into prostitution.[37] As such, those who stayed ashore were equally invested in the safe return of their loved ones and breadwinners. The dangers of life at sea and the slow pace of communication generated desire for news or even signs, and this fed a certain predilection for presentiments. It was popularly reported that no less a figure than Admiral Nelson had had a presentiment of his death shortly before the Battle of Trafalgar, and whether such a famous sanction was needed or not, it was noted that 'many a mother in Old Portsmouth has had a feeling … that on a particular day a loved one far from home had been lost at sea'.[38]

If presentiments were too rare and random one could easily resort to Portsmouth's fortune tellers for 'news' and peace of mind. An article in the *Hampshire Telegraph* entitled 'Among Fortune-Tellers' suggested that into the late 1890s Portsmouth was well-provisioned with a range of back-street fortune tellers, mediums, seers and wise women.[39] However, neither this nor a flurry of court cases related to fortune-telling in the town in the 1880s provides much indication of a particularly maritime dimension to this local magical trade. Given the unusually high proportion of the town's male population who were in naval service or away at sea, one fortune teller gambled (incorrectly) on the prediction that her client had 'a fair young man, that he was abroad [and] that he was coming home'.[40] As suggested here, the fortune teller's typical client appears to have been the town's young women, especially domestic servants and shop girls seeking advice about relationships and future marriage prospects.

[36] For indication of the mental and physical strains arising from naval service, see R. Pietsch (2013), 'Hearts of Oak and Jolly Tars? Heroism and Insanity in the Georgian Navy', *Journal of Maritime Research*, 15:1, 69–82.

[37] Dolling, *Ten Years*, pp. 108–09.

[38] Gates, *Portsmouth that has Passed*, p. 223, and Proctor, *Reminiscences*, p. 5.

[39] 'Among Fortune-Tellers', *Hampshire Telegraph*, 26th November 1898. See also 'Fortune-telling; Strange Case at Southsea', *Hampshire Telegraph*, 16th December 1893.

[40] 'Fortune Telling at Southsea,' *Hampshire Telegraph*, 6th November 1886, 3.

If Portsmouth was the gateway to empire then these representational aspects of a local, magically minded 'other' appeared to suggest it was less a portcullis guarding the entrance to the heart of a Christian empire and more a threshold where the flotsam and jetsam of maritime 'superstitions' washed ashore. Such beliefs were typically associated in the educated Victorian mind with presumed 'inferiors'—women, children, the uneducated, and non-Europeans.[41] These representations of otherness, informed by educated Victorian views on religion and irreligion, shaped a crude sense of difference between Portsmouth's rough and respectable geographies and communities. Yet at the same time, one must recognise that talk of heathenism served a larger narrative that local clergymen were attempting to advance. By forwarding a representation of Portsmouth as containing 'sinks of iniquity' they made the heroic struggle and victory of the church (and therefore civilisation) all the greater once they had cleansed the town of both its environmental dangers and debauched, 'heathen' behaviours.[42] This was borne out by F.J. Proctor later crediting Portsmouth's 'churchmen and dissenters' with 'manfully tackl[ing] the job of cleansing the town by eloquently advocating reform', declaring 'That agitation was the starting point of the wonderful progress which Portsmouth and its environs have made'.[43]

Of course, these notions of port town 'heathenism' were very much an externally applied representation. From within Portsmouth's maritime communities (both afloat and ashore) there was a rather different perspective and an alternative engagement with Christian ideas and symbolism. With a degree of insight seemingly lacking in many of his contemporaries, the nineteenth-century Portsmouth historian Henry Slight observed:

> Religion in a sailor is more of an active than a passive feeling. It does not consist in reflection or self-examination. It is in externals that his respect to the Deity is manifest. Witness the Sunday on board of a man-of-war. The care with which the decks are washed, the hauling taut and neat coiling down the ropes … most of which duties are performed on other days, but on this day are executed with an extra precision and attention on the part of the seamen, because it is *Sunday*.

[41] Newspapers drew parallels between domestic 'superstitions', popular ignorance and 'heathen' races elsewhere in the empire. See, for example, *Hampshire Telegraph*, 25th April 1857, 7.

[42] 'Pictures of Portsmouth', *Hampshire Telegraph*, 24th February 1894, 2.

[43] Proctor, *Reminiscences*, p. 18.

He added, 'sailors have a deep-rooted feeling of religion', expressed not only by their attention to duties before divine service but also seen in 'the little knots of men collected, in the afternoon, between the guns, listening to one who reads some serious book; or the solitary quartermaster poring over his thumbed Testament, as he communes with himself'.[44]

Yet accompanying these more formal and conventional religious observations, mariners and Portsmuthians engaged with beliefs in providence and unseen forces that could be ritualistically appeased or appealed to, a hybrid fusion of religious and supernatural mentalities that historians have termed popular religion or 'alternate belief'.[45] This was a muted but pervasive worldview of hidden meanings and supernatural connections, one that manifested itself in omens and insights of what may come and, possibly, how such an outcome could variously be secured or avoided. It connected the individual to the supernatural and natural worlds, and was orientated towards navigating the misfortunes that were liable to arise from any given environment. In Portsmouth this commonly translated into seeking a sense of influence over the dangers of maritime life, most obviously drowning. As an 1844 article in the *Hampshire Advertiser* recognised, 'Sailors are, from the habits and circumstances of their whole lives, strange beings' with 'a deep feeling of the reality of things unseen'.[46] Magra has emphasised how eighteenth-century mariners 'relied on both folklore and organized religious ideas to help them process unpredictable lives at sea' and this appears to have still had some observance into the second half of the nineteenth century.[47] By fostering a sense of human agency amidst the vastness of the marine environment, popular religion served more psychological than metaphysical purposes. It militated against fatalism by encouraging a feeling of insight, knowledge and forewarning. Nominally, mariners may have placed their fate in their seafaring skills and the sturdy design of their vessels, but given the potential hazards of both the sea and naval warfare, the floating community appears to have exchanged a body of lore that enabled them to detect particular signs and observe ritualistic activities so as not to invite misfortune.

[44] H. Slight (1838), *The History of Portsmouth* (Portsmouth), p. 5.

[45] See Bushaway, 'Tacit, Unsuspected, but still Implicit Faith', pp. 194–95, and also Steve Bruce (2011), 'Secularisation, Church and Popular Religion', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 62:3, 543–561.

[46] *Hampshire Advertiser*, 28th December 1844, 5.

[47] Magra, 'Faith at Sea', 97.

Importantly, religion served as a link between land and sea. Magra has noted how elements of 'formal land-based religious beliefs can be discerned in sailors' lives', especially their 'providential worldview'.[48] That worldview was richly informed by an appropriation of biblical knowledge. It was, for example, considered bad luck to set sail or launch a ship on a Friday, that being the day of Christ's crucifixion.[49] Referencing both the Old and New Testaments, one newspaper account of sailors' 'superstitions' reported 'One of the strongest and most lingering superstitions of the British tar is his aversion to putting out to sea on a Friday … Other days, such as the first Monday in April, the day, it is said, on which Cain was born, and Abel was slain; the second Monday in August, on which tradition has it, Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, and December 31st, the day on which Judas Iscariot is said to have been born, were [previously] regarded as ill-omened days on which to proceed to sea'. As a rule, 'all Saints days and Church holidays were regarded as unlucky' but 'The Sabbath appears to have been a favourite day for leaving shore'.[50] While this sensitivity to the ecclesiastical calendar would have obviously been learnt and developed ashore, when taken to sea it was granted additional meanings. This providential application of biblical lore and ecclesiastical observances certainly did not preclude genuine religious faith, but it gave it a more 'pragmatic' application in protecting against or else explaining misfortune.

In this context, it is also worth noting that having clergymen aboard ship was thought to bring bad luck. One suggested reason for this aversion was because clergymen were 'sworn enemies of the devil' and that 'storms and tempests are sent by the fiends to destroy them'. This then was not an expression of innate anticlericalism so much as a wish to avoid the bad weather that their presence would supposedly encourage. That said, clergymen were also unpopular for other reasons, for 'their black gowns and the fact that their principal use [was] to console the dying and assist at the burial of the dead'.[51] It was reported that 'few … sailors relish the presence of a parson aboard … and there is still current a strong antipathy to a dead body in the ship, not owing to any natural aversion to the corpse

[48] Magra, 'Faith at Sea', 97.

[49] 'Sailors' Superstitions', *Hampshire Telegraph*, 29th February 1896, 12.

[50] 'Sailors Superstitions', *The Hull Packet and East Riding Times*, 13th September 1878, 3, and 'Sailors' Superstitions', *Hampshire Telegraph*, 29th February 1896, 12.

[51] 'Sailors' Superstitions', *Liverpool Mercury*, 26th December 1895, 3.

as such, but because it is still regarded as possessed of certain malignant powers', not least that it would make the ship sail slower or 'deviate from its course'.[52]

Ashore, neither Portsmouth in particular nor port towns in general were unique in their appropriation of the power of orthodox religious spaces, imagery, litany and tropes for magical purposes. However, it was locally believed that if seated in the golden barque, a model ship that was erected at the top of St Thomas' Church in Old Portsmouth 'during its infrequent descents to ground level for repairs' a child would be granted 'immunity from drowning'.[53] This was a clear example of popular religion fusing with sympathetic magic, the model ship gaining some of its protective powers from the veneration drawn from its location on the church. Such symbolism may have been invoked in a context more magical than theological but, like prayer, this appropriation was very much about granting a sense of hope for the future. Even when transformed into a source of magical power, the religious element was integral to that power. From within Portsmouth's maritime communities then, Wigram's observation that the inhabitants of Portsea were 'without Christ and without hope' suggest he either misunderstood or else was blind to the operation of popular religious mentalities in the town.[54]

If these measures failed to protect mariners, local ghost lore might provide a modicum of comfort. The popular maritime folkloric trope of the dead sailor's ghost returning to land or, conversely, the spirit of a deceased land-dweller appearing before a mariner miles away at sea enabled a sense of closure. The sailor's longing for home meant it was 'not surprising that a drowned sailor's new-made ghost comes as a "forerunner" to warn the family of his end'.[55] Like all Victorian towns, Portsmouth had its fair share of ghosts, and, given the obvious presence of naval seamen and marines in its streets, many were the ghosts of sailors. In particular, the ramparts near the King's Bastion in Old Portsmouth were renowned for being haunted

[52] 'Sketches of Maritime Life' *The Newcastle Weekly Courant*, 31st August 1888, 5, and 'Sailor's Superstitions', *The Hull Packet*, 13th September 1878, 3. For their part, ships chaplains could find themselves in the awkward situation of serving aboard *The Infernal* or attending the christening of *The Beelzebub*. See *Hampshire Advertiser*, 28th December 1844, 5.

[53] R. Esmond (1959) *The Charm of Old Portsmouth* (Portsmouth: Gale and Polden), p. 39. Features of church architecture were often credited with supernatural significance in popular folklore. See J.E. Vaux (1894) *Church Folklore* (London: Griffith, Farran).

[54] Wigram, *Spiritual Necessities of Portsea*, p. 13.

[55] M. Baker (1979) *The Folklore of the Sea* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles), p. 67.

by the ghosts of 'much whiskered sailors' who had presumably returned home to port.[56] These ghosts can be situated in the context of Portsmouth as the nation's preeminent naval town. Royal Naval ports were sites of bereavement, and the patriotic dimension to the loss of loved ones gave families' grief an inflection that was not to be found in commercial ports or even fishing ports. In this respect, the town's ghostly mariners informed a sense of local memorialisation; because the phantoms were never clearly identified as individual seamen they arguably served as representatives of all those lost at sea.

Towards the end of the century newspapers repeatedly reported that mariners' superstitions were dying out, that life at sea had lost its 'old romantic colours', drained by 'steam … education, the march of science, and above all, Time'.[57] This was a familiar narrative of the time, regularly applied to inland communities but easily adapted to naval developments and port town maritime cultures, too. From the 1850s Portsmouth's Royal Dockyard had initiated major modernisations with the construction of the steam basin and the shift from the production and maintenance of sailing ships to steam ships. This, the press suggested, had an impact on seafarers' 'superstitions'. Whereas such beliefs had previously thrived in a dangerous marine environment they were no longer required as vessels had become 'almost unsinkable … As danger is removed from their calling, they cease to heed those traditions which taught them how some things were to be regarded with favour as presaging luck, whilst others … [were] certain sign of misfortune'.[58]

As W. Clarke Russell observed in 1888, the 'Jacks of today are to be congratulated on having got rid of most of what they would themselves call this "long-shore swash" … The cat no longer carries a gale of wind in its tail … [a]ll the wizardry has gone out of the Fin, and his mission as a wind-raiser has come to an end; the mermaid made her last dive long ago'. Although admitting that 'with the departure of these old faiths has gone also the freshness and glory of the old sea dream', he concluded 'I certainly have no quarrel with my ship because her swift iron keel has shorn and rent and scattered the old poetic visions which once floated cloud-like

[56] See D.H. Moutray Read (1908) *Highways and Byways in Hampshire* (London: Macmillan), p. 351.

[57] 'Sketches of Maritime Life', *The Newcastle Weekly Courant*, 31st August 1888, 5.

[58] 'Fishermen's Superstitions', *The Ladies Treasury: A Household Magazine*, 1st December 1885, 684.

upon the dark blue surface'.[59] Such statements attempted to incorporate maritime 'superstitions' into a nostalgic representation of the age of sail, when omens and supernatural beliefs had 'gilded the vocation … with a hue of romance'.[60] By safely distancing these beliefs and practices to the past, mariners were expected to embrace the modern naval world of the ironclad and, thereafter, the dreadnought. There is evidence that the naval seaman of 1900 considered himself markedly different to the bluejacket of the 1850s, distinguished by a generally improved level of education, technological proficiency, and professionalism among the naval ranks.[61] Even if one still harboured a belief in the ideas above, it had perhaps become increasingly unacceptable to talk about them, even within the enclosed floating community of a naval vessel.

However, naval 'superstitions' still existed into the Edwardian period, sustained by concern for ill fortune. It was believed that ships named after reptiles and creatures that sting were doomed. As one newspaper noted in 1901, the *Gadfly*, *Hornet*, *Rattlesnake*, *Viper*, *Cobra* and *Serpent* had all been lost, some with nearly all their crew. One ship called *Wasp* was 'wrecked with heavy loss' and a gunboat of the same name 'disappeared in a typhoon, never to be heard of again'. As a result, it was said that that name 'had been struck out of the Admiralty's list of available names'.[62] Such an action, if true, amounted to the Admiralty condoning the 'superstition', even if it was done in the name of morale.

Ashore, maritime supernatural beliefs, particularly the idea of spirits of the drowned returning home, found slightly more respectable expression in the vogue for spiritualism in Portsmouth in the 1860s–1880s. Unlike the fickle nature of premonitions or the reading of maritime omens, mediums' utterances provided an almost ritualistic means of garnering 'news' of servicemen far away at sea, or else ensuring that their spirits had returned to land. However, there is little to suggest that séances in Portsmouth were disproportionately orientated towards contacting the spirits of naval mariners, even though Royal Naval officers were known to have participated.[63]

[59] 'Sketches of Maritime Life', *The Newcastle Weekly Courant*, 31st August 1888, 5.

[60] 'Sketches of Maritime Life', 5. See also I. Land (2009), *War*, *Nationalism*, *and the British Sailor*, *1750–1850* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 131–158.

[61] See Conley, 'Torpedo Gunner', 13–14.

[62] 'Naval Superstition', *Yorkshire Telegraph and Star*, 21st September 1901, 2. See also 'The Cobra Disaster', *The Derbyshire Times*, 28th September 1901, 7.

[63] See 'Spiritualism in Portsmouth', *Hampshire Telegraph*, 9th October 1875, 8.

While spiritualism implicitly supported maritime beliefs about returning spirits, ecclesiastics (and others) were keen to lambast populist notions of the spirit world, accusing séance attendees of misunderstanding the phenomena they were supposedly communing with.[64] One such critic, the evangelical John Beaumont, gave a lecture entitled 'Spiritualism (so-called) Tested and Exposed by the Word of God' to an audience of about 150 people at the Yorke Rooms, St Paul's Road, Southsea, in May 1889. Beaumont condemned spiritualism as 'an old snare of Satan's in a new dress … and ruinous to people's souls'. He argued that 'True Christians believe in spirits' but not that 'the spirits of dear ones departed were always hovering around them'. Reiterating earlier representation of the town's heathenism, Beaumont contended that spiritualism 'began in Babylon, was the religion of the Egyptians, the Canaanites, and the Philistines'. It was Beaumont's conviction that the spirits being communicated with in séances were demons who sought to mislead the beguiled, enabling Satan to accustom people to 'overstepping the boundary which God had laid down' regarding knowledge of and interaction with a spirit world.[65]

More moderate critics tended to play down the 'heathen' dimension and the misguided metaphysics. This may have derived from the fact that spiritualists openly appropriated elements of Christian worship into their practices. One anonymous sceptic who adopted the moniker 'Anti-Spiritualist' noted that spiritualism had become 'a religion with its votaries'. Two spiritualist circles that met in Southsea every Sunday began with 'the singing of orthodox hymns'.[66] Similarly, the séances conducted by a Portsmouth medium, 'a Dockyard man of no particular education or polish' whose spirits all seemed to share his lack of education, also involved 'fervent prayers' and 'sacred and secular singing'.[67] The séance rooms of Portsmouth represented a liminal space where populist metaphysical notions about the afterlife were explored and facilitated through appropriating aspects of orthodox Christian practice, a fusion that resonated with the earlier operation of popular religious and supernatural beliefs.

[64] See, for example, articles on spiritualism in Portsmouth in *Hampshire Telegraph*, 27th June 1874, 2nd, 9th, 16th and 23rd January 1875, 23rd September 1876, and 11th May 1889.

[65] 'Spiritualism So-called', *Hampshire Telegraph*, 11th May 1889, 6.

[66] 'Spiritualism So-called', 6. Granting a degree of institutional credibility to the local practice of spiritualism, Portsmouth's Temple of Spiritualism was established for public worship in 1901.

[67] 'Spiritualism in Portsmouth', *Hampshire Telegraph*, 24th March 1900, 2.

Through examining both representations of irreligion and the existence of a magically inflected popular religion, this chapter has briefly probed the complex nature of urban-maritime anxieties and 'otherness' in Victorian Portsmouth. External commentators constructed a view of a heathen 'other' through the lens of their own Christian identity. Frequently articulated through grandiose biblical rhetoric, this 'otherness' was spatially conceived as an immoral geography centred on Portsea's sailortown district. However, from within that urban-maritime community, popular religion can be read as a predominantly plebeian 'othering' of biblical lore and Christian practices. This was appropriated into a functional, psychological tool for naval mariners and their land-bound families, enabling the community to cope with the anxieties arising from lives lived and possibly lost at sea. Like the urban-maritime cultural nexus in which it existed, these expressions of official and unofficial belief suggest that cultural otherness in nineteenth-century Portsmouth was not constructed from fundamental differences, but rather from the particular external and internal inflections by which port town religiosity was understood and practised.

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CHAPTER 5

Hey Sailor, Looking for Trouble? Violence, Drunkenness and Disorder in a Swedish Port Town: Gothenburg 1920

Tomas Nilson

Introduction

At 9.50 on a Monday night in September 1920, the police were called upon to restore order at the 'National' beer hall, one of numerous public houses located at Second Longstreet in Gothenburg. The police constables on duty arrived and managed to break up a ferocious fist fight between two drunken men, one of them the 25-year-old Erik Rudolf Månsson, an unemployed sailor from Gothenburg, currently residing with his mother. After restoring order, the constables began escorting Månsson to the nearby gaol but on route he once again became violent and tried to escape his captors by 'throwing several punches and so called head butts at the police constables, however without hitting them'.[1]

Månsson is only one of many sailors found in the police records of Gothenburg during the interwar period. He displays the most common

[1] *Gothenburg Police Chamber*, Daily Records, Fourth Precinct, 13 September 1920.

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traits—drunkenness and a gusto for violence—found among young men with a working-class background. In this essay I am going to study men like Månsson and the way these sailors behaved ashore. I will concentrate on three themes: their drinking habits, their masculinity ideals and how those are connected to violence, and finally their strategies of resistance towards authorities.[2] And I will do this through a study of Gothenburg, the leading Swedish export harbour, exit point for the Atlantic liners, centre for the emigration traffic, and the most important national gateway to the West, during the year 1920.

The year 1920 provides an ideal time frame to capture sailors' behaviour in Gothenburg. The Swedish merchant marine was still intact, both in numbers and volume. A year or so later, the depression of 1921–1922 had struck and reduced the numbers of sailors employed. The consequences of the depression of 1929–1934 were even greater. The Swedish merchant marine had a slow recovery and reached the same population figure only in the end of the 1930s.

Working-Class Masculinity, Honour and Violence

Historical studies on working-class men and violence all seem to arrive at the same conclusion: their heavy drinking frequently turned into brawling and violence and, on occasion, led to lethal consequences. The fights were often triggered by perceived injustices. This culture of male honour has long historical roots and is to be found across Europe and the United States.[3]

The dominant masculine ideal of the working class involved first and foremost the possession of bodily physical strength and endurance—qualities grounded in the physicality of working-class jobs. Ideals of masculinity also consisted of a set of moral guidelines, which stipulated that insults to personal honour could not be tolerated and had to be challenged at any cost. The sociologist R.W. Connell has noted that violence was an important tool in maintaining a leading position within a male-dominated working-class community where violence was used against other men or the authorities, and where such

[2] By sailor I mean persons working on deck and below deck on commercial or naval vessels. In this specific study I have also included officers as they constituted such a small group among those perpetrating crimes. When I discuss sailors in more general terms, not connected to the result of this study, officers are excluded from the sailor category.

[3] See Adler, J.S. (2003), 'On the Border of Snakeland': Evolutionary Psychology and Plebeian Violence in Industrial Chicago, 1875–1920', *Journal of Social History*, 36: 3, 541–560; Adler, J.S. (1997), 'My Mother-in Law is to Blame, but I'll Walk her Neck Yet': Homicide in Late Nineteenth-Century Chicago, *Journal of Social History*, 26:1, 253–276.

violence was deemed normal and logical.[4] Several other scholars also point out that violence during the period 1850–1950 was seen as a natural way of solving conflicts among men.[5] This interpersonal violence was wholly equated with working-class violence and constructed by the authorities and the middle class as a social problem that had to be addressed in one way or the other. The criminal individual was usually portrayed as working class, committing crime because it was part of his nature.[6]

In such a context, personal honour was the single most important cultural and social capital available to a man, and therefore had to be kept intact. To preserve one's reputation on the streets as 'a hard man' was one important reason to engage in fighting. A real man, then, as historian John Archer has noticed, is tough, can look after himself in a fight, and is ready to defend his comrades and family, in a violent way if necessary. If not he risked losing status and his social position among other men.[7] To be a member of the working class meant a common set of standards and a familiarity with the existing system of honour that enabled working men to understand not only when and why to fight but also how to fight. Perhaps a strict adherence to informal rules partly explains why male violence mostly was kept within the working class. Drunkenness was commonly seen as a prerequisite for violence—this was recognised as evident

[4] Connell, R.W. (1995), *Masculinities* (London, Polity). But already in the 1950s researchers had claimed that working-class violence was caused by insults not taken lightly; see Wolfgang M.E (1958) *Patterns in Criminal Homicide* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania). Later studies point to the confrontational nature of working-class violence—that it was extremely extroverted and therefore spontaneous, unscripted, and driven primarily by rage. This deadly unrestricted violence among working-class men (assaults, stabbings and gun shootings) were all caused by insult. See Adler. (2003), for a thorough discussion of this.

[5] See Archer, J.E. (2014), 'Men Behaving Badly? Masculinity and the uses of violence, 1850–1900' in S. D'Cruze (ed.), *Everyday Violence in Britain 1850–1950*, *Gender and Class* (London: Routledge), p. 99.

[6] D'Cruze, S. (2014), 'Introduction. Unguarded passions: Violence, History and the Everyday life', in S. D'Cruze (ed.) *Everyday Violence in Britain 1850–1950*, *Gender and Class*,(London: Routledge), pp. 25–64. The idea that inner qualities were externally visible originally came from the Italian psychiatrist Cesare Lombroso. He meant that bodily characteristics—either natural physiognomy or marks like tattoos or scars—gave valuable insights to the moral standings of an individual. The upper classes and the authorities embraced such a view, and used it to categorise people into honest or dishonest persons. Sailors fell under the dishonest category. See Nilson, T. (2014) 'Brottslingens blomma—sjömän, tatueringar och brottslighet', in *Svenska sjömänstatueringar* (Stockholm: Medströms Bokförlag), pp. 54–57.

[7] Archer, 'Men Behaving Badly?', pp. 97–99.

among contemporary legislators in Sweden and Britain, who attempted to curb drinking by different restrictive and prohibitive measures.[8]

Places of Conflict

In this study I will use Randall Collins' sociological theory of 'places of conflict' as my framework to gain a better understanding of sailor behaviour in Gothenburg. To apprehend the use of violence, one then has to find and analyse situations where violence is likely to occur and not focus solely on the individuals who perpetrate violence, as often is the case.[9] Collins does not wholly discard actors, as knowledge of individual traits could be a factor in predicting who might get involved in violent situations. Traditionally, young men are most likely to take part but not exclusively. Collins also emphasises that individuals regarded as violent only display this trait during specific circumstances. From such a perspective, violence is an inherent quality on standby rather than something acted out on a regular basis: it is situational, triggered by outside stimulus like alcohol or insults and challenges to one's masculinity. Collins's statement contrasts with other researchers, who argue that violence was a constant part of everyday lives, a part that formed and constructed social life and daily interaction and constituted a rational and integral part of working-class masculinity.[10]

Collins points out though, that most of the ongoing conflicts between individuals or groups of persons never reach the stage of actual physical violence. Collins implies that to go from verbal to physical confrontation does not happen automatically. If the confrontation level is firm and stable and is not escalated significantly by any of the protagonists, the situation is unlikely to end in violence.[11] Collins also de-emphasises a common notion that violence comes easy. Instead the opposite is true: combatants often are reluctant to engage in violence, and instead choose more 'staged' actions

[8] Rowbotham, J. (2014), '"Only When Drunk": The Stereotyping of Violence in England, ca. 1850–1900' in S. D'Cruze (ed.), *Everyday Violence in Britain 1850–1950*, *Gender and Class* (London; Routledge), pp. 288–289.

[9] Collins, R. (2008), *Violence*: *a Micro-Sociological Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), p 1–3.

[10] See Connell *Masculinities*, Archer, 'Men Behaving Badly?' and D'Cruze 'Introduction: Unguarded passions'.

[11] Collins, *Violence*: *a Micro-Sociological Theory*, pp. 337, 342.

that can prevent a conflict's escalation into violence.[12] Only a handful do not hesitate—a group Collins labels 'the violent few'.[13]

Where then do we find Collins's 'places of conflict'? In England during the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, violence among the working class mainly took place at work, at the pub or on the street: these were the violent 'hot spots'.[14] The use of public space was a controversial matter, and traditional working-class street activities, like socialising, gambling and especially drinking, were contested and actively discouraged by the police, who were tasked with keeping public space safe and clean.

Different Forms of Violence

To understand sailor behaviour while in sailortown, I will use three different concepts of violence: (i) *ritual* violence, (ii) *performative* violence, and (iii) *instrumental* violence. These concepts partly overlap but are distinct enough to be used as analytic tools.[15] The first concept refers to those informal rules that guided fighting among working-class males. A good example is the British notion of the 'fair fight', bare-knuckled fist fights with established rules of which both participants approve.[16] Or the way Greek men met insults by engaging in ritualised knife fights with the purpose of only scaring the antagonist, not killing him. As soon as someone got hurt, the fighting stopped.[17] The same rationale was behind

[12] Collins, *Violence*: *a Micro-Sociological Theory*, p. 338.

[13] Collins, *Violence*: *a Micro-Sociological Theory*, p. 370. In general violence does not often occur. When it does flare up, it is carried out by a small hard-core minority of violent-driven younger males, the so called violent few, who have been exposed to violence through an early socialising process, like as members of street gangs Collins, *Violence*: *a Micro-Sociological Theory*, p. 373.

[14] Archer, 'Men Behaving Badly?', p. 89. Of course violence also took place in domestic settings.

[15] Originally, the first and third concepts were formulated by the Dutch historian Pieter Spierenburg as a way of making sense of everyday violence in Amsterdam during the seventeenth century. Spierenburg, P. (1998), 'Masculinity, Violence and Honor: An Introduction', in P. Spierenburg (ed.), *Men and Violence. Gender*, *Honor and Rituals in Modern Europe and America* (Ohio, Ohio State University Press), p 12–14.

[16] For a description of the 'fair fight', see Archer, 'Men Behaving Badly?', pp. 93–94. Archer points out that no weapons, like knives, were allowed: that was viewed as cowardly and 'foreign', p. 95. Archer's text is important because the empirical material he uses emanates from Liverpool, another port town.

[17] Gallant, T.W. (2000), 'Honor, Masculinity, and Ritual Knife Fighting in Nineteenth-Century Greece', *The American Historical Review*, 105: 2, 359–382.

the equivalent kind of behaviour among men in Rome during the same period.[18] This is the working-class equivalent of the duelling practice of the nobility.

I have revised somewhat the *second* concept from the way it is employed by the American anthropologist Allen Feldman in a study of political violence. He sees such violence as public protest intentionally turned into political statement.[19] I have picked up his notion of protest and performance—violence as theatre—but in this case more on an individual, less politicised level. In Gothenburg in 1920, many of the sailors arrested by the police 'put on a show' when they were escorted to the police station: they resisted arrest in different ways, like being loud, foul-mouthed, violent—hitting and head butting the police constables—and in most cases, trying to escape. I interpret this behaviour as both a protest against the authorities (the police) and a highly symbolic performative act of defiance and machismo as a way of maintaining status as (hard) men in the eyes of the public. Violence, although very real, might then always be seen as staged in some respect.

The *third* concept concerns itself with violence as a means to an end; for instance, the use of violence to break in to someone's house or shop or to intentionally rob or assault someone. Rituals of violence are played out on different levels and arenas. Collins points to the public level where staging of rituals constantly occur: from a Durkheimian perspective, crime and punishment are fundamental rituals that uphold society; in fact society needs crime, criminals and associated rituals to survive in the long run.[20] This staging of rituals that Collins mentions (influenced by Durkheim), is very evident when it comes to police and offenders during the period of study. In this dramaturgy, the police constable had the role of authoritarian safekeeper of the streets assigned to him. Depending on perspective, the perceived role of the offender was either to stand up to the police or to enable him to carry out his task.

[18] Boschi, D. (1998), 'Homocide and Knife Fighting in Rome, 1845–1914', in Spierenburg (1998), pp. 128–58.

[19] Feldman, A. (1991), *Formations of Violence*: *The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland* (Chicago: University of Chicago). Feldman studies ways the Irish Republican Army turned violence into political protest acts.

[20] Collins, R. (1982), *Sociological Insight – An Introduction to Non-Obvious Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 109–110. In a stratified society, based on social classes, dominant groups use rituals of punishment (fines, imprisonment, death penalty) to strengthen internal solidarity and cement its hold on other social groups. Crime then becomes an integral part of social structures. Exactly what sort of crimes will be singled out and punished depends on which social group holds political power, pp. 113–115.

Gothenburg as a Modern Port Town

During the early 1900s, the quayside in Gothenburg expanded rapidly—several new docks along both sides of the river were constructed between 1900 and 1922.[21] This expansion rested on two developments. Firstly, a large-scale introduction of steam-powered vessels, which called for a more modern infrastructure compared to the days of the sailing ships. Secondly, that shipping had increased in numbers. In 1920, almost 40 % of all Swedish seaborne exports were shipped out from Gothenburg.[22]

The process to modernise the harbour facilities had begun already in the mid-nineteenth century. The original harbour was situated at Klippan, farther down the river, as the river was too shallow to enable larger ships to enter. But by dredging the river, large-sized ships could enter right to the town centre. This very complicated task had started in the 1860s and went on for many years under mostly difficult conditions.[23] But in the early years of the twentieth century, the inner harbour was in urgent need of renewal, and proposals for new harbour facilities was put forward by a coalition of wealthy shipowners with political influence, resulting in several new or improved quaysides mentioned above.[24] The interwar period saw a continuous expansion of harbour and shipping activities in Gothenburg, aided by an increase in the number of ships being built by the three large shipyards at Hising Island across the river. Despite an inconsistent economy, by concentrating on using and building diesel-fuelled ships, employment and production could be kept rather intact.[25]

That Gothenburg had become the leading Swedish port town at the beginning of the twentieth century is evident in many ways: export quantities, number of shipping companies, total tonnage built at the

[21] The Mashuggs quay 1900, the Stigbergs quay 1910, the New Quay 1915 and the Free Port 1922.

[22] Fritz, M. (1996), *Göteborgs historia – Från handelsstad till industristad 1820–1920*, (Stockholm: Nerenius & Santérus), p. 248, 283.

[23] Fritz, M. (1996), pp. 249–50.

[24] Åberg, M. (1998), *Samförståndets tid. Konflikt, samarbete och nätverk i svensk lokalpolitik* (Lund: Historiska Media), pp. 70–91.

[25] Olsson, K. (1996), *Göteborgs historia – Från industristad till tjänstestad 1920–1995* (Stockholm: Nerenius & Santérus), pp. 159–60, 211. Swedish shipping was experiencing periods of great prosperity as well as enduring spells of low profitability during the interwar period. The number of ships in the merchant marine varied accordingly, as did the number of employed sailors.

shipyards, and the proportion of sailors and dockyard workers residing in Gothenburg.[26]

In Majorna, the area enclosing Klippan and the original harbour, sailors and their families had lived in large numbers since the 1730s, mainly due to the activities of the Swedish East India Company. Klippan, then, could be seen as a de facto sailortown, bustling as it was with public houses, boarding houses for seafarers and the occasional brothel. Generally, the neighbourhood of Majorna had a fearsome reputation. It was incorporated into Gothenburg in 1867 but the harbour had, by then, lost its original importance. However, Majorna continued to host large numbers of sailors and people employed at the docks or the shipyards.[27]

Due to the mass emigration of Swedes to America beginning in the 1860s, Gothenburg became the most important Swedish gateway to the West. Regular shipping lines to British destinations were established, both by domestic and foreign shipping companies. These ships departed from the quays at Skeppsbron near the customs house. The street leading from the central railway station to the embarking areas was Herring Street (Sillgatan), situated within the old ramparts. This street was constantly busy, filled with places to stay, eat and drink, as well as offices for emigration agencies, and had a reputation for being a sordid and disreputable place. In the taverns and beer halls, sailors mixed with men bound for America, farmers and fishermen. According to police reports, this was a rough and noisy place indeed. In the beginning of the 1900s, life on Herring street was vividly described.

> When the ships arrived or departed, the whole street was decked out in flags and pennants. When the shops close at seven o'clock in other parts of town, "high society" gathered there. It was open everywhere, accordion music in the cafés, girls from the underworld of Europe, conmen, tricksters, emigrants and navies filled the street and shops.[28]

[26] For the number of sailors and dockers in Gothenburg, see Census material for Gothenburg 1900, 1910, 1920. *Bidrag till Sveriges officiella statistik. A*, *Befolkningsstatistik* (BiSOS A).

[27] See Hallén, P. & Olsson, K. (2007), *Majornas historia*: *krig och oxar*, *sill och socker* (Göteborg: Landsarkivet i Göteborg).

[28] Quoted in Bejbom, U. (1995), *Mot löftets land. Den svenska emigrationen* (Stockholm: LT Förlag), p. 75.

After 1915, Herring Street lost its importance, as emigration had been redirected to the Swedish America Line, which embarked from the Stigbergs quay closer to the sea.

In Gothenburg, working-class residential areas were close to work places or situated in the city's harbour district. The central residential area of Masthugget, close to the harbour, is a good example. This was the main residential area for sailors and dockers. Additionally, official institutions like the Seaman's House, the Seaman's Home and the main hiring agency for sailors, as well as the employment office for dockers, were located there. Several shipping agencies had their offices in this area, and most of the fitting out shops also were located around the Masthuggstorget. A picture of a dense urban maritime geography of work, living and social institutions emerges. It was a district that also became notorious as a place of pleasure and vice.

Sailortown Supreme: Järntorget and the Surrounding Area

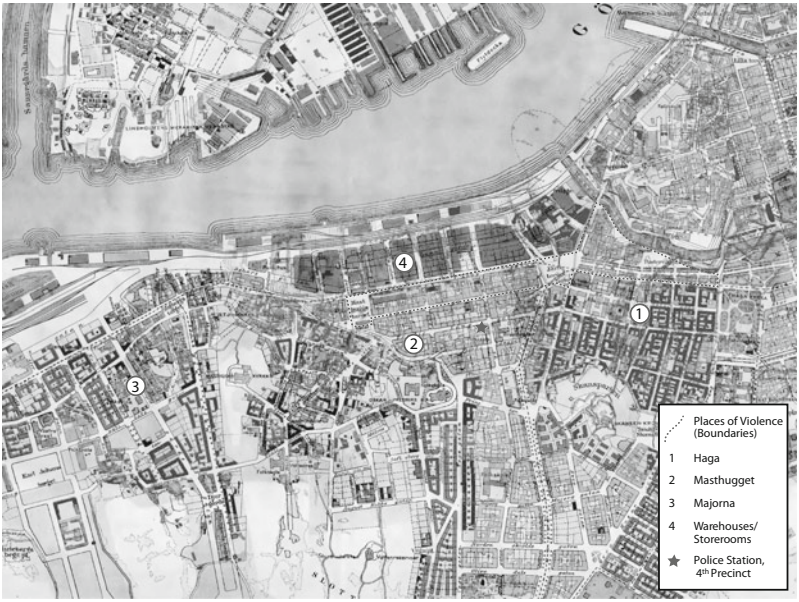
The central space in Gothenburg regarding sailors, pleasure and vice was Järntorget (Iron Square) and the surrounding streets and avenues.[29] In 1923, the local chronicler C.R.A. Fredberg wrote about Järntorget in this manner

> Here life simmers and ferments in times of unrest. And when riots and disorder take place in town, one can be sure Järntorget is the main stage. Here are many sorts of amusements on offer. Here are theatres and cinemas. Around the square and the adjacent streets, restaurants and cafés in endless numbers, with or without accordion music, with or without sobriety. In short, Järntorget is the preferred open space of the working-class people in Gothenburg.[30]

According to Fredberg, Järntorget was the centre for working-class pleasures, and the geographic hub from which streets and avenues radiated towards the harbour and the quays. Indeed, the working-class

[29] The name Iron Square emanates from its former function as the focal point for the Swedish export of iron.

[30] Fredberg, C.R.A. (1923, 1977 edn), *Det gamla Göteborg. Del I*, (Lund: Ekstrand Förlag) p. 707. Fredberg was a local boy, born and raised in Majorna as the son of a sea captain. In 1923 he published his history of Gothenburg in three parts.



Map 5.1 Gothenburg 1921 (Source: Göteborgs Stadsbyggnadskontors Arkiv)

neighbourhoods of Haga and Masthugget and the adjacent bourgeoisie dominant street of Linnégatan, especially the Longstreets (first to fourth) and the streets east of the square (South Avenue, North Avenue and New Avenue) hosted a large number of beer halls, cafés and other establishments for eating and drinking as well as premises for entertainment. Most of the many boarding houses of the area were located on the Longstreets, as were the majority of those with rooms to let. The whole area surrounding Järntorget was a mixed one, primarily geared towards amusement but with residential zones and plots for business intertwined. But Järntorget was also important from another perspective as the Social Democratic Party Headquarters, the Working Man's Club and the left wing newspaper of the city were all situated on or around the square (see Map 5.1).

Järntorget and its surroundings became contested and stigmatised for three key reasons. It was at the heart of the working-class communities of Masthugget and Haga, known for the rowdy behaviour of the often drunk and loud clientele of the beer halls and cafés, and for the location

of the Labour movement through the institutions located there or in close proximity. The fourth police precinct was the one responsible for covering Järntorget and the surrounding area, mainly from the police station at Third Longstreet. From there, police constables were on the beat, monitoring daily life in sailortown.

Police and Sailors in Sailortown

Sailors in the age of steam were a different breed from earlier generations—they were not recruited only from the coastal areas with traditional maritime culture but originated from all regions.[31] Contemporary commentators equated them to 'an industrial proletariat' and talked about this new type in derogatory terms. The social background for a majority of sailors was working class, and they were therefore firmly embedded in a working-class culture. Seafaring was by tradition a young man's profession, and that implies an uncertain existence, especially regarding where to stay while ashore and matters of family. Sailors as a group were numerous and highly visible in certain areas of the port town, especially in the sailortown surrounding Järntorget.

A modern police force in Gothenburg came into being in the mid-1800s. The police constables were often recruited from the surrounding countryside. This policy highlighted in many ways a traditional hostility between rural and urban areas. A rookie constable fresh from the farm had to instantly gain respect among those living in his precinct. That meant not backing down from physical confrontations or any other kind of testing showdowns he might face. But once he had become known and integrated into the community, his job got a lot easier.[32]

However, for the inhabitants of working-class districts, the police were seen as a repressive and violent tool for those in power. Similarities with the British police force during the same era are obvious.[33] It was not the

[31] See Beaven's chapter in this volume for the representation of British sailor recruits to steam ships.

[32] Bergman, K. (1990), *Poliser mellan klassförtryck och brottsbekämpning*, (Göteborg: Etnologiska föreningen i Västsverige).

[33] See Gatrell, V.A.C. (1990), 'Crime, Authority and the Policeman-state', in F.M.L. Thompson (ed.) *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750–1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

police's prime task to counteract alcohol use in general but rather to keep the streets orderly, and that meant arresting drunks who disturbed the peace or made public space unsafe. The number of arrests for drunkenness rose in Gothenburg during the period 1850–1900 due to more effective police work and because the definition of drunkenness was applied more strictly.[34] The same can be said about violence—the constables only intervened at incidents that were deemed a risk for public safety. And depending on whether the constable had a long experience of dealing with sailors, he may have considered it sufficient to give only a warning. One thing sailors were known for was their frequent contact with the police, and therefore, or because of this had a reputation for drunkenness and trouble making.

Sailors in Town: A Crime Story?

How then did sailors ashore behave? What actually happened on the streets of sailortown? Robert Lee has argued that the stereotypical image of sailors as 'whoring, drinking and fighting' originates from a too narrow focus on the behaviour in sailortown of young men back from long spells at sea.[35]

My study of sailor behaviour in Gothenburg 1920 is based on a review of all crimes perpetrated by sailors as recorded in the police records of the fourth precinct. The number of offences in 1920 amounts to 655, committed by 578 individual sailors. The records cover a wide range of offences. As has been noted by Bergman, both the numbers and the type of offences are most probably underrated and simplified to a large extent. The number of unrecorded offences are of course hard to estimate and varied, depending on the approaches of individual constables. A constable with experience might find a warning sufficient (resulting in no entry in the records for historians to study) while an inexperienced constable would apply the law in a stricter way (resulting in an entry in the records).[36] The way offences were accounted for matters—offences were 'stereotyped' into only a few possible alternatives by the standardised language used in the records.

[34] Bergman, *Poliser*, pp 135–37.

[35] Lee, R. (2013), 'The Seafarers' Urban World: A Critical Review', in *International Journal of Maritime History* 25:23. Lee's point is that the rowdy sailor existed but that he is not the only type. There are plenty of examples of sailors visiting museums, botanical gardens, tea houses, and so forth.

[36] See Bergman, *Poliser*, p. for such a discussion.

Table 5.1 Total number of offences committed by sailors in Gothenburg 1920

		While drunk	*While sober*
Drunkenness	427 (65 %)		
Violence	130 (20 %)	65 (50 %)	65 (50 %)
Other offences	98 (15 %)	54 (55 %)	44 (45 %)
N	655 (100 %)		

Source: Daily Records, Fourth Precinct, 1920

As can be seen in Table 5.1, in Gothenburg the most common offence committed by sailors in 1920 was drunkenness.[37]

The great majority (65 %) of sailors got arrested for drunkenness. But to be intoxicated also led to committing additional acts: indecency, disturbing the peace, making noise, insubordination and violence all came about as a result of being drunk. There are many entries in the police records of sailors urinating in public; sailors who disturbed the peace by gesticulating, shouting, screaming and singing aloud (often creating attention and a crowd); and sailors who were considered insubordinate for refusing to adhere to directions from the police constables (not to walk in the streets, not to interfere with traffic, not to annoy women by stalking and harassing them). Most of the sailors who were arrested for these kinds of offences were under the influence of alcohol. Altogether, alcohol-related crimes accounted for 83 % of all crimes perpetrated by sailors. In this study though, I will mainly concentrate on drunkenness and violence acted out by sailors.

What Table 5.1 depicts is rather typical behaviour for young working-class males, recognisable from other studies. The relationship between violence and drinking is especially familiar. Violent behaviour was accounted for by the police (as noted in the records) in three different forms: *fighting* with one or several other men, often (but not always) caused by verbal disagreements between men who often seem to know each other; *assault*, often unprovoked violence towards other but unknown men; and *violent resistance* that took place when the police constables were escorting the perpetrator to the police station.

Sailors fighting with other men happened often. In fact, it was so common that the police laconically noted it as yet another act of offence. Those punch-ups started with verbal exchanges and moved on to fist

[37] As I mentioned earlier, in this study officers perpetrating offences are included in the term sailor just because they are such a small group.

fights—not exactly 'fair fights' as the police often noted kicking and headbutting, though the use of weapons was more seldom registered.[38] The combatants were almost always drunk. One example of this kind of fighting is when H.B. Malmberg (long known to the police, and probably one of the 'violent few') assaulted an unknown man with blows to the head and while the man was lying on the street, Malmberg continued 'with kicks, that probably hit the head'.[39] Malmberg was at the time sober, or at least sober enough for the police not to register him as intoxicated.

Assault in relation to being drunk was very common. Thus one sailor was arrested by the police for assaulting another sailor: 'after a prior dispute … he assaulted him and dealt him such a forceful blow to the face that he fell to the ground, which caused him a bleeding wound at the upper lip, and for a moment left him unconscious'.[40] Similarly when a stoker assaulted a worker not known to him, he threw the worker to the ground and into a shop window, which shattered.[41] Another stoker got himself arrested for assaulting the doorkeeper at the *Vira* beer hall at Second Longstreet when the doorkeeper wanted to eject him for being too drunk—the doorkeeper suffered bloodshed and soreness from headbutts and got his jacket ripped.[42] Yet another drunken stoker had a disagreement with a doorkeeper, this time at the *Café Miranda*. It had started with insults and ended with him assaulting the doorkeeper with punches, kicking and headbutting.[43]

Generally, disagreements with doorkeepers was a running theme—sailors and stokers reacted furiously when being asked to leave or when denied entry to the premises. Reactions ranged from cursing, threats and minor acts of defiance, like when sailors who were not allowed to enter threw objects through the windows of the beer halls or damaged the front door by attempting to kick it in, to outright fights with and assaults on doorkeepers. One explanation for this behaviour, apart from the obvious ones of anger

[38] I have only noticed two incidents that involved weapons: first a sailor threatening a stoker with a knife (*Gothenburg Police Chamber*, Daily Records, Fourth Precinct, 20 July 1920). The other known incident that saw the use of weapons was when a sea captain fired his gun in the air to scare off an unwanted intruder from his vessel (*Gothenburg Police Chamber*, Daily Records, Fourth Precinct, 28 November 1920).

[39] *Gothenburg Police Chamber*, Daily Records, Fourth Precinct, 3 December 1920.

[40] *Gothenburg Police Chamber*, Daily Records, Fourth Precinct, 3 May 1920.

[41] *Gothenburg Police Chamber*, Daily Records, Fourth Precinct, 28 August 1920.

[42] *Gothenburg Police Chamber*, Daily Records, Fourth Precinct, 20 August 1920.

[43] *Gothenburg Police Chamber*, Daily Records, Fourth Precinct, 22 December 1920.

for being refused access to (more) alcohol, is that doorkeepers then became figures of authority, and for that reason were viewed with suspicion.

The third form of violence was resisting the police when taken into custody. Several cases of this are found in the material. The aforementioned H.B. Malmberg, stoker and serial offender, got violent after being apprehended by the police—during the scuffle with the police he 'lunged at, and with his hands, hit one constable several times under the left eye' causing severe bloodshed and pain. Malmberg continued his resistance after his arrest by kicking and hitting at the constables and by trying to crowbar them during his escort to the station.[44] When another sailor was taken in by the police for 'trying to engage in quarrel and fighting with several guests' at the *Café 8:an*, he tried to obstruct his departure to the police station by kicking and hitting at the constables and 'by throwing himself to the ground'.[45]

There are several more examples of this kind of behaviour. As has been noted earlier, violence needed an audience to carry out bursts of symbolic displays of bravado. This can very clearly be seen in Gothenburg when sailors were transported to the police station. After being apprehended by the police, the offenders were then marched on foot to the police station. This was very public of course, and the recorded incidents of offenders violently opposing their arrest by shouting, hitting out, head-butting and trying to break free, can be viewed as behaviours that were expected of offenders. In those cases, the majority of the apprehended sailors were drunk.

Other ways of resisting the police included attempting to free captured comrades or fellow sailors or stokers. In one incident, a sailor had 'in a loud voice complained' that a drunk person was taken to the station, and continued 'with offensive words of abuse' to the constables, which resulted in a menacing crowd emerging.[46] More resolute interventions by seafarers were also recorded: another incident occurred when one steward tried to liberate a drunken man held by the police—he 'rushed forward and caught hold of, tugged and pulled the uniforms of both constables with the intention to get the arrested man free, however without succeeding'. As a result of his actions he himself was taken to the station.[47] A further incident involved a drunken stoker, who attempted to get an

[44] *Gothenburg Police Chamber*, Daily Records, Fourth Precinct, 21 September 1920.
[45] *Gothenburg Police Chamber*, Daily Records, Fourth Precinct, 14 January 1920.
[46] *Gothenburg Police Chamber*, Daily Records, Fourth Precinct, 22 February 1920.
[47] *Gothenburg Police Chamber*, Daily Records, Fourth Precinct, 8 May 1920.

intoxicated male free from the police. According to the police records, he had 'tugged the clothes of the person being held in order to get him freed, and thereafter followed and shouted "Boys, help so that we will get him released!"' A large crowd emerged 'that acted in a threatening way and jostled around the constables, forcing them to draw their sabres. During the disorder, several stones were thrown at the constables causing minor bruises at their arms'. The stoker, who instigated the whole hullabaloo, was taken into custody, but not without 'violent and fierce resistance by kicking and hitting' on the way to the station.[48]

Another stoker got arrested for drunkenness and violence. Initially, he had bawled and made noise, overturned public sofas and 'unprovoked' he had 'pushed people walking towards him'. He then tried to free a man arrested by the police by 'jumping one of the constables and hitting him in the head several times, causing swelling and pain at the left eye'. When he was escorted to the station, he kicked and hit out at the constables and tried to break free from them.[49] Just another clear example of what I have labelled 'performative violence'.

One sailor was taken in for a similar offence. While drunk, he twice managed to liberate comrades held by the police: at both incidents, which took place at Järntorget, he violently pulled and tugged at the uniforms of the constables, which allowed the held men to escape. He was eventually overpowered by several constables and taken to the station, but resisted with punches, kicks and attempts to force himself loose.[50]

What are the motives behind such behaviour? The existence of a basic solidarity between crew members, especially visible when a member of the crew was attacked by someone from another ship—then it was 'us' against 'them'—is one way of explaining the many cases of fights among sailors, or the plentiful attempts to free captured comrades from the police. To act in defence of a crew member was the honourable way to behave, and signalled loyalty and efforts to uphold the collective identity of belonging to a certain ship or crew.

But why were there so many drunken sailors? The violent behaviour mentioned above is in many cases triggered by alcohol—the offence given by the police is drunkenness and different types of violence. Connell points to the existence of a strong normative code of behaviour within

[48] *Gothenburg Police Chamber*, Daily Records, Fourth Precinct, 26 June 1920.
[49] *Gothenburg Police Chamber*, Daily Records, Fourth Precinct, 31 August 1920.
[50] *Gothenburg Police Chamber*, Daily Records, Fourth Precinct, 23 May 1920.

Table 5.2 Age distribution among sailors arrested in Gothenburg 1920

	–20	21–25	26–30	31–35	36–40	41–50	50+
N (565)	48 (8.5)	206 (36.5)	148 (26.2)	78 (13.8)	38 (6.7)	30 (5.3)	9 (1.6)

Source: Daily Records, Fourth Precinct, 1920. Remark: eight sailors (1.4 %) have not their age noticed in the records

working-class masculinity that comprised an easy use of violence and a strong tradition of drinking. The latter is important—those who did not drink almost certainly were considered to occupy a subordinate position within the working-class masculine cultures.

However, there were also a number of violent incidents without any intoxication on behalf of the perpetrating sailor. What is the explanation for this? The most plausible one is probably the honour culture so prominent among the working class—if certain values, like personal respect, dignity and honour, were seen to be challenged, a response had to follow. It might have come easier while drunk but the relatively large overall number of violent incidents indicates a readiness to fight at all costs. Also Collins's notion of the importance of location—or what he labels 'violent places'—actually seems to indicate that the presence in one place at the same time of many young men, intoxicated, excitable and not ready to accept insults, might at least enhance the probabilities of trouble occurring.

An interesting point is that brawls including sailors more often than not came about between men not personally known to each other. In the majority of cases, it is noted that sailors fought 'an unknown man' but when information is given the opponent almost always belongs to either the same profession (sailors/stokers) or the working class. Sailors only occasionally rowed with men not from within the same class. But from examples of the police arresting sailors for unprovoked assaults on men labelled 'office clerks', 'a drummer' and 'an ad salesman', it is possible to interpret a class dimension to the disturbance.

Another question remains in identifying who these sailors were? Some conclusions can be drawn from Table 5.2. Sailors traditionally go to sea at a young age. Prior studies point to the fact that sailors still working after the age of 40 were very rare.[51] The age distribution of the studied sailors

[51] Der Velden, S. (2012), 'A Unique Branch of the Working Class? Dutch Seamen 1900–1940', in R. Gorski and B. Söderqvist (eds.), *The Parallel Worlds of the Seafarer*: *Ashore*, *Afloat and Abroad*, (Gothenburg: Gothenburg Maritime Museum & Aquarium), pp. 119–140.

Table 5.3 Addresses of arrested sailors in Gothenburg in 1920

Visiting Gothenburg	
(1) Residing at ships	295 (47.4 %)
Living in Gothenburg	
(1) Permanent address	89 (14.3 %)
(2) Lodging	105 (16.9 %)
(3) Seaman's Home/hostels/hotels	42 (6.7 %)
(4) "no known address"	55 (8.8 %)
Living outside Gothenburg	
Other parts of Sweden or abroad	24 (3.8 %)
N	622 (100 %)

Source: Daily Records, Fourth Precinct, 1920

Remark: 12 sailors have no address given in the police records (1.9 %)

in Gothenburg confirms this finding—only roughly 7 % of them were over the age of 40. As is evident, nearly half of the population (45 %) is under 25 years of age. In total, more than 70 % had not yet reached the age of 30. But the table also confirms a pattern of young offenders known from previous studies involving working-class men—also in Gothenburg violence was a young man's game.

Another important fact to consider when it comes to identifying the arrested sailors is place of residence. By analysing the addresses arrested sailors stated to the police, it is possible to tell if they were residents (lived in Gothenburg) or were just visiting. An indication of this is given in Table 5.3.

The majority of the arrested sailors, roughly 48 %, found themselves in sailortown because their ships were loading/unloading cargo at the docks. Most of them were not from Gothenburg and therefore had no prior affiliation to the city. Sailors residing in Gothenburg in one way or another made up around 47 % of those arrested. Of these, only about one-third (30.6 %) had a permanent address; the rest were either lodgers, stayed at the Seaman's Home or at hostels and hotels or even were without a regular place to live.[52] Those indwelling had two options: to find a place to live by renting from those who let out rooms or to live with relatives (parents/siblings). The latter was in most cases probably a matter of convenience, as it must have been difficult to keep a permanent address if at sea on a regular basis. The bulk (roughly 70 %) of those sailors residing

[52] In the police records those get the standardised notice of 'no known address'.

Table 5.4 Days of the week when crime was committed by sailors 1920

	Monday	*Tuesday*	*Wednesday*	*Thursday*	*Friday*	*Saturday*	*Sunday*
N 641	98	110	90	97	54	124	68
100	15.3 %	17.2 %	14 %	15.2 %	8.4 %	19.3 %	10.6 %

Source: Daily Records, Fourth Precinct, 1920

in Gothenburg did so under rather insecure conditions. By looking at the given addresses of the seamen taken into custody, it is also possible to see that the majority of the sailors lived in or in close proximity to sailortown. This pattern of overlapping residency and amusement areas is typical of the larger continental port towns. Even though the fourth precinct covered a large area, the majority of the offences involving sailors took place in a rather confined space emanating from Järntorget and the surrounding streets and avenues (see Map 5.1).

When it comes to what weekday the offences were committed, the picture is very conclusive that crimes were committed on every weekday and that the crimes perpetrated were relatively evenly distributed as well. The only exceptions are Fridays and Sundays, which show a slight decrease. To explain this pattern, one has to look at the family situation of sailors—the majority were young, not married and lived either aboard ships or in temporary places, and as a result were free to enjoy a night out drinking at times they chose. Also, the ample amount of free time available to sailors while in port mattered, as did the relatively large numbers of unemployed (in between boats) among the studied group (Table 5.4).

A clear majority of the total crimes (641) were perpetrated in evenings—roughly 80 % (501) of the sailors were arrested after 6 o'clock in the evening up till midnight, while only 9 % (59) were taken in by the police after midnight (no arrests being made after 4 o'clock in the morning). In the afternoon hours (noon to 6 o'clock in the evening) 13 % (81) were picked up by the police.

This pattern shows a rising curve for the total number of offences from afternoon till 10 o'clock at night. Then, a rather steep decline sets in. The curve for acts of violence is similar but with one exception: instead of incidents falling off after 10 o'clock there is actually an increase in violence up till after midnight, indicating that violent acts seems to be more frequent later at night than other offences.

Conclusion

Violence in sailortown came in many varieties—alcohol-fuelled rage in the form of fighting, assault or vandalism with a vengeance was the common denominator, all guided by informal rules and rituals. In this dramaturgy, both police and sailors had distinctive roles to play. The police records are especially rich in examples of so-called ritualised and performative acts of violence. Both types are attached to traditional working-class behaviour, and therefore anchor sailors well within the same class.

To explain the behaviour of sailors ashore, especially their recorded acts of violence, it is vital to view sailors just as part of a working-class culture, where insults to one's honour had to be met at all costs. Traditional drinking habits increased manifold the possibilities of violence. This is a very common way of coming to grips with a behaviour ascribed to working-class males. But one also has to take into consideration Collins's notion of space—what he labels 'violent places' (the drinking establishment and the street). Combined, these two strands turn sailortown into a dense space for young men, drinking and acting out pent-up emotions. Violence in such a place is perhaps more a result of highly intense interpersonal interactions during specific circumstances than the effects of built-in working-class belligerence.

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CHAPTER 6

On the Margins of Empire: Antipodean Port Cities and Imperial Culture c. 1880–1939

John Griffiths

The Antipodean port city was an entrepôt for its surrounding hinterland, importing and exporting goods, with trade patterns locked into the British imperial system at least until 1918. While a detailed prosopography of Antipodean civic elites is yet to be undertaken, it is evident from contemporaneous publications that a strong British link was in place before 1914. Many urban governors either had been born in Britain or had parents who originated from the country. Much like their British counterparts, they derived their wealth from Empire trade, or the law or manufacturing. Indeed, cities such as Melbourne, Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch were redolent in some respects of British provincial cities like Leeds or Manchester, and furthermore, the Antipodean port city has been firmly located by historians within the 'imperial' system.[1] However, this chapter will argue that despite the imperial network, Antipodean port cities occupied a liminal space with the British Empire. Instead, Antipodean port cities often looked to the American Pacific rather than to the Mother

[1] See, for example, the way Melbourne is placed alongside other imperial cities in A. Briggs (1965), *Victorian Cities* (London: Odhams); T. Hunt (2014), *Ten Cities that Made an Empire* (London: Penguin), and A. Jackson, (2014), *Buildings of Empire* (Oxford: University Press).

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Country for inspiration in designing the built environment while, at the same time, they began to develop an independent political position based on their coastal location. It will be argued that urban elites' attempts to cement mass imperial sentiment through advocating closer political ties with Britain and encouraging imperial societies failed to garner popular support. Indeed, the Antipodean port's mixed Anglo-American culture diluted the imperial message, particularly with regard to its effectiveness in engaging the working-class community.

The Antipodean Port City and the Built Environment

Before exploring the human dimension to imperial culture, we might consider the 'look' of the port city; that is to say its architectural style. The establishment of provincial government in the 1850s in New Zealand did much to help the construction of wharves and these were further facilitated by the creation by the council of the Auckland Harbor Board in 1871, with further reclamation works undertaken that included dockyard facilities. Across Auckland Harbor the largest dry dock in the southern hemisphere 'Calliope Dock' was created in 1888. In 1910 the Royal Navy decided to base its southern hemisphere operations at Devonport North Shore, as the newly created Australian Fleet took over its previous base in Sydney.[2] Other Antipodean cities such as Melbourne, Wellington and Christchurch developed as commercial ports. The port of Melbourne was greatly facilitated by the efforts of Victoria's colonial government to make the Yarra River more navigable and to create a canal system to allow shipping into the west of the city, berthing at Victoria Dock, which opened in 1889.[3] On New Zealand's South Island, the port of Lyttelton was opened in 1877 to serve Christchurch and the Canterbury region, while, in a similar fashion to Auckland, Wellington's private citizens began land reclamations in the 1850s that were further accelerated by the creation of Wellington Harbor Board in the 1880s.[4]

It is arguable that the Antipodean city in the period 1880–1940 was shaped just as much by North American design as it was by British

[2] J. Rose, *Akarana: The Ports Of Auckland*, (Auckland: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1971), p. 120.

[3] See J.R. Buckrich, *The Long and Perilous Journey: A History of the Port of Melbourne*, (Melbourne Books, 2002), p. 10.

[4] D. Johnson, *Wellington Harbour* (Harbour Trust, Wellington, 1996), p. 137.

design. The reasons why American design increasingly usurped British design lies in the increased opportunities for architects and civic administrators to travel to both North America and Europe to assess the style and technologies that might work in an Antipodean context. Even if this were not possible, Ann McEwan has noted that architectural qualifications were attainable from the early twentieth century, obtained by correspondence with American institutions such as the International Correspondence School based in Pennsylvania and the American School of Correspondence of Chicago from the early twentieth century.[5] So too, a range of journals and magazines that featured American design, as much as British design were available for subscription such as *The Architectural Record*, published in New York from 1891; *The Architectural Review*, published in Boston from 1899; *The Architect's Journal*, published in London from 1919 onwards; and *The Architectural Forum*, published in New York from 1917 onwards, to name four of several. In previous work I have detailed the trips made by Antipodean civic managers to both North American and British cities in the early twentieth century, and it is evident that as the architectural profession became more established, opportunities arose for students to spend time training in both countries, before returning to either Australia or New Zealand to begin their professional career.[6] Indeed, overseas experience was increasingly seen as essential for the architect intending to practise. One of the most significant architects of inter-war New Zealand, for example, was William Henry Gummer,

[5] A. McEwan, "'An American Dream" in the "England of the Pacific": American Influences on New Zealand Architecture' 1840-1940' (PhD thesis, University of Canterbury. 2001), p. 192. Among the noted New Zealand architects to take these courses was Edmund Anscombe who designed the Centennial Exhibition staged in Wellington in 1940. The style he used was streamline moderne art deco, and he was influenced by his visits to the Chicago Exhibition of 1933 and to the New York World's Fair and San Francisco's Golden Gate Exposition, both staged in 1939. See P. Shaw, *New Zealand Architecture: From Polynesian to 1990* (Auckland: Hodder and Stoughton, 1991), p. 134. Joseph Dawson designed factories for the Ford Motor Company in various locations in New Zealand. For this see J. Gatley 'For(war)d Thinking: The Ford Building Seaview in J. Wilson (ed.) *Zeal and Crusade: The Modern Movement in Wellington*, (Christchurch: Te Waihora, 1996), pp. 21–27. J. W. Chapman Taylor was heavily influenced by the arts and crafts style and admired C.F.A. Voysey. See McEwan, 'An American Dream' p. 194; Shaw, 'New Zealand Architecture' p. 80.

[6] For example, J. Griffiths, 'Were there Municipal Networks in the British World c. 1890-1939?' *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* Vol. 37:4 (2009), pp. 575–598; McEwan, 'An American Dream'.

who had spent time in both Britain working under Edwin Lutyens in London and with Daniel Burnham in Chicago.[7]

Even in the years before 1900, when physical visits were rather rare, it is evident that a hybrid Anglo-American style had taken hold in cities such as Melbourne.[8] As a result of the economic boom of the 1880s, provoked by the infusion of British capital, Melbourne's city centre witnessed the creation of a first generation of 'skyscrapers'. Most were, by later standards, still comparatively low-rise, but they were a break with the past, being eight to ten storeys high and most using the Queen Anne revival style, then popular in Britain.[9] Indeed, Miles Lewis suggests that these decades saw Melbourne become a 'Queen Anne Chicago'.[10] The highest of the buildings erected in this period was the twelve-storey Australian Permanent Assurance (APA) building, which was as high as any of the North American skyscrapers built at that time.[11] Other examples of the period were the Finks Building of 1888, located on Flinders Street, a ten-storey building, which predated the APA by a year and the New York Permanent Building Society, located on Collins Street, which also dated from 1888 and was designed in the Second Republic style.[12] Approximately eleven skyscrapers were located in Melbourne's financial sector in this period and, from this point onwards, the city looked very much less like a low-rise provincial British city, to which it had hitherto been compared.[13] In the 1890s, an economic downturn in Australia led to a notably more restrained architecture, yet still influenced by America. The preferred style shifted to a more conservative 'American Romanesque', largely influenced by the American architect Henry Hobson Richardson (1838–1886).[14]

[7] For more on Gummer and his work in both Auckland and Wellington and his American influences see K.J. Shanahan, 'The Work of W. H. Gummer Architect, (unpublished B. Arch dissertation, University of Auckland, 1983), pp. 30–2.

[8] Noted in M. Lewis, et al, *Melbourne: The City's History and Development*, (Melbourne: City of Melbourne, 1995), p. 81.

[9] Lewis, et al, *Melbourne*, p. 81.

[10] Lewis, et al, *Melbourne*, p. 7.

[11] A. Brown-May 'The Australian Building' in A. Brown-May and S. Swain, (eds.) *Encyclopedia of Melbourne* (Cambridge: University Press, 2005) p. 44.

[12] For Finks Building see www.walkingmelbourne.com/building507.html and for the New York Permanent Building Society see www.walkingmelbourne.com/building603.html accessed 17 August 2014.

[13] R. Storey, 'Skyscrapers' in Brown-May and Swain (eds.) *Encyclopedia of Melbourne*, p. 665.

[14] M. Lewis, *Melbourne: The City's History and Development*, p. 81.

His influence was perhaps most notable in the subsequent work of Louis Sullivan and Dankmar Adler, whose 'Chicago style' was also to have an impact on the Antipodean city in the Edwardian era and beyond. Their Chicago Auditorium building of 1889 was to be highly influential within the architectural profession. By 1913, in a not uncommon example of copycat syndrome, Melbourne had its own version, designed by Nahum Barnet. The Chicago style was also evident in the context of the Snider and Abrahams Building on Melbourne's Drewery Lane (1908).[15] It was the second example of American C.A.P. Turner's flat plate system of reinforced concrete construction to be built and was begun in the same year as Turner's Lindeke Warner Building in Minnesota.[16]

American influence was also being felt across the Tasman by the Edwardian period. High-rise buildings were a more risky venture in an earthquake zone, and most buildings constructed before 1900 did not rise to more than three or four levels in New Zealand. As Stuart Gardyne notes of Wellington's architecture, up until the Great War, it 'was to say the least, confusing and not at all unified in style or intention. Foreign influences especially English had a strong impact upon the architectural profession.'[17] Yet, on closer inspection, other commentators have noted that there were signs of a creeping Americanism in public buildings before 1914. The influence was at first rather subtle; it was the technology used to reinforce ostensibly British-influenced buildings where it first made its impact. In 1897, John Belcher had won the competition to design the Colchester Town Hall, designed in Queen Anne revival style. It proved to be highly influential around the British world, clearly influencing the style of John Campbell's Public Trust Building in Wellington, which was constructed 11 years after Belcher's in 1908. The Wellington construction was, for its time, a high five storeys. Significantly, it was American technology that enabled this height to be achieved as experts were brought in from San Francisco to advise on its strengthening against disaster.[18]

[15] *Walking Melbourne*. www.walkingmelbourne.com/building459_dovers-building. M. Lewis, 'Building Technology' in Brown-May and Swain (eds.) *Encylopedia of Melbourne*, p. 99.

[16] *Walking Melbourne*, www.walkingmelbourne.com/building459_dovers-building.html

[17] S. Gardyne, 'Transition in Architectural Style from Beaux Arts to Bauhaus: Wellington Between the Wars 1919-1939' (PhD thesis, Victoria University Wellington, 1981), p. 19.

[18] The contract to construct the building had been bid for by the San Francisco company Reid Brothers, but was rejected by Campbell's Government Department. See McEwan, 'An American Dream', p. 124.

As a consequence it is seen by some architectural historians as an Anglo-American building.[19] In other examples of Campbell's work, such as the Wellington Customs House (built 1905), American influence was more explicit, incorporating American-influenced arcades that he had viewed on his American tour of 1902. Indeed, as one architectural historian has noted, 'The Custom House is a precursor of the American-inspired buildings erected in New Zealand by the Luttrell Brothers, such as the New Zealand Express Company Buildings in Christchurch and Dunedin, 1906–10', New Zealand's first 'skyscrapers'.[20]

Steel technology was first used in Melbourne and Sydney before 1914. A feature article published in *The Argus* during 1912, for example, noted that Melbourne was being rebuilt and modernised after a considerable period of inertia, due to the economic downturn. The Centreway, a new arcade linking Collins and Flinders Street, which used Edwardian baroque design, was 'constructed on the American steel-frame system' and, it contended, was 'the first of its kind in Australia'.[21] As J.M. Freeland noted in his study of Australian architecture, after Federation, 'Australian eyes increasingly turned eastward … in all fields. Australians saw their country as similar in size and potential to the burgeoning republic whose origins, background and history were so like their own'.[22] Another American style that was increasingly visible in an Antipodean context was the Californian Spanish-colonial style, used in the design of buildings such as Auckland Grammar School (1913) and, more publicly still, Henry White's Midland Hotel (1917) located on Lambton Quay, Wellington.[23] The style also took off in relation to upper-class domestic architecture; an alternative to the Californian bungalow that was prevalent among lower-middle-class

[19] P. Richardson, 'An Architect of Empire: The Government Buildings of John Campbell in New Zealand' (unpublished MA thesis, University of Canterbury, 1988), p. 95.

[20] Richardson, 'An Architect of Empire', p. 95.

[21] See 'Rebuilding Melbourne: Modern Architecture' in *The Argus*, 22 June 1912, p 7. J.M. Freeland contends that this new technique first appeared in an Australian context in Sydney in 1910. Freeland, *Architecture in Australia* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1972), p. 249.

[22] Freeland, *Architecture in Australia*, p. 219.

[23] For these see *N.Z. Building Progress,* July 1917, p. 1003; P. Shaw, *New Zealand Architecture: From Polynesian to 1990* (Auckland: Hodder and Stoughton, 1991), p. 103; McEwan, 'An American Dream' p. 106. For the Californian/Spanish mission style in an Australian context, see P. Goad, *Melbourne Architecture* (Balmain NSW: Watermark Press, 2009), p. 117.

suburbs in the 1920s.[24] American hotels had long been admired in the Antipodes as among the most comfortable in the world. During the 1920s and 1930s a further two new hotels, the Hotel Waterloo and the Hotel St George, were constructed in Wellington and, while bearing 'Anglo' names, were clearly influenced by American design.[25] Indeed, by the 1920s there were a number of styles that could be used by architects, but it is significant that very few of these had emerged from Britain. Thus, while 'Wrenaissance' and Georgian revival still had their advocates, beaux arts (French), commercial palazzo (American), art deco (French/American) and the associated streamlined moderne, all found increasing favour in Antipodean building design in the 1920s and 1930s.

American architects, moreover, increasingly made a name for themselves in the inter-war period. Walter Burley Griffin and R.A. Lippencott, for example, had arrived in Melbourne from America to set up in practice just before the Great War and their careers reached fruition after 1918. Burley Griffin's commissions included the design of the combined Capitol Theatre and Capitol House, which opened in 1924, again demonstrating the influence of the 'Chicagoesque' school.[26] Lippencott (Burley Griffin's brother-in-law), had been involved in designing the new Australian capital of Canberra, and subsequently relocated with Griffin to Sydney and then Melbourne, before moving again with his family to New Zealand in 1921. This last move was largely due to his winning of the commission to design the arts building of Auckland University. Lippencott had submitted a late and ultimately unsuccessful entry for the Chicago Tribune Building competition.[27] As an American-trained architect (he attended Cornell University, 1905–9), Lippencott's ideas were, like Griffin's, influenced by the Sullivan-Chicago school and also Frank Lloyd Wright. This influence was seen, for example, in his design for Smith and Caughey's department store in Auckland (1927). As Peter Shaw has noted of this building, 'in essence the building is designed according to Sullivan's principles, being

[24] Advocated by L. M. Wilkinson, first Professor of Architecture at the University of Sydney. See Freeland, *Architecture in Australia*, p. 233.

[25] See, for example, the advertisement for the Hotel St. George *in Journal of the New Zealand Institute of Architects* Vol. 14.2 June 1935, p. ii.

[26] R. Storey, *Walking Melbourne: The National Trust Guide to the Historic and Architectural landmarks of Central Melbourne* (Victoria, National Trust of Australia, 2004), p. 33.

[27] M. A. Bruce, 'R. A. Lippencott, The American Connection' (BArch thesis, University of Auckland, 1985).

treated as monolithic mass and given vertical emphasis'.[28] Other features were 'plucked from emerging Art Deco skyscraper vocabulary in America'.[29] Other types of building that was influenced by American design from the USA were the railway terminals constructed in Auckland and Wellington during the 1930s. Both owed a debt to the Grand Central and Pennsylvanian Stations of New York. Auckland's terminal was designed by W.H. Gummer and Wellington's by the architectural firm Gray, Young, Morton and Young. The latter's design for the Wellington terminal was described by the *Architectural Review* as being in the 'American neo-classical manner'.[30]

As land values increased in the Antipodean cities' central space in the mid-1920s the high-rise movement became ever more pronounced. One of its leading advocates in the context of Melbourne was architect Marcus Barlow, who argued in the mid-1920s that height restrictions on buildings in Melbourne were too severe and believed buildings could be safely taken up to 300 feet in height.[31] The city's fire brigade was in fact happy to see buildings taken up to 1000 feet as long as modern fire prevention techniques were installed. Later, in the 1920s, Barlow explained on a business visit to Perth that

> Land in picked spots in the heart of Melbourne is now worth £3,000 a foot and the result is that new city buildings soar to a great height. It is the only possible way in which to get an adequate return for invested capital. We no longer build office blocks of less than 12 storeys and some of the facilities nowadays provided in such buildings would have amazed an older generation…Take for instance Temple Court, a fairly new building in Collins Street. It is worth £500,000, goes up twelve storeys, has seven electric lifts and a continuous hot water lavatory service throughout.[32]

Turning to domestic architecture, Barlow noted that

> Australians are developing an aesthetic sense, thanks to the increasing wealth of the country, and a great deal of literature dealing with domes-

[28] Shaw, *New Zealand Architecture*, p. 111.

[29] M. A. Bruce, 'Lippencott, The American Connection' (BArch Thesis, University of Auckland, 1985), p. 74.

[30] I. Lochead, 'New Zealand Architecture in the Thirties: The Impact of Modernism' *Landfall*, Vol. 38:4 (1984), p. 470.

[31] *The Argus*, 29 July 1925, p. 23.

[32] *The West Australian*, 6 May 1927, p. 12.

> tic architectural problems has reached this country in recent years. The Americans being magnificent advertisers, this literature portrays the very best of their work.[33]

In the early 1930s, moreover, Barlow began to advocate that the American 'Rush Building system' be adopted.[34] Speaking after the completed construction of the Manchester Unity Building on Melbourne's Swanston Street, Barlow noted that it had been constructed far more quickly than was typical for a building of that size, due to adopting methods used in the context of Chicago skyscrapers.[35] New Zealand's city buildings also gained height during the 1920s. Indeed, in an article titled 'Wellington's New and Notable Buildings', published in *New Zealand Building Progress* in 1923, the journal contemplated the 'Prospects of the Sky-Scraper' appearing in the city. The article noted that 'Although the area is subject to mild earthquakes, New Zealand architects have shown a capacity to design buildings adapted to meet these special strains … there are indications of the coming of the more modest form of sky-scraper'.[36] This prediction proved to be accurate, as Ben Schrader notes of the inter-war years, 'Downtown Wellington was transformed as one and two storey Victorian structures gave way to impressive seven or eight storey office blocks and hotels.'[37] Among the most significant of the inter-war constructions was a phase of buildings constructed in the second half of the 1920s and another in the later 1930s after the depression subsided.[38] Among the best examples of the new high-rise built in the 1920s were the Temperance and General Building, the Drapery and General Importing Company (DIC) Building and the State Insurance Building and in the later 1930s and early 1940s, the Mutual Life and Citizens Assurance (MLC) Building, the South British Building and the Commercial Bank of Australia Building.[39] The Chicago Tribune Building competition, staged in the early 1920s,

[33] *The West Australian*, p. 12. For a full exploration of Melbourne's interwar inner city building redevelopment, see B. Schrader, 'Rebuilding Melbourne: Modernity and Progress in the Central Business District' (PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 2001).

[34] *The Argus*, 30 July 1932, p. 24. See also B. Schrader, 'Paris or New York? Contesting Melbourne's Skyline, 1880-1958' *Journal of Urban History*, Vol. 36: 6 (2010), pp. 823–824.

[35] *The Argus*, 30 July 1932, p. 24.

[36] *New Zealand Building Progress* September 1923, p. 8.

[37] Schrader, 'Modernising Wellington', p. 15.

[38] Gardyne, 'Transition in Architectural Style from Beaux Arts to Bauhaus', p. 15.

[39] Gardyne, 'Transition', p. 15.

had created an important blueprint for Antipodean cities, as the winning entry by John Mead and Raymond Hood was subsequently used as a template by Barlow for his Manchester Unity Building 1929–32, and Eliel Saarinen's second-placed entry influenced Wellington East Post Office on Cambridge Terrace, imitating 'the stepped set-back form of the New York Skyscraper.[40] In Auckland, Wellington and Melbourne, a similar template was adopted for the branches for another of the significant inter-war assurance firms, Australian Temperance and General Mutual Life, buildings constructed in the 1920s and 1930s; all owed much to the Chicago style. Melbourne architects A and K Henderson were the commissioned architects who used the commercial palazzo style adapted from an American context.[41] This style, as McEwan points out, associated businesses with a civic style of architecture that enhanced the appearance of their solidity.[42]

Political Ties and Popular Imperialism c. 1884–1902

Thus while the port cities' built environment represented a mix of Anglo and American styles, the attempts at political integration between Antipodean coastal cities and Britain coastal cities did not run smoothly. Civic elites in Antipodean ports became increasingly concerned with localised threats to their security, which overshadowed grand schemes of formalised political ties with London. The notion of formalising imperial relations by the creation of an imperial parliament gained favour among sections of the political elite in both London and the other British world centres after 1880. Federation was not a new idea as Ged Martin has demonstrated, but the late nineteenth century witnessed its rejuvenation, largely due to the efforts of the Imperial Federation League (IFL) founded in London in 1884, which contained leading Conservatives and Liberal imperialists.[43] Quite what form federation would take was the subject of extended debate in the 1880s and 1890s, but many thought that perhaps the House of Lords might be replaced with a gathering of imperial representatives.[44]

[40] Gardyne, 'Transition', p. 60.

[41] For Melbourne's version see Goad, *Melbourne Architecture*, p. 118.

[42] McEwan, "'An American Dream" p. 132.

[43] G. Martin, 'Empire Federalism and Imperial Parliamentary Union 1820-1870' *Historical Journal*, Vol. 16: 1 (1973), pp. 65–92. For the IFL's formation and early activity, see M. Burgess, 'Lord Rosebery and the Imperial Federation League 1884-1893' *New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol. 13:2 (1979), pp. 64–77.

[44] For a useful overview, see D. Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future World Order 1860–1900* (Princeton: University Press, 2007).

The number of such representatives for any given nation would reflect the size of the population in question. How far was the federation project embraced in Antipodean port cities? One problem that beset the imperial federationists was that they could not have launched their proposals at a worse time from the point of view of those in the southern hemisphere, as Germany annexed parts of New Guinea in 1884 and there was general feeling on the part of the southern Empire of being abandoned by Gladstone's second ministry. In fact, any enthusiasm for closer political ties between London and its imperial capitals was usually cast in terms of a rather instrumental desire for better defence of the Antipodean port city rather than a deeper sentimental affection for the Empire. In a colony such as Victoria, with a tradition of economic protectionism stretching back to the 1850s, there was a strong sentiment among manufacturers that federation would bring no benefit at all.[45] The Melbourne daily *The Age* was sceptical of the project in its early stages and argued against it from an economic standpoint:

> Neither we think is it quite certain that England would gain in the long run by fusing the representatives of Australia and Canada and the Cape into the same parliament with members for Great Britain and Ireland. No doubt Manchester and Birmingham manufacturers would get a start if Victorian manufacturers were extinguished and a Chancellor of the Exchequer would look with a lighter heart upon war, if he could assess an income tax upon the owners of property in Australia… she [Britain] ought to treasure Australia as she would Kent or Sussex and to hold Canada and the Cape by so light a tie that their severance should involve the least possible loss of prestige.[46]

It was somewhat ironic that it was in protectionist Melbourne rather than free-trade Sydney that a branch of the IFL first convened in June 1885. However, as the historian of the Victorian branch notes, the most significant occupational background of its members was the military and the primary concern of this branch was the issue of defence of the Victorian coastline. This concern, as Leonie Foster noted, overrode any wider considerations of imperial relation.[47] Troop departures from the Antipodean

[45] G. Blainey, *A History of Victoria* (Cambridge: University Press, 2006), pp. 68-69.

[46] *The Age*, 29 July 1884, p. 4.

[47] L. Foster, 'The Imperial Federation League in Victoria after Australian Federation: An Analysis of its Structure, Personnel, Aims and Decline' (BA Hons Thesis, Monash University, 1979).

ports witnessed sizeable crowds gathering at the dockside to send the men off. However, the reasons why such crowds gathered cannot simply be explained solely by reference to an enthusiasm for participation in a war for Empire. Press reports often described the departures with reference to 'Our Boys', which implied a rather more localised patriotism than that of imperial citizenship. In the context of troop departures from the port of Melbourne, the morning daily *The Argus* described such farewells as *historic* events, which port citizens wanted to be part of. One old woman who attended the departure of the first Victorian contingent said she had witnessed the return of troops from the battle of Waterloo as a young girl. [48] *The Argus* noted in this context

> the feeling that the event is a historic one animates all and the parents who are linked in memory with some outstanding events of the past wish to give their children a landmark of national importance on which to fix their backward gaze. Hence the city is early astir and trains and trams pour all the life of the surburbs into it.[49]

Of course, many on the dockside were also hoping that their loved one(s) would return, that this was not the last time they would see them and that they would return from southern Africa safe and well. So, in short, both national identity and family concerns were to the fore at these departures.

The participation in this imperial war was also an apposite time to measure the progress of both the city and the wider colony. Souvenir editions of the daily papers published during the war suggested that cities like Melbourne were now mature and could comfortably withstand comparison with European cities. They were genuinely imperial cities. The notion that crowds were essentially engaging in local celebrations as much as imperial ones, is given further credence in the context of troop departures from New Zealand's South Island. *The Otago Witness* noted of the departure of Christchurch troops from their home city:

> The southern contingent for the Transvaal were in town [Christchurch] yesterday…immense excitement prevailed here yesterday when the last of the Canterbury contingent left, for Wellington … When the contingent paraded at the drill shed the grounds were crowded and so thick were the people in the streets that with difficulty the men could march to the railway station,

[48] *The Argus*, 30 October 1899, pp. 4–5.
[49] *The Argus*, 30 October 1899, pp. 4–5.

> headed by the Cycle Corps to clear the way and the Garrison Band … So great was the crowd outside the station that with great difficulty the band and contingent got on to the platform… The scene on the station was most enthusiastic. Patriotic airs were played by the band and sung by the immense crowd and cheers given for the Queen and the contingent and groans for Kruger and T.E. Taylor.[50]

This contrasted with scenes in the same city a few days later, when the Dunedin contingent passed through on its onward journey to Wellington. The smaller attendance to see off the Dunedin contingent would suggest that enthusiasm was largely reserved for locally raised troops and that two celebrations in less than a week would hinder trade activity.

The end of the first phase of the conflict witnessed celebrations following the relief of the besieged settlement of Mafeking in May 1900. This event has generally been seen as witnessing the zenith of enthusiasm for the British Empire on the part of the domestic British population, with all classes in society taking part in the revelry. However, Richard Price provided a most influential study of the celebrations in a much-cited wider study of the South African War, in which he argued that it was the lower middle class, rather than the working class who were most infused with enthusiasm for the relief of Mafeking. Indeed, it is similarly questionable whether it was the Antipodean working class who took the leading role in the celebrations and riots of May 1900 down under. In Melbourne, for example, it appears to be the case that the most boisterous of the participants were from two distinct groups: the first were lower-middle-class office workers while the second were 'larrikin' youth. On 23 May 1900 *The Age* described the demonstration by employees of the Metropolitan Board of Works against pro-Boer sympathisers, and further disturbances were noted by 'various Government departments'[51] such as the Shipping Office. On 24 May, *The Age* also noted that 'the people were in a wild delirium, a frenzy of jubilation …knots of youths would get hold of bugles or whistles or toy drums and have processions on their own'.[52] That evening the celebrations continued and it was noted that

> Every class of individual and every type of emotion were represented. Elderly gentlemen of irreproachable appearance rushed into the melee … children in arms… were hoisted shoulder high, with perhaps the idea of fixing on

[50] *Otago Witness*, 19 October 1899, p. 23.
[51] *The Age*, 23 May 1900, p. 6.
[52] *The Age*, 23 May 1900, p. 6.

> their baby consciousness some memorial of an epoch-making event in the history of the Empire … But presumably and particularly it was a day out for the youth of Melbourne.[53]

The young man who 'works in an office and plays football on Saturday afternoons' was the central figure of the occasion.[54] So too, medical students were noted as 'wild and boisterous as of old'.[55] A patriotic concert staged at the Royal Exhibition Building was interrupted by university students 'in academic robes and various quaint costumes [who] made an unceremonious entry…the singer paused in her song while the students, mounting chairs and beating tin cans improved the shining hour by chanting the university anthem'.[56]

These largely middle-class participants were supplemented by a working-class larrikin youth element, who evidently saw Mafeking night not as a celebration of Empire, but as 'carnival', the immediate opportunity of which was to claim the streets for themselves. *The Age* also noted that on 24 May, 'You could do what you liked in the way of extravagance of dress, antic or vocal demonstration'.[57] This behaviour included the lighting and throwing of firecrackers, turning over of tram cars, 'lying them on their side like stranded ships' and the surrounding of a tram driver on Bourke Street by a mob who 'on the plea that he was a Boer, evidently intended to give him a rough handling'.[58] Thus, as the paper noted, it was larrikins who 'took advantage of the prevailing excitement and toleration to satisfy their mischievous instincts'.[59] Mafeking was therefore clearly more than a demonstration of enthusiasm for Empire. Descriptions of participation are suggestive of 'liminality' among the middle-class and working-class youth at this point in the war. The revelry does not seem to have revolved around imperial sentiment as much as a sense that the rules concerning civil conduct had been temporarily suspended. It is interesting to note that descriptions of excessive behaviour in relation to the Mafeking celebrations do not identify working-class adults as significant participants in the evening's revelry.

[53] *The Age*, 24 May 1900, p. 6.
[54] *The Age*, p. 8.
[55] *The Age*, p. 8.
[56] *The Age*, p. 8.
[57] *The Age*, p. 8.
[58] *The Age*, p. 8.
[59] *The Age*, p. 8.

Imperial Loyalty Societies

Between 1880 and 1940 a cluster of imperial loyalty leagues formed in Britain, which had political, economic, defensive or friendship/educational aims. Given their varied objectives it is not possible to undertake an extensive investigation of each of them here, and I would direct the reader to my lengthier study.[60] Here, some of the salient problems of both an internal and external nature can be identified. In the context of the Antipodean branch, it was certainly the case that membership was largely confined to city elites; that is to say, those who held power in the port. The City Mayor was invariably a leading patron of the leagues, and powerful elites often held senior positions on the council of more than one of the leagues. The leagues did not evidently aim at developing a mass membership, because membership denoted status in the settler community. Thus 'class' was as much a part of these leagues' identity as 'Britishness'. The Antipodean port cities were locations that in some instances held significant numbers of Irish and Scottish settlers in addition to English. This meant that the relational problems within the UK were replicated in such contexts. Imperial apathy was recorded on the pages of publications such as *The Round Table*, the journal that took its name from the intellectual group founded by Lionel Curtis in 1910, and *The English Race*, the journal of the Royal Society of St George (RSSG), which had been founded in 1895 by Howard Ruff. *The Round Table* noted, for example, that, 'both in Great Britain and the Dominions …it is well nigh impossible to understand how things are going with the British Empire. People feel that they belong to an organisation which is greater than the particular portion of the King's Dominion where they happen to reside, but which has no government, no parliament, no press even, to explain to them where its interests lie, or what its policy should be'.[61] This pessimism was also realised in the demise of several of the branches of the Round Table in the 1920s, partly it appears, because the London members were not really interested in their views.[62] While both Britishness and Englishness were identities that

[60] J. Griffiths, *Imperial Culture in Antipodean Cities, 1880–1939* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014).

[61] *The Round Table: A Quarterly Review of the Politics of the British Empire* Vol. 1:1 (1910), p. 1.

[62] For the rather supercilious attitude of the Oxbridge-educated London core towards the Dominion-based groups, see A. May, 'The Round Table 1910-66' (DPhil thesis, Oxford University, 1995).

aroused little enthusiasm, Scottishness, as an identity, faired rather better, in the form of Caledonian/Scots societies. The Melbourne Caledonian Society, for example, boasted 800 members in 1900, compared to the 329 members of the RSSG in 1912. As Vaughan Yarwood noted, 'Unlike expatriated Englishmen, the Scots had little desire to return to their native lands, but rather, directed their energies toward bringing relations out to the colonies. Their collective view also differed from that of the English colonists in that their first loyalty, to Scotland, did not always coincide with their loyalty to Empire'.[63]

While the leagues did useful patriotic work during the Great War, their finances were invariably uncertain after the war ended and membership frequently dropped. The League of Empire, originally named the Children of Empire and founded in 1901 by Mrs. Ord Marshall, was a movement of education and attempted to instigate an imperial exchange of teachers after the Great War ended, but the Antipodean contribution was smaller than Canada's. This might have been partly due to the practical problem of distance that had to be traversed and the costs that had to be met to travel between the northern and southern hemispheres, where the journey time ran into several weeks. However, in the context of some port cities where Labour councils had had electoral success, there was some considerable antipathy to imperial cultural presence within the school curriculum. Less imperial material was printed in the school journals and papers by the mid-1920s, for example, and the imperial loyalty groups from this point often found it difficult to gain access to schools to promote essay competitions. There were also examples of Labour councils denying the leagues the right to collect for donations at street level, particularly in the context of the antimilitarist spirit of the early 1920s.

During the 1920s and 1930s the leagues increasingly tended to concentrate on warding off the undesirable effects of a creeping Americanisation of the popular culture within the port cities. For example, they combined in some instances to advocate a 'quota' of British-produced film for the cinema in the face of Hollywood's saturation of the market. They also attempted to counter undesirable global trends such as the threat of an apparently virile Communist Left, a characteristic especially evident in the case of the British Empire Union, which had formed during the Great

[63] V. Yarwood, 'Shibboleth of Empire: Attitudes to Empire in New Zealand Writing 1890-1930' (MA thesis, University of Auckland, 1982), p. 76.

War. However, they appear to have had little significant impact in making citizens feel 'imperial'.

This chapter has argued that the Antipodean port city drew on significant cultural influences that stretched beyond the British Empire when conceiving their built environment and political strategies. Clearly, these port cities were an integral part of an imperial trading network and much of the civic elite and their families in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were originally from Britain. However, in exploring the importance of imperial culture, historians have often been blind to the significance of the port as a place of cultural exchange and of influences that lay outside of the imperial system. The port was a receptacle for international culture that influenced its built environment and reminded the population that there were alternatives to the British imperial system. The Americanisation of the built environment gave port cities a distinctive identity that set them apart from other imperial centres. Indeed, Antipodean port cities felt particularly exposed to the perceived military threat to the southern zone of the British Empire, which ironically only served to strengthen resistance to initiatives that originated in London for closer ties of federation. These issues weakened the imperial message, which, it is argued here, failed to energise popular enthusiasm for the British Empire. Indeed, in the 1920s and 1930s, as class politics became more pronounced, it was the middle class who became identified as the group loyal to Empire and who had put imperial concerns before national interest. In contrast, the working class was seen to put self-interest before either national or imperial concerns.[64] They were noticeably absent, for example, from the imperial loyalty societies that formed in each of the cities from the 1890s onward. Thus, while the Antipodean port city stood within the world's largest imperial network, the cultural and political influences that flowed into the harbour helped shape a popular culture that was often out of kilter with London's imperial message.

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CHAPTER 7

Encounters on the Waterfront: Negotiating Identities in the Context of Sailortown Culture

Tytti Steel

Reminiscing about his first visit to the port of Kotka, English sailor John McCreadie described it as an icy experience. At first, the town did not impress. McCreadie recalled that it was a cold winter's day in 1949 or 1950. He described the cold weather as horrifying because he hardly ever wore a hat, never mind long johns. He remembered thinking to himself, 'the less time I spend on the streets swept by the icy wind the better'. In the evenings, he recalled that it was much better to go to the pub, have a pint and go dancing. The exchange rate of the pound was very beneficial for Britons, so McCreadie and his shipmates did not need to skimp in the pub. With pecuniary benefits in mind, he also realized that upon his next visit he could bring tins of coffee to sell to the locals. 'This was the way to make some extra money to spend in the favourite pub', McCreadie recalled.[1]

McCreadie visited the port of Kotka (140 km east from the capital Helsinki) as an engineer on the S.S *Baltara*, a vessel of the United Baltic

[1] I. McCreadie (2007) 'Englantilaisen seilorin muistoi Kotkast', in A-L. Alivirta and M. Liukkonen (eds), *Miä oon Kotkast. Muistoja 50-luvun Kotkasta*, (Helsinki: Minerva), 20–21.

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Corporation. S.S *Baltara* visited Kotka every 3 weeks and soon McCreadie was looking forward to visiting the town. He recalled that young women were as eager to learn to speak English as to dance. It seems that McCreadie found himself a girlfriend while visiting Kotka, as his memories have been written down by a woman named Irma McCreadie.[2]

The McCreadie's narrative reaches some intrinsic aspects of the post-war years of Kotka—as well as other Finnish coastal towns—and is an example of oral history as a fascinating source. As historian Alessandro Portelli has noted, oral history has the potential to replenish and challenge written sources. The greatest force of oral history is not so much in telling what people did but instead what they were thinking and what they think they have done in the past.[3] This chapter will map the transnational everyday practices of the harbour-side. Keeping in mind the difference between the experienced and the narrated, the article offers a grassroots perspective on the social interactions of two Finnish port towns in the post-war years, also referred to as the extended 1950s.[4] It will explore the cargo harbours of Helsinki and Kotka and will shed light on the interactions between sailors and local people. The sources are thematic interviews made with people who represented several professions, but they all worked in the port area: dock labourers, their bosses, crane drivers, and customs officers, for example.[5] Alongside the reminiscences, the main source for this article is a report of sailors surveyed in the port of Kotka in 1956.[6]

The context of the article is the so-called Shortage-Finland, a country slowly recovering from the Second World War. Rationing and shortages

[2] This is most likely John McCreadie's wife or daughter, but there is no information about this in the book.

[3] A. Portelli (2008) 'What Makes Oral History Different', in R. Perks and A. Thomson (eds), *The Oral History Reader*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge), 35–38.

[4] By extended 1950s I mean the years from the end of the Second World War to the middle of 1960s. See M. Godhe (2003) *Morgondagens experter. Tekniken, ungdomen och framsteget i populärvetenskap och science fiction i Sverige under det långa 1950-talet*. (Stockholm: Carlssons), 16; K.M. Booker (2002) *The Post-Utopian Imagination. American Culture in the Long 1950s*. Contributions to the Study of American Literature. 13 (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press), 1, 197; K.M. Booker (2001) *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds, and the Cold War. American Science Fiction and the Roots of Postmodernism, 1946–1964*. Contributions to the Study of Science Fiction and Fantasy. 95. (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press), 3.

[5] Museovirasto, Suomen merimuseo, A200803:1–13 Tytti Steelin väitöskirjan haastattelu-uaineisto 1–12. (hereafter MV:SMM:A200803).

[6] A. Lahtinen (1956) *Merimiehet Kotkassa. Sosiaalinen tutkimus*, (Kotka: Kotkan Kauppakamari).

of most commodities were a significant part of daily life.[7] Finland had avoided Soviet invasion, but remained relatively isolated from Western Europe. Finnish ports on the other hand were open: anyone could go for a walk on the piers, have a look at vessels and meet sailors. Some sources accentuate that the citizens of Kotka welcomed the sailors with pleasure. They even allege that the tolerance is seen to this day.[8] The alleged tolerance and openness is used to construct a port town identity. This article will explore how the reminiscences connected with the Helsinki and Kotka ports are used to construct a local, a professional, or a personal identity. It will also seek to establish how a sense of 'otherness' is connected to this 'identity work' and sailortown culture.[9] The article is about the internal sense of the harbour-side occupational community and how this internal sense takes a stand on stereotypes and mental images forced on the community from the outside.

Coffee Breaks and Language Barriers: Interaction at Work

In the extended 1950s both Helsinki and Kotka were major ports in Finland. Helsinki specialized in imports (consumer goods and coal) and Kotka in exports (with a strong focus on products of the wood processing industry).[10] The impact of the port was eminently visible in the town of Kotka. In the 1950s, 42,000 sailors visited Kotka annually. In the 1960s, the figure was 50,000. In a town with 40,000 inhabitants, the port was a major employer and an important influence on the town. Because of the arctic winter conditions, there were large variations in the port's activities at different times of the year. In the quiet winter months, there were a few dozen sailors in the town, whereas in the summer months, such

[7] S. Jaatinen (2004) *Kortilla korviketta. Säännöstelyä ja selviytymistä pula-ajan Suomessa*, (Helsinki: Multikustannus).

[8] J. Saarinen (2008) *Miljoonamöljä: Kotkan satama 1871–2008*, (Kotka: Kotkan Satama), 230.

[9] On identity work, see A. Tuori (2014) *Doing Intersectional Identity Work. Social Categories, Inequalities, and Silences.* Economics and Society. Publications of the Hanken School of Economics, Nr 284. (Helsinki), 16–23.

[10] T. Bergholm (2002) 'Satamaliikenne ja yhteiskunta', in Ali Pylkkänen et al. (eds), *Satamillaan maa hengittää. Suomen satamaliiton historia 1923–2000*, (Helsinki: The Finnish Port Association), 52–53.

as the busy period of August 1955, there were more than 700 sailors in the town every day. Six out of ten of them were foreign nationals.[11] A report ordered by the local Chamber of Commerce in 1956 clarified the conditions for dealings between the locals and the sailors. While staying in the harbour, the report noted, the sailors lived on board the ship and got food there. The facilities they most needed were laundry services, cobblers and barbers. On board the ship they often met the staff of a provisioning company or a pedlar selling souvenirs. Sailors also worked while the ship was in the harbour, for example, painting and repairing the vessel.[12] Interaction between dock workers and sailors was possible but not constant. At times the crew took part in handling the cargo. For example, when timber was loaded, sailors marked the batches. One responsibility of the first mate was to superintend the cargo handling, so he had more connections with the locals than other officers or members of the crew.[13]

According to interview sources, the dock workers did not take up much with the sailors. Foremen needed to know some English or German, but everyone else could manage with gestures or body language. The foreman needed to find out from the first mate in which order the cargo was to be loaded because the ship usually had several destinations. According to the interviewees, many of the foremen and superintendents had earlier worked as officers of the merchant navy; hence, they had good language skills and knowledge of shipping. Some of them were Swedish speaking by origin, so for them it was easy to communicate with Swedish officers and crews.[14] Kalevi, who worked as a foreman at Kotka harbour, recalled that knowing the officers made work go well on board. Knowing the first mate made it possible for the foreman to pass over the hierarchy and ask the crew directly to help with tasks that needed to be done. According to Kalevi, the foremen were most friendly with Finnish officers and crews, and were 'always going out to the pub' with them, but they did not really get to know people from other countries. He noted that work

[11] Lahtinen, *Merimiehet Kotkassa*, 4. For the report, sixty Finnish and non-Finnish sailors were interviewed with a survey form.

[12] Lahtinen, *Merimiehet Kotkassa*; MV:SMM A200803:09.

[13] MV:SMM A200803: 8.

[14] MV:SMM A200803:2, 6, 7.

matters were dealt with, but otherwise there was no contact.[15] Foreman and later industrial safety delegate Ilmari recalled that he often had coffee on board with the sailors or the officers.[16] Two more interviewees also mentioned that the sailors or the cook often offered them coffee on the ship's forecastle. While working on the first ships that came from America after the Second World War the dock workers were often offered food, too.[17] In the context of the Finnish post-war years, many ships had exceptionally good food and it was in plentiful supply. Dockers also said that they would rather drink the free coffee than go to the harbour-side canteen that was sometimes quite distant.[18] For sailors, having a chat with the dockers must have been a welcome change after a long trip at sea.

At the same time, the language barrier was discussed in several interviews, and respondents recollected the contact they had with other nationalities. For example, Ilmari noted that he often used signs or papers he had prepared beforehand to make his point when checking health and safety issues on a vessel. Lack of a common language sometimes brought on even potentially lethal situations if the foreman did not get information across about hazardous cargo.[19] Kalevi recollected the story of English officers who almost got run over by a train in the port of Kotka.

> […] Yes, they fell between the tracks and the train drove over them. The two guys who worked for the railway shouted: 'What got knocked over by the train?' They came to see what had happened but they couldn't speak any English. They just cleaned off the officers' clothes and said: 'Ok, ok.' The officers went away. I'm sure they remember they visited Kotka (laughing).[20]

Kalevi's narrative indicates that even basic safety instructions could not be given in any other language than Finnish. The last sentence can be interpreted as bolstering and renewing a 'tough' port town identity.

[15] MV:SMM A200803:12.
[16] MV:SMM A200803:8.
[17] MV:SMM A200803:2, 5.
[18] MV:SMM A200803:2, 7.
[19] MV:SMM A200803:2.
[20] MV:SMM A200803:12.

Friends and Enemies

The positively charged transnational harbour-side interaction can easily be used in constructing a local port town identity in Kotka. Analysing the interviews reveals that the positive emotions are sometimes only a screen. It is sometimes difficult to know whom exactly the stevedores refer to when they discuss sailors. Many times it is not clear if the interviewee is referring to a Finnish or foreign sailor, the crew or an officer. In his interview, Ilmari recalls that sailors and dockers were on good terms:

> Interviewer: Did you get to know sailors?
>
> Ilmari: Well, sailors were quite good friends. We knew them all almost always, officers and the whole crew. We cooperated quite a lot.[21]

Cooperation for Ilmari meant cooperation between trade unions, and analysing the whole interview it becomes clear that here Ilmari was referring to Finnish sailors. Later in the interview Ilmari says that he or dockers generally did not have the language skills to be able to socialize with foreigners.[22] Hence, Ilmari's definition of sailors seems to exclude foreign nationals and he also downplayed the occupational hierarchies.

When analysing the extracts depicting and commenting on the transnational scene of the ports, it becomes clear that foreign sailors were not seen as a homogenous group. According to Olavi, foreign sailors were 'always watched and criticized a bit'. According to him, sailors from the East, especially Soviet sailors, evoked negative emotions.

> Olavi: […] Russians, they were like that. […] they were the kind of crowd who no one could get along with. If we left a truck in the cargo hold over night next morning there was nothing left of it. They had taken the lights and everything. They were that kind of crowd. Couldn't really trust them at all. Apparently they had nothing, their system was like that, need to keep hands in others' pockets and not your own so that had consequences everywhere.
>
> Interviewer: Yes, of course […] So people didn't want to work on their ships or there was […]
>
> Olavi: Well, we always had to work but dealings were negative. Of course, all of them weren't like that, but some of them were.

[21] MV:SMM A200803:8.
[22] MV:SMM A200803:8.

> Interviewer: And probably just after the wars [Winter War and Second World War] it wasn't […]
>
> Olavi: Yes, that's the way it was generally. People hated the Russians a lot. There definitely wasn't much mingling.[23]

During the interview Olavi tones down his statement and shows understanding towards the Soviet sailors by shifting the focus from dishonest individuals to criticizing the communist system. Olavi also notes that British sailors annoyed him. However, Olavi was fond of the tidiness and promptness of Germans:

> […] And Limeys [Olavi uses the word *engelsmanni*], they were such tea drinkers and when football was on nothing happened. We needed to get the hatches open but the guys were just watching telly. Had to go and kick them to go to work. Germans were the cleanest and most punctual. They almost always had everything on track and their ships were tidy and well looked after.[24]

The fact that Olavi refers to watching television seems to pin this memory to later times, but there is no way of knowing for sure. It is possibly a mixture of earlier and later memories—a situation very common in oral history material. Despite the possible inaccuracy of the reminiscence, the message of the narrative is clear: Finnish and German work ethics were closely aligned and everything else seems humbug to the interviewee. Olavi does not directly say which vessels were not tidy or when he needed all his patience, but it is quite obvious that in the big picture it is about the 'Nordic efficiency' meeting a way of thinking that has been called the 'mañana mentality'.[25] Folklorist Marika Rosenström has shown that Finnish sailors who worked on the last sailing ships of the first half of the twentieth century did not think highly of sailors from the South of Europe. The Finns thought themselves tougher and more skilled. The division into 'us' and 'them' has been a strong component in sailors' worldviews. In Rosenström's sources, 'us' and 'them' are constantly being renegotiated and defined. A contraposition could be constructed between

[23] MV:SMM A200803:6.

[24] MV:SMM A200803:6.

[25] B. Ehn, and O. Löfgren (2007) *När ingenting särskilt händer. Nya kulturanalyser*, (Stockholm: Brutus Östlings Bokförlag Symposion), 35.

sailors and landlubbers, men and women, the crew and the officers, deep-sea sailors and Baltic sailors, between the watches or different nationalities within the crew.[26] In a similar manner, there were fluid occupational, local and national identities demonstrated in the sources used for this chapter.

Unlike Olavi, Ilmari conveys positive attitudes towards crews from the eastern bloc. Ilmari had a big influence on improving the occupational health and safety on board some ships from East Germany and he felt that he received the sailors' respect.[27] This success seems to have a big influence on his very positive views. Elsewhere in the interview, Ilmari says he liked the cleanliness of the German vessels:

> Practically it was the German ships. I respect *Transgermania*, which was a ro-ro ship. It always went to Sompasaari [the eastern harbour] and everything was in order on board! I didn't have to say anything. The first mate came to walk with me as soon as they saw me. If I had something to reprimand, well, actually there was really nothing. Because even the mates cleaned the decks if needed and I must say everything was shipshape.[28]

Here the interviewer asks which sailors were the nicest but the reply is about which people did everything by the book and had the cleanest ships. According to Sven, the ships of the American Moore & McCormack were in very good condition and the crew 'handsome dark guys'. Hence it is somewhat surprising to find out that Ilmari dislikes the officers of the American vessels. According to him, US officers, at least the ones working on Moore & McCormack, were 'unpleasant' and 'self-important'.[29] Ilmari does not mention whether his dislike of the Moore & McCormack officers had anything to do with the fact that at least some of them were black. However, studies have revealed that black sailors evoked ambivalent emotions in the locals.[30]

Ilmari's views on different nationalities can be pondered in the context of the discussions about Finnish soldiers (as an analogy of Finnish men in

[26] M. Rosenström (1996) *Fartyget, himlen och havet. Verklighetsuppfattningen bland sjömän i långfart under segelsjöfartens sista era*. Skrifter utgivna av Svenska litteratursälskapet i Finland Nr 597. Meddelanden från Folkkultursarkivet, 16 (Helsinki: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland), 114–116.

[27] MV:SMM A200803:8.

[28] MV:SMM A200803:8.

[29] MV:SMM A200803:8.

[30] See T. Steel (forthcoming) 'Port of Emotions. Nostalgia in Harbour-side Reminiscences', *Journal of Finnish Studies*).

a more general sense) linked to the hugely popular novel *The Unknown Soldier* written by Väinö Linna, published in 1954.[31] It is interesting to compare Ilmari's impressions to the types of leaders of the book. Second lieutenant Koskela has often been referred to as an exemplary leader. Matter-of-fact and self-effacing, Koskela takes part in all tasks side by side with his subordinates—much like the German officers in Ilmari's narrative. Koskela never quibbles about pedantic organizational rules, unlike the spruced-up company commander Lammio, who is regimented, punctual, heartless and formal.[32] Similarly reserved and distant seems to be the relation between Ilmari and the US officers.

Business as Usual

Juhani, who started his career at sea and continued at the harbour-side from the post of a first mate, recalls from the sailor's point of view how it was to visit a port:

> Juhani: All sailors need to cooperate with dock workers, it's a self-evident truth. It was linked to handling the cargo, unloading and loading the vessel, opening and closing the hatches and sometimes in England even keeping the dockers' teapots warm. This reminded me of a story. One ship had an angry cook who didn't want the 'Lime-juicer' teapots in his galley. He threw them out with the consequence that the dock work came to a complete halt. In the end he had to take the teapots back and keep them warm until it was 'teatime'.
>
> Interviewer: Did you personally take up with dockers?
>
> Juhani: Well, very very seldom. Sometimes there might have been some so-called business, all harmless. Once, I remember, once in France I borrowed a bike from a docker to be able to get to the town and back fast. That kind of trust existed.[33]

The interviewee presents the cooperation of sailors and dockers as taken for granted. The recollection brings out some tensions between stevedores and the crew but merely as an exception. From a cultural context, this can

[31] V. Linna (1954) *Tuntematon sotilas*, (Porvoo: WSOY).

[32] L. Koskela (2010) 'Mitä opimme Tuntemattomasta sotilaasta?', in L. Koskela and P. Lankinen (eds), *Johtajakirja. Suomalaisen kaunokirjallisuuden johtajia*, (Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran Toimituksia 1288), 139, 155.

[33] MV:SMM A200803:3.

be seen as the interviewee implicitly accentuating his knowledge of British culture by using English terms, thus accentuating his personal transnational history. Juhani obviously wanted to highlight that the smuggling or other businesses were not large-scale criminality. This thread of the quotation can be interpreted as a counterimage to the common impression of dock workers and sailors as infamous groups.[34] The end of the excerpt closes in the span of the narrative: the bicycle becomes a symbol of the transnational cooperation and trust between dock workers and sailors.

Legal or illegal businesses were transnational collaborations in the everyday life of port towns. Several interviewees recall that trading was a substantial part of the socializing as it gave both sailors and dockers an opportunity to earn some extra income. In his interview Olavi (docker, truck driver and storekeeper born at the beginning of the 1940s) recalls the businesses in which he was involved:

> Well, yes, one had to have some small business going on to make money for coffee. That's how we got to know the guys. Back then in the beginning of the 1960s, if you needed spare parts or something like that you could get them from Germany. The guys who worked on the lines to Germany, they often arranged those. You name it, they got it. The sailors had this system: they were allowed to bring a certain amount of certain goods tax free. It was often radios and that kind of stuff. Didn't need to pay as much as on shore. That was all legal, nothing sneaky.

Olavi admitted that alcohol was smuggled 'a little bit'.[35] According to a customs officer, smuggling was common and often the whole crew was involved.[36] The most common smuggled goods were alcohol, tobacco and, in the first post-war years, saccharin.[37] Smuggling was a tempting way to gain extra income as the punishments for small-scale smuggling or purchasing smuggled goods were minor. Both parties could make a profit and the buyer could sometimes get commodities that were difficult or impossible to buy in a shop. For example jeans, which came into vogue

[34] For example, see T. Bergholm (1996) 'Masculinity, Violence and Disunity: Waterfront Strikes and Strikebreakers in Finnish Ports in the 1920s and 1930s. *International Journal of Maritime History*, 8.1, 23–42; T. Steel (2013) *Risteäviä eroja sataman arjessa*. Kansatieteellisiä tutkimuksia Helsingin yliopistossa, 17 (Helsinki: Helsingin yliopisto).

[35] MV:SMM A200803:6.

[36] MV:SMM A200803:4.

[37] MV:SMM A200803:2.

at the beginning of the 1950s, were initially only available on ships.[38] Leather jackets, Collaro record players and Maxwell House instant coffee are other examples that could be drawn upon.[39] In addition to financial or material gains, smuggling brought a thrill into the lives of the participants. Legislation and officials could be seen as a common enemy and foul play strengthened the camaraderie of the participants.[40] By constructing a composition between 'us' (sailors, dock workers and bootleggers) and 'them' (officials) the narratives on smuggling created a 'port-side bunch' identity, transcending the occupational limits.

Harbour-Side Pub: 'A Different World'

While staying in the port, sailors had time off in the evenings and on Sundays. Some sailors simply stayed on board to read, listen to the radio and drink beer. The ones who went to the town could go sightseeing or to the cinema. The seamen's mission had limited opening hours and the rooms were dismal. From 1952, Kotka had a football league for ships' teams, and sailors could participate in other sports too. Athletics, table tennis and chess were played in international series in harbours over the world.[41] In the evenings, many sailors headed for the pubs, some of them because it was the only place open at that time of the day. In practice, pubs or restaurants were the only places where sailors and locals could really get together and socialize.[42] Sailors went to the pubs to seek company, entertainment and relaxation as a counterbalance to the routines at sea. Expectations for a pub evening were to get to know new people, tell and listen to interesting stories, dance and simply have fun.[43]

[38] T. Poutasuo (2006) *Farkkukirja*, (Helsinki: Minerva), 25; P. Pulma (2004) 'Kuriton sukupolvi-Uusi nuorisokulttuuri rantautuu 50-luvun Suomeen', in P. Mandart and T. Forss (eds), *Keisarikunta. Elokuvakäsikirjoitus ja esseitä*, (Helsinki: Like), 25; A. Seppänen and M. Kauppi (1996) 'Lättähatut', in Matti Peltonen (ed.) *Rillumarei ja valistus. Kulttuurikahakoita 1950-luvun Suomessa*, (Historiallinen Arkisto 108), 143.

[39] T. Forss (2004) 'Pekka Mandart kertoo – Ei oltu niin kuin muut', in P. Mandart & T. Forss (eds), *Keisarikunta. Elokuvakäsikirjoitus ja esseitä*, (Helsinki: Like), 32; MV:SMM A200803:7.

[40] MV:SMM A200803:1.

[41] Lahtinen, *Merimiehet Kotkassa*.

[42] Lahtinen, *Merimiehet Kotkassa*, 6–9, 16.

[43] Kymenlaakson museo, Kotka, Finland: Arkisto, Tytti Niemisen tekemät haastattelut Ravintola Kairon historiasta, 1063:1–15, 1063:9 (hereafter KyM:A 1063); Lahtinen, *Merimiehet Kotkassa*, 10.

In contradiction to the sailors' hopes, Finnish pubs or restaurants of the extended 1950s were not meant for having fun. The officials' outlook on alcohol consumption had its roots in the prohibition of 1919–1932 and the national mental image about Finns as 'barbaric' drinkers.[44] Pubs were guided by strict regulations and the control measures of the governmental alcohol monopoly *Alkoholiliike*.[45] After the Second World War, the directors of Alko thought pubs or restaurants should not become places for entertainment and having fun. The mission of restaurants was to serve lunch and dinner, and alcohol was to be sold merely along with a meal.[46] When in a restaurant, it was forbidden to become intoxicated or to speak with people who sat at the next table. Loud talking or laughing was deplorable, as was loud lamenting about the quality of the food or service. Even clinking glasses was thought to be bothersome to other diners. Having a familiar chat with a waitress was inappropriate.[47]

However, sailors were used to, or at least familiar with, a different kind of scene elsewhere. In the Finnish context, sailors behaved in a more relaxed way than other customers. According to a waitress, sailors were rollicking, 'splashed out money' and ordered lavish servings.[48] They spent more money than the locals and gave bigger tips.[49] One of the interviewed waitresses argued that sailors wanted to show off by, for example, ordering champagne.[50] In a report ordered by the Chamber of Commerce, sailors were almost classified according to the way each nationality spent money. According to the listing, the British and German sailors were usually thrifty whereas Americans spent more money and bought expensive food and drink.[51]

The atmosphere of the sailors' and dockers' pubs was different from other restaurants. The ambiance has been described as 'free' and the customers cheery.[52] One of the interviewed men described the harbour-side

[44] M. Peltonen (2002) *Remua ja ryhtiä. Alkoholiolot ja tapakasvatus 1950-luvun Suomessa*, (Helsinki: Gaudeamus), 26–27.

[45] M. Sillanpää (2002) *Säännöstelty huvi*: *Suomalainen ravintola 1900-luvulla*, (Bibliotheca Historica 72. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura).

[46] Sillanpää, *Säännöstelty Huvi*, 79.

[47] Sillanpää, *Säännöstelty Huvi*, 78, 90.

[48] KyM:A 1063.15.

[49] KyM:A 1063:15.

[50] KyM A 1063:1.

[51] Lahtinen, *Merimiehet Kotkassa*, 10.

[52] KyM:A 1063:7 ja 9.

pubs' clientele as the easy-going waterfront bunch.[53] The dress code in the harbour-side pubs was more casual than in other places.[54] The harbour-side pubs had a working-class imprint. For example, some of the stevedores went to the harbour-side pubs during their breaks for a drink.[55] With their dirty, worn out working clothes and occasional rough language, jokes and loud laughs, the dock workers were not the kind of customers the Alko directors wanted to see in places that had a licence to dispense alcohol. In Matti's narratives, the straightforwardness of the sailors' pub contrasts sharply with the rigidness of other restaurants:

> Well, it was natural that it was more relaxed because of the customers. Generally the style of the beginning of the 1960s was that restaurants had white tablecloths and the ambience was stiff.[56]

Kairo did have white tablecloths, but otherwise the rules of Alko were not followed as strictly as in 'classier' restaurants. In the sailors' pubs one could change the table and company more frequently and go to ask a woman to dance even if she was sitting at another table. At Kairo, even women could go to ask men to dance, even though in other restaurants this would have been a breach of the unwritten etiquette.[57]

According to one respondent, a musician, people behaved in a reserved way in the 'classier' restaurants. Everyone sat at their own table and only danced with people who sat with them. But in Kairo sailors would sit anywhere they wanted and chatted with anyone they chose. Kairo thus felt like a different world.[58] A small but telling detail is that sailors often rocked their chairs so that the seats needed to be fixed continuously.[59] The musicians can remember the buzz of conversation in several languages and the thick cigarette smoke. On occasion, even a waitress or a musician could be seen with a cigarette in her or his mouth. Near closing time, many of the customers would be quite intoxicated and went back to the ship with 'girls'. The next evening the partying would continue. The musicians pointed out that the behaviour taking place in the 1950s was

[53] KyM:A 1063:5.
[54] KyM:A 1063:9.
[55] KyM:A 1063:7, 15.
[56] KyM:A 1063:7.
[57] KyM:A 1063:7.
[58] KyM:A 1063:8.
[59] KyM:A 1063:11.

akin to the night club scene in contemporary society.[60] By drawing a parallel between the 1950s harbour-side pubs and twenty-first-century night clubs, the interviewee represented the waterfront bunch as a forerunner for the contemporary outlook.

In a sailors' pub the musicians would aspire to satisfy an international clientele and create a more relaxed atmosphere by, for example, circulating tables while playing.[61] The transnational nature of the clientele was seen and heard clearly in the music. Sailors liked Latino rhythms and wanted to dance the samba or cha-cha.[62] Some sailors joined the local musicians in jam sessions or sang a song with the house band.[63] These transnational musical ties are a crowning glory for the cultural scene in Kotka and had a strong influence on the local identity of many of the town's inhabitants.[64] Some interviewees linked the negative attitudes towards sailors, dock workers and the harbour-side pubs and their staff, noting that none of them were valued as late as in the 1960s.[65] The 'othering' of the sailor-town inhabitants is an international phenomenon and its Finnish application is influenced by romantic nationalism. Sailors did not fit the image of the stationary peasant folk, a picture created by researchers and artists.[66]

Disorder and Criminality

In the extended 1950s Kotka and ports in general were often portrayed as disreputable.[67] The Marshall of the Kotka police as well as some representatives of Alko were interviewed for the Chamber of Commerce report. In their opinion, sailors conducted themselves 'relatively well'.[68] According

[60] KyM:A 1063:8.

[61] KyM:A 1063:8.

[62] KyM:A 1063:2, 8.

[63] R. Ikävalko (1998) *Täyttä elämää Junnu. Kotkan poikii ilman siipii*, (Helsinki: Gummerus), 51–52.

[64] For example, see Ikävalko, *Täyttä*; P. Mandart & T. Forss (eds) (2004) *Keisarikunta. Elokuvakäsikirjoitus ja esseitä*. (Helsinki: Like).

[65] KyM:A 1063:2, 7.

[66] R. Lee (2013) 'A Seafarers' Urban World: A Critical Review', *International Journal of Maritime History*, XXV.1, 23–64; M. Rosenström (1996) *Fartyget, himlen och havet. Verklighetsuppfattningen bland sjömän i långfart under segelsjöfartens sista era*. Skrifter utgivna av Svenska litteratursälskapet i Finland Nr 597. Meddelanden från Folkkultursarkivet, 16 (Helsinki: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland), 13.

[67] Steel, *Risteäviä eroja*.

[68] Lahtinen, *Merimiehet Kotkassa*, 9, 18.

to one of the interviewed waitresses, sailors usually behaved better than locals.[69] One of the waitresses remembered one case from her 30-year career of a customer leaving without paying, and he was a local. At closing time though, waitresses had to be extra careful with billing. Sailors often ordered drinks just before last orders were called and many times were in a rush when the women they had been spending time with were about to leave the premises. For the interviewed waitresses, the most unpleasant memories were connected with the fights of couples, and two shootings, both with no serious injuries. However, in general they recalled that sailors were good customers because they gave large tips, and because the tips were the only income the waitresses received they made a significant difference to the money they could earn. It is of interest to note that the waitresses wrote two kinds of bills: sailors were only billed for what they had ordered, but locals got a bill with a 10 % tip written into it.[70] The oral testimony does reveal that the restaurant staff did not actually get to know the foreign sailors very well, however. Nonetheless, responding to individual nations' drinking habits was clearly an important concern for restaurant managers, who would read the list of 'arriving ships this week' in the local paper to plan the alcohol orders according to the habits of the incoming sailors.[71]

One respondent, waitress Liisa, believed that sailors or dockers did not get the understanding they deserved, and also recalled that Kotka townspeople were particularly afraid of foreign sailors. She noted that occasionally sailors did try to resolve their arguments in a fight, usually outdoors. According to Liisa, this was the only negative thing about sailors, and she noted that, overall, sailors were honest individuals. According to her, only rustic halfwits would steal from a pub.[72] The musicians also point out several times how honest and generous sailors were.[73] The musicians felt that sailors gave them more respect than the locals and it seems that in return the musicians wanted to cement the idea of a sailor being respectable and absolutely loyal to his colleagues. In the mental image, a decent sailor would lend his last money, cigarettes or even underpants to his friend.[74]

[69] KyM:A 1063:14.
[70] KyM:A 1063:15.
[71] KyM:A 1063:1.
[72] KyM:A 1063:1.
[73] KyM:A 1063:8.
[74] K. Weibust (1969) *Deep Sea Sailors. A Study on Maritime Ethnology*, (Nordiska museets handlingar 71. Stockholm: Nordiska museet), 189.

Ethnologists who have studied the sailing ship era have also written about the perception of sailors' honesty. As there was practically no private space on a windjammer, everyone knew everything that was going on in their workmates' lives and everyone depended on the others. A symbol of the trust was that the sailors' chests were kept unlocked. According to the research, it would have been a significant insult to lock one's chest and thereby suggest there was a dishonest person on board.[75] Liisa and the musicians seem to have agreed fully regarding the impression of the sailors' honesty and loyalty.

Nevertheless, the honesty of sailors was not a natural law. In 1955, apart from arrests due to drunkenness, Kotka police did investigations on seven crimes that were committed by a sailor. A Scottish sailor broke a shop window, stole a mannequin and the clothes it was wearing. A group of English sailors broke a payphone in a phone booth and stole some signs. A Turkish sailor stabbed a Finnish man's arm with a pocketknife 'during a fight over a woman'. Outside Kairo, a Danish sailor battered a woman and stole her watch. The sailor had treated her during the evening, but contrary to his expectations, the woman did not want to follow him back to his ship for the night. A drunken Swedish sailor made off with a taxi and caused a car crash with both cars ending up unusable.[76] The most serious crimes were committed by sailors from the Åland Islands: one shot a man who had come on board without asking permission. The intruder was seriously wounded. Another sailor beat his fellow worker to death.[77]

What is striking about the report is that it lists only offences committed by foreign sailors. It is not clear from the text if this was the only aim of the report.[78] It is, however, difficult to believe that Finnish sailors had not committed any crimes. Whatever the truth of the matter, the list indicates that Finns were not the only sailors caught in an inebriated and dishevelled state, even if the national self-image suggested otherwise.

[75] Weibust, *Deep Sea Sailors*, 191. Rosenström, *Fartyget*, 126.
[76] Lahtinen, *Merimiehet Kotkassa*, 19.
[77] Lahtinen, *Merimiehet Kotkassa*, 19.
[78] Sailors from the Åland Islands could have been counted as foreigners.

Seagulls and Wharf Angels[79]

Historian Juhani Saarinen has noted that to sailors Kotka looked like a small village but the townspeople welcomed them with open arms.[80] Sometimes this happened in a tangible way. In the middle of the 1950s, every year 10–20 women got married to a sailor. In 1956, the records of the local social workers revealed that 24 sailors (11 of them foreign nationals) were paying alimony for their children.[81] In his testimony, sailor Veikko recalls the first merchant vessel to dock at Kotka following the end of the Second World War. Only a week after its arrival, the first Kotka girl was engaged to an American sailor. According to Veikko, Americans were the most popular sailor community among local women.[82] Even if the narrative is an overstatement, it clearly demonstrates Veikko's will to point out the popularity of sailors from the USA.

The enthusiasm of some young women towards the sailor was of significant concern for bourgeois women's associations, and a special campaign was organized prior to the Helsinki Olympic Games of 1952 to counter their concerns. The campaign used 'ship girls' as specific warning examples. According to the campaign, idealizing everything 'with the import sign' could have disastrous consequences.[83] Relatively wealthy American sailors came from the right part of the globe and were an exception.[84] Usually though, sailors' sex lives were seen as exceptional and it could stigmatize both sailors and women who spent time with them. However, the image of the sailors' way with women was not actually as clear as the chastity campaign of 1952 implied.[85] Nonetheless, the Chamber of Commerce report shares the contempt of the campaign towards the issue when it categorizes people visiting the pub Kairo as 'the lower orders by their skin colour and behaviour'. The report describes the sailors as 'riff-raff of

[79] P. Baker and J. Stanley (2003) *Hello Sailor*! *The hidden history of gay life at sea*, (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited), 11.

[80] Saarinen, *Miljoonamöljä*, 230.

[81] Lahtinen, *Merimiehet Kotkassa*, 18.

[82] KyM:A 1063:9.

[83] M. Urponen (2010) *Ylirajaisia suhteita. Helsingin olympialaiset, Armi Kuusela ja ylikansallinen historia* (Helsinki, Helsingin Yliopisto, 140).

[84] On balls organized for US mariners and Finnish women and Finnish foreign policy, see Urponen *Ylirajaisia suhteita*, 144.

[85] Steel, *Risteäviä eroja*, 155–157.

the crew' and the women as 'worn out'.[86] The description is startlingly prejudiced. Sailors' testimony revealed the same thing in different words. According to the sailors' recollections, women who were too old to find a man in Fennia could find someone in Kairo. The report makes a distinction between women who wanted to date sailors and 'true ship girls', but does not give any further definitions. According to the report, the local police 'handled' 147 'ship girls' during 1955.[87] The testimony does not always make it clear when a woman was a sailor's girlfriend and when the woman was charging for her time and the intimacy. What it does reveal, however, is that some of the women lived on board with a certain sailor every time his ship was in the harbour. The testimony also reveals that women even did some of the sailors' household work on board.[88] Some of the interviewees recalled that the girls travelled on board in several Finnish ports.[89] Sailor Veikko, however, remembered that no extra passengers were allowed on board for safety reasons.[90]

In her study of the Helsinki vice squad in the 1950s, Margaretha Järvinen found that for a homeless woman spending the night on board a ship was a far better option than sleeping outdoors or in a stairway. She found that some of the women sought the ships because there was alcohol to be had, and some because they were interested in foreign men. According to Järvinen, for most of the arrested women 'going to ships' was just a short period in their lives.[91] For an outsider, it was not always easy to see the nature of a man and a woman getting together in the port. Some of the interviewees emphasized the respectability of sailors and the women they spent time with.[92] Indeed, sometimes they were already married. According to historian Hanna Hagmark-Cooper, a sailor's wife would often travel to meet her husband in a Finnish or a Nordic port.[93] In addition, sometimes the rest of the family and other relatives went to meet an uncle whose ship came to the port. In chil-

[86] Lahtinen, *Merimiehet Kotkassa*, 9.
[87] Lahtinen, *Merimiehet Kotkassa*, 19–20.
[88] KyM:A 1063:6.
[89] KyM:A 1063: 8.
[90] KyM:A 1063: 9.
[91] M. Järvinen (1990) *Prostitution i Helsingfors – en studie i kvinnokontroll*, (Turku: Åbo Akademis Förlag), 130–133.
[92] KyM:A 1063:9; MV:SMM A200803:7.
[93] H. Hagmark-Cooper (2008) *Avsked och återseende. Sjömanshustruns liv under 1900-talet*, (Helsinki: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland), 55.

dren's opinion, sailors were popular guests, not least because they usually gave children chewing gum, sweets or fruit. Kotka-born Anna-Leena Alivirta has written about her childhood memories and recalls that, as a girl, she sometimes got to visit ships with her father who worked in a forwarding agency. Anna-Leena remembered that while her father was negotiating with the ship's master, the steward served her pancakes and strawberry jam.[94] This is an example of how oral history can bring competing narratives alongside the foggy, murky and sinful images of port history in popular culture.

Conclusion

Close reading of the interviews and the Chamber of Commerce report reveal a kaleidoscopic picture of the harbour-side. The transnational interaction in the port town culture is an invitation to imagine harmonious, notorious or functional images depending on the motivations and ambitions of the interpreter. Just as Marika Rosenström has found that sailors constructed social dichotomies and negotiated this over and again, the harbour-side or the sailortown was a place of 'identity work' with activating and deactivating components of identity. The dichotomies of the identity negotiations were based on, for example, the understanding of the integrity or generosity of different groups. In this case, especially the sailors' alleged honesty broadens from an occupational identity factor to cover a local, 'sailortown identity'.

In the sources of this article, 'the other' is constructed in diverse and fluctuating ways. It is also important to note the role of the interviewer in this process. Asking about different nationalities can prompt the interviewee to think about ethnicity or national characteristics based on stereotypes, even if this kind of thinking was not relevant in their everyday practices. However, talking about nationalities reveals the internal hierarchies of the transnational interaction of the port town with more reverence towards sailors who benefited the local community or shared the cultural sphere of efficiency and order.

The report published by the Kotka Chamber of Commerce reflects the ambivalent thoughts of its writer, social policy researcher Alli Lahtinen,

[94] A-L. Alivirta, K. Hurtta, H. Kimpanpää, M. Liukkonen and K. Paananen (2007) 'Satama', in A-L. Alivirta and M. Liukkonen (eds), *Miä oon Kotkast. Muistoja 50-luvun Kotkasta*, (Helsinki: Minerva), p. 17.

'an outsider' at the harbour-side. On the one hand, Lahtinen wants to let the sailors' voices be heard and help improve their conditions. At the same time, however, she uses evaluative expressions that confirm and regenerate stereotypes. Strong articulations brim with disapproval of the drunken and impure pub-goers. In Finland, restaurants and their staff had a reputation until the 1980s.[95] Hence, the waitresses shared the sailors' and dock workers' feelings of being discriminated against. Twisting the kaleidoscope reveals the interdependence between the commercial interests of the port town and the commercial needs of the seafarers. Twist yet another notch and the bad reputation of the waterfront becomes a marketing gimmick for the pubs and 'the maritime town'.

The image of port towns as dubious melting pots is connected with more general ideas about how urban and rural environments were understood in the extended 1950s. For example, historian Panu Pulma has described the black-and-white thinking of the time. Towns and cities were depicted as sources of ruination and especially dangerous were port towns with the drunken sailors and their women. Smugglers and 'ship girls' were seen as representatives of transnational criminality that had nothing to do with the 'pure' inland provincial towns or the countryside.[96] 'The insiders' of the port-side community also used the dichotomy to their benefit, making a point of their toughness, challenging the small-mindedness of strict regulations and resisting the marginalization of working-class rules of conduct.

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[95] Sillanpää, *Säännöstelty Huvi*, 172, 174.

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PART II

Representations and Identities

CHAPTER 8

Ports and Pilferers: London's Late Georgian Era Docks as Settings for Evolving Material and Criminal Cultures

William M. Taylor

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This chapter begins with two accounts of a port community for nearly coincident periods. Both take their cue from the planned expansion and walled enclosure of London's docklands, developments initiated during the 1790s that continued into the nineteenth century. Both accounts demonstrate how the building of London's 'wet' docks were the adjunct of capitalist accumulation and urban catalyst for subsequent social and political change that continued long after they were completed. Wet docks were artificial basins, typically surrounded by high masonry walls and barred warehouses, into which ships were floated at high tide to permit the 'commodious', regulated, and secure conveyance of their cargoes

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and hence promote the efficient conduct of commerce generally.[1] One can question what these terms mean in a historical context. Building wet docks was an attractive, albeit contentious project for London's dockyard reformers, commercial shipping interests, and investors from the 1790s to 1815 when the first of the enclosed docks were proposed and completed, respectively. The wet docks attracted much interest among engineers at the time, although they did not necessarily function the ways they were intended, in a profitable and entirely secure fashion.[2] Once completed, they were a monolithic intrusion into the living space and lives of port-resident communities.

My choice and comparison of the following narratives to frame the chapter is more than simply a rhetorical move, the pair counterpoising 'fictional' and 'factual' accounts of the docks. Rather, my starting point is to suggest that both qualities (of fact and fiction) are present in the two narratives. The first account dramatises the complex character of the docks and is excerpted from historical fiction: Lloyd Shepherd's 2012 debut novel, *The English Monster*.[3] Shepherd's novel was written when its British author bears witness to his country's so-called postcolonial and postindustrial age, as 'factual' evidence of the horrors of imperialism and capitalism that regularly attracts academic interest. The second account appears in a style of historical writing exemplified by Joseph Broodbank's 1921 authoritative *History of the Port of London*.[4] Broodbank's *History* was published when London's docks were still commonly regarded by scholar and layperson alike as the beating heart of world trade, interpreted (invariably with copious statistics) as a glorious national achievement and entrepreneurial inspiration—both, in part, 'fictions' prompting historical forgetfulness.

Arguably, there is a literary effect to which both narratives and a range of genre contribute, entailed in the mixed characterisation of London's docklands as the setting of both commercial opportunity and endemic crime. This imaginative pretence, entailing the conjoining and typecasting of places, people, and criminal acts for dramatic interest and narrative context, has roots established before the docks were constructed and per-

[1] (1799) *Act for Rendering More Commodious and For Better Regulating the Port of London* (London: House of Commons), p. 1.

[2] See I.S. Greeves (1980) *London Docks, 1800–1980: A Civil Engineering History*, (London: T. Telford) and D. Smith (2001) *Engineering Heritage: London and the Thames Valley*, (London: Thomas Telford Ltd/(UK) Institution of Civil Engineers), pp. 93–106.

[3] See L. Shepherd (2012) *The English Monster*, (London: Simon & Schuster).

[4] J. Broodbank (1921) *History of the Port of London*, (London: Daniel O'Connor), 2 vols.

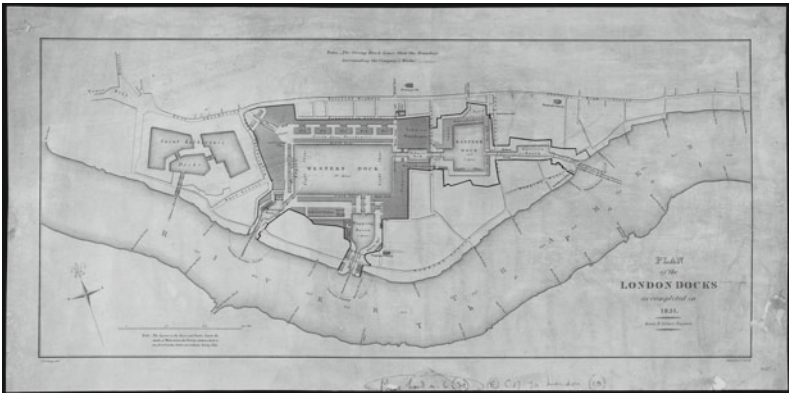
sists in contemporary storytelling and social history.[5] It underscores the evocative prose of the fiction writer and the inference of port historians who establish conventional wisdom by explaining the building of dock walls, quays, and warehouses as the practical response to the demands of escalating trade and a plague of thievery—or thus it was perceived. Contrary to this perception, the chapter seeks to show how mixed representations of the docks as places of opportunity and crime accompanied the imposition of a regime of power and knowledge in which managing the accumulation of wealth and controlling thieving behaviour were connected, partially or imperfectly perhaps, in urban discourse and politics to determine the course and control of the port's future.

Past, present, and future are manipulated for dramatic effect in Shepherd's novel. The narrative in *The English Monster* moves back and forth between historical moments and settings of Britain's colonial trade, principally between London's East End at the time of the Napoleonic war and the sugar plantations of seventeenth-century Jamaica, the scene of the island's brutal slaveholding society. Shepherd takes the notorious Ratcliffe Highway murders as inspiration, providing the reader with his own story of the bludgeoning deaths of seven residents of Wapping and Rotherhithe in 1811. The writer was far from the first to associate the area with sensual excess and pervasive criminality. Thomas de Quincy wrote a satirical essay in 1827 'On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts', which cast the Ratcliffe Highway murders as 'a performance' and the East End as the 'darker side of London'.[6]

Shepherd describes the dynamism, as well as the dereliction of the communities along the Thames, counterpoising their heterogeneous urban and social fabric with the newly constructed docks and rising economic power of London's port, its walls looming fortress-like above dark alleyways and dilapidated tenements (see Map 8.1). Rounding a corner onto Pennington Street while on a timely errand to buy oysters for her master's dinner, Margaret, servant to one of the victims, escapes the fictional killer's path, but suddenly encounters

[5] See P. Newland (2008). *The Cultural Construction of London's East End: Urban Iconography, Modernity and the Spatialisation of Englishness*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi), pp. 37–56; R. Porter (1998) *London: A Social History*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).

[6] T. De Quincy, 'On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 21 February 1827, 200–213, and Newland, *Cultural Construction of London's East End*, p. 45.



Map 8.1 Plan of the London Docks as completed in 1831. Henry Palmer (1831). Bodleian Library, Oxford. Barcode A18002111032. The Ratcliffe Highway is shown at the top of the plan. Pennington Street is parallel and one block south

> […] the dark, hulking presence of the dock wall, a prison-like expanse protecting the wealth within the new London Dock on the other side. The dock is as full as ever, and the tops of the tallest masts are visible over the top of the wall and the warehouses within. […] If you put your ear to the dock wall, you can hear the river. It is the bass note to all the other noises of the dock—the shouting men, the creaking timber, the splashes and the crashes and the thunder of barrels rolling down planks and into cellars. This is the counterpoint to the bass of the river: the music of trade.[7]

Rather than evocative prose extolling the 'music of trade' Broodbank relied on two volumes and over 500 pages to compose a scholarly paean to British commercial capitalism and its dockside performance. The construction of the London Dock and walled basins at Wapping, the Isle of Dogs, Rotherhithe, and other settings along the Thames was positioned within a 'presentist' narrative. This was a story in which the past largely prefigured the circumstances and terms of the present, including statistical terms, which support the apparent veracity of Broodbank's viewpoint relative to an otherwise more obviously 'literary' or 'fictional' genre. The narrative begins with the historian's references to the advantageous siting of ancient Roman and Saxon settlements along the river. It concludes

[7] Shepherd, *English Monster*, p. 15.

with speculation on the ever brighter future awaiting the port at the end of the First World War provided authorities can manage to control port side labour.[8] The expansion and enclosure of the docks is thus understood anachronistically, relative to London's obvious (in apparent and statistical terms) emergence by 1921 as a global, commercial powerhouse. At the same time, the wet docks are effectively dramatised as sites of urban, technological, economic, and managerial innovation.

Broodbank's *History* was acclaimed upon publication for its comprehensive account of the Port of London.[9] Resembling economic history in its description of the port's growth, the increase of its shipping, cargoes, and revenues, the book shared a commemorative and progressivist tone with other histories of the dock in which dock architecture was commonly interpreted as having functioned successfully, practically, and commercially. This chapter explores an alternative possibility, more or less reversing the historian's causal reasoning to challenge a storyline that now seems far too simple from a contemporary perspective more attuned to nuanced relations between 'the economy' and power. It proposes that the securitisation of London's docklands imposed a particular form and discipline on port commerce, introducing new monopolistic privileges while removing others, moves justified as promoting the common good. The chapter proceeds by describing the mixed representation of the docks as the setting for a dynamic material culture and social milieu. It then illustrates how port historians have mostly provided readers with a progressivist and functionalist account of the dock architecture, thereby encouraging forgetfulness of how its construction was an exercise of political power. Citing studies by Linebaugh and Taylor the chapter proposes that London's dockyard walls helped frame a 'moral economy' that shaped relations between labour and material wealth for a period when the age-old customary rights of port workers to a share of the material gains of trade were transformed into more recognisable forms of wage labour.[10]

[8] Broodbank, *History of the Port of London*, pp. 4–11 and 507.

[9] H. J. Robinson, 'The History of the Port of London', *The Contemporary Review*, 1 July 1922, p. 228; 'The History of the Port of London', *The Economist* (Issue 4122), 26 August 1922, 363.

[10] See P. Linebaugh (2003) *The London Hanged*: *Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century*, (London: Verso), and D. Taylor (1998) *Crime*, *Policing and Punishment in England*, *1750–1914*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan).

Criminal Wealth

The aesthetic treatment of London's Georgian docks in Shepherd's book is mirrored by additional works of contemporary popular fiction, film, and television that portray the city's East End docklands generally as conducive to crime. The docklands is represented across a range of genre as a world of fabulous commercial wealth and sensory excess, but also a potentially tyrannical and malevolent realm of rapacious trade and deviancy. These include mixed historical perspectives on the urban district, its late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century architecture rendered iconic, providing the *mise en scène* for certain types of narratives. On the one hand, there are historical sources, particularly from the Victorian era and published with increasing frequency toward the end of the nineteenth century, reporting with fascination on the vast accumulation of goods, capital, and power of labour filling the port's quaysides and warehouses. Consider the following characteristic description—from a mid-nineteenth century issue of *The Illustrated London News*, one of the earliest of these reports—of the West India docks near Blackwall. The development was completed in 1802 largely through the patronage and capital of Robert Mulligan, a wealthy merchant and shipowner with family interests in the Jamaica sugar plantations. The *London News* reporter observes:

> […] merchandise valued at twenty millions of [pounds] deposited on the wharfs, in the warehouses, and in the vaults below. The wealth of London lies not in her gaudy shops; beyond the Tower stand her great storehouses. A stranger who passes on the river, on his way to Greenwich or Gravesend, sees but little of these enormous treasuries—the tops of the tall masts alone point out their "whereabouts." These docks are surrounded by high, strong-built walls—so lofty, that it would be a puzzle to a most expert thief to scale them, on account of the finish of the coping; and if even this were accomplished, a greater difficulty would remain in getting over the bulky goods that are stored within.[11]

On the other hand (and as this report acknowledges), historical accounts spanning the Georgian and Victorian eras connect the meaning of dock walls to an imaginary topography of thievery. Though varying in the precise target or purpose of their moralising and degree of reformist

[11] T. Miller, 'Picturesque Sketches of London, Past and Present. Chapter VI – London Docks, Sailors, and Emigrants', *The Illustrated London News*, 29 July 1848, 54.

zeal, the accounts paint a landscape burdened by heterogeneous forms of crime. This terrain foregrounds the effort to reform dock architecture and establish a river constabulary to police it—the latter a parallel, roughly coincident and complementary reformist enterprise.

Patrick Colquhoun, in his 1800 *Treatise on the Commerce and Police of the River Thames* describes the 'Robberies and Felonies, and other evil and detestable acts' conducted along the Thames in his day. These were carried out by an underclass of a 'rude, ignorant and unskilful number' of watermen, ferrymen, and other characters, casually employed opportunists who conveyed paying passengers upon the river, whereby 'diverse persons have been robbed, and spoiled of their Goods, and also drowned.'[12]

Colquhoun brought reforming zeal and imagination to bear on the classification of thievery, drawing his readers' attention to the gallery of such rogues as 'mudlarks' who scoured the mud flats at low tide, ostensibly grubbing for nails and objects of little value, but in fact retrieving bags of sugar, coffee, and other produce stolen from cargoes and thrown overboard by shipboard accomplices. Readers were also introduced to the 'scuffle-hunters' who readily appeared dockside to offer their services as porters, but who came prepared with long aprons into which they secreted pilfered goods and quickly disappeared. In addition there were organised gangs of 'Light-' and 'Heavy Horsemen' who likewise devised devious means to pilfer quantities of traded produce and raw materials, both small and large.[13] The story of dockland thievery was further and more widely dramatised in the popular press for decades to come. Stories including a report in the *Penny Magazine*, notable for being published after the initial period of wet dock construction, described 'a system of pillage and depredation, which, though it was in full operation only 40 years ago, we at the present day can scarcely think credible.'[14]

Common to both sets of views—those fascinated with the treasures seeming to overspill the port's quaysides and secreted within its warehouses, in the first instance, and reports of wholesale larceny extracting its toll on the city's trade, in the second—was a complex and rapidly evolving material culture and social milieu. It was variously the subject of wonder and anxiety, aestheticised

[12] P. Colquhoun (1800) *Treatise on the Commerce and Police of the River Thames* (London: Joseph Mawman), pp. 420–21; see also J. Pudney (1975) *London's Docks*, (London: Thames and Hudson), pp. 14–21.

[13] Colquhoun, *Treatise*, pp. 39–81; see also P. Quennell (1950), *London's Underworld* [selections from works by Henry Mayhew], (London: William Kember).

[14] 'A Looking-Glass for London', *Penny Magazine of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge*, 1 July 1837, p. 252.

by means of visual and literary arts and captured for rational calculation by statisticians and reformers. The heterogeneity of this culture derived from a domain of miscellaneous goods, commonly available in substantial quantities; diverse modes of handling merchandise (or mishandling them as reformers believed); and unstable forms of agency (different actors and interests). These factors were all entailed in the reception, the storage and onward transportation, and the taxing of goods. There were also subjective aspects of this culture that require scrutiny, a parallel domain of behaviours and shifting values intervening on practical and material dimensions of commerce.

Images of commercial treasure and widespread larceny were routinely enlisted by port reformers. Though justified by their proponents as means of enhancing the former and inhibiting the latter, the transformation of London's port by means of constructing new docks on such a large scale was more clearly an exercise of political power by merchant cartels whose interests were advanced by government decree, firstly by parliamentary passage in 1799 of the 'Act for Rendering More Commodious and For Better Regulating the Port of London' (hereafter referred to as the 'Act'). The 'Act' provided legal authority or precedent for building several wet docks in succession. It also established the enclosed wet dock as the principal architectural model to be emulated in successive developments. The first was the West

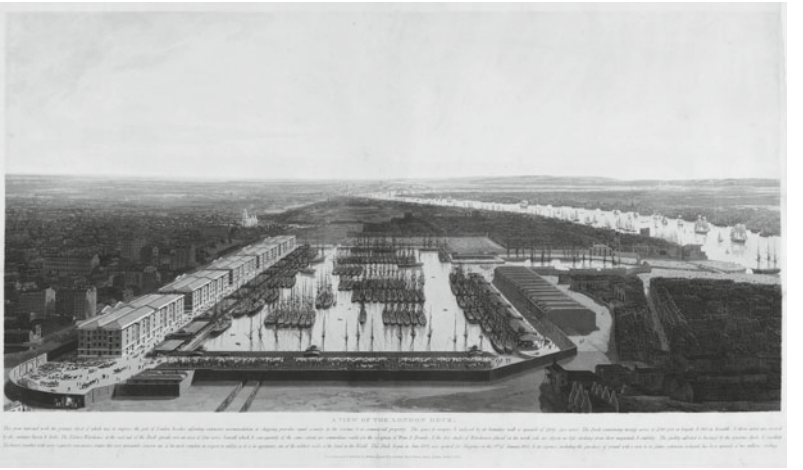


Illustration 8.1 A view of London Docks, 1808. Artist: Daniell. PLA Collection/Museum of London: Image no. 010414

India Dock on the Isle of Dogs (directly authorised by the 'Act' and first to be opened in 1802) followed by the East India Dock in Blackwall (largely completed in 1806) and the London Dock at Wapping (1815) (Illustration 8.1).

Reinforced by an act of Parliament and a large sum of investment capital the new enclosed docks appeared amidst the varied stakeholders in Britain's overseas trade, consolidating the powers of some, but further distinguishing between others and dispersing still more.[15] The number of stakeholders included shipowners and shipping agents, foreign and colonial producers of goods, municipal authorities, investors, as well as scores of lesser parties such as stevedores, carriers, and warehousemen. In other words, construction of the new dock basins and walls provided momentary architectonic clarity to mixed and competing agents engaged in waterborne trade. Construction also mostly replaced a complex mix of inherited monopolies and ad hoc practices governing the stowage, safekeeping, and delivery of cargoes, including privileges granted by means of so-called Legal quays, sufferance wharves, and licensed mooring chains anchored in the Thames.

There were other proposals and models for regulating port operations, their number and variety demonstrating a degree of fluidity prevailing with which the efficiency (or 'commodiousness' according to terms of the 'Act') and security of commerce were conceived at the time. These included alternatives to the model of the enclosed wet dock, some that obviated needs to compulsorily purchase and consolidate large numbers of private properties for dock construction, to excavate large mooring basins and enclose—more or less privatise—expanses of 'new' Thames water with locks, walls, and encircling warehouses. Some opponents of wet dock construction, for instance, argued that refinements merely needed to be made to arrangements in place before 1799, namely the existing system of quays, wharves, and mooring facilities and the monopolies they served.[16] One proposal and plan relied more or less on the maintenance of these same privileges though proposed a rearrangement of mooring facilities along the Thames with the construction of a system of jetties perpendicular to both river banks from London Bridge to Deptford.[17] Another plan called for widening the free quays near the medieval church of St Katharine's

[15] R. D. Brown (1978) *The Port of London*, (Lavenham, Suffolk: Terence Dalton), p. 52.

[16] See 'London Dock Bills', *Oracle and Daily Advertiser*, 16 February 1799.

[17] 'Mr Ogle's plan, for mooring vessels, in the River Thames, from London Bridge to Deptford, on an improved system.' (1796), Object ID G218:9/78, National Maritime Museum archives.

neighbouring the London Docks and building a vast warehouse parallel to the river, thus precluding the necessity of creating an artificial basin.[18] (A large section of the neighbourhood of St Katharine's, however, would have needed to be purchased and its housing razed.)

Period newspapers account for this arena of competing interests, rival plans, and contested riverine terrain; providing means whereby battle lines over the rights to trade and goods and, to some extent, to the Thames itself were drawn before the public eye. An editorial in *The Caledonian* impressed upon its readers the monumental scale of the wet docks being constructed on the Isle of Dogs, a scheme that, though 'originating in the spirit and enterprise of the merchants of London and calculated for their immediate advantage', honoured the British nation as a whole.[19] The magnitude of works spreading between Blackwall and Limehouse was likened to the building of ancient Carthage; the Scots engineer Rennie was portrayed as a modern Virgil whose vision for improving Edinburgh's harbour at Leith along similar lines promised a magnificent urban transformation equal to any found in antiquity.

Other period observers were less sanguine, including those who had foreseen the West India Dock Act would pose a significant threat to dockland communities. Fear was expressed for the well-being of thousands of families whose livelihoods depended on the monopolistic privileges shared by the Legal Quays and chartered warehouses. A related concern saw only 'poverty and ruin' dealt to local communities if centres of commercial activity were moved to new docks at Wapping and further east.[20] An appeal was made to improve existing quaysides before building new docks for fear that increased cartage distances between old and new centres increased transport costs for all. Conversely, groups of London merchants called for action, fearing losses to profit margins were Liverpool and Bristol to press ahead with dockland improvements in those port cities, before they were realised in the capital's port.[21]

[18] R. Walker (1799) *Plan for extending free quays at St. Catherine's Dock*, The National Archives, Kew, ref no. Work 38/377.

[19] 'London Wet Docks', *The Caledonian*, 15 September 1800.

[20] 'London Dock Bills'.

[21] See 'Wet Docks', *Oracle and Public Advertiser* (Issue 19) 9 February 1796.

Rationalising Trade

Conventional historical accounts of the Port of London, such as Broodbank's, commonly interpreted the planned expansion and enclosure of the docks as born of necessity, in ways arising from and contributing to the port's commercial success. The walled basins and fortified warehouses are portrayed as functioning to contain burgeoning trade while securing profits against widespread property crime. By adopting a largely functionalist perspective on dock architecture in this manner, the historians surveyed here were more or less complicit in the same power–knowledge relationships that propelled the ideal of 'commodious' and regulated trade to the top of the reformist agenda justifying the dock enclosures.

In his 1884 account W.C. Russell described how before the docks were built 'the whole business' of shipping along the Thames was 'full of pushing and confusion', which 'the water-thieves turned to good account' by plundering ships and shipowners of their cargoes, equipment, and stores.[22] Russell's comments were preceded by those of the Victorian moralist Samuel Smiles who devoted a chapter in volume two of his *Lives of the Engineers* (1862) to the dock and harbour works of John Rennie (1761–1821). Playing up the disorder along the river before Rennie's East and West India and London Docks were completed, Smiles cited Patrick Colquhoun's (1800) estimates of the resulting damage. He described how plunder from ships awaiting discharge of their cargoes was 'something extraordinary', taking its toll on foreign and coastal trade to the amount of £500,000 or more, annually. Smiles added:

> The lightermen, watermen, labourers, sailors, mates and sometimes captains, and often the officers of the revenue, were leagued together in a system of pilfering valuables from the ships while lying at anchor in the river, or from the barges into which the goods had been transferred. Mr. Colquhoun stated the number of pilferers and thieves to amount to 10,850; and the number of receivers to 550.[23]

Given the hundreds of vessels at a time that competed for moorings in the Thames for much of the eighteenth century, Herbert found

[22] W.C. Russell (1884) *English Channel Ports and the Estate of the East and West India Dock Co.*, (London: Sampson, Low Marston, Searle and Rivington), p. 67.

[23] S. Smiles (1862) *Lives of the Engineers*, *vol. 2 Harbours*, *Lighthouses and Brides*, (London: John Murray), p. 352.

it 'amazing' that ship captains managed to navigate in such congested waters at all, while riverside gangs 'carried out their villainy, with unparalleled brazenness and audacity'.[24] This was the state of play in the port until the beginning of the nineteenth century according to Herbert who improved upon Colquhoun's estimate and figured 'the net result of all the depredations was an average annual loss of £800,000 by the Public Revenue and London Merchants, which passed into the pockets of the Light Horsemen and their colleagues.'[25] Brown concluded that shipping congestion and crime brought the port to 'the edge of chaos' while the campaign for reform was led by William Vaughan, 'a man of exceptional imagination, energy and determination' who published a series of tracts on the subject beginning with the first in 1793.[26]

Ball and Sunderland provide additional figures showing that Vaughan, Colquhoun, and Rennie may have indeed been 'men of the hour' owing to their responsiveness to port conditions prior to 1800 that were 'notoriously inefficient' and where 'stealing was rife' (despite the establishment of Colquhoun's river police, the historians observed).[27] Often obscured by such dramatic language describing scandalous conditions on the Thames and the visionary character of Vaughan and the other reformers, there is evidence nonetheless the new docks did not 'function' entirely as they were intended. Ball and Sunderland describe how the new docks failed to prosper after their initial years so that dock company monopolies were not renewed. New inefficiencies resulting from the oversupply of enclosed moorings arising from dock construction and additional factors, including the introduction of novel technologies such as steamships and railways that impacted on shipping patterns nationally, threatened profits further.[28]

The preceding survey of the literature shows that Port of London historians have commonly sung from the same choir book when praising the enclosed docks and warehouses for their practicality and innovation.

[24] J. Herbert (1947) *The Port of London*, (London: Collins), pp. 14–15.

[25] Herbert, *Port of London*, p. 16.

[26] R. D. Brown (1978) *The Port of London*, (Lavenham, Suffolk: Terence Dalton), p. 51. For more on Vaughan see W. Vaughan (1793) *On Wet Docks, Quays, and Warehouses for the Port of London; with hints respecting Trade*, (London), and W. Vaughan (1839) *Memoir of William Vaughan, Esq. F.R.S. with Miscellaneous Pieces Relative to Docks, Commerce, Etc.* (London: Smith, Elder).

[27] M. Ball, and D. Sunderland (2002) *Economic History of London, 1800–1914*, (Hoboken NJ: Taylor and Francis), p. 219.

[28] Ball and Sunderland, *Economic History of London*, pp. 220–22.

Moreover, their thinking has also been based on a conventional, but narrow conception of deviancy, particularly 'thievery' and its forms. These are, collectively, largely construed as a fact of life, social in origin and conduct perhaps, though mostly immutable and bifurcated. It was behaviour encouraged by criminal opportunities provided by London's accumulating wealth and shipping's material culture, on the one hand, but also frustrated by the prudent planning and building of walled docks, the establishment of docklands constabularies, and by additional means of control characteristic of what Foucault came to analyse as a 'disciplinary' society, on the other.[29] The prospects that the West and East India, London, and other docks were at least partly, perhaps indirectly, responsible for encouraging crime rates to increase by providing their measure and by causing certain crimes of property in particular to evolve and flourish is not part of the historian's view of the past and conceptual luggage. Colquhoun had alerted readers to the first possibility:

> It has been argued speciously, that Docks will supersede the necessity of a Police; but reasons equally conclusive may be offered why those Establishments will increase that necessity. Men inured to a course of Crimes, are not be made honest by increasing the conveniences for shipping and discharging Cargoes, whatever these accommodations may be. The more closely they are connected, and the smaller the bounds in which a multitude of labouring People are collected, the greater [the] danger.[30]

Perceptions of the extent and gravity of theft and pilfering by the time dock construction began were possibly exaggerated by port reformers who shared common interests with a vocal and influential class of merchants. (Colquhoun, incidentally, was a merchant and an agent for the West India Merchant's Committee as well as a magistrate.) One opponent of police reforms (being a self-acknowledged 'Citizen of London: But No Magistrate') wrote anonymously that crime was inevitable in so great and prosperous a city as London and must be viewed in context leading him to warn that 'Abstracted speculations are dangerous, as they tend to produce innovations which are not merely useless, but which may prove pernicious

[29] M. Foucault (1979), *Discipline and Punish*: *The Birth of the Prison*, trans. from the French by Alan Sheridan (Harmondsworth: Penguin), pp. 135–230.

[30] Colquhoun, *Treatise*, p. 261.

to the public body, and be particularly grievous to individuals.'[31] A parallel warning was delivered by opponents of the enclosed docks who believed their completion would lead to the removal of commerce (and not necessarily its increase for the benefit of all parties) from areas where it was traditionally conducted.[32]

Emsley observed that conventional police history was prone to take period reports of rampant criminal conduct at face value, despite government crime statistics being available only from 1805 to prove any likely trend.[33] It may also have been the case that period reporting and popular literature tended to sensationalise the menace posed by London's criminal classes. Allowing for self-interest, sensationalised reporting, and additional possibilities, an 'apparent crime wave' like the one Harris describes appearing in the 1780s established criminal conduct as a social menace in the minds of many.[34]

Pilfering and the Moral Economy of the Docks

The growth of London's docklands clearly manifests a dynamic economic condition, although an additional equation comes into the picture. This accounts for a range of social and subjective factors leading to the construction of the enclosed docks, including a crime wave that appears in part fictional, contributing to the 'almost hysterical concern' over thievery that has become part of East End heritage.[35] At stake is a moral economy in which the judicious handling of goods in certain ways, including the storage and preservation of ship cargoes from pilfering and depreciation, becomes desirable for making sense (however partially or imperfectly) of the novel circumstances and vagaries of imperialism and attendant process of industrialisation, urbanisation, and capital accumulation. The economy raises questions of an ethical or even existential order these circumstances may have posed.

[31] *Observations on a Late Publication Intituled* [*sic*] *A Treatise on the Police of the Metropolis by P. Colquhoun*, *Esq.* (London: H. D. Symonds) no date, p. iv.

[32] 'London Dock Bills'.

[33] C. Emsley (1991) *The English Police*: *A Political and Social History*, (London: Longman), pp. 15–16.

[34] See A.T. Harris (2004) *Policing the City*: *Crime and Legal Authority in London*, *1780–1840*, (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press), pp. 38–39.

[35] 'The West India Docks', *Survey of London*. *Volumes 43 and 44*: *Poplar*, *Blackwall and Isle of Dogs*, (London: London County Council) 1994, pp. 247–248.

Linebaugh's portrayal of crime and capitalism in *The London Hanged* provides an opening to explore this possibility, inviting comparison between circumstances leading to the reform of Britain's penal system over the course of several decades from the late eighteenth century and factors relating to the enclosure of London's docks for more or less the same period. As its title suggests, Linebaugh's book is principally concerned with historical and social contexts for corporal punishment. It repositions the spectacle of public hanging in the eighteenth century metropolis from its customary position in histories of crime as a means of punishing malefactors broadly speaking to highlight hanging's specific role in demonstrating the inviolability of private property by the punishments visited upon thieves in various incarnations (house burglars, shoplifters, pickpockets, pilferers, and others). Period reports of criminal behaviour and statistical accounts of punishments administered for seemingly minor infractions of the law (brutal sentences for stealing loaves of bread have acquired near mythological status in the popular imagination of historical crime) are recast as evidence of shifting relations between forms of labour and material wealth.

Linebaugh accounts for the problematic and criminalisation of 'customary rights' that were long a feature of working life in port and docklands communities. These were allowed for dock workers who routinely gleaned quantities of coal, sugar, or tobacco spilled from cargoes, who pocketed these and other commodities from warehouses for personal consumption, or who sold them along with material scraps leftover from docklands manufacturing (metal scrapings from watchmaking, remnant fabric from clothes making, wood from furniture production, and other products) to supplement meagre piece wages. Linebaugh observes:

> The data of the misappropriated things of the workplace strike us for the variety of materials: coal, beaver, fur, timber, silk, sugar, pins and needles, pewter, tedges, tobacco, calico, coffee, indigo, cochineal, lead type, beer, tea, planes, saws, silver and gold. The struggles over the material circuits of production of the previous decades became subject to a judicial onslaught in the 1790s.[36]

Taylor sees the crux of the problem and criminalisation of customary rights as one of clashing values accompanying industrialisation:

[36] Linebaugh, *The London Hanged*, p. 404.

> There is a category of more contentious theft which were the subject of dispute, particularly in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. These cover a range of activities including some forms of poaching, the taking of firewood, coal, raw materials and manufactured goods and of tools. These activities stemmed from a clash of value that was particularly acute during the early phases of the 'Industrial Revolution' and which gave rise to a popular perception that rightful 'perks' were being denied and that customary rights were being criminalized. Nowhere is the social construction of crime more easily seen than in this contested area of occupational or industrial larceny.[37]

Mindful of insights from these two studies one can compare the operation of Bentham's model penitentiary, the panopticon, and the enclosed Georgian docks. Whereas the former has been interpreted as replacing the spectacle of the gallows with an exacting architecture of observation and moral correction, with machinery for 'grinding rogues honest' as Bentham famously claimed, the enclosed docks imposed on workers a corresponding regime of surveillance and reform.[38] Containment was the key architectural principle of the walled docks. Gates and other practical openings were points of vulnerability to theft and therefore required continuous scrutiny of passing goods and people (see Illustrations 8.2 and 8.3). The entrance gate to the West Indies Dock was equipped with two guardhouses and detachments of government troops who sounded a bell at regular intervals provided all was well.[39] Reminiscent of the panopticon, discipline was not only a matter of solid masonry, strategic positions, and establishing lines of vision. The management of dock workers also required control of their working day, round-the-clock policing, and even special clothing to frustrate pilfering and smuggling. These controls coincided with the dock companies' breaking up of labour monopolies enjoyed by brotherhoods of porters resulting in worker casualisation.[40]

According to the Museum of London catalogue item description, the protective enclosures, which contributed to the extended network of surveillance and policing within and surrounding the dock walls, served at different times as 'arsenals, guardhouses and prisons'.

[37] Taylor, *Crime, Policing and Punishment*, p. 41.

[38] See Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, pp. 195–230, and J. Semple (1993) *Bentham's Prison: A Study of the Panopticon Penitentiary*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press), p. 192.

[39] Brown, *Port of London*, p. 56.

[40] Ball and Sunderland, *Economic History of London*, pp. 223–6.

Colquhoun's newly found river police were complemented by specially formed squads of 'lumpers', labourers responsible for loading and unloading cargoes, who were subject to a strict working regime. Regulations required their working day to begin at six in the morning and continue until six at night in summer and from sunrise to sunset in winter. Lumpers were prevented from leaving the ships during working hours; their meal times and periods were determined in advance. They were allowed to wear 'only Stockings and Breeches—No Frocks, Trowsers [sic], Hemmies, Pouches, or Bags' were allowed. Finally, on quitting the vessels and dock premises each worker was searched by the police constables to ensure nothing was taken away.[41] As Harriot, a lieutenant in the river police, wrote: 'It was a labour not unworthy of Hercules, and we succeeded, by our joint efforts, in bringing into reasonable order some thousands of men, who had long considered plunder a privilege.'[42] The result of this quasi-carceral regime was that shipborne commerce was disciplined along certain lines in concert with the lives of labourers involved in transport, haulage, and warehousing activities. It was this discipline that arose along with the walls of the city's enclosed docks to secure Linebaugh's 'circuits of production'.

Regarding the reformist impulse that encouraged all manner of 'abstracted speculations' and innovations in dock and prison architecture and policing, Bentham's panopticon was an ideal machine; its system of incarceration, surveillance, and correction was incapable of realisation—owing to its origins in utopianism—and thus unable to entirely reform society's deviant or 'rogue' members. Equally, the enclosed docks are better understood as shifting the terms of deviancy rather than interrogated as succeeding or failing, wholly or partly, to eliminate fears for 'robberies and Felonies, and other evil and detestable acts to the great annoyance of the Commonwealth' by impeding commerce.[43] The construction of the docks nonetheless impacted on commercial and labour practices, contributing to new modes of reasoning about the orderly movement of goods from ship to shore and from warehouses to consumers. Moreover, the docks changed the understanding and character of property crime as some forms of dockside thievery became more difficult to conduct while others were invented or encouraged (fraud and more sophisticated forms of excise tax evasion, for example).

[41] Colquhoun, *Treatise*, p. 584.
[42] J. Harriot (1807) *Struggles Through Life* […], (London: J Hatchard), p. 337.
[43] Colquhoun, *Treatise*, p. 420.

Illustration 8.2 (*Left*). Linney AG. West India Dock, entrance to dock and ship over gateway. Sept. 1927. Museum of London: ID no. 2012.28/360

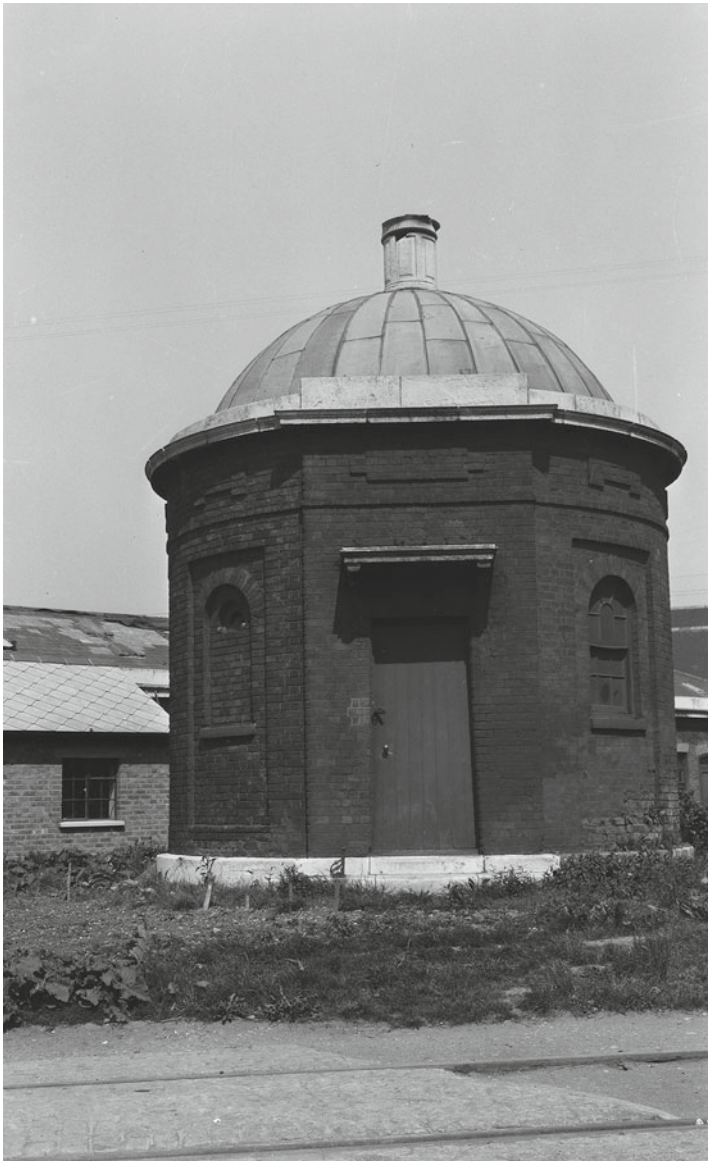


Illustration 8.3 (*Right*). Linney AG. West India Docks: The North Round House at the West India Dock Road [undated]. Museum of London: ID no. 2012.28/459

Conclusion

By the end of Shepard's novel it becomes apparent that the 'English monster' of the book's title is not necessarily the unknown assailant under investigation by John Harriott (the 'real life' lieutenant and associate of Colquhoun in the river police). Rather, the beast is Britain's commercial empire and its adjuncts: colonialism, industrialisation, and urbanisation. The new enclosed docks that characterised this period of London's growth provide an instrumental and symbolic measure of Britain's exploitative commercial adventures overseas and their multiple impacts on port and dockland communities at home.

As one conceivable outcome of those impacts, the attempt to criminalise customary rights to spillage and material remains leftover from shipping and warehousing activities enjoyed by London's port and dockland communities speaks to the fluidity and social construction of crime. (One generation's entitlement is another one's crime.) Moreover,

Map 8.2 St Katharine's Docks. Plan of proposed docks, designed by Thomas Telford, engineer, Philip Hardwick, architect. The National Archives, Kew; 1825: Reference No. Work 31/212. *Shaded area* and *adjacent areas* shows extent of existing housing and buildings requiring demolition

the scale of construction of the Georgian docks highlights the extent of manifest power needed to 'regulate' commerce and secure the inviolability of private property. Completion of the St Katharine's (also spelled Catherine's) Dock scheme (1824) neighbouring the London Docks, for instance, provides a glimpse of a bigger picture of progress, social division, and class alienation. While developments farther east were mostly uninhabited, to clear the ground for St Katharine's and build a basin to accommodate 1400 merchant ships annually, 1250 houses were bought and pulled down, including the hospital, church, and its graveyard.[44] An estimated 11,300 residents were obliged to find accommodation elsewhere (see Map 8.2). Broodbank accounted for objections to the scheme while justifying the destruction as a measure of progress:

> The sentimental interest of the public in the St. Katharine Hospital was employed for all it was worth by the opponents of the new dock scheme, and the journals of the day with copious quantities of tracts, were used for the purposes of propaganda against the dock scheme in a way that suggest an intelligent anticipation of the modern machinery of agitation by vested interests […] If the promoters of the new [dock] company were to be condemned for the destruction of an historical edifice, they were entitled to claim that their operations also involved the disappearance of the most insanitary and unsalutary dwellings in London.[45]

A resident of the precinct, correspondent to *The Gentleman's Magazine,* and presumably a person of means, foreshadowed the historian's assessment, telling readers of the popular journal he was happy to leave the neighbourhood, owing to the 'sinks of infamy, and abominations of almost every description' there. St Katharine's had been a place of temporary residence for 'rogues and vagabonds' and 'dealers in marine stores' (pilfered goods) who resided in the vicinity, a 'species of traffic in which the title to property is not usually enquired into.'[46] Arguably, proponents of the scheme such as the correspondent relied not only on appeals to the dock's likely positive contribution to national prosperity to sway public opinion in its favour, but also what had, by then, become a recognised caricature of the locale and its thieving residents.

[44] 'St. Katharine's Docks', *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle*, 2 January 1826, 8–10.

[45] Broodbank, *History of the Port of London*, pp. 153–54.

[46] 'St. Katharine's Docks', p. 10.

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CHAPTER 9

From Jolly Sailor to Proletarian Jack: The Remaking of Sailortown and the Merchant Seafarer in Victorian London

Brad Beaven

> *'Jack' is 'alive,' to my knowledge and experience … he shows special and vigorous symptoms of vitality in Ratcliffe Highway. If it interests you at all to see him alive, and to see how he lives, we will explore, for some half-hour or so, this very muddy, tarry, salt-water-smelling portion of the metropolis.*
> *Household Words, 6 December 1851, 254.*

In the 1890s, Karl Baedeker published his London travellers' guidebook, which provided visitors with directions to and descriptions of the capital's historic landmarks. Among the famous monuments, theatres, and churches, Baedeker listed the 'notorious Ratcliffe Highway' and London docks where a 'motley crowd' with 'numerous dusky visages and foreign costumes impart a curious and picturesque air'.[1] The tourist guides' inclusion of sailortown reflected a popular fascination with Ratcliffe Highway, which

[1] K. Baedeker (1902), *London and its Environs*, (Leipsic: Baedeker Publishing), p. 169.

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was to reach its zenith toward the late nineteenth century. Although officially renamed St George Street East, in the 1850s, Ratcliffe Highway remained in common parlance and had been the principal thoroughfare through sailortown since the 1830s. The chapter will examine the shift of sailortown from the water's edge of Wapping High Street to the more inland Ratcliffe Highway during the early nineteenth century. The relocation of sailortown from the water's edge coincided with the introduction of steamships from the 1850s. This technological breakthrough brought significant change to the seafaring profession as the steady increase of the new 'steam' sailor came at the expense of the traditional sailing mariner. While Victorians looked favourably upon the 'genuine' eighteenth-century sailor of Wapping, the steam sailor of Ratcliffe Highway was dismissed as a member of the urban proletariat who had inherited little in the way of maritime spirit or skill. It will be argued that the Victorian writers' demonisation of Ratcliffe Highway served as a metaphor for wider anxieties of industrial and urban change. As the nineteenth century progressed, such fears cast Ratcliffe Highway not only as a place of maritime otherness, but a modern, urban space that exuded menacing threats to the stability of class and gender relations.

Sailortowns were the districts of merchant and naval ports where sailors visited, often lived, and were entertained. It was a distinct area characterised by its public houses, brothels, and low entertainment that employed significant numbers of working people. Stan Hugill, a former sailor, noted that 'Sailortown was a world in, but not of, that of the landsman. It was a world of sordid pleasure, unlimited vice, and lashings of booze, but a dangerous place too'.[2] Indeed, Cicely Fox Smith went as far as to write that Ratcliffe Highway was 'the toughest street in the world'.[3] Sailortowns and their cultural representation remain a much underdeveloped theme in urban and maritime history. Historians have traditionally focussed on the development of merchant ports to illustrate wider histories of international trade and imperial networks. However, the significant breadth of literature on merchant ports has provided the context to the few studies that have focussed on seafarers in sailortowns. Historians such as Judith Fingard and Valerie Burton have focussed on the role of sailortown in supplying labour in global trade networks. Taking the North Atlantic ports of Quebec, Saint John, and Halifax as case studies, Fingard explored how

[2] S. Hugill (1967), *Sailortown*, (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul), p. xviii.
[3] C. Fox Smith (1923), *Sailor Town Days* (London, Methuen & Co), p. 27.

the merchant sailors' rhythm of work and play were shaped by the international market in seafaring labour that had emerged in the mid-nineteenth century.[4] Similarly, Burton investigated sailortown through contextualising it within changing economies and industrial relations. She explained how, during the nineteenth century, merchant ports became an important centre of industrial disciplining and labour reorganisation as the British Empire expanded and commercial interests grew overseas. Burton noted that for the transient sailor and casually employed dockyard worker, the ideals of the liberal classical economy, with its associated values of individualism, prudence, and respectability, had little to commend it. Thus, the commercial activities of lodging houses, crimps, and brothels, while on the margins of legitimate trade, 'were important in the circulation of the products of capital'.[5] However, while acknowledging Burton and Judith Fingard's pioneering work on sailortown, Robert Lee has recently noted that seafarers and their urban world have seldom been placed 'within an appropriate cultural, familial or social context'.[6] Indeed, the nineteenth-century social explorers' representations of sailors and sailortowns have rarely been contextualised within wider contemporary anxieties over industrial change and modern urban development.[7]

The Remaking of London's Sailortown

In his book *East London*, the Victorian author Walter Besant described the area as a collection of 'new towns crammed with people'.[8] What struck him most, however, was the importance of the sea, which profoundly influenced the character of the area. He noted that the districts of Wapping and Shadwell were 'populated by sailors, belonged to sailors, and those who make their livelihood out of sailors'. In essence, Besant

[4] J. Fingard (1982), *Jack in Port: Sailortowns of Eastern Canada* (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press), p. 3.

[5] V. Burton (2001), 'Boundaries and Identities in the Nineteenth Century English Port: Sailortown Narratives and Urban Space', in S. Gunn and R.J. Morris (eds.), *Identities in Space. Contested Terrains in the Western City since 1850* (Aldershot: Ashgate), p. 137.

[6] R. Lee (2013), 'The Seafarers' Urban World: A critical review', *International Journal of Maritime History*, 25:23, 7.

[7] For a seminal text on sexual and social politics of nineteenth century social investigation, see S. Koven (2004), *Slumming. Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton, Princeton University Press).

[8] W. Besant (1903), *East London* (London, Chatto & Windus), p. 41.

had described the microeconomy that serviced seafarers' activities on land. However, he also went on to suggest that a rather different culture from the rest of the metropolis had evolved in these districts due to its maritime influences. He noted that

> Its riverside is cut up with docks; in and about among the houses and the streets around the docks rise forests of masts; there is no seaport in the country, not even Portsmouth, which is charged and laden with the atmosphere of ocean and the suggestion of things far off as this port of London and its riverside.[9]

This fusion between urban and maritime living gave the district an 'otherness' that flouted conventional moral and civic norms that had been recorded by observers in the late eighteenth century. For example, the magistrate John Fielding noted of Wapping that 'a man would be apt to suspect himself in another country. Their [the sailors] manner of living, speaking, acting, dressing and behaving are so peculiar to themselves'.[10] Both Fielding and Besant, though writing over 100 years apart, were describing a long-held view of London's sailortown. While the sense of 'otherness' continued to prevail in sailortown, the authorities' toleration of a land-based seafaring culture began to wane under the Victorian moral gaze.[11] Furthermore, underlying anxieties about urban degeneration, class and gender, and the rise of the cheap sensational press ensured that London's Ratcliffe Highway became one of the most notorious streets in Britain by the close of the nineteenth century.[12]

London had been Britain's largest port since Roman times. During the early modern period, London's port exported over 80 % of Britain's textile goods and imported 70 % of the nation's wine. While London lost trade to the west coast ports of Liverpool and Bristol during the eighteenth century, the port remained dominant in the North Sea trade.[13] It was in

[9] Besant, *East London*, p. 41.

[10] Quoted in J. Marriott, (2011), *Beyond the Tower: A History of East London* (New Haven: Yale), p. 84.

[11] B. Beaven (2016), 'The Resilience of Sailortown Culture in English Naval Ports, c.1820–1900', *Urban History*, 43:1, 72–95. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0963926815000140.

[12] L. Brake and M. Demoor (2009, eds.), *The Lure of Illustration in the Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave).

[13] L. Schwarz, 'London and the Sea', http://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/Sea/articles/schwarz.html (accessed 6 February, 2014).

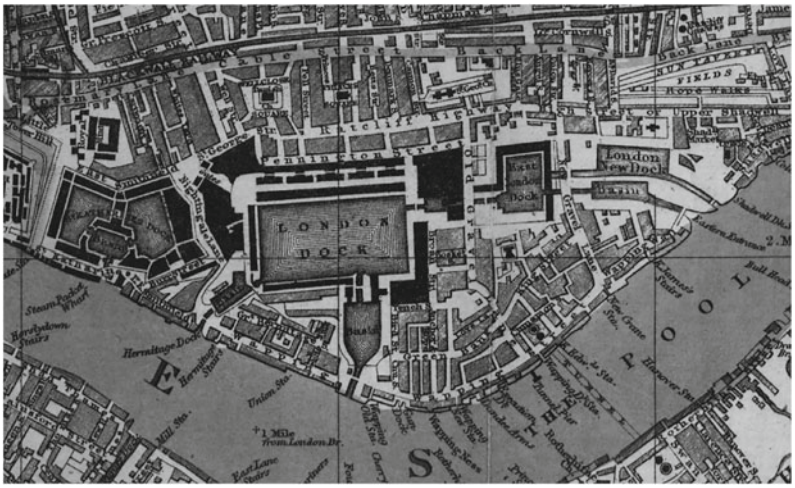
this period that the districts of Wapping and Ratcliffe became the focal point for sailortown and where maritime traditions and living patterns became culturally embedded.[14] As Leonard Schwarz has argued, 'the port had its own social structure and its own pattern of life', as 'until the advent of steam from about the middle of the nineteenth century, the pulse of the port beat to the trade winds and to foreign harvests'.[15] For example, while there was constant marine traffic throughout the year, the arrival of the American ships in the spring and autumn triggered intensive periods of activity. Moreover, the truly international character of the port meant that London's sailor population was continually changing with seafarers lodging temporarily in the many boarding houses located in the Wapping area. By the mid-eighteenth century, Wapping High Street had become the unrivalled centre of sailortown as, due to its close proximity to the water's edge, a microeconomy of boarding houses, public houses, brothels, sailmakers, and general marine trades had developed in the area. However, in the nineteenth century Britain's imperial expansion and the development of larger ships merited the construction of London Docks situated to the north and west of Wapping High Street. The High Street was severely affected by the new docks as housing was demolished to accommodate new and imposing blocks of warehousing. The High Street was penned-in between the new docks and warehouses and ceased to function as London's principal sailortown district. The newly constructed Western and Eastern docks occupied approximately 30 acres of land and lay close to Ratcliffe Highway, which ran through the three parishes of St George's, Wapping, and Shadwell.[16] The docks had a gravitational pull for sailors and those who catered for them, and by the 1830s, Ratcliffe Highway had become firmly established as London' sailortown (see Map 9.1).

An analysis of the 1891 census of sailors residing in the Ratcliffe Highway district confirms the relocation of sailortown and provides an insight into their living patterns, nationality, and the transient nature of their lives. From the 635 sailors that were residing in the district of St Georges and Ratcliffe, 59 % were British, 30 % foreign, and 11 % were registered as of unknown origin. Significantly, 45 % of sailors were boarding

[14] D. Morris and K. Cozens (2014), *London's Sailortown 1600–1800. A Social History of Shadwell and Ratcliff, an Early-Modern London Riverside Suburb* (London: East End History Society).

[15] Schwarz, 'London and the Sea', (accessed 6 February, 2014).

[16] Hugill, *Sailortown*, p. 114.



Map 9.1 Smith's new map of London, 1860, courtesy of the Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division. The London Docks, built in the early nineteenth century, effectively killed off Wapping's sailortown. By the 1850s, sailors ashore made for the boarding houses and entertainment venues of Ratcliffe Highway, which was the main thoroughfare north of the docks.

in temporary lodgings, 40 % were living with family, 13 % in a sailor's rest or workhouse, and 2 % were living alone. Moreover, of the 202 sailors living on Ratcliffe Highway itself, 188 were listed as temporary lodgers and the majority of these men were foreign seamen. Indeed, the seafarers who were listed as living with partners or family were generally English and resided in a few streets north or south of Ratcliffe Highway. In addition, enumerators captured a further 210 sailors on ships docked in the district who would inevitably head for Ratcliffe Highway when they stepped ashore. The majority of these sailors were from Scandinavia and Germany. In effect, London's sailortown radiated out from its core of Ratcliffe Highway, where a concentration of foreign sailors temporarily resided or visited when ashore. In just a half-mile stretch, Ratcliffe Highway hosted at least 27 public houses, 15 of which were licensed for music and dancing.[17] Interspersed between these licensed premises were the numerous beer and gin shops and 'low' drinking dens. Public houses such as the

[17] Hugill, *Sailortown*, p. 115.

Prussian Eagle, Paddy's Goose, and the Jolly Sailor had fearsome reputations.[18] As did Wilton's Music Hall that stood on the corner of Ratcliffe Highway. Here the proprietor had built 'a special gallery for sailors and their women'.[19] For social investigators of the late nineteenth century, then, London's sailortown was alive with transient foreign sailors, low drinking dens, and brothels. However, in failing to explore the streets to the north and south of Ratcliffe Highway, the social commentators overlooked the more stable sailor communities. Indeed, these sailor communities did not fit easily with the dominant narrative of fear and degeneration that had begun to characterise Ratcliffe Highway and the wider neighbourhood. The Highway became a 'celebrated' den of iniquity that cast sailors as both victims of 'land sharks' and immoral spendthrifts.[20] The sensational stories of a depraved Ratcliffe Highway overrun by violent foreign sailors fed into wider narratives on the relationship between the merchant sailor, industrial change, and urbanisation during the nineteenth century. Contemporaries perceived that sailortown's relocation from the water's edge of Wapping High Street to the more inland Ratflcliffe Highway, embodied the transition of the merchant sailor from skilled sailing seafarer to the steam sailor proletariat. It is this supposed transition that we shall now turn to.

The Remaking of the Merchant Sailor

In 1903, Charles Booth considered seamen ashore to be a sufficiently large enough body of workers to be included in his study on the life and labour of London's poor. In describing the changes in their occupation and traditions, Booth portrayed a declining English workforce who, at the same time, had benefited from parliamentary and philanthropic intervention to improve their material conditions and morality.[21] In short, the carefree jolly sailor, who was skilled in the art of sailing ships but subject to the temptations ashore, had been replaced by the more proletarian Jack of the steam age who made use of the seaman rests and trades organisations that

[18] F.W. Robinson, 'A night in the Highway', *Belgravia*: *a London Magazine*, 28, 151, 1879.

[19] Hugill, *Sailortown*, p. 118.

[20] See, for example, an account of the Ratcliffe murders in 1811 in J. Flanders (2011), *The Invention of Murder* (London: Harper Press), p. 1.

[21] C. Booth (1896), *Life and Labour of the People of London*, vol VII (London: Macmillan), p. 359.

modern urban life afforded. Of the old sailing seafarer Booth noted that 'his free and open disposition, appeal strongly to the sentimental side of human nature, and consequently "poor Jack" is a people's idol'.[22] Booth was content to draw from popular stereotypes of Jack Tar, suggesting that he was 'childlike in his guileless simplicity' and that his 'helplessness' was taken advantage of while ashore by '"land sharks"—crimps and loose women'. These seafarers of sail who enveloped Wapping High Street when ashore in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were sailors who were shunned by 'callous legislators' because the seafarer 'rarely has a vote to give'.[23] Booth was tapping into a popular memory of the traditional sailor that had begun with the transition to steam in the mid-nineteenth century. Frank Bullen, a merchant seaman, remembered the bo'sun, the lynchpin of a sailing vessel, to be a 'great figure of romance'.

> He is, of course, to the general, the *beau-ideal* of "Jack Tar", a magnificent monster with a bull's voice, burned almost black by the tropical sun, with eagle eyes forth-looking from a thicket of beard…brave as a man can be, he is terrible in his wrath, yet his heart is tender as a little child's, any tale of pity never fails to empty his pockets.[24]

Bullen articulated a popular perceived dichotomy in the sailing seafarer's character in that on water he was a fearsome individual, whereas in the urban environment he was exploited and ruined because he was 'just a big child'.[25] The bo'sun's role was much diminished in the steamship and according to Bullen, the classic Jack Tar character died with him.[26]

As we have seen, the introduction of steam had coincided with the shift of sailortown from Wapping High Street to more inland districts around Ratcliffe Highway. In 1859, a correspondent in the *East London Observer* commented upon how the streets of Wapping had changed over recent years. He noted that when sailors

> made merry in England, tradition tells us of his gay doings in Wapping, where then the sound of the fiddle and shuffle of Jack's soles were never still. There are men yet living who can remember when Dibdin was merely

[22] Booth, *Life and Labour of the People of London*, p. 359.
[23] Booth, *Life and Labour of the People of London*, p. 359.
[24] F. T. Bullen (1900), *The Men of the Merchant Service* (London: Murray), p. 151.
[25] Bullen, The Men of the Merchant Servi ce, p. 154, 257.
[26] Bullen, The Men of the Merchant Servi ce, p. 154, 257.

> chronicling admitted phases of maritime life in singing of the glories of Wapping Old Stairs and the Moll of Wapping – there are men who have years of life in them yet. Who can remember Wapping streets crowded with sailors and girls, and crimps and slop-shops, and when the public-houses there situate roared and blazed with custom.[27]

Georgian and early Victorian sailortown became synonymous with licentious behaviour that attracted a cross section of society from the plebeian ranks to aristocratic libertines. Indeed, it was the presence of well-to-do libertines and flâneurs that, to a degree, legitimised sailortown hedonism and excesses. For example, the writer Pierce Egan fictionalised his experiences of 'slumming' in Georgian sailortown through his novel *Life in London*. His text provides an insight into how 'well connected socialites' integrated effortlessly from the affluent West End to the plebeian crowd in the East. Egan describes how his two heroes, Tom and Jerry, visit a sailor singing saloon in Wapping where 'every cove that put in his appearance was quite welcome; colour or country considered no obstacle'.[28] However, contemporaries believed that it was not only the physical departure of sailors, girls, and crimps from Wapping High Street that was notable but also the disappearance of a traditional maritime language and custom that was embedded in the age of sail. The *East London Observer* correspondent asked 'do sailors ever fry gold watches now, or make sandwiches of bank notes? Do they ever "shiver their timbers?"… are mates continually "splicing the main-brace" and "bousing their jibs"? I am afraid not'. Such was the perceived honourable, skilled and simple life of the traditional seafarer, the reporter saw a 'consistency of the character of a sailor and a Christian'.[29]

Writing in 1903, it seemed clear to Booth that the sailors of sailing vessels belonged to a different age, an age in which seamen were honest but gullible and skilled in their trade but profligate with their earnings. This seafarer was master of the sea but was prey to the vices of urban society ashore. It is perhaps no surprise, given his advocacy for state intervention, that Booth emphasised the importance of parliamentary legislation in addressing the hardships of merchant seamen. The Merchant

[27] *East London Observer*, 6 August 1859.

[28] P. Egan (1869), *Tom & Jerry. Life in London. The Day and Night Scenes*, (London: John Camden Hotten), p. 320; this volume is a collection of Egan's work first published in the 1820s.

[29] *East London Observer*, 6 August 1859.

Shipping Act of 1894 consolidated earlier maritime legislation stretching back to 1836, which meant, according to Booth, 'few genuine grievances remain unaddressed'.[30] Booth also noted that London was well served with philanthropic institutions specialising in seamen's welfare and they had 'to some extent supplanted the old boarding houses, many of which were dens of iniquity'.[31] Such moral and material progress had, however, evolved alongside a more disturbing development in the seafaring profession. Booth had noted a new type of sailor that was more akin to the urban proletariat than their traditional sailing cousins. Sailing skills were no longer relevant in the age of steam. Indeed, it was an observation shared by Bullen who noted that it was 'undoubtedly the advent of the steamship' that degraded the maritime profession for all that was wanted in a steamer was a 'burly labourer who is able to steer'.[32] Likewise, Booth declared that 'the ordinary deck hands are little better than labourers.'

> In place of the splicing, bracing, setting and general manipulation of ropes and sails and other work of navigation, they are now chiefly occupied in cleaning, scrubbing, scouring, holystoning, polishing and painting the different parts of the ship.[33]

Booth hints that, unlike the romanticised image of the sailing seafarer, this new breed of sailor was not drawn to a maritime life of adventure on the high seas but instead was driven to mercantile shipping due to personal misfortune. He observed that the steam seamen 'are generally of a rather low class than sailors, and often take to the sea because they have failed to obtain work, or because disreputable habits have brought them into disgrace, at home'.[34] Booth was not alone; one social observer contrasted the sailing seafarers' high spirits of the early nineteenth century with the modern sailor's 'dullness and spiritless nature' who 'indulged in foul mockeries of recreation'.[35]

These steam sailors of the late nineteenth century, then, were essentially an undesirable strata of the working class, a classification that made these seafarers a more dangerous and streetwise social group than their sail-

[30] Booth, *Life and Labour of the People of London*, p. 359.
[31] Booth, *Life and Labour of the People of London*, p. 360.
[32] Bullen, *The Men of the Merchant Service*, p. 277.
[33] Booth, *Life and Labour of the People of London*, p. 361.
[34] Booth, *Life and Labour of the People of London*, p. 362.
[35] *East London Observer*, 13 August 1859.

ing forebears. Among Victorian commentators of both the merchant and naval services it was generally agreed that the stoker on the steamship was the lowest role occupied by the worst class of men. Christopher McKee has noted that the contemporary perception of stokers were that they were 'big, strong, illiterate, dumb guys; all brawn and no brain recruited to do the ship's heavy lifting in torrid, coal and soiled engine spaces'.[36] Writing in 1993, B.W. Beresford adopted the Victorian stereotype of the stoker describing him as of simple character and 'ape-like' appearance.[37] Indeed, the steam sailor and stoker (or fireman) seemed to embody the encroachment of an industrialised society into the maritime profession during the second half of the nineteenth century. Bullen described the thought of becoming a stoker as 'terrifying' and proceeded to describe a job more akin to factory work or coal mining than to traditional seafaring. He noted that the stoker descends into the bowels of the ship to face the boiler that 'claims him as its slave for four hours'. He is surrounded by 'strange-looking taps and gauges and tubes, with the use of which he must be familiar'.[38] For the trimmer, who was tasked in supplying the stoker with coal, conditions resembled a coalface. Bullen pronounced the trimmer's job 'so terrible that he should receive the sympathy of every kindly man and women he serves'.[39] For the trimmer,

> his labour knows no respite as he struggles to keep the fireman's needs supplied. And there is no ventilator pouring down fresh air into the bunker. In darkness, only punctured by the dim light of a safety-lamp, in an atmosphere composed of exhalations from the coal and a modicum of dust-laden air, liable at any moment to be overwhelmed by the down-rushing masses of coal as the ship's motion displaces it, the grimy, sweat-soaked man works on.[40]

For commentators like Booth and Bullen, given the classic proletariat working conditions that steamship sailors and stokers toiled in, it was no surprise that they adopted urban forms of industrial protest. Unlike their seafaring forebears, the steamship sailor was perceived to have possessed

[36] C. McKee (2002), *Sober Men and True*: *Sailor Lives in the Royal Navy 1900–1945*, (London: Harvard University Press), p. 103.

[37] Quoted in T. Chamberlain (2013), 'Stokers – the lowest of the low? A social history of Royal Navy stokers, 1850–1950' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Exeter), p. 71.

[38] Bullen, *The Men of the Merchant Service*, pp. 317–18.

[39] Bullen, *The Men of the Merchant Service*, p. 323.

[40] Bullen, *The Men of the Merchant Service*, p. 324.

a modern political dimension grounded within urban industrial contexts. In 1869, one reporter noted that the modern sailor complains about his pay and has 'followed the example of his brother workmen on shore and struck. He has paraded the streets of seaports with bands and music, and the triumphant British flag borne aloft…'[41] This was the proletarian sailor, a man of urban identity who took to the streets rather than the sea to wield influence in an increasingly mass democratic society.

In the eyes of social commentators, then, the streets of Ratcliffe Highway thronged with a different type of sailor, one that was less noble, honest, and more engaged with the urban world. In essence, the modern sailor was streetwise, and the childlike portrayals of traditional seafarers were replaced by narratives that embraced a quasi-social class dimension. However, further changes to the shipping industry seemed to compound the theory that sailortown's traditional English Jack Tar was in decline. By the mid-nineteenth century, commentators declared that most English ships recruited foreign sailors at the expense of 'the old Tar' who 'may be occasionally observed, seeming like visions of the past'.[42] One reporter noted that

> The great resort of sailors in London is now almost exclusively occupied by foreigners, who keep boarding houses, public houses, and houses of a still worse nature, where the allurement is offered, and every means employed to obtain Jack's cash and copper.[43]

Throughout Bullen's account of the merchant shipping service, he returned to the question of the foreigner seafarer who now seemed to dominate English-owned ships. While Bullen could appreciate why foreigners with traditional maritime skills had replaced the declining sailing Jack Tar, he failed to understand why unskilled foreign sailors were replacing British crews on English steamships. He could only suggest that the unskilled British working class 'are getting more and more loth to work at all' while the foreign sailor will 'work till they sink from exhaustion' and 'swarm into every opening that presents itself'. He also detected an element of militancy among English crews as 'if a shipmaster happens to have had much trouble with the crew of his own countrymen' he will look to

[41] *East London Observer*, 24 April 1869.
[42] *East London Observer*, 24 April 1869.
[43] *East London Observer*, 24 April 1869.

foreigners next time.[44] By the late nineteenth century, commentaries on London's sailortown had begun to describe an air of menace in the neighbourhoods as anxieties concerning class, gender, and race began to surface. The sailortown of libertine hedonism had given way to depravity and danger. While, sailortown continued to embody the exotic, social relations were framed with more certainty along class-exclusive lines. Social observers no longer described the area as an exotic playground for 'Jack' and the libertines of Egan's day, but instead the street of Ratcliffe Highway was now awash with a volatile mix of a residuum population, criminal classes, and foreign races.

The Victorian appetite for lurid and sensational stories that appeared in the new popular press ensured that Ratcliffe Highway became one of the most infamous streets in Victorian Britain.[45] As late as the 1930s, writers noted that 'the name of Ratcliff Highway became a byword not only for poverty and misery, but for the coarse, the brutal, and the vicious'. Indeed, the chronicler added that the Highway gained its reputation during the mid-nineteenth century as Ratcliffe's 'many taverns, dancing saloons and so-called boarding-houses harboured the lowest types of humanity of almost every nation'.[46] Moreover, the Victorian's propensity to liken the chaotic jungle environment of empire with the outer boundaries of London's East End became a recognisable trait in the mid-nineteenth-century discourse on Ratcliffe Highway.[47] London's sailortown became a place of fascination where, just as imperial expeditions had discovered new human 'species', urban explorers were keen to catalogue the varieties of races and subclasses they purported to have witnessed. For example, J.E. Ritchie writing in *Household Words* carefully noted the range of foreign sailors while describing their appearance and 'indigenous' cultural traits.

> Up and down Ratcliffe-highway do the sailors of every country under heaven stroll—Greeks and Scythians, bond and free. Uncle Tom's numerous progeny are there—Lascars, Chinese, bold Britons, swarthy Italians,

[44] Bullen, *The Men of the Merchant Service*, p. 278.

[45] Flanders, *The Invention of Murder*, p. 1.

[46] *The Copartnership Herald*, Vol. II, no. 24, February 1933.

[47] For an analysis of the city and the imperial mission, see B. Beaven (2012), *Visions of Empire: Patriotism, Popular Culture and the City, 1870–1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), chapter 2.

> sharp Yankees, fair-haired Saxons, and adventurous Danes—men who worship a hundred gods, and men who worship none.[48]

Moreover, like their imperial exploring counterparts, danger lurked around every corner.

> Jack is getting more lively all through Thames Street, and Tower Street, and is alarmingly vital when I emerge on Tower Hill. A row of foreign mariners pass me, seven abreast: swarthy, ear-ringed, black-bearded varlets in red shirts, light-blue trousers, and with sashes round their waists. Part of the crew of a Sardinian brig, probably. They have all their arms round each other's necks; yet I cannot help thinking that they look somewhat 'knifey,' 'stilettoey.' I hope I may be mistaken, but I am afraid that it would be odds, were you to put an indefinite quantity of rum into them, they would put a few inches of steel into you.[49]

Late Victorian social investigators placed their categorisation of Ratcliffe Highway within dominant discourses of racial hierarchies while alerting readers to the dangers of heathen and exotic cultures to the uninitiated. Northern Europeans were deemed largely unthreatening and Christian. For example, Walter Besant observed that on Ratcliffe Highway there was a Swedish church 'where on Sunday morning, you may see rows of light-haired, blue-eyed mariners listening to the sermon in their own tongue'. In contrast, he noted that 'Portugal Jack and Italy Jack and Lascar Jack have always been handy with their knives'.[50] Similarly, one sensation-seeking journalist took to 'gaslight' wanderings along Ratcliffe Highway and stumbled across the 'Prussian Eagle', a German-run public house, but one that attracted custom from a cross section of nationalities. He noted with some alarm the sign at the public house entrance asking patrons to deposit at the bar any pistols and knives that might be on their person. After finding his nerve, he entered a long room that had tables and seats aligning the walls with the centre entirely given up to a German orchestra and a crowd of dancers.

> There were French, Spanish, Italian, German, and Dutch seamen; there were Greeks from the Aegean Sea; there were Malays, Lascars, and even the

[48] J. Ewing Ritchie, *The night side of London* (London, William Tweedie, 1857), pp. 66–75.
[49] *Household Words*, 6 December 1881, p. 255.
[50] Besant, *East London*, pp. 72–73.

> 'heathen Chinese,' disguised in European costume, with his pigtail rolled up under a navy cap. There were mariners in fezzes and serge capotes; there were Mediterranean dandies, girls with broad crimson scarves, and with massive gold earrings glistening as they twirled about. No wonder it had been found necessary to collect the knives and pistols from the hot-blooded cosmopolitan crowd.

Thus, while the German hosts hardly merited comment, the more 'hot-blooded' southern Europeans and the heathen but disguised Chinese gave the reader a sense of the exotic but, above all, a racial 'otherness' that harboured danger.[51] There was a perceived tradition in sailortown of public houses and singing saloons opening their doors to a range of nationalities. Thus Pierce Egan's semifictional account of a sailortown public house in which 'lascars, blacks, jack tars, coal heavers, dustmen and women of colour' were all 'jigging together', did not seem unusual in 1820s Wapping.[52] However, while throughout the nineteenth century there are numerous accounts of public houses welcoming a range of nationalities, by the 1850s, black mariners began to become excluded from the principal venues. One reporter who, accompanied by a policeman, toured Ratcliffe Highway was told of one saloon that was '"used" exclusively by "coloured people". No white man will enter it'. The reporter believed that racial segregation had transported to British shores via American shipping as any merchant sailor taking service 'under the star-spangled banner' became imbued with national prejudice and contempt for the black man. However, in his account, the writer conformed to the dominant stereotypes that depicted black men as lazy and the women as overly sexed. After entering the establishment, he described a number of sober black males lounging around while the black women he encounters gave 'impudent leers'.[53]

The Victorian press' and commentators' intolerance to Ratcliffe Highways' sailortown culture certainly resembles the traditional forms of nineteenth-century popular culture that were shunned by civic leaders in many towns from the 1850s.[54] However, unlike provincial towns, the East End of London was deemed bereft of civic leadership and without a sense

[51] *The Metropolitan*, 14 September 1872.

[52] Egan, *Tom & Jerry*, p. 321.

[53] *East London Observer*, 13 August 1859.

[54] See Beaven, 'The Resilience of Sailortown Culture in English Naval Ports, c.1820–1900'.

of 'civic virtue' among the inhabitants.[55] By the 1850s, social observers complained that due to the neglect of the civic and policing authorities, Ratcliffe Highway had descended into lawlessness. Moreover, the street disturbances of the mid-nineteenth century were perceived to have significantly exceeded the traditional sprees of Jack Tar and his prostitutes 'Molls and Meggs'.[56] To the 'respectable' residents of Ratcliffe Highway, prostitutes in particular openly mocked bourgeois gendered codes of behaviour by loudly taking possession of the main thoroughfare. One correspondent in the *East London Observer* wistfully remembered how earlier on in the century prostitutes found it quite sufficient to advertise their profession by walking the streets 'bare-headed, and with a red silk handkerchief—a bandanna—tied round their delicate shoulders', and a halfpenny cane in their hands. But now things had changed:

> how many a modest woman is forced into the roadway to avoid the half a dozen caricatures of her sex, who, wildly drunk, are walking abreast, occupying the whole of the footway, and singing, or rather screeching, snatches of obscene songs at the very top of their voices.[57]

Not only did prostitutes, at times, dominate the pathways, they also took possession of the Highway itself. The reporter claimed that prostitutes would dress up in masquerade dresses, and 'cram themselves into and on several cabs' and parade up and down Ratcliffe Highway in a noisy procession, stopping off on the many hostelries en route. According to the correspondent, other prostitutes hired donkeys and traps that raced through the Highway, intimidating passers-by 'in drunken hilarity in carts filled with screaming women and swearing sailors'. By the 1850s, then, prostitution in Ratcliffe Highway was not discretely confined to side streets and public houses, but flagrantly exercised in the main thoroughfare in a gregarious and noisy fashion. One exasperated resident of Ratcliffe complained that the police were to be seen everywhere but the Highway itself. 'Where are the police? In your Kitchen sir! Flirting with your housemaid, madam! Chatting with your potman, or barmaid, mine

[55] J. Harris (1995), 'Between Civic Virtue and Social Darwinism: The Concept of the Residuum', in D. Englander and R. O'Day (eds.), *Retrieved Riches. Social Investigation in Britain, 1840–1914* (Aldershot: Scholar Press), p. 82.

[56] *East London Observer*, 6 August 1859.

[57] *East London Observer*, 10 October 1857.

host!'[58] Within the perceived lawlessness of Ratcliffe Highway, traditional gendered boundaries that governed male and female behaviour in public spaces had crumbled. Indeed, just as early nineteenth-century narratives of the largely benign jolly Jack Tar had, by the 1850s, given way to the proletarian sailor, discourses on sailortown prostitutes also underwent a similar 'dangerous' transformation. Ratcliffe Highway, like other large urban areas was subject to the garrotting panics of the 1860s. However, unlike orthodox accounts of garrotting, Ratcliffe Highway harboured the female garrotter who preyed upon sailors. In one garrotting incident in 1862, Catherine Harrington was charged with the assault and robbery of seamen Morris Hurbur. As the sailor left the US public house down a narrow alley, a passing policeman

> saw the prisoner, another prostitute, and a man following the sailor. He suspected them and followed. He heard money fall, and when he came up with the party the prisoner had her arm round the neck of the sailor, while the others were riffling his pockets. The other two saw him approaching, and ran away. He seized the prisoner, and took from her 3 s.[59]

Throughout the attack, it was clear that Harrington was the violent perpetrator, who attacked and restrained Hurbur while her accomplices robbed him. This, of course, deeply unsettled Victorian gender roles and led to uncomfortable moments for the sailor in the court case. For a sailor to be overpowered, garrotted, and robbed by a woman was a clear slight on his masculinity, and throughout the proceedings Hurbur repeatedly informed the court that 'if he had an instrument in his hand he would have killed all three'.

Harrington was the antithesis of the eighteenth-century feminised 'lusty Moll and Megs' and instead took on a masculine frame that had the strength and aggression to match. Indeed, while the sailor's failure to fend off the women brought laughter in court, the *East London Observer* sympathised with Hurbur as the reporter surmised that Catherine Harrington was 'a strong and masculine woman'.[60] Harrington was no stranger to crime and had been convicted on five occasions and been in custody 20 times. In this instance, she was sentenced for 6 months with hard labour.

[58] *East London Observer*, 10 October 1857.
[59] *East London Observer*, 20 December 1862.
[60] *East London Observer*, 20 December 1862.

On Ratcliffe Highway, then, women openly transgressed gendered behavioural codes and were visible and audible in the public thoroughfares and in the public houses that populated the street. Moreover, women were also proprietors of some of the most notorious public houses on Ratcliffe Highway.[61] After visiting a number of 'low' singing saloons on the Highway, one journalist recalled he and his party discovered 'The Prussian Eagle' which they had heard 'was a quarrelsome house, and it was not surprising to find a lady, loud of lung and demonstrative of gesture, being hustled unceremoniously into the street as we arrived'. On entering, the journalist F.W. Robinson described a 'general viciousness of demeanour', with the room packed with foreign sailors and 'women of the lower class'. To their astonishment, however, the pub was run by a 'bold faced, dark-eyed' woman

> Shabbily attired, and with a rough unkempt head of hair growing all kinds of ways and suspiciously gritty in appearance, [she] seemed to be the ruling spirit of the place and to be on speaking and cheek slapping terms with the whole community.[62]

The proprietor, suspicious of their motives, did not particularly welcome Robinson's visit and sat next to the party to monitor their activities. After feeling they had outstayed their welcome, the party left the Prussian Eagle to sarcastic cries from its patrons, whereupon the proprietor followed Robinson out 'evidently suspicious of our movements, or anxious to see in which way our destination lay'.[63] This brief insight into the management and patrons of one of the most notorious public houses in Ratcliffe Highway illustrates that while women continued to fulfil a significant role in sailortown culture, public houses had become less socially heterogeneous than the ale houses in Egan's day. What's more, Victorian social observers could only explain the women-proprietor's evident control over the patrons in one of the most dangerous public houses on the Highway through de-feminising her and emphasising her 'gritty and unkempt' appearance.

[61] Morris and Cozens, *London's Sailortown 1600–1800*, p. 44.
[62] Robinson, 'A night in the Highway', p. 309.
[63] Robinson, 'A night in the Highway', p. 310.

Conclusion

When visitors explored London's Ratcliffe Highway, they never failed to note its sense of 'otherness' from the rest of the city. Their accounts invariably looked seaward to explain the maritime traditions that were inscribed in the working, living, and leisure patterns of the district. For example, Fox Smith noted of Ratcliffe Highway in the early twentieth century that 'you might always know when you have entered the borders of that queer amphibious country which lies as it were between land and sea, even were there no visible signs of actual ships to inform you of it'.[64] It was in these districts of English and foreign transient sailors, boarding houses, and 'low' entertainment venues that unconventional gender relations flourished. However, to fully appreciate Victorian representations of sailortown, we also need to understand their anxieties toward urban modernity that informed their gaslight wanderings. Through examining the texts of a range of social commentators during the nineteenth century, this chapter has argued that a common narrative emerged that recast the sailor from benign jolly sailor to proletarian Jack. Likewise, the portrayal of sailortown was transformed from a socially heterogeneous playground to a place of danger and depravity. In some respects, the writers were echoing the urban anxieties found in other industrial cities. However, sailortown's liminal urban space and relative isolation from civic and religious influence gave Ratcliffe Highway a notoriety that both excited and appalled social commentators.

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[64] Fox Smith, *Sailor Town Days*, p. 6.

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CHAPTER 10

‘If there’s one man that I admire, that man’s a British tar’: Leisure and Cultural Nation-Building in a Naval Port Town, c. 1850–1928

Robert James

On 23 January 1915 Plymouth’s local newspaper, the *Western Evening Herald*, published a poem called ‘Our Picture Show’.[1] Written and illustrated by W. McMann, ‘Our Picture Show’ was one of a series of poems that featured in the newspaper under a regular column entitled ‘Jack’s Yarns.’ By combining poems with rudimentary sketches, ‘Jack’s Yarns’ recounted the fictional tales of a sailor who served on the ship *H.M.S. Hearty*. The poems were invariably highly topical, and ‘Our Picture Show’ was no exception, drawing on events of the First World War for its narrative drive. The poem described how Jack had gone to the local cinema, watched a newsreel featuring the German fleet, and later, when visiting a local public house, he saw one of the German officers—none other than ‘Captain von Bulow[2]—from the newsreel sitting at the bar disguised as an Englishman.

[1] W. McMann, ‘Jack’s Yarns: Our Picture Show’, *Western Evening Herald*, 23 January 1915.

[2] Karl von Bulow was a German officer well known to the British public. As Command of the Second Army he led the disastrous campaign at the First Battle of the Marne in September

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Jack devises a plan to take von Bulow to the local cinema, and when the officer reveals his true identity by jumping up and shouting 'Der Vaterland' after catching sight of himself on the screen, Jack arrests him.

This chapter argues that 'Our Picture Show' appropriated the British sailor, and more broadly the British navy, to impart particular messages to the *Western Evening Herald*'s readers regarding notions of patriotism, heroism, and masculinity. The newspaper, this chapter contends, was deploying the poem to remind the local community of their wartime duties. By featuring the popular leisure activities of cinemagoing and pub-going, the poem implied that by being vigilant when partaking in them, Plymouth's citizens could help in the war effort by following Jack's example and capturing any German spy they may encounter. As such, 'Our Picture Show' offers a microcosmic example of the broader relationships that operated between civilian society and the naval sailor. The aim of this chapter is to explore the networks of cultural exchange and interaction that operated between the navy and the inhabitants of Plymouth from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries, focussing in particular on leisure as an arena in which the town's civic leaders and local press interacted with its sailortown community to both reconstruct the image of the Royal Navy sailor and to negotiate the boundaries of acceptable and improper behaviour in its sailortown district. It thus builds on the limited research undertaken in recent years into the Royal Navy and the sailors who served in it as 'a social institution and cultural force'; as important to consider on land as at sea.[3]

From the Bawdy to the Respectable: The Royal Navy Sailor as a Cultural Icon

The appropriation of the British sailor as a cultural tool in the contemporary press evident in 'Our Picture Show' is interesting. Long-standing cultural stereotypes of 'Jack Tar,' many still prevalent today in fact, were not

1914, which was widely reported in the press. His name featured regularly in both local and national newspapers. See, for example, 'Belgian Facts v. German Acts', *Daily Mail*, 8 December 1914 and 'Italy and the War', *Devon and Exeter Daily Gazette*, 8 December 1914. While von Bulow's rank is referred to as captain in the poem he was a general at the time of the First Battle of Marne, and was promoted to field marshall in January 1915. See http://www.firstworldwar/bio/bulow.htm, date accessed 19 March 2015.

[3] D. Leggett (2011) 'Review Essay: Navy, Nation and Identity in the Long Nineteenth Century', *Journal for Maritime Research*, 13.2, 151–163; 152.

as favourable, particularly when depicting Jack ashore. While at sea Jack was viewed as a model of discipline and good behaviour, on land he was a morally disreputable character, coarse, drunk, and oversexed. Indeed, in his analysis of naval sailors' lives in the first half of the twentieth century, Christopher McKee succinctly captures the duality of the sailor's identity that continued to hold sway in the popular imagination during this period:

> He is a globe-wandering adventurer […] short on shoreside personal responsibilities, who flexes the national muscle at enemies, would-be and real, beyond or on the seas. His dark side is a strong part of his appeal, with prodigious appetite for alcohol and sex, he delights in anti-social behaviour which is held in check only by the fear of harsh punishment.[4]

Despite the continuance of this popular image of the sailor, however, and as the 'Jack's Yarn' depiction suggests, representations of the sailor and the Royal Navy had gone through something of a reconstruction in the preceding years. As Mary Conley has noted, toward the end of the nineteenth century Jack Tar was being promoted as a 'patriotic defender and dutiful husband and father' rather than 'the brave but bawdy tar of the Georgian Navy whose bravery afloat was only matched by his licentiousness ashore'.[5] The portrayal of Jack Tar in 'Our Picture Show' reflects this changing image of the sailor away from a drunken bawdy character—although, of course, he still liked his drink—to a 'hero', representing the British Empire during a time of war.

This evolution of the image of Royal Navy sailors was largely attributable to the modernisation of the service in the Victorian and early Edwardian era. As part of the professionalisation of the navy, a new uniform was introduced in 1857. The sailor now had a clearly recognisable image, and it was one that the Admiralty strived to protect, particularly as the role of the navy became even more visible during the 'Dreadnought Era', initiated in 1906 with the launch of HMS Dreadnought in Portsmouth.[6] In addition, the naval arms race between Britain and Germany ensured that public awareness of the Royal Navy's role in world affairs increased, thus

[4] C. McKee (2002) *Sober Men and True: Sailors Lives in the Royal Navy, 1900–1945*, (London: Harvard University Press), p. 1.

[5] M. Conley (2009) *From Jack Tar to the Union Jack: Representing Naval Manhood in the British Empire, 1870–1918*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press), p. 3.

[6] Conley, *Jack Tar*, pp. 32–33. See also B. Lavery (2011) *Able Seamen: The Lower Deck of the Royal Navy*, (London: Conway Maritime Press), p. 91.

helping the service establish itself as a highly visible force in society.[7] The service's visibility was further aided by its increased focus on display and theatricality. Ship inspections became a form of public spectacle, with the monarch increasingly involved in them; reviews of the fleet dramatically increased in number; while ship launches were 'intricately choreographed' to garner the most impact.[8] The launch of HMS Dreadnought, for example, was met with significant fanfare.[9] These events 'amplified' the power of the navy and went some way to increase public pride in the fleet.[10] More importantly, the organisation of these events was no longer restricted to the Admiralty and the sailors; local and national governments, along with the general public, were involved too. Local residents could thus share in the civic pride fostered by the occasion.[11] As Jan Rüger has argued, the increased visibility of the Royal Navy helped it become a source of national pride, with public fascination in it reaching 'cult' status in this period, thus ensuring the service became 'a particularly prolific arena for cultural nation-building'.[12]

'Our Picture Show' can be read as part of this 'cultural nation-building' process in a local context. The residents of Plymouth could identify with the fictional Jack; he could be any one of the number of sailors strolling around the streets in this important naval town. What is clear, of course, is that it was not the popular image of Jack Tar as a heavy drinking womaniser with whom the townspeople were supposed to identify, but the more recent portrayal of the sailor as a morally upstanding member of one of Britain's pre-eminent armed forces. Regardless of the realities of the sailors' behaviour on the town's streets, fictional Jack does not engage in any of the customary boisterous and irresponsible activities of Jack Tar of old; his participation in the town's abundant leisure opportunities is entirely honourable. The country's involvement in the First World War had

[7] Conley, *Jack Tar*, pp. 24–27.

[8] R.J. Blyth (2011) 'Introduction: The Dreadnought and the Edwardian Age', in R.J. Blyth, A. Lambert and J. Rüger (eds.), *The Dreadnought and the Edwardian Age*, (Farnham: Ashgate), pp. 1–8; p. 2. Between 1773 and 1887 eight reviews took place; between 1887 and 1914 there were eleven. J. Rüger (2009) *Great Naval Game: Britain and Germany in the Age of Empires*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 21

[9] B. Beaven (2012) *Visions of Empire: Patriotism, Popular Culture and the City, 1870–1939*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press), p. 23.

[10] Blyth, 'Introduction', p. 2.

[11] Beaven, *Visions of Empire*, pp. 23–24.

[12] Rüger, *Great Naval Game*, p. 166.

ensured that the inhabitants of Plymouth had more interaction with naval sailors because of their increased presence in the town, and it also meant that the profile of the Royal Navy was raised even higher. It is entirely understandable, then, that attempts were being made to ensure that the enduring bawdy image of the naval sailor was consigned to history, and by focussing on the townspeople's leisure participation, the local press, and as we shall see, the town's civic leaders, had seemingly identified an ideal way in which this could be achieved.

'Unhealthily Exciting'[13]: Leisure Participation in Plymouth's Sailortown

Recent histories of leisure have shown that people's recreational activities have been fractured and delineated by age, class, gender, income, and race.[14] As Brett Bebber has argued, it is these power relationships that help to construct 'identities and mentalities, shaping the way people think about themselves and their recreations'.[15] Less scrutinised by historians is the way in which geographical location can likewise act as a key determinant in shaping society's interactions with the leisure medium.[16] This chapter will

[13] 'Films the Children Like Best; Statistics of "Regular" Cinema-goers', *Western Evening Herald*, 27 February 1917.

[14] See, for example, A. Davies (1992) *Leisure, Gender and Poverty. Working-Class Culture in Salford and Manchester: 1900–1939*, (Milton Keynes: Open University Press); R. McKibbin (1998) *Classes and Cultures, England 1918–1951*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press); C. Langhamer (2000) *Women's Leisure in England, 1920–1960*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press); B. Beaven (2005) *Leisure, Citizenship and Working-Class Men in Britain, 1850–1945*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press); R. James (2010) *Popular Culture and Working-Class Taste in Britain, 1930–1939: A Round of Cheap Diversions?*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press).

[15] B. Bebber (2012) 'Introduction: Contextualising Leisure History', in B. Bebber (ed.), *Leisure and Cultural Conflict in Twentieth-Century Britain*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press), pp. 1–10; p. 2.

[16] The importance of geographical location has been recognised, but is usually the preserve of the local, amateur historian. For a more sophisticated approach, see Beaven, *Visions of Empire* and James, *Popular Culture*. Some work has been conducted into regional differences in people's cinemagoing habits, particularly in the naval town of Portsmouth due to the richness of the archival material there. See, for example, S. Harper (2004) 'A Lower Middle-Class Taste-Community in the 1930s: Admission Figures at the Regent Cinema, Portsmouth, UK', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 24.4, 565–587; S. Harper (2006) 'Fragmentation and Crisis: 1940s Admissions Figures at the Regent Cinema, Portsmouth, UK', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 26.3, 361–394;

explore the localised nature of leisure provision and consumer response, and reveal how in the naval town of Plymouth leisure activities, and people's discussions of them, were principally shaped by the town's portside location. Of course, because the town was home to large naval installations, the presence of the Royal Navy played a major role in how it was viewed not just locally, but nationally too.[17] Nationwide, people's leisure participation had been causing consternation, and much heated discussion, within the establishment. As Jeffrey Hill has noted, debates within government and among civic leaders regarding society's leisure activities increased dramatically in the period, with attempts made 'to render [them] safe and respectable'.[18] It is not surprising, therefore, to find that such discussions reached fever pitch among the civic leaders of a town with such strategic importance to Britain's place on the world stage.

Located on the southwest coast of the UK, Plymouth was established as one of the country's major naval ports in the late seventeenth century.[19] Originally consisting of three separate towns—Devonport, Plymouth, and Stonehouse—the construction of Union Street in 1815 linked the three districts together.[20] While intended for occupation by the borough's middle classes, Union Street's residential patterns changed after the expansion of the dockyard and construction of the naval barracks in the Devonport district of the town in the mid-nineteenth century.[21] From that time onward, the thoroughfare, home to Plymouth's sailortown, where sailors and dockyard workers and their families mingled together, became known as the most disreputable in the region due to boisterous behaviour, criminality, and prostitution.[22] As Marc Partridge has noted, it surpassed all

J. Sedgwick (2006) 'Cinemagoing in Portsmouth', *Cinema Journal*, 46.1, 52–84; R. James (2013), 'Cinema-going in a Port Town, 1914–1951: Film Booking Patterns at the Queens Cinema, Portsmouth', *Urban History*, 40:2, 315–335.

[17] Beaven, *Visions of Empire*, p. 6.

[18] J. Hill (2002) *Sport, Leisure and Culture in Twentieth-Century Britain*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 166.

[19] W. Filmer-Sankey and L. Markham (2005) *Plymouth: Rapid Urban Character Study*, (Plymouth: Alan Baxter & Associates), p. 11.

[20] Filmer-Sankey and Markham, *Plymouth*, p. 10. They remained as three separate boroughs until merging as one in 1914. Vision of Britain, 'Plymouth Devon', www.visionofbritain.org.uk/place/928, date accessed 26 February 2015.

[21] C. Gill (1979) *Plymouth: A New History. 1603 to the Present Day* (London: Devon Books), p. 121.

[22] Anon., 'Union Street: Night and Day', *BBC Devon: Community Life*, http://www.bbc.co.uk/devon/content/articles/2006/07/12/union street community features.shtml, date

others for being the 'location of drunken debauchery'.[23] In 1858, one troubled resident's letter to the editor of the *Plymouth Journal* perfectly encapsulated the severity of the situation:

> Sir, I beg through the medium of your valuable paper, to call the attention of the magistrates and police authorities of Stonehouse to a problem of no mean order. In Union Street, there exists three beerhouses, which may be described as bad, worse and worst (sic) as regards the nuisance they are to the whole neighbourhood. From the windows of these houses females of doubtful character, by gestures, endeavour to allure the passer-by […] the turn out of the bad people of both sexes often gives rise to disgusting scenes. They fight, they curse, and such horrid curses; the obscenity of their language is so revolting, as to show how much they must be brutalized by the abominable traffic of which they are at once slaves and victims.[24]

While not alluding directly to the behaviour of the town's sailor community, it can be safely assumed that because of the thoroughfare's reputation as the 'servicemen's playground', the activities taking place would have included members of that service.[25]

As a consequence of these growing fears regarding the town's perceived decline into depravity, Devonport's sailortown district came under the surveillance of a number of social commentators whose observations were invariably critical. One contemporary observer thus described the town as being overrun by '[b]ullies and thieves, vagrants and youthful depredators' who were 'united in the use of signs, marks and strong language'.[26] The sense of 'otherness' captured here in the unfamiliar expressions and gestures of the sailortown inhabitants, permeated many such reports, leading to observers regularly fearing for their safety. As another contemporary observer noted, any visitor would 'despair of escape from these infernal regions'.[27] Of course, as a strategically important naval town, concerns about drunkenness and the immoral behaviour to which it was expected to lead were long-standing, and the Devonport district of the town—

accessed 8 February 2015.

[23] M. Partridge (2014) 'Plymouth, Devonport and Stonehouse: From the Peace of 1815 to the 1860s', *Plymouth History*, 13–21, p. 17, http://www.yumpu.com/en/document/view/26757010/plymouthhistory, date accessed 7 February 2015.

[24] Quoted in Partridge, 'Plymouth', p. 18.

[25] Anon., 'Union Street.

[26] Partridge, 'Plymouth', p. 14.

[27] Partridge, 'Plymouth', p. 15.

where the naval installations and dockyard were based—had always been most closely associated with these elements of social malaise. But the Victorians' moral sensibilities, coupled with the growing visibility of the Royal Navy in the period, ensured that campaigns were stepped up to stamp out these apparent social evils.[28] The town thus became subject to the strong moralising forces of a growing number of social investigators, religious missionaries, and reformers who attempted, with the aid of the town's civic leaders and the Admiralty, to reform the unruly behaviour in its sailortown district.[29] In 1876, for example, philanthropist Agnes Weston opened a sailors' rest home in Devonport in an attempt to dissuade naval personnel from visiting any of the district's many public houses, thereby removing them from the dangers present in the town's sailortown district.[30]

These attempts to curb immoral behaviour and improve the district's reputation accelerated toward the end of the nineteenth century and into the beginning of the twentieth, with the greater national prominence of the Royal Navy only serving to intensify the situation further. Moreover, the 'empire in crisis' debates, initiated partly by the country's disastrous campaigns in the Boer War, led to increased scrutiny of Britain's military capabilities, resulting in investigations such as the 1904 Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration that sought to ascertain why so many working-class military recruits were unfit for service.[31] It is surely no coincidence that in the same year the Plymouth and Stonehouse Vigilance Association was formed 'for the promotion of social purity', with its members discussing a wide range of issues including 'disorderly public houses, brothels and prostitution'.[32] Operating alongside the Vigilance Association, temperance campaigners worked hard to provide alternative pursuits to the perceived debased

[28] See Hill, *Sport, Leisure and Culture,* pp. 165–167 for the Victorians' campaigns against leisure.

[29] Partridge, 'Plymouth', pp. 13–14. Similar campaigns took place in Portsmouth, another major naval port on the south coast of Britain. James, 'Cinema-going in a Port Town'.

[30] Weston also bought and closed down public houses that were near to the dockyard. Conley, *From Jack Tar*, pp. 79–80.

[31] Conley, *From Jack Tar*, p. 28.

[32] National Archives, http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/rd/8019b108-109e-47da-880b-3297a4701055, date accessed 13 February 2015.

activities on offer in the town's public houses and music halls.[33] Control over the sailors' and townspeople's leisure participation had thus become a burning issue by the turn of the twentieth century, increasing civic leaders' willingness to take more interest in its provision to improve the town's standing. As H.E. Mellor has noted in his study of the port town of Bristol in the period:

> municipal power, municipal pride, the concept of 'social citizenship' and the practical dimensions of local government activity in public health and education provided the framework within which municipalities developed facilities for leisure and pleasure.[34]

As they looked both to land and to sea, port towns, whether merchant or naval, were clear focal points for concern regarding national prestige, but naval towns held a particular status in the national psyche, and thus concerns over and interventions into sailors' and townspeople's lives and leisure activities escalated further as the twentieth century progressed, reaching a peak during the years of the First World War.

The outbreak of war only served to heighten the visibility of the Royal Navy, both locally and nationally. In Plymouth, the war ensured that there was a greater number of sailors visiting the town, leaving for or returning from military service. The dockyard workers' profile was raised, too, due to the important role they played in the war effort.[35] Therefore, any activities that could have a negative affect on them, and in turn, the country, were bound to be subject to growing scrutiny. Long-standing concerns over people's drinking habits in the town's sailortown district were thus heightened, with the town's civic leaders and members of the Plymouth and Stonehouse Vigilance Association becoming ever more vocal in their attempts to stamp out drunkenness and disorderly behaviour. In spring 1917, for example, the Association held a meeting in the town hall calling for the total prohibition of alcohol. Reporting on the event, the *Western Evening Herald* claimed that the meeting had revealed 'the strength of the movement of public opinion in favour of Prohibition', and went on

[33] Beaven, *Leisure*, pp. 68–70; H.E. Mellor (1976) *Leisure and the Changing City, 1870–1914*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul), p. 15.

[34] Mellor, *Leisure*, p. 98.

[35] See, for example, 'Dockyard Notes by "Chips": A Retrospect of 1914', *Western Evening Herald*, 2 January 1915. The article praised the loyalty and patriotism of the workmen and their families.

to argue that the issue 'should be tackled as a war measure'.[36] The report concluded by noting that '[t]he proposal for prohibition is put forward to help us in our battle with Germany'.[37]

The call for prohibition, rather than greater regulation of alcohol, echoed the nationwide calls for abstinence in the second half of the nineteenth century, when temperance was promoted as the 'foundation of ideal manhood', while drunkenness was classed as a menace that threatened 'one's masculine social status'.[38] In a time of war, of course, the matter seemed even more pressing. One dignitary at the town hall meeting thus warned of the dangers of the effect of drinking on the country's armed services by noting that '[t]he use of alcohol lessens the fighting value of men in all ranks and impairs their thinking power and the speed and soundness of their judgement'.[39] In a similarly alarmist tone, and to further the call for the implementation of state control of the purchase of alcohol in the town, the *Western Evening Herald* reported that civic leaders had taken inspiration from the highest echelons of British society, drawing on Prime Minister Lloyd George's assertion that the consumption of alcohol 'was bound to interfere or impair the efficiency of the nation, whether for peace or for war'.[40] The consumption of alcohol was not only seen by members of the Vigilance Association and Plymouth's civic leaders as an activity that impaired the individual's judgement, therefore, it was considered to be a highly unpatriotic act too, particularly when the country was at war.

Despite the growing calls for prohibition reported in the *Western Evening Herald*, and the paper's averred support for it from within the local community, responses to the meeting from the townspeople were mixed. Many of the paper's readers were somewhat critical of greater state control of alcohol.[41] What vexed the readers most of all, however, was an incident in which a pub landlord had been fined for illegally sup-

[36] Plymouth Record Office, 94/48, Plymouth Social Reform Society: Newspaper Cuttings on Leisure Activities, 1915–1917. Plymouth Social Reform Society was founded in 1919 upon the dissolution of the Plymouth and Stonehouse Vigilance Association. National Archives, http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/rd/8019b108-109e-47da-880b-3297a4701055, date accessed 13 February 2015.

[37] Plymouth Record Office, 94/48.

[38] Conley, *From Jack Tar*, p. 79

[39] Plymouth Record Office, 94/48. Sir A. Pearce Gould quoted in Anon., 'Drink or Food? Great Meeting asks for prohibition', *Western Evening Herald*.

[40] Plymouth Record Office, 94/48. David Lloyd George quoted in Anon., 'Drink Control State Purchase as Short Cut to Prohibition', *Western Evening Herald*, 31 March 1917.

[41] What Herald Readers Think', *Western Evening Herald*, 23 April 1917.

plying whiskey to two sailors. It was not the fact that the landlord had been punished that particularly enraged them, but the tactics used by the police when detaining him. The paper reported that the landlord had been caught by two policemen who had dressed as naval officers when entrapping him.[42] Commenting on the case, one reader, writing under the pseudonym 'Fair Play', heavily criticised the police, maintaining that they were wrong to don sailors' uniforms because by doing so they had brought the navy's 'uniform into disrepute and contempt'.[43] The paper's editor declared that he had received many letters from readers on the issue, all of whom disapproved of the police's tactics.[44] What is fascinating about this episode is not so much what it tells us about the differing attitudes toward the regulation of alcohol in the town, but what it reveals about the relationship between the townspeople and its sailor community. These sailortown residents clearly placed a high regard on the *image* of the sailor, and their responses to this case suggest that they not only wanted to protect that image, one that was associated with fair, and not foul, play, but also that they did not necessarily buy in to the image of sailors as presented from 'above' or 'outside'.

While the individual and collective agencies at work in the town regarding prohibition reveal that opinions on the subject of society's drinking habits continued to be a cause for concern in the early twentieth century, it was the growing popularity of another leisure pursuit—one with more shallow cultural roots—that was beginning to garner even greater attention in the period: the cinema. Following its advent in the late nineteenth century, film had been largely exhibited as part of a range of entertainment on offer in the town's music halls. Union Street's Palace Theatre, for example, which was said to have been frequented 'almost religiously' by townspeople and naval personnel, featured films alongside a variety of live music hall acts.[45] After the implementation of the 1909 Cinematograph Act, however, a proliferation of purpose-built cinemas sprang up across the town.[46] These were principally

[42] See, for example, 'Plymouth Landlord's Offence. Illegal Supply of Whiskey', *Western Evening Herald*, 16 April 1917; 'Breach of Liquor Order Devonport Licensee and Two Customers Fined'; Disguised Policemen Dressed as Naval Officers, *Western Evening Herald*, 20 April 1917.

[43] 'What Herald Readers Think', *Western Evening Herald*, 23 April 1917.

[44] 'What Herald Readers Think'.

[45] Anon, 'When All the Stars Shone in One Street', *Western Morning News* supplement, 12 April 1984.

[46] S. Hanson (2007) *From Silent Screen to Multi-Screen: A History of Cinema Exhibition in Britain since 1896* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), pp. 26–27. S. Brown (2012) 'Censorship Under Siege: The BBFC in the Silent Era', in E. Lamberti (ed.), *Behind the*

located in working-class areas—there were five in Union Street alone—and by 1918 the town was home to 17 halls.[47] Cinemagoing was fast becoming *the* 'mass' leisure activity in the town, as it was nationwide, and as such it began to attract the attention of civic leaders and morality campaigners, who viewed the medium as both a threat and an opportunity.

Indeed, as the popularity of the cinema had grown within Britain's urban centres, a number of morality campaigns had cropped up across the country, led by religious and purity crusaders, to protect cinema's more 'susceptible' patrons from the medium's harmful influences.[48] The Public Morality Council, for example, while independent of the government, took on the role of overseeing cinema provision across many parts of the country, including its capital, and passed on the findings of its reports to the Home Office to ensure that a 'decent standard' of film was offered to the country's consumers.[49] These campaigns were principally aimed at protecting the working classes and children, but in port towns sailors were likewise identified as 'vulnerable' consumers who needed protecting from cinema's most pernicious effects.[50] Not surprisingly, then, many of the criticisms of cinemagoing reported in Plymouth's local press ran along similar lines to those expressed by the leisure pursuit's detractors across the country. One contributor to the debate about cinemagoing in the town could have thus been speaking on behalf of any number of the film medium's critics nationwide when he remarked in 1917 that 'cinemas were bad for all young people' because films led them to emulate the immoral behaviour witnessed on the screen, thus ensuring that they 'were not being trained in matters of moral responsibility'.[51] Another contributor's remark that all films were 'unhealthily exciting' was equally representative of the concerns circulating around the country regarding cinema's

Scenes at the BBFC: Film Classification from the Silver Screen to the Digital Age, (London: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 3–15; p. 3.

[47] Plymouth Record Office, *Kelly's Directory*, 1917–*19*18. The directory lists all the cinemas operating in the town.

[48] See A. Kuhn (1988) *Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality 1909–1925*, (London: Routledge); D. Rapp (2002) 'Sex in the Cinema: War, Moral Panic, and the British Film Industry, 1906–1918', *Albion*, 34.3, 422–451.

[49] James, *Popular Culture*, p. 46.

[50] Kuhn, *Cinema*, Rapp, 'Sex'. For the 'vulnerability' of sailors see R. Lee (2013) 'The Seafarer's Urban World: A Critical Review', *International Journal of Maritime History*, XXV.1, 23–64; 24.

[51] 'Films the Children Like Best'.

unwelcome attractions.[52] It was not just what was taking place on screen that concerned critics, but what was happening within the auditorium too. Morality campaigners were equally concerned about the possibility of lewd behaviour taking place inside the darkened spaces of the cinema halls.[53] In Plymouth, long-standing anxieties over prostitution and the sexualised nature of the sailor would have undoubtedly heightened these concerns among its civic leaders. One *Herald* contributor's support for the introduction of 'half-lighting of auditoriums' would have thus surely been met with approval in the town, as had been the case when the plan was proposed up-and-down the country.[54]

To counter the criticisms regarding the pleasures audiences could obtain both on and off the screen, cinema managers constantly sought to enhance their business's reputation. One way in which they could achieve this was to promote the leisure activity as a more respectable alternative to the public house or music hall.[55] In Plymouth's sailortown district, therefore, cinemas were regularly promoted as social hubs of their local communities, to which families were encouraged to attend. The Tivoli Picture House, for example, which was located close to the naval barracks, opposite the Military Arms public house, and just along the road from the Royal Sailors' Rest, was said to have been a 'family institution', attendance of which became 'a way of life with the families of Devonport'.[56] Recalling visiting the cinema in the early twentieth century, one regular patron remarked that he viewed the Tivoli as 'a kind of second home'.[57] In addition, the nationwide decision to halve admission prices for servicemen during the First World War would have undoubtedly done much to help entice sailors and military personnel away from the less respectable entertainment venues into the 'safe' environment of their local cinemas.[58]

[52] 'Films the Children Like Best'.

[53] Hanson, *From Silent Screen to Multi-Screen*, p. 29.

[54] 'Films the Children Like Best'; Rapp, 'Sex', 422.

[55] Hanson, *From Silent Screen to Multi-Screen*, pp. 28–29.

[56] P.F. Ghillyer (1983) 'The Tivoli Picture House: Home of My Childhood Dreams and Fantasies', in W.S. Power (ed.), *Plymouth Theatres and Cinemas*, (Plymouth), pp. 107–124; pp. 109–112.

[57] G. Fleming, 'Penny Ha'penny Ticket for the Unemployed', *Western Evening Herald*, 29 March 1984.

[58] A. Eyles (2009), 'Exhibition and the Cinemagoing Experience', in R. Murphy (ed.), *The British Cinema Book*, 3rd edn (London: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 78–84; p. 78.

Plymouth's local cinema proprietors had clearly found common ground with the leisure activity's critics, for in comparing cinema favourably against the public house and music hall they were tapping into a growing recognition that the pastime could be deployed for the common good. Indeed, one local probation officer defended the cinema's reputation by pointing out that it was a 'great improvement' on older forms of leisure, such as the 'old penny gaff, the old music-hall, and club entertainment,' and argued that rather than encouraging bad behaviour films could be used to teach important moral lessons.[59] In fact, he recalled visiting a local cinema and watching children 'cheering when the crook was run to earth and punished'.[60] Rather than criticising cinemas, this commentator believed they could 'become a night school or social club, and singers, glee parties, and lecturers [could] be introduced into them'.[61] Even those townspeople who were less critical of the cinema thus sought ways to improve its image that were strikingly similar to those offered across the country.[62]

Of course, the main function of cinema was to entertain, and any attempts to turn these venues into educational establishments rather than places of entertainment could be expected to be met with resistance. However, it would appear that the idea was not totally abhorrent to Plymouth's cinemagoers, for in these early years at least, cinemas were viewed as social centres that could fulfil a range of society's needs, sometimes even educational ones. The manager of the highly successful Tivoli cinema, for example, actively advanced the pastime's educational qualities by exhibiting 'important historical and classical' films and setting children essays to write on them.[63] In fact, as the twentieth century progressed, the town's cinemas increasingly came to be seen as sites where ideas of citizenship, patriotism, and duty could be rehearsed and encouraged, both off and on screen. On 12 November 1920, for example, and to commemorate Armistice Day, the Cinedrome, which was run by two ex-servicemen, screened a film honouring those who had fallen in the recent war, advertised as 'Special To-day – Our Glorious Dead'.[64] Interestingly, the Cinedrome often omitted film titles from its

[59] J. Massey, 'The Child and the Film', *Western Evening Herald*, 3 April 1917.

[60] Massey, 'Child and the Film'.

[61] Massey, 'Child and the Film'.

[62] For national attempts at improving film content, see Brown, 'Censorship Under Siege'. For improving conduct in the auditorium, see Hanson, *From Silent Screen to Multi-Screen*, pp. 28–29.

[63] Ghillyer, 'Tivoli Picture House', p. 112.

[64] See advertisement for the Cinedrome, *Western Evening Herald*, 12 November 1920.

advertisements, running instead with a 'kindly note' reminding prospective patrons that it was managed by ex-servicemen, thus suggesting that the owners believed their former service status would be enough to attract local customers.[65] The fact that they repeatedly advertised in this way suggests that their faith in the townspeople's patronage was fully justified.

On screen, meanwhile, newsreels, shorts, and documentary films provided an important conduit for news about the Royal Navy's activities.[66] Regularly shown in cinemas nationwide, Alfred West's long-standing *Our Navy* series received critical acclaim for its portrayal of the service.[67] Capitalising on the success of West's *Our Navy* series, the Admiralty initiated its own film propaganda campaign in 1917, producing films that featured, among other events, comprehensive re-enactments of the principal sea battles of the First World War, such as the 1921 production *The Battle of Jutland*.[68] These films' positive portrayal of the Royal Navy and the sailors who served in it reinforced the image of the modern Tar as an upstanding member of, not just the ship's community, but the shoreside community too. While audiences were treated to a wide variety of films during the period, and on the whole preferred comedy and drama films that took them away from their day-to-day realities, these heavily romanticised screen depictions of the navy further enhanced the service's standing, thus helping to consolidate the 'cult' status it had achieved at the turn of the twentieth century.[69]

It is within this cultural milieu that the fictional tale of Jack Tar in 'Our Picture Show' can be placed. The poem capitalised on the increasingly important status of the Royal Navy in an attempt to appeal to the townspeople's sense of duty during a time of war. To close, therefore, this chapter will return to the poem to further explore its appropriation of the Royal Navy sailor as a popular cultural symbol from which to impart information to this sailortown community regarding idealised concepts of patriotism, militarism, masculinity, and heroic behaviour.

[65] See, for example, cinema advertisement in *Western Evening Herald*, 17 December 1920.

[66] V. Carolan (2012), 'British Maritime History, National Identity and Film, 1900–1960', unpublished PhD thesis, Queen Mary University, London, pp. 52–53.

[67] Beaven, *Visions of Empire*, p. 185; Conley, *From Jack Tar*, p. 28.

[68] Carolan, 'British Maritime History', p. 77.

[69] James, 'Cinema-going in a Port Town', pp. 334–335; Conley, *From Jack Tar*, p. 47.

Appropriating the Royal Navy Sailor as a Popular Cultural Symbol

It is evident from the way the poem's narrative is constructed that Jack had intended to use the cinema as a form of escape, as indeed did many cinemagoers in the period, for he informs the readers that he went 'for a little treat' and to enjoy a 'hearty laugh'.[70] But, there is a serious side to his experience. Going to the cinema is shown to have played a significant part in the country's war effort. After all, Jack captures an important German officer, thereby harming the country's war effort. The use of the cinema in Jack's tale is, therefore, highly propagandist in nature. In fact, the newsreel featuring the German fleet that is being shown in Jack's fictional cinema would have undoubtedly reminded the newspaper's readers of the type of material they would have watched in the cinemas they frequented. From the start of the war, government personnel understood that they could use people's leisure time to bolster morale, and cinemagoing, as an increasingly popular, and visual, activity, was seen as an ideal way in which to impart propaganda messages.[71] As mentioned, there was thus a huge increase in the number of newsreels, shorts, and documentary films made in the period featuring celebratory depictions of the British navy, as well as those featuring the enemy forces, such as the example deployed in 'Our Picture Show'.[72]

But the poem could also be said to have been used to reassure its readers. The countries' fleets had met on a number of occasions after the outbreak of war, with mixed results for both navies.[73] In fact, in December 1914 the German fleet had raided the east coast of Britain, resulting in a loss of human life and significant damage to buildings, raising the spectre of increased German sorties along the British coastline.[74] Tensions within British society were inevitably amplified on the day the poem appeared in

[70] McMann, 'Jack's Yarns'.

[71] J. Richards and J.C. Robertson (2009) 'British Film Censorship', in R. Murphy (ed.), *The British Cinema Book*, 3rd edn (London: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 67–77; p. 69.

[72] Carolan, 'British Maritime History', p. 38.

[73] On 28 August 1914 the fleets met at Heligoland Blight, resulting in a British victory. On 1 November the British were defeated at the Battle of Coronel. On 8 December the British Navy succeeded in defeating the German fleet at the Battle of the Falkland Islands. http://firstworldwar.com/battles/sea.htm, date accessed 19 March 2015. See also R. Wolfson and J. Laver (1997) *Years of Change: Europe 1890–1945*, 2nd edn (London: Hodder and Stoughton), pp. 211–214.

[74] In January 1915 it was reported that German U-boats had been spotted off the Dover coast. See, for example, 'Another Coast Challenge', *Manchester Courier and Lancashire*

the newspaper when, in an attempt to stop the Royal Navy's reconnaissance mission at Dogger Bank, the German navy arrived in the North Sea, resulting in the sinking of a merchant vessel.[75] All of these events were covered by the press, both national and local, so Plymouth's residents would have been aware of the serious nature of the situation. However, press reports were overwhelmingly positive, regardless of the outcome for the British fleet.[76] It is not surprising, therefore, to find that 'Our Picture Show's' Jack is not to be daunted by the situation, for he not only shows courage by capturing the German officer, but perhaps more importantly, he also says that he and his fellow sailors would be willing to meet the German navy head-on in battle—it is, he boasts, the 'fleet we'd like to meet'.[77] So he, and by extension the British navy, are shown to be undeterred by the might of the German navy.

In fact, the cinemagoers in this fictional cinema were encouraged to mock the Germans—its navy is referred to as a 'standing joke'—and the audience are said to have responded to the newsreel by making 'choice remarks' about this once feared foe.[78] So the German navy, and by extension the German nation, was being shown to have become something of a laughing stock in the eyes of the British public. In addition, the manner in which Jack manages to outwit the German officer displays ingenuity, pluck, and strength of character on his part, and complete ineptitude on the part of the unfortunate German officer. This optimism and mocking of the German fleet was echoed in the wider press, and while the German navy was still a force to be reckoned with, readers were often encouraged to deride it.[79] In fact, the Battle of Dogger Bank, which resulted in British

General Advertiser, 14 January 1915. For further information about the increased threat, see http://firstworldwar.com/battles/sea.htm.

[75] See reports in the local press, 'British Vessel Torpedoed', *Essex Newsman* and 'Threat Carried Out', *The Western Times*, both 23 January 1915.

[76] Triumphalist reporting of British successes is understandable (see, for example, with regards to the Battle at Heligoland Bight, 'Night attack on German Fleet: British Naval Victory', *Daily Mail*, 29 August 1914 and, for the Battle of the Falkland Islands, 'Three German Cruisers Sunk off the Falkland Islands', *Devon and Exeter Daily Gazette*, 10 December 1914), but British defeats were also reported with an optimistic slant. See, for example, on the defeat at the Battle of Coronel, 'Naval Battle in the Pacific', *Daily Mail*, 5 November 1914, in which the defeat is blamed on weather conditions and British losses are not confirmed.

[77] McMann, 'Jack's Yarns'.

[78] McMann, 'Jack's Yarns'.

[79] See, for example, the celebratory headlines after the Battle at Heligoland Bight, 'Bravo! the Navy', *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 29 August 1914, or the

victory, was widely reported to be due to the pluck and courage of the Royal Navy sailor. *The Western Times*, for example, noted that: 'Whenever and wherever the two Fleets meet on anything approaching equal terms […] the British sailor man will go into action with the prestige of an aggressive tradition, whereas the German sailor man, however skilful and brave, will have the depressing tradition of retreat behind him'.[80]

Like these reports, 'Our Picture Show's' storyline thus intimated that Britain would be victorious in the war and, more importantly, that the newspaper's readers could be part of this success: it was, of course, called '*Our* Picture Show'. The poem encouraged the readers to be observant; it showed them that they all had a vital role to play in the war effort. Significantly, it also illustrated how important leisure could be as part of this process. 'Our Picture Show' featured both a cinema and a public house; it appeared in a local newspaper. Cinemagoing, drinking, reading—all three of these leisure pursuits were being appropriated as part of a highly influential anti-German, and very pro-British, propaganda campaign; one that fostered notions of Britishness, militarism, heroism, and patriotic endeavour, while at the same time actively presenting Royal Navy personnel as idealised symbols of British masculinity to the wider community. As the disguised German officer remarks to Jack when the latter approaches him at the public house's bar: 'If there's one man that I admire, that man's a British tar'.[81] The inhabitants of this important naval town were clearly expected to identify wholeheartedly with the German officer's sentiment.

Conclusion

By the early twentieth century the official image of Jack Tar ashore was radically altered from the popular stereotype of earlier periods. No longer was Jack identified as the bawdy, highly sexualised figure of the Georgian era. Instead, he was a model of respectability: brave, dutiful, and patriotic. The professionalisation of the service, the increased visibility of the Royal Navy and its sailors, and the country's involvement in a world war had ensured that the Admiralty worked relentlessly to cultivate such an image. In the naval town of Plymouth, where Jack ashore had long been regarded as a harmful presence, the Admiralty was aided in its attempts by the town's

Battle of the Falkland Islands, 'Naval Action: Three German Cruisers Sent to the Bottom', *The Western Times*, 10 December 1914).

[80] 'Naval Action', *The Western Times*, 26 January 1915. The reporter mockingly added: 'Germany had far too few cruisers at the outbreak of war. She has fewer still now.' See also 'Our Naval Victory in the North Sea', *Daily Mail*, 25 January 1915.

[81] McMann, 'Jack's Yarns'.

civic leaders and local press, who were equally eager to present Jack in a more wholesome and respectable light to boost the town's reputation.

It would be tempting to suggest, therefore, that the Jack Tar of old had finally been relegated to history. However, while there was certainly a reconstruction of the image of the sailor over the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the reality was far more complex. Certainly, the professionalisation of the service helped to bring about significant changes to how the Royal Navy was viewed, both externally and internally. As Conley has argued, in sharp contrast to the early Victorian era and Georgian era fleets, it was now seen by outsiders as a highly disciplined and organised unit; while internally naval personnel identified themselves as professional servicemen.[82] The town's civic leaders and local press, meanwhile, clearly combined in their attempts to disseminate positive perceptions of the newly professionalised Jack Tar. Popular culture, too, undoubtedly helped reinforce positive images of the Royal Navy sailor in the minds of its sailortown inhabitants. When, in August 1928, therefore, the *Western Times* reported that Plymouth was the second most sober borough in the country, and that it 'owed its sobriety largely to the good conduct of its naval population', one could be forgiven for thinking that the reconstruction of Jack Tar was complete.[83] In fact, from reports such as this, it would appear that Plymouth's rumbustious sailortown environment had been sanitised too.

However, the prevalent cultural image of the sailor as a hard-drinking womaniser continued to hold sway in the popular imagination long into the twentieth century. As the newspaper reports regarding prohibition suggest, despite attempts to curb drinking in the town, sailors visiting Plymouth still frequented the district's many public houses. Popular culture, meanwhile, may well have celebrated an idealised image of Jack Tar, but Union Street's reputation as the 'servicemen's playground' was maintained well into the twentieth century too.[84] In fact, the same 1928 report that boasted of Plymouth's sobriety included comments from a naval officer commending 'the thousands of Jack tars in Plymouth' for 'keep[ing] away from temptation'.[85] The fact that this officer refers to the enticements on offer in the town suggests that while there may well have been some movement toward a more respectable image of Jack Tar as the service professionalised, in reality his and Plymouth's sailortown's notoriety continued, despite aspirational claims to the contrary.

[82] Conley, *From Jack Tar*, pp. 193–195.
[83] Anon., 'Plymouth Sobriety', *The Western Times*, 24 August 1928. Walsall came first.
[84] Anon., 'Union Street'
[85] Anon., 'Plymouth Sobriety'.

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CHAPTER 11

The Use of 'Local Colour' and History in Promoting the Identity of Port Cities: The Case of Durban, c.1890s–1950s

Vivian Bickford-Smith

Jim Dyos, founding father of British urban history, argued that cities have commonly acknowledged 'individual characteristics'.[1] Dyos did not substantially pursue this observation. Yet most of us would accept that such characteristics, though based on material realities, gain popularity and possible historical salience because they are promoted and maintained in public imagination—albeit some might be subject to contestation or change over time—through forms of literary, oral, and visual representation. Distinctive city identities are promoted through the media and by word of mouth.

Promoters of city identities have included the likes of travel writers, city historians, novelists, painters, and, in the modern era, photographers and film makers; with the appearance of the latter two forms of communication coinciding in South Africa with the emergence of its first substantial cities. Importantly, such promoters have also included amateur and professional place sellers keen to attract tourists, investors, or additional inhabitants. As Stephen Ward has argued, such place sellers will create

[1] H. J. Dyos (ed.) (1968) *The Study of Urban History* (London: Edward Arnold), p. 15.

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some unifying myth about modern places and their 'uniqueness', however objectively complex cities have become.[2]

This chapter examines varieties of literary and visual productions that popularised ideas about Durban, a major port city on South Africa's Indian Ocean coast. Doing so demonstrates that those who sought to convey Durban's identity—and this surely holds true for all port cities—did so not only by describing its particular topography, architecture, history, and functions, but also by describing its 'local colour'.[3] Local colour refers to the supposedly unique customs, manner of speech, dress, or other special features of its inhabitants.

From the perspective of white visitors or residents, describing the local colour of colonial port cities or port cities with a colonial past, was often about describing local inhabitants of colour. The irony was that many of the elements of 'local colour' thus described were the result of transnational processes. Before air travel, port cities were the pre-eminent sites of international cultural exchange, as well as of cosmopolitan encounter and racial miscegenation. Such exchange and miscegenation produced in many port cities both cultural and 'racial' hybridity, processes perhaps more appropriately termed creolisation.

It was not so much perceived physical difference such as darker skin that warranted the attention of white visitors. Seemingly more significant was the distinct, colourful, outward appearance that went beyond the anatomical. Local colour accounts focussed on perceived difference in dress, adornments and appendages, behaviour, and tastes. In doing so, they are reminiscent of accounts of Venetian gondoliers or London cockneys.[4] The representation of cockneys was analysed several decades ago by Gareth Stedman Jones. His conclusions have informed my understanding of how local colour has been used in Durban.

What follows is a brief history of the early decades of Durban's existence. Knowing something of Durban's history, and especially how racial identities came to be underpinned by social geography, helps to explain

[2] S. V. Ward (1998) *Selling Places: The Marketing and Promotion of Towns and Cities 1850–2000* (London: Spon Press).

[3] 'Local Colour', *Oxford Dictionary of English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 1028.

[4] For an account of how local colour understood in this fashion was used in the promotion of another South African port city, Cape Town, see V. Bickford-Smith (2012), 'Providing Local Colour? "Cape Coloureds", Cockneys and the Identity of Cape Town from the late nineteenth century to the 1970s', *Journal of Urban History* 38:1, 133–51.

how the popular was put in both its social and spatial place from a white middle-class perspective. This perception meant that city boosters felt able to use local colour to promote Durban's identity by the beginning of the twentieth century.[5]

Durban came into existence as an offshoot of a British settlement at the Cape. Initially called Port Natal and situated on the northern shore of the Bay of Natal, British traders and adventurers were allowed by the Zulu King Shaka to settle in a few 'kafir huts' made of wattle and daub to the south of his powerful kingdom in 1824. The early years of Durban's existence were precarious and saw conflict between British settlers and both Zulus and Boer *voortrekkers*, Dutch or Afrikaans-speaking migrants escaping British rule in the Cape Colony. Port Natal's inhabitants unilaterally renamed their settlement Durban in 1835, after the Cape's British Governor Sir Benjamin D'Urban, largely in the hope that annexation by Britain and consequent greater security would ensue.

This happened in 1843 after the Boers had almost seized control of the town. In 1854, now officially named Durban, it had a settler population of 1200 and was granted municipal government.[6] Initially Natal had a nonracial franchise similar to the Cape's. Yet Natal's white settlers were more vulnerable to electoral racial arithmetic than their counterparts in the Cape, and swiftly passed laws that severely restricted the possibility of African qualification.[7]

Wealthier whites also established a racialised 'popular in its place' by making use of topography to maintain social superiority over black Durban residents. Many commenced this process by residing on Durban's four hundred foot Berea ridge that provided elevation above the town's burgeoning cosmopolitan mixture of less wealthy whites, Indians, and

[5] G. Stedman Jones (1989) 'The "Cockney" and the Nation, 1780-1988', in D. Feldman and G. Stedman Jones (eds.), *Metropolis London: Histories and Representations since 1800* (London: Routledge), pp. 272–324.

[6] F. Stark (1960) *Durban* (Johannesburg: Felstar), pp. 14–27.

[7] T. R. H. Davenport (1991) *South Africa: A Modern History* 4th Edition (London: Macmillan), p. 103. The restriction of the vote to very few Africans was accomplished by 1865 through a combination of an Exemption Law and a Native Franchise Act of Byzantine complexity. The former required any African wishing to be exempted from 'Native Law' and thereby eligible to vote to produce proof of literacy and take an oath of allegiance; the latter stated that to be considered for the vote Africans had to have been residents of Natal for 12 years, have had proof of exemption from Native Law for seven years and had the approval of three Whites whose support was endorsed by a magistrate. Even after all of this, their admission to the electoral roll was still at the discretion of the Lieutenant-Governor.

Africans. The judgements of renowned visitors such as British novelist Anthony Trollope helped confirm the Berea's elite residential reputation:

> 'Immediately west of the town …is the hill called the Berea on and about which the more wealthy inhabitants of Durban have built their villas. Some few of them are certainly among the best houses in South Africa, and command views down upon the town and sea which would be very precious to many an opulent suburb in England. Durban is proud of its Berea and the visitor is taken to see it as the first among the sights of the place.'[8]

Anglophon e educational and religious institutions were duly established on or near the Berea from the late nineteenth century onward that reinforced a sense of white British identity among its inhabitants. This was aided by the fact that Durban was the one South African city in which English-speaking whites of British extraction enduringly outnumbered their Dutch or Afrikaans-speaking counterparts.[9]

Sugar plantations, which provided Durban's main export commodity, were worked by indentured Indian immigrants brought to Natal by the colonial government in large numbers from 1860. After 5 years these immigrants, mostly men, gained the right to stay in Natal as free people. Many sought economic opportunities in Durban. Besides the ex-indentured, free or 'passenger' Indians, often experienced small traders, also came to Natal's main port after 1869.[10] Indians gravitated to the Grey Street area to the northwest of the town's business district, soon pejoratively dubbed the Coolie Location by white Durbanites, even though some whites and Africans lived there.[11] Indians also lived in a large 'Coolie Barracks' as well as private accommodation. Comprehensive official segregation was prevented because the British Imperial government opposed legislation

[8] A. Trollope ([1877] 1987) *South Africa* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton), p. 201.

[9] A. Macmillan (1936) *Durban Past and Present* (Durban: William Brown and Davis); H. Jennings (1966) *The D.H.S Story 1866–1966* (Durban: Durban High School and Old Boys' Memorial Trust).

[10] J. F. Ingram and F. A. Sams (1899) *The Story of An African Seaport: Being the History of the Port and Borough of Durban, The Seaport of Natal* (Durban: G. Coester); Stark, *Durban*, pp. 28–34; B. Freund (2000) 'The City of Durban: Towards a Structural Analysis of the Economic Growth and Character of a South African City', in D. Anderson and R. Rathbone (eds.), *Africa's Urban Past* (Oxford and Portsmouth, NH: James Currey and Heinemann), p. 149.

[11] F. Meer (1969) *Portrait of Indian South Africans* (Durban: Avon House), p. 188. They had been moved there from their previous more central site in Gardener Street.

overtly discriminating against fellow British citizens. After Natal obtained responsible government in 1893, Britain paid far less attention to Indian rights, and the Natal parliament was able to pass legislation disenfranchising both Indian and African voters. Further legislation allowed not only the arbitrary refusal of trade licenses to Indians but also restriction on Indian immigration.[12]

The third major component of Durban's population was African and largely Zulu-speaking who were in a large majority in the colony from its inception. This led the British administration to assert political and social control over them through indirect rule and spatial separation, ostensibly to protect African society from exposure to European influences and land-grabbing. Night curfews were imposed on Africans who came to Durban.[13] Once there, Africans often sought short-term casual work stevedoring at the docks, as day labourers in the building industry, in domestic service, and as rickshaw pullers.[14] A further possibility was self-employment in the informal sector, as small-scale traders or beer brewers.[15]

To control the rate of African migration to Durban, a day labourer or *togt* system was introduced in 1874 by the Natal government that required payment of fees, registration, and the wearing of badges by African employees. The municipality, equally concerned about social control within its boundaries, yet representing employers keen to ensure a cheap labour supply, made the registration of domestic servants compulsory and established single-men's barracks to house day labourers.[16] The passing of the Natal Beer Act in 1908 provided the means to finance more compre-

[12] M. W. Swanson (1983), '"The Asiatic Menace": Creating Segregation in Durban, 1870-1900', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 16:3, 401–21.

[13] N. Worden (2000) *The Making of Modern South Africa*, (Oxford: Blackwell), pp. 71–2; Davenport, *South Africa*, p. 101.

[14] R. Posel (1996) 'Amahashi: Durban's Ricksha Pullers', in P. Maylam and I. Edwards (eds.), *The People's City: African Life in Twentieth Century Durban* (Pietermaritzburg and Portsmouth NH: University of Natal Press and Heinemann), pp. 202–221. Rickshaws were first introduced to Durban by sugar magnate Marshall Campbell. See W. P. M. Henderson (1904) *Durban: Fifty Years' Municipal History* (Durban: Robinson).

[15] P. Maylam (1996) 'Introduction' in Maylam and Edwards, *The People's City*, pp. 3–6; P. La Hausse (1996), 'The Struggle for the City: Alcohol, the Ematsheni and Popular Culture in Durban, 1902-1936', in Maylam and Edwards, *The People's City*, pp. 33–66.

[16] M. W. Swanson (1976), '"The Durban System": Roots of Urban Apartheid in Colonial Natal', *African Studies*, 35, pp. 3–5; La Hausse, 'Struggle for the City', pp. 39–47; Davenport, *South Africa*, p. 102.

hensive segregation of Africans.[17] The Act gave the Durban municipality a monopoly on the production and sale of 'traditional' beer. This was now sold in beer halls under its control, while rendering domestic brewing by Africans illegal. Based on proceeds from municipal beer sales together with fines, rental, and license payments by Africans, the 'Durban System' financed the growth of African urban residential segregation throughout southern Africa.[18]

Before the 1880s, Durban fared poorly in most external depictions. The insubstantial frontier nature of the place was captured in several sketches and articles in the *Illustrated London News* (*ILN*) in the 1850s.[19] For Trollope in the 1870s, the Berea had been Durban's only positive feature. Otherwise his comments were largely disparaging. The town had a 'reputation for heat' and mosquitoes, and should not be visited in summer. Shifting sandbars, the Durban 'Bar', also blocked the direct access of ships to Durban's harbour. Passengers and cargo had to be offloaded and taken to shore by smaller vessels, a serious impediment to trade and an unnerving experience for many travellers, including Trollope. Extensive dredging was necessary before sizeable ships were able to enter the Bay and dock in the harbour itself by the 1890s.[20]

In the course of the previous decade, municipal improvements along British lines were not only applauded in the local press, but began to produce more flattering external reports. The *ILN* referred approvingly to a *Natal Mercury* special issue of 1885 on the opening of Durban's first Town Hall that claimed the city had at last 'reached the age of architecture'.[21] The favourable comments in the 1890s of American author Mark Twain reflected the substantial changes that had occurred since Trollope's visit.

[17] A system emulated in Dar es Salaam and other cities in British Africa. See J. Willis (2007) 'Unpretentious Bars: Municipal monopoly and independent drinking in colonial Dar es Salaam', in J. R. Brennan, A. Burton and Y. Lawi (eds.) *Dar es Salaam: Histories from an Emerging African Metropolis* (Dar es Salaam and Nairobi: Mkuki na Nyota and The British Institute in Eastern Africa), pp. 157–74.

[18] Willis, 'Unpretentious Bars', pp. 174–6. See also, La Hausse, 'Struggle for the City', pp. 33–66.

[19] 'Emigration to Natal', *Illustrated London News* 16th March 1850; 'Entrance of the First Steamer into Port Natal', *Illustrated London News*, 6th November 1852; 'West Street in D'urban: From an Original Sketch', *Illustrated London News*, 6th January 1855; 'West-Street D'urban, Natal', *Illustrated London News*, 27th June 1857.

[20] See Trollope, *South Africa*, pp. 193–4.

[21] *Natal Mercury* 28th October 1885, cited in the *Illustrated London News* 16th January 1886.

Twain thought that Durban was a 'neat and clean town. One notices that without having his attention drawn to it'.[22] Durban was benefiting hugely in terms of economic and demographic growth from being the port city closest to the riches of the Witwatersrand gold mines. It was able both to attract industrial investment and to sell itself as a convenient holiday destination for the Rand's rapidly growing white population that led it to becoming South Africa's second largest manufacturing centre in the twentieth century. Increased municipal revenues had enabled further tidying of the city centre. Steamers of considerable size could now pass the Bar and dock alongside the wharfs.[23] Like Trollope, Twain praised the Berea. However what really caught his attention were rickshaws 'drawn by splendidly built black Zulus, so overflowing with strength, seemingly, that it is a pleasure, not a pain, to see them snatch a rickshaw along'.[24]

Twain had identified what subsequently became the leading and nigh constant local colour element in Durban's place description and promotion for the next 80 years. Rickshaws had only made their appearance in Durban in 1893, a few years before his visit. The first vehicles had been imported from Japan; thereafter they were manufactured locally. To attract custom, especially the custom of tourists, some rickshaw pullers adopted eye-catching headgear and other adornments that grew increasingly elaborate.[25] Rickshaw pullers duly found their way into Joseph Ingram's *The Story of an African Seaport* of 1899, in a photograph and comment that they had become 'an important feature in every street scene … [a few years ago] to ride in a handcart drawn by a feather-bedecked barbarian would have been regarded by respectable burgesses as preposterous'.[26] *African Seaport* was an officially sanctioned history, the first of its kind for a South African city. Its appearance reflected the increased market for such publications, and was but one of several books by Ingram on Natal's history. In compiling his material, Ingram had the full cooperation of port, railway, and Town Council officials in a collaboration that formed part of South African place-selling efforts up to the 1960s.

[22] M. Twain (1897), *Following the Equator: A Journey Around the World*, (Hartford, CONN: American Publishing), p. 644.

[23] Ingram, *Story of an African Seaport*, pp. 62–91.

[24] Twain, *Following the Equator*, p. 644.

[25] Ingram, *Story of an African Seaport*, p. 109 (illustration on opposite page); Henderson, *Durban*, p. 341; Posel, "Rickshaw-pullers".

[26] Ingram, *Story of an African Seaport*, p. 27 and 109; the illustration of a rickshaw puller is opposite page 109.

Like almost all South African city histories before the Soweto uprising of the 1970s, Ingram's book told a story of progress. A collage of photographs of past mayors of Durban formed his frontispiece and set the tone for what followed. Ingram provided extensive details on municipal development, explained how urban beautification was financed from a public improvement account, and how the port had become 'an entrepôt to the vast trade resources of the sub-continent of Africa'.[27] A short final section focussed on contemporary Durban and highlighted services offered by local businesses, hotels, and the newly constructed Beach Tea Room.

African Seaport was meant to be a testament to British colonial achievement. One passage overtly asserted 'British Rights to the Seaport'. Ingram proudly described Durban as the most British of South African cities, with magnificent new buildings that were the product of the nation's mercantile enterprise. He concluded that Durban had 'a certain and brilliant future'.[28] George Russell's *Old Durban* promoted Durban as British in even more overtly jingoistic fashion. Both books presumably did so in part because they appeared on the eve of the Boer War that began in 1899. *Old Durban* was also a city history, written by one of Durban's early settlers and aimed primarily at fellow British residents of the town. Russell's stated intention was to record 'the struggles, the difficulties, and the victories of those early days' that would demonstrate to those reading it to whom they owed 'the prosperity of the beautiful town which is their heritage'.[29] As such, *Old Durban* was another story of progress, similar in structure and tone to many pioneer histories of Johannesburg.

Russell opened his story with the idea that the Phoenicians might have visited the Bay of Natal area. This was attempting to make Durban seem more important by linking it to classical times, in keeping with many eighteenth-century histories of British towns.[30] Russell likened the arrival of groups of British settlers in the mid-nineteenth century to that of Romans splashing ashore in ancient Britain. He argued that British colonists had a right to Durban because it had been 'squarely traded, bought and paid for' in a deal with Shaka. A sense of Britishness was maintained even in the early days by celebrations of royal occasions like the Queen's

[27] Ingram, *Story of an African Seaport*, preface.

[28] Ingram, *Story of an African Seaport*, p.

[29] G. Russell (1899) *The History of Old Durban and Reminiscences of an Emigrant of 1850* (Durban: P. Davis), p. xiv.

[30] See R. Sweet (1997) *The Writing of Urban Histories in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press).

birthday, and Russell revelled in the story of the British relief of Durban, and in denouncing the 'cowardly' tactics of the Boers who 'wanted the country for themselves'.

Old Durban contains many of the topics and anecdotes recounted within a tale of gradual progress that reappear in many subsequent Durban histories and guidebooks. It tells of early makeshift housing, humble diets, and close encounters with wild animals, explains the naming of streets and other parts of the town, and recalls numerous firsts, whether this be a public ball, horse race, steamer, tug, bank, club, or execution. Russell concluded by suggesting that Durban was now 'the most progressive seaport town of South Africa, a fitting replica of the Carthage of the North', and by reminding his readers that not long ago 'Durban was the shelter of wild beasts and birds, the hunter and the savage'. One of Russell's last statements was against miscegenation. He hoped that 'the old British stock' would never be diluted and engender a 'whitey-brown people, subjects of some greater Britain, speaking the language of Volapuk, and ruling the destinies of the borough'.[31]

W.P.M. Henderson's *Durban: Fifty Years' Municipal History* promoted the city in similar British patriotic fashion after the Boer War, when the creation of South Africa under the British flag had become an imminent possibility. Durban was competing with Cape Town to be its major port and seaside resort. All the major cities were seeking immigrants and investment and promoting themselves as akin to modern towns in the Mother Country in the process. Henderson provided a minutely detailed chronology of municipal meetings, decisions, and progress in transforming 'a few wooden huts and shanties … sandy tracks … and primitively sunk wells … on an unhealthy, sand-swept flat into the most beautiful South African seaport town' replete with the amenities of a city in Britain. Illustrations of Durban past and present reinforced the message. In what was an official history to mark the Town Council's golden anniversary, Henderson, like Ingram, featured portraits of large numbers of mayors, councillors, and council officials, British immigrants or of British descent, who contributed to this transformation and affirmed a sense of British identity among its likely readers.[32]

[31] Russell, *Old Durban*; quotations from p. 6, 18, 38, 511. Volapuk was an attempt at constructing an international language by a German Roman Catholic priest, Johann Schleyer, in its ambition a forerunner of other such attempts such as Esperanto.

[32] Henderson, *Durban*; quotations from p. 1 and 361.

It was the use of local colour in tandem with an emphasis on the greater extent of the town's British modernity that helped boosters construct a particular Durban identity in contradistinction to that of rival South African cities. It too longed for the other two largest cities to use local colour as extensively in this fashion, in part because of pre-war social unrest and lack of an equivalent extent of racial social and spatial distance. In particular both Cape Town and Johannesburg had substantial multiracial working-class areas. Boosters consequently played down cosmopolitanism in favour of a stress on their European modernity. Equally, unrest in the form of cross-class riots by the unemployed in Cape Town and violent strikes in Johannesburg meant that the implicit message of local colour as popular in its place was less credible. Only in the interwar period, and particularly after the crushing of an attempted seizure of power in Johannesburg in 1922 by white workers, the Rand Revolt, did black mine workers in ersatz traditional costume for Johannesburg, and the New Year Carnival of working-class coloured inhabitants of Cape Town come to prominence in local promotional material.

Once the Boer War ended in 1902, South African cities were competing in a region united under the British flag for British tourists, investment, and immigrants. Durban boosters could more confidently use local colour in promoting their city. Rickshaw pullers consequently were featured again in Henderson's history, as well as many other attractions of the 'most picturesque town' in South Africa. Everything possible had been done to preserve the 'picturesque' through public buildings, the recently completed Victoria Embankment, 'which provides a magnificent promenade along the Bay side', and the Town Gardens and parks.[33] Endorsement of these efforts came from Australian visitor Ambrose Pratt, denouncer in contrast of Johannesburg before the First World War as a New Babylon.[34]

The appearance of *Durban by the Sea: Official Illustrated Handbook*, the city's first guidebook published jointly by Natal Railways and Durban Municipality in 1908, indicated that both internal and overseas tourism was increasing. Local colour along with descriptions of subtropical flora and fauna and plentiful examples of modernity now loomed larger than ever in the guide's description of Durban's attractions. This greater emphasis on local colour was a product in part of changes to the franchise, restriction on Indian immigration, and the introduction of the Durban

[33] Henderson, *Durban*, pp. 360–74; the quotations are from p. 360.
[34] A. Pratt ([1912] 2010) *The Real South Africa*, (Milton Keynes: General Books), p. 46.

System that had seemingly put the popular more firmly in its place. It also reflected a strategy among rickshaw pullers, competing for tourist custom, of adopting an increasingly dramatic appearance. By now they were 'fantastically adorned with plumes, curiously fashioned bracelets of copper wire, and necklaces of bead work' and could be seen alongside 'electric tramcars; the latest design in motors—all these give life to the streets'.[35] Another guidebook offered visitors similarly startling juxtapositions such as an anthropology professor being pulled through the streets by a 'burly Zulu, decked out in all the gaudy trappings of barbarism'.[36]

Both guidebooks depicted Durban as simultaneously modern, with its new town hall 'the most handsome structure on the continent', and enticingly exotic, demonstrating the way that promotional city material recycled and reinforced distinctive characteristics even if the tone varied. The Marine Hotel guide's description was fanciful:

> 'In the main streets a raw Kafir girl in beads and blankets, just in from the kraal, may be seen walking alongside her civilised sister, radian in all the glory of a fashionable European gown, with picture hat and high-heeled shoes to match…a mingling of the most primitive savagery and most advanced civilization … all living in peace and comfort under the same laws, and the protection of the same flag'.[37]

The *Illustrated Handbook*'s was more restrained:

> 'At every turn one is struck by the cosmopolitan air of the town, where the sons of three great continents, besides representatives of almost every civilised and uncivilised nation, live and work in harmony'.[38]

The Marine Hotel guide's title, *Durban, the Brighton of South Africa*, reveals the way publicity material promoted the city in British fashion to potential British residents or tourists as a seaside health resort.[39] Statistics

[35] General Manager of Railways and Durban Corporation (1908) *Durban by the Sea: Official Illustrated Handbook* (Durban: Durban Municipality and Natal Railways), pp. 5–6. Both this early publicity material and post-1922 Durban Publicity Association publications are available in the Durban Municipality, Don Collection, Durban.

[36] J. J. McQuade (c.1910) *Durban: The Brighton of South Africa, a Souvenir from the Marine Hotel* (Durban: Marine Hotel), p. 2, 17 and 18.

[37] McQuade, *Durban*, p. 3.

[38] Durban Corporation, *Durban by the Sea*, p. 6.

[39] Ward, *Selling Places*, pp. 31–82.; J. Urry (2002) *The Tourist Gaze*, (London: Thousand Oaks), p. 20 and 155.

were used to support the claim that Durban's death rate was now 'the lowest in the world', around 5 per 1000 in some monthly returns, 'in spite of a large native and Asiatic population'.[40] This had been achieved through a filtered water supply, the 'almost complete' sewerage system, and the elimination of malaria and other infectious diseases.[41] The use of Brighton was surely meant also to suggest further commonalities in terms of royal association and amenities. So if Queen Victoria had once resided at the Brighton Pavilion, visitors to Durban were informed that her son Prince Alfred had stayed at what became Durban's Royal Hotel. Equally, in the minds of publicists for the Marine Hotel, Durban now boasted its own impressive modern hotels akin to Brighton's Metropole or Grand.[42]

Pratt's *Real South Africa* was a traveller's account that acknowledged the Marine Hotel's line of promotion by also calling Durban 'the Brighton of South Africa'.[43] This angle remained a feature of Durban publicity material after Union. The *Durban Guide* of 1915 boasted that the city had a 'complete sewerage system', no 'dust, fog, mist or mud' and even that it was 'free of slums'. An official visitor's room and enquiry bureau had now been set up opposite the Town Hall, itself 'lasting proof' of the municipality's effort to 'beautify Durban'. Amenities compared well with the best resorts in England: an enclosure for (whites-only) mixed gender bathing, a zoo with 'almost all' African animals, the Victoria Embankment and sea front, and excellent schools, cinemas, theatres, and concert halls.

As well as rickshaw pullers, 'local colour' was provided by the Indian market's 'truly oriental atmosphere', a phrase likely to resonate with ongoing British orientalist fascination. Patriotic Britishness predictably remained part of a guide produced during the First World War. It contained photographs of Dick King, mention of the memorial to those who died for Queen and Country during the Boer War, and comment that the Old Fort 'teems with memories of the early pioneers who fought for liberty'.[44] The Durban Publicity Association (DPA), inaugurated in 1922, continued to make extensive use of local colour in Durban place promotion. In 1926 the DPA's *Delightful Durban* insisted the city was as diverse

[40] Ward, *Selling Places*, p. 8. McQaude, *Durban*, p. 4.

[41] General Manager, South African Railways and Durban Corporation (n.d [c.1914]), *Durban. The White City. Official Illustrated Handbook* (Durban: South African Railways and Durban Corporation), pp. 15–16.

[42] Durban Corporation, *Durban by the Sea*, p. 4, 8, and 9.

[43] Pratt, *The Real South Africa*, p. 46.

[44] Anon. (1915), *Durban Guide* 1915 (Durban: P. Davis), p. 8, 10, and 21.

in terms of race, speech, and dress as London, Paris, and New York. West Street was 'at once [Durban's] … Oxford Street and … Cheapside'. Cosmopolitan juxtapositions followed as in earlier Durban guidebooks. One addition was a passage expressing confidence in the city's racially stratified police force:

> 'to round off the varied kaleidoscope of Durban life, here are Native and Indian policemen, supplementing the European…The Bantu policemen, garbed in neat knickerbockers uniform, carry the native sticks and knobkerries which … they can use with unerring aim and skill;…the Indian police officer is dressed much in the manner of the European constable save that a peaked cap takes the place of the familiar helmet.'[45]

Delightful Durban was one attempt to give the Natal Port a sobriquet in response to Cape Town's Tavern of the Seas or Mother City. Another, not seen as at odds with cosmopolitanism and first coined by Ingram, was 'The Most British of all South African Towns'.

> 'Its people, its buildings, its thoroughfares and parks, its manners and customs, are so inherently British that its very atmosphere seems redolent of the Old Country … it is no foreign or alien city … but a distant branch of "Home", a bit of Britain dumped down amid the splendid, sub-tropical environment of the coastal region of Natal.'[46]

The DPA swiftly realised that overseas visitors would rank local colour high among unique attractions of British South African cities. They could not easily compete with northern counterparts in terms of modernity alone, so they needed to be judged by their own unique criteria as well. So it was this seemingly paradoxical combination of Britishness and exotic local colour that continued to be used in the promotion of Durban up to and beyond the Second World War. Even after South Africa became a republic and left the commonwealth in the early 1960s, and thus political ties with Britain sundered, the same combination was used in Durban place promotion, if by then to bolster not so much a British as an anglophone South African identity. In the process, city histories continued to

[45] Durban Publicity Association (DPA) and SAR&H (1926) *Delightful Durban. Sunny South Africa's Seaside Resort* (Durban: DPA), p. 3, 4, and 49.

[46] DPA and SAR&H, *Delightful Durban* (mid-1920s), p. 3. This had much similar material to the 1926 guide, but also new sections including the one cited.

associate progress with this identity, and to do so by drawing distinctions between British or white anglophone South Africans and 'other' residents of Durban. Thus Janie Malherbe's *Port Natal*, published in the mid-1960s,was another story of progress with a clear delineation between an 'us' and 'them'.[47] Given its cost, at R6.75 it was more than £3 at the current exchange rate, and its sponsorship by 33 leading companies, the book's readership was likely to have been the city's white anglophone social elite, despite its production and marketing by a commercial publisher. There is an overt distinction from the start between British and Afrikaner pioneers conveyed by the cover illustrations and a verbal description of these from the dust jacket of the book:

The author tells how from the early years of the last century the 'Seatrekkers' [i.e. the British Settlers] and the Voortrekkers [the Afrikaners], indispensably helped by faithful non-whites, were conjoined in a pioneer community, sharing hardships and fun, and building up what is today the burgeoning, multi-racial city of Durban with nearly 700, 000 inhabitants—the Mecca of tourists and holiday-makers, and largest seaport in Africa.

Although there were significant differences with Russell's *Old Durban*, not least Malherbe's message that the British and Afrikaners (i.e. Boers of old) had been equal partners in building South Africa, one commonality was her stress on Durban's antiquity and antiquities. Malherbe gave a similar highly exaggerated sense to Russell of the antiquity of 'civilized'—meaning non-African—contact and settlement in the geographical area of modern Durban, as well as in her almost obsessively chronicling of 'firsts' in terms of features of the Durban present that had come into existence in a relatively far distant past.

The opening chapter of Malherbe's books describes the legends and documented accounts of Port Natal's 'First Civilized Visitors', beginning with the supposed arrival of Phoenicians in 700 BC, before moving on to the Portuguese and, in the second chapter, discussing the first Dutch settlement that lasted from 1685 to 87. The first 'permanent' white settlement is then dated to the formal claim made by a tiny group of British ivory traders and adventurers in 1824. Yet, as Malherbe's own account reveals, the settlement was temporarily abandoned to a Zulu force in 1838. The Zulus killed the few settlers who stayed, and (a detail omitted in Malherbe's history) dressed their corpses in women's 'gowns and stock-

[47] J. Malherbe (1965) *Port Natal* (Durban: Howard Timmins).

ings', shawls, waistbands, blankets, and sheets—not obviously the actions of people she implicitly included among 'faithful non-whites'.[48] As we saw, the settlement remained tiny and insecure for several decades to come.

So part of Malherbe's effort at building pride in Durban was to exaggerate its antiquity; and part of giving its white citizens a sense of heritage, belonging, and achievement was to combine antiquarianism with a story of progress. This involved separate, reasonably short chapters, chronicling a seemingly endless number of 'firsts' and when they happened, then tracing the history of these events, forms of transport, particular inhabitants, or structures to the present: Durban's first own military regiment; the first Durban July race meeting; the first Grand Balls; the first agricultural show; the first steamships; the first railway; the first Indian immigrant; the first hospital; the first bridge over the Umgeni; the first theatre; and the first air flight in the city. A photograph is included of a Mrs Lily Martin, the first woman in the world to fly a plane, who was born in Durban.[49]

'They', in the form of people described as Indians and Zulus, are predictably almost as marginal to this story as they were in Russell's history. Only 4 of Malherbe's 300 or so pages are spent describing the coming of Indian immigrants to the city. Yet, unlike with *Old Durban*, some Indians and Africans are given names, and shown as being not dissimilar to 'us': Miss Naidoo, who we are told is studying to become a doctor at Dublin University, but who will bring her skills back to help her local community; or Mr Mathis Mathemba and family, examples of the emergence of a successful black business sector consisting largely of building contractors and bottle store owners in the townships, shown in their bright new motor car.[50]

Hence some concession is given to the reality of an Indian and African modernity. Yet what are still more prominent in Malherbe's history, both in size and frequency of illustration, are images of 'tradition' associated since the late nineteenth century with Durban's local colour. These include images of Indians in Saris (including Miss Naidoo) as well as seminaked Zulus, particularly in the form of rickshaw pullers and Zulu dancers.

Images of exotic difference, as well as detailed narration of a pioneer history replete with military conflict between settlers and Zulus, helped preserve an imaginative racial boundary between 'our' modernity

[48] E. Rosenthal (1963), *Schooners and Skyscrapers* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins), p. 60.
[49] Malherbe, *Port Natal*, p. 69, 99, and 193.
[50] Malherbe, *Port Natal*, pp. 102–6 and pp. 267–9.

and 'their' local colour or 'un-progressive' tradition. White British or anglophone history, culture, and achievements were constantly given greater prominence and validation. Residence in separate places—whether in white suburbs such as Berea or in segregated township housing that 'rescued' Africans from shanties—gave additional salience to the imagination of separate collective self-identities.

This brings us back to the matter of explaining the use of local colour in the promotion of Durban. Discovery of exotic 'others' typified many urban as well as colonial encounters by the late nineteenth century, and sometimes in a threatening way. Anglophone middle-class visitors to lower-class and poverty-stricken areas of port cities like London, Sydney, and San Francisco looked for and found exotic 'others', even among those not identified as living in the likes of Chinatowns or coming from an immigrant community. Those who described the lower classes in 'slums' used deliberately sensational language or visual imagery to emphasise perceived abnormalities and differences among their denizens.[51] This would appear to have reflected both the rise of pseudo-Darwinist ideas about inheritable difference that spanned ideas about race and class as well as the popularity and influence of colonial travel literature. It also reflected the changing social demography of nineteenth-century cities facilitated by technological innovations. Railways and trams hastened suburbanisation over greater distances, and thereby greater spatial separation that correlated with class. So for at least some middle- or upper-class British observers, inhabitants of London's East End, for instance, were seen in the late nineteenth century as inherently different and potentially dangerous. Rudyard Kipling likened cockney customs to those of the Barolong. 'Slumlands' were portrayed as being continents apart from middle-class areas, their inhabitants often depicted as being as dissimilar from the observer as anthropophagi. General William Booth of Salvation Army fame certainly thought along these lines as is evident even from the title of his book, *In Darkest England and the Way Out*.[52]

Yet at the same time it was also physical distance that allowed middle-class imagining of some among the lower classes as local colour: the popular in its place in occupational, class, and spatial terms. In South African cities, racial segregation was an attempt to ensure that urban spatial distance was about the practical taming of the black working-class. This would be

[51] See A. Mayne (1993) *The Imagined Slum* (Leicester: Leicester University Press).

[52] For detailed discussion of how the East End of London was perceived in the late nineteenth century, see G. Stedman Jones (1976) *Outcast London* (Harmondsworth: Penguin).

achieved through the regulation and surveillance of places of residence, backed up by effective paramilitary policing techniques.[53] Such taming could then be sold through portrayals of local colour that suggested black acceptance of their situation and social harmony.

The further imaginative taming of the working class that reference to local colour entailed was facilitated by the particular nature of economic activities in port cities and their consequent social structure. Even if small factories and workshops were plentiful in such places, the presence of an industrial proletariat was strongly diluted both by the seasonality and casualisation of work, especially in dock labour.[54] The focus on rickshaw pullers or Zulu dancers in Durban, who entertained tourists or dressed in fantastic fashion as a way of making money, was a focus on what Stedman Jones dubbed 'people of the market place'.[55] In other words, people seen as local colour were not factory or dock workers more liable to combine in industrial action but those in unthreatening occupations where smiling good humour was necessarily part of the job. This was the case with the likes of cockney costermongers, Venetian gondoliers, or Cape Town's flower sellers. Port cities commonly retained a high proportion of people of the marketplace, in the form of those participating in modest trade of varying kinds, often partially self-employed or self-sufficient, only semiproletarianised. In South African port cities at least, people of the marketplace were noticed by famous visitors like Mark Twain and deployed as local colour by place promoters partly because they could trade, display, and clown in urban spaces more central, observable, and less confined or controlled than those in inland industrial or mining centres like Kimberley or Johannesburg. To reiterate, this clowning and smiling, and the wearing of spectacular dress of one kind or another, were of practical use for those who wished to sell services or commodities.[56] The outward appearance of rickshaw pullers and Zulu dancers also helped to make them less threatening because they could seem to be more rural than urban, only semiproletarianised in another fashion, and perhaps more reminiscent of the 'unspoilt' rural African than of likely urbanised adherents of ideologies

[53] See J. D. Brewer (1994) *Black and Blue: Policing in South Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

[54] As argued in Stedman Jones, *Outcast London*. V. Bickford-Smith (1995) *Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice in Victorian Cape Town, 1875–1902* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) found a similar pattern in this port city.

[55] Stedman Jones, 'The "Cockney"'.

[56] Stedman Jones, 'The "Cockney"'.

such as nationalism or socialism. Rickshaw pullers remained part of the way Durban's distinctiveness was promoted after the Second World War, even as apartheid removals and ideology meant a downplaying of broader cosmopolitanism.

Finally, the fact that Durban was a port city helps to explain the extensively creolised, transnational, spectacular and often quite rapidly changing nature of its 'local colour' manifestations. This was before the faster-paced globalisation of the late twentieth century brought about by the likes of air travel and electronic visual communications, which helped even the playing ground for inland cities in this respect. Local colour distinctiveness here, as in other port cities, was frequently itself a product of this transnationalism as might have been deduced from our descriptions. The vehicles utilised by Durban rickshaw pullers had originated in the Far East. Pullers' dress and adornments were an ersatz combination of African and non-African elements. Durban's local colour was in many ways decidedly unlocal.

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CHAPTER 12

To Be a Sailor's Wife: Ideals and Images of the Twentieth-Century Seafarer's Wife in the Åland Islands

Hanna Hagmark-Cooper

In November 2006 a temporary exhibition called *The Woman and the Sea* opened at the Åland Maritime Museum. It was an exhibition that focussed on the female experience of maritime life, both at sea and on land. It was the story of female sailors, officers, and passengers, and of seafarers' wives onboard and ashore. It is rather telling that it takes a special exhibition to tell the story of maritime women because somehow they are always an exception. At sea, they are an anomaly, as both the ship and the sea belong to the realm of men. Ashore, they are also perceived as different due to their family structure and independent position.[1]

[1] See, for example, D. Kirby and M.-L. Hinkkanen (2000) *The Baltic and the North Seas*, (London: Routledge); I. Kaijser (1997) 'Sjömannens yrke – ur hustruns perspektiv' in N. Storå and K. Montin (eds) *Sjömannen: från livsform till yrke*, (Åbo: Sjöhistoriska museet vid Åbo Akademi); M. Rosenström (1996) *Fartyget, himlen och havet – verklighetsuppfattningen bland sjömän i långfart under segelsjöfartens sista era*, (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland); B. Berggreen (1992) 'Dealing with Anomalies? Approaching Maritime Women' in L. R. Fischer, H. Hamre, P. Holm and J.R. Bruijn (eds) *The North Sea: Twelve Essays on Social History of Maritime Labour*, (Stavanger: Stavanger Maritime Museum); A. van der Veen (1992) 'Independent Willy-Nilly: Fisherwomen on the Dutch North Sea Coast, 1890–1940' in L. R. Fischer *et al* (eds), 1992; C. Sundqvist (1988) 'Kvinnor ombord', *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland*, vol. 73/3.

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Maritime women are conspicuously absent both in women's history and in maritime history. In the case of the latter, most research efforts still centre around economic and structural aspects of the maritime industries, and on the men who worked at sea, on the docks, as shipowners, shipbuilders, brokers, and agents. This is hardly surprising as the maritime industries are and have been extremely male dominated. When women have entered maritime history it has been either as exceptional women in a man's world—for example, as female pirates and women-in-command—or they have been mentioned incidentally in studies concerning maritime communities and the domestic lives of fishermen or seafarers.[2] That said, since the 1990s there has been an increase in studies dealing with women's roles in maritime communities, not only within the field of history but also in anthropological and sociological research.[3] In Sally Coles's anthropological study of the Portuguese fishing community Villa Cha, the focus was on women, work, and social change, while Michelle Thomas's, Helen Sampson's, and Minghua Zhao's sociological study paid attention to the impact of the seafarer's working conditions on his relationship with his partner and children.[4] In the book *Captain Ahab had a Wife*, historian Lisa Norling examined gender dynamics in the American whaling industry during the eighteenth

[2] See, for example, J. Tunstall (1962) *The Fishermen*, (London: MacGibbon and Kee); P. Thompson with T. Wailey and T. Lummis (1983) *Living the Fishing*, (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul); T. Lummis (1985) *Occupation and Society: The East Anglian Fishermen 1880–1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); A .P. Cohen (1987) *Whalsay: Symbol, Segment and Boundary in a Shetland Island Community*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press); D. Cordingly (2002) *Heroines and Harlots: Women at Sea in the Great Age of Sail*, (London: Pan Books).

[3] See, for example, J. Brøgger (1992) *Nazaré: Women and Men in a Pre-Bureaucratic Portuguese Fishing Village*, (Orlando: Harcourt School); M. Thomas, H. Sampson and M. Zhao (2001) 'Behind the Scenes: Seafaring and family life', *Proceedings of SIRC's Second Symposium*, (Cardiff: Cardiff University); M. Creighton and L. Norling (1996) *Iron Men and Wooden Women: Gender and Seafaring in the Atlantic World 1700–1920*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press); I. Kaijser, 2005; C. Sundqvist, 1988; R. Rønning Balsvik (1991) 'Kvinner i nordnorske kystsamfunn', *Historisk tidsskrift*, vol. 70/4; R. Skotheim, 'Female labour in Stavanger 1875–1910' in P. Holm and J. Edwards (1991) *North Sea Ports and Harbours: Adaptations to Change*, (Esbjerg: Fiskeri- og Sjøfartsmuseet); B. Berggreen, 'Dealing with Anomalies?'; A. van der Veen, 'Independent Willy-Nilly: Fisherwomen'; I. Kaijser, 'Sjömannens yrke'.

[4] S. Cole (1991) *Women of the Praia: Work and Lives in a Portuguese Coastal Community*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

and nineteenth centuries.[5] Two further very important contributions to the historiography of maritime women are Ingrid Kaijser's book *Kvinnliga sjömän—finns dom?* (Female seamen—do they exist?) and Lynn Abrams's *Myth and Materiality in a Woman's World*. In Kaijser's book, the complexity of being a woman and a sailor, both in terms of life onboard and life ashore, is thoroughly investigated.[6] Abrams, in turn, describes how Shetland in the nineteenth century became a place where traditional gender roles were questioned. In the absence of men, the women not only maintained family and society, they were also vital actors in the island's economy.[7] The historiography of Åland's maritime pursuits follows the traditional pattern and there is no shortage of literature on the economic and structural nature of the Islands' shipping industry, on famous shipowners, captains, and ships, or on male accounts of life at sea.[8] In contrast, the female experience has been dealt with mainly in fictional and autobiographical works and it was not until the first decade of the twenty-first century that academic attention was afforded to the maritime experiences of Åland women.[9]

The findings presented here are based on a collection of oral interviews and written life stories by 75 women from the Åland Islands, born between 1912 and 1969. They all shared the experience of being or

[5] L. Norling (2000) *Captain Ahab had a Wife: New England Women and the Whale Fishery, 1720–1870*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press).

[6] I. Kaijser (2005) *Kvinlinga Sjömän - Finns Dom,?* (Stockholm: Statens Maritima Museer).

[7] L. Abrams (2005) *Myth and Materiality in a Woman's World: Shetland, 1800–2000*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press).

[8] See, for example, D. Papp (1977), *Åländsk allmogeseglation*, (Stockholm: Raben and Sjögren); G. Kåhre and K. Kåhre (1988) *Den åländska sjöfartens historia*, (Mariehamn: Ålands Nautical Club r.f.); J. Harberg (1995) *Åländsk sjöfart med maskindrivna fartyg*, (Mariehamn: Ålands Nautical Club r.f.); M. Rosenström, 1996; H. Svensson (1998) *Algot - en obändig ålänning*, (Mariehamn: Mariehamns stad); G. Sundberg (2001) *Lundqvist rederierna – Ångfartygs aktiebolaget Alfa & Rederiaktiebolaget Hildegaard*, (Mariehamn: Lundqvist Rederierna Ab); J. Örjans (2002) *Boken om Pommern*, (Mariehamn: Mariehamns stad).

[9] See, for example, S. Salminen (1936) *Katrina*, (Helsingfors: Schildt); P. Bourne Eriksson (1958) *The Duchess; the Life and Death of the Herzogin Cecilie*, (London: Secker and Warburg); A. Blomqvist (1968) *Vägen till Stormskäret*, (Helsingfors: Söderström); U.-L. Lundberg (1989) *Leo*, (Stockholm: Alba); G. Högman (1990) *Den åländska kvinnans historia*, (Mariehamn: Ålands kulturstiftelse); H. Hagmark-Cooper (2008) *Avsked och återsende: sjömanshustruns liv under 1900-talet*, (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland); H. Hagmark-Cooper (2012) *To be a Sailor's Wife*, (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing).

having been married to a seaman.[10] In the analysis of the material, the respondents were divided into three groups, representing three generational groups of women. Generation One (G1) consisted of 18 women, born between 1912 and 1935. Their husbands were retired and the children had long since moved out. Generation Two (G2) was made up of 28 women, born between 1940 and 1954. Their husbands were still working but they had no children living at home. The 29 women in Generation Three (G3) were born between 1948 and 1969. Their husbands were active seamen and they had children living at home. The women in the study built their life stories around four basic questions. In the first question, the respondents were asked about the expectations they had had of a future life as a seafarer's wife, and to what extent those expectations had been met. Following that, the women were asked to first describe their daily lives while their husbands were at sea, and then how it changed when they returned. Finally, the fourth question was concerned with the impact being married to a sailor had had on the women's opportunities to work and pursue hobbies, as well as on domestic finances and raising a family with an intermittently absent partner. The idea of the seafarer's wife's supposed independence was also raised, and it is that issue which will be discussed in more detail here.

The Sailor's Wife and the Åland Identity

The Åland Islands is fundamentally a maritime community, and as such the sea constitutes a strong symbolic element in the construction of identity. In 1997, to mark the 75th anniversary of Åland's autonomy, the annual publication of the Åland board of antiquities, *Åländsk odling*, had 'Åland identity' as its theme. In the introduction, Professor Bo Lönnqvist writes that the Åland Islanders perceive the sea as a source of strength in many ways. He further contests that the word 'sea' in itself has a prominent position in the Åland vocabulary; that the word works as a tool in the construction of a specific Åland identity.[11] Fifty individuals, representing different professions and population groups in and outside Åland, were interviewed for the book. With the maritime industries employing a large number of the population, it was not surprising to find a sea captain, a chief engineer, and a shipowner among the 50 respondents. More noteworthy, however,

[10] To simplify, this includes common-law marriages and cohabitees.

[11] B. Lönnqvist (1997) 'En icke ålänning' in *Åländsk odling*, vol. 57, p. 13.

was the fact that one of the interviewees had been given the title 'seafarer's wife'. She was the only person to be identified through her spouse's profession rather than through her own. The same peculiarity was observable in a special exhibition at the Åland Museum in the summer of 2000, called *Åländska kvinnoporträtt* (Åland women portraits). There were writers, labourers, politicians, and doctors among the 39 women featured in the exhibition, as well as two seafarers' wives. Again, these two women were the only ones who were defined as somebody's wife, almost as if being a seafarer's wife was an occupation in its own right. This is an indication of how significant the seafarer's wife is in the gallery of Åland national characters, how important she is as a symbol of Åland identity, and just how good a representative of the community she is perceived to be.

It is a popular belief on Åland that the islands' women are more independent than women who live in, for example, mainland Finland and Sweden, and that the reason behind it is that the islands' men have always worked at sea while the women have taken responsibility for home, family, farm, and animals. The seafarer's wife is often presented as a female ideal and there are a lot of stories that strengthen the image of the strong and enduring woman, who despite very harsh conditions manages to create a home for herself, her children, and her roving husband. These stories are often based in a time when seafaring was more closely connected to farming, and when fishing was still the main source of income in the outer archipelago. It is worthwhile noticing that the iconic status of the seafarer's wife isn't merely a modern social construction but has a long-standing tradition. In a travel journal from 1871, a visitor noted that Åland women, more than women elsewhere, had to learn to deny themselves a lot:

> She is hardly even fully aware that she owns a friend for life, before he is pulled away from her. Out at sea is his home, there he wrestles with dangers and maybe with death, while she works in the quiet home and hardly has time to think of the one she loves out there, and for whom worry fills her bosom.[12]

Although not all women in Åland were seafarers' wives, the author of the quote above chose to let the circumstances of the seafarer's wife symbolise those of all Åland women. There are other stories too, that with comical undertones reveal the independent nature of the seafarer's wife.

[12] E. Nervander (1983, orig. 1872) *Sommarresor på Åland, Åländska klassiker I*, (Mariehamn: Ålands litteraturförening) p. 62 (author's translation).

In a well-known local anecdote, a seaman is at home on one of his short and rare visits. One day he accompanies his wife to the local grocery store. Upon her return home the wife is struck by a feeling that she has forgotten something. She has to think for a while until she realises that her husband is not with her. She returns to the shop and finds him, lost and confused, among the shelves. The story alters slightly depending on who is telling it. Sometimes the couple has been to the cinema or the theatre, but the point of the story is always the same; the woman is so used to doing everything on her own that she forgets that her husband is with her, and the man is so unfamiliar with life ashore that he is lost without his wife as his chaperone. To what extent this story is true is debatable, but rather than being taken at face value, it should be read as yet another way in which the ideal of the independent seafarer's wife is used as a symbol to strengthen the prevalent dominant discourse of Åland as different and apart from the neighbouring mainlands of Finland and Sweden.

Fictional works have effectively contributed to strengthening the discourse of resilient maritime women, where heroines like Sally Salminen's Katrina and Anni Blomqvist's Maja are iconised. However, the same attitude is also obvious in nonfictional writing. When reading Gyrid Högman's history of Åland women, it is the discourse of hard-working, capable women that flows off the pages in the chapter on maritime women.[13] The existence of a culturally endorsed, strong female icon can be empowering, and it provides women with a valid context for their own stories. However, the myth may equally well have a negative impact on women, who for various reasons cannot or do not want to identify with it.[14]

The Independent Sailor's Wife

The current scholarly debate as to the degree to which nineteenth-century maritime women can be regarded as independent has been discussed by David Kirby and Merja-Liisa Hinkkanen. Despite considerable disagreement on the issue, the broadly held viewpoint is that although maritime women were perhaps more independent than other women, they were forced to be so by the circumstances in which they lived, because, in the nineteenth century, coastal as well as other communities were still fundamentally

[13] Salminen, *Katrina*; Blomqvist, *Vägen till Stormskäret*; Högman, *Den åländska kvinnans historia*.

[14] Abrams, *Myth and Materiality*, p 37.

patriarchal, 'where women were backers-up to the male work'.[15] Kirby and Hinkkanen have further pointed to the fact that there were substantial differences between maritime communities within the North Sea and Baltic region. In the Dutch fishing communities of Vlaardingen, Katwijk, and Scheveningen, for instance, Annemiek van der Veen's research demonstrates that fisherwomen felt that their independence was a heavy burden and were quite happy to give it up on their husbands' return.[16] David Papp proposes that even if some enterprising seafarers' wives took the opportunity to 'develop their innate potential' in their husbands' absence, the patriarchal character of the maritime community was generally maintained. However, Papp also notes that the conflict between upkeep of traditional gender roles on the one hand and enforced modification of them due to the men's absences on the other at times led to tension in the social fabric, as not all women were prepared to give up the power they had wielded during the husband's long periods away at sea.[17] Paul Thompson's research into Britain's fishing communities in East Anglia and the Shetland Islands has similarly revealed that women had 'the possibility of achieving, within the fishing family, a degree of independence and power which is unusual'. He points out that this tendency could also be found elsewhere in the world, for example in Japan, Malaysia, Ghana, Spain, and in coastal regions of Scandinavia. He further states, however, that women did not automatically gain increased independence or respect just because their husbands were absent or because they had a large economic responsibility. Thompson concludes by stating that 'the power and responsibility, in short, is shaped by a complex interaction of economy, social attitudes, law, religious doctrine and family need—within which the formal law, local convention and actual practice of inheritance are simply one significant and revealing element'.[18] Sally Cole cites Thompson, together with Jan Brøgger and Carmelo Lisón-Tolosana, in her discussion of the construction of the maritime households in Vila Chã, Portugal, noting:

> Although it has generally been assumed that a pattern of male inheritance and virilocal residence prevails in fishing communities […] there is abundant evidence that a pattern of women's inheritance of property and uxorilocal

[15] Kirby and M.L. Hinkkanen, *The Baltic*, p. 240.

[16] van der Veen, 'Independent Willy-Nilly'.

[17] D. Papp (1985) 'Gode Make! Min Gumma! En brevväxling mellan Tilda Mattsson och hennes man skepparen Matts Mattsson' in *Skärgård*, vol. 8/2, pp. 40–41.

[18] Thompson, *Living the Fishing*, pp. 177–178.

> and uxorivicinial residence similar to the pattern found in Vila Chã is common in many of the world's smaller fishing communities […][19]

The matrilocality was also evident in Grimsby and Hull in Britain, according to the findings of David J. Starkey and Craig Lazenby, and Tunstall contends that the wives of Hull fishermen turned to their mothers for 'understanding, companionship, help with her children, and a chance of escaping sometimes from what is otherwise the prison of her home'.[20] In the Swedish community of Tjörn, seafarers' wives were incorporated into a collective and supported each other while their husbands were at sea. This tradition faded in the 1960s as the structure of shipping changed and an increasing number of women went into paid employment.[21]

As for the question whether seafarers' wives in the Åland Islands in the twentieth century regarded themselves as more independent than other women, the answer was not as simple as one might have assumed. It was not possible to place the respondents' attitudes into straightforward categories of 'independent' and 'not independent', as the word in itself could be used to describe a number of different things. It was used to denote self-confidence and personal integrity, as well as to refer to an ability to cope on one's own, of being dextrous and a practical problem-solver. Moreover, some women regarded independence as synonymous with being economically self-sufficient.

Despite many differing attitudes, an attempt was made to sort the reconstructions into thematic groups. Of the 75 life stories that were collected, 62 dealt in some way with the idea of independence, and these accounts were placed into three groups. The first and biggest category consisted of reconstructions that predominantly followed the discourse of the strong and independent seafarer's wife, made thus through her experiences of maritime life. This category comprised 29 accounts. In the narratives of the second category, which consisted of 19 accounts, the respondents also presented themselves as independent. The significant difference was that they did not necessarily feel more independent than any other group of women. Their sense of strength and assurance did not only stem from

[19] Cole, *Women of the Praia*, p. 59.

[20] D. J. Starkey & C. Lazenby (2000). 'Altered Images: Representing the trawling in the late twentieth century' in D. J. Starkey, C. Reid & N. Ashcroft (eds.) (2000). *England's Sea Fisheries: The Commercial Sea Fisheries of England and Wales since 1300*, (London: Chatham House Publishers), p. 171; Tunstall, *Fishermen* , p. 161.

[21] Kaijser, 'Sjömannens yrke', pp. 42–43.

their maritime experiences, but also from other factors, such as inherent personality traits and nonmaritime events. Some of these reconstructions stated that the respondent's inborn autonomy was the sole source of independence and thus totally unrelated to her being a seafarer's wife. The third group, which was made up of 14 narratives, contrasted with the two previous types. In six of these accounts, the respondents claimed that they were not at all independent, at least not in the sense of possessing the vast reservoir of confidence generally associated with maritime women. In the remaining eight accounts, the respondents either stated that their independence was none the greater than any other woman's or they were unsure as to what extent their situation differed from that of women whose husbands worked ashore. Finally, it should be pointed out that although the reason for a woman's independence was not always explained through her maritime lifestyle but was said by the respondents to be either innate or had been gained through other experiences—about two-thirds of the women did imply that being on their own had given them the practical skills to cope with the daily management of the household, even if it had not always given them confidence and self-assurance.

The Traditional Ideal

The stereotypical characterisation of a seafarer's wife among Åland Islanders is that of a strong-minded and resolute woman, multiskilled as well as self-confident and perhaps even somewhat domineering. This image was adopted by just under two-fifths of the respondents in this study. It was not, however, exclusive to Åland women. This was also the image to which the older maritime women in Cole's study likened themselves, and Kaijser argues that because seafarers' wives spent so much time alone and had to assume greater responsibility than other women, they gained self-confidence and a very independent position.[22] Although this attitude was significant in all three generational groups, it was more common among the older women. Both in Generation One and Generation Two, nearly half of the reconstructions followed this line of reasoning, compared to less than a third of the accounts in Generation Three. Typical of these reconstructions was the tendency to state that the respondent's particular circumstances as a seafarer's wife was the reason behind her independence, implying that she would have been less accomplished had her husband

[22] Cole, *Women of the Praia*, pp. 28–41; Kaijser, 'Sjömannens yrke', p. 39.

worked ashore. The women stated how they had adjusted to their situation and, in doing so, had learnt how to cope on their own. Some stressed their transformation into a seafarer's wife, describing how they had grown with the responsibilities put on them. Others contrasted their situation with that of women whose men worked ashore, emphasising the increased responsibility that a seafarer's wife had to shoulder. For example, one respondent noted: 'It is self-evident that we as seafarers' wives become more independent. We have a completely different responsibility for children, house and home etc. And you have to make your own decisions'.[23] An interesting aspect here is that the respondent was not only referring to herself but appeared to speak for seafarers' wives as a collective. In doing so, she intuitively suggested that they all shared the same experience. This is evidence of how ingrained the stereotypical image of the seafarer's wife was in Åland society, for although all of them were forced to cope on their own as best they could while their husbands were at sea, it did not, as we shall see, necessarily make them feel any more independent.

Compared to the other two generational groups, fewer Generation Three women presented themselves in accordance with the dominant discourse. However, those who did, did so wholeheartedly. They would make it obvious that they thrived in their role and that they would not want to change anything. One respondent proudly proclaimed: 'I think I'm more independent than women whose men work ashore and I think that is my strength; as a matter of fact I wouldn't want to change anything'.[24] Another woman wrote:

> I consider myself more independent than many other women. You are forced to deal with so much more when you are a seafarer's wife. Many who have their men on 'home turf' take so much for granted and whine over trifles, for example that the husband is going away for 1–2 days. I feel strong! I would not want to exchange my seaman![25]

In both accounts, the women stressed that they 'wouldn't want to change anything'. This was a powerful way of signalling their contentment with their situation. It was almost as if they felt that they had to prove something to the rest of society. And admittedly, despite being one of the most common professions among men in the Åland Islands, seafarers were

[23] G3088 (b. 1954).
[24] G3070 (b. 1952).
[25] G3081(b. 1960).

still attributed with some of the old vices associated with the profession—drinking and womanising in particular. There was ample evidence that the wives were faced with insinuations from people around them doubting their partners' character. Maybe this was why they felt they had to state their contentment so clearly. Age was another factor. At least one older respondent pointed out that she was more remonstrative when she was younger. With time she mellowed and accepted her situation, recognised her limitations, and made the best of what she had.[26]

Perhaps the 'mellowing with age' syndrome explains why older women usually were more ambivalent when they discussed their independence. Despite claiming that they generally felt more independent than women who had their partners at home, women in Generations One and Two were more willing to acknowledge that they too experienced moments of insecurity, usually pertaining to practical issues such as house maintenance and child rearing.[27] In cases where the respondents appeared very self-sufficient, they still recognised that the strong sense of independence they, as seafarers' wives, felt they possessed was more complex than just being able to cope well on one's own. When the husband returned home, some women found it difficult to let go of their autonomy, continuing to make all the decisions without much consideration for the seafarer's opinions. During the seafarer's active period this was more easily overcome, but when the seafarer went ashore permanently, for whatever reason, the situation became more difficult to handle. One woman wrote:

> I believe I'm much more independent than women whose men work ashore; yes, and that is the seafarer's wife's big problem. You're supposed to cope on your own, the household economy, and all the practical stuff and first and foremost you are almost solely responsible for your children. This is fine but the problem is that when he is at home I feel it is my responsibility to make him feel manly and important. Seamen want to be much more masculine than many other professionals.[28]

In this case, her husband had to retire from the sea prematurely and she continued by saying: 'You have to attempt to create a completely new life and try to make him feel important at home. Maybe it would have been

[26] G203-230799 (b. 1947).
[27] G2049 (b. 1942).
[28] G2005 (b. 1953).

better not to be such an independent woman then'.[29] This account followed the outlines for the stereotypical view of seafarers' wives, but it also reminded the reader of the challenges it could present.

Most reconstructions that followed the discourse of the strong and independent seafarer's wife were relatively positive in the attitudes they conveyed. The women stressed how maritime life had made them stronger and more confident in their own abilities. There were cases, however, where adherence to the dominant discourse—the ability to cope as a seafarer's wife, for example—was pushed to the extreme. There was one such narrative in the sample, presented by a woman of Generation Two. She claimed that seafaring life had made her more resilient to hardship. She described her marriage as unhappy and her husband as a miserable recluse. Nonetheless, as if to demonstrate her strength, she stated that her compassion was certainly strong enough to keep living with her ageing husband. She ended her narrative by saying 'such is life', and one can almost hear the valiant sigh with which she said it.[30] This could be interpreted as the attitude of a strong and irrepressible woman, but was in fact an example of how the dominant discourse also produced 'martyrs'.

Nurture and Nature

Accounts that took the second discursive position stressed both nature and nurture as significant elements in the women's sense of independence. To a varying degree, they also downplayed the impact of seafaring life on this issue. One of the women admitted that although there was an element of truth in the saying that seafarers' wives became more independent through the particulars of seafaring life, she found it somewhat overrated. In her view, personality was equally important.[31] The same view was expressed in a narrative by another respondent of the same age, who said that to cope, a seafarer's wife needed to be 'quite independent and fond of solitude'.[32] Innate independence was frequently placed alongside independence gained from life as a seafarer's wife in this group of reconstructions, particularly among the two older cohorts. In one reconstruction, the respondent gave her child's disability as the main reason for her

[29] G2005 (b. 1953).
[30] G2088 (b. 1949).
[31] G201-060799 (b. 1954).
[32] G204-290799 (b. 1949).

independence, while the strength of coping alone with day-to-day life and the problem of letting go of her autonomy when her husband was ashore took a more peripheral place in the narrative.[33] One woman claimed that if she had not been of an independent nature she would not have achieved all she had done. However, she continued by saying that she had also 'learnt to be independent'.[34] This was an attitude prevalent in the majority of accounts in this category. In some accounts, factors other than personality and maritime life were said to have influenced the woman's character. One example of this was a narrative in which the respondent accredited her independence to the loss of her parents at the age of eight. However, her reconstruction also contained episodes that illustrated her adjustment to maritime life and how it had taught her to be independent. In several places, the respondent attested how she had 'grown with the tasks'.[35] One such episode was where she described her role in the building of their home, but the most poignant example was a stillbirth that she experienced early on in her marriage:

> The year prior to the birth of my oldest son, I experienced a premature birth, despite among other things a seven week stay in hospital. At that occasion too H was tied up with his work without any possibility of taking leave. Birth, christening and funeral – all on my own, but with the support of good friends. For H this event was difficult too. But in both fortune and hardship you grow in your role. You had to learn to stand your ground and be diligent.[36]

The nurture and nature approach is manifested in the last sentence of the quote: 'You had to learn to stand your ground and be diligent.' The quote also highlights another aspect of maritime family life, namely the lack of spousal support, and in the absence of her husband, the seafarer's wife had to rely on family and friends. There was no official society of seafarers' wives on Åland and in a study of maritime occupations in the Swedish port town Gävle, Andreas Björklund notes the lack of reciprocal exchange of favours among seafarers' families; instead the seafarers' wives turned to their own or their husband's relatives for help.[37] For the younger

[33] G2029 (b. 1948).
[34] G103-020899 (b. 1916).
[35] G1093 (b.1918).
[36] G1093 (b. 1918).
[37] A. Björklund & D. Papp (1973) *Sjöfartsyrken i hamnstaden Gävle*, (Stockholm: Sjöhistoriska Museet), pp. 45–46.

women, combining work and family left little time for voluntary work of that kind and as their partners spent comparatively much more time at home the women had less need for a 'sea wives' society.[38] Whereas family and friends were an important part of all respondents' safety networks, the desire to socialise with other seafarers' wives was not equally universal. There were a few women who indicated that they would have appreciated the company of other seafarers' wives; the majority of the respondents made no mention of it or claimed that they saw no point in being part of a 'seafarers' wives society. That said, a considerable number of the women in this study had friends who also had married into seafaring life.

The 'nurture-nature' position was the most popular category among Generation Three narratives. Ten of the 28 women in this age cohort presented narratives that followed this discursive pattern. The corresponding number of narratives in this group made by women in Generations One and Two were three out of 18 and six of 29, respectively. Furthermore, six of the eight women who asserted that they were of an independent nature and would have been so irrespective of their partner's occupation, belonged to Generation Three. The two other women who took this stance were of Generation Two. On the whole, younger women displayed a higher propensity to present themselves within an individualistic discourse. Therefore, it was not surprising to find many women proclaiming that their sense of independence had little or nothing to do with their husbands' occupation. One respondent claimed that she was 'of a stubborn and independent kind' and had been so since her teenage years.[39] Another woman said that she had always been confident of her abilities; it was not a result of her choice of partner. On the contrary, she felt that she and her husband had got together 'because we have discovered qualities in each other that suit this kind of life'.[40] The equation of independence and seafaring thus took on a different shape. Not only were women who married seafarers forced to obtain a certain level of independence to cope on their own, the narrative also seemed to imply that self-reliant women and seafaring men made a good match. For a strong-minded woman who thrived on responsibility, partnership with a seaman meant that she could maintain her sense of independence as she was left to manage her and her

[38] See Kaijser, 'Sjömannens yrke', p. 44 for a discussion on the impact of modern-day relief systems and women's work outside the home on the loss of the solidarity among women that traditionally existed in seafaring communities.

[39] G3038 (b. 1965).

[40] G305-100100 (b. 1967).

children's lives more or less according to her own design. For the seafarer, it was reassuring to know that he had left house and children in the hands of a capable woman. This attitude was expressed not only by the respondent above, but also by other women, who claimed that life with a seafarer suited their independent disposition and that they probably would not cope with living with a man who worked ashore.

Anomalies

The third discursive position was that in which the respondents positioned themselves in opposition to the central discourse of the self-sufficient and resourceful seafarer's wife. All in all, only two women of each generational group did not consider themselves independent, either in relation to other seafarers' wives or in general. Despite acknowledging their ability to cope on a practical level while they were on their own, their narratives did not project an image of the strong and confident character that formed the basis of the traditional ideal, and that was also widespread in the nature-nurture approach. The women nonetheless showed an awareness of what a seafarer's wife was supposed to be like by setting that image against their own narratives. That the ideal of the seafarer's wife as a self-sufficient and versatile person could be regarded as detrimental rather than beneficial was stated very candidly by one of the respondents, who said: 'Compared to women who have their husbands ashore, I am expected to be independent but it only gives me a feeling of failure'.[41] This quote demonstrates the respondent's consciousness of how the society in which she found herself expected her to behave. However, instead of giving her encouragement, these expectations only increased her feelings of failure. This phenomenon is also discussed by Lynn Abrams in her work on Shetland crofters. Abrams contends that the idealised image of the Shetland crofter woman is not only positive as it prevents other narratives to surface. The honouring of only one cultural ideal hinders the emergence of alternative histories.[42]

A frequently returning issue in this category of narratives was the meaning of independence. Two women, who had both divorced their seafaring husbands, raised this question explicitly. One of them said that although she was capable of many things, she was still financially dependent on her

[41] G2050 (b. 1941).
[42] Abrams, *Myth and Materiality* , p. 30.

husband.[43] The other woman said that there were several kinds of independence and although she coped with daily life, she confessed that she 'was on her tiptoes' while her husband was at home.[44] In a third narrative, the respondent commented:

> The question of independence is a difficult thing. Sometimes I think I've been independent but as soon as my husband came home that came to an end. We have had many difficult years when my husband has been at home through early retirement. I struggle each day to make my voice heard and for my independence.[45]

This statement signalled the confusion the woman felt about this particular subject. While she was on her own, she coped well and could handle her situation. She felt confident and independent, just as a seafarer's wife should, according to societal consensus. A certain degree of acclimatisation was an unavoidable part of the seaman's return in all maritime families. In the majority of cases, the different parties managed to negotiate their space and role in the family successfully, to find an equilibrium that suited all family members. In this particular testimony, however, it appeared that this woman was unable to maintain her status when her husband returned from the sea. The exact reason behind this remains hidden from the researcher and reader, but there was doubtless something in the seafarer's character that made it impossible for his wife to feel like an able and confident woman while he was at home. The remaining eight accounts in this category dealt only very briefly with ideas of independence. In half of them, the women said that they were unable to say if they were more independent than women whose husbands worked ashore. One of the women commented that whatever the degree of her independence, she still envied women who had their husbands at home.[46] Another woman commented that she found it difficult to determine whether or not she was more independent as her husband's work on the ferries did not take him away from home for any length of time. A similar opinion was voiced by another ferryman's wife, the difference being that she also stated that she was forced to be independent when her husband was at work.[47] Ferrymen worked on short shifts close to home, and they were sometimes referred to by their long-distance counterparts as 'sailing between the reeds and the

[43] G205-290799 (b. 1943).
[44] G304-070799 (b. 1957).
[45] G1065 (b. 1934).
[46] G2[3]009 (b. 1950).
[47] G2036 (b. 1944).

shore', implying that the ferrymen were not proper sailors. By the same argument, a ferryman's wife would perhaps not have the same status as a long-distance sailor's wife. That said, more research needs to be conducted to confirm this assumption and how it may have affected the women's self-perception and identity, especially as many women moved between being a 'proper' sailor's wife and the wife of a ferryman during their lifetime as their husband moved between long-distance and local traffic.

The remaining respondents in this category did not regard themselves to be more independent in relation to other women. One woman was of the opinion that 'most women nowadays are incredibly independent'.[48] This may well be true and by opening up the issue of the seafarer's wife's alleged independence to debate, the women in the study were given the chance to actively reflect over it. The result was a debate that clearly illustrated the complexity of the concept of independence and it also brought to light the subordinate discourses on the subject that existed in Åland society at the turn of the millennium.

Being an Icon

Subjectivity and intersubjectivity are key concepts in the analysis of oral history and life stories. No story, although subjective, exists in isolation, separated from the cultural and material reality of society. On the contrary, it is informed by the discourses available to the narrator, both at the point of experiencing and of recollecting. Therefore, even if each story is unique, the way in which it is remembered and reconstructed is collective. Furthermore, the relationship between the subjective and the objective works both ways, which means that in telling their individual stories, the narrators use cultural stereotypes and available discourses as reference points for expressing and making sense of their own experiences.[49] In addition to this, one must consider the impact on the interview situation of the interviewer, who plays an active part in the creation of the narrative. Lynn Abrams describes the interview process as a three-way conversation in which subjectivity and intersubjectivity merge as the interviewee talks

[48] G2055 (b. 1939).

[49] M. Chamberlain (1995) 'Gender and Memory' in V. Sheperd, B. Breton & B. Bailey (eds.) *Engendering History: Caribbean women in historical perspective*, (New York: St Martin's Press) pp. 95–96.

> with him/herself. The conversation consists of two parts; the process by which the subject, the interviewee, constructs a version of the self, drawing upon discursive formulations or recognisable public identities available to him or her, and second, the subjectivities present in the oral history interview that facilitate the construction of a memory story.[50]

Thus, to make a valid contribution to our knowledge of maritime communities and the women within them, the personal testimonies collected in this case have to be understood as drawing upon, and contributing to, the discourse on seafarers' wives in Åland society. Equally, one must remember the context in which they were constructed and the influence of the researcher/interviewer on the collected material. The analysis of the relationship between reconstruction and discourse in this study made visible the extent to which social ideals feed into subjective identity, but also how common discourses are constructed and sustained through individual narratives. Because each generational group was marked by the discourses available to them when they experienced different phases of seafaring life, each woman's story was a product of her own social and temporal milieu, a fact that was evident in the individual reconstructions. Equally, because all respondents recalled their stories at the same moment in time, they also displayed awareness of contemporary debates and ideals. Because the image of the seafarer's wife was socially constructed through common discourse, there was also noticeable agreement in the individual experiences of life as a seafarer's wife. In reconstructing their experiences, the women were often forced to negotiate their stories around conflicting discourses—both contemporary and separated in time. For women in Generation One, the most conspicuous conflict was women's subordination to men in opposition to the ideal of the strong and independent seafarer's wife. At the same time as the women were expected to show capability in managing their families while the husbands were at sea, they were supposed to acknowledge men's authority. Whereas some women took pride in their independence, others felt that their position as seafarers' wives forced them to relinquish their femininity. A similar situation is apparent in Penny Summerfield's study of women's lives in wartime Britain. Summerfield found that conscripted

[50] L. Abrams (2010) *Oral History Theory*, (London & New York: Routledge) p. 54; see also P. Summerfield (1998) *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, (Mancester: Manchester University Press).

women had to find an acceptable position between doing masculine jobs and maintaining their classic feminine roles.[51]

The revival of the feminist movement in the 1970s challenged the established discourse of good housewifery and gave rise to the discourse of gender equality that was so prominent in the late 1990s. Although women in Generation One were also influenced by this, it was among the other two groups that the impact was most noticeable. Gender equality was still a new phenomenon when the women of Generation Two became wives and mothers. It was still both common and widely accepted for women to stay at home upon marriage. For the women of this generational group, therefore, the discursive conflict between the housewife and the working woman was a conflict separated in time. Although many of the respondents did not return to paid employment after childbirth, only 1 out of 28 women in Generation Two put down 'housewife' as her occupation in the background questionnaire, compared to 7 out of 18 in the Generation One cohort. For women in Generation Three, the ideal of equality was even stronger in common discourse. Women who were on maternity leave made a point of stating their intention to return to work as soon as possible, and despite often being tired from combining parenting with work, women did not regard staying at home for much more than a year a viable option. To be a housewife was not acceptable, and for women who chose not to go back to work when their maternity leave came to an end, it was therefore important to be able to justify that decision. This was often done by stressing the importance of being accessible for one's children, using a discourse on motherhood similar to that explored in an article by Ylva Elvin-Nowak and Heléne Thomsson.[52]

From the discussion on independence, three discursive positions were identified. The first position was a traditional ideal based on the image of seafarers' wives as 'no-nonsense' women, who had gained both self-confidence and resilience from their experiences of seafaring life. This was the most common position among informants of Generations One and Two, while women of Generation Three were more inclined to take the nature-nurture approach, which was the second discursive concept identified. The nature-nurture approach downplayed the effects of maritime life, and focussed more on inborn personality traits and the impact of non-

[51] P. Summerfield, *Reconstructing*, pp. 78–105.

[52] Y. Elvin-Nowak & H. Tomsson (2001) 'Motherhood as Idea and Practice: A discursive understanding of employed mothers in Sweden', *Gender & Society*, 15:3.

maritime events on the informant's ability to cope with her life situation. Individualism was a strong influence in the majority of reconstructions in this category. There was also a third way in which the respondents presented their experiences, and that was to juxtapose their stories against the central discourse. This could be done directly or indirectly, but common to all informants who placed their narratives in this category was a more pronounced awareness of what the stereotypical seafarer's wife should be like. The expectations and assumptions of this study were largely based on the common discourse regarding the Åland seafarer's wife; a discourse that was taken for granted to such a degree that its existence initially was not even acknowledged. From the reconstructions of seafarers' wives' day-to-day life, a picture emerged, which largely cohered with the stereotype. The picture painted was of a strong and resourceful woman, able to juggle family, work and household commitments with seeming ease; a woman who rarely complained, despite at times being faced with immense hardships. When her husband returned home, she let him take his place as the family's head, herself staying in the background and making sure everything worked as it should. However, despite the seemingly strong consensus between the societal stereotype and the respondents' reconstructions, there were also tales of disillusionment, disappointment, and feelings of failure. These reconstructions challenged the dominant image of the seafarer's wife and made visible subordinate discourses that existed within Åland society in the twentieth century. It pointed at the difficulties of living up to the perceived image of the seafarer's wife in a community that iconised her and afforded her such great symbolic value.

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CHAPTER 13

Hull, Fishing and the Life and Death of Trawlertown: Living the Spaces of a Trawling Port-City

Jo Byrne

In the late 1960s the port-city of Hull could boast a long association with fish. From the 1880s, the city's distant-water fishery had grown rapidly with the advent of the steam trawler and had thrived by transporting cheap nutrition to the industrial centres of northern England. In the early decades of the twentieth century Hull secured its position as a 'friers' port', supplying Icelandic cod to the fish and chip trade.[1] By the Second World War the dependency of Hull's fishery upon the waters of the North Atlantic had become deep-rooted, as the city took its place among the leading fishing ports of the world.

Within Hull, trawling had developed operational and business structures that were highly localised. The fishery maintained a strong situated presence in the west Hull district of Hessle Road: an urban quarter running parallel with the Humber bank, adjacent to the fish dock. For over a century there had evolved an interdependency between the dock and its surrounding district. In 1957, urban sociologist G.W. Horobin observed a neighbourhood where the whole population was '"geared" to the rhythm

[1] J.K. Walton (1992) *Fish and Chips and the British Working Class, 1870–1940* (Leicester: Leicester University Press), 44–5.

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of fishing' and where shops were reported to vary their prices in accordance with the state of the market for fish.[2] It is this neighbourhood that is portrayed here as trawlertown, a fishing heartland where the comings and goings of the fleet, the celebrations, losses, and the daily shoreside grind took place amid the bricks and concrete of terraced streets running down to the dock. Concentrated here were the families of fishermen, dockworkers, and fish processors who shared and understood the centrality of the fish dock within their lives.

In the 1970s, rising oil prices, declining fish stocks, and most crucially, alterations to international maritime territories, were to disrupt the assumed certainty of time-served practices, sending Hull's distant-water fishery into crisis. In 1976, Britain was defeated in the last of three seaborne conflicts known as the 'Cod Wars', which were fought with Iceland over access to fishing grounds. Hull's fishery suffered an ensuing decade of struggle and decline, which spread beyond the dockside into the adjacent neighbourhood, bringing an end to the economic, social, and spatial connectivity that had defined life in Hull's fishing district for decades.

Conceptualising the Port-City District

In focussing on the life and demise of the shoreside spaces of Hull's distant-water fishery, a phenomenological stance is adopted in this chapter to explore the dynamic relationship of maritime activities and their cultural landscapes. Those studying maritime communities have engaged a range of approaches to portray the port-city. Port historians such as Sarah Palmer and David Hilling have conceptualised a port-city relationship based upon multiple social, economic, and spatial linkages.[3] Economic engagements such as distribution, employment, and supply, are shown to acquire clear spatial expression.[4] At the same time, the port-city is revealed as responding to the distinct social needs of seafaring, enabling those engaged at sea or in maritime occupations on land to reside in a

[2] G.W. Horobin (1957) 'Community and Occupation in the Hull Fishing Industry', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 8:4, 348.

[3] S. Palmer (2000) 'Ports 1840–1970' in M. Daunton (ed.) *The Urban History of Britain* (Cambridge: University Press), pp. 133–150; D. Hilling (1988) 'Socio-economic Change in the Maritime Quarter: The Demise of Sailortown' in D. Pinder and S. Hussain (eds) *Revitalising the Waterfront* (London: Belhaven Press), pp. 20–36.

[4] Palmer, 'Ports', pp. 138–139.

neighbourhood that understood and shared their experience.[5] In more recent years attention has been directed to the cultural dimensions of such associations, with topics as diverse as cinemagoing and the supernatural under scrutiny as indicators and mediators of the bond between port and city.[6] Furthermore, in an era subsequent to the decline and remodelling of many waterfront districts, memory too has been deployed as a means to articulate and capture aspects of the port-city dynamic.[7]

This chapter builds upon such cultural approaches, engaging memory to offer an articulation of the port-city as a network of meaningful lived spaces. Human geographers studying the connection between people and their environments have noted the significance of everyday engagements, social contact, and the habitual movement of bodies in the constitution of place relationships.[8] In this sense, place is deeply rooted in the human experience. Indeed, some assert that 'lived place' lies at the heart of feelings of belonging.[9] More recently, nonrepresentational geographers too have offered an understanding of place based upon embodied encounters and the experience of being 'slap bang in the middle' of a world shaped by practice, smell, sound, and sensation.[10]

Such factors are encompassed within Tim Ingold's concept of the taskscape. In 1993, social anthropologist Ingold conceived the taskscape as a means of imagining place as the located ensemble of collective tasks, sensations, sounds, and encounters performed in the process of communal living.[11] The taskscape is a network of what Ingold refers to as the

[5] Palmer, 'Ports', pp. 146–150.

[6] R. James (2013) 'Cinema-going in a Port Town 1914–1951: Film Booking Patterns at the Queens Cinema', *Urban History*, 40:2, 315–335; K. Bell (2012) 'Port-city Afterlives: The Cultural Function of Ghosts in Nineteenth-century Portsmouth', Paper presented at Port City Lives Conference, University of Liverpool, 29–30 June 2012.

[7] L. Balderstone, G. Milne and R. Mulhearn (2014) 'Memory and Place on the Liverpool Waterfront in the Mid-twentieth Century', *Urban History,* 41:3, 478–496; A. Mah (2010) 'Memory, Uncertainty and Industrial Ruination: Walker Riverside, Newcastle upon Tyne', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 34:2, 398–413.

[8] D. Seamon (1979) A Geography of the Lifeworld (London: Croom Helm).

[9] E. Relph (1976) *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion); Y. Tuan (1977) *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (London: Arnold).

[10] N. Thrift (1999) 'Steps to an Ecology of Place' in J. Allen and D. Massey (eds) *Human Geography Today* (Cambridge: Polity Press), pp. 295–323; H. Lorimer (2005) 'Cultural Geography: The Busyness of Being More-than-Representational', P*rogress in Human Geography*, 29:1, 83–94.

[11] T. Ingold (1993) 'The Temporality of the Landscape', World Archaeology, 25:2, 444–461.

activities of dwelling: the everyday tasks that we undertake as part of our everyday lives. Activities are ongoing and performed within the passage of time. To become a taskscape, activities must be collective and take place as part of a shared and ongoing life world. Importantly, Ingold firmly relates these everyday temporal processes to the creation of landscape. The form of our surroundings thus stems from our collective interactions within place, meaning that the landscape itself can be understood as the taskscape in palpable form. The taskscape offers a theoretical perspective on how the situated movement, process, and connectivity of ongoing everyday life, over time, can physically mould the landscape and imbue it with collective meaning.

With this phenomenological, sensual, yet simultaneously physical rendering of place, Ingold provides an adaptable model for an exploration of the port-city. This chapter draws on oral history testimony conducted into Hull's fishing industry in the wake of the 1976 Cod War, to explore the lived experience and embodied geographies of the life and demise of a trawling port-city. By presenting Hull's fishery as a taskscape, or trawler-town, this paper portrays Hull's fishing district as a visible, recognised, and lived entity, embedded within the flows of the wider city. It then considers the aftermath when fishing activities cease and the lived spaces of a maritime community are consigned to the past.

Distant-Water Trawling: An Extreme Occupation

In 1962, sociologist Jeremy Tunstall published his detailed contemporary study of Hull's fishermen.[12] Tunstall portrays distant-water trawling as an extreme occupation. Arctic fishing was dangerous, carried out in freezing and hostile seas. Work was hard and conditions were harsh. Work-related accident and death rates were among the highest in the country.[13] Men were casually employed with little job security and pay was tied to voyage profits, meaning incomes could boom or bust.

In Hull, the practices of trawling revolved around the 21-day trip. This was the time needed for the traditional side trawler to steam to the fishing grounds of Iceland, Faroes, and northern Norway and return with a

[12] J. Tunstall (1969) *The Fishermen: A Sociology of an Extreme Occupation,* 2nd edn (London: MacGibbon and Kee).

[13] D. Holland-Martin (1969) *Trawler Safety: Final Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Trawler Safety* (London: HMSO), pp. 118–121.

catch still fresh enough for market. The long-standing dominance of the 21-day trip permeated not only life at sea, but also the life of the dockside and surrounding district. As trawlers entered port, ancillary and secondary workers sprang into action to unload, process, and dispatch fish and to prepare the ships to return to sea. Vessels always returned to Hull and the regular rhythms of the seagoing sector had over time forged a distinct culture within the portside community. In the late 1960s, ships were in dock only 60–72 hours and life for the fisherman at home assumed a frenzied character. While many spent time with family, local memory is rife with tales of epic celebration, drinking, and spending, as some trawlermen earned themselves the reputation of the 'three-day millionaires'.[14] From the early 1960s, the established pattern of life was destined to change, as the growth of a new and technologically advanced fleet of stern trawlers, which could freeze the catch at sea, brought the promise of modernisation, increased prosperity, and novel ways of fishing. However, the older fleet of side trawlers working into the 1970s was sizeable and for many, trawling adhered to traditional rhythms.

Prior to 1976, Hull's distant-water fishery operated within localised structures. Tunstall wrote, 'Fishermen see themselves in a curious way as working in Hull'.[15] Although fishing 2,000 miles from the city, vessels, landing, and processing facilities were Hull owned, Hull staffed, and Hull based. In 1955, 92 % of the seagoing workforce lived within 4 miles of the fish dock.[16] Fifty-seven per cent of fishermen and 72 % of fish landing crew (known as bobbers) lived within a one-mile radius of the dock. Thus many sailed, worked, and lived with other men from within a narrow locale.[17] Although the emerging freezer fleet was starting to create new demographics, in the 1970s the Hull tradition remained strong.[18]

The concentration of shoreside activity—the casual employment, fluctuating pay, the short time ashore, and the 3-day millionaires—created an environment reminiscent of a latter-day sailortown. On Hessle Road until the 1970s, the fishermen's pubs, clubs, pawnshops and chandlers, loan

[14] A. Gill (2001) *Three-Day Millionaires: Trawlermen Home Between Trips* (Hull, Dovedale Studios) (DVD).

[15] Tunstall, *Fishermen*, p. 171.

[16] Figure taken from G.W. Horobin, PhD Thesis, University of Hull in Tunstall, *Fishermen*, p. 277.

[17] Horobin, 'Community and Occupation', 348 & 354.

[18] British Film Institute, Ref: C-64335 (1973) 'Trawling: Your Future' (Antony Barrier Productions) [Documentary Film].

systems, even the fishermen's outfitters and tailors draw easy comparison to Hugill's popular depiction or to certain elements of the sailortown districts examined in the academic work of Daunton, Hilling, or Palmer.[19] Yet here the similarity ends. For Hull's fishermen were returning not just to port, but to their home community where many of them had been born; to wives and girlfriends; to family, children, and shore-dwelling friends. They were returning to trawlertown; a taskscape of collective activity that was distinct, yet at the same time part of the wider city and that had been created in response to the rhythms of the North Atlantic trawl.[20]

Although the position of Hessle Road at the heart of the fishing community is widely reported in oral testimony, the precise limits of trawlertown are less consistently defined. This may be unsurprising, for here it is suggested that the creation of trawlertown stemmed less from its physical infrastructure, than from the situated lived experience of its inhabitants. A visit to trawlertown was a phenomenological encounter with the port-city. The fishing district had an economic and material expression, with fish dock and smoke house immediately recognisable as the fabric of a trawling port. But the essence of *trawlertown* lay in the collective encounters of those who lived and worked in the shoreside spaces of an extreme seafaring occupation. Trawlertown was a 'lifeworld' that was walked, smelt, heard, felt, and touched. It was lived space, embodied place and although it could be observed from the outside, it could only be fully understood from within.

Welcome to Trawlertown

Oral history offers the ideal vehicle for a visit to trawlertown. If trawlertown is a phenomenological encounter, then narrators are able to invoke its existence because they lived it and lived in it. Respondents recalled an exceptional neighbourhood where a lifeworld bound to the fishery could coexist with other expressions of community.[21] Trawlertown cannot be divorced from the broader composition of Hessle Road, just as Hessle Road cannot be ascribed exclusively to fishing. Lives and lifeworlds were

[19] S. Hugill (1967) *Sailortown*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul); M. Daunton (1979) 'Jack Ashore: Seamen in Cardiff before 1914', *Welsh History Review*, 9, 176–203; Hilling, 'Demise of Sailortown', 21–28; Palmer, 'Ports', pp. 146–147.

[20] The term *trawlertown* is widely associated with the folk CD, J. Conolly and P. Sumner (2000) *Trawlertown: The Singing of the Fishing* (Fellside) [on CD]. Predating this is the local history video, *Trawlertowns – Hull and Grimsby* (Forest Edge, 1993) [on VHS].

[21] The sample consisted of 43 individuals, including fishermen and their families, trawler owners, fish trade and dockside workers and lifelong Hessle Road residents.

intertwined. But with a nuanced ear and a keen eye, it is possible to detect trawlertown from amid the bustle of a working-class district.

During Horobin's research in the 1950s, Hessle Road was widely reported as 'a world in itself'.[22] My own respondents similarly conjure a sense of distinctness and separation. Alan H, working for the White Fish Authority on St Andrew's Fish Dock, introduces trawlertown by distinguishing the trawling community from others:

> It was a tough life and it required a certain lifestyle and character to do it. […] the families had to accept that the man of the household would be away for three weeks and life had to carry on when he was not there. And when he came home, life would change for about three days and then maybe peace would reign for another three weeks until he came back again. So it was a lifestyle that I think a lot of other communities could not adapt to. It was something you lived with, grew up with and accepted.[23]

Interviewees recall Hessle Road in the 1960s as 'something very special',[24] 'a wonderful, wonderful road',[25] 'a breed of their own'.[26] With equal clarity they assign the cause of this distinct and separate sense of place. For Hessle Road fishmonger Billy, it could only have come from the fishing industry:

> The atmosphere of Hessle Road was from nowhere else. There's nowhere else like it […] Absolutely. It could only be that *[fishing]*. Yeah, it could only be that.[27]

Fish processor Ivy is similarly absolute:

> Ivy: That's what Hessle Road was built for. For the fishing industry. Nothing else.
>
> Jo (Researcher):And could you see that when you were living down there?
>
> Ivy: Oh yes. I din't know nothing else apart from fishing. I didn't even know there was a Metal Box *[a local factory]* til I left school, because that

[22] Horobin, 'Community and Occupation', 343.
[23] Interview with Alan Hopper, 29 November 2012.
[24] Interview with Ken Knox, 2 May 2013.
[25] Interview with Victor and Pauline Wheeldon, 31 August 2013.
[26] Interview with Ivy Gollagher, 22 April 2013.
[27] Interview with Billy Glenton, 24 April 2013.

> was Gypsyville and I never left from Hessle Road til I was 15. I didn't even know there was a town *[city centre]*.[28]

The narratives of Ivy, Billy, and others like them express first-hand the dominance of Hull's deep-sea fishery over Hessle Road. The taskscape is never far away within these reflections. Trawlertown comes into being with their reports of the continual day and night motions of dock workers, merchants, and processors; with the trains and fish vans, with the sound of a ship's hooter. Fisherman Jim, for example, narrates the sound of 'hundreds' of fish bobbers walking to work in the very early hours in iron shod clogs 'like horses hooves'.[29] Alan J, director with a major trawling firm, recalls the perpetual threading of people to and from the fish dock:

> You had to walk all the way down West Dock Avenue, under the tunnel, under the railway lines and onto the dock. And I mean there were always masses of people. You never walked down West Dock Avenue on your own (laughing) […] there was always people backwards and forwards all the time.[30]

Many concur that a visitor to the area would have recognised its connection with fish. There were the filleting factories and distinctive lines of slender chimneys belonging to the kipper houses. There were the women wearing the 'wellies' and the 'turban' headscarves of the fish processor.[31] And there was the odour. 'We did have our own fish smell' admits fisherman Ken.[32] This was not the seaside smell of a fresh landing, but the heavy, dull tang of fishmeal, cod drying farm, and smoke house.

If the area moved to the rhythm of trawling, then it was the comings and goings of the fleet that set the tempo. Hessle Road historian Alec Gill has revealed how Hessle Road shops included outfitters 'open to suit all tides' and shops offering credit until dad came home from sea with his wages.[33] Narrators give fishermen centre stage when describing the visible and distinct character of trawlertown. There were the suits that adhered to

[28] Interview with Ivy Gollagher.
[29] Interview with Jim Williams, 13 November 2012.
[30] Interview with Alan Johnson, 19 March 2013.
[31] Interview with Lily Waltham, 10 September 2013.
[32] Interview with Ken Knox.
[33] A. Gill (1987) *Hessle Road: A Photographer's View of Hull's Trawling Days* (Beverley: Hutton Press), p. 29.

the latest and sometimes exuberant fashions and that could make a gathering of fishermen instantly identifiable:

> They had their own sort of tailoring style […] double breasted suits, which were tightly fitted round the hips, the bell bottom trousers. In outrageous colours as well some of them.[34] *(Philip, shore-based radar engineer)*

There was the bustle of fishermen's wives retrieving suits that had been pawned to enhance the family budget, prior to their husband's homecoming[35] or carrying work gear to the wash house.[36] There was an observable generosity and easy spending.[37] There was the frenetic movement between home, dock, pub, the homes of friends and relations, the tailor, the bank, the barber, as 3 weeks of living was compressed into 3 days. There was the perpetual darting of taxis, for fishermen did not waste time walking: 'it was a taxi', says Ivy, 'even though it was only next street'.[38]

Fused with the collective encounters of the fishing taskscape were the specific spaces that they had simultaneously created. Ken's narrative demonstrates how certain physical places took on meaning within trawlertown, via the interactions of the fishermen who went there:

> *[Places]* are connected with fishing via the fishermen themselves […] there was your own tailors that made your suits for you. […] We had our special shoe shops, they all knew the fishermen more or less by names. We had our own barber that would give you a dram o' rum while you were sat in his barber's chair. You'd all be sat talking while you're waiting for your haircut – about how much you'd made and how much you landed – and so all the way along the length of Hessle Road, there was stories of the fishermen.[39]

In such places, fishermen could come together and reconnect back to land. And at the heart of the process were the pubs. Alan H recalls that the pubs of Hessle Road were 'constantly alive with people coming and going and ships coming in and coming out'.[40] Narrators are consistent in naming the pubs favoured by fishermen. Margaret was a barmaid at Dee

[34] Interview with Philip Barratt, 2 July 2013.
[35] Interview with Michael Howden, 5 March 2013.
[36] Interview with Ivy Gollagher.
[37] Interview with Margaret Green, 25 September 2013.
[38] Interview with Ivy Gollagher.
[39] Interview with Ken Knox.
[40] Interview with Alan Hopper.

Street Club. She conveys the regular flow of new arrivals, many of whom she knew by name:

> Right, rack 'em up again, Margaret, from the back of the room. All right. Same round? Same round. […] Then there'd be another crew come in an'all. I'd think, Jesus. I'd be one end o' there, to there. All day long, but I loved it.[41]

Pubs were more than just places to drink, says Jim, they were places to meet your friends.[42] Tunstall observed how certain clubs on Hessle Road were regarded by fishermen as their 'exclusive preserve'.[43] Relatives would know which Hessle Road pubs to frequent to meet with a newly landed crew.[44] While some harboured the hope of a generous round, many others came to welcome and catch up. For with only 3 days ashore, pubs were not only places of leisure, they were important arenas to maintain relationships.

Fish Dock

At the end of West Dock Avenue stood St Andrew's Fish Dock: the very hub of trawlertown. Here, in the transitional space between land and sea, the actions, encounters, and fabric of Hull's fishery taskscape were generated at their most intense. The Fish Dock was another world, a geographic entity that was seldom seen by those without a reason for a visit. To the inhabitants of trawlertown, however, this world was known first-hand, through their daily work, through its ships, stores, and offices, through the emotive flows of arrivals and departures. Alan J remembers his first encounter with the dock in 1960:

> Although I'd lived in Hull all my life, I'd never been on the Fish Dock before. […] [W]hen I went down there, it just amazed me, because there were just hundreds and hundreds of people, doing all sorts of things […] [I]t was just something I hadn't been able to envisage and when I saw it, y' know, I thought – this is huge.[45]

[41] Interview with Margaret Green, 25 September 2013.
[42] Interview with Jim Williams, 13 November 2012.
[43] Tunstall, *Fishermen*, p. 138.
[44] Tunstall, *Fishermen*, p. 266.
[45] Interview with Alan Johnson.

Alan's job with a trawling firm pulled him into the heart of the fishery taskscape, into its endless stream of work and people. Respondents frequently spring to life when asked to describe the dock in its heyday. They draw upon common terms to convey animation and movement; 'very busy',[46] 'hustle and bustle all the time',[47] 'a beehive',[48] 'like ants'.[49] There is a clear eagerness to convey the spectacle that distinguished the dock from an average workspace.

When describing the Fish Dock, witnesses powerfully evoke a blend of activity, sounds, sights, smells, and feelings. Jim describes an efficient disarray:

> It was dangerous walking. […] You'd have clogs, because there was water and fish slime and ice […] you would have the bobbers landing the fish and at the same time they were bringing up the fish room boards […] there would be shore-riggers splicing wires, there'd be electricians. […] The cod liver oil boat would be alongside, pumping out […] organised chaos, everybody knew what they were doing.[50]

Others recall the sounds, the smells, and the routines. X *[anonymous]*, a shoreside radar engineer, remembers:

> The smells, y' know, obviously the smell of fish and fishmeal and the rope smells and net smells.[51]

Michael, a fisherman, relays an aural memory:

> When you're on dock, you'd hear people riveting all day – bang, bang, bang, bang, bang.[52]

While Alan H brings together the soundscape that progressed throughout a typical day:

[46] Interview with Chris Gilchrist, 6 February 2013.
[47] Interview with Thomas Nielson, 23 September 2013.
[48] Interview with Michael Howard, 5 March 2013.
[49] Interview with Jill Long, 10 September 2013.
[50] Interview with Jim Williams, 9 November 2012.
[51] Interview with X (anonymous), 21 April 2013.
[52] Interview with Michael Paterson, 21 November 2012.

> The daily activity could be best summed up by the different noises coming from the dock […] in the earliest hours of the morning the bobbers would clatter down to the dock in their clogs […] there would be noises coming from the dock, of clashes of boards from the ships being thrown onto the quayside and aluminium kits *[fish containers]* being bounced and people yelling and shouting and the squeal of winches and such like. Then you'd have the *[fish]* auction itself with all its noise and then the frenzy of the fish coming off the dock in trucks and trailers […] Peace reigned in the afternoon.[53]

Such vibrant descriptions capture the raw frenzy of daily practices. Sense of place is vividly conveyed and the role of embodied and sensual experience in the creation and subsequent recollection of place is revealed.

For fishermen and their families, St Andrew's Fish Dock assumed significance as a place of arrivals and departures. Margaret remembers meeting her brother and other friends as they arrived into port: 'It was lovely', she says, 'It made you feel real warm. And glad to see 'em come back'.[54] For the crews, the dock was the gateway into trawlertown and the subsequent point of separation. It was their first and last contact with land and could assume a territorial significance, as Ken's testimony demonstrates:

> A dock is a dock, you know, and it's just a place where you take your ship. But St Andrew's Dock wasn't just a dock, it was *the* dock […] it's ours.[55]

It is from such a mix of affective encounters and shared activity that the fishing taskscape of trawlertown sprang into being on Hessle Road among street, shop, and factory, among dock and district. On Hessle Road, other work communities lived side by side with trawlertown; it was part of their neighbourhood, although they themselves may rarely engage with it. There were also those who breezed in and out of trawlertown, as they laboured in its workforce, perhaps drinking in its pubs before returning home to other quarters. Among these were fishermen like Doug and Victor who lived to the east of the city, but who express trawlertown as their own; a place that understood and supported their lifestyle.[56] But for

[53] Interview with Alan Hopper.

[54] Interview with Margaret Green.

[55] Interview with Ken Knox.

[56] Interview with Doug Driffill, 14 November 2012; Interview with Victor and Pauline Wheeldon.

many trawlertown was their primary world. They lived and worked within its midst, unequivocally absorbed within its sounds, smells, sensations, and networks. If it is through such interactions that connection to place is cemented, then we might expect the distinct and intense encounters of trawlertown and its located systems of occupational support to produce significant place attachments.

Disruption

By the 1970s the bonds between industry and district were beginning to loosen. The disruptive technology of the freezer trawler, while improving working conditions, was diluting the collective experience of the 21-day trip. With the ability to freeze fish on board, freezer trawlermen remained at sea for 8–10 weeks and subsequently enjoyed longer shore leave, reducing the advantages of living close to the Fish Dock. On shore, from the late 1950s, Hessle Road was undergoing radical housing clearances as part of the city's post-war programme to produce more modern, spacious housing. As the city sought to eliminate substandard living conditions, the densely packed terraces to the south of Hessle Road, close to the Fish Dock, were targeted. In this area the homes of many fishermen and Fish Dock workers were concentrated. The inhabitants, often reluctantly, moved to new estates. Many of these stood on the outskirts of the city, away from the environment and activity of the Fish Dock and from the people and systems that had supported a way of life. The in-laws of Ron, a fisherman, were forced to move to the north side of Hessle Road when their home close to the Fish Dock was demolished. Although this was not a great distance, they hated the move. Ron explains why:

> They'd lived there a long time and my father-in-law was a fisherman and his father was a fisherman and her father was a fisherman and they were right in the hub of the fishing community […] So they lost friends and the days of standing on your doorstep and talking to your neighbour, as they used to do in the terraced houses […] It just became a different way, a different community.[57]

In the mid-1970s came another major change. The ageing fabric of St Andrew's Fish Dock and the growing fleet of large freezer trawlers

[57] Interview with Ron Wilkinson, 12 June 2013.

prompted the development of new port facilities. In 1975 the trawling fleet left St Andrew's, their home for over 90 years, relocating to the adjacent William Wright and Albert Dock, which had been refurbished as a modern base for the trawling fleet of the future. The William Wright and Albert Dock offered features that greatly improved shoreside working conditions. However, the relocation changed the dockside atmosphere. Larger facilities such as the ice and fishmeal factories had remained on the St Andrew's estate. The result was a dilution of the focussed activity and shared spaces that had defined the very heart of trawlertown. Thomas, a fisherman, explains:

> There was no atmosphere *[on William Wright and Albert Dock]*. Not like there was […] y' see, everything happened on *[St Andrew's]* Fish Dock. Everything. Your trawlers were landed on Fish Dock, you signed on on Fish Dock, you signed off. Everything happened on Fish Dock. So to move it to another dock […] it was all wrong. Completely wrong, you know what I mean.[58]

Such change was set to alter the dynamic of Hull's fishing district. Given time, the people and their activity would have generated a different taskscape, creating a new and modern freezer-trawlertown. But in 1975 came disruption to British distant-water trawling with the final Cod War. Iceland, concerned by overfishing, extended its exclusion zone for foreign trawlers to 200 miles. In 1976, Britain's distant-water fleet was ejected from its habitual fishing grounds at Iceland, closely followed by similar losses at Norway, Faroe, and the Barents Sea. In Hull, gradual change was thus overtaken by sudden catastrophic events, which limited opportunities for adaptation. When the plan to relocate to Albert Dock had been conceived there were on average 4.25 large trawlers landing a total of approximately 597 tonnes of fish per day.[59] By 1983 the industry was struggling to maintain one daily landing and direct employment in the city's fishery had plunged by almost half from 8,600 jobs in 1976 to 4,495 just 7 years later.[60] In Hull, the fish merchant and processing industry survived, albeit in contracted form, by landing and importing foreign-caught fish, some of which travelled into the port by road. They survived, because, as fish

[58] Interview with Thomas Nielson.

[59] Sea Fish Industry Authority (1983) *An Analysis of the Hull Fish Industry in 1983*. (Technical Report No. 220), (Hull: University of Hull), p. 25.

[60] Sea Fish Industry Authority, *Hull Fish Industry*, pp. 83–86.

merchant Chris observes 'there's always somebody, somewhere wanting to send fish'.[61] The price of these changes however, was the fracture of the localised structures that had previously characterised the industry.

The seagoing catching sector, however, was sent into crisis. Left with an efficient fish-hungry fleet, owners tried to diversify within a fishing arena that had become political, territorial, and global.[62] British deep-sea trawling firms grappled with newly emerging quotas, uncertain European policy, and competition from expanding global fishing fleets. Most ventures ultimately failed and where tenacious Hull trawling firms enjoyed a measure of success, their business became increasingly international, with ships, operations, and men scattered across the world. The special ties between industry and place were broken for good.

The Death of Trawlertown

As Hull's distant-water fishing industry was transformed through the 1970s, the residents of trawlertown were hit by a tidal wave of change affecting their homes, streets, and workplace. This culminated with the contraction and loss of the fishery itself; the very bedrock of trawlertown and the creator of the lifeworlds it embraced. After 1976, as the surviving fishing firms became international, ships and operations increasingly diverged from the city. Where they touched, they left a lighter footprint on its economy and culture. If it was the trawling fleet that had moulded the rhythm and form of trawlertown, then the demise of that fleet brought it to an end. For as Ingold writes, 'the taskscape exists only so long as people are actually engaged in the activities of dwelling', and as Sarah Palmer observes, 'no sailortown could ultimately survive the decline of the port which had given it life'. [63]

Respondents capture the demise of trawlertown in their descriptions of Hessle Road and the Fish Dock in the late 1970s and 1980s. Some report the demise of ancillary and secondary businesses located in the vicinity. Many others describe the escalating decay of the old St Andrew's Fish Dock. This site, rather than the struggles of the newly established William

[61] Interview with Chris Gilchrist.

[62] M. Wilcox (2012) 'Beyond the North Atlantic' in D.J. Starkey and I. Heidbrink (eds) *A History of the North Atlantic Fisheries, Vol 2: From the 1850s to the Early Twenty-First Century* (Bremen: Verlag H.M. Hauschild), pp. 306–317.

[63] Ingold, 'Temporality', 161; Palmer, 'Ports', p. 148.

Wright and Albert Dock, came to symbolise the end and Doug recalls the beginning of disintegration:

> As I drove past the Lord Line building at the back of it, it looked absolutely derelict, because the windows were smashed. Kids'd obviously used it for a bit of entertainment on a night-time.[64]

Lily, working for the White Fish Authority, describes with emotion her return to St Andrew's Dock after 1981:

> Oh, it just looked derelict. It was awful […] It was just so sad to see it […] when I was always used to *[there]* being so many people about and so many things happening.[65]

The sight of a place once characterised by so much life, now reduced to silence and dereliction, was a spectacle that some chose to avoid. Michael explains his own perspective:

> I went down there once. I didn't want to know any more, it just looked horrible. No, as soon as fishing finished, I didn't want to know any more, cos it was depressing.[66]

Beyond the Fish Dock, Hessle Road was also hit by this catastrophic wave of disruption. With trawlertown in its midst, the district not only supported fishing, it depended upon it. Ron, describing change on Hessle Road, reflects upon its causes:

> Once you haven't got the money there for people, y' know […] when we used to come home when I was a deckhand […] you came home and for two days it was enjoying yourself, doing things, spending money and keeping the businesses of the city going.[67]

Less work within the fishery meant less spending within local shops and pubs. Earlier, Jim had reported pubs as spaces central to the encounters of trawlertown. He now observes how well-known local spots, began to disappear:

[64] Interview with Doug Driffill.
[65] Interview with Lily Waltham.
[66] Interview with Michael Paterson.
[67] Interview with Ron Wilkinson.

> *[Pubs]* were meeting places of your friends, your relations, everything. They were starting to go – one by one. The clubs the same. It was the shops and I think for a lot of people, the Clothing House, when that closed it was like somebody ringing a bell. That's how it went, over a period of years.[68]

Alongside these meaningful sites of the fishing district, people were also vanishing. Hessle Road had always teemed with life. However, the movement of inhabitants out to new estates and the decreasing numbers coming to work in the depleted fishery, meant a much reduced footfall in the district. The familiarity of well-known faces was also lost. Doug recalled that a visit to Hessle Road shops in the heyday of trawlertown would be a lengthy and sociable experience, as he stopped to chat with people that he knew. Speaking of Hessle Road in the 1970s, Doug observes:

> The thing that you notice*[d]* is that, when you're walking down Hessle Road, there's not so many people that you knew – not necessarily to talk to, *[but to]* look and say oh, that's so-and-so is that, just across the road there. And course that was because a lot of them had moved out to Bransholm *[new estate]* and those sort o' places.[69]

With the industry in rapid contraction and the catching sector in terminal decline, Hull's fishing taskscape was dissolving. The fishery that had dominated the function and culture of Hessle Road for over a century would henceforth influence just a small part of it. In this chapter trawlertown has been conveyed with an 'insiders' sense of place, people, and activity, of sound, smell, sensation, and motion. Michael poignantly brings all these elements together in his description of Hull's fishing district in demise:

> All the people on Hessle Road, as the fishing was going, then they slowly disappeared and there was different people all together on Hessle Road […] I would say 1978 it was going down the tubes […] there's all the fish houses gone and all the people who supplied kits and boxes to the market, y' know, there's thousands every day, all that'd gone, so you didn't see the transport on the roads anymore […] And then it *[was]* fish lorries and all that'd gone […] So it was like half of Hull had gone to sleep and just left. I suppose like California in the gold strike, when it'd gone and you just had towns with all

[68] Interview with Jim Williams.
[69] Interview with Doug Driffill.

> the doors swinging empty and all that. And that's like Hessle Road was. All the factories closed down, cos they didn't need fitters for the trawlers any more. That was it. It was horrible.[70]

Michael continues:

> And Hessle Road, all the shops boarded up and everything […] And before, all the pubs used to be full at 11 o'clock in the morning and there was taxis darting all over the town. But all that'd gone see, all the atmosphere.[71]

This was the end of trawlertown. The movement stopped and the taskscape ceased to be. As the fishery assumed a lower profile, that definable layer of geographical, occupational, and cultural relationships gradually dissolved back into the undulations of the wider city. Much of trawlertown had existed in the consciousness and interactions of its inhabitants. Once these were gone it ceased to exist. In trawlertown, the Star and Garter, known to locals as Rayner's, was widely recognised as the fishermen's pub. After the trawl, it is just a pub; the fisherman's pub only in memory.

However, it must be remembered that amid the lived encounters of Ingold's concept, the taskscape does find physical expression. 'A landscape' asserts Inglis 'is the most solid appearance in which a history can declare itself'.[72] Ingold builds on this, reflecting that, 'Thanks to their solidity, features in the landscape remain available for inspection long after the movement that gave rise to them has ceased'.[73] As the activities of the past give way to new encounters, physical residues are left behind, to be remoulded into the taskscapes of the present. This is where the journey to heritage begins. After the death of trawlertown comes the birth of the geographies of memory and the struggles for representation and commemoration.[74]

[70] Interview with Michael Paterson.

[71] Interview with Michael Paterson.

[72] F. Inglis (1977) 'Nation and Community: A Landscape and its Morality', *Sociological Review*, 25, 489.

[73] Ingold, 'Temporality', 162.

[74] D. Atkinson, S. Cooke and D. Spooner (2002) 'Tales from the Riverbank: Place-marketing and Maritime Heritages', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 8:1, 25–40; C. Lazenby and D. J. Starkey (2000) 'Altered Images: Representing the Trawling in the Late Twentieth Century' in D.J. Starkey, C. Reid and N. Ashcroft (eds) *England's Sea Fisheries: The Commercial Sea Fisheries of England and Wales since 1300* (London: Chatham), pp. 166–172.

Although the distinct interactions of Hull's fishery have gone and their expression in the landscape is eroded, solid traces endure. These are the relics of the taskscape and they retain the invested memories, meanings, and attachments of those who were part of their creation and passing. In the landscapes of the present they are valued and struggled over as sites of memory; as legacy and a tangible expression of other lives.

Conclusion

This chapter has taken a journey through the changing shoreside spaces of Hull's North Atlantic trawl fishery in the latter half of the twentieth century. By engaging oral history, the chapter offers an expression of the port-city relationship that moves beyond social, economic, or spatial definitions. Drawing upon geographers' notions of lived space and embodied place and aided by Ingold's conceptualisation of a taskscape, the port-city has been encountered as a phenomenological, sensory, and emotional liaison. Trawlertown was born and nurtured by the rhythms of an extreme occupation. Amid the physical spaces of Hessle Road, it articulates as the sounds of bobbers' clog irons, the smell of rope and fishmeal, the warmth of an arrival, and the everyday performances of those who experienced it from within. As the fishery faced a rapid change of fortune, the disruption to these established practices caused the loss or dilution of the shared encounters of the fishing district. Such dislocation brought Hull's fishing taskscape to an end. But while trawlertown cannot be discerned in narratives from the 1980s and beyond, it has an afterlife in the physical traces that remain and in the memories that are assigned to them.

There is a postscript to the story of trawlertown. Some respondents are still drawn to Hessle Road. Over the years, they have returned to live there, or to shop, or have a drink in familiar places. It is tempting to explain such returns as the continued pull of trawlertown; the remnant rhythms of an extreme maritime occupation. Returning to Hessle Road is a performance of place attachment—a demonstration of affinity to a neighbourhood that moulded lives. The death of trawlertown resulted from the divorce of a maritime community from the industry that gave it birth. When it existed, the intensity of its encounters forged strong situated bonds. In demise and for some, those same factors forge a strong desire to return and to remember.

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CHAPTER 14

Doing Urban History in the Coastal Zone

Isaac Land

The essays in this volume move us beyond treating the port town as merely the sluice gate regulating how the mighty oceanic flows interact with the mainland. Within the discipline of history, at least, this marks a sharp departure from much of the existing scholarship. For historians, the coast has generally been someone else's problem. It was either too watery and marginal for scholars accustomed to a terrestrial focus or it marked the line where the maritime ended. Approached in this manner, the coast appeared ancillary, or merely an expression of what lay 'behind' it (whether sea or continent).

Certain urban themes are best approached, and most readily explained, by placing the coastal zone at the centre of the inquiry; indeed, some will remain invisible or only partly glimpsed until such an approach is adopted.[1]

[1] This chapter is not intended to serve as a retrospective historiographical summary, but to look forward. See, however. J. Fingard (1982), *Jack in Port: Sailortowns of Eastern Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press); L. Norling (2000), *Captain Ahab Had a Wife: New England Women and the Whalefishing, 1720–1870* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press); V. Burton (1999), "'Whoring, Drinking Sailors': Reflections on Masculinity from the Labour History of Nineteenth-Century British Shipping" in M. Walsh (ed.), *Working Out*

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In this chapter, I will propose a possible framework for discussing what might be called the 'coastal-urban forms', dividing them into three types: the urban foreshore, the urban offshore, and the urban estuary. The contributions to this volume offer examples of each. I also engage with the existing scholarship on littoral societies and suggest that a somewhat more inclusive coastal studies approach, as outlined here, has much to offer urban history.[2]

Why a Coastal Studies Approach?

In the wake of the 'Oceans Connect' project that transformed the field of world history in the late 1990s, we have seen a host of transnational, cosmopolitan, and oceanic approaches to the port town.[3] Is urban life in port essentially about mobility (even, perhaps, just a subsection of mobility studies)?[4] The difficulty with focussing primarily on flows and circulations is that the resulting picture may be smooth, seamless, and networked, but placeless.

Alternately, it is possible to view the port town as an enclave with a unique personality that bears comparison to nothing else—perhaps not even to another port town. At the outset of the first volume of his *Alexandria Quartet,* Lawrence Durrell presented the Levantine city as a zone of exception:

Gender: Perspectives from Labour History, (Aldershot: Ashgate), 84–101; V. Burton (2001), "Boundaries and Identities in the Nineteenth-Century English Port: Sailortown Narratives and Urban Space" in S. Gunn and R.J. Morris (eds.), *Identities in Space: Contested Terrains in the Western City since 1850*, (Aldershot: Ashgate), 137–151; D. Vickers (2005), *Young Men and the Sea: Yankee Seafarers and the Age of Sail* (New Haven: Yale University Press); R. Lee (2013), "The Seafarer's Urban World: A Critical Review," *International Journal of Maritime History* 25:23, 23–64.

[2] In what follows, I am seeking to elaborate a conceptual framework that I sketched out in a more informal way in I. Land (2007), "Tidal Waves: The New Coastal History," *Journal of Social History* 40:3, 731–743.

[3] M. Lewis and K. Wigen (1997), *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley: University of California Press). For our purposes, J. Mack (2011), *The Sea: A Cultural History* (London: Reaktion) is as interesting for its omissions as for its inclusions.

[4] K. Hannam, M. Sheller, and J. Urry (2006), "Editorial: Mobilities, Immobilities and Moorings," *Mobilities* 1:1, 1-22; A. Anim-Addo, W. Hasty, and K. Peters (2014), "The Mobilities of Ships and Shipped Mobilities," *Mobilities* 9:3, 337–349; J. Stanley (2012), "On Buffer Kissers, Bus-Station Skanks, and Mile-High Clubs: Sexualities in Transport," *Mobility in History: The Yearbook of the International Association for the History of Transport, Traffic, and Mobility* (Oxford: Berghahn), 29–49; J. Clancy-Smith (2011), *Mediterraneans: North Africa and Europe in an Age of Migration, c. 1800–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

> Five races, five languages, a dozen creeds: five fleets turning through their greasy reflections behind the harbour bar. But there are more than five sexes and only demotic Greek seems to distinguish among them. The sexual provender which lies to hand is staggering in its variety and profusion.[5]

This is evocative language, but it fails to capture the massively engineered and bureaucratized environment of many modern port towns. [6] As Bill Taylor suggests in this volume, the appropriate theorist here might be the Foucault of governmentality rather than the Foucault of heterotopia.

Coastal studies offer a different conceptual toolkit. The humanities are unusual in that they lack a mature, distinct subfield with a coastal remit: in other disciplines, we see coastal geology, coastal ecology, coastal geography, coastal engineering. There are academic journals with these or similar titles, endowed chairs at universities, and so forth. It may seem strange to the next generation that a coastal studies approach came so late to the humanities, and to certain parts of the social sciences.

An insight common to many varieties of coastal studies is that inundations are very real, but so are the barriers that interrupt, channel, or inflect them. It also matters precisely where you stand; the terrestrial encounter with oceanic space is mediated differently. Diagrams that show 'factors' and 'interactions' with the port town at the centre, as it were, of an intermeshed system of gears may miss the point.[7] For human beings living under the rule of law, the coastal zone is a place of transmission, but equally one of discontinuities and enforced ruptures.

In *The Edge of the Sea,* Rachel Carson included an illustration of a single boulder—a vertical extent of perhaps 2 metres—and numbered six discernable regions on its surface, distinguished by tidal reach and distinctive flora and fauna.[8] She accompanied this illustration with hundreds of words of description to walk readers through what each of these microhabitats meant. On a somewhat grander scale, diagrams of the 'littoral zone' from a physical geography point of view demarcate a dozen distinct subareas across a stone's throw of space. Geographers and ecologists have

[5] L. Durrell (1954), *Justine* (New York: E.P. Dutton), 14.

[6] G. Milne (2000), *Trade and Traders in mid-Victorian Liverpool: Mercantile business and the making of a world port* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press), 14.

[7] B. Hoyle (1988), "Development dynamics at the port-city interface," in B.S. Hoyle, D.A. Pinder, and M.S. Husain (eds.), *Revitalising the Waterfront: International Dimensions of Dockland Development* (London: Belhaven), 3–37.

[8] R. Carson (1955), *The Edge of the Sea* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin), 31.

developed the arresting concept that there is something called an 'offshore' that counts as *part of* the coastal continuum.

What would a similarly discriminating and attentive approach look like for a port town? Is it possible to adapt the language of ecology and physical geography to express the way that cities inhabit their coasts? How can we describe the way that individual port towns shape, or allow themselves to be shaped by, their coast's particular form? How does one city carry its coastal character differently than another? How can we capture a sense of the physical constraints while preserving room for human agency? It may be helpful to think not of a coast, but of a coastal zone whose parameters, traits, and physical extent are changing, contested and (like other human activities) power-ridden.

From the point of view of the urban historian, a coastal studies approach is unlikely to involve an emphasis on developing a universal template showing how all coasts are similar to each other. The question will not be 'what have we decided the coast includes?' or 'how far, in or out, should we say that the coast extends?' but rather, 'what types of work does this particular coast perform, and why?'

Michael Pearson and John Gillis have offered one possible approach to this: developing a narrative around the classic 'work' of the coast as organized around fishing, foraging, and chaffering trade in small craft. Later uses of the coast, such as property speculation and urban sprawl, figure only as despoliation or decline.[9] In contrast, the chapters in this volume suggest a more eclectic approach to the coastal experience. They have much in common with the methods adopted in the field of island studies, which does not posit an ideal island but rejoices in the diversity of ways that human beings use, view, appropriate, and interact with islands. Some islands are accessible on foot at low tide, while others, like St Helena, are remote from any continent. A similar point could be made about the various forms and degrees of insularity. Islands have served as resorts, prisons, plantations, religious hermitages, coaling stations, free trade zones, and so forth. In that spirit, I will suggest that there is not one kind of urban coast, but at least three. In proposing the 'urban foreshore', the 'urban offshore', and the 'urban estuary', I must emphasize that in contrast to the

[9] M. Pearson (2006), "Littoral Society: The Concept and the Problems," *Journal of World History* 17:4, 353–373; J. Gillis (2012), *The Human Shore: Seacoasts in History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press). See also J. Stilgoe (1994), *Alongshore* (New Haven: Yale University Press).

natural sciences, these are not just things but actions; they should take on the force of verbs as well as nouns, because they are more than places—they are also processes.

The Urban Foreshore

The urban foreshore is the image that comes immediately to most people's minds when they think of 'ports', 'harbours', or 'sailortowns'. Rather like one of Rachel Carson's microhabitats, however, it is usually confined to a very narrow strip of territory filled with intense activity. A diverse array of occupations appear in the pages of this volume, from waitresses, rickshaw men, and taxi drivers to sex workers and publicans. Vivian Bickford-Smith observes that 'Port cities commonly retained a high proportion of people of the market place, in the form of those participating in modest trade of varying kinds, often partially self-employed or self-sufficient, only semi-proletarianized'. The activity of the urban foreshore centres on strangers, and on people who earn their livelihood by supplying strangers with services. There is limited attention in this volume to the people who handle goods on the foreshore, but many dock workers and porters may fit in here as well; those who operate small craft like lighters and tenders; not to mention smugglers, scavengers, pilferers, and petty officials.

The army of foreshore workers characteristic of the centuries before containerization has largely evaporated. Does this mean that the foreshore no longer exists? The need for a visible gateway and the imperatives of tourism, leisure, and property speculation have dictated otherwise. In this volume, Griffiths discusses Melbourne's integration of Chicago designs into a distinctively international skyline, while Bickford-Smith notes the irony of Durban's transnational 'local colour'. The development of tourist districts and a signature waterfront façade are, arguably, not the effacement of the foreshore, but its evolution in a new urban era. In the same period, Liverpool was building its 'Three Graces': the Mersey Docks and Harbour Building, the Royal Liver Building, and the Cunard Building. This 'instantly recognizable, iconic epicentre' would later be imitated by urban planners in Shanghai.[10] With the emergence of port-resort cities, foreshores have also become sites of intensely engineered leisure spaces;

[10] J. Belchem (2006), "Celebrating Liverpool," in John Belchem (ed.), *Liverpool 800: Culture, Character, and History* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press), 20.

the almost wholly artificial space of Miami Beach, a creation of dredged sand, is a striking example.

Foreshoring behaviors, then, are those that welcome, orient, and facilitate the use of the port town by arriving strangers. This is a sufficiently flexible framework that it can encompass an Indian Ocean port in the *dhow* era, Wapping's sailortown in the age of Samuel Johnson, and Dubai in the twenty-first century. Yet it is important to remember that the foreshore is not the only kind of coast.

The Urban Offshore

The urban offshore may sound like a contradiction in terms, but it is not. Consider the Japanese use of an artificial island in Nagasaki harbour to accommodate the Dutch, while keeping them at arm's length. Offshoring is not an anomaly, but a practice that we can spot in many different cultures and time periods; it is one of the fundamental functions of the urban coast, and it is better considered as *part* of the port town rather than an interruption or an exception to it. The sociologist Godfrey Baldacchino, in his study of islands, has called it 'idiosyncratic governance' and offers a suggestive list of forms that this can take: excising, zoning, detaching, niching, outbordering, dislocating, insulating, unbundling, quarantining.[11] The urban offshore is an engineered coast. Sovereign states sometimes raise up new land from the water, but also 'excise' pieces of their own territory, and decree quarantines, prisons, and free trade zones. There is, then, physical engineering, but also extensive social-legal engineering.[12] Engineered to what end? It transforms the adjacent into the proximate and the connected into the merely convenient. The urban offshore is often *just* offshore.

I have mentioned that the coastal-urban forms may be considered as verbs and not only as nouns. As with other human endeavours, just because an offshoring project is undertaken does not guarantee success. Frances Steel has related how the British authorities in Fiji, anxious to avoid collecting undesirables along the waterfront, adopted the remarkable

[11] G. Baldacchino (2010), *Island Enclaves: Offshoring Strategies, Creative Governance, and Subnational Island Jurisdictions* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press), 4.

[12] P. Steinberg (2001), *The Social Construction of the Ocean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,); C. Pearce (2010), *Cornish Wrecking, 1700–1860: Reality and Popular Myth* (Woodbridge: Boydell); S.. Kane (2012), *Where Rivers Meet the Sea: The Political Ecology of Water* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press).

approach of refusing to build any urban infrastructure whatever. In Suva, there would be no lodging houses and no lavatories. Victorian ladies who had enjoyed finely furnished cabins on the voyage out were surprised to see their luggage thrown into the surf and to find themselves carried ashore on 'the oily backs of natives'. This attempt to create a buffer zone failed; indentured labourers and fortune seekers still wandered the beach, and in the absence of shelter, answered the call of nature in the open air.[13]

As the Fiji example suggests, it would be a rare port town that adopts offshoring to the exclusion of other approaches. The East End of London had to be a convenient entrepôt for goods and labour, yet significant efforts were made to regulate its relationship to the metropolis without sacrificing its commercial functions. When the East India Company's lascar sailors roamed the streets and got into trouble, the solution was to place them in a legally constructed offshore zone, subject to the authority of the *serang* or boatswain as if they were at sea, even though they were in an East End lodging house. Disembarking lascars did not have the right to stay in Britain; the Company was forced to take responsibility for repatriating them, so even when they set foot on shore, they remained legally in transit.[14] As Bill Taylor discusses, ambitious building projects would also enclose the docks and warehouses of the East End to create an insulated and subdivided space. His chapter is the only one to engage with offshoring in this volume, but it is worth remembering that one of the most basic coastal-urban forms is a wall.

The Urban Estuary

Here is how Daniel Defoe described what happened at the mouth of the Thames: 'the strong clay of Essex and Suffolk is made fruitful by the soft meliorating melting chalk of Kent, which fattens and enriches it.'[15] Defoe, ever practical, was referring to the profit to be made from the industrial uses of lime, but his tactile language expresses the way that estuaries soften

[13] F. Steel (2012), *Oceania under Steam: Sea Transport and the Cultures of Colonialism, c. 1870–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), 26, 181.

[14] I. Land (2005), "Bread and Arsenic: Citizenship from the Bottom Up in Georgian London," *Journal of Social History* 39:1, 89–110; for similar legal devices in a later period, see L. Tabili (1994), *We Ask for British Justice: Workers and Racial Difference in Late Imperial Britain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press).

[15] Letter 2 in D. Defoe (1989), *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, Pat Rogers (ed.), (New York: Viking Penguin), 38.

and dissolve whatever they encounter. Because each mixture will have its own unique character, the urban estuary is harder to define than its counterparts. If the foreshore is about how strangers will accommodate or service each other, the estuary offers us a way to think about acquaintanceship, if not intimacy, and hybridity rather than unobstructed mobility.

One of the distinctive features of this volume is its engagement with the problem of civic identity in the port town context. Cape Town was the 'Tavern of the Seas', a motto suggesting the outward-facing foreshore, yet Durban aspired to be the more homely 'Brighton of South Africa'. While Brad Beaven's Ratcliffe Highway appeared devoid of any civic core—to the alarm of Victorian observers—the chapters by Rob James, Karl Bell, and Paul Gilchrist (Chaps. 3, 4, and 10) each offer examples of how urban spaces could take on a fused personality at a deep level. A Newcastle-upon-Tyne sailmaker could become a trustee of the Town Moor. In the 'family cinema', Plymouth's civic culture could cohabit with its sailor population. In Portsmouth, the superstitions of sailortown appeared to have sunk ineradicably into the urban fabric, where they resisted the ministrations of reformers.

Hannah Hagmark-Cooper's chapter (Chap. 12), 'To Be a Sailor's Wife', addresses one of the most intractable problems in maritime history: How to deal with those who never, rarely, or only occasionally went to sea? To be sure, a space has been created, at great effort, within port town studies for a discussion of gender, and for the presence of women as well as men.[16] Yet maritime history has had difficulty assigning an analytically central role in the subfield to what might be called the domestic maritime. In contrast, the concept of an urban estuary offers a respite from debates about who is maritime, who is merely paramaritime, and so forth. The presence of women can be taken as normal rather than as exceptional. Fractional identities—including mixed occupations like sailor-farmer—are quite to be expected in

[16] M. Hunt (2004), "Women and the Fiscal-Imperial State in Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries," in K. Wilson (ed.), *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 29–47; S. Meacham (2005), "Keeping the Trade: The Persistence of Tavernkeeping among Middling Women in Colonial Virginia," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 3:1, 140–163; S. Haggerty (2012), "Ports, Petticoats, and Power: Women and Work in Early-National Philadelphia," in D. Catterall and J. Campbell (eds.), *Women in Port: Gendering Communities, Economies, and Social Networks in Atlantic Port Cities, 1500–1800* (Leiden: Brill), 103–126; N. Zacek (2012), "Between Lady and Slave: White Working Women in the Eighteenth-Century Leeward Islands," in D. Catterall and J. Campbell, eds., *Women in Port*, 127–150.

an estuary. French historians have been engaging with mixed occupations, and mixed sensibilities, for some time.[17] The Swedish expression 'one boot in the boat, and the other in the field' can be taken as emblematic of the estuary mentality.[18]

Like Defoe's melting clay, the urban estuary changes the character of what it touches. Jacqueline Shohet Kahanoff's 'Levantine' writings evoke the peculiarly tolerant mindset characteristic of the superdiverse port towns of what is today the Middle East and the Balkans.[19] We can and should distinguish between foreshore cosmopolitanism (which may extend only to the mastery of foreign languages and a willingness to shrug off a certain amount of cultural variation) and estuary cosmopolitanism. The Jewish community in Salonica was located on the foreshore, where Jews handled cargo and peddled wares of varying legality, but if our inquiry concerns—for example—the syncretic faith of the Salonican Jews who followed their prophet Sabbatai Zevi into Islam, we are moving into territory that is quite distinct, yet still meaningfully and demonstrably coastal.

Conclusions

In proposing the foreshore-offshore-estuary framework, I am aware that like all rubrics or heuristics, it may come complete with its own blind spots. Every form of urban activity has its own distinctive spatiality, and its own appropriate unit or scale of analysis. In this volume, for example, Tomas Nilson offers an account of male violence in Gothenburg that brings us

[17] G. Le Bouëdec (2002), "La pluriactivité dans les sociétés littorales XVIIe-XIXe siècle," *Annales de Bretagne et des Pays de l'Ouest* 109:1, 61–90; M.-A. Vandroy-Fraigneau (2004), "Quand la pluriactivité brouille les efforts de définition: gens de mer ou gens de côtes?" in C. Cérino, A. Geistdoerfer, G. Le Bouëdec and F. Ploux (eds.), *Entre terre et mer: Sociétés littorales et pluriactivités (XV^e^-XX^e^ siècle)* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes), 190; O. Levasseur (2004), "La pluriactivité sur le littoral septentrional de la Bretagne d'après les rapports de Le Masson du Parc (1726): premiers résultats," in Cérino et al. (eds.), *Entre terre et mer,* 125–6.

[18] Gillis, *Human Shore,* 75.

[19] J. Kahanoff (2011), *Mongrels or Marvels: The Levantine Writings of Jacqueline Shohet Kahanoff,* Deborah A. Starr and Sason Somekh (eds.), (Stanford: Stanford University Press); M. Mazower (2006), *Salonica, City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims, and Jews, 1430–1950* (New York: Vintage); A. Amin (2002), "Ethnicity and the Multicultural City: Living with Diversity," *Environment and Planning A* 34:6, 959–980; S. Vertovec (2010), "Super-diversity and its Implications," in S. Vertovec (ed.), *Anthropology of Migration and Multiculturalism* (London: Routledge), 65–95.

down to the finest of details. Were brawls more likely in the street, or inside the tavern? Was the door open or closed? Who was watching? What day of the week was it? Does it matter that the employment office and the headquarters of the Social Democratic Party were nearby? This kind of granularity has, traditionally, been one of the strengths of urban history. Nilson's microgeography of male violence will not mesh well with the macrogeography appropriate to an inquiry into the dealings of long-distance merchants, and indeed economic historians have developed their own taxonomy, distinguishing between 'cities with ports' and 'city-ports', and between a port's terrestrial hinterland and its maritime foreland.[20] None of this must be shoehorned into either foreshore, offshore, or estuary. A framework of three may still be too small, but it is superior to trying to deform a single category (say, 'sailortown', 'waterfront', or even 'maritime') to contain things that it clearly shouldn't.

It also gets us away from definitions that prematurely assign a natural boundary to the coastal inquiry. Is the concept of a 'coastal zone' excessively vague? Here, I would echo Patrick Joyce, who suggests that certain terms (in his example, 'the social') are helpful precisely because they maintain a certain ambiguity or vagueness. This is what keeps them in the forefront of our thinking, 'in need of constant theoretical scrutiny and reinterpretation'.[21] In that same spirit, it will be productive to ask, and ask again: How do the foreshore, offshore, and estuary interact with each other? Which of them dominates in a particular time, place, or setting? If a fourth, or fifth, term is needed, what would that be?

Stretching or extending the limits of the coastal zone is also an invitation to try out new source material, new concepts, and new methods. Recent work with a cultural history emphasis has tested the limits here, examining how theatrical productions, radio broadcasts, naval exhibitions, and even model ships on aristocratic estates far inland can be in some sense coastal.[22] When Thomas Dyja wanted to write a book arguing for

[20] Summarised in M. Pearson (2003), *The Indian Ocean* (London: Routledge), 31. See also S. Palmer (1999), "Current port trends in an historical perspective," *Journal for Maritime Research* 1:1, 99–111; A. Ng et al. (2014), "Port geography at the crossroads with human geography: between flows and spaces," *Journal of Transport History* 41, 84–96.

[21] P. Joyce (2009), "What is the social in social history?" *Past and Present* 205, 175–210, quoted page 186.

[22] J. Davis (1988), "British Bravery, or Tars Triumphant: Images of the British Navy in Nautical Melodrama," *New Theatre Quarterly* 4, 122–143; H. Lewis-Jones (2005), "Displaying Nelson: Navalism and the Exhibition of 1891," *International Journal of*

Chicago's distinctive contribution to twentieth century American culture and thought, he chose the title *The Third Coast*. The word 'coast' here has scarcely any materialist or economic reference point at all; the analogy is to places like California, where a heady cocktail of permissiveness and innovation had become synonymous with its West Coast location.[23] For humanists and social scientists, studying the discourse around—and deployments of—'the coastal' will be an integral part of a coastal studies approach.

Perhaps most importantly, the eclecticism of coastal studies avoids the trap of focussing in too tightly on just one aspect of coasts, or adopting a technology-specific notion of what coasts are supposed to accomplish that works well for one century but not for others. It may be helpful to discuss this point in more detail. For modern and postmodern port towns, a coastal studies methodology differs quite markedly from the littoral societies approach.

Gillis and Pearson identify the advent of industrial-scale fishing, container shipping, and affordable air travel as the termination of a noble and ancient coastal tradition. Today's overbuilt coastline, for them, is little more than a tombstone marker atop a corpse.[24] If, however, urban life is taken as the research focus, then a different picture emerges. The foreshore is still with us, but in new forms. Günter Warsewa's work on the renovation and redevelopment of derelict waterfront districts in places like Cardiff and Baltimore shows that this is an area of urban innovation, not of rigor mortis.[25] Globally, we are in the midst of a historic coastal construction boom, dragging armoured coasts and desalination plants in its wake. Architects compete to build showpiece skyscrapers in the emerging megacities of the Persian Gulf. In Abu Dhabi, Tadao Ando's witty design for the Maritime Museum blurs the line between over- and underwater,

Maritime History 17:1, 29–68; K. Felus (2006), "Boats and Boating in the Designed Landscape, 1720–1820," *Garden History* 34:1, 22–46; V. Carolan (2011), "The Shipping Forecast and British National Identity," *Journal of Maritime Research* 13:2, 104–116.

[23] I. Land (2016). "The Tolerant Coast," in *Sea Narratives*, ed. Charlotte Mathieson (London: Palgrave).

[24] See especially M. Pearson, "Littoral Societies," and the final chapters of J. Gills, *Human Shore*. For a general critique of discourses of nostalgia and authenticity, see J. Ryan (2011), "Beale Street Blues? Tourism, Musical Labor, and the Fetishization of Poverty in Blues Discourse," *Ethnomusicology* 55:3, 473–503.

[25] G. Warsewa (2012), "Adaptation and Individuality: The Re-invention of the Port-City," in S. Häyrynen, R. Turunen, and J. Nyman (eds.), *Locality, Memory, Reconstruction: The Cultural Challenges and Possibilities of Former Single-Industry Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing), 18–45.

land and sea. In Dubai, modern dredging techniques have enabled the 'World' project, artificial islands whose map-like shape can only be appreciated from a great height. This brings the ancient disciplines of urban planning—and the crafting of urban spectacles—into the age of Google Earth and Internet memes.

If we are looking for people with a tactile and intimate relationship to water in a post-industrial society, we may need to learn to look in new places. The number of sailors, fishermen, and dock workers is much diminished, but consider the ubiquity of resorts, 'fun and sun' vacations, and jet skis in popular film and fashion, as well as in actual leisure practice.[26] Glen O'Hara mentions a citizens' protest group that emerged in Cornwall in 1990, 'Surfers against Sewage', which attained a membership of 12,500 within 4 years, despite the rather narrow purview suggested by its name.[27] The proliferation of marinas, luxuriously renovated waterfront districts, and the intensive development of any stretch of sandy walkable area resembling a 'beach' could be a sign of overcivilized alienation from nature, or it could be an engagement on different terms.

A form of offshoring that makes headlines regularly in the twenty-first century is the regulation of waterborne irregular migrants (so-called boat people). Australia's 'Pacific Solution' rerouted the migrants to locations such as Christmas Island, where they were 'neither at home nor arrived, not able to become refugees or asylum seekers because of their location at a distance from sovereign territory'.[28] In the Mediterranean, the rising number of deaths between Libya and the island of Lampedusa (the European Union's southernmost point) has provoked an international outcry. New anxieties about Islamic State militants buying passage on one of the migrant boats to Italy only raises the prospects of a militarized response, perhaps even more aggressive than Australia's 'Operation Sovereign Borders', which turns (or tows) boats back to where they originated.

[26] L. Lenček and G. Bosker (1998), *The Beach: The History of Paradise on Earth* (New York: Viking); A. Nocke (2012), "Modern Israeli identity and the Mediterranean cultural theme: an exploration into the visual representations of Tel Aviv and the sea," *Jewish Culture and History* 13:1, 68–86.

[27] G. O'Hara (2010), *Britain and the Sea since 1600* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 226.

[28] M. Giannacopoulos, M. Marmo and W. de Lint (2013), "Irregular Migration: Emerging Regimes of Power and the Disappearing Human," *Griffith Law Review* 22:3, 559–570, quoted page 563.

With experts predicting that climate change may result in historically unprecedented levels of migration, the political and humanitarian challenge on the coasts will only intensify in this century. Yet clashes over waterborne migrants are perhaps only one of the more vivid examples of a larger pattern. Seyla Benhabib has written:

> Where 'we' are today globally is a situation in which every 'we' discovers that it is in part a 'they': that the lines between 'us' and 'them' are continuously redefined through the global realities of immigration, travel, communication, the world economy, and ecological disasters.[29]

Much of this could be said of airports, of the great financial hubs, or of the communities around major research universities. Yet the contrasts and contradictions of globalism manifest on coasts with an intensity that equals or exceeds any of these.[30]

The premise that beachfront property is the most valuable has intensified a phenomenon only recently diagnosed as 'coastal squeeze', in which industrial, commercial, leisure, and residential sectors compete for the same narrow channels of land and sea.[31] For example, dredging a deeper channel for navigation purposes may change the flows of sand and starve a beach whose replenishment was essential to a resort's prosperity. The construction of an offshore wind farm may impede the movements of a fishing fleet. Studying coastal squeeze is an important opportunity for urban historians, environmental historians, and historians of leisure to join forces and learn from each other.

The urban amphibious seems destined to take on new meanings as major cities like Miami contemplate a Venetian future or turn to Dutch engineers to manage their transition, embracing a version of the Anthropocene

[29] S. Benhabib (1995), "Cultural Complexity, Moral Interdependence, and the Global Dialogical Community," in M. Nussbaum and J. Glover (eds.), *Women, Culture, and Development: A Study of Human Capabilities* (New York: Oxford University Press), 235–258, quoted page 244; see also F. Foer (2004), *How Soccer Explains the World: An Unlikely Theory of Globalization* (New York: HarperCollins).

[30] J. Kasarda and G. Lindsay (2011), *Aerotropolis: The Way We'll Live Next* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux); B. Gumprecht (2008), *The American College Town* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press); S. Amrith (2013), *Crossing the Bay of Bengal: The Furies of Nature and the Fortunes of Migrants* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press).

[31] J. Doody (2004), "Coastal Squeeze—An Historical Perspective," *Journal of Coastal Conservation* 10, 129–138.

period without admitting what has caused the sea level rise.[32] Seeking to understand our planning mistakes is not in any sense to excuse them, or to abandon efforts to articulate a greener (bluer?) or more sustainable approach to coastal living. However, if our aim is to learn why our coastline continues to be overbuilt, even as evidence mounts that such practices are environmentally unsustainable, we can begin by engaging more fully with the dynamism and appeal of the urban coast in all its aspects.

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[32] "Goodbye, Miami," *Rolling Stone,* July 4, 2013; "Report offers ideas for a Boston beset by rising seas," *Boston Globe*, September 30, 2014.

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