

Sounds and Songs of Sailing: A Historical and Theoretical Perspective on the Performance and

Content of Sea Shanties

W3

Music

Jordana Qi

Junior

jqi2@washcoll.edu

When examining the influence that ships and sailing have had on the development of modern culture, the lifestyle of ships and sailing is significant. The culture surrounding ships included the performance of sea shanties and sea songs, sung to pass the time during work or provide entertainment during rest periods on a ship. However, sea shanties became somewhat static in history, as their performance decreased with fewer ships in use during the rise of industry. Industries such as whaling facilitated interaction of various cultures, Western and non-Western alike, each bringing their own traditions and practices in musical styles into the musical contributions shaping life on a ship and the performance of sea songs and shanties. The presence of sea shanties and sea songs in history, in comparison with their relative decline in performance today, invites inquiry and study of the influences that shaped this genre, as well as views from multiple ethnomusicological theories to determine their relative place and function in both historical and modern settings. These historical views and theoretical influences have shaped sea shanties' presence and performance in current modern musical settings.

From a historical perspective, the function of sea shanties in an overall musical setting is shaped and driven by the culture of the people creating sea shanties. These cultural influences surface in the lyrics and performance of sea shanties, but are also evident within some musical similarities. Within the category of sea music, two types of musical performance define the subgroups of music known as "sea shanties" and "sea songs." In his essay entitled *The Background of Sea Shanties*, Harold Whates examines a clear difference between sea shanties and sea songs, as he explains that "shanties were sung at work and had an exact relationship to...varieties of heavy physical toil."¹ Compared with sea songs, which were noted to be "everything sailors sang in hours of relaxation...from professional songs...to contemporary

¹ Harold Whates, "The Background of Sea Shanties," *Music and Letters* 18, no. 2 (1937): 260. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/727760>.

popular ditties,” sea shanties functioned as a means of historically recording the work being done on ships, especially when compared with sea songs, although both of them were performed on ships². Sea shanties had different types and usages according to what type of work was being done on the ship; for example, specific shanties called “hauling shanties” functioned as a manner of “harness[ing] rhythm...[from the] combined strength of a team of men.”³ The tempo of a shanty was often adjusted for the type of work being done by the sailors. Whates mentions that in a time of celebration, the “stamp and go” style of sea shanty would have been performed; an example of this type of shanty is “What shall we do with a drunken sailor?”⁴ When shanties were used to fit tasks on a ship, individual speeds and tempos often differed, depending on what type of work was being done. Certain shanties are specialized for varying tasks on a ship, for example, the “heavy topsail yard...hoisted in a series of long, vigorous pulls.”⁵ In considering the function of sea songs in leisure, Whates emphasizes “Spanish Ladies” as “strictly professional”, but he is confident that “[it] probably will last for as long as British naval power.”⁶ The variability and adaptability surrounding the performance of sea shanties and sea songs illustrates their function in a period of history that was dependent on sailors’ lifestyles and their work on ships. Sailors used shanties to regulate their work, and used sea songs for entertainment while on ships, but inadvertently, or perhaps somewhat advertently, created a mechanism for passing down historical influences musically through sea shanties in the larger usage within sailors’ lifestyle on ships; the performance of sea shanties and songs as a group also helped to create a musical community surrounding the individual and varied musical styles of the performances of sea songs and shanties.

² Ibid., 260.

³ Ibid., 262.

⁴ Ibid., 262.

⁵ Ibid., 262.

⁶ Ibid., 260.

Many of the historical influences noted in the performance and creation of sea shanties can be attributed to geography, in part, due to the continuous travel and journeying that occurred when ships were sailing to and from their intended destinations. The whaling industry became quite influential in the creation and sharing of sea shanties, most likely due to the number of nations involved in whaling, such as the British, Americans, Japanese, French, Dutch, Scandinavians, and Germans⁷. Each country involved in the whaling industry had multiple musical influences and traditions within their own country, so it is natural that some of these traditions and ideas would blend in the formation and performance of sea shanties. However, exchange of influences is not always peaceful, especially in a competitive business such as whaling. Some musical influences will become stronger and will be preserved in historical musical traditions, while others may not react as favorably to cultural diffusion. James Revell Carr explores the influences of musical and cultural exchanges between sailors and native Hawaiian people in his book entitled *Hawaiian Music in Motion: Mariners, Missionaries, and Minstrels*. In Carr's research, he notes, "The arrival of Euro-American seamen in Hawaii marked the establishment of the tourism industry in those islands."⁸ Researchers may believe that the tourism industry was largely one-sided at the expense of the Hawaiian people, but Carr mentions a different perspective, as "...missionaries' efforts to teach music were often less-than-successful," especially in comparison with Hawaiians' roles on ships⁹. Hawaiian people were placed in a position of power on ships when songs were performed; Carr notes, "In 1835...aboard American and European ships...Hawaiians were valued for their voices, leading

⁷ *Shipping Routes in the Pacific Showing National Interests*. Map. 1943-1945. Scale in degrees longitude/latitude. Perry-Casteñada Library Map Collection, University of Texas Libraries. http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/pacific_islands_1943_1945/shipping_routes_national_interest.jpg (accessed 27 April 2015).

⁸ James R. Carr, *Hawaiian Music in Motion: Mariners, Missionaries, and Minstrels* (Champaign: University of Illinois, 2014). 5.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

sailors in sea shanties and singing comic songs...”¹⁰ This exchange of cultural influences, even with its imbalances, created a unique method of exchanging musical practices among sailors and the various nationalities of people that they met while traveling. The journeys that sailors made were often mentioned in their songs and shanties. Shanties were also differentiated in genre by whether they dealt with “faraway places...[with] exotic, familiar, or appealing qualities” or shanties sung for a return to the original port¹¹. Shanties and songs mentioned in Rose’s work in regard to geography and nearing a destination include “South Australia” and “Away, Susanna!” while the songs “One More Day” and “Good Mornin’, Ladies All” are focused more on returning home and “...brief moments of pleasure at the end of an arduous voyage.”¹² Rose also emphasizes the presence of “cyclical motifs” in songs sung on the return voyage, which fall under the category of “departure;” these types of songs, whether they are shanties or sea songs, usually “refer to subsequent journeys or tours of service...”¹³ Utilizing “cyclical motifs” may also reflect a larger sharing of music among sailors during all parts of the voyage, since sea shanties and sea songs served various functions during the length of time a ship was on the sea.

Geography had significant influences on the lyrics and musical content of sea shanties and songs, which then surfaced in other parts of society, even among people who were not sailors. In multiple instances, sea shanties and songs became a part of literature and writings, especially dealing with events and subjects that surrounded either sailing or ships’ voyages on the sea. The poet Ben Jonson, while not directly involved with ship life, influenced the performance of sea music in his position as a “City pageant writer and...provider of guild entertainments” through his writings for celebrations, such as the celebrations held for the

¹⁰ Ibid., 6.

¹¹ Kelby Rose, “Nostalgia and Imagination in Nineteenth-century Sea Shanties,” *The Mariner’s Mirror* 98, no. 2 (2012), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00253359.2012.10708990>. 155-159.

¹² Ibid., 156-59.

¹³ Ibid., 158-59.

“Merchant Taylors...on 16 July 1607.”¹⁴ Records of this celebration mention that “in the air between [the musicians] was a gallant ship triumphant, wherein were three rare men like sailors, being eminent for voice and skill, who in their several sons were assisted...by the...lutanist.”¹⁵

Jonson’s role in this ship-focused celebration was as the writer of “a short speech containing eighteen verses devised by Master Benjamin Jonson” as well as a performance where “three mariners...sang one, possibly two songs by Jonson.”¹⁶ Heaton and Knowles’s mention of “the ship attached [to] the hall roof” is significant in relation to Jonson’s role, as “the ship...was the company’s pageant ship...built in 1602 for the mayoral procession of Sir Robert Lee.”¹⁷

Jonson’s role in these celebrations involving ships did not involve any type of voyage for him on the vessels he wrote songs and speeches for. However, his writing surrounding these ships, especially the music, illustrates the various social settings in which sea songs and shanties could be performed. Taking into account Jonson’s role in writing some of the songs that were performed at these celebrations, the idea of individual power and creativity is an influence worth considering on the formation and creation of sea music. Many sea shanties and songs were influenced by various diverse cultural influences, so Jonson’s position of power in creating songs dealing with celebrations that included ships possibly allowed him more creativity in the songs he was creating, since the songs and speeches he wrote were mainly used in celebrations on land (although they were performed by people who were mariners or sailors). In future study, exploration of whether Jonson’s composing style of sea songs was unique when compared with

¹⁴ Gabriel Heaton and James Knowles, “‘Entertainment Perfect’: Ben Jonson and Corporate Hospitality,” *The Review of English Studies* 54, no. 217 (2003), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3661476>. 587-88.

¹⁵ Edmund Howes, “The Annales...of England begun first by maister Iohn Stow...continued...unto the ende of...1614,” (London, 1615), 890-891, quoted in Gabriel Heaton and James Knowles, “‘Entertainment Perfect’: Ben Jonson and Corporate Hospitality,” *The Review of English Studies* 54, no. 217 (2003), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3661476>. 589.

¹⁶ MSC 169-70, 173-4, quoted in Gabriel Heaton and James Knowles, “‘Entertainment Perfect’: Ben Jonson and Corporate Hospitality,” *The Review of English Studies* 54, no. 217 (2003), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3661476>. 589.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 589.

other music of the early 1600s, or whether he drew largely from already existing music could provide a more precise view of the type of artistic influences Jonson had on sea songs and their performance settings.

Jonson was by no means the only author to include sea music in his work, as Herman Melville's novels often included "the sailor world of...whaling and South Sea romances."¹⁸ However, while much of Jonson's work surrounding sea music involved its purpose in celebrations, Melville's use of sea shanties in his work often placed a greater emphasis on the mood and tone that shanties played in his work. For example, in Melville's novel *Omoo*, the song "Were You Ever in Dumbarton?" is viewed as "[a way] to make every thing as cheerful as possible" with the song's use as "a marvelously inspiring, but somewhat indecorous windlass chorus."¹⁹ Frank notes, "the context in which Melville presents ["Dumbarton"] is as a *cheerful* and *cheering* song," exemplifying Melville's use of sea shanties to adjust and change the emotions of his characters in his novels²⁰. Also within *Omoo*, the inclusion of the shanty "High Barbaree" is again used to illustrate the emotions of the sailors, as well as "...the heights and depths of human folly, searching for an "enemy."²¹ Frank emphasizes that, in Melville's novels, "the chantey names the theme," and these themes are played out among Melville's characters as they develop through his novels²². While Jonson and Melville both employed unique writing styles in their works dealing with the sea, Jonson exercised a greater amount of his own creativity, given the performance setting he was working in, in comparison with Melville, who used the currently existing shanties of his time period as a mechanism for character development

¹⁸ Stuart M. Frank, "'Cheer'ly Man': Chanteying in *Omoo* and *Moby Dick*," *The New England Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (1985), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/365263>. 68.

¹⁹ Herman Melville, *Omoo*, 1847, as quoted in Stuart M. Frank, "'Cheer'ly Man': Chanteying in *Omoo* and *Moby Dick*," *The New England Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (1985), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/365263>. 69.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 69.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 71.

²² *Ibid.*, 72.

in his novels. Even when not being performed on the sea, sea shanties and sea songs had a significant influence on the surrounding culture in which they were sung and shared.

Given the wide use and performance of sea shanties on ships, the range of topics that sea shanties include and, by nature, are categorized by serves to emphasize their importance and purpose among sailors. Kelby Rose's essay, entitled *Nostalgia and Imagination in Nineteenth-century Sea Shanties*, emphasizes the necessary nature of shanties among sailors, as "the shanty was a tool for everyday use."²³ Sea shanties were useful for "coordinat[ing] the physical effort of sailors for managing sails, yards, pumps, and anchors."²⁴ In considering the more creative side of sea shanties, Rose proposes that sea shanties have another function, as "shanties also added stimulation, diversion, and a chance for self-expression to the life of a sailor."²⁵ The creative nature of sea shanties allowed shanties to be adapted and customized to an individual ship, and the individual tasks on that ship, while also including the adaptations that were made by sailors, usually by adding their own previous knowledge of shanties. Shanties on ships were often performed by a "shantyman," who was "the person responsible for the selection and execution of shanties."²⁶ Focusing only on shanties sung during work and not on the sea songs sung in between periods of work, many shanties can be classified into two categories of "hauling songs" and "heaving songs."²⁷ Hauling songs were used for tasks that required "an intermittent pulling motion," while heaving songs were used for tasks that required "a sustained pushing motion."²⁸ A larger number of tasks on ships lent themselves to hauling songs, so more varieties of hauling

²³ S. Hugill, *Shanties from the Seven Seas*, London, 1984, quoted in Kelby Rose, "Nostalgia and Imagination in Nineteenth-century Sea Shanties," *The Mariner's Mirror* 98, no. 2 (2012), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00253359.2012.10708990>. 147.

²⁴ W.B. Meloney, *The Chantey Man Sings*, New York, 1926, quoted in Kelby Rose, "Nostalgia and Imagination in Nineteenth-century Sea Shanties," *The Mariner's Mirror* 98, no. 2 (2012), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00253359.2012.10708990>. 147.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 147.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 150.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 151.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 151.

songs exist than heaving songs. Types of work on ships where hauling songs were used included the raising and lowering of sails, such as “topsails and topgallants,” while tasks where heaving songs were used included the moving of large objects on ships, including “main capstan or windlass songs...for moving the anchor” as well as more specific “capstan songs...for raising sail...or warping in and out of dock.”²⁹ The tasks that shanties were sung for determined what type of shanty was used, but the variations in subject matter of the sea shanties played a larger role in the sailors’ entertainment and rhythm while they worked and sang shanties.

The subject of “the lost lover” is found in the shanties “Lowlands Away” and “Can’t Ye Dance the Polka;” “Lowlands Away” takes a more somber tone, as it is considered a “haunting song of loss,” while “Can’t Ye Dance the Polka” takes a somewhat devil-may-care tone in describing a “frustrating encounter with a flirtatious young lady” and ending with “glamorizing the sailor life.”³⁰ Descriptions of one’s journeys were common in sea shanties mentioning geography; for example, the shanty “Away, Susanna!” references “more than one dozen places...including San Francisco, the North Sea and the Azores.”³¹ Rose notes that sea shanties with geographical subject matter might function as “a way of celebrating the opportunities afforded sailors,” and mentions the breadth of geographically based sea shanties, as they make up “one of the largest groups of songs in shanty collections.”³² Types of shanties referred to as “growling” shanties served as a way to voice complaints about the sailors’ lifestyle and provided a musical outlet for “creating and reinforcing the traditions and culture of sailorhood.”³³ Shanties dealing with folklore served as a way to tell stories while work was being done on a ship, such as

²⁹ Ibid., 151-52.

³⁰ Ibid., 154-55.

³¹ Ibid., 156.

³² Ibid., 156.

³³ Ibid., 156.

in the shanty “Mister Stormalong.”³⁴ Since folklore most likely experienced regional variations among the sailors’ various cultures and folkloric knowledge on a ship, different forms of sea shanty folklore would have been dependent on the region sailors were from or intertwined with the countries they had visited, providing a possible explanation for slight variations between the lyrics of folkloric sea shanties.

A common subject within sea shanties was “the pleasures of the sailor,” which usually mentioned activities such as “drinking and women,” considered to be “the few pleasures afforded to a sailor.”³⁵ The shanty “Cheerily Man” follows this pattern of subject matter, mentioning, “numerous women who...have certain qualities that appeal strongly to the desires of a sailor.”³⁶ These types of shanties gave sailors the opportunity to enjoy the positive things in their life and perhaps prone to exaggerate them somewhat as well, as some shanties in this genre also deal with “complications...as a result of indulgence,” such as the shanty entitled “Whiskey Johnny.”³⁷ As various types of shanties could be traced throughout the length of time sailors spent on the ship as well as the various tasks they completed, sea shanties dealing with departure, and the “beginning and end of journeys”, served as a means of building enthusiasm for returning home, but also mentioned the “cyclical motif” of the sailors’ lifestyle and an eventual return to another sail or another journey³⁸. The creativity surrounding the different types of shanties for work on a ship and the variations in subject matter as the sailors progressed through their journey form a unique experience of music creation, as sailors often added cultural flavors into their already existing music, which then was sung throughout their travels and most likely underwent individual changes within a ship’s journey. The constant exposure to a myriad of cultures in port,

³⁴ Ibid., 157.

³⁵ Ibid., 158.

³⁶ Ibid., 158.

³⁷ Ibid., 158.

³⁸ Ibid., 158-59.

combined with days on the sea with only the other sailors for company, provided a rich and constantly changing environment for the formation and performance of sea shanties and songs.

The preservation of sea shanties is largely influenced by scholars whose collections and recordings of their experiences and exposure to sea shanties and songs provided a background of information for more recent scholars to study from. The experiences of Philip Henry Gosse and the proposed meanings of his lyrics recorded during fieldwork provide an opportunity to examine the cultural influences on a single shanty³⁹. Gosse's fieldwork was focused on one particular shanty he heard while on "his homeward journey down the Alabama river [which was] frequently broken to load cotton."⁴⁰ Williams notes that Gosse's preservation of this shanty is "one of the earliest records of...shanties sung by cotton stowers...in Gulf of Mexico ports such as Mobile and New Orleans."⁴¹ The lyrics of this shanty were written in Gosse's preservation as "Fire the ringo, fire away," but other sources suggest that the lyrics may instead be "Fire, maringo, fire away," or "Fire, Marengo, fire away."⁴²

Other scholars' collections have contributed to the study of sea shanties and songs by the breadth of their collection; this is especially true for what is known as the "Carpenter Collection" from the works preserved by James Madison Carpenter⁴³. This collection contains a variety of work pertaining to sea music and shanties, including "thousands of pages of manuscript, hundreds of cylinders and discs and...over 750 recorded items."⁴⁴ Due to the considerable size of this collection, researchers and ethnomusicologists have studied different types of sea shanties within the Carpenter Collection, including shanties "used at halyards...Typically featuring two

³⁹ R.B. Williams, "Short Note: Philip Henry Gosse at Mobile, Alabama: his unique record of a sea shanty," *Archives of Natural History* 35, no. 2 (2008), DOI: 10.3366/E0260954108000430. 360.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 360.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 360.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 360-62.

⁴³ Robert Y. Walser, "'Here We Come Home in a Leaky Ship!': The Shanty Collection of James Madison Carpenter," *Folk Music Journal* 7, no. 4 (1998), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4522611>. 471.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 471.

accented beats,” which pertains to a more musicological perspective of study⁴⁵. Other musicological aspects of study were noted, such as the presence of more “unusual worksongs” including “Nothin’ but a Humbug,” and examination of its use was recorded by Walser by “attempting to use the song at halyards aboard the full-rigged ship *Joseph Conrad* at Mystic Seaport...” providing an opportunity to apply the theories noted in Carpenter’s work⁴⁶. This more recent study of previous collections of sea shanties and songs is not uncommon, as Murray Shoolbraid’s research on the song “Lukey’s Boat,” which is noted as a song throughout Shoolbraid’s essay and not a shanty, still mentions historical collections and recordings during his study of this particular song⁴⁷. Shoolbraid notes that “there are two basic tunes involved [with Lukey’s Boat],” which include a “Newfoundland version,” while the other tune “was collected in Nova Scotia by Helen Creighton and published in ‘Songs and Ballads of Nova Scotia.’”⁴⁸ Shoolbraid’s work compares nine different “versions” of “Lukey’s Boat,” providing opportunities to draw comparisons and examine differences between various performers, such as John White and Omar Blondahl, helping to possibly determine whether the variations in the shanties are based more on geography or on individual performers⁴⁹. The work of previous collectors of shanties and previous ethnomusicological work helps to provide a larger field of study for ethnomusicologists currently studying, as the work of previous scholars helps to guide research and the formation of new theories and ideas.

When studying sea shanties and sea songs, it is beneficial to consider multiple ethnomusicological theories due to the variety of knowledge, usage and performance of music in

⁴⁵ Ibid., 476.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 489-90.

⁴⁷ Murray Shoolbraid, “A Close Look at the Various Tunes for Lukey’s Boat,” *Canadian Folk Music* 4, no. 18 (1984), 5-6.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 6.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 7-8.

this field. The perspective of historical ethnomusicology, as emphasized in McCollum and Hebert's work entitled *Theory and Method in Historical Ethnomusicology*, includes consideration of perspectives such as "music archaeology, iconography, history and ethnography," bringing together multiple perspectives for a new method of study in ethnomusicology⁵⁰. This historical perspective, since it brings in other areas of study, is acceptable and usable when applied to the study of sea shanties because it provides a method to observe the larger scope of what was occurring in history; during the time of sea shanties, this included whaling and trade through ships. Historical ethnomusicology provides a means of observing the cultural diffusion of sea shanties and their popularity, as shanties were influenced by sailors' previous knowledge and cultural experiences. Ethnomusicologist Robert Walser emphasizes the historical perspective in his classification of sea shanties into three areas of development. Walser's first era classifies shanties into their development during the age of sail, ending around 1930; next, the time following when sea shanties were no longer used but there were still people alive who had done the work, roughly ending with the passing of Stan Hugill in 1992; and the era following after, in which people learned sea shanties from folklore archives and other singers⁵¹.

The theoretical perspective of phenomenology, which Ruth M. Stone defines as "the sensations and interpretations of individuals as important...data," is a valuable perspective when studying sea music and shanties⁵². The phenomenological approach emphasizes the idea of "durée, or inner time, [as] the central focus of the musical experience."⁵³ Considering the contrast of inner and outer time that phenomenology emphasizes, a researcher might view a

⁵⁰ Jonathan McCollum and David G. Hebert, *Theory and Method in Historical Ethnomusicology* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014).

⁵¹ Personal interview with Robert Walser, June 11, 2016.

⁵² Ruth M. Stone, *Theory for Ethnomusicology* (Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education, Inc., 2008). 165.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 168.

sailor's ship as a microcosm of society with its own individual musical experiences and an individual musical culture. The passage of time on a ship poses a contrast between the outer time of the time zones that sailors passed through on their journeys juxtaposed with the inner time of the daily tasks on a boat and the passage of time during each day on the sea. The function of shanties and their performance was most likely affected by these different spheres of time.

Taking into consideration performance theory, or the concept drawing on the "experience...between performer and audience," the relatively closed nature of sailors on a ship would imply the lack of an audience, yet the shanties and sea songs were still performed by the sailors⁵⁴. In the existence of performing sea shanties, the sailors may have functioned as both the audience and performer, especially if sailors alternated being the "shantyman" for different tasks⁵⁵. The idea of other groups' influence on shanty performance is explored in James Revell Carr's research in Hawaii, as he noted that "[Hawaiian women] freely offered to travel with the ship to entertain the crew" and "performed [a dance] for the sailors," which might indicate a divide between the women's Hawaiian music and dance and the shanties sung by the sailors⁵⁶. Each group served as both "performer" and "audience" for different musical acts and songs on the ship, which would have influenced changes in performance between both groups.

In considering music and the singing of sea shanties and songs as a type of "performance," the dramaturgical theory, which mentions "backstage behavior...not intended for the patrons to see" and "front stage behavior," referencing "the performance itself," can be applied to the performance of sea shanties and songs⁵⁷. While there was most likely behavior on

⁵⁴ Ibid., 137.

⁵⁵ Kelby Rose, "Nostalgia and Imagination in Nineteenth-century Sea Shanties," *The Mariner's Mirror* 98, no. 2 (2012), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00253359.2012.10708990>. 150.

⁵⁶ James R. Carr, *Hawaiian Music in Motion: Mariners, Missionaries, and Minstrels* (Champaign: University of Illinois, 2014). 24.

⁵⁷ Ruth M. Stone, *Theory for Ethnomusicology* (Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education, Inc., 2008). 118.

ships that other people were not meant to see (such as behavior during leisure time), sailors had no true audience on ships besides themselves, especially being at sea. This individual group of people had no audience to perform shanties for, yet they were still sung on ships to ease work and pass time. One wonders that if guests were on ships, such as the Hawaiian women Carr mentions, if the performance of sea shanties would change due to the presence of guests. There are certainly behavioral changes associated with bringing new people onto a ship, so these changes may have transferred over to the performance of shanties and sea songs. The function of sea shanties in easing work disputes their place as “back-stage behavior” or as “front stage behavior;” since the shanties were sung while work was being done, they may have been considered “back-stage behavior,” but the actual singing of the songs functions more as a performance, since the songs were sung out loud among the other sailors.

With the constant and regular performance of sea shanties and songs in an isolated environment, like a ship, it is natural that some type of culture or “group” would form among sailors working on a ship. Considering sailors on a ship, the theory of structural functionalism, which mentions “the interrelationship among different systems within a group” as well as “parts and processes” might serve as a means of determining the function of sea shanties and songs for sailors⁵⁸. Sea shanties and songs formed one part of the entire culture and lifestyle of sailors’ lives on a ship, and served as a form of discussion as well as a way to create community among sailors, as they worked together to perform tasks on a ship.

The general opinion of the public towards sailors was not always favorable, however; during the historical period of Herman Melville’s novels, sailors often received “Bibles, hymnals, and other devotional literature to any seamen who would take them” from

⁵⁸ Ibid., 39-40.

“shipmasters, shipowners, and seamen’s benevolent organizations.”⁵⁹ This idea of reforming sailors was taken to an extreme on “‘Sunday ships,’ where religious observances were required and foul language was a punishable offense.”⁶⁰ Compared with musical changes and the idea that “pilgrims need holy songs to replace profane ones,” the emergence of songs such as “Roow well ye marynors &c’ ...in 1565-6” eventually became known as “Row Well Ye Mariners.”⁶¹ These religious influences attempted to change the culture of sailing and being a sailor into a concept that was more socially acceptable, as is seen in the application of these songs and the idea of “pilgrims,” providing a more pleasing perception of sailing life.

Sea shanties have had a significant historical influence, but outside of collections such as the Carpenter Collection and the work of Philip Henry Gosse, sea shanties and songs remain difficult to study due to regional variations and lack of songs being recorded or written down. Thus, the practice of “virtual fieldwork,” being applied to “the virtual presence of...performing musicians when they are not present in person” and “the study of people making music” enables music to be shared not only among different people, but preserved from different time periods as well⁶². Within my own research, I was able to use the Internet to access performances of sea shanties from the annual Sea Music Festival in Mystic, CT, which would not have been possible without the option of virtual fieldwork as a method of gathering information⁶³. The amount of music that is available to access via virtual fieldwork provides ethnomusicological researchers with a larger variety of material than they would be able to access with another method of

⁵⁹ Stuart M. Frank, “‘Cheer’ly Man’: Chanteying in *Omoo* and *Moby Dick*,” *The New England Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (1985), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/365263>. 75.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁶¹ C.B. Hardman, “Row Well Ye Mariners,” *The Review of English Studies* 51, no. 201 (2000), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/517663>. 80-82.

⁶² Gregory Barz and Timothy J. Cooley, *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). 90-91.

⁶³ The Morgan Stowaway, “Windlass Chantey Santy Anno,” Mystic Seaport: The Museum of America and the Sea, Mystic Seaport, August 1, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-KOurhm7TPQ>. Other examples available from Mystic Seaport at <https://www.youtube.com/user/MysticSeaportVideos>.

research, exposing more variety and areas of study within a particular subject, such as sea shanties. The ideas used in dramaturgical theory are also applicable to current work, as one of the tenets of dramaturgical theory is that “everyday life is analogous to dramatic enactment and musical on stage.”⁶⁴ This theory was applied in a much more literal sense to the recent Broadway musical *The Last Ship*, written by the musician Sting about his life growing up in Wallsend, England and being influenced by the shipbuilding industry surrounding him⁶⁵. In this case, the dramaturgical theory was directly applicable to everyday life, and this perspective was eventually transferred onto the stage.

As virtual fieldwork grows and sea shanties and songs retain some of their popularity today, the consideration of the significance of their performance is largely the means of determining how and in what manner sea shanties are preserved. For example, sea shanties and songs are performed each year at the annual Sea Music Festival at Mystic Seaport, bringing together a variety of musicians with varying shanties and songs to share⁶⁶. The fact that these shanties are performed in festival settings, even though the songs may still be sung on ships at these festivals, indicates that the performance of sea shanties today is focused more on tourism than on using shanties for work, as sea shanties are now largely viewed as a historical type of music. The use of sea shanties’ performance for tourism brings into debate the idea of preserving musical traditions versus preserving historical accuracy, and whether greater importance should be placed on keeping musical performance “alive,” or whether music should be seen as a part of history and not performed without the context of that time period, as was mentioned in class

⁶⁴ Ruth M. Stone, *Theory for Ethnomusicology* (Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education, Inc., 2008), 119.

⁶⁵ Adam Hetrick, “Sting Musical *The Last Ship* Sailing Towards Fall 2014 Broadway Arrival,” Playbill, last modified August 14, 2013, <http://www.playbill.com/news/article/sting-musical-the-last-ship-sailing-toward-fall-2014-broadway-arrival-208519>.

⁶⁶ Sea Music Festival, Mystic Seaport, last modified 2015, <http://www.mysticseaport.org/event/sea-music-festival-2/>.

when discussing the accuracy of early music ensembles at Washington College. Since sea shanties were mainly done during ship work and are used for tourism today, the idea of their performance being “accurate” may be compromised when viewed from this perspective. The future of sea shanties is dependent on oral traditions, since few sea shanties were written down and varied between regions, countries, and ships. However, the sharing of sea shanties is beneficial. According to musician Cliff Haslam, sharing songs at the Sea Music Festival in Mystic is a way to teach other people songs and learn more about the work that sea shanties were associated with. He mentioned that singing at different venues, such as the Jolly Beggar’s and Griswold inn in Mystic had helped him meet other singers and people involved in sailing⁶⁷. The opinions and desires of the musicians performing shanties and the people listening to shanties determine where the performance of shanties will function in society, as music does not exist in a social vacuum, and its purpose is changed by the people who listen to it and perform it.

Sea shanties and songs are seen as a part of history, yet their musical and historical influence is far from finished. The nature of varying musical styles in modern performance provides opportunities for a new area of study, as performers of this era most likely had different experiences with ship work and shanties than the original nineteenth-century experiences that most sailors had during the popularity of sea shanties and songs during the whaling industry⁶⁸. With the current performance of sea shanties, the field of study would be benefitted by any other collections or records of sea shanties similar to the James Madison Carpenter Collection or the work of Philip Henry Gosse: more fieldwork could be undertaken to find out if any other

⁶⁷ Personal interview with Cliff Haslam, June 10, 2016.

⁶⁸ *Shipping Routes in the Pacific Showing National Interests*. Map. 1943-1945. Scale in degrees longitude/latitude. Perry-Casteñada Library Map Collection, University of Texas Libraries. http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/pacific_islands_1943_1945/shipping_routes_national_interest.jpg (accessed 27 April 2015).

collections of this type exist. The interactions between American and European sailors and non-Western countries is mentioned in James Revell Carr's experience with research in Hawaii, and other non-Western countries played a significant part in the whaling industry; a possible research area could include observing non-Western sea music and sea songs, or whether these songs are even in existence as a music genre. Research could also be done in fields other than sailing, including other industries that required rhythmic work, for example, the mining industry. When taking into consideration the role sea shanties and songs have played in the formation of history, especially in their individual settings and genres within performance, the role these songs took on in the daily life of sailors illustrates how applicable music is to life and how the lives of countless people are intertwined with music.

Works Cited

- Barz, Gregory, and Cooley, Timothy J. *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Carr, James R. *Hawaiian Music in Motion: Mariners, Missionaries, and Minstrels*. Champaign: University of Illinois, 2014.
- Frank, Stuart M. "'Cheer'ly Man': Chanteying in Omoo and Moby-Dick." *The New England Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (1985): 68-82. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/365263>.
- Hardman, C.B. "Row Well Ye Mariners." *The Review of English Studies* 51, no. 201 (2000): 80-82. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/517663>.
- Heaton, G., and Knowles, J. "'Entertainment Perfect': Ben Jonson and Corporate Hospitality." *The Review of English Studies* 54, no. 217 (2003): 587-600. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3661476>.
- Hetrick, Adam. "Sting Musical *The Last Ship* Sailing Towards Fall 2014 Broadway Arrival." Playbill. Last modified August 14, 2013. <http://www.playbill.com/news/article/sting-musical-the-last-ship-sailing-toward-fall-2014-broadway-arrival-208519>.
- McCollum, J., and Hebert, D.G. *Theory and Method in Historical Ethnomusicology*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014.
- The Morgan Stowaway. "Windlass Chantey Santy Anno." Mystic Seaport: The Museum of America and the Sea. Mystic Seaport. August 1, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-KOurhm7TPQ>
- Rose, Kelby. "Nostalgia and Imagination in Nineteenth-century Sea Shanties." *The Mariner's Mirror* 98, no. 2 (2012). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00253359.2012.10708990>
- Sea Music Festival. Mystic Seaport. Last modified 2015. <http://www.mysticseaport.org/event/sea-music-festival-2/>
- Shipping Routes in the Pacific Showing National Interests*. Map. 1943-1945. Scale in degrees longitude/latitude. Perry-Casteñada Library Map Collection, University of Texas Libraries. http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/pacific_islands_1943_1945/shipping_routes_national_interest.jpg (accessed 27 April 2015).
- Shoolbraid, Murray. "A Close Look at the Various Tunes for Lukey's Boat." *Canadian Folk Music* 4, no. 18 (1984): 5-8.
- Stone, Ruth M. *Theory for Ethnomusicology*. Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education, Inc. 2008.
- Walser, Robert Y. "'Here We Come Home in a Leaky Ship!': The Shanty Collection of James Madison Carpenter." *Folk Music Journal* 7, no. 4 (1998): 471-95. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4522611>.
- Whates, Harold. "The Background of Sea Shanties." *Music & Letters* 18, no. 2 (1937): 259-64. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/727760>.
- Williams, R.B. "Short note: Philip Henry Gosse at Mobile, Alabama: his unique record of a sea shanty." *Archives of Natural History* 35, no. 2 (2008): 360-63. DOI: 10.3366/E0260954108000430