

THE SONGS OF THE SHANTYMEN:
COMPOSITION AND PERFORMANCE IN A
NINETEENTH CENTURY TRADITION

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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JAMES HENRY MOREIRA



THE SONGS OF THE SHANTYMEN: COMPOSITION AND PERFORMANCE
IN A NINETEENTH CENTURY TRADITION

by

© James Henry Moreira, B.A.

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of the requirements for the degree of
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Memorial University of Newfoundland

St. John's

Newfoundland

ABSTRACT

The study is an attempt to analyse the nature and function of formulaic composition in the performance of shanties, which were worksongs used to accompany manual labour on board merchant sailing ships in the last century. The primary objective is to examine the stylistic and conceptual alterations that occur in a singer's approach to performance during the "transitional" phase between the non-literate and literate stages of a society, for although formulaic composition, or "re-creative performance," can exist in both non-literate and literate contexts, researchers have shown that the methods of performance differ significantly between the two phases of culture.

Although some textual material has been garnered from published shanty collections, the analysis centres mainly on the repertoires of Richard Maitland, whose songs were collected by William Doerflinger and also by Alan Lomax, and another of Doerflinger's informants, Capt. Patrick Tayluer. Since the study is confined to a very specific context, a great deal of data pertaining to the tradition has also been obtained from the autobiographies of former seamen.

Following the theoretical precepts of Milman Parry and Albert Lord, as well as other writers, such as John Barnie, David Buchan, David Evans, and John D. Niles, whose works are extrapolations of the "oral theory," the study examines how literate attitudes, particularly the concepts of

memorization and "improvisation," affect the shantyman's approach to performance. The study also examines how the singer must modify his method of performance to satisfy certain functional conditions or to cope with the structural and stylistic differences in the songs themselves. Generally speaking, literacy may be said to have a broad, conceptual effect on the shantyman's method of performance while the functional and poetic aspects of literacy affect the performance of specific songs in specific situations.

2

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Seemingly anchored to his desk and typewriter amidst an ever-growing mound of papers, books, coffee cups, and overflowing ashtrays, a student can sometimes lose sight of the fact that writing a thesis is really a collaborative effort that depends on the assistance and co-operation of many people. The contributions of these individuals, however small, all serve to make the process easier and to remind the writer that he is not, in fact, "going it alone."

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

vi

PAGE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
INTRODUCTION	9
Sources and approaches	12
I. "DAMN AND BEGGAR THE NAVY, BOYS, 'A MERCHANT SHIP FOR ME': THE CONTEXT	29
"Life at sea"	46
II. "WE'LL HAUL AND HAUL TOGETHER": THE FUNCTION	70
III. "AWAY DOWN SOUTH WHERE I WAS BORN": THE HISTORY OF THE SHANTY	122
IV. "I'LL SING YOU A SONG ALL ABOUT THE HIGH SEA": THE CONTEXT	155
V. "I THOUGHT I HEARD THE OLD MAN SAY": ORAL VERSUS VERBAL TRADITION	200
VI. "IT'S A LONG, LONG TIME SINCE I MADE UP THIS RHYME": SHANTY COMPOSITION AND PERFORMANCE - I	246
VII. "IT'S A LONG, LONG TIME SINCE I MADE UP THIS RHYME": SHANTY COMPOSITION AND PERFORMANCE - II	307
VIII. "IT'S A LONG, LONG TIME SINCE I MADE UP THIS RHYME": SHANTY COMPOSITION AND PERFORMANCE - III	342
IX. "WE SWEAR BY ROTE FOR WANT O' MORE": SHANTYING IN THE LATTER DAYS OF SAIL ..	400
CONCLUSIONS	414
LIST OF SOURCES	427

(Notes are included immediately following each chapter)

LIST OF FIGURES

1. Standard windlass.
2. "Brake" windlass.
3. Capstan with windlass.
4. Anchor davit and catting tackle (side view).
5. Anchor davit and catting tackle (front view).
6. Barquentine, R.V. Regina Maris (front view).
7. Regina Maris (aft view).
8. Sail plan with single topsails.
9. Sail plan with double topsails and topgallants.
10. Foremast rigging of the Regina Maris (general view).
11. Foremast rigging of the Regina Maris (detail).
12. Foresheet tackle and fairlead.
13. Halyards (lower tackle).
14. Halyards (upper tackle).
15. Single halyards.
16. Double halyards.
17. Braces and triple sister blocks.
18. Bumkin with fore and lower-topsail brace blocks.
19. Binary stanzaic construction in "Child Waters."
20. Structural analysis of "Child Waters," stanzas 5-11.
21. Structural analysis of "Child Waters."
22. Stability of components in the formula.
23. Stability and variation in "hauling" systems.
24. Stability and variation in "Cape Horn" system.

25. Stability and variation in substitution systems.
26. Stability and variation in conceptual systems.
27. Annular patterns in Richard Maitland's version of "Lowlands."

INTRODUCTION

In folkloristics, the term "oral tradition" is commonly employed, albeit rather loosely, to refer to the transmission of materials by word-of-mouth, but when aspects of performance are brought into the picture, the term suddenly demands a certain degree of care and precision in its usage, for researchers have shown that there is a substantial difference between the processes of transmission and performance in non-literate and literate societies. In communities where writing is unknown, or known only to a select few, the concept of memorization frequently does not exist, and, thanks largely to the works of Harvard researchers Milman Parry¹ and Albert Lord,² we now have a fairly good understanding of the process that enables the unlettered singer to "re-create" his songs in performance through the manipulation of traditional verbal elements (formulas), narrative episodes (themes), and structures (parallelisms). In literate cultures, the stability of the printed page tends to impress upon the performer the notion that the text is inalterable, and even when materials are disseminated by word-of-mouth in such societies, they are generally learned and performed by rote.

The style of performance one will encounter in a tradition, however, is not entirely dependent on whether or not the participants are literate, for when writing is introduced into a culture, the transition from oral composition to rote

memorization is not automatic. In fact, the frequent occurrence of re-creative performance in literate cultures has led some researchers to question seriously the effect of literacy on oral performance.³ The traditions put forward in support of these claims belong to cultures in which mass literacy is a comparatively recent phenomenon, and thus, they represent a transitional period between purely oral and purely literate methods of performance, but few researchers have analysed closely the differences in the re-creative styles existing in non-literate and newly-literate cultures. An exception is David Buchan's examination of the ballad tradition in the northeast of Scotland in which he shows that, during the transitional phase, the advent of literacy opens new avenues of thought to the singers, including notions of fixity and originality, which affect their basic approach to performance. Consequently, in contrast to the tightly-knit compositional style of the oral phase, the performance of ballads during the transitional period is "loosely re-creative,"⁴ and many of the integral features of orally composed texts either disappear or become substantially altered. In light of these changes, Buchan suggests the adoption of the term "oral tradition" to refer specifically to word-of-mouth transmission in non-literate cultures and the term "verbal tradition" to signify word-of-mouth transmission in literate societies.⁵

In the present study, we shall examine the nature and role of re-creation in the performance of shanties as used

as accompaniments to heaving and hauling tasks on board merchant sailing ships of the last century, paying close attention to the differences in the shantyman's method of performance and that of oral singers. That shanties were re-created in performance is a fact well known to anyone having even a casual interest in these worksongs, for there are few writers on the subject who do not acknowledge the role of "improvisation" in this tradition. Frank Bullen, himself a shantyman on many vessels, writes,

Now it is necessary to say something about the words of Chanties. The stubborn fact is that they had no set words beyond a starting verse or two and the fixed phrases of the chorus, which were very often not words at all. For all Chanties were impromptu as far as the words were concerned. Many a Chantyman was prized in spite of his poor voice because of his improvisations. Poor doggeral they were mostly and often very lewd and filthy, but they gave the knowing and appreciative shipmates, who roared the refrain, much opportunity for laughter.⁶

The shanties may also be classified without reservation as part of a "verbal" tradition, for in spite of the stereotyped image of the nineteenth-century seaman as an "illiterate," historian David Alexander has shown that as early as 1835 over fifty per cent of merchant sailors were literate and that, by the turn of the century, this folk group had attained a literacy rate of ninety per cent.⁷

Shanty performance, however, is influenced by more than the literacy of the singers, and there are important functional considerations that have a significant effect on the

re-creative process. Also, in contrast to the ballads and the blues, which have fairly coherent metrical and stanzaic formats, the shanties consist of a diverse body of songs that are unified only by the fact that they were all used as shipboard worksongs, and the poetic diversity of the tradition has a further effect on performance. In the discussions that follow, we shall analyse not only the individual effects of these influences but their combined effects as well.

SOURCES AND APPROACHES

The analysis deals with the shanties only as used in their original context, that is, as nautical worksong, and virtually ignores their latter-day roles as nostalgic reminders of the so-called "golden age of sail" or as "working-class" folksong, for neither of these latter forces has been able to ensure the survival of the songs in traditional seafaring communities.⁸ Among seamen, the shanties are relegated solely to the work environment, and some writers have stated that there was a "taboo" against singing them at any other time. Presumably, the strong associations the shanties have with unpleasant labour are responsible for the prohibition against their use in an entertainment context. The study is also limited regionally to an analysis of the shanties as used on board English and American deep-water vessels, and given the frequent interchange of sailors from both

countries, we are essentially dealing with a single tradition. Shantying as practiced by the seamen of continental Europe, Scandinavia, the Caribbean, and other nations in virtually every corner of the globe is not discussed, for although all these traditions have much in common, a proper investigation would demand a thorough analysis of the different cultural and contextual factors in each region. At several points, however, we shall note the influence of these other traditions on shantying in the Anglo-American context.

The first four sections of the thesis consist of an examination of the tradition and the context in which it existed and focus on the history of the sailing merchant marine in the last century, both as an industry and as a society unto itself; the function of the shanties; their history; and their thematic content. The data pertaining to the context has been gleaned from both popular and academic histories of the merchant marine, such as the works of Howard I. Chapelle, Alexander Laing, Basil Lubbock, Knut Weibust, and others. These volumes represent a good overview, of the industry, for the different authors approach the subject from different perspectives. Chapelle⁹ and Laing,¹⁰ for example, concentrate on the modifications in hull and rigging design that occurred over the course of the century, which, by the way, did have an important effect on the shanty tradition. Lubbock,¹¹ on the other hand, has produced a series of works analysing the industry in terms of the various trades, while Weibust¹² has published an excellent

ethnographic analysis of life in the merchant sailing fleets.

Another valuable source is, one on which Webbust himself relied quite heavily, and that is the autobiographies of former seamen. There is an immense number of these volumes available and they essentially fall into two temporal groups: those written around the middle of the last century due to the success of Richard Dana's Two Years before the Mast,¹³ and those written in the years following the First World War due to the nostalgic furor caused by the demise of the sailing fleets.¹⁴ Commenting on this body of literature, David Alexander writes:

Some of it, written by evangelical converts, describes [horrendous] conditions...but most of it, while emphasizing the hardship and brutality of a seaman's life, tends to a perverse pride in that fact and concludes that it was as honourable and worthy a life as any working man might hope to find. The literature is repetitious and, whatever the moral stance of the writer, there is common agreement on many points.¹⁵

Although oral historian Paul Thompson has cautioned against the use of autobiographies for ethnographic research on the ground that they reflect the personal bias of the author, he does allow that they are a useful source for background material,¹⁶ and their use has been so confined in the preparation of this thesis. Comments on the literacy of sailors, for example, which are frequently made in these works, have not been considered valid historical records, and for such information, I have relied solely on statistical data.

Data pertaining to the shanty tradition itself has come mainly from library and archive sources, for since the context in which the songs thrived virtually ceased to exist over fifty years ago and had been on the decline for as many years prior to that, the collection of shanties from singers who used them in the nautical context is a rather difficult undertaking at this late date. At the outset of the project, it was hoped that Newfoundland, being a region where sailing vessels were used in an industrial capacity until as recently as twenty years ago, would prove to be a favourable area for shanty collection. This, however, appears not to be the case. In fact, the shanty tradition seems to have been rather weak in the province, for although some shipboard labour was regulated by vocal accompaniment, a single song, "The Jolly Poker," appears to have been used in most situations. This song is a variant of the "short-haul" shanty, "Do my Johnny Boker," and its use at the windlass,¹⁷ which is a heaving operation, sets the Newfoundland tradition apart from that which existed on most Anglo-American vessels. The most likely reason for the lack of shanties in the region is that the "Grand Bank" schooners used by Newfoundland fishermen and coastal traders are quite small in comparison to most deep-water vessels, and furthermore, they are "fore-and-aft," rather than "square," rigged, which means that the working of the sails is much easier on these vessels, and thus, shanties may not have been deemed necessary. Even on the largest sailing ships, shanties were

not used for the working of all sails but only those that constituted the heaviest labour.

Most of the published works on the tradition have been produced with a popular audience in mind, and although the shanties are an important sub-genre of folksong, representing as they do what is perhaps the most significant corpus of worksongs in Anglo-American culture, few trained folklorists have bothered to expend any great amount of energy investigating this tradition. Some, such as Cecil Sharp,¹⁸ have written on the music of the shanties, but on the whole, little effort has been directed toward an analysis of shanty performance and the cultural significance of the songs, and perhaps the only work of note emanating from an academic source is Roger D. Abraham's collection of essays on contemporary shantying in the West Indies, Deep the Water, Shallow the Shore. Most of the literature on the subject, published collections included, has been produced by "amateur" folklorists, many of whom are former seamen or writers attracted to the shanties for nostalgic or political reasons. While most of these works are not intended to be scholarly examinations of the tradition, a few, notably Stan Hugill's Shanties from the Seven Seas and William Doerflinger's Shantymen and Shantyboys, are clearly the result of competent and painstaking research and have contributed immensely to our knowledge of the shanties and the practice of shantying.

In general, there are three aspects of shantying that have received the most attention: the practical application of the songs in the work context, the history of the tradition, and the thematic content of the songs as a mirror of seafaring life under sail. Although the functional analyses of the tradition are in keeping with the approaches of contemporary folkloristics, the discussions, as I say, are normally confined to the practical applications of the songs -- in fact, the common practice is to classify shanties according to the area of labour for which they are used, that is, they are first divided into "heaving" and "hauling" songs and then into various sub-groups. Little, however, has been written on how the demands of different tasks affect the type of song used and the subsequent effect on performance, or on the further functions of the songs, such as the diversion they provide from the labour and group unification. In this study, the chapters on function and content will attempt to provide some insights into these latter aspects of the tradition.

Of all matters pertaining to the shanties, that which has been given the most attention is the history of the tradition, and there is considerable disagreement on the subject. Some writers appear to feel that a tradition's importance is directly proportional to its age and assert, on the basis of literary references to the "songs," "howls," or "cries" of sailors, that the shanties date back to Elizabethan times.¹⁹ Contemporary thought on the matter,

however, brought about largely through the researches of Hugill and Doerflinger, ascribes a more recent origin, either during or shortly after the Napoleonic wars.

Although the quest for a tradition's origins is currently out of vogue in modern folkloristics, in this case it is actually a very pertinent part of the discussion, for the oral tradition out of which the shanties grew did not, in all likelihood, exist in the nautical context. Rather, the tradition appears to have been adopted from the worksongs of the Black stevedores in the ports of the southern United States and the Caribbean. In consequence, the shanties of the latter half of the century represent not only a stage in the evolution of a single tradition, but the merging of many traditions. This, as we shall see, has a very significant effect on the shantyman's approach to performance. The history of the shanties that appears in this study consists mainly of a re-evaluation of what has already been written on the subject, and whenever possible, the original sources quoted by other researchers have been re-examined. In this respect, the autobiographies of seamen have, again, been of great service, for by comparing the comments of a writer such as Dana with those of sailors from the latter part of the century, one can obtain a fairly good diachronic perspective on the tradition and the alterations that occurred due to the technical and sociological changes in the merchant marine.

The latter five chapters are devoted solely to an analysis of shanty performance with particular reference to the re-creative aspect of the tradition. The principles of the so-called "oral theory" have been applied to a number of traditions in recent years, and while many of these analyses have been examined during the preparation of this thesis, those having the greatest impact are Parry and Lord's initial works on Yugoslav and Homeric epic; the formulaic analyses of Anglo-Saxon scholars, particularly those of Donald K. Fry²⁰ and John D. Niles;²¹ and most importantly, the analyses of re-creative performance in literate contexts by Buchan and by researchers working with traditional blues, chiefly John Barnie²² and David Evans.²³ These latter works are of particular relevance, for the most prominent influences in the shanties are Anglo-American ballads and Black folksong.

As was stated earlier, the primary purpose of the present study is to demonstrate how the shantyman's approach to re-creation varies from that of oral singers, and while the differences are many, they are generally attributable to two main factors. First, as a member of a literate community, the shantyman is aware that his texts vary from one singing to the next, and due to functional incentives, he often deliberately attempts to alter his texts in performance. Second, not all shanties are based on formulaic patterns, and consequently, to attain the desired variation, the shantyman is sometimes forced to adopt a rather loose approach

to performance. In the analysis of shanty re-creation, most of the discussion will focus on how these factors affect the shantyman's use of formulaic and non-formulaic material as well as his overall approach to the performance of different types of songs.

Judging from past studies, it would appear that researchers analysing re-creative performance in other contexts adopt one of two basic approaches to their respective traditions: either they focus on one primary informant and analyse his role within the tradition, as Buchan has done by using three singers as representatives of the three phases of traditional balladry; or they concentrate on the tradition in general and use a variety of performers as examples, as Evans has done in his analysis of the blues. With the shanties, the latter approach is favoured, for due to the multiplicity of influences acting on this tradition, different shantymen have different fundamental approaches to performance. Thus, an analysis of at least two singers is imperative in order to show the true nature of the re-creative process in this context.

There is, however, a problem with finding suitable texts on which to base such an analysis, for it is not enough to rely on versions that are representative of typical performances; rather, one must have texts copied down from actual performances. Most of the published shanty collections are not suitable, for a great deal of the material in them has been edited in order to make the songs more

acceptable to the general public. This process involves not only the deletion of material the editors consider obscene but also an attempt, in some instances, to make the shanties more "poetic" than they actually may have been.²⁴ In other cases, the editors have collated versions in an attempt to establish either an "Ur" form of a given song²⁵ or a text that contains as many of the stanzas known to have been used in the song as possible.²⁶ Although some material has been drawn from such collections, it has been used sparingly and with caution.

One of the few collectors who printed shanty texts exactly as he recorded them, allowing, of course, for the censoring of forthright sexual references, is Doerflinger,²⁷ and the songs in his collection are an invaluable resource for anyone studying the re-creative aspect of shanty performance. Furthermore, he frequently includes alternate versions of a song as sung by a single shantyman or carefully notes the alterations made in different performances, and this makes his collection an even richer source of material.

His two principle informants are Richard Maitland and Capt. Patrick Tayluer, who, at the time their shanties were recorded, were both living in Sailors' Snug Harbor, Long Island. Maitland was born in New York, in 1857, and began his seafaring career when only twelve. At this young age, he signed on as a trainee on board the American schoolship, Mercury, and it was during his two year

apprenticeship on this vessel that he learned most of the shanties he carried with him for the rest of his life.

After leaving the Mercury, he followed the sea intermittently for a few years but finally committed himself to a seafaring occupation and served on many deep-water vessels until some time after World War I. In later years, he was a frequent performer of shanties and sea songs at folk festivals in the United States.²⁸

After his initial exposure to formal education ended in a fight with the master on the first day, Patrick Tayluer decided that his fortunes lay elsewhere, and he spent most of his childhood earning what little money he could by performing odd jobs in and around his native Eastport, Maine. About 1886, at the age of thirteen, he ran away from home and headed for Boston with the intention of joining a ship as cabin boy. In this pursuit, he had the good fortune to fall in with a benevolent captain who saw to it that young Tayluer learned how to read and write as well as how to sail. After nine years service in the merchant marine, he obtained an extra-master's license in the port of Halifax and later served as captain on both British and American vessels. During the First World War, he quit the sea and signed up with the British 10th Lancers. He did not return to his former occupation at the war's end. He eventually retired to the United States and, like Maitland, was a popular performer at folk festivals in the northeast.²⁹

The shanties of these two men form the basis for most of the discussion on shanty performance. Particular attention is paid to Maitland's songs, for his repertoire has also been collected by Alan Lomax,³⁰ and thus, alternate versions of almost all his songs are available. Copies of the Lomax recordings have been obtained from the Archive of Folk Culture, in Washington, D.C. Copies of Doerflinger's recordings of Tayluer have also been obtained from the same source -- his recordings of Maitland, unfortunately, are not available -- and they have proved to be a valuable source of material in their own right, for even though most of the texts are printed verbatim in Shantymen and Shantyboys, the tapes have the advantage of containing the elements deleted from the printed versions and they also contain a number of items not included in the published collection. Only single versions of Tayluer's songs have been recorded, but his texts are so distinct that they offer an interesting contrast to Maitland's more conventional texts, and as we shall see, the two men appear to have substantially different approaches to their tradition. All in all, the Maitland and Tayluer corpuses comprise roughly seventy-five "complete" texts and a number of fragments consisting mainly of additional stanzas.

Finally, material has also been drawn from the shanties included in the Robert W. Gordon collection,³¹ copies of which are housed in the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive (MUNFLA), in St. John's. The

texts in this collection, which were recorded during the 1920's from various singers in California, are, for the most part, rather brief, many of them consisting only of a single stanza and a chorus. The recordings are primarily of interest for the texts collected from singers who would have gained their experience in sail around the turn of the century and later, for there are some significant differences between the performance of these shanties and those of Maitland and Taylor, which are representative of the tradition as it existed some twenty to thirty years earlier. A brief description of these alterations in performance style is included at the end of the main body of the discussion.

FOOTNOTES

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² Albert B. Lord, The Singer of Tales (1960; rpt. New York: Atheneum, 1978).

³ See for example, Bruce Rosenberg, The Art of the American Folk Preacher (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

⁴ David Buchan, The Ballad and the Folk (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 243.

⁵ Buchan, p. 2.

⁶ Frank T. Bullen and W.F. Arnold, Songs of Sea Labour (London: Orpheus Music Publishing Co., 1914), p. vi.

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⁸ Horace Beck, Folklore and the Sea, The American Maritime Library, Vol. VI (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1973), p. 140.

⁹ See for example, Chapelle, The History of American Sailing Ships (London: Putnam, 1936).

¹⁰ See for example, Laing, American Ships (New York: American Heritage Press, 1971).

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¹² Knut Weibust, Deep Sea Sailors: A Study in Maritime Ethnology (Stockholm: Nordiska museets, Handlingar 71, 1969).

¹³ See for example, Francis Allyn Olmsted, Incidents of a Whaling Voyage (1841; rpt. Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1969).

¹⁴ See for example, Walter Runciman, Before the Mast -- and After: The Autobiography of a Sailor and Shipowner (London: T. Fisher Unwin, Ltd., 1924).

¹⁵ Alexander, p. 3.

¹⁶ Paul Thompson, The Voice of the Past: Oral History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 94.

¹⁷ Anne Budgell, interview with Arch Way of Newtown, Bonayista Bay, recorded 1979 (cass., 1 7/8 ips), tape in collector's possession.

¹⁸ Cecil Sharp, English Folk Chanteys (London: Simpkin Marshall, Ltd., 1914).

¹⁹ See for example; W.B. Whall, Sea Songs and Shanties, 6th ed. (Glasgow: Brown, Son & Ferguson, 1927), pp. ix-xi.

²⁰ Donald K. Fry, "Old English Formulas and Systems," English Studies, 48 (1967), 193-204.

²¹John D. Niles, Beowulf: The Poem and its Tradition (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1983).

²²John Barrie, "Formulaic Lines and Stanzas in the Country Blues," Ethnomusicology, 22:3 (1978), 457-473.

²³David Evans, Big Road Blues: Tradition and Creativity in the Folk Blues (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

²⁴See for example, Richard Runciman Terry, The Shanty Book, part 1 (London: J. Curwen & Sons, Ltd., 1921), p. ix.

²⁵See for example, Frederick Pease Harlow, Chanteying Aboard American Ships (Barre, Mass.: Barre Publishing Co., Inc., 1962).

²⁶See for example, Stephen Hugill, Shanties from the Seven Seas (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961).

²⁷William Main Doerflinger, Shantymen and Shantyboys (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1951); for Doerflinger's statement of his own editorial policy and criticism of the practices of other collectors, see pp. ix-x.

²⁸Doerflinger, pp. 3 and 322.

²⁹Doerflinger, p. 323; see also, William Main Doerflinger, Sea songs and shanties collected from Patrick Tayluer, recorded 1942, Library of Congress, Archive of Folk Culture, LWO 3493, reels 47B-50A (7" reel, 7 1/2-ips), AFS 6597b-AFS 6598a.

³⁰ Alan Lomax, Sea songs and shanties collected from Richard Maitland, recorded May, 1939, Library of Congress, Archive of Folk Culture, LWO 4872, reels 161B-162A (7" reel, 7 1/2 ips).

³¹ Robert Winslow Gordon, Shanties collected from various singers in California, recorded 1920-23, Library of Congress, Archive of Folk Culture, LWO 9347, copies housed in Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive, MUNFLA 78-240, tape no's. F4166-F4169 and F4182-F4184.

Chapter I

"DAMN AND BEGGAR THE NAVY BOYS, A MERCHANT SHIP FOR ME!"

THE CONTEXT

By the year of 1902, Captain Thomas Powles had had enough of seafaring. After forty-two years of service under sail in the merchant marine, during which time he had circumnavigated the globe on numerous occasions, he resigned his position as commander of the four-masted barque, James Kerr, and retired to a life ashore. He was fifty-six years old. His resolution to leave the sea was undoubtedly a difficult decision for him to make, for on his final voyage he wrote: "This drifting down the North Atlantic is not very cheerful from the monetary point of view, but -- it's awfully nice."¹ Captain Powles was one of a small group of die-hard skippers and sailors who clung onto sail until the bitter end, ultimately to their financial loss, for by the end of the nineteenth century, almost all of the world's major trade routes had been taken over by steam. With an air so typical of the conservative mind, these men scoffed at their peers in the "tin kettles" and staunchly declared that this was not seafaring. From an aesthetic point of view, they may have been correct, but, as Captain Powles realized, when economics were brought into the picture, they were men out of their time.

In the early years of the twentieth century, sailing ships all but disappeared from the face of the earth.

Apart from a number of schooners and other small vessels engaged mainly in coastal trades, about the only merchant fleet of any note was the "Flying 'P' Line," owned by Ferdinand Laeisz, of Hamburg, Germany. This company operated several steel barques and ships and, in 1902, launched the crowning glory of sailing ship technology; the Preussen, a steel, five-masted, full-rigged ship of 5,081 tons, the only vessel of her kind ever built. She was run down by a steamship in the English Channel in 1910.²

The beginning of the period in maritime history when merchant sailing ships dominated the oceans can be traced to the years immediately following the Napoleonic Wars and the War of 1812. Prior to this, conditions of war, which had existed off and on for three-quarters of a century, had created an atmosphere that was not conducive to the large-scale expansion of a mercantile marine. In Great Britain, this was due to the emphasis placed on maintaining the strength of the Navy, which resulted in most of the experienced sailors finding their way into that service by one route or another. Many volunteered, but a great many more went by way of the "press-gangs;" whose cudgels and spiked liquor were sure to secure the enlistment of any man whose national spirit could not be moved by bounties, provocative editorials, or the songs of Charles Dibden.

In the United States, the situation was reversed. Until the election of John Quincy Adams as President in

1798, the American Government failed to appreciate the necessity of a well-equipped Navy. When war broke out between England and France in 1793, the States remained neutral but tried to reap the economic benefits of the war by trading with both sides; a practice that resulted in their vessels being seized by both French and British warships -- particularly the former. Thus, when the Navy Department was established by the Adams administration in 1798, its first orders "...authorized retaliations on French ships anywhere on the seas."³ This was not a declaration of war, but it produced the desired effect. Unfortunately, Adams's successor, Thomas Jefferson, allowed the Navy to fall into such a state of decay that spoiliations by British ships eventually forced the Americans into the War of 1812.

But in spite of the seemingly endless wars of this period, the demand for supplies and provisions kept the merchant marines of Britain and America very much alive, as is evidenced by the considerable growth in the fleets of both nations during these conflicts:

At the commencement of the Revolutionary War she [Britain] had 950,000 tons [registered merchant shipping]. Through that war she lost about 300,000 tons; yet in 1790 her commercial fleet had greatly increased; it then had 1,460,823.⁴

Across the Atlantic in the United States, even more astounding gains were made, for in that country, registered

shipping had risen from 123,893 tons in 1789 to 567,107 tons by the turn of the century.⁵

But the merchant service of this period was vastly different from its counterpart of later days. In Britain, the Navy's efforts toward recruiting the best seamen meant that those who served in commercial vessels were often of indifferent quality, and due to the constant threat of enemy warships and privateers, British and American vessels alike were invariably outfitted with cannon and a generous supply of muskets, pistols, boarding pikes and nets, cutlasses, and other implements of naval warfare. In keeping with this paramilitary state of affairs, life on board, daily work, and, to a lesser extent, discipline were also regulated along naval lines. As Hugill states, "It was the period of the 'Johnny Haul-taut' as opposed to the Merchant John...."⁶

With the coming of peace in 1815, things began to change. Masters could now navigate their vessels across the oceans without fear of being overtaken and seized by the enemies of their country, and so the para-Naval facades gradually disappeared from the merchant fleets. The quality of the crews also began to improve slightly as men who had formerly been in the navy obtained their discharges and opted for the less restricted life-style of the commercial service.

There were other factors, however, apart from those that can be directly attributed to a state of war, that inhibited free trade upon the seas, factors largely relating to maritime law. The first of these barriers had actually been broken down prior to the end of hostilities when, in 1813, the East India Company's age-old monopoly on trade with the Far East was rescinded,⁷ thereby opening the wealth of the Orient to all British shipping. While this had little bearing on events in the United States, there were other British regulations that did affect American interests. Until they were repealed by Westminster in 1849, "The Navigation Laws" declared that

...no goods could be carried by coastal shipping from one part of Great Britain to another, or exported from Great Britain to any British Possession in Asia, Africa or America...or carried from one British Possession in Asia, Africa or America to another, in any but British ships; that no foreign ships could trade with any British Possession unless specially authorized to do so by Order-in-Council; that various consumption goods of European origin could only be imported into Great Britain in British ships or in ships of the country of origin, or in ships of the country from which they are normally imported; that no produce of Asia, Africa or America could be imported for consumption into Great Britain from Europe at all, and that it could only be imported from any other place in British ships or in ships of the country of origin.⁸

By the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation, which was signed by England and the United States in 1815, the latter country was granted permission to carry out trade in the ports of Britain and the Orient but was denied access to the

ports of British North America. From the point of view of the Yankee merchants, this was hard usage indeed, for prior to the revolution, trade with the Caribbean alone amounted to almost \$18,000,000 annually,⁹ and so, in retaliation, Congress placed an embargo on all British vessels trading between restricted ports and the United States. Although this was a situation in which neither country had a distinct advantage and was in many ways unfavourable to both, it was not easily resolved. The matter became bogged down in diplomatic negotiations that dragged on until the fall of 1830 when the restrictions were lifted with two exceptions: no foreign vessel could engage in the coastal trade of either country, and American vessels were still forbidden to carry exports from a third country into Britain.¹⁰

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, the Americans poured heart and soul into their merchant marine, and they soon dominated any trade in which they were engaged, an achievement largely due to the development of clipper ships. These vessels, characterized by slimmer lines and a shallower draft than on a conventional sailing ship, introduced a rather novel innovation to commercial shipping -- speed:

...the New Englanders took early to ship-building and soon excelled at it. There was no valid reason why the hull-forms of seagoing sailing-ships should be built to resemble a large herring barrel.... There was moreover a good financial return in fast ships. They were used as privateers,

first, in the War of Independence. Afterwards they became traders, ranging the length and breadth of the great Pacific and making venturesome voyages to China and the East, whose success founded many a New England fortune. Then they cut in on the China trade to England, after the repeal of the British Navigation Laws (1849) . . . 11

One should not assume from this quotation that United States vessels were in any way limited to trade with the Orient, for American packets almost completely dominated the Western Ocean trade between the United States and Britain from 1816 until that route was taken over by steamships in the latter half of the century. They also boasted one of the best whaling fleets the world has ever known, and their trading vessels found lucrative markets in continental Europe, the Mediterranean, and in the "hide droghing" trade with California; an industry which is perhaps more renowned as the setting for Richard Dana's Two Years Before the Mast than for any fortunes it may have produced.

The first half of the nineteenth century also saw a number of technological changes in the rigging of vessels, and perhaps the most important of these modifications was the development of self-reefing topsails and, later, the division of both topsails and topgallantsails into upper and lower segments. The purpose of the new design was essentially to cut down on the number of men needed aloft while taking in sail, and thus, one of the immediate results of this innovation was that the size of the average crew

decreased. But the sailors themselves also benefited, for in spite of the fact that there were fewer men working on the yard, the smaller sails were lighter and, therefore, easier and safer to handle. In addition to the economic and humanitarian benefits obtained, this design also had an indirect effect on the practice of shantying, for with fewer men on board, the number that could be allotted to a given task was reduced, especially if a variety of functions were being executed at the same time, which was usually the case. As a result, work that was relatively light when a large group was available suddenly became quite taxing. Previously, such tasks were co-ordinated by a very rudimentary type of vocal accompaniment known as a "sing-out," but now something a bit more substantial was required, and the need for a song in these situations probably led to the development of the "short-haul" shanty.

As a result of the technological advances made by the Americans, particularly in the area of hull design, their ships could deliver goods on a more reliable schedule than could British ships and at significantly less cost. Consequently the Americans dominated any trade in which they competed directly with the British, and this was particularly evident in the Atlantic passenger trade. Many British firms took refuge in the trades secured under the provisions of the Navigation Laws, but in spite of these protections, British shipping activity in general took a downward turn.

There were weaknesses in almost every aspect of the English merchant marine but particularly in their shipbuilding. It was not a case of inability or lack of technology, but the construction of vessels in Britain was a more expensive proposition than in the States due to timber shortages, and as British tonnage laws taxed a vessel by her length and beam but not by her depth, owners were inclined to order deep-draughted ships which were naturally sluggish in the water.¹²

In 1836, Parliament appointed a select committee to investigate the merchant marine, but its terms of reference were such that its primary focus was only on the frequency of shipwrecks and not on the industry as a whole. Even within this framework, its results were limited.¹³ Two years later, the priorities of British shipping interests were substantially altered after the Great Western and the Sirius made the first transatlantic crossings under steam. The government quickly realized that whereas the Americans' strength lay in their unlimited timber resources, their own strength lay in their industrial capabilities. Consequently, steamship lines, such as Cunard's and the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, were given huge subsidies to foster the development of the technology and to defray the cost of coal. But the transfer from sail to steam would not occur overnight, and it would be many years before a steamship could compete in the voyaging trades to the Orient and the west

coast of the Americas. For these trades, Britain would have to rely on her sailing fleets which, in the first half of the century, simply could not compete on an equal footing with the American clippers.

Thus, the 1830's and '40's were lean years for shipping in Great Britain. In fact, by 1843 there was such an accute depression in British shipping activity that, according to Lubbock, only the discovery of a "modern treasure island" off the coast of West Africa saved it from total collapse. The island was called Icheboe and its treasure was "penguin guano to a depth of 90 or 100 feet."¹⁴ As one might expect, this year saw the appointment of another select committee on merchant shipping, but again, its terms of reference were too narrow to produce any tangible results.

The discovery of gold in California in the summer of 1848, which created such an enormous boom in American shipping, had little effect on the British scene, for although the transportation of passengers and supplies from the eastern seaboard of the United States to San Francisco involved several thousand miles of deep-water sailing, technically it was a coastal trade and, therefore, one in which British vessels could not participate. Nor did British shipping profit greatly from the subsequent increase in emmigration from Europe, for, as was previously noted, the Western Ocean packets on which the emmigrants sailed were, for the most part, American vessels.

Through the efforts of the Foreign Office and the Board of Trade, Parliament was finally induced to act, and in 1849 they repealed the Navigation Laws. The measure was not received with a great deal of enthusiasm from the British shipping community, and when American tea clippers began arriving in London, many feared that the days of the British merchant marine were numbered. But there were others, not so pessimistic as their colleagues, who realized that the protection offered by the Navigation Laws was a false security which only served to perpetuate an unacceptable state of affairs and that a real solution to the problem would only be gained through a complete alteration in their approach to shipping. If the commercial service of Britain was to compete successfully, it would have to do so by meeting, if not surpassing, the standards set by the Americans. The continued efforts of the Board of Trade and other agencies in this direction resulted in the "Mercantile Marine Act of 1850." The most notable accomplishments of this legislation were the creation of a Marine Department within the Board of Trade which was responsible for all matters relating to merchant shipping and the introduction of mandatory competency tests and certificates for masters and officers.

Positive government action could not have come at a more opportune time, for in 1851, gold was discovered in Australia, and the demand for vessels was suddenly greater than the British shipowners could cope with. To fill the

immediate need, they chartered or bought any available ships from the American lines, and when the tonnage regulations were revised as part of the monumental "Merchant Shipping Act of 1854," orders for new American and "Nova Scotian"¹⁵ clippers were quickly placed by most of the larger British firms. The Australian trade also precipitated a healthy increase in domestic shipbuilding, particularly in the ports of Aberdeen, Glasgow, Liverpool, and Sunderland. As a rule, British built vessels were not as large as those launched on the other side of the Atlantic, nor were they quite so lavishly outfitted. But whereas the North American ships were built of softwood, the British used hardwood -- primarily teak -- which considerably extended the life span of their vessels.

Ocean commerce under sail reached its peak in the 1850's and the rivalry between nations, lines and even individual ships, not to mention the ever increasing threat from steam, forced masters to drive their vessels for all they were worth. In many respects, deep-water sailing was as much a sport as an industry, and on both sides of the Atlantic, public interest ran high. The highlights of merchant shipping activity, such as a record passage or a spectacular day's run, were given coverage in the press, as were the exploits of the more famous and, in some cases, infamous masters. As Chapelle states, "...a reputation for being a very fast ship brought cargo and

passengers to a ship; fame for her captain, and owner, but Hell for the crew."¹⁶

| The Anglo-American rivalry was most keenly apparent in the China tea trade, and it was in this service that Britain's renewed efforts in shipping had their greatest successes. By 1855, most of the tea imported into Britain was once again being carried by vessels flying the Red Ensign, and by the end of the decade, the United States had withdrawn from the tea trade almost entirely. The Americans also lost ground in the Western Ocean routes, for with the exception of the timber trade in Lower Canada, the Maritimes, and the northeastern States, and the cotton trade in the southern States, much of the traffic on the North Atlantic was being taken over by steam.

During the Crimean War (1853-56) and the Indian Mutiny (1857-59), British shipping managed to plod along relatively unaffected by hostilities, although some of the larger vessels were requisitioned by the government as troop carriers and supply ships. The merchant marine of the United States, on the other hand, suffered tremendous losses during the Civil War (1861-65) due to the plunderings of the Alabama and other Confederate cruisers, and even after the war's end, the Americans failed to rebuild their commercial fleets to their former strength as both Washington and the powerful business interests in the northeast turned their attention to the expansion of the western frontier.

New York and Boston continued to be the major ports of call on the eastern seaboard in the latter half of the century, but the areas responsible for most of America's shipping were the smaller New England ports, particularly those in the state of Maine. The vessels they produced and operated, which were generically referred to as "Down Easters," were involved in many of the world's trades, but as in the pre-war years, California proved to be their most lucrative marketplace, although returning ships now carried cargoes of grain rather than gold.

As American shipping declined, the British continued to expend vast amounts of energy and capital on improving their sailing ships, and the most important innovation in shipbuilding in the 1860's was the adoption of "composite construction," whereby wooden hulls were reinforced with iron beams. The Scots were particularly adept at this form of construction, and they produced many excellent composite clippers, two of which are perhaps the most famous merchant sailing vessels ever built: the Thermopylae, built by the firm of Alexander Hall, of Aberdeen, in 1868, and the Cutty Sark, built by Scott and Linton, of Dumbarton, in the following year. The popularity of this design, however, was relatively short-lived, for by the early 1870's, most of the shipyards in Britain had turned to building vessels entirely of iron. This development was the last significant step in the evolution of the sailing ship,

and with the advent of iron, the size of British vessels increased substantially.

In November of 1869, the Suez Canal opened, and this event, as Lubbock states, "...sounded the death knell of the sailing ship in many of its most lucrative trades."¹⁷ By eliminating the long voyage around the Cape of Good Hope, the canal made voyages from Europe to the Orient feasible for steamers, and while this obviously had an effect on the sailing ships engaged in the China tea trade, its effect of British shipping as a whole was even more pronounced than one might first imagine:

In 1860 there were 25,663 sailing ships afloat with a net tonnage of 4,204,360 tons against 2,000 steamers with a tonnage of 454,327 tons. In 1868 sail tonnage reached its high water mark with 4,691,820 tons, steam having risen in the meantime to 824,614 tons. Then came the Suez Canal, and by 1873, by which time its value was fully realized, the tonnage of sail had dropped to 4,067,564, whilst that of steam had risen by leaps and bounds to 1,680,953.¹⁸

It was now clearly evident that the future of ocean transportation lay in steam, but windjammers continued to be a common sight on the world's shipping lanes as long as there were trades in which they could turn a respectable profit for their owners. In Australia, the gold rush gave way to a more peaceable agrarian economy, and that country remained an important destination for both British and American sailing ships up until the turn of the century,

as did many ports in India and Indonesia. Other regular ports-of-call included the island of Mauritius, the Hawaiian Islands, San Francisco, Yokohama, and a few ports on the west coast of South America where the much despised cargoes of nitrate and guano were loaded. In the last days of sail, many vessels were forced to earn their keep as "tramps," which meant they were not involved in a particular trade on a regular schedule but sailed from port to port in search of cargoes, often travelling in ballast in the hopes of securing break-even rates.

By 1910, most of the British sailing ships had either been scrapped or sold to foreign owners, mostly to the Scandinavians and the Italians. But for many years prior to that date, even the sailors themselves regarded wind-jammers as merely a training ground for steam, for one still had to have experience in sail to become a qualified master mariner. It is very difficult to say exactly when the age of sail finally ended, for in certain isolated trades, such as the Grand Banks fishery, auxiliary schooners were used up until the 1960's. But one must concede that in the highly industrialized world of the twentieth century, that sailing ship was an anachronism; a point which is made only too clear when one learns of the fate of vessels such as the four-masted barque, Eudora, which was torpedoed by a German submarine in the First World War.¹⁹ It would appear, however, that the few deep-water vessels that

managed to survive the ravages of the war eventually succumbed to the economic pressures of the Great Depression, for the year 1929 figures prominently in the demise of the merchant sailing fleets in both the United States and Britain. In that year, only one American company, the Alaska Packers Association, of San Francisco, still operated a small fleet of sailing ships, and they only managed to do so by hiring untrained Mexicans as crew members.²⁰ In the fall of 1929, the last British-owned square-rigger, the four-masted barque, Garthpool, was wrecked off the Cape Verde Islands. One of her crew members was a young sailor named Stan Hugill, who, later in life, went on to become one of the world's leading authorities on shanties and nautical folksong, and approximately one week before the accident, he led his shipmates in the singing of what is alleged to be the last shanty ever raised on the decks of a British sailing ship.²¹

LIFE AT SEA

Most of the sailors in the nineteenth century began their careers as mere boys, sometimes as young as ten years old but more often between the ages of thirteen and sixteen. For some, going to sea was a matter of economic necessity, and in Britain, the government sponsored a program whereby orphans and the children of destitute families were indentured as apprentices in the merchant marine. But for many, going to sea meant giving up the safety and comfort of a good home. Most of the men whose memoirs were read in the preparation of this thesis fall into this latter group, and of the reasons they give for going to sea, two predominate: they wanted to follow in the footsteps of relatives or close friends who were seamen, and/or they were moved by the tales told of the "romance of the sea." Admittedly, this is a hackneyed and misrepresentative term, but that it played on the imaginations of young boys is unquestionable. Dana writes:

There is a witchery in the sea, its songs and stories, and in the mere sight of a ship, and the sailor's dress, especially to the young mind, which has done more to man navies, and fill merchantmen, than all the press-gangs of Europe. I have known a young man with such a passion for the sea, that the very creaking of a block stirred up his imagination so that he could hardly keep his feet on dry ground; and many are the boys, in every seaport, who are drawn away, as by an almost irresistible attraction, from their work and schools, and hang about the decks and yards of vessels,

with a fondness which, it is plain, will
have its way.²²

While the duties performed by boys on American and British ships were basically the same, the time spent in that position differed considerably. On American ships, a youth signed on as a deck or cabin boy, until he had sufficient experience to sail as an ordinary seaman; a task that could be completed in one voyage by most lads. The British, on the other hand, adhered to the apprenticeship system, whereby boys were indentured for a period of five years, and at the end of this time, they were required to sit for an examination on seamanship and navigation skills. The advantage of this system was that upon the completion of his exams, a youth could rise almost immediately to an officer's berth, whereas with the American system, promotions were granted on the recommendations of former masters and officers.

Youths were usually segregated from the rest of the crew and were berthed in the half-deck or in "steerage" in the after part of the vessel. Some boys were even ordered by the mates not to associate with the older men as they would be apt to pick up "bad habits." This served to make many lads feel alienated from the rest of the ship, for they were neither members of the afterguard -- those who held rank -- nor members of the crew.²³ But although

they were kept apart from the rest of the crew socially,
they did retain

...all the privileges of the men forward,
such as tarring the rigging, greasing the
mast, wielding the holy stone -- i.e., the
"Philadelphia Bible" [used for sanding the
decks].... Yes, indeed, and I must not
forget that for a change they'd let us act
as dock labourers sometimes when we arrived
in port.²⁴

Apprentices were introduced to the working of the rig-
ging gradually, beginning with learning how to furl and
set the royal mizzen, the smallest sail on the ship. All
in all, their lot was much easier than that of the men in
the fo'c'sle. Some masters gave their boys six hour watches
and on other ships they were given "all night in, all day on
deck," and therefore they did not suffer from lack of sleep
to the same extent as the men forward. Mistakes, however,
were not tolerated, since too many lives depended on every
member of the crew doing his job quickly and correctly. But
despite the initial horrors of sea life, such as seasickness,
hands blistered and bared of skin, and the gruelling routine
of work and discipline, most boys adapted quickly. Others
took longer and some were plainly not cut out to be sailors.
A lad who sailed with Frederick Harlow as cabin boy became
seasick shortly after leaving Boston and suffered in varying
degrees from that miserable condition until the ship
reached Melbourne, Australia, 117 days later. Needless to

say, he obtained his release from the captain and took a position ashore.²⁵

If a boy were to advance in his seafaring career by the natural order of things, after the completion of his apprenticeship he would accept a berth as "ordinary seaman." From there he would rise to "able-bodied seaman," or simply "A.B.," then to second mate, first or chief mate, and finally to captain. Ships with large crews sometimes carried third and fourth mates but this was rare, especially towards the end of the century when vessels were manned with skeleton crews. There were several positions on board sailing ships that were not actually considered as ranks but which were apart from and, to all intents and purposes, over the rest of the crew. The bosun was berthed in the fo'c'sle but was chosen by the mate to be a sort of overseer, and the position was usually granted on the basis of seniority. There were also a small group on board that were commonly referred to as the "idlers," for except in an emergency they were generally exempt from regular ship's duty. These men included the carpenter, the sailmaker, the steward, and the cook. Some researchers have speculated that in the early years of the century, when vessels carried relatively large crews, the shantyman was included among this class of seamen,²⁶ but in the latter days of sail this individual was usually expected to throw his hand in with the rest.

The division of work was a simple arrangement and standard on all ships. Crews signed on at the beginning of each voyage and usually left the ship at an agreed terminus. If a seaman liked a particular ship or captain, he would sign on again, but it was very rare for an entire crew to sail twice on the same vessel. In fact, through discharges, desertions, and deaths, crews were constantly changing. When the sailors were assembled on board prior to embarkation, they would be put to work performing various tasks, and this gave the mates an opportunity to see which men worked better than the rest. This was probably not the best time at which to judge a man's ability, since most of the men arrived on board in varying degrees of inebriation and, therefore, were not likely to be working at peak efficiency, but the afterguard could at least determine who knew the ropes and who did not.

During the first evening at sea, the crew was assembled and divided into larboard, or port, and starboard watches. The former was commanded by the first mate and the latter, while technically the captain's watch, was chosen and commanded by the second mate. Custom had established that the first evening watch of an outward bound voyage was taken by the larboard watch while the starboard watch took the first turn of duty when homeward bound. With one exception, watches were of four hours duration and the day was divided up into evening (8 p.m. - midnight), night

(midnight - 4 a.m.), morning (4 a.m. - 8 a.m.), forenoon (8 a.m. - noon), and afternoon watches (noon - 4 p.m.). The remaining four hours were divided into two shifts so that the watches would be rotated every day. These were known as the "dogwatches" and were generally a time in which no work was done.

Under ideal conditions, the sailors were given "watch and watch," that is, four hours on deck and four hours below. The rules governing the afternoon watch varied from ship to ship, for on some, all hands were required to be on deck, while on others, the watch not on duty was allowed to spend the time as they pleased, but this was always considered a privilege and could be revoked for the slightest infraction. In the evening and night watches, what was required of the crew, again, depended on the person in command. Those not on lookout or manning the helm were sometimes allowed to sleep on deck, but this was not the general rule, and some mates went so far as to insist that all men remain on their feet for the duration of the watch. Talking while on duty was technically forbidden, but this rule was freely broken whenever the afterguard was out of hearing. The reasoning behind these regulations was to ensure that every man was devoting his entire attention to the running of the ship and that any order would be responded to quickly.

During the day, the crew's duty, apart from the working of the sails, consisted of holy-stoning the decks, tarring

and mending the rigging, making spun-yarn, pounding rust from the metal fixtures and anchor cables, painting and scraping, polishing brass, and a myriad of other operations. There is a commonly cited adage that runs: "A ship is like a lady's watch, always out of repair,"²⁷ and a good mate never had to look far to find something for his men to do. Even during a watch below, the sailors were by no means guaranteed four hours to themselves, for when weather conditions demanded, which was often, all hands would be called to take in sail, and when a vessel was approaching a region that was notorious for foul weather, such as Cape Horn or the Grand Banks of Newfoundland, the sailors could look forward to very few hours of sleep. This, coupled with the fact that they would be working in wet clothes in freezing temperatures, made sailing in such conditions a dangerous and miserable experience.

As for the masters of sailing ships, folklorist Horace Beck states that there were two kinds: the lions and the lambs. He further explains that while seamen preferred to ship with the latter, it was the "lions" who were most readily alluded to when tales were told of past experiences.²⁸ In reading histories or literature of the sea, one is constantly encountering the names of men such as James Forbes, Bob Waterman, and Sam Samuels. These were the men who made record passages, and surrounding them are legends of padlocking the halyards so that no sail could be taken in and shooting at men in the rigging to make them move faster.

Such men were not, however, typical sailing ship captains. At the same time, any master worth his salt demanded a great deal from his crew and took what measures he felt necessary to ensure that his vessel ran smoothly. From the standpoint of outright bullying, it is generally held that American and Nova Scotian officers were far more severe in inflicting punishment than were the British, and their vessels were often termed "red-hot Yanks," "hell-ships," and "blood-boats."²⁹ The violent measures adopted on board these vessels were often born out of necessity, for they were frequently manned by "hard case" crews, known as "packet rats" and "Spanish Main beachcombers," and such men required an equally tough afterguard to keep them in line. The Western Ocean packets were particularly notorious as haunts for this breed of sailor, and on board these vessels, the officer who could use his fists was often of greater value to the captain than the one who was an expert seaman. Huggill writes:

The mates were named Blowers, Greasers and Strikers, and could throw a nifty right hook when the situation demanded it. Belayin'-pins were the favorite enforcers, with the handspikes used in the capstan a second favorite. In fact, as the shanty has it, "belayin'-pin-soup an' handspike hash" was the daily routine aboard the packets.³⁰

Harlow, writing of the period around 1875, states that the days of the "blood-boat" were restricted to the 1850's and '60's and that harsh treatment did not exist aboard

American ships at the time he went to sea.³¹ Lubbock, however, in his book on the Down Easters, gives colourful little sketches of charming characters with names such as, Glass-eye Mitchell, Bull-dog Penfield, Hell-roaring Taylor, and the unforgettable Cut-throat Lawrence, all of whom were mates on American ships in the latter days of sail and who attained the title, "Bucko."³²

The nature of crews on British vessels was much the same as on their American counterparts, although their officers were usually less ruthless in dealing with violent seamen. A boot in the backside was occasionally applied to increase a man's efforts, but English captains and mates generally waited for trouble to show itself before taking any direct action, and when action was necessary, they relied less on violence than on "chemical warfare":

The British commanders under similar circumstances prided themselves in being able to cure mutiny or loafing by a milder form of punishment than that of the knuckleduster. They first knocked the bully or bullies out, put the "shackles" on and then proceeded to administer doses of castor oil or jalap until the "devil" was taken out of them.³³

Lesser punishments could take many forms and each captain had his own particular favorites. As was mentioned earlier, privileges, such as the afternoon watch below or "splicing the main-brace" -- the issuing of rum to the crew -- could be revoked and the rationing of food was also used as a disciplinary measure. But the most common form

of non-violent punishment was called "hazing" or "working-up" and could be inflicted upon the entire crew or an individual. This punishment was usually meted out to anyone accused of being a "soger" -- a term derived from the word "soldier" and means someone who is lazy or incompetent. Such a person was subjected to continual labour, even during the afternoon and dogwatches, and while being hazed was obviously a physically exhausting ordeal, its real effect lay in its degradation, for to be a soger was to be a poor sailor and less than a man.³⁴

One should not get the impression that the merchant vessels of the nineteenth century were floating chambers of horrors; they were far from it, and as Stanton King points out, "The man who is a competent sailor and implicitly obeys the officers' commands, keeps clear of abuse."³⁵ But operating a vessel was a costly, dangerous, and highly competitive business, and masters had to keep a tight rein on their crews. There were those who enforced discipline in the extreme, but by virtue of the fact that violence draws attention more readily than does leniency, one might allow that the reports of brutality have been exaggerated to some extent, and certainly the shanties themselves have done much to foster the image of the tyrannical, hard-nosed skipper and the "bucko" mate. To return to Beck's classification:

The lambs were more numerous. They loved their vessels and went by the adage "You

must treat your vessel kindly and it'll treat you well." These men were good seamen and made good passages and year after year carried the major business of the ocean traffic on their backs.³⁶

We have seen the manner in which the seamen worked and the manner in which they were driven to perform their duty, let us now look at the way in which they lived on board. The fo'c'sle, where the common hands were berthed, was either a raised cabin or a space between decks situated in the very bows of the ship; hence the term, "sailing before the mast," to denote service as an ordinary or able-bodied seaman. Those who have lived in such quarters do not describe them as pleasant accommodations, but all things being relative, some were better than others. The two major problems were size and ventilation, and despite the advances in nautical technology in the last century, the fo'c'sle remained basically unchanged. Extra room forward was neglected in ship design since it would encroach on cargo and deck space, which were always at a premium, and as for the latter deficiency, the need for keeping the vessel watertight meant that as few openings as possible were incorporated into the design, especially in the forward sections. Thus, fresh air was never allowed to circulate freely and the problem was augmented if the ship was carrying a cargo that gave off fumes, such as naphtha, molasses, or guano. Also, if the galley was situated near the fo'c'sle, as was the case in many smaller

vessels, then the stench from the fat and grease would invariably permeate the bulkhead.

During his two years at sea, Dana served on two vessels, and in noting the differences between the fo'c'sles of the Pilgrim and the Alert he writes:

The fore-castle in which they [the crew of the Alert] lived was large and tolerably well lighted by bulls-eyes, and, being kept perfectly clean, had quite a comfortable appearance; at least it was far better than the little, black, dirty hole, in which I had lived so many months in the Pilgrim. By regulations of the ship, the fore-castle was cleaned out every morning, and the crew, being very neat, kept it clean by some regulations of their own, such as having a large spit-box always under the steps between the bitts, and obliging every man to hang up his wet clothes, etc. In addition to this, it was holystoned every Saturday morning.³⁷

Dana later states that the fo'c'sle of the Alert leaked so badly that all but four bunks were continually soaked, and when sailing into a head-sea, the ship "... struck it with a sound as dead and heavy as that with which a sledge-hammer falls upon the pile, and took the whole of it upon the fore-castle."³⁸

The walls of the fo'c'sle were lined with tiers of bunks in which the sailor slept on a straw filled mattress, commonly referred to as a "donkey's breakfast," which he was required to furnish himself. For many sailors, their bunk was the only place on board they could consider their own:

A sailor's bunk is his "sanctum sanctorum." He not only sleeps there, but puts up shelves and nails canvas pockets to the head and foot of it, where he keeps his fork, spoon, pot and pan, and whatever trinkets he may possess. It is the one place on board where he can feel absolutely out of the way of others.³⁹

Regardless of the conditions in which the seaman lived or the physical abuses to which he was subjected, that which he cared most about was his food. Whereas American ships were notorious for their harsh discipline, the British vessels gained a reputation for being ill-provisioned. The Board of Trade legislated that every man on board was to receive his "pound and pint" per day, but this was a minimum, and the sailors expected, and usually got, more. Despite this, it is not uncommon to read of ships of British registry running out of food at sea, and in such a case, the vessel would either head for the nearest land or hope to encounter another vessel from which provisions could be secured. Occurrences of this nature could often be blamed on a prolonged voyage due to adverse weather conditions, but not always. The provision of food was the responsibility by the owners and captain, and some tried to save a few pennies by cutting corners:

At the commencement of the voyage the bare regulation supplies were put on board; that is, beef, pork, flour, tea, coffee, sugar, biscuits (weevily), water, currants, raisins, and a small amount of butter for the cabin only. No preserves of any kind were supplied, not even "soup and bully" (bouilli),

and the whole crew were put on their "pound and pint." The "dipper" was hoisted to the royal truck each day after the water had been served out and the bung put securely into the cask so that none could be sneaked at night.⁴⁰

The eating arrangements on board sailing ships left quite a bit to be desired. The men in the fo'c'sle had their food served to them in a wooden receptacle, called a "kid," and each man cut off what he wanted with his knife and ate sitting on his bunk or sea-chest. The standard fare was salt beef, with salt pork once or twice a week for variety, plus hard-bread, and tea or coffee. As a treat on Sundays or special occasions, the men were given "duff," which was a flour and water paste boiled in the grease from the beef. Whenever possible, the menu was augmented with fish or sea-birds that the sailors were able to catch, but this seems only to have been the practice in certain latitudes, primarily the tropics.

In addition to a lack of quantity and variation, the sailor's victuals were also notorious for their abysmal quality. Ship's biscuit is invariably reported as having been riddled with vermin of some kind, usually weevils or maggots, and the meat served aboard was often of the most inferior grade. There is a poem, first published by Dana and latterly by many others, that the sailors would recite if a particularly dry, hard piece of meat was served to them. Such a morsel was called "old horse" and the poem,

"The Sailor's Grace," runs as follows:

"Old horse! old horse! what brought you here?"
 -- "From Sacarap to Portland pier
 I've carted stone this many a year;
 Till, killed by blows and sore abuse,
 They salted me down for sailors' use.
 The sailors they do me despise:
 They turn me over and damn my eyes;
 Cut off my meat, and pick my bones;⁴¹
 And thrown the rest to Davy Jones!"

Finally, after long weeks or months at sea, the vessel would approach her destination and a pilot would be taken on board to guide her into the harbour. As soon as the captain was satisfied that everything was in order, the men were dismissed and, at an agreed time, they would assemble at the broker's office to be paid off. If a seaman had a home in the port, or friends he could stay with, then he was in great shape. But for many, the only places of refuge were the sailors' boarding houses that infested every seaport town. Maritime historian, Archibald MacMechan once said, "When a sailor makes port after a voyage, two things he must have. One is a drink."⁴² The men who operated the boarding houses were well aware of the sailors' wants and gained notoriety by taking advantage of them. As with tyrannical captains, legends about boarding house masters and their "crimps" are commonplace, but whatever their legendary reputation might be, their actual method of conducting business was not much better.

In the summer of 1980, Judith Fingard of Dalhousie University presented a paper to the Fourth Conference of

the Atlantic Canada Shipping Project in which she stated:

...crimps should be rescued from the gutter of history and given a fairer and more serviceable status as members of a highly vulnerable "lumpenproletariat" whose class interests coincided rather than conflicted with those of the merchant seamen.⁴³

Her argument was to the effect that crimps functioned as labour organizers and thereby helped the sailors get employment. There is truth in this hypothesis, but it is a very perverse interpretation of the situation. When a sailor left a ship, he usually did so with very little cash in his pocket, but depending on the length of the voyage, he was about to be paid a substantial sum of money. Knowing this, the crimps, and other merchants as well, freely extended him credit, and on payday, scenes such as the following were probably not uncommon at shipping offices:

On the third morning Mr. Murphy [a boarding master] accompanied us to the British consul's office. The place was crowded with the boarding masters, runners, tailors, and shoemakers, every one of whom had a bill awaiting settlement. As soon as each man was paid, these landsharks demanded payment of their bills. When a bill was repudiated, the reply was that the coat or shoes were bought and the money loaned while we were drunk. "Where are these things?" "Oh, you lost them, or sold them for rum." Mike was the first to question the bills. A blow from his boarding house bully, and the advance of the others to render this one aid, revealed to us that our best policy was to submit to this wholesale robbery.⁴⁴

The sailor was allowed to remain at the boarding house, eating and drinking at prices dictated by the master, until he had acquired a debt, at which time the crimp found him a position on board a vessel, and his one month's advance was signed over to cover the bill. This note was postdated to after the date of embarkation to ensure that the sailor fulfilled his side of the bargain. That this was a common sequence of events is evidenced by the custom of "burying the dead horse." After a ship had been to sea for a month, an effigy of a horse was constructed by the crew, given a mock trail, and cast into the sea. This ritual was observed to mark the time from which the sailors stopped working for the boarding masters and started earning money for themselves.

If the boarding house system had been conducted honestly and in good faith, it would have been a great benefit to the mariners, and Fingard's theory would have some credence to it, but the crimps grossly abused the situation and many ships that had reputations for being unseaworthy or blood-boats were supplied with "hoccussed hands" by them. A seaman would be well plied with liquor, which was often spiked with a drug to hasten the process, taken to the shipping office to sign the articles of agreement, and then placed on board the ship, completely oblivious to the true nature of what was happening. A man who found his way onto a ship in this manner was said to be "shanghied." To further

degrade the situation, crimps would often entice men who were still bound to the vessels to desert by offering a ship with better pay or better conditions. The seaman who succumbed to this line would find himself in a truly hopeless situation, for if he resisted in any way, he would be handed over to the authorities as a deserter, for which the crimp could claim a reward.⁴⁵

This system was stopped towards the end of the century, not by the sailors, but by shore agencies that established alternate resorts for the mariners, such as the Seamen's Mission and like institutions. If anything, the sailors perpetuated crimping by being easy marks for anyone who would give them credit and liquor. After the restriction of living on a one hundred foot vessel, the natural desire to live it up was the deciding factor. A sailor's behavior ashore as opposed to at sea can be fairly well illustrated by two incidents which, at first glance, might appear to be quite trivial. George Little states that a shortage of tobacco at sea could be a very serious problem on a long voyage. Sailors would hoard whatever they had while those without would try to beg, borrow, or steal a plug in any way they could.⁴⁶ Yet ashore, frugality was not one of the sailor's strong points:

We spent the first night ashore together at a music hall...in Ratcliffe Highway. The performance was of the usual kind. A chairman in evening dress introduced the artists in their

order on the programme, and as the evening went on the by-play increased. Quids of tobacco were thrown at the performers who were disapproved of....⁴⁷

Of the thousands of men who went to sea in the nineteenth century, only a small percentage made a lifetime career of seafaring. In examining the shipping records from Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, David Alexander found that "Over eighty-two per cent of the Canadians recruited in 1865-69 were under thirty years of age as were seventy-two per cent of the foreigners."⁴⁸ He concludes that many grew tired of the sea and sought positions in shore-based industries. Those who remained in the merchant services for many years often adopted a devil-may-care attitude and took each day as it came. As Harlow points out, the term "old sailor" did not necessarily mean someone who had attained a level of competence through years of experience:

An "old sailor" had no ambition or pride to become better than a common seaman. His station in life was at a rest. Pride gone, he couldn't live down the drunken debauchery that befell him on every trip ashore. Awakening from the revelry and filled with remorse at finding himself shanghaied on some outwardbound vessel, he lived to exist and that was all. He accepted blunt rebuke from an officer, as a matter of fact, not batting an eye to show that his pride had been hurt. Not having any pride, the insult rolled off like water on a duck's back and he went on with his work indifferently.⁴⁹

His attitude was not generally altered by religious philosophy of fear of retribution in the hereafter, for it was commonly

held among sailors that "To work hard, to live hard, die hard, and go to hell after all, would be hard indeed,"⁵⁰

But there were many things in the mariner's life to alleviate the day to day drudgery of ship's duty, and in the memoirs of seamen, there is an infinite number of accounts of sights and experiences -- humorous, outrageous, frightening, touching; many of them have undoubtedly been enlarged in the retelling and "shed new light on naval history,"⁵¹ as Lubbock puts it, but all of them serve to illuminate the "witchery" mentioned by Dana, that perhaps drove them to sea in the first place.

FOOTNOTES

¹Basil Lubbock, The Last of the Windjammers,
I (Glasgow: Brown, Son & Ferguson, Ltd., 1927), 45-48.

²Alan Villiers, The Way of a Ship (New York: Charles
Scribner's Sons, 1953), pp. 1-2.

³Harold D. Langley, Social Reform in the United States
Navy, 1798-1862 (Chicago: University of Illinois Press,
1967), p. 6.

⁴William S. Benson, The Merchant Marine (New York:
The Macmillan Company, 1923), p. 11.

⁵Benson, p. 31.

⁶Stan Hugill, Shanties from the Seven Seas (London:
Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), p. 5.

⁷Lubbock, p. 70.

⁸British Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation,
Seafarers and their Ships (New York: Philosophical
Library, 1956), p. 14.

⁹Benson, p. 33.

¹⁰Benson, pp. 34-36.

¹¹Villiers, p. 12.

¹²Basil Lubbock, The China Clippers (Glasgow: James
Brown & Son, 1925), p. 105.

¹³Ministry of Transport, p. 16.

¹⁴Lubbock, Windjammers, pp. 72-74.

¹⁵"Nova Scotian" in this context means any vessel built in the Maritime provinces of Canada or Quebec.

¹⁶Howard I. Chapelle, The History of American Sailing Ships (London: Putnam, 1936), p. 286.

¹⁷Lubbock, Windjammers, p. 115.

¹⁸Lubbock, Windjammers, p. 116.

¹⁹Lubbock, Windjammers, p. 381.

²⁰Lubbock, The Down Easters (1929; rpt. Glasgow: Brown, Son & Ferguson, 1971), p. 224.

²¹Hugill, pp. 518-519.

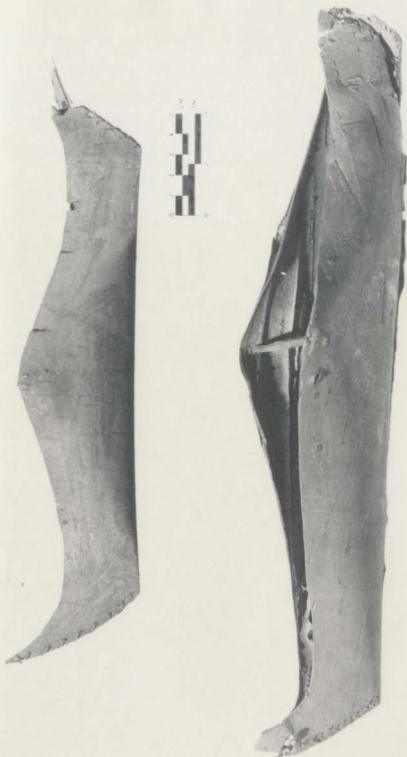
LIFE AT SEA

²²Richard Henry Dana, Two Years Before the Mast: A Personal Narrative of Life at Sea (1840; rpt. Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1946), pp. 398-399.

²³Dana, p. 66.

²⁴Thomas Hemy, Deep Water Days: The Chronicles of a Sailor and Sea Painter (London: H.F. & G. Witherby, 1926), p. 40.

²⁵Frederick Pease Harlow, The Making of a Sailor, or Sea Life Aboard a Yankee Square Rigger, Marine Research



⁴¹Dana, p. 315.

⁴²Cited in Thomas H. Raddall, Halifax: Warden of the North (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971), p. 298.

⁴³Judith Fingard, "'Those Crimps of Hell and Goblins Damned': The Image and Reality of Quebec's Sailortown Bosses," in Working Men Who Got Wet, eds. Rosemary Ommer and Gerald Panting, Proceedings of the Fourth Conference of the Atlantic Canada Shipping Project (St. John's: Maritime History Group, 1980), p. 323.

⁴⁴King, pp. 122-123.

⁴⁵Hemy, pp. 89-90 and pp. 117-119; see also, Frederick William Wallace, Wooden Ships and Iron Men (Boston, 1937; rpt. Belleville, Ont.: Mika Publishing Company, 1976), p. 102.

⁴⁶George Little, Life on the Ocean, or Twenty Years at Sea (New York: Clark, Austin & Smith, 1852), pp. 128-129.

⁴⁷Runciman, p. 149.

⁴⁸David Alexander, "Literacy Among Canadian and Foreign Seamen, 1863-1899," in Working Men Who Got Wet, p. 6.

⁴⁹Harlow, p. 205.

⁵⁰Dana, pp. 50-51.

⁵¹Lubbock, Windjammers, p. 64.

"WE'LL HAUL AND HAUL TOGETHER:

THE FUNCTION.

All the energy required to execute the various tasks involved in the handling of a sailing ship was provided through the sweat and toil of the crew, or "Armstrong's patent," as manual labour was sarcastically dubbed by the sailors. For some operations they were aided by mechanical devices, such as capstans and windlasses, and in the latter decades of the century, halyard and brace winches. But even so, the force required to manipulate these devices was supplied by the muscles of the crew. Much of the work the sailors were called upon to perform was extremely heavy and often monotonous, and the fundamental purpose of the shanty was, first, to provide a rhythm through which the strength of several men could be united into a single force, and second, to provide a diversion from the drudgery of the labour.

Essentially, the shanties fall into two main groups, the classification being dependent on the nature of the work involved. The songs in the first group, the heaving shanties, were used to accompany tasks involving continuous motion, such as tramping around the capstan or heaving at the windlass. Those in the second group, the hauling shanties, were used for operations requiring sporadic bursts of energy, such as hauling in sheets and tacks, and

...71
the yards. There was also a third group, which Masfield refers to as a "bastard variety,"¹ that was, in a way, a combination of the other two. These songs were known as "walkaway" or "stamp-and-go" shanties, the name being derived from the manoeuvre they accompanied. A walkaway was technically a hauling operation, and the crew line up along the fall of the tackle as in any other hauling task, but instead of pulling only at periodic intervals, they marched along the deck, carrying the rope with them as they went. If the lead man ran out of room, he let go of the rope and returned to the end of the line. This process was continued until the task was completed. This was by far the most efficient way of executing a hauling task, but if a long, heavy pull was involved, it required a large crew. In the early decades of the century, fo'c'sle hands were plentiful on most vessels, and walkaways were used for raising even the heaviest yards. But as masters and owners sought new ways to cut down their overhead costs, the size of the average crew diminished substantially, and after the middle of the century, this method of hauling was rarely used for anything other than hauling the braces when tacking ship.

These classifications, of course, are only the very basic subdivisions and the complete picture is considerably more intricate. A more elaborate description of how the different groups of songs were applied to their specific tasks is therefore necessary in order that we may fully

appreciate the functions of the shanty in the work context. Some of the following accounts of rigging and gear may appear unnecessarily involved, but as Stan Hugill points out, "...shanties make more sense when you know how they were used."²

Heaving shanties were most commonly used when weighing the anchor, and there were two different devices that were used to aid the seamen in this task: the windlass and the capstan. Both of these machines have existed, in various forms, for centuries, but over the years their mechanics have changed. On both, the anchor cable or chain was wound around a spindle, and the fundamental difference between the two was that the barrel of the windlass was horizontal whereas that of the capstan was vertical.

In the first part of the century, most merchant ships were fitted with windlasses, capstans being found mainly on naval vessels and occasionally on very large merchant ships, such as East Indiamen. The most basic form of windlass consisted of an octagonal barrel supported at each end by upright posts, and it was turned by handspikes that were inserted into square "pidgeon-holes" in the axle on the outside of the supports. In the middle of the barrel was a ratchet and pawl apparatus to prevent the windlass from "walking back" while the handspikes were being shifted during the operation (see figure 1). Later windlasses, which came into widespread use during the 1820's and '30's, were similar except that they were

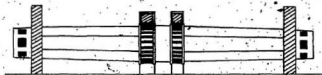


FIGURE 1: STANDARD WINDLASS

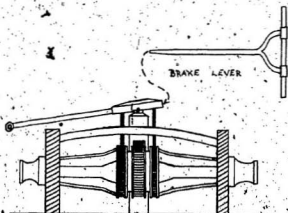


FIGURE 2: "BRAKE" WINDLASS

operated by handbrakes that were pumped up and down, much in the same manner as on the old-fashioned hand-cars used by railroad workers (see figure 2).

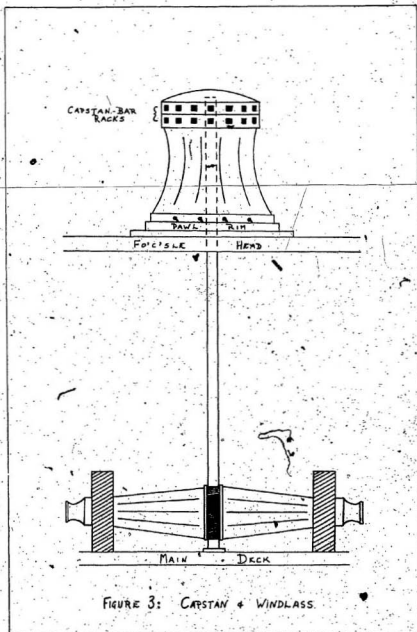
It is doubtful whether shanties were every sung at the former type of windlass, for contemporary writings by seamen who were familiar with this device indicate that its manipulation was co-ordinated by "singing-out," which was a lesser form of vocal accompaniment. Dana, for example, mentions one unusual instance where he and his shipmates spent over two hours heaving at the windlass with nothing more than "Yo ho!-ing" to lighten the labour.³ At the brake windlass, on the other hand, much use was made of shanties. In the operation of this device, the crew lined up on either side of the brake-levers, with the men on one side beginning with the lever at head level and those of the other side beginning with the lever at knee level. Because of the great weight involved, heaving was carried out in two movements. On the first accent of the shanty, the men on the first side brought the bar from their heads to their waists and, on the second accent, to their knees. The reverse was true for the men on the opposite side.

The shanties used to regulate this task had four lines per stanza with solos on the first and third lines and choruses on the second and fourth. They were usually in 2/4 or 6/8 time, thereby giving them a lilting rhythm that emphasized the notes on which the bars were shifted. The

following example from Hugill will serve to show how the natural accents of the shanty regulated the rhythm of the work. The words and syllables in capital letters indicate where the sailors would heave:

SAL-ly BROWN she's a FINE mul-LAT-ter,
WAY, HAY, ROLL an' GO!
SHE drinks RUM an' CHAWS ter-BACK-er,
SPENDS me MONEY on SAL-ly BROWN.

Brake windlasses were found on smaller sailing vessels right up until the last days of the sailing merchant marine, but in the second half of the nineteenth century most ships were fitted with capstans. In actuality, these latter day devices were capstan and windlass combined into one (see figure 3). The windlass part, around which the anchor cables were brought in, was located underneath the fo'c'sle-head -- sometimes in the fo'c'sle itself -- and the capstan was situated atop the fo'c'sle-head directly over the windlass. The two were connected by an iron rod with a worm on its lower end that hooked into a gear-rim on the windlass and caused it to revolve. The head of the capstan contained two racks of pigeon holes, upper and lower, into which the handspikes were fitted. If they were shipped into the lower rack, then only the barrel of the capstan turned, and this would be done in situations where a line or a fall was taken directly around the capstan, such as for boarding the fore-tack or working cargo, etc. For raising the anchor, the handspikes were placed in the



upper rack, thereby engaging the rod, which was in effect the axle of the capstan, and operating the windlass.

In the operation of the capstan, there were usually two men on each bar, and they simply marched around in a continuous circle like horses at a treadmill. Consequently, the shanties used for this task had flowing rhythms suitable for marching, and when windlass shanties were adapted for capstan use, their accents were smoothed out and they were sung with less lilt, as can be seen in the following two versions of "Sally Brown" cited from Doerflinger:

Windlass Version

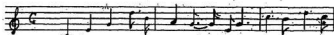
AW, SAL-LY BROWN I BEEN A LONG WHILE A-COURTIN' YA,

WAY, HAY--AY, ROLL AND GO! AW, SAL-LY BROWN I BEEN A

LONG WHILE A-COURTIN' YA. SPENT MY MONEY ON

SAL-LY BROWN.

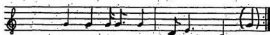
Capstan Version



SAL - LY BROWN WAS A GAY OLD LADY, WAY - AY - AY - AY



ROLL AND GO! OH, SAL - LY BROWN WAS A CREOLE - LADY



SPENT MY MONEY ON SALLY BROWN.

Apart from the mechanical differences between the capstan and the windlass, and in consequence, the rhythmic differences in the shanties, the task of weighing anchor involved the same general elements regardless of the device used. On the mate's orders, the men took up their positions at the bars and began to heave. If the crew were of sufficient size, then the shantyman was exempt from work and positioned himself near the men, usually on the windlass supports or on the capstan head. If the vessel were short of hands, then he took his place with the rest, but even so, he generally "rode the bars," and put most of his energy into the singing of his shanty.

Due to the nature of the work involved in raising the anchor, the function of co-ordination was not primary in the heaving shanties, although the tempo of the work was

directly regulated by the tempo of the song. More importantly, its main purpose was to take the minds of the sailors off the monotony of the labour. Consequently, these songs, as a group, exhibit certain features that are not found, or are found to a lesser degree, in other types of shanties, namely, the addition of "grand choruses," a greater emphasis on narrative development, and a more noticeable degree of influence from other song genres, both traditional and popular. Furthermore, while all these traits are apparent in shanties most commonly associated with work at the windlass, they are more prevalent in what are generally recognized as capstan shanties, and therefore, their appearance may represent a later development in the art of shantying. For the time being, only the first of these features needs to be commented upon as the latter two are discussed more completely in subsequent chapters.

The function of the grand chorus was essentially twofold: first, it served to lengthen the song, thereby making the job of the shantyman easier; and second, it gave the rest of the crew a greater opportunity to sing, which for our purposes, further emphasizes the function of diversion. These extra choruses, so to speak, consisted of four or more lines and could either be in addition to the standard solo and chorus response pattern, as in,

Now I was born on the Rio Grande,

Ch: To me way, Rio!

I was born on the Rio Grande,

Ch: And I'm bound for the Rio Grande!

And away Rio,

Away Rio.

So fare you well, my bonny young gal,

We're bound for the Rio Grande.

or in place of it, in which case the shantyman would sing a two or four line solo followed by a single chorus, as in:

I was broke and out of a job in the city of London;
I went down to Shadwell Docks to get a ship.

Ch: Paddy, get back, take in the slack!

Heave away the capstan, heave a pawl,

Heave a pawl!

'Bout ships and stations, there, be handy,

Rise tacks 'n' sheets, 'n' main s'l haul!

The length of time required to raise the anchor depended on several variables: the amount of chain out, the strength of the wind, head swells, etc., not to mention the ability and/or sobriety of the crew. As the work progressed, the shortening of the chain did not, at first, draw the anchor toward the vessel, but rather the reverse, and the tension increased as she drew over it. Therefore, the shantymen usually began with a fairly up tempo song and then changed to a slower one at a later stage in the operation. The heaving continued without interruption until the chain was "hove short," meaning that the vessel

stood directly over the anchor. More often than not, the flukes were firmly embedded in the silt and debris on the bottom, and releasing the anchor's hold called for a last concentrated effort by the crew. To aid in this endeavor, the shantyman had two courses of action: either he could continue the shanty and intensify the accents, or he could stop singing and employ a series of sing-outs, such as:

Heave 'n' paul!
 Heave-o-heave!
 Heave, ye parish-rigged barstards [sic]!
 Roundy come roundy for Liverpool town!
 Roundy come roundy -- squarey come squarey!
 Heave 'n' bust 'er!
 Heave round hearty!
 Heave 'n' break her bullies!⁸

Each of these cries was accompanied by a tremendous heave on the bars, and eventually the anchor was snapped out of its resting place on the bottom and brought to the surface.

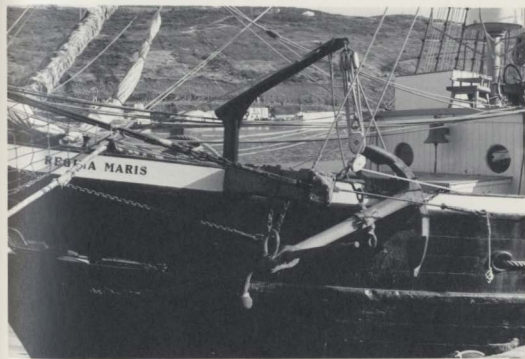
Once the anchor was "awash," meaning that its stock was just above the surface of the water, the crew stopped heaving. Then came the process of raising the shank and flukes and, in the case of larger vessels, swinging them over and onto the deck of the fo'c'sle-head where they were stowed for the duration of the voyage. On smaller vessels, the anchor was secured to the side of the hull as deck-space forward was at a premium. Up until the last decades of the century, this procedure was carried out in two stages, and shanties were involved in both. The first stage was called "catting," and the second was known as "fishing."

Projecting out over each side of the bow was a large wooden baulk, called a "cat-head," and set in its outboard end were three sheaves. In effect, this served as the upper block of a three-fold purchase, the lower part consisting of a treble block with a hook on its lower end. In catting, this hook was slipped into the ring of the anchor which was then hauled up to the cathead and secured with chains. For the second part of the operation, a piece of gear called a "fish-tackle" was used. This consisted of a purchase suspended from the crosstrees of the foremast, and as with the cat-tackle, the lower purchase block was fitted with a large hook, this one being passed under the flukes which were then hauled up onto the fo'c'sle-head and chained to the deck. Toward the end of the century, many ships were equipped with anchor-davits (see figures 4 & 5), thereby eliminating the fish-tackle, and in this arrangement, the anchor usually had a ring located at the center of gravity of its shank, thus allowing it to be catted and fished in one move.

The type of shanty used for this operation depended on the manner in which the purchase falls were manipulated. If they were worked by hand, then a long-haul shanty was used, but a more common practice was to take them around the barrel of the main capstan, in which case the task was regulated by a few verses of a capstan shanty. This latter method was not necessarily confined to vessels that used capstans for weighing their anchors, for many

Figure 4: Anchor davit and catting tackle
(side view)

Figure 5: Anchor davit and catting tackle
(front view)



ships fitted with windlasses also had deck capstans that were used for a variety of purposes, catting the anchor among them.

In addition to accompanying work at the windlass and capstan, heaving shanties were also sung at the pumps. One of the mechanisms used for pumping ship was very similar in its method of operation to the brake windlass and was known, not surprizingly, as a "brake pump." This device, however, was less taxing than its counterpart and the movement of the bar from head to knee level was effected in one motion. The other type of pump, which was found on vessels built in the latter part of the century, was known as a "downtown" or "flywheel" pump, and as the latter name indicates, it was operated by two flywheels that were cranked by handles and also by "bell-ropes" attached to each handle which were alternately pulled and then slackened. Here, obviously, rhythm was important, but when a sailor could expect to spend the better part of his watch heaving at the "temperence wheel," the need for diversion was foremost in his mind. As one of Hugill's informants told him, "Any old song could be used at the pump so long as it had a good rousing chorus." The crew was also greatly appreciative if the shantyman's solos were as obscene as he could possibly make them, and while this was true of shanties in general, it was particularly so with pumping shanties. Obscene lyrics, it would appear were the most "diversionary,"

and in "The Sailor's Alphabet," "A" did not necessarily stand for "anchor," nor "B" for "bowsprit."

The hauling shanties, as mentioned earlier, were used to accompany tasks, usually dealing with the working of the sails, that required sporadic bursts of energy, and to set the different types of hauling shanties in their proper perspective, one needs to have a basic understanding of the various pieces of rigging involved. While the general principles of rigging were standardized, the actual number and type of sails carried by vessels of different size and design varied considerably. For the sake of simplicity, we shall deal only with the rigging of a full-rigged ship carrying double topsails and topgallants.¹⁰ The photographs that accompany this discussion are of the Regina Maris of Boston (see figures 6 & 7), and because she is of barquentine rig, some of the particulars of her rigging are at odds with those described in the text, but the illustrations should serve to give the reader a general idea of the nature and position of the different kinds of tackle.

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, a full-rigged ship carried four square sails on each of her three masts. In ascending order, these were the courses, the topsails, the topgallants, and the royals (see figure 8). When referred to individually, the courses are termed the fore-sail, the main-sail and the cro'jack. Toward the middle of the century, as the size of vessels increased

Figure 6: Barquentine, R.V. Regina Maris
(front view)



Figure 7: Regina Maris (aft view)



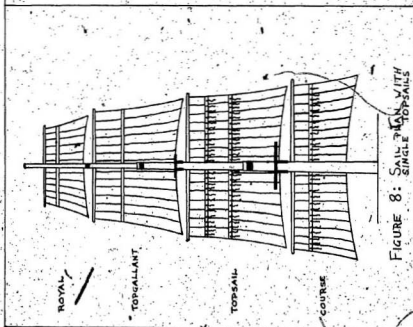


FIGURE 8: SAIL PLAN WITH SINGLE TOPSAILS

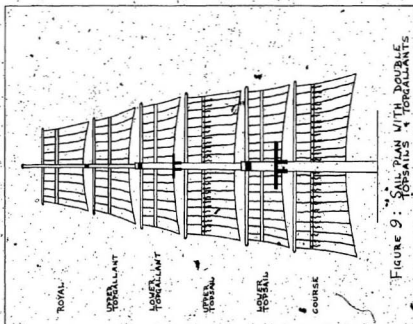


FIGURE 9: SAIL PLAN WITH DOUBLE TOPSAILS & TOPGALLANTS

and that of the crew decreased, the topsails, and later the topgallants, were split into upper and lower segments, thus making a total of six sails on each mast (see figure 9). In addition to these, there were several fore-and-aft sails -- jibs, staysails, and spanker -- and a group of light weather sails, generically referred to as "kites," which included studding-sails, skysails, and moonrakers. As these sails were rarely set with shanty accompaniment, little needs to be said about them here other than they were part of a ship's full complement of canvas. Furthermore, while there are many pieces of rigging associated with every sail, from the point of view of shantying we need only concern ourselves with four: the sheets, the tacks, the halyards and the braces.

The yards that supported the courses, lower topsails, and lower topgallants were fixed to the mast, and these sails were set by pulling the clews -- the lower corners of the sails -- downwards. This was done by means of two ropes: the sheet and the tack, the former controlling the lee side of the sail and the latter controlling the weather side. Again, from the point of view of shantying, only the sheets and tacks of the courses need to be discussed, for those on the upper sails were set with the aid of sing-outs. The courses had two lines on each clew: one leading down and aft, the sheet, and the other leading down and forward, the tack (see figures 10 & 11). When the sail was set, the lee sheet and the weather tack were

Figure 10: Foremast rigging of the Regina Maris
(general view)

LEGEND

- A - Foretack
- B - Foresheet
- C - Fore-brace pendant
- D - Fore-brace purchase
- E - Fore-lower-topsail brace
- F - Fore-lower-topsail-brace purchase

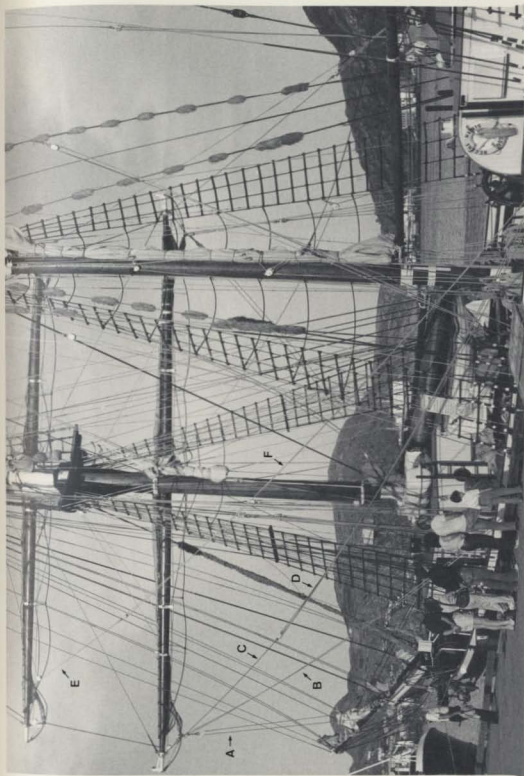


Figure 11: Foremast rigging of the Regina Maris
(detail)

LEGEND

- A - Foretack (double rigged)
- B - Foresheet (double rigged)
- C - Fore-brace pendant
- D - Fore-brace purchase
- E - Fore-lower-topsail brace
- F - Fore-lower-topsail-brace purchase

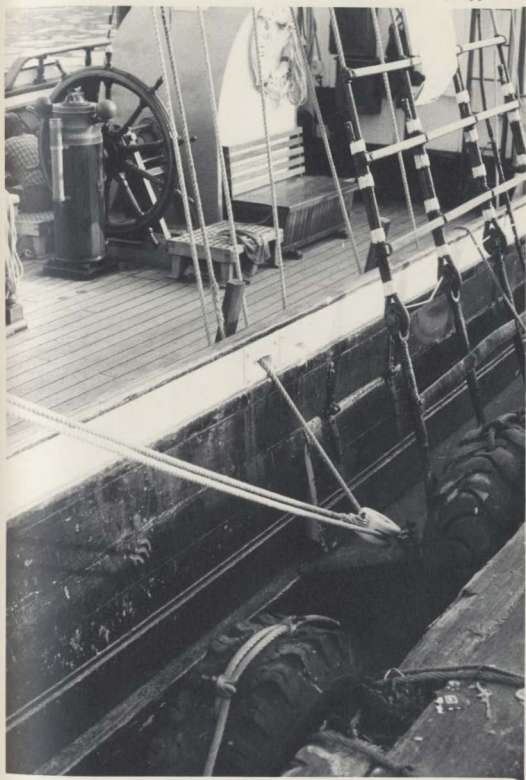


taut, and the weather sheet and the lee tack were left slack. When the ship was running with the wind directly abaft, only the sheets were used.

Sheets could be rigged either "single" or "double," and the difference between the two is simply a matter of the number of blocks in the tackle. For the first, one end of the sheet was shackled directly to the clew; it then led down and aft, through a fairlead in the bulwarks of the vessel, then forward and belayed to a pair of bitts on the lee main-rail. In the second type of rig, the standing part of the line was shackled to an eye-bolt near the fairlead, and the sheet then led up through a block attached to the clew, back through the fairlead and to the bitts as before. The purpose of the block was, of course, to increase the mechanical advantage of the purchase, thereby making the task of hauling easier. The Regina Maris has a second block located in the main-channels near the fairlead (see figure 12), but in terms of increasing the mechanical advantage of the tackle, it is redundant, and I have not seen anything in print to indicate that this was a standard piece of equipment on most sailing ships.

Tacks could be double-rigged, as on the Regina Maris (see figure 11), but they were more often single. On the fore-sail, they led down from the clew to a block on or near the cat-head and were then either taken around the capstan or belayed to a pair of bitts on the fo'c'sle-head.

Figure 12: Foresheet tackle and fairlead



The main-tack belayed to a pair of bitts on the main-rail, directly opposite those to which the fore-sheet belayed. Likewise, the tack of the cro'jack was secured to bitts across from those holding the main-sheet.

The yards of the upper topsails, upper topgallants, and royals were attached to metal brackets, called "parrals," that slid up and down the mast, and when setting these sails, the sheets and tacks were made fast and the yards were raised by means of the halyards (see figures 13 & 14). These pieces of rigging consisted of three parts and, like sheets and tacks, could be single-rigged or double. On single halyards (see figure 15), a length of chain, called a "tye," was shackled to the centre of the yard, and this led up through a sheave in the mast and was then spliced to the actual halyard which was generally made of wire. The third part, the purchase, consisted of two double or treble blocks, the lower being shackled to an eye-bolt in the deck near the bulwarks and the upper to the free end of the halyard. From the last sheave of the upper purchase-block, the fall led down and rove through a lead-block on the deck. The part of the fall between these two blocks was called the "forehand."

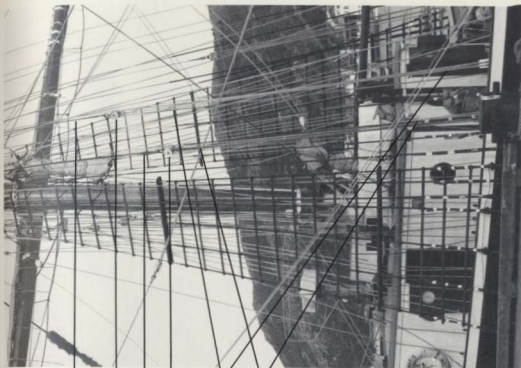
On double halyards (see figure 16), a single-sheaved "ginblock" was shackled to the free end of the tye. The standing part of the halyard was secured to an eye-bolt in the deck on the opposite side from the purchase, and led up through the gin-block and then down to the upper

Figure 13: Halyards (lower tackle)

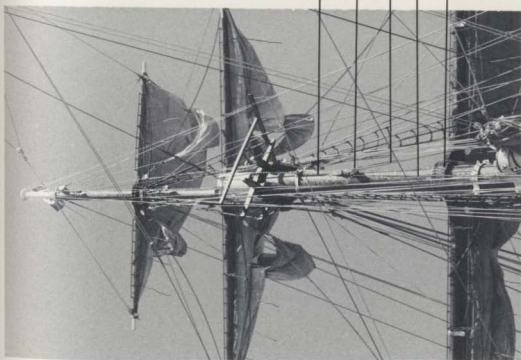
LEGEND

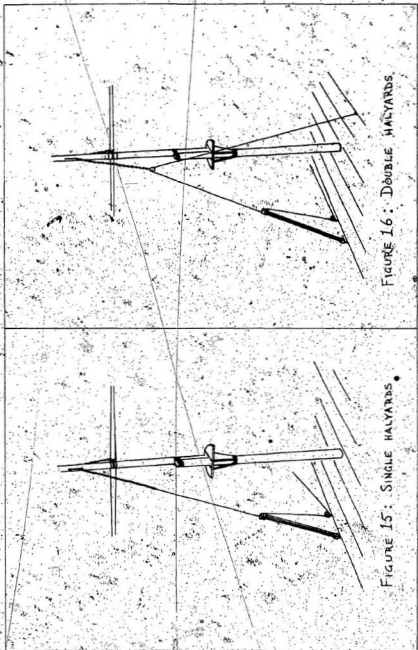
- A -- Fore-royal Halyard
- B -- Fore-royal-halyard purchase block
- C -- Fore-upper-topsail halyard
- D -- Fore-upper-topsail-halyard purchase block
- E -- Fore-royal-halyard purchase
- F -- Fore-upper-topsail-halyard purchase
- G -- Sheave-hole (fore-upper-topsail halyard)
- H -- Gin block
- I -- Standing halyard line
- J -- Running halyard line
- K -- Parral

Figure 14: Halyards (upper tackle)



A B C D E F G H I J K

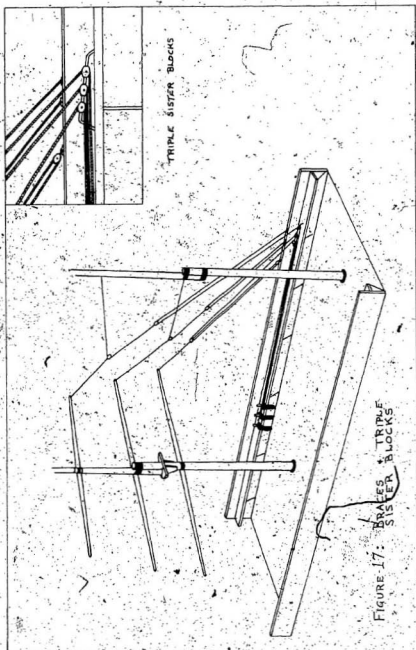




purchase-block. This system not only increased the mechanical advantage of the tackle, but it also prevented the halyards from putting too much strain on one side of the mast, as was the case with single halyards.

Whereas the angle of the sails in relation to the wind was controlled by the sheets and tacks, the corresponding angle of the yards was controlled by the braces (see figures 10, 11, & 17). Once again, in so far as shantying is involved, we do not have to deal with the rigging of every yard but only with that of the lower and both top-sail yards on the fore and main masts. Attached to the end of each yardarm was a length of wire, called a "pendant," which had a single block on its free end. On the fore-lower yard, the standing end of the brace was shackled directly to this block, and from here the line led down and aft, through another single block on the bulwarks, back up through the block on the pendant, and then down through the first of a set of triple "sister-blocks" on the main-rail. The end of the fall belayed to a pin forward of the sister-blocks.

The braces on the topsail yards consisted of three parts, including the pendant, and were similar in rig to double-halyards except that they were in a horizontal rather than a vertical plane. On the fore-lower-topsail yard, the standing end of the brace was fixed to the main-top or to the main-stay just in front of the top; the line then led up through the block on the pendant and concluded in a single block. The fall of the brace led from an eye-



bolt on the bulwarks, up through this second block; and then down through the second of the sister-blocks. The braces for the fore-upper-topsail yard were rigged in exactly the same manner except that the standing end was shackled to the main-crosstrees, and the fall rove through the third of the sister-blocks. The braces controlling the yards on the main-mast were much the same as those on the fore except that in the case of the main-topsail braces, the standing ends were fixed to points on the mizzen-mast, and instead of sister-blocks, the falls rove through three separate blocks mounted on a metal bar, called a "bunkin," which was located on the outer hull of the vessel just under the mizzen-shrouds (see figure 18).

The type of shanty used at these various pieces of rigging depended on the amount of work involved and the manner in which the haul was effected. Thus, the hauling shanties are broken down into three sub-groups: long-haul, or long-drag, shanties; short-haul, or short-drag, shanties; and the aforementioned walkaways. In the first two sub-headings, the words "long" and "short" do not refer to the length of the individual pulls but to the length of time required to complete the task.

Long-haul shanties were most often sung at the hal-yards and particularly at those for the topsails and top-gallants. The royals were usually light enough to hoist by pulling hand-over-hand with maybe a sing-out or a chant to co-ordinate the effort. When the mate ordered a particular

Figure 18: Bunkin with fore and lower-topsail
brace blocks



sail to be set, the men lined up along the fall with the strongest men in front near the purchase and the boys trailing on behind. The very last place on the fall was ordinarily reserved for the cook, and his sole responsibility was to gather in the slack and secure it to a belaying-pin. The shantyman, along with maybe one of two others, took hold of the forehand and stood facing the crew. As in work at the capstan or windlass, his voice was needed more than his muscle, and so most of his energy went into his song. The work began with a few "dry pulls," that is, without shanty accompaniment. But once the wind caught the sail, the hauling became heavier, and after a couple of sing-outs or a brief chant to establish the rhythm, the shantyman broke into the first line of his shanty.

The long-haul shahties had a four line stanza structure, with solos on the first and third lines and choruses on the second and fourth. Pulls were taken only on the choruses and usually on the final stress of the line, though this was not always the case. In "Blow the Man Down," for example, the pull came on the penultimate stress:

To me, way, hey, BLOW the man down!

 Oh, give me some time to BLOW the man down!

If the work was light and the men were not tired, or if the mate felt the work was proceeding too slowly, then two pulls were taken on each chorus:

To me, WAY, hey, BLOW the man down!

Oh, GIVE me some time to BLOW the man down!

This was called "doubling-up"¹¹ and was probably the rule rather than the exception, but if the crew had been engaged in a long stint of heavy work, then only one pull was taken on each chorus.

During the course of the operation, the shantyman was expected to give the men a small break between pulls by altering the length of his solos, and there were two ways he could do this. First, he could add words or draw out the value of the notes given each word, thus directly extending the length of the line, but this method had the unfortunate effect of disturbing the natural rhythm of the song. The second option open to the shantyman was to use "hitches," which Mugill describes as "wild yelps or breaks in the voice...." He adds, "The beginning of the second solo was a common place for the execution of a hitch, as well as on the final note of the first solo."¹² Rather than distorting the rhythm, the hitch simply served to lengthen the break between the solo and the chorus.

Although there was a substantial difference in the weights of a topsail yard and a topgallant yard, a distinction between the songs used at their respective half-yards is very difficult to make, for a shanty was generally wedded to its area of labour by custom rather than by any trait inherent in the song itself. Furthermore, any

one song would be used by different shantymen for different purposes. However, bearing this in mind, topsail halyard shanties can be generally said to have a longer meter than their counterparts used at the lighter halyards. In "Blow the Man Down," for example, a song commonly used at the topsail halyards, the meter is, for the most part, dactylic-tetrameter, whereas that of the topgallant-halyard shanty, "Reuben Ranzo," is roughly trochaic-trimeter. A definite meter cannot be given for the shantyman was rarely bothered by such academic technicalities as metrical construction; hypermetrical syllables were commonly added, and when it came to line extension, he displayed an uncanny genius for fitting eleven or more syllables into a line that, in the hands of a lesser poet, would only have accommodated six.

A topsail yard, excluding its sail and rigging, could weigh in excess of a ton and a half.¹³ Add to this the weight of the gear and the force of the wind acting against the sail, and it becomes clear that to raise such an object required no small effort. Thus, in contrast to the heaving shanties, the function of diversion in the long-haul shanties -- and this is also true of the short-haul shanties -- was secondary to that of co-ordination, for in this context, the fundamental purpose of the song was to time the intervals at which the men pulled and thereby make the most of their combined strength. As shantyman Richard Maitland puts it, "...without music we could never

get the work done. One man pulling now, another man pulling next week. Why, you could never get anywhere."¹⁴

Short-haul shanties, which were relatively few in number, were only used in situations where two or three very strong pulls were needed to complete a task, and most often for the last few drags on the sheets and tacks. When working at one of these tackles, the crew were strung out along the fall with the shantyman in front and the cook in the rear taking up the slack. Much of the work was accomplished by pulling hand-over-hand, but as the wind caught the sail and the tension increased, individual pulls were taken, each one co-ordinated by a sing-out. In light weather, this was enough to bring the sheet home, but in a moderate or heavy breeze, a short-haul shanty was needed to bring the line in the last couple of feet and thereby give the canvas its best exposure to the wind.

There were three songs, often referred to simply as the "fore-sheet shanties," that were used for most of the work at the sheets and tacks: "Do my Johnny Boker," "Haul Away, Joe," and "Haul the Bowline." They had couplet stanzas consisting of one long solo line followed by a chorus of almost equal length. The pull was effected only on the final stress of the latter, and the accented word was normally shouted rather than sung:

Haul the bowline, Kitty is my darlin',
Haul the bowline, the bowline HAUL!

"A long rigmarole," writes Bone, "for such a short 'haul!' "

But what a strain can be put on the heavy five-inch sheet when the men lay back together and shout!"¹⁵

Because the short-haul shanties produced a much stronger pull than the long-haul songs, they were often used for the last few pulls at the halyards when raising a yard in a heavy wind. This particular aspect of shantying, known as "sweating-up," also came into play when any tackle required minor adjustment which, due to the stretching of the ropes and slight changes in course and wind direction, was often. The shanty "Do my Johnny Boker," was a great favourite for sweating-up, as was the song "Boney." This latter song, like long-haul shanties, had quatrain stanzas and was, in fact, often used at the topgallant halyards. Furthermore, in contrast to other short-haul shanties, its choruses were quite brief and, therefore, it provides a good example of a shanty's usage being dictated by custom rather than by its structural components. The only difference in the performance of this song in the two contexts was that at the halyards, two pulls were taken on each chorus, and when used for sweating-up only one pull was taken. Bone states that this song was also used for the last few pulls when raising a heavy storm staysail, though he is the only author I have encountered who mentions the use of shantying at this type of sail.¹⁶

There was one other type of short-haul shanty, called a "bunt" shanty, that was used while taking in sail at sea.

When the force of the wind increased to a degree where either the sails or the masts were in danger of being carried away, all hands were called and one watch remained on deck to look after the various pieces of rigging involved while the other watch went aloft to handle the sail. On practically all square-riggers, with the exception of a few of the later vessels, the first part of this operation involved letting go the sheets and tacks and hauling the clews up toward the "bunt," that is, the point at which the mast and the yard intersect. This was all done from the deck by means of the clew-lines, leech-lines, and bunt and slab-lines. The shanty, however, was not used by the men hauling on these ropes, but by those aloft who were strung out along the footropes and whose task was to roll the mass of sodden canvas onto the yard and secure it there; a procedure generally referred to as "tossing the bunt."

On the first note of the song, the men bent over the yard, flinging their feet high in the air, and attempted to secure a grip on the sail. On the last note of the chorus, they swung their feet downward, dragging the sail with them as they returned to an upright position. All they had gained was tucked between themselves and the yard and the operation was repeated. Usually, no more than three or four verses were needed to complete the task. On British and Canadian ships, the shanty "Do my Johnny Boker" was occasionally used in bunting a sail, but the song normally reserved for this purpose was "Paddy Doyle's Boots." The

individual referred to in the song was alleged to have been a Liverpool boarding-master who, legend has it,

...kept a cow's horn in the back yard, round which he solemnly marched "green hands," so as to be able to tell a doubting skipper that they had "been three times round the Horn!"¹⁷

The last type of shanty was the walkaway, and this had the distinction of being the only type of shipboard worksong that was sung in unison. As mentioned previously, walkaways were occasionally used at the halyards in the early decades of the century when vessels were relatively well-manned. In later years, this manoeuvre was largely confined to the braces when the vessel "tacked" or "stayed," that is, altered her course to a degree where the wind was coming from the opposite side of the ship. Again, it was an operation that required all hands, the port watch being responsible for the rigging on the fore-mast and the starboard watch looking after the rigging on the main. At the order "Hard alee!" the wheel was put up and the men forward let go the sheets, tacks, and braces of the fore-sail and the jib sheets. They then moved to the weather side of the vessel, took hold of the fall of the fore-sail brace, and marched forward up the deck, singing their shanty as they went. As the upper sheets and tacks were attached to the fore-lower yard, the upper sails were partially hauled around in the first manoeuvre, and after the fore-sail brace was belayed,

these other lines were taken in along with the fore-sheet and tack.

During this time, the main rigging was left untouched, and as the vessel took to the opposite tack, the sails on the mainmast became "laid aback" which helped push the bow around until the wind caught the sails on the fore-mast.

At this point, the appropriate rigging on the main-mast was let go and re-set in the same manner as on the fore-mast. When this was completed, the cro-jack braces were hauled around and the task, which usually took about twenty minutes from start to finish, was over.

Walkaways were also used to accompany the task of scraping a vessel's bottom at sea, particularly on iron and steel ships which were notorious for the amount of pelagic flora and fauna that adhered to their hulls during the course of a voyage. As Maitland explains:

After an iron ship has been twelve months at sea, there's a quite a lot o' barnacles and grass grows onto her bottom, and generally in the calm latitudes -- up in the Horse Latitudes in the North Atlantic Ocean -- usually they rig up a purchase for to scrub the bottom. You can't do it when the ship is going over three mile an hour, but less than that, of course, you can do so. But it all means considerable walking; not much labour but all walking....¹⁸

As is intimated in the above quote, the purpose of the shanty in the walkaway operation was merely to provide a distraction from the work.

These then are the principal areas of work for which the shanties were used. There were many, many other pieces of rigging and gear, a few of which have been mentioned, that were worked with sing-out or chant, rather than shanty, accompaniment. The tasks for which shanties were needed represent those requiring the most effort or the most time to complete, and in these contexts, the songs provided a steady working rhythm and a welcomed diversion from the drudgery of the labour.

Shanties, however, were not sung on all vessels. There were a few "religious" captains who felt that such songs were immoral and forbade their use. Also, part of a shanty's effectiveness depended on the spirit of the fo'c'sle hands, and on some "hard case" ships, the morale of the crew was so low that they had no will to sing at their labour. A lack of shantying, in fact, was often intended as a form of mute protest, a sort of nautical "work-to-rule." The following passage from Dana depicts the mood and actions of the crew of the Pilgrim after two men had been flogged:

No one went aloft beyond his ordinary gait, and the chain came slowly in over the windlass. The mate, between the knight-heads, exhausted all his official rhetoric, in calls of "Heave with a will!" -- "Heave hearty, men!" -- "heave hearty!" -- "Heave and raise the dead!" -- "Heave, and away!" etc., etc.; but it would not do. Nobody broke his back or his handspike by his efforts. And when the cat-tackle-fall was strung along, and all hands -- cook,

steward, and all -- laid hold, to cat the anchor, instead of the lively song of "Cheerily, men!" in which all hands join in the chorus, we pulled a long, heavy, silent pull, and -- as sailors say a song is as good as ten men -- the anchor came to the cat-head pretty slowly. "Give us 'Cheerily!'" said the mate; but there was no "cherrily" for us, and we did without it. The captain walked the quarter-deck, and said not a word. He must have seen the change, but there was nothing which he could notice officially.¹⁹

On board a sailing ship; the shanties' strong associations with work relegated them solely to that context, and they were not sung during the dog-watches or in any situation where singing functioned purely as entertainment. Here the sailor preferred a song that severed all connections with the work environment. Bone writes:

There was almost a taboo on the subject. Like whistling around the decks (the sure incitative to uncommon gales) and spitting in the wind, the other hands maintained that the rousing of a chanty 'when ther worn't no call' could not but offend some presiding deity.²⁰

But the shanties were not all work and no play. The ritual of "burying the dead horse," mentioned earlier,²¹ had its own shanty. After the sailors had passed sentence on the effigy of the horse, it was hauled up to the main-lower yardarm to the accompaniment of

As I walked out upon the road one day,

CH: For they say so, and they know so,

I saw an old man with a load of hay,

Ch: Oh, poor old man!

Says I, "Old man, your horse is lame,"
Says I, "Old man, that horse will die."

"Now, if he dies he'll be my loss,
"And if he lives he'll be my horse."

"And if he dies I'll tan his skin,
"If he lives I'll ride him again".²²

At the conclusion of this stoic little ditty, a seaman sitting on the yardarm cut the line and committed said horse and one month's "free labour" to the deep.

By the time Rex Clements went to sea in the early 1900's,

There was even a shanty for doing nothing at all. It was like the others with solo and chorus and was sometimes started by a discontented crowd who felt they were having their old iron worked up unnecessarily. One of the men would begin:

"I've got a sister nine foot high!"

and was taken up by the chorus.

"Way down in Cuba!"

but instead of heaving, the words were followed by three short jumps. It was very infrequently heard and always came to an abrupt end after the first line in obedience to an angry order from the mate to "Stop that!"²³

FOOTNOTES

¹ John Masfield, ed., A Sailor's Garland (1924; rpt. Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), p. 343.

² Stan Hugill, Shanties and Sailors' Songs (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1969), p. 76.

³ Richard Henry Dana, Two Years Before the Mast: A Personal Narrative of Life at Sea (1840; rpt. Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1946), p. 128.

⁴ Hugill, p. 71.

⁵ William Main Doerflinger, Shantymen and Shantyboys (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951), pp. 74-76.

⁶ Doerflinger, p. 66.

⁷ Doerflinger, p. 54.

⁸ Stan Hugill, Shanties from the Seven Seas (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), pp. 579-580.

⁹ Hugill, Sailor's Songs, p. 89.

¹⁰ All the information in this section has been taken from the chapter on "Running Rigging" in, Harold A. Underhill, Masting and Rigging the Clipper Ship and Ocean Carrier (1946; rpt. Glasgow: Brown, Son & Ferguson, Ltd., 1958), pp. 136-201.

¹¹ Alan Lomax, Sea songs and shanties collected from Richard Maitland, recorded May, 1939, Library of Congress.

Archive of Folk Culture, LWO 4872, reels 161B-162B
(7 1/2 ips, 7" reel), AFS 2515b.

¹²Hugill, Sailors' Songs, p. 86.

¹³Frank T. Bullen and W.F. Arnold, Songs of Sea Labour
(London: Orpheus Music Publishing Company, 1914), p. xiv.

¹⁴Lomax, AFS 2522a.

¹⁵David Bone, Capstan Bars (New York: Harcourt,
Brace & Co., 1932), p. 39.

¹⁶Bone, p. 42.

¹⁷Joanna C. Colcord, Roll and Go (Indianapolis:
Bobbs-Merril, Co., 1924); rpt. Songs of the American
Sailormen (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1938),
p. 43.

¹⁸Lomax, AFS 2521b.

¹⁹Dana, p. 126.

²⁰Bone, p. 139.

²¹See Chapter I, p. 62.

²²Doerflinger, p. 14.

²³Rex Clements, A Gypsy of the Horn (London: Heath
Cranton Limited, 1924), pp. 231-232.

"AWAY DOWN SOUTH WHERE I WAS BORN":

THE HISTORY OF THE SHANTY

Exactly when and how the practice of shantying became established on board of English and American ships is a matter about which there has been considerable debate. Some authorities have stated that the custom dates back to Elizabethan times, while others have ascribed a more recent origin to this particular type of worksong. The reason for this debate is largely attributable to the fact that folklorists and other students of nautical song did not take a great deal of interest in the shanties until late in the last century when the custom was beginning to fade, and with one or two exceptions, the most significant works on the subject were not produced until after the First World War. Consequently, much of the information regarding the early history of the shanty had to be recovered from the pages of travellers' journals and the diaries of seamen in which allusions are made to a "song," or a "howl," or a "cry," or a "yo-heav-ho," etc., when work situations are being recalled. Obviously, such descriptions leave much to the interpretation of the individual reader, for one has to decide whether the referent is an actual shanty or one of the other forms of vocal accompaniment used to co-ordinate shipboard labour, such as a "sing-out" or a "chant."

A sing-out, contrary to what its name suggests, is not so much a song, in the strict sense of the word, as a piercing cry with "...a dolorous cadence, and a wildness that sounds like a note of distress...."¹ Prior to the development of the shanty, these cries were used to mark time in all heaving and hauling on board merchant ships, except in the latter half of the eighteenth century when armed merchantmen adopted the naval custom of employing a fiddler, fifer, or drummer for this purpose. Even in the last days of the windjammers, shantymen used sing-outs for lighter work that did not call for a full shanty. In performance, the cries were shouted out by only one man, and they consisted of either a string of meaningless sounds, such as, "Hoo! Wo-o-o, oh bye!"² or short phrases of encouragement, repeated with minor variations, such as:

Away, hey, oh, raise him ahoy.
 Away, hey, oh haul him ahoy.
 Oh, oh, oh, raise him ahoy.³

Chants, or "semi-chanteys" as Harlow calls them,⁴ served a variety of purposes, such as for "sweating-up" sheets and braces, hoisting the lighter sails, and the initial stages of tasks involving a long, heavy pull, such as hoisting the topsail yards. Again, there were two types: those that were performed by one man throughout, as in,

Hand, Hand, Hand o'er hand
 Devil run away with a west country man.⁵

and those that had short choruses at the end of each line, as in:

You stole my boots, you Saint Helena soldier,

Ch. You stole my boots, ah-ha!

You stole my boots so early in the morning,

Ch. You stole my boots, ah-ha!⁶

As their name indicates, they were chanted rather than sung, and their lyric development, like sing-outs, consisted mainly of a repetition of a single idea which was generally devoid of any purposeful meaning.

Even though all three fulfill roughly the same primary function, the shanties are set apart from sing-outs and chants by virtue of the fact that, from an aesthetic and cultural point of view, there is a vast difference between crying something along the lines of "One, two, three, pull!" and co-ordinating labour with a song that speaks candidly of one's profession and the environment in which one lives. Therefore, when defining "shanty," we must include some means of differentiating between these various forms of vocal accompaniment found in the work context. This delineation is not entirely an academic one, for the seamen of the nineteenth century made the same distinction, but our primary reasoning here is to set a temporal parameter on the practice of shantying and to establish some structural criteria for the shanties themselves. For the purposes of this thesis, we shall define "shanty" as any

one of a group of songs, stanzaic in structure and usually consisting of separate solo and chorus parts, which were used to mark time in heaving and hauling operations on board sailing ships.

In English literature, the earliest reference to mariners singing-out dates back to the reign of Henry VI and is contained in a poem depicting the voyage of a ship carrying Pilgrims to the shrine of St. James of Compostella, in the year 1400. In his description of the vessel getting under way, the author includes:

With 'howe! hissa!' then they cry,
'What howte! mate, thou stondyst to ny,
They fellow may nat hale the by;
They thus begyn to crake.

A boy or tweyne anone up-styen,
And overthwarte the sayle-yerde lyen; --
'Y-how! taylia!' the remenaunte cryen,
And pull with all theyr myght.

While these sing-outs bear certain resemblances to those of four hundred years later, they do vary in some respects, for the phrase "the remenaunte cryen" seems to indicate that these cries were performed in unison or perhaps antiphony.

From the mid-sixteenth century comes the most significant reference to seamen using vocal accompaniment to regulate their work prior to the early 1800's. In The Complaynt of Scotlande (1549), there is a scene depicting a vessel getting under way from the Firth of Forth, and the author gives several examples of the cries used by

the men as they weighed the anchor and worked the sails.

He writes:

than the marynalis began to veynd the cabil,
witht mony loud cry. ande as ane cryit, al
the laif cryit in that samyn tune, as it
hed bene ecco in ane hou heuch. and as it
aperit to me, thaif cryit thir vordis as
effir foullouis. veyra veyra, veyra veyra.
gentil gallandis, gentil gallandis, veynde
i see hym, veynd i see hym. pourbossa,
pourbossa. hail al ande ane, hail al and
ane. hail hym vp til vs, hail hym vp til
vs.⁸

He goes on to describe the catting of the anchor, the hauling of the bowline and the hoisting of a topsail, and the cries used for each operation.

The second sentence in this quotation exemplifies the problem of interpretation that has caused so much argument over the antiquity of the shanty: "ande as ane cryit," versus "al the laif cryit in that samyn tune..." A sing-out or a song? Colcord opts for the former;⁹ Laughton, the latter.¹⁰ Whall goes so far as to call these items "shanties,"¹¹ while Doerflinger, searching for some sort of middle ground, calls them "short, elementary shanties."¹² Hugill also appears undecided, for after speaking of them as "shanties" -- perhaps following Whall's lead -- he later refers to them as "the hauling cries of Elizabethan seamen."¹³ Certainly, the fundamentals of shantying are present, and evidently the seamen of this time had, in some instances, developed their art beyond the simple words and phrases encouraging their shipmates to heave or

haul, for, contained in the bowline cry is a relatively coherent piece of verse telling of the mariner's hopes for a successful voyage: "afoir the vynd... / god send... / fayr vedthir... / mony pricis...."¹⁴ This development is significant, but the direct repetition of the solo lines and the apparently stichic structure bear little resemblance to "the shanty as we know it." Also, the brevity of the solos might lead us to conclude that we are not dealing with "elementary shanties," but with elaborate sing-outs.

The only other reference from this period is definitely an allusion to singing-out. Laughton cites it as "From Purchas," presumably from Purchas His Pilgrimes (1625): "When mariners do hale or pull anything they do make a noise, as it were crying ha woet hale men hale."¹⁵ Of this, Laughton writes:

This is not shantying, but the primitive "Yo-hoing" out of which the shanty developed; and if we admit that "yo-hoing" served for most purposes, we do not thereby rule out the possibility of a song having been used for special occasions, such as for weighing and stowing the anchor.¹⁶

This seems unlikely, however, for if we accept that a song, by virtue of its melody and intelligible, if not intelligent, words, is more interesting than "yo-hoing," then it is hard to believe a chronicler would take the trouble to describe the sing-outs and ignore the songs.

From the beginning of the 1600's until the middle of the next century, there is a complete blank in the history

of the shanty, and there are no further references to either songs or sing-outs until the publication of Falconer's Marine Dictionary (1769), in which the following is found under the entry "Windlass":

It requires, however, some dexterity and address to manage the handspikes to the greatest advantage; and to perform this, the sailors must all rise at once upon the windlass, and, fixing their bars therein, give a sudden jerk at the same instant, in which movement they are regulated by a sort of song or howl pronounced by one of their number.¹⁷

Laughton suggests that this may refer to a basic form of shanty, "...presumably something in the nature of Lowlands."¹⁸ Again, this is doubtful, for Falconer specifically states that only one man was involved in the performance.

The latter half of the eighteenth century, as previously noted, was a period in which the efforts of the merchant marine were greatly overshadowed by those of the Navy. The writers who subscribe to the theory that shanties existed in the days of the Armada, and others, such as Doerflinger and Hugill, who allow for the possibility of shanties existing prior to the 1800's, argue that the absence of references to shantying from this era is due to factors directly related to conditions of war. Their reasoning is threefold: first, in the minds of the public, the Navy was first and foremost, and as a result, the merchant marine and its customs were neglected by the

writers of the day. Second, some merchant ships were armed and their routine regulated along naval lines. As neither shanties nor sing-outs were ever permitted on board a ship-of-the-line, these vessels followed suit, and work on board was regulated by instrumental accompaniment, the boatswain's whistle or the calling of numbers. Third, due to the urgent demand for naval seamen, English and, prior to 1776, American sailors were eagerly sought by the press-gangs, and the merchant marine had to make do with whatever leftovers the crimps could round up, few of whom were accomplished shantymen.

This theory, however, is contingent upon the assumption that shanties did exist in the eighteenth century, and from the historical evidence presented so far, this does not appear to be the case. But there is other evidence, based on the alleged antiquity of some shanties, that has been put forward as indicating the existence of these worksongs long before the nineteenth century. The four songs commonly alluded to in this respect are: "Whiskey Johnny," "A-rovin'," "Cheerly Men" and "Haul the Bowline."

The first of these shanties is supposed to have existed in Tudor times under the title "Malmsey Johnny," but this allegation, Hugill states, "...is obviously a pleasant yarn without foundation."¹⁹ The origin of "A-rovin'," or "Maid of Amsterdam" as it is also known, has often been traced to a song in the fifth act of Thomas Heywood's Rape of Lucrece (1640), but, again, Hugill thinks otherwise:

I have spent some time investigating this statement and I have discovered that the song alluded to in Heywood's play is of the type known as a 'catch.' It is certainly not the shanty "A-rovin'," and the only thing that can be said about it is that the approach of Sextus to Lucrece bears some resemblance, in sequence, to that of the amorous seaman to his Dutch girl in the full bawdy version of the shanty.²⁰

He goes on to say both the main theme and the tune of this song have been found ashore in many different countries and from Elizabethan to modern times. "A-rovin'," like many shanties, was probably adapted from a previously existing song, and although it is impossible to say when this happened, this song can not be offered as proof of the existence of shantying in the year 1640.

"Cheerly Men" is a similar case, although its age is not alleged to be as great as that of "A-rovin'." Loughton cites an article from the United Service Journal of 1834, entitled "A Cruise of a Revenue Cutter," in which the author states:

On board a revenue cutter, for want of music, it is customary for one of the men to give them a song, which makes the crew unite their strength and pull together.²¹

The example given is "Cheerly Men," and the author adds that "...for time out of mind this song has been attached to revenue cutters...." Even if we set the statue of limitations on "time out of mind" at greater than thirty-four years, thereby placing the creation of this song inside

the eighteenth century, we should not automatically assume that it always was, still is, and always will be, a shanty. We know that "Cherry Men" was one of the first songs to be used as a shanty, but we can not emphatically state that it was composed for this purpose, especially since it is atypical of standard shanty structure, having four solos and four choruses per stanza.

As for "Haul the Bowline," its title assures us that it was composed to be a shanty, but its antiquity may not be as great as some have suggested. The controversy surrounding this shanty centers on the inclusion of the word "bowline." Colcord writes:

The best evidence of the antiquity of an actual shanty is to be found in "Haul on the Bowline." This song has puzzled some writers on the subject, because on modern square-rigged vessels the bowline is an unimportant rope, used merely to steady the leach of a sail when sailing on the wind. No shanty could ever have been used in handling such a light tackle.... But on the carracks of Elizabethan times, the bowline was the name for what we now call the fore-sheet; and it seems fairly evident from the wording of the modern shanty that it must have been in use for its present purpose, ever since those far-off days.²²

Thus, on the basis of this technical evidence, "Haul the Bowline" has been cited as an Elizabethan shanty. We have already noted the type of vocal accompaniment used in that period and have concluded that it was not shantying, and also, an important piece of information relating to

this particular song has, for some reason, gone unnoticed. The full chorus of this shanty is "Haul on the bowline, the bowline haul," and, in his dictionary of nautical terms, Admiral W.H. Smyth defines the term "Bowline Haul" as "A hearty and simultaneous bowse."²³ Smyth, who served on both merchant and naval vessels during his career, began compiling material for his dictionary in the 1830's and continued to do so until his death in 1865. Thus, the term was current in the early to mid-nineteenth century, the period in which most shanties are supposed to have been created. It seems more than likely that this expression was responsible for the song, for by its definition, it is exactly what a shanty was intended to produce: a hearty and simultaneous bowse. The term is not listed in Falconer's dictionary, nor in others printed after Smyth's. It is probably naval in origin, for the bowline did remain an important rope on men-of-war, but given the interchange between the two services, the term could easily have found its way into the merchant marine. Other naval expressions, such as "grog" and "splice the main brace," had little trouble entering the merchant seaman's vocabulary. One might guess that as the terms "shanty" and "sing-out" became established, "bowline haul" fell into disuse.

From the evidence available, although scanty, it would appear that shanties did not exist on board either English or American vessels prior to the nineteenth century. Abrahams, however, in his study of West Indian shantying,

has shown that this style of singing did exist in other contexts as early as 1790." From William Beckford's A Descriptive Account of the Island of Jamaica, published in that year, he quotes the following description of the songs used by the plantation slaves as they worked at a mill:

The style of singing among the negroes, is uniform; and this is confined to the women; for the men very seldom, excepting upon extraordinary occasions, are ever heard to join in chorus. One person begins first, and continues to sing alone; but at particular periods the others join: there is not, indeed, much variety in their songs; but their intonation is not less perfect than their time.²⁴

Abrahams adds:

There are a number of such descriptions in later works, most often associated with harvest scenes, for that was the time of greatest activity on the plantations in the West Indies.²⁵

In the other references that he quotes, the men have found their voices and are merrily singing of their joys in life and the vices of their masters. It is significant to note that Abrahams cites no less than six references to the work-songs of the Blacks from the years 1790 to 1835. For the same period in a nautical context there are only two such references, both from the 1830's.

As we move into the period just prior to the close of the Napoleonic Wars and the War of 1812, seamen are still

performing their duties with the aid of sing-outs or to the sound of the fiddle or fife. From an American source describing the voyage of an armed merchantman in the year 1809, we have:

I shall never forget the shrill voice of the boatswain on that morning, when he piped, "All hands, up anchor, a-hoy!" -- neither shall I forget the merry tones of the drum and fife while we were running around the capstan heaving the anchor to the bows.²⁶

Instrumental accompaniment, as previously noted, lasted well into the nineteenth century, and Doerflinger has cited references to its use on board East Indiamen as late as 1844.²⁷ He also cites, again with relation to East Indiamen, a reference to an unusual blend of instrumental and vocal accompaniments. It is contained in a book entitled, The Quid; or Tales of my Messmates, describing a voyage to the Orient in 1832, which is very close to the time when references to shantying -- though this term is not yet in use -- first begin to appear in print. The author, who signs himself as "A Steerage Passenger," writes:

...the motley group that man the bars, the fiddler stuck in the corner, the captain on the poop encouraging the men to...desperate efforts....Every man runs the same road, and hard and impenetrable is that soul that does not chime in with the old ditties, "Pull away now, my Nancy, O!" and the long "Oh!" that precedes the more musical strain of

"Oh, her love is a sailor,
His name is Jemmy Taylor,
He's gone in a whaler
To the Greenland sea!"

or

"Oh! if I had her,
Eh then if I had her,
Oh! how I would love her
Black although she be."28.

Hugill is of the opinion that these two choruses are not shanties, but "forebitters" -- songs sung for entertainment -- made to do service at the capstan.²⁹ Nevertheless, it is an interesting marriage of the two forms of accompaniment.

The connection between shantying and stevedoring is especially strong, and the earliest evidence pointing to this is contained in the memoirs of a British seaman named Robert Hay, who at various times served in both the Royal Navy and the merchant marine. In his book he gives several instances of fiddling and fifing on board men-of-war, and from his description of a merchant brig leaving England in 1811, it would appear that singing-out is the practice with which he is most familiar in that service, for he speaks of "...the nautical heave O of the mariners as they braced their yards and hauled their bowlings [sic]..."³⁰ While on a voyage to Jamaica in the same year, he describes the black stevedores and the songs they used while working at the capstan:

Our seamen having left the ship, the harbour work was performed by a gang of Negroes. These men will work the whole day at the capstan under a scorching sun with almost no intermission. They beguiled the time by one of them singing one line of an English song, or a prose sentence, at the end of which all the rest join in a short chorus. The sentences which prevail with the gang we had aboard were as follows:

Two sisters courted one man

Ch. Oh, huro, my boys,

And they lived in the mountains,

Ch. Oh, huro boys O.

Grog time of day, boys,

Grog time of day,

Ch. Huro, my jolly boys,

Grog time of day.³¹

Of these Hugill writes: "...to my way of thinking the given songs are undoubtedly shanties as distinct from Negro work-songs,"³² by which he may be intimating that they are of Anglo-American origin. After all, if the choruses are removed, one is left with fragments of an English ballad and a seamen's drinking song. However, the examples given by Hay may merely indicate that the slaves were adopting these themes into their own songs.

If we accept that shantying did not exist in a nautical context at this time, then Hay's testimony lends considerable reinforcement to the theory that the practice owes its origin to the worksongs of the Blacks in the West

Indies and the southern United States. Laughton has compiled some interesting statistics concerning the frequency of trade with the latter region that bear relevancy to this question:

Before the French Revolution no American cotton came to England. In 1791, however, a machine was invented which gave for the first time a commercial value to the "upland" cotton of the South, a variety forming about 95 per cent of the total crop. An export to England at once began, at first on a small scale, but rapidly increasing. At the peace of 1815, the annual export was 96 million pounds; in 1830 it was 260 millions, and in 1837 it had risen to 444 millions. A million pounds make 450 tons, which would be a load for a big ship as ships then went; so that if we say that the import of cotton to England in 1837 represented 500 ship loads, we would be within the mark.³³

Thus, there is a direct correlation between the growth of the cotton trade and the development of shantying on board Anglo-American ships, and while this industry is the one most often referred to in connection with shantying, there were other lucrative trades in the American south which would have given seamen exposure to this type of worksong. For example, Gorham P. Low mentions Black stevedores singing as they loaded hogs-heads of tobacco on board his ship at City Point, Virginia, in 1823.³⁴

Given the general trend of increased mercantile activity in the post-war period, information concerning trade with the West Indies would probably tell a similar tale. We should also bear in mind that many Blacks were

themselves shipping as seamen at this time. The precise number is not known, but by 1800, there were an estimated 15,000 freed slaves in the West Indies,³⁵ many of whom would find employment in the merchant marine. In the United States, there were a sufficient number of black seamen to require some states to pass "Jim Crow" laws, placing restrictions on them:

Late in 1822, South Carolina...passed a law forbidding free Negro seamen to leave their vessels when in her ports. In the ensuing years several other slave states passed similar laws. These evoked many protests from Negro individuals and groups, not only because of the attack this represented against their rights but also because maritime occupations were among the most important followed by Negroes.³⁶

The practice of shantying was gradually adopted by the seaman, and by 1830, it was common on both English and American ships, although at this time it was only used in a limited number of situations. We have already noted the use of "Cheerly Men" on board British revenue cutters in 1834, and another writer who mentions this song and several others is Dana. He is the first to give a full account of the nature and function of worksongs in the nautical context, although he makes no mention of the word "shanty." From this we can assume with almost complete certainty that the term was not known to him, for in all other areas he takes the greatest of care to present and define nautical jargon to his readers. His description of the songs is as follows:

The sailor's songs for the capstan and falls are of a peculiar kind, having a chorus at the end of each line. The burden is usually sung by one alone, and, at the chorus, all hands join in, -- and the louder the noise the better.... A song is as necessary to the sailor as the drum and fife to a soldier. They can't pull in time, or pull with a will, without it. Many a time, when a thing goes heavy, with one fellow yo-ho-ing, a lively song, like "Heave to the girls!" "Nancy oh!" "Jack Crosstree," etc., has put life and strength into every arm.³⁷

Oddly enough, his account of the songs is included among the passages describing the process of "steaving" hides into the hold of a ship. However, at several other points in his narrative, he does mention the use of songs in connection with regular shipboard work.

On board the vessels that Dana sailed in, the Pilgrim and the Alert, worksongs were used to accompany three tasks: catting the anchor, hoisting the topsail yards, and stowing the cargo. The first two tasks were only performed occasionally, and the song that was invariably used to accompany them was "Cheerly Men," although "Time for us to Go" was sung, quite appropriately, at the beginning of the homeward voyage. Dana probably heard most of his shanties while engaged in steaving hides into the hold of the Alert, for this operation involved six weeks of intense labour -- and continual shantying. To his description of "songs for the capstan and falls" he adds:

We often found a great difference in the effect of the different songs in driving in the hides. Two or three songs would be tried, one after the other, with no effect; -- not an inch could be got upon the tackles -- when a new song, struck up, seemed to hit the humor of the moment, and drove the tackles "two blocks" at once. "Heave round hearty!" "Captain gone ashore!" and the like, might do for common pulls, but on an emergency, when we wanted a heavy, "raise the dead" pull, which would start the beams of the ship, there was nothing like "Time for us to go!" "Round the corner!" or "Hurrah! hurrah! my hearty bullies!"³⁸

The common denominator in these three operations is, quite simply, arduous toil, and so we can see that in Dana's experience, shanties were only used to accompany the heaviest tasks. This is not to say that other types of shipboard labour, such as hauling sheets, tacks, braces, etc., are light work, but they do require less energy or less time than the above, and on the ships Dana sailed in, these other functions were performed with the aid of sing-outs. Weighing the anchor was also regulated by the never-failing "yo-heave-oh," but this was probably because the operation of the windlass with which Dana was familiar -- the type levered by handspikes -- was not suited to shanty accompaniment. His initial description of the songs indicates that on vessels fitted with capstans, shanties were sung while raising the anchor, and Marryat, in Diary in America (1839), gives an account of sailors singing as they hove the anchor by means of a "brake," or

"up-and-down," windlass, which at that time was a relatively new invention.³⁹

Other references to shantying from the 1830's and '40's corroborate the assertion that these songs were only used in situations involving heavy labour. Olmsted, who served on the whaleship North America from 1839-1841, has the following to say about the use of worksongs during his time at sea:

I have often been very much amused by the cries and songs of the men, who engaged in hauling away upon the rigging of the ship. The usual cry is "Ho! Ho! Ho!" or "Ho! Ho! Heave!".... But there are many songs in common use among seamen... which ... are performed with very good effect when there is a long line of men hauling together.... The songs of the sailors, when sung with spirit and to the full extent of their fine sonorous voices, add new vigor to their exertions, as the heavy yards and sails are mounting upwards.⁴⁰

Nordhoff, writing of the mid-1840's, states that "getting up anchor or hoisting topsails, with a good crew, is always enlivened by various cheering songs ..."⁴¹

As shanties were only sporadically used on the sailing ships of this period, they were probably not composed in significant numbers in the maritime context. Certainly, there were a few created or adapted by seamen, such as "Cheerly Men," "Drunken Sailor," "Across the Western Ocean," and possibly a few others, but the probable source of most of the shanties created in the first half of the

century was the cotton ports of the southern United States. Nordhoff visited the port of Mobile, Alabama, during the '40's, and writes at considerable length about the process of "screwing" cotton and of the "chants" used by the men who performed this task:

When a lighter-load of cotton comes along side, all hands turn to and hoist it in. It is piled on deck, until wanted below. As soon as the lighter is empty, the gangs go down to the work of stowing it. Two bales being placed and the screws applied, the severe labor begins. The gang, with their shirts off, and hankerchiefs tied about their heads, take hold the handles of the screws, the foreman begins the song, and at the end of every two lines the worm of the screw is forced to make one revolution, thus gaining perhaps two inches. Singing, or chanting as it is called, is an invariable accompaniment to working in cotton, and many of the screw-gangs have an endless collection of songs, rough and uncouth, both in words and music, but answering well the purposes of making all pull together, and enlivening the heavy toil.... One song generally suffices to bring home the screw, when a new set is got upon the bale, and a fresh song is commenced.⁴²

This account gives a good illustration of the necessity and, more importantly, the frequency of shantying in this context. In the early years of the cotton trade, the handling of the cargo was performed entirely by slaves, but in '30's and '40's, many Irish and English seamen took stevedoring jobs in the South during the winter months to avoid having to sail on the North Atlantic in that season, and as the most predominant strains in the shanties are

allegedly Negro and Irish, it is probable that these cotton ports are the places of their meeting. Hugill has gone so far as to dub the Gulf ports as "shanty parts or work-song exchanges,"⁴³ and the number of shanties thought to have originated among the southern stevedores is quite substantial. They include: "Roll the Cotton Down," "Lowlands," "Blow the Man Down," "Let the Bulgine Run," "Sally Brown," the "Stormalong" family. "A Long Time Ago," "Gimme de Banjo," "Captain Gone Ashore," "Fire Maringo," "Fire Down Below," "Highland Laddie," and several others.

Short-haul shanties and topgallant halyard shanties probably came into use during the boom in the shipping industry spawned by emigrant trade and the California and Australian gold rushes, for as we have seen, there was a great impetus among shipowners during the '40's and '50's to reduce the number of crewmen on each vessel, thereby giving rise to the need for a song at lighter forms of labour. This notion, however, is contrary to what is generally envisioned as the "evolution" of the shanty. Hugill, for example, traces the development of these songs as follows:

Hauling

- 1st stage: Hey, holly, hilly, oh! Hey, ro, ho, yu! (sing-out)
- 2nd stage: Hand, hand, hand-over-hand, Divil run away with a Liverpool man, etc. (chant)

3rd stage: Cheer'ly Man, Boney, Handy, M' Boys (rather tuneless short hauls and sweating-up songs)

4th stage: Blow the Man Down, A Long Time Ago, etc. (tuneful hauling songs)

Heaving

1st stage: Yo ho, heave ho! (sing-out)

2nd stage: Round come roundy for Liverpool Town (chant)

3rd stage: Yo heave ho, round the caps'n go, etc. (rather tuneless heaving song)

4th stage: A-rovin', Shenandoah, Rio (tuneful heaving songs)⁴⁴

He does not set any temporal restrictions on these various stages, but for hauling songs, his timetable would have short-haul shanties coming before, and developing into, long-haul shanties. His premise, however, is based fundamentally on aesthetic criteria and follows a steady evolution of the shanty within the nautical context, independent of outside influence. Thus, his conclusions concerning the different uses of shanties are secondary and also slightly inconsistent, for "Cheerly Men" is a long-haul shanty. Having looked at the origin of the shanty as having been adopted from another work-song tradition, we can see that the use of long-haul shanties predating that of short-haul songs is, from a functional point of view, quite natural: at first, song accompaniment was used where it was most needed, namely,

for the heaviest tasks. Then, as the practice established itself and grew, shanties were applied to other types of work as well.

Once again, however, before we can arrive at any firm conclusions, we must address one or two questions of "alleged antiquity," for there are a couple of short-haul shanties which supposedly date from an earlier period; among them is our old friend, "Haul the Bowline." To the best of my knowledge, this shanty does not appear in print before 1869,⁴⁵ and given the previous information concerning this song, a composition date of c1850 would not be totally out of hand. The other ancient of this group is "Boney," a song recalling, in a light vein, the deeds of Napoleon. On the basis of its subject matter, this song is thought to have been adapted from broadside ballads which circulated shortly after Waterloo. Doerflinger points out, however, that street ballads concerning Napoleon are known to have been in circulation as late as thirty years after his defeat.⁴⁶

There is a second theory concerning the creation of this shanty which, if true, would also help to place its inception at a later point in the century. Hugill writes:

Some authorities seem to think that the shanty itself was originally a French one and a Frenchman, Captain Hayet, is of this opinion; and the shanty which Sailor John took and cut to his own liking was "Jean Francois de Nantes," a "chanson a hisser" or halyard song popular with Johnny Crapoo at topsails.⁴⁷

He disagrees with this allegation on the basis of certain elements contained in the French song which one stanza will serve to illustrate:

C'est Jean Francois de Nantes,

Ch. Oue! oue! Oue!

Gabier de la Fringante, Oh! mes boues!

Ch. Jean Francois!

"'Oue' (Way) and 'Oh mes boues' (Oh, me boys)," Hugill says, "are essentially English, and I feel the 'pinch' was the other way about."⁴⁸ These expressions may well be English, but they are also general features of many shanties, and the French could have easily adapted them into their own song. Furthermore, here we have a French topsail-halyard shanty, probably in existence in the second quarter of the century, that has the same chorus as the English short-haul shanty, "Boney," and I should stress that whereas solos could change daily, the choruses were not overly susceptible to alteration. The name "Jean Francois de Nantes" would have meant nothing to the English sailors, but Napoleon was symbolic of British victory over the French. Stealing a French shanty, and then altering it to ridicule its source, would have given the English seamen no small amount of pleasure. It is also possible that the deeds of the "Little Corporal" were once again brought large before the public during the mid-century period, after his nephew, Napoleon III, succeeded in

establishing the Second Empire in 1852. This argument, unfortunately, rests far too heavily on speculation, and it is only offered as possible reinforcement to the literary evidence which does indicate that short-haul shanties did not exist prior to the late 1840's.

As for the evolution of the heaving shanties, the only criticism to make is that the sophistication of a shanty's tune may be a faulty premise on which to base its age. However, the narrative capstan shanties, such as "Paddy, Get Back," "Heave Away," and "Can't You Dance the Polka," as well as the narrative versions of some hauling songs, such as "Blow the Man Down," probably date from the 1840's and '50's, for narrative development is a feature rarely, if ever, found in shanties of Black derivation or those having close associations with the cotton ports.

Not surprisingly, the heyday of the shanty coincides with that of the sailing merchant marine, and on board the hard-driven "Yanks" of the '40's and '50's and the British clippers that followed, shantying was a means to getting work completed in a fast and efficient manner. One of the main sources for shanties during this period was the songs of the music halls and the black-face minstrels. In some cases, a song would be adapted into a shanty with very little change, maybe the only alteration being the addition of a chorus, as in the above mentioned "Heave Away," which was taken from a music hall song

called "Yellow Meal," concerning an Irish emigrant's encounter with a shipping master, Mr. Tapscott.⁴⁹ Other songs had to be altered considerably before they could find a home in the deep-water environment. For example, the gold-rush shanty, "Sacramento," is alleged to have been adapted from Stephen Foster's "Camptown Races," and the only resemblances in the two songs are the "hoodah, hoodah," choruses and a rough similarity in tune.

Many other shore songs were taken to sea and used as shanties, such as "Billy Boy," "Oh, Susanna," "The Derby Ram," etc., and it was not uncommon for a shantyman, for want of solos, to borrow from the texts of any ballads he might happen to know.⁵⁰ As Hugill writes, "all was fish for the shantyman's net."⁵¹ Both the Crimean and Civil Wars contributed to the shantyman's repertoire, and in the main, these were marching songs, such as "Sebastopol," "John Brown's Body," and "Marching Through Georgia," which were adapted for use at the capstan. Out of the latter conflict also came a shanty recalling the exploits of the Confederate Frigate Alabama.

After the 1860's, however, very few shanties were created, and although seamen continued to sing at their labour right up until the last days of the American Down Easters and the British iron and steel vessels, there were several factors which contributed to making these songs less important than in former years. Many vessels in the latter decades of the century were equipped with labour,

saving devices, such as halyard winches and small-deck capstans which were used for hauling in sheets and braces. While a shantyman might have been able to sing a stanza or two of a capstan shanty at the latter, at the former a song was redundant. Also, on iron and steel vessels, the need for pumping was greatly reduced, but although this meant fewer shanties, I doubt the loss was mourned by many seamen.

But perhaps the most significant change of all was in the seamen's attitude toward the shanty, especially as service in sail came to be regarded as a stepping stone to steam. As Captain Patrick Tayler says:

...the new class of seaman, he was indifferent to all old sailor's ways.... If he came aboard of a sailing ship, it was just because he couldn't get work aboard of a steamer and he had to go somewhere to earn his bread. He was the only man who sneered and jeered at the shanties.... [I]t wasn't that he...thought they were too much trouble, but it was just that he was indifferent towards them.³²

FOOTNOTES

¹Francis Allyn Olmsted, Incidents of a Whaling Voyage (1841; rpt. Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, Inc., 1969), p. 115.

²William Main Doerflinger, Sea songs and shanties collected from Capt. Patrick Tayluer, recorded 1942, Library of Congress, Archive of Folk Culture, LWO 3493, reels 47B-50A (7-1/2 ips, 7" reel), AFS 6595b.

³Frédéric Pease Harlow, Chanteying Aboard-American Ships (Barre, Mass.: Barre Publishing Company, 1962), p. 9.

⁴Harlow, p. 29.

⁵David Bone, Capstan Bars (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1932), p. 42.

⁶Stan Hugill, Shanties from the Seven Seas (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), p. 575.

⁷From "a manuscript of the time of Henry VI in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge, R iii, 19;" as cited in Bone, pp. 147-148.

⁸The Complaynt of Scotlande (1549), ed. James A.H. Murray, Early English Text Society, Extra Series No. 17 (London: N. Trubner & Co., 1872), p. 40.

⁹Joanna C. Colcord, Roll and Go (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, Co., 1924); rpt. Songs of the American Sailormen (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1938), p. 27.

¹⁰L.G. Carr Laughton, "Shantying and Shanties," Mariner's Mirror, 9 (1923), 52.

¹¹W.B. Whall, Sea Songs and Shanties, 6th ed. (1910; rpt. Glasgow: Brown, Son & Ferguson, 1927), p. x.

¹²William Main Doerflinger, Shantymen and Shantyboys (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951), p. 92.

¹³Hugill, p. 3 and p. 18.

¹⁴The Complaynt, pp. 40-41.

¹⁵As cited in Laughton, p. 52.

¹⁶Laughton, p. 52.

¹⁷Windlass, "Falconer's Marine Dictionary, ed. William Falconer (1769); rpt. A New Universal Dictionary of the Marine, ed. William Burney (1815; rpt. New York: Library Editions, 1970).

¹⁸Laughton, p. 55.

¹⁹Stan Hugill, Shanties and Sailors' Songs (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1969), p. 34.

²⁰Hugill, Seven Seas, p. 46.

²¹As cited in Laughton, p. 68.

²² Colcord, pp. 28-29; for similar arguments see, Bone, p. 38, and Eric P. Russell and Mark Lovewell, Songs of South Street, Street of Ships (Wobdbridge, N.J.: Chanteyman Press, 1977), p. 58.

²³ "Bowline Haul," The Sailor's Word Book, ed. W.H. Smyth (London: Blackie & Son, 1867).

²⁴ William Beckford, A Descriptive Account of the Island of Jamaica (London: 1790); as cited in Roger D. Abrahams, Deep the Water, Shallow the Shore: Three Essays on Shantying in the West Indies, American Folklore Society, Memoir Series No. 60 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1974), p. 12.

²⁵ Abrahams, p. 12.

²⁶ George Little, Life on the Ocean, or Twenty Years at Sea (New York: Clark, Austin & Smith, 1852), p. 117.

²⁷ Doerflinger, Shantymen, p. 94.

²⁸ The Quid, or Tales of My Messmates (London: W. Strange, 1832); as cited in Doerflinger, Shantymen, p. 94.

²⁹ Hugill, Seven Seas, pp. 8-9.

³⁰ M.D. Hay, ed., Landsman Hay (London: Rupert Hart-Davies, 1953), p. 286, as cited in Hugill, Seven Seas, p. 8.

³¹ Hay; as cited in Hugill, Seven Seas, p. 8.

³² Hugill, Seven Seas, p. 7.

³³ Laughton, pp. 50-51.

³⁴ Gorham P. Low, The Sea Made Men, eds. Elizabeth L. Alling and Roger W. Babson (New York: Flemming H. Revell Company, 1937), p. 37.

³⁵ Cyril Hamshere, The British in the Caribbean, A Social History of the British Overseas, series ed. Peter Quennell (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1972), p. 126.

³⁶ Herbert Aptheker, ed., A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States, 6th ed. (New York: The Citadel Press, 1968), I, 221.

³⁷ Richard Henry Dana, Two Years Before the Mast: A Personal Narrative of Life at Sea (1840; rpt. Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1946), pp. 289-290.

³⁸ Dana, p. 290.

³⁹ Frederick Marryat, Diary in America (1839; rpt. ed. Jules Zanger (London: Nicholas Vane, Ltd., 1968), pp. 52-53.

⁴⁰ Olmsted, pp. 115-116.

⁴¹ Charles Nordhoff, The Merchant Vessel (1857; rpt. in Life on the Ocean (1874; rpt. New York: Library Editions, 1970), p. 20.

⁴² Nordhoff, p. 40.

⁴³ Huggill, Seven Seas, p. 17.

⁴⁴ Huggill, Seven Seas, p. 28.

⁴⁵"Sailors' Shanties and Sea Songs," Chambers's

Journal, 11 Dec. 1869, p. 795.

⁴⁶Doerflinger, Shantymen, p. 93.

⁴⁷Hugill, Seven Seas, p. 446.

⁴⁸Hugill, Seven Seas, p. 446.

⁴⁹Doerflinger, Shantymen, pp. 60-62.

⁵⁰For examples of ballad texts in shanties see,
Doerflinger, Shantymen, p. 21, and Colcord, p. 94.

⁵¹Hugill, Seven Seas, p. 575.

⁵²Doerflinger, Shanties collected from Tayluer,
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"I'LL SING YOU A SONG ALL ABOUT THE HIGH SEA":

THE CONTENT

When folklorists first began to take an interest in the shanties, most collectors felt that the only value of these songs lay in the music and that the words were of little importance. Great poetry they are not, by any means, but not all would go so far as the writer who summed up his discussion of shantying with the following statement:

It may be imagined that the specimens of sailor songs already given illustrate the highest possible achievements of man in the direction of vocal idiocy. This would be a mistake. There are songs which in elaborate unintelligibility and inanity of chorus are so appalling that it would be unkind to lay them before the reader.

Unduly harsh criticism, indeed. Still, other commentators did see the relevance of the songs of the shantyman and took a much more sympathetic approach to his words. William Meloney writes:

Often his poetic feet stumbled and his rhymes flattened out like flounders' tails, but he sang bravely and not without purpose. As a long passage wore on he would become a very personal interpreter of the crew's opinions of ship, owners, master, mates, cook, and grub--the lyrical barrister of the fore-castle's wrongs.

Never was the deep-water sailor more interesting than when, with his heart full of the wrongs done him ashore by the boarding-house masters, crimps, runners, and shoddy dealers

he cast his chanties in a narrative mood. Woe unfits most folk for work or, at least, makes it all the harder. But the chanty-man made a lay of his personal disasters and with it lightened his labours.²

As Meloney indicates, the shanties, for the most part, depict seafaring life from the point of view of the foremost hand. But to say that they reflect only the negative side of the occupation is not entirely correct. True, the seaman often portrays himself as the hapless victim of circumstances beyond his control, but in such instances his mood is usually satirical, not bitter, and he often implies and sometimes plainly states that his own weaknesses are to a large degree responsible for his situation. More precisely, the mariner tells of the peculiarities of his trade and of those traits that separate him from the "landsman," a character for whom he has little respect. At the same time, he is never boastful, nor does he try to romanticize his calling. He has his heroes, but "Billy Budds" with "Hearts of Oak" are not characters one is likely to encounter in the shanty world.

While life in the sailing merchant marine is the most common topic, there are others, and the themes found in the shanties can be divided into four general categories: life at sea, life ashore, historical, and miscellaneous. In the latter two groups, some themes are of a nautical nature, but they do not relate directly to the mariner's life style, and in some cases, the material consists merely of bits and

pieces borrowed from other types of folk and popular song which by choice or by chance found its way into the shantyman's repertoire and whose connection with seafaring is somewhat oblique.

Under the heading of "life at sea," the most common theme is that depicting the seaman's attitude toward the afterguard, and as one might expect, the shantyman is rarely complimentary. The captains are usually reminiscent of James Forbes and Robert Waterman and the mates are of the "Bull-dog" Penfield and "Cut-throat" Lawrence variety -- the buckoes:

And who d' you think is the captain of her?
Why, Bully Hayes is the captain of her.

Oh, Bully Hayes, he loves us sailors;
Yes, he does like hell and blazes!

And who d' you think is the mate aboard her?
Santander James is the mate aboard her.

Santander James, he's a rocket from hell, boys,
He'll ride you down as you ride a spanker.³

The mate and second mate belonged to Boston,
And the Captain hailed from Bangor down in Maine.

Now, the three of them were rough and tumble fighters,
When not fighting amongst themselves they turned on us.⁴

In the sheet shanties, themes are not as elaborately developed as in the songs having two solos in each stanza. The lines relating to the afterguard, for example, consist of simple statements commenting on the shortcomings, real or imagined, of the officers and idlers:

O do, me Johnny Bowker, the chief mate he's a croaker.
O do, me Johnny Bowker, the Old Man he's a soaker.
O do, me Johnny Bowker, the bosun's never sober.

.....
O do, me Johnny Bowker, the sails he is a tailor.
O do, me Johnny Bowker, the chips he ain't no sailor.⁵

This type of solo was rarely intended as a genuine protest against, or affront to, the authority of the afterguard, and consequently, officers paid little attention to such remarks. Their only concern was that the task be carried out quickly, and a shanty, regardless of its content, was the best means of assuring efficient work. Some masters even seem to have enjoyed hearing themselves described as "bullies." Bone writes:

Captain Barton was old in the ways of the sea. Knowing that he held the master-key to the situation, the key of the bread locker, he was not gravely concerned at the mutinous spirit aboard....The fumes in the fo'cas'le might gather, but no serious matters lay hidden when the business of working ship went on with a shout. He was even content to smile indulgently at personal allusions when halyards were manned and the tops'ls were spread after a gale.

Ses I who's the skipper ov that little witch?
W-ay! Hey? Blow th' man down.

Ses he Bully Barton, th' son of a gun.
Give us th' time an' we'll blow the man down.⁶

If the shantymen sang of the tyrannical nature of the afterguard, it was generally regarded as his "right to growl." However, as the shanty has it, "Growl too much and your head they'll bust" -- a shantymen could overstep his

bounds, as in the following instance given by Harlow in which the mate felt that the singer was attempting to undermine his authority:

Oh, Tommy's gone, what shall I do?
The Mate is sore, and so are you.

Oh, Tommy's gone and left us, too;
We like the mate -- Like hell we do!

This brought a burst of laughter from us all which was more than the mate could stand, for he ran across the deck shouting in an excited manner and addressing his remarks to Brooks [the shantymen]:

"See here, by God! You're not going to make me the laughing stock aboard this ship and if I hear anymore such words from you, you can stow this away in your head and that is, you and I will simply fall out...."

His face was ashen white with rage and his little gray eyes had a look that told us he was mean enough to work off any hardship on Brooks, even to keelhauling him for a second offence.⁷

The last statement is, of course, slightly hyperbolic, keelhauling having attained the status of "cruel and inhuman" in the eighteenth century.

Seamen in general, irrespective of their rank, are defined in strictly black and white terms in the shanties, that is, there are two kinds of sailors: good and bad. The former are represented in the character of "Mister Stormalong" whom Bullen describes as "...the embodiment of all the prime seamen the sailor had ever known."⁸ Oddly enough, while "Ol' Stormy" is sometimes portrayed as a foremost hand -- usually a bosun -- he is more often a

skipper, and it also appears that many seamen saw him as the personification of a captain whom they greatly admired:

Now, who Stormalong was, that's a matter I can't inform ya'. But I was with a man by the name of [Captain] Bill Gardener in a ship called the Alexander Marshall in 1875 -- we went from San Francisco to Liverpool -- and he come near...about as near bein' Old Stormalong as anybody that I know of. Anyhow, when he told you to do anything, you generally done it or he knew the reason why.

Statements such as this show that in spite of the distance between the afterguard and the crew, many officers did command a great deal of respect and admiration from those who sailed under them.

There are many variants of the shanty "Stormalong," and although most are pump and capstan songs, halyard versions have also been collected. In essence, the shanty is a dirge for a sailor who "slipped his cable off Cape Horn," and in the song, the shantyman extolls the virtues of Ol' Stormy and recalls the grandeur and grief on the occasion of his funeral. The following are samples of stanzas taken from a version collated by Hugill:

Old Stormy he is dead an' gorn [sic],
Old Stormy he is dead an' gorn,

Of all ol' skippers [the sailors] he was best,
But now he's dead an' gone to rest.

He slipped his cable off Cape Horn,
Close by the place where he was born.

.....

We'll dig his grave with a silver spade.
His shroud of finest silk was made.

We lowered him down with a golden chain,
Our eyes all dim with more than rain.

.....
Old Stormy loved a sailors' song,
His voice wuz rough an' tough an' strong.
His heart wuz good an' kind an' soft,
But now he's gone 'way up aloft.

.....
But now Ol' Stormy's day is done;
We marked the spot where he is gone.
An' so Ol' Stormy's day wuz done,
South fifty six, west fifty one.¹⁰

The reason for the apparent confusion regarding Stormalong's final resting place -- on land or at sea? -- is due to an oddity in the formulaic nature of shanty performance, and this will be discussed more completely in a subsequent chapter. In addition to the above stanzas, there is also a lyric coda to this shanty that deals with the seaman's idea of heaven on earth:

I wisht I wuz Ol' Stormy's son,
I'd build a ship o' a ton.

I'd sail this wide world round an' round,
With plenty o' money I'd be found.

.....
I'd load her up with Jamaicy rum,
An' all me shellbacks they'd have some.

.....
I'd load 'er up with grub an' gin,
An' stay in the port that we wuz in.¹¹

The antithesis of Stormalong is "Rueben Ranzo," a landlubber of the first degree who has the misfortune of being shanghied aboard a whaling ship. As Doerflinger points out,

Most merchant sailors looked askance at whaling life, with its long voyages, bad living conditions, low pay, and hazardous work in small boats. The name "Ranzo" was probably suggested by "Portugees" who shipped in American whalers, and it is no accident that Ranzo's first name suggests the farmer.¹²

When Ranzo's shortcomings are totalled up, the result is a character that brings new definition to the term "born loser". While his name may connote the farmer, his trade is given as tailor in many versions, and merchants and tradesmen of all kinds were despised by the sailor because of their unscrupulous business dealings; once shanghied, he proves totally incompetent as a seaman and is flogged and put to holystoning the decks; and in some versions, apart from his nautical failings, he is unsanitary. One might expect that such a despicable fellow would meet with little success in the realm of seafaring. Not so:

The captain's youngest daughter
Begged her father for mercy.

The captain loved his daughter.
And he heeded her cries for mercy.

He put Ranzo in the cabin,
And he taught him navigation.

Ranzo married his daughter,
And now he's skipper of a whaler.

And he's got a little Ranzo.^{12a}

Although the narrative is, in some ways, reminiscent of Märchen, Ranzo's character is such that the audience is expected neither to sympathize with his initial plight nor applaud his rise to command. In fact, the reverse is true, for the intention of the shanty is to show the second-rate nature of whalemén and the inferiority of their occupation.

The shantyman also pokes fun at the élite of the merchant marine, namely, the crack frigate, packet, and clipper fleets such as the Blackball Line, Swallowtail Line, Black Wall Frigates, etc. To the general public, such ships connoted record passages, daring captains, and all that was heroic in the mercantile service. For the seamen, however, they had slightly different connotations, and in his song, the shantyman does his level best to destroy any notions of grandeur associated with them:

On a trim Black Ball liner I first served my time.
On a trim Black Ball liner I wasted my prime.

When a trim Black Ball liner's preparing for sea,
You'd split your sides laughin', such sights you
would see.

There's tinkers and tailors, shoemakers and all,
They're all shipped for sailors on board the Black Ball.¹³

Much of the sole material for this theme alludes to the violence found aboard these vessels:

"Lay aft," is the cry, "to the break of the poop,
Or I'll help you along with the toe of my boot."

.....

"Tis larboard and starboard on deck you will sprawl,
For Kicking Jack Williams commands that Black Ball. 14

or

How d'yer know she's a Yankee clipper?
By the blood an' guts that flow from her scuppers.

.....
What d'yer think they had for dinner?
Belayin'-pin soup an' a squeeze through the wringer. 15

A vessel's seaworthiness, or rather lack of it, is usually pointed out by comparing her to Noah's Ark or some other relic of the distant past:

Her fo'c'sle was low and her poop was so high,
.....

That she looked just like a Dutch galley-old-yacht. 16

However, more direct comments on a vessel's state of repair are also found, as in the oft used couplet,

Her sails were old, her timbers rotten, 17
His charts the skipper had long forgotten.

Of the many privations with which the foremast hands had to contend, the ones most frequently alluded to in the shanties, in addition to severe discipline, are inadequate victuals and exposure to foul weather. The seaman's opinion of the food served aboard is rarely expressed in the most tasteful of terms, so to speak:

What d'yer think they had for breakfast?
Why, the starboard side o' an ol' sou'wester. 18

The fare at other meals is scarcely an improvement:

Mosquito's hearts and sandflies' livers
 Monkey's nuts and baboon's liver
 'Twas water soup but slightly thinner
 Nanny goat's horns and a donkey's rudder
 Dandy funk and centipede's whiskers.¹⁹

Similarly, lines from the poem "The Sailor's Grace" are occasionally adapted by the shantyman for use as solo material. The "old horse" referred to in the verse is the nautical slang for salt pork and beef which constituted a significant part of the seaman's diet:

"Old horse! old horse, what brought you here?"
 --"From Sacarap to Portland pier
 I've carted stone this many a year;
 Till, killed by blows and sore abuse,
 They salted me down for sailors' use.
 The sailors they do me despise;
 They turn me over and damn my eyes;
 Cut off my meat, and pick my bones,
 And pitch the rest to Davy Jones."²⁰

The weather was always a crucial factor in determining the relative ease of a voyage, and naturally, it is not neglected in the shanties. While straightforward references to gales, high seas, and "shipping it green" are found in many texts, the most common manner in which the shantyman depicts harsh sailing conditions is simply through references to Cape Horn, or "Cape Stiff" as it was known to the sailors:

We're bound away around Cape Horn,
 We wisht ter hell we'd niver bin born.

Around Cape Stiff [that Cape] we all must go,
Around Cape Stiff through ice an' snow.

Me boots an' clothes are all in pawn,
An' it's bleedin' draughty around Cape Horn. 21

Cape Horn, in fact, is sort of an instant metaphor for a hard passage and is often combined with several of the more unpleasant aspects of seafaring life when the shantyman wishes to portray as severe a situation as possible:

In a red-hot Yank Bound around Cape Horn,
And all my clothes they were in pawn,

Bound around Cape Horn and up to Callao
and then load 'petre' fer Liverpool. 22

Being songs used primarily to accompany shipboard work, the shanties naturally embody many lines and stanzas dealing with the various activities involved, and the most common of these elements are the phrases encouraging the men to work harder, as in the following solos from Richard Maitland's version of the halyard shanty, "So Handy":

Hoist her up from down below.
We'll hoist her up through frost and snow.

We'll hoist her up from down below.
Oh, we'll hoist her up and show her clew.

One more pull and that will do.
Oh, we'll sing a song to make her go.

Now it's growl you may but go you must;
Growl too much and your head they'll bust!

Now, one more pull and then belay,
And another long pull and we'll call it a day. 23

Similar lines are also found in the short-haul shanties:

Haul on th' bowlin', Th' ship she is a-rollin',
O-haul on the' bowlin', We'll either break or bend it.
O-haul on th' bowlin', We're men enough to mend it.
O-haul on th' bowlin', Another pull t'gether.
O-haul on th' bowlin', And burst th' chafin' leather. 24

While solos of this kind are found in a great many shanty texts, only in a few do they form the central theme, for they were most commonly used as a convenient means of "stringing-out" a song if the shantyman found that his "improvisational" abilities were being overly taxed. Also, while such lines and stanzas occasionally appear in the texts of heaving shanties, they are far more prevalent in hauling songs, and the reason for this is probably due to the fact that the long-haul and short-haul shanties were more integrally tied to the actual work process than were their counterparts used at the windlass or capstan.

Perhaps the most interesting components of the work themes are the so-called "hinting" lines. Aboard ship, the foremast hand was, of course, never consulted on matters of seamanship, and for a crew member to offer advice was an unthinkable breach of discipline. The shantyman, however, was generally a seaman of considerable skill and experience, and in some instances, a better sailor than those from whom he took orders. While he could not convey his opinions in an outright manner, in his solos

...he would often convey a sailing hint to a young or inexperienced officer. The line 'an'

burst th' chafin' leather' is an intimation that the chantyman considers the sheet is hard home and that another drag will bind the chafing piece on the foot of the main-sail against the forward shrouds, to the destruction of the sail.²⁵

A less subtle means of saying precisely the same thing can be noted in the following couplet which is found in many long-haul shanty texts:

I thought I heard the first mate say,
"Give one more pull, and then belay."²⁶

Similarly, one often encounters lines such as, "Hey-ho, rock 'n' shake her," and Hugill states that this is a hint to the helmsman to "luff" the ship, that is, bring her head slightly into the wind, thereby reducing the pressure on the sails and making the task of hauling easier.²⁷ How often such hints were taken, he does not say.

The various ports that the seaman visited and the trades in which he was engaged are frequently referred to in the shanties, and a common solo pattern for this theme consists of the identification of a port or region in the first solo and a comment upon the place in the second:

Wuz ye ever in Québec,
Launchin' timber on the deck?

Wuz ye ever in Mobile Bay,
Screwin' cotton on a summer's day?

Wuz ye ever off Cape Horn,
Where the weather's niver warm?²⁸

In these particular stanzas, there is a direct connection between the port and the cargo obtained there, or, in the case of the last couplet, between the region and the sailing conditions. Not all stanzas based on this pattern, however, are work-related, for different places were famous for different things:

Wuz ye ever in Bombay,
Drinkin' coffee an' bohay?

Wuz ye ever in Vallipo [Valparaiso],
Where the gals put up a show?29

Before moving from the themes depicting the sailor's life at sea to those concerning his adventures ashore, we should first look at the themes dealing with an element that was common to both contexts -- alcohol. Needless to say, this is a subject dear to the sailor's heart, and there are a number of shanties that centre on this theme, such as, "The Drunken Sailor," "Whiskey Johnny," and "The Sailor Likes his Bottle-O," in which the shantyman also sings of his ship-mates' appreciation for tobacco, fighting, singing, and more Rabelaisian delights. While the shantyman makes no attempt to conceal his desire for the occasional tot, he does portray liquor as both a blessing and a curse:

There was a limejuice skipper of the name of Hogg,
Once tried to stop his sailor's grog,

This made the crew so weak and slack,
That the helmsman caught her flat aback.

An' ever after so they say,
That crew got grog three times a day. 30

As opposed to:

Whiskey made me mammy cry,
Whiskey closed me stabbud eye.

Whiskey killed me poor ol' Dad,
Whiskey druv me mother mad.

Whiskey made me pawn me cloes, 31
Whiskey gave me this red nose.

Despite such tales of woe, it is doubtful whether many seamen were ever won over to the cause of temperance by them, for in the above text the shantyman also sings:

Whiskey gave me many a sigh,
But I'll swig whiskey till I die.

On board ship, the order most welcomed by the foremast hands was to "splice the main-brace," for while this appears to be work-related, it actually indicates that every man is to receive a small drink of rum or whiskey courtesy of the skipper. Some captains were vehemently opposed to this custom, while others issued "grog" only after a bit of severe weather. Some captains, on the other hand, took a kindlier approach to their crews and rewarded them frequently with a ration of liquor. Such a ration, however, was not the sailor's statutory right, and he could not demand it. But if the "Old Man" was in ear-shot, there was nothing to stop the shantyman from dropping the odd hint:

I think I heard our Old Man say,
"I'll treat my men in a decent way."

"I'll treat my men in a decent way;
I'll grog them all three times a day."³²

Liquor also plays a role in some of the narrative songs telling of the sailor's adventures ashore. The most common scenario deals with the practice of "shanghaiing," whereby a seamen is given liquor by a crimp or boarding master until he has drunk himself into a state of unconsciousness, and then he is placed on board a "blood-boat" or an unseaworthy vessel. This theme figures prominently in shanties such as "Larry Marr," and some versions of "Whiskey Johnny." In other instances, the villain is a prostitute who robs the sailor while he is asleep, and this pattern can be found in shanties such as "Can't They Dance the Polka," and "Maggie May."

As one might expect, the most prominent theme in songs relating to the sailor's life ashore is women, and while the shantyman occasionally sings of his "loves" in a sentimental, romantic mood, his normal treatment tends to be along seedier lines. The women that inhabit the shanty world are most often of a meretricious nature, and like other species of "landsharks," they only cater to the sailor for his money. At the same time, the seaman is not always a victim when cast in the role of "lover," for all he seeks in a woman is an outlet for his lust, and friendship, compassion, understanding, and the nobler aspects of romance are not

part of the bargain; so to speak. In fact, in the shantyman's opinion, permanent relationships are best avoided altogether:

Oh, once in life I married a wife,
And, damn her, she was lazy,
And wouldn't stay at home of nights
- Which damn near set me crazy.

She stayed out all night, Oh hell! what a sight,
And where do you think I found her?
Behind the pump, the story goes,
With forty men around her.³³

As these stanzas indicate, the shantyman has few misgivings about boasting the extent of his carnal knowledge, which is hardly surprising given that the sailor's affinity for profanity and vulgarity is proverbial. Sociologists speak of this tendency, which is held to be characteristic of most all-male societies, as functioning as a "safety valve," in that it provides an outlet for tension. Knut Weibust adds that "Profanity reflects also social values such as strength, masculinity and freedom from the restraint of society at large."³⁴ The obscenity of the shanties is discussed by virtually every writer on the subject, and although some try to play the matter down, most acknowledge that they have had to "camouflage" many of their texts in the interest of decency. Most of the writers in the former group are professional or amateur folklorists who had no actual experience in the nautical context, and thus, one might imagine that much of the camouflaging was done by the shantymen in the recording context, for their variable singing style would have made such alterations a fairly

simple undertaking. This relationship between formulaic composition and obscenity shall be touched on briefly in a subsequent chapter. Perhaps the most forthright spokesman for the latter camp is Capt. Whall, who states that the men serving on cargo vessels "never heard a decent shanty."³⁵ He adds that men serving on passenger ships were ordered to refrain from including bawdy themes in their songs, but "...when the passengers were landed, and this prohibition was removed, the notorious 'Hog-Eye Man' at once made its appearance."

Needless to say, printed collections are completely free of obscenities. Mild expletives, such as "damn," "bloody," and "blasted," are found in abundance, but one would imagine that in the original context much harsher words were used. Most field recordings, at least those I have listened to, would also be acceptable to even the most puritanical audiences, but there are a few instances where shantymen have been persuaded to discard their inhibitions in front of a microphone. The lines that I have encountered are, by today's standards, quite tame for the most part and range in intensity from the mundane, as in Hugill's poorly camouflaged version of the chorus of "Sacramento,"

Blow, boys, blow for Californi-O,
There's plenty o' grass, to wipe yer moustache,
On the banks of the Sacramento.³⁶

to relatively forthright allusions to the female genitalia:

Aw, Sally Brown, well, I loves your daughter,
Aw, Sally Brown, oh, I love the place you make
your water.³⁷

When I laid my hand upon her snatch,
She said, "Young man, that is my main hatch."³⁸

When I laid my hand upon her quim,
Said she, "For Chris' sake, shove it in!"³⁹

Allusions to sodomy and sexual activities not generally regarded as being socially acceptable, such as masturbation and homosexuality, are normally made with reference to the ship's officers and idlers, as in the following camouflaged elements given by Lloyd and Huggill:

Sally in the garden sifting sand,
Bosun watching with his (cap) in his hand.⁴⁰

I put me fist in the mate's ear'ole,
The mate he cried, "God bless my soul,
Take it out! Take it out! Take it out! Take it out!

So I took me fist from the chief mate's ear
The mate he cried, "Why that's darn queer,
Put it back! Put it back! Put it back! Put it back!"⁴¹

The sexual preference of the common sailor is, for lack of a better word, predictable, though he sometimes boasts of remarkable, almost "miraculous," prowess:

I laid her on her snow white bed,
And I fucked her there 'til she was dead.

And when the bell tolled out her name,
I fucked her back to life again.⁴²

The most common pattern used for the exposition of sexual motifs is an element that has been dubbed the "anatomical progression,"⁴³ and with this pattern, the

shantyman develops his song by placing his hand on different parts of a woman's body in the first solo line and noting her response in the second:

I put me arm around her waist,
Sez she, 'Young man, yer in great haste!'

I put me hand upon her knee,
Sez she, 'Young man, yer rather free!'

I put me hand upon her thigh,
Sez she, 'Young man, yer rather high!'⁴⁴

This progression is most commonly associated with the pumping shanty, "A-rovin'," but it is also found in many, many other songs.

While it would be rather difficult to dispute the fact that the material in this sequence is overtly sexual, some shantymen maintain that it has broader implications. Patrick Tayluer, for example, states:

...women or anybody else may think it's a smutty song, but it's not. It's just the way the sailors put every particle of the ship into the song and made it appear that it was a woman.⁴⁵

As in maritime folklore, in general, the assimilation of ships and women is common in the shanties; the following description of a vessel under full sail, for example, is quite probably intended to be representative of a woman making love:

She strained her bustle and she dipped her nose!⁴⁶

In exactly the same manner, the shantyman also uses nautical motifs as metaphors for women (In the singing style of this shantyman, solos are normally repeated twice in each stanza):

Now, as I was a-strollin' down Ratcliffe Highway,
As I went a-roving down Ratcliffe Highway,

A flash looking packet I chanced for to see.

She was bowling along with her waind (sic) blowing
free,

She clewed up her courses and waited for me.

She was round in the counter and bluff in the bow.⁴⁷

Some of the variations on this theme are rather obscure, and in order to understand them, one must have a knowledge of restricted nautical jargon. The following stanza, for example makes no apparent sense to the uninitiated landsman:

I climbed up three steps to a little back room.⁴⁸
She lay on the bed and she turned up her broom.

The last sentence of the second line makes reference to the fact that the woman in question is a prostitute and is derived from the catch phrase, "She carries the broom up (at the masthead)." This expression is itself derived from the nineteenth century practice of raising a broom to the main-truck of a sailing vessel to indicate that she has been sold.⁴⁹

While the shantyman's normal view of women is that they are "sex objects," he occasionally strives for a more delicate touch. At the same time, the extent to which the more tender appraisals of the opposite sex are carried differs from singer to singer. In Richard Maitland's version of "A-rovin'," for example, the Dutch girl is described as follows:

Her eyes were like twin stars at night.
And her cheeks they rivalled the roses red.⁵⁰

However, no panderer to schmaltz is our Mr. Maitland, for he very quickly makes his intentions perfectly clear:

This last six months I've been to sea,
And boys, this maid looked good to me.

Patrick Taylor, on the other hand, while perfectly capable of expounding on lustier themes, often betrays himself as being a true romantic, as in his version of "Rio Grande":

"May I come with you, my pretty maid?"

"You can please yourself, young man," she did say.

Now, when I can come to you with open arms,

God bless you, may I only hope for your hand.

Now, there is a thing that I would love to say.

When I return, oh, may I have your hand?⁵¹

Stanzas such as these, however, are far from common in the shanties, and the more ribald elements described before

are much more indicative of the shantyman's general approach to amorous relationships.

Women were not, of course, the seaman's only contact ashore, and just as at sea, there were authoritarian figures on land as well. In the shanties, the police, oddly enough, are rarely mentioned in this context, and the only instance of note in which a constable plays a role is in one of the narrative patterns to the shanty, "Blow the Man Down." In this version, a policeman falsely accuses a sailor of theft with the following result:

They gave me six months in Liverpool town
For kicking a p'liceman and blowing him down. 52

Most of the longshore villains are boarding house masters, crimps, and shipping masters, and the shanties dealing with these characters are, for the most part, narrative in style, usually adapted from forebitters, and tell of the devious manner in which these men conducted their business. The themes relating to the practice of shanghaiing have already been mentioned, but there are also instances where the evils of the boarding house system are commented upon in a more general manner. One solo pattern to the shanty, "Homeward Bound," depicts a sailor's stay at one of these establishments and tells of how the landlord's attitude changes in direct relation to the seaman's financial situation:

Then we'll go up to the Dog and the Bell,
And the landlord he'll come in with his face
all in smiles,

Saying, "Drink up, Jack, for its worth your while!"
But when your money is all gone and spent,

There's none to be borrowed nor none to be lent.
Then you'll see him come in with a frown,

And then you'll hear him to the other man say,
"Get up there, Jack, and let John sit down!"

When your pocketbook's full your name it is John,⁵³
But when you are broke then your name it is Jack.

In contrast to the shantyman's normally comic approach to the less desirable aspects of his life-style, the tenor of this particular song is rather serious, and, indeed, the shantyman's indignation appears to be genuine. The singer of this song, Richard Maitland once remarked to a collector:

Now, this...song, it's very...it's touching in one sense of the word, because where it says, "Get up, Jack, and let John sit down," that's very popular amongst the people. As long as you got money in your pocket, it's a well known fact that everybody's showin' you respect, but when you're broke, nobody wants to know anything about you.⁵⁴

This sentiment, though not universal in songs concerning this theme, indicates perhaps that the sailor had different opinions of those who held authority over him at sea and those who controlled his life ashore. As songs such as "Stormalong" show, the sailor's resentment of a poor or brutal afterguard was often tempered by his respect for a good one. Boarding masters, on the other hand, and other longshore villains as well, neither warranted nor received such respect. Still, there are some shanties that relate the activities of boarding masters in a lighter vein. Per-

haps the best known is the capstan shanty, "Paddy West," which tells of the various methods used by the title character to artificially upgrade the abilities of the men who stayed at his house:

Now he axed me if I had ever been to sea,
 I told him not till that morn;
 'Well, be Jesus,' says he, 'a sailor ye'll be,
 From the hour that yiz wuz born;
 Just walk into the parlour, walk around the ol'
 cow horn,
 An' tell the mate that ye have been, oh, three
 times round the Horn!'

When I got into ol' Paddy West's house,
 The wind began to blow;
 He sent me up to the lumber-room,
 The fore-royal for to stow;
 When I climbed up to the attic, no fore-royal
 could I find,
 So I jumped upon the window sill and furled
 the winder-blind.⁵⁵

The function of the crimp and the shipping master was one and the same, to secure crews, but their methods were slightly different. The crimp's success lay in his ability to subdue the sailor, usually with liquor but occasionally through force, and then place him aboard a vessel unaware of the situation. The shipping master, on the other hand, was a government official and could not resort to such blatant treachery. He did, however, have his methods of serving the greater interest of the merchant marine and, of course, himself. Before each voyage, the sailors were brought before him to sign the Articles of Agreement, which, by law, had to include the destination of the vessel or give an indication of the duration of the

voyage.⁵⁶ By placing a greater amount of emphasis on the latter condition, particularly if he were sufficiently bribed by a captain to do so, the shipping master could quite easily misrepresent the nature of the voyage to the sailors:

There was a Yankee ship a-laying in the basin.
Shipping master told me she was going to New York!

.....
When the pilot left the ship the captain told us
We were bound around Cape Horn to Callao!⁵⁷

A similar though less plausible deception can be noted in a solo pattern commonly found in the shanty, "Heave Away." In this version of the shanty, which was adapted from a music-hall piece entitled, "Yellow Meal," a shipping agent informs a prospective emigrant that the ship in which she is to sail is loading "a thousand bags of mail," thereby giving the impression that the vessel is a fast mail packet. In actual fact, the substance being placed on board is "meal" -- pronounced "mal" in the Irish Brogue -- which constituted the staple food provided for steerage passengers.

The themes covered so far are those relating more or less directly to the traditional community in which the sailors lived, and as Doerflinger states, "The songs that the sailing-ship men composed and handed on by word of mouth told the inside story of sea life candidly, as the 'common sailor' lived it."⁵⁸ The cultural significance of these themes is that they provide a coherent and consistent image

of the sailor's relationship with his environment, and thus, the function of group unification is also a vital part of the shanties. On board ship, the afterguard and those serving before the mast were separated officially, socially and spatially; so too are they aesthetically separated in the shanties. But even greater is the distance between the sailor and the landsman, and when the shantyman sings of tinkers n' tailors, shoemakers and all" shipping as prime seamen, one must remember that these are the much despised merchants and tradesmen who handed the sailors exaggerated bills on payday, and their fate at the hands of a hard-nosed Blackball skipper is not a lamentable event. But if occupations can be spoken of in terms of opposites, then the antithesis of the mariner is the farmer: one firmly attached to the sea, the other inseparable from the land. Yet the farmer is rarely the subject of abuse in the shanties. Occasionally he is caught up in the crimp's net and sent to sea, and thus his unseaman-like qualities are recognized, but in such cases, the villain is the crimp, and the farmer, like the sailor, is a victim. This, perhaps, serves to show that while all landsmen were held in a certain degree of contempt by the seaman, the ones he truly resented were those who cheated him of his hard-earned wages and made his life ashore uncomfortable and uncertain: the merchants, the prostitutes, the boarding masters, the crimps, and, as dishonest intermediaries between life on land and life at sea, the shipping masters.

Describing the next group of songs as "historical" may be something of a misnomer, for detailed fact is by and large nonexistent in these shanties. The group is named so only because the shanties in question allude to people, things, places, and events of historical significance. Many of the songs in this group were adapted more or less intact from other types of folksong, primarily for use at the capstan. Among these are ballads, both Child and broadside, such as "The Golden Vanity" (Child 286) and "Captain Kidd," as well as a number of marching songs that came out of the various wars of the last century, such as "John Brown's Body," "Marching through Georgia," "Sebastopol," and "We Are Marching to Pretoria." For the present, however, we shall confine our discussion to the three shanties that are rarely, if ever, excluded from shanty collections on the grounds of "authenticity." These are "Boney," "Santy Ana," and "The Alabama."

The various hypotheses concerning the sailor's appreciation for a shanty about Napoleon have been covered elsewhere, but a word or two about his treatment of the French dictator would, perhaps, not go amiss. The shanty is not, of course, intended to be a serious expose of the life and times of Bonaparte, and Maitland points out that "On British ships...this was usually sung in a sort of jeering tone -- as you know, the British and the French never did get on well together!"⁵⁹ Texts of this shanty invariably include the same type of material, although some shantymen go into

greater detail than others. The common elements are references to battles with the Austrians, the "Rooshians," and the "Prooshians," the destruction of Moscow, Waterloo and allusions to the Duke of Wellington, and Napoleon's exile to St. Helena. Essentially, the song is historically accurate, but the overall sentiment is derisive and sarcastic:

Boney was a warrior,
A reg'lar bull and tarrier,

He beat the Austrians and Rooshians,
The Portugees (sic) and Prooshians.

Boney went to school in France.
He learned to make the Prooshians dance.

.....
Oh, Boney came to Waterloo,
And there he met his Waterloo!

He met the Duke of Wellington,
He was taken prisoner.

He was sent to Saint Helena's isle,
And there to pine away and die.⁶⁰

The song, "Santy Ana," commemorates the famous Mexican general of approximately the same name and his battles against the United States general, Zachary Taylor. The song is peculiar, though, for the identity of the victor changes with different shantymen. Most American versions credit Taylor with the victory, which is historically accurate, but Hugill states that many British shantymen had it the other way around. This, he suggests, indicates that the shantymen were not concerned so much with historical fact.

as with national pride or, as the case may be, prejudice.

"Britishers, it would appear, favoured the cause of the Mexicans."⁶¹ As one can see from the following text, this song, though not quite so derisive as "Boney," is not intended to provide a serious evaluation of the U.S.-Mexican War. The inference that battles are decided by the cowardice of the losing side is common to most versions:

Santy Ana gained the day,
Santy Ana gained the day,

And General Taylor run away,
And Santy lost his leg that day.

Oh, Santy Ana gained his name,
And Santy Ana fought for fame.

He fought one day and run away,
But General Taylor...[Untelligible].

'Twas at the Battle of Molenó (sic) del Rey
That Santy lost his life that day.⁶²

Hugill states that in addition to this fundamental core of the song, a eulogy for Santa Ana, modelled after that given to "Stormalong," was often included.

Of the three historical shanties, "The Alabama" is the most serious in tenor, which is not surprising given the shantyman's understandable reverence for nautical matters. Furthermore, in contrast to the superficial handling of events in "Boney" and "Santy Ana," exposition in this shanty is quite detailed. The first "scene" in one of Maitland's versions, for example, includes a number of particulars relating to the construction of the vessel, such as her number on the builder's registry and the financing of the

venture, which are not really necessary to the narrative:

In eighteen hundred and sixty-one,
The Alabama's keel was laid,

'Twas laid in the yard of Johnathan Laird
At the town of Birkenhead.

At first she was called the "Two-ninety-two,"
For the merchants of the city of Liverpool

Put up the money to build the ship,
In hopes of driving the commerce from the sea. ⁶³

The shantyman's desire for detail in this song again points to his inherent respect for his occupational environment. He does not necessarily believe that the events surrounding the Alabama are of greater significance than the deeds of Bonaparte or Santa Ana, nor does the Alabama, as an historical figure, have a greater symbolic value for him than the other two, for judging by the number of times each of these songs has been collected and printed, "Boney" and "Santy Ana" are more popular. But when nautical subjects are the focus of attention, he does tend to strive for a greater degree of precision and, in a sense, reality in his songs.

The historical shanties, then, would appear to owe much of their popularity to reasons other than the actual historical significance of the personages or events they commemorate. Rather, the various figures have a symbolic value that appeals to the shantyman's sense of national pride. "Boney" is symbolic of English victory over the French; "Santy Ana," while not directly involving the English and Americans as combatants, underlines the Anglo-American

rivalry by virtue of English sympathy for the Mexican cause. This rivalry is thrown into greater prominence in "The Alabama," which, of course, deals with England's overt support of the Confederate forces during the American Civil War. Not surprisingly, of the three sources that have printed this shanty, two, Colcord⁶⁴ and Doerflinger,⁶⁵ are American. The third collector to print a text of this song is Huggill, and his text came not from one of his many British informants, but from a woman in New Zealand whose husband had served on board the Alabama.⁶⁶

The miscellaneous themes actually form a relatively small portion of the material found in the shanties, but they are nonetheless interesting, for they underline the myriad of sources and influences manifested in this truly eclectic tradition. Included in this category are a couple of nautical themes that do not pertain directly to the mariner's life-style, and perhaps the most common deals with animals at sea. A case in point is the nautical version of "The Derby Ram," in which the incredible creature is shanghaied and, once at sea, assumes the different roles of seaman, mate, and captain. A virtually identical scenario is found in "The Song of the Fishes," in which various denizens of the deep come on board a ship and either assume the role of one of the ship's company or perform some task related to the working of the vessel:

Oh, first came the herring, sayin', 'I'm
King o' the Seas',

He jumped on the poop: 'Oh, the Capen
I'll be!'

Then next came the hake, he wuz black as a rook,
Sez he, 'I'm no sailor, I'll ship as the cook.'

Then came the eel with his slippery tail,
He climbed up aloft an' he cast off each sail. 67

Commenting on the performance of this shanty, Harlow writes:

It was very often sung as a "rounder", in which every man selected a fish and sang his solo in turn, as a chanteyman. If he wasn't equal to something original, you might hear words as follows:

The salmon comes next and I'm here ríght on time,
But hell and damnation! I can't make a rhyme. 68

Another of the shantyman's "fish stories" is "The Codfish Shanty," which deals with some rather interesting uses of fish products for purposes other than the conventional food-stuff:

Down-east gals ain't got no combs,
They comb their hair wí' a whale-fish bone,

Yankee gals don't sleep on beds,
They go to sleep on codfish's heads, 69

The locales generally referred to in this shanty are New England ports, such as Gloucester, Cape Cod, and Nantucket, and other prominent fishing communities, for the humor in the song lies in poking fun at places where the fishing industry is of such importance that the community is overwhelmed by

fish. Hugill states that many of the variations on this theme are decidedly obscene, but he does a better job of "camouflaging" his version of this song than in other instances, and consequently, the precise nature of the obscenity cannot be exemplified. The mind boggles at what could be done to or with a codfish.

Other topics included in the miscellaneous category have little to do with either the sea or the mariner's occupation and are primarily of interest as evidence of the multiplicity of influences on this tradition. Some of these themes were derived from traditional Black folksong, and these elements, as we shall see, provide the strongest evidence for the "oral" origins of the shanties. In some songs, such as "Lowlands" and "Roll the Cotton Down," the material relates directly to the cotton industry, which as was noted earlier, had a profound influence on the "shanty-man's art" and may well have been largely responsible for the inception of the tradition. The influence of Black folksong can also be noted in songs such as "Hanging Johnny" and "Let the Bulbine Run," and one can even note traces of spirituals in the shanties, as in the walkaway song, "We'll Roll the Golden Chariot Along." Then there are the songs taken from the music hall and the black-face minstrel stage, and at least one researcher, Doerflinger, has placed an enormous amount of weight on the influence of these popular songs on the shanties.⁷⁰ Among the songs allegedly derived from these sources are "The Camptown

Races," "Dance the Boatman," "De History ob de World," "Dixie," and "The Drummer and the Cook." Lastly, there are the songs derived from Anglo-American folk and popular song in general, such as "Billy Boy," "The Farmer's Daughter," and "Shenandoah." The shantyman often added nautical elements to these songs or parodied them, but in many instances the versions obtained from sailors differ very little from those collected from shore sources.

These, then, are the different types of themes on which the shantyman concentrated when he performed for his shipmates as they carried out their duties, and, obviously, Hugill's quip that "all was fish for the shantyman's net"⁷¹ is true. From a functional standpoint, an analysis of these themes bears relevance to the diversionary purpose of the shanties, and one can see from the examples included in this discussion that humor, particularly obscene humor, is of paramount importance, though the shantyman is perfectly capable, as Meloney points out, of making "a lay of his personal disasters."⁷² From a cultural point of view, on the other hand, the most important themes, as well as the most prevalent, are those dealing with the mariner's way of life and his outlook on his environment. David Buchan states that many forms of folksong grow "organically out of a certain set of social conditions," and he points out that folksong of the nineteenth century must be analyzed in the light of the many social changes brought about by the industrial revolution and the education of the lower classes.

In contrasting the classical Ballad and the bothy ballad as reflections of their respective societies, he writes:

...the psychological function of the ballad for the folk had changed. The oral ballad was distanced from everyday life, and was set in a glamorized and unknown outside world, but by the nineteenth century the outside world was no longer unknown, for it impinged upon almost every aspect of their daily life. Instead of escaping from the hard realities of everyday life by singing about another life, the ballad singer relieved his feelings by commenting directly and sardonically on the life he led, day in, day out.⁷³

The songs of the nineteenth century mariner, as Buchan allows, reflect this "new social pattern," and instead of a distancing from reality, there is in the shanties a marked social distancing; a constant juxtaposition of the common sailor with the hierarchy of the merchant marine and also of seafarers with landmen, particularly those who dominated the sailor's life. By keeping these distinctions clear, the shantyman manages to sing in a forthright manner of the evils and misfortunes inherent in his occupation and, at the same time, foster his own self-respect by showing that he has the ability to cope with these problems. On the other hand, the traits of the foremast hand that might be spurned by society at large, such as an overfondness for liquor and prostitutes, and a generally unstable life-style, are viewed as positive attributes in this context, in spite of the fact that they can, of course, be translated as signifying social problems such as alcoholism, venereal disease, broken

homes, and unrealized ambition. This facet of the shanties, as Weibust says of the sailor's penchant for swearing, demonstrates that "freedom from the restraint of society"⁷⁴ is highly valued in this traditional community, and thus, while the seamen were conscious of, and to some extent resentful of, their class status within society, they were not altogether dissatisfied with the dissociation from that society afforded them by their occupation.

There is one final cultural aspect reflected in the shanties that is often intimated by writers on the subject but rarely stated directly, and that is the sailor's role as a traveller and, in a sense, his lack of nationality. Both of these qualities are pointed out quite blantly in shanty lyrics when the shantyman sings of the many places he visits or makes references to the "Dutchmen," "Finns," "Dagos," "Yankees," "Limeys," and "Bluenosers" that comprise the crew of his vessel. But they are also reflected in the tradition as a whole, simply by virtue of the many sources and influences manifested in it. As a largely Anglo-American tradition adapted from Black folksong, the shanties exhibit primarily the influences of these races, and in making this statement, I am using the term "Anglo," quite presumptuously perhaps, to refer to all the nations of the British Isles. The contributions of other nations are less noticeable, probably due to language barriers, but nonetheless real, as, for example, the adaptation of "Boney" from the French shanty, "Jean Francois de Nantes," and in the

shantyman's occasional attempts to mimic foreign accents, as in the pumping shanty, "Ja, Ja, Ja." Musically, the international nature of the shanties is even stronger, for Hugill states that "...new shanties would be made up from scraps of tunes heard in Oriental and Latin ports..."⁷⁵. To this we must also add that the shanties exhibit the influence of almost every type of Anglo-American folk and popular song known in the last century. Folksongs, of course, are noted for the ease with which they cross national and linguistic borders, but in an age that predates Marshall McLuhan's "global village," the shanties truly represent an eclectic and, indeed, cosmopolitan tradition.

FOOTNOTES

...194.

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⁴Alan Lomax, Sea songs and shanties collected from Richard Maitland, recorded May, 1939, Library of Congress, Archive of Folk Culture, LWO 4872, reels 161B-162B (7 1/2 ips, "7" reel), AFS 2518a.

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⁶David Bone, Capstan Bars (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1932), pp. 75-76.

⁷Frederick Pease Harlow, The Making of a Sailor, or Sea Life Aboard a Yankee Square-Rigger, Marine Research Society, No. 17 (Salem, Mass.: Marine Research Society, 1928), p. 259.

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- 25 Bone, p. 39.
- 26 Colcord, p. 76.
- 27 Hugill, p. 29.
- 28 Hugill, p. 145.

29 Hugill, p. 145.

30 Hugill, p. 277.

31 Hugill, p. 275.

32 Doerflinger, p. 15.

33 Harlow, p. 272.

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38 Doerflinger, shanties collected from Tayluer, AFS 6585a.

39 Robert Winslow Gordon, Shanties collected from various singers in California, recorded 1920-23, Library of Congress, Archive of Folk Culture, LWO 9347, reels 1, 2, 3, 16, & 18 (7 1/2 ips, 7" reel), AFS 18,996, cylinder 122; copies housed in Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive, MUNFLA 78-240, tape no. P4168.

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⁵⁷Doerflinger, Shantymen, p. 55.

⁵⁸William Main Doerflinger, "The Songs that Sailors Sang," The American Mercury, 52 (1941), 593.

⁵⁹Doerflinger, Shantymen, pp. 5-6.

⁶⁰Doerflinger, Shantymen, p. 6.

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⁶³Doerflinger, Shantymen, p. 36.

⁶⁴Colcord, p. 65.

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⁷⁵Hugill, p. 19.

Chapter V

"I THOUGHT I HEARD THE OLD MAN SAY":

ORAL VERSUS VERBAL TRADITION

In our society, we tend to assume that the presentation of a work in the performing arts involves three separate stages: composition, rehearsal, and performance. Exceptions can, of course, be noted, but generally the rule holds. In an "oral" society, which it will suffice for the moment to define as a non-literate one, a different state of affairs exists altogether, and while acts analogous to the above do occur, their manifestation is somewhat different from that to which we are accustomed. As Albert Lord puts it:

An oral poem is not composed for but in performance.... Singer, performer, composer, and poet are all one under different aspects but at the same time. Singing, performing, composing are all facets of the same act.

This is not to say that a new work is created in every performance; on the contrary, the pieces are all traditional and well known to audience and performer alike. But different performances of a single song, poem, tale, etc., render texts that vary, sometimes considerably.

The reason for this is that the non-literate performer does not memorize the words to a text and then simply repeat them in the presence of an audience. Instead, he has at his disposal a number of devices that enable him to re-

construct works of considerable length in performance without the benefit of rote memorization. In some instances, this is accomplished within the confines of a very strict metrical framework.

Academic research into this method of performance was first undertaken on a large scale during the nineteen twenties and thirties by classicist Milman Parry, whose objective was to prove that the Homeric poems were part of an oral tradition and not, as had previously been supposed, the work of a literate man. In his first major work on the subject, L'Épithète traditionnelle dans Homère: Essai sur un problème de style homérique, Parry closely examines the style of Homeric verse and pays particular attention to the function of the oft-repeated epithets for the principal characters. He concludes that such phrases, which he terms "formulas," are ready-made units of speech that the bard draws upon to construct his verses, thereby greatly simplifying the task of composing in performance. In Parry's view, formulas are the cornerstones of oral composition.

In order to field test his theory, he went on to record and study the singers of a living oral tradition, the epic bards of Southern Yugoslavia. Unfortunately, he did not live to see the project through to its conclusion, but the work was carried on by his student and field assistant, Albert Lord. The findings were published in 1960 by Lord in a volume entitled The Singer of Tales, in

which he gives a detailed description of the methods used by the Yugoslavian bards to create, or more correctly re-create, poems of upwards of 12,000 lines in performance. The main thrust of the study focuses on three aspects of oral performance: the training of the bard; the formulas; and the larger semi-stable elements, the "themes."

The initial phase of a singer's training begins at a young age, but during this period he makes no conscious effort to sing, and his role is merely that of a spectator. As such, he becomes familiar with the plots and the main characters of the tales, and he also develops, albeit quite unconsciously, a feel for the overall oral style of the performance, that is, he is already starting to absorb some of the formulaic and thematic material that he will eventually use to compose his own songs. The most important aspect of this phase, however, is that he develops the desire to become a singer, and the second phase of his training begins the moment he tries to sing a song of his own.

This stage, according to Lord, is invariably conducted in private, and the future bard's initial efforts are merely attempts to reproduce what he has already heard performed by others. This does not mean that what he sings something he has memorized, for, since his mentors never sing the same song in exactly the same manner, he has no idea of what a "fixed text" is. As Lord states:

Learning in this second stage is a process of imitation... but it may be truthfully said that the singer imitates the techniques of composition of his master or masters rather than particular songs.²

In other words, the young singer is absorbing the formulaic and thematic patterns of his elders and learning to mould the lesser units to the metrical structure of the verse and to piece the larger sequences together to tell a tale.

The dichotomy between stability and variation is not something that is left behind at the end of the learning process, but remains an integral part of the bard's method of composition throughout his career. It is, in fact, the quintessence of oral performance. On the one hand, we have recorded texts from individual singers that display a considerable degree of variation, and not only in mere wording, but also in depth of description and detail. And yet, Lord found that even the most experienced singers insisted they performed their songs "word-for-word" the way they had learned them. In order to make sense out of what was obviously conflicting data, he realized that "word-for-word" had to be interpreted as meaning that all the essential elements of the tale were present in every telling.³

While such stability results in part from the bard's desire to tell the story as he heard it, it has its functional value as well. If the bard were to start wandering down blind alleys in the middle of his song, he

would soon become lost. He can allow himself a considerable degree of latitude in the manner in which he tells his tale, but if he is to maintain the ability to compose rapidly in performance, he must tread familiar paths. This force, which requires that all bards, from the novice to the most experienced, adhere to their tradition, is present in all aspects of oral composition, from the construction of formulas to the development of themes and the narrative as a whole.

The third and final stage in the learning period begins when the singer is competent enough to perform in front of an audience. At this point, his songs are likely to be rather crude, and in Lord's experience, most singers knew only one complete song at the time of their first performance.⁴ From here on, the young bard concentrates on two things. First, he adds to his repertoire by learning new songs and completing those he has already learned in part. As before, this is not a matter of memorization but of learning to manipulate the appropriate formulas and themes so that the tale may be re-created in performance without hesitation. Second, he learns to embellish and ornament his songs through the use of more descriptive formulas and more fully developed themes.

In one sense, the final phase never ends, that is, the singer will continue to rework and add to his songs and his repertoire for as long as he continues to perform. But Lord states that

...it is better to define the end of the period by the freedom with which he moves in his tradition, because that is the mark of the finished poet. When he has sufficient command of the formula technique to sing any song that he hears, and enough thematic material at hand to lengthen or shorten a song according to his own desires and to create a new song if he sees fit, then he is an accomplished singer and worthy of his art.⁵

Thus, we can see that during these training periods, the bard is, in a manner of speaking, rehearsing, not specific songs for specific performances, but an entire tradition out of which all his future performances will grow.

As previously noted, composition and performance are facets of the same act, and although there are a number of factors involved in the technique of oral composition, those at the very heart of the matter are the formulas and themes. The former are phrases alluding to characters, scenes, objects, actions, and ideas that recur again and again in a given corpus. Their function, quite simply, is to provide the singer with ready made compositional units so that he does not have to pause to think of what words to use. As defined by Parry, a formula is "a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea."⁶ To this he adds the proviso that the functional element of the formula must be present, that is, the style of the text in question must demonstrate that repeated phrases exist primarily as compositional units and not in some

other capacity. "When the element of usefulness is lacking, one does not have a formula but a repeated phrase which has been knowingly brought into the verse for some special effect."⁷

While Parry's definition still remains one of the cornerstones of the "oral theory," it has not gone unchallenged, and its ambiguity has caused a great deal of discrepancy in statements of what constitutes a formula and what does not. Many researchers, particularly those opposed to Parry's stance on Homeric composition, consider only verbatim, or near verbatim, repeats as formulas. Others apply a looser set of criteria in their study of the formula. Parry's own vision of oral composition, however, allows for a process involving a fairly wide range of combinations, for in addition to verbatim repeats, he states that there is a second type of formula:

The other kind of formula is that which is like one or more which express a similar idea in more or less the same words.... We may say that any group of two or more like formulas make up a system, and the system may be defined in turn as a group of phrases which have the same metrical value and which are enough alike in thought and words to leave no doubt that the poet who used them knew them not only as single formulas, but also as formulas of a certain type.⁸

That "formulaic systems" are the crucial components in oral composition is plainly undefined by Lord:

Although it may seem that the more important part of the singer's training is the learning of formulas from other singers, I believe that the really significant element in the process is rather the setting up of various patterns that make adjustment of phrase and creation of phrases by analogy possible. This will be the whole basis of his art. Were he merely to learn the phrases and lines from his predecessors, acquiring thus a stock of them, which he would then shuffle about and mechanically put together in juxtaposition as inviolable, fixed units, he would, I am convinced, never become a singer. He must make his feeling for the patterning of lines, which he has absorbed earlier, specific with the actual phrases and lines, and by the necessity of performance learn to adjust what he hears and what he wants to say to these patterns. If he does not learn to do this, no matter how many phrases he may know from his elders, he cannot sing.⁹

Although the notion of formulaic composition may seem alien to us at first, Lord finds an adequate analogy in our everyday speech.¹⁰ Consequently, it may help us in our understanding to examine certain elements of our language which have a direct bearing on the question at hand. Linguists have discovered that due to associations we develop at a very young age, words often become embedded in familiar groupings, and consequently, much of our language is comprised of word-groups, or "collocations," which we reuse with a surprising degree of consistency. Linguist Dwight Bolinger explains:

...words as we understand them are not the only elements that have a more or less fixed correlation with meaning. They are not even necessarily the first units that a child learns to imbue with this association. In

the beginning stages a child apprehends "holistically": the situation is not broken down, and neither is the verbal expression that accompanies it. That is why the first learning is "holophrastic": each word is an utterance, each utterance an undivided word, as far as the child is concerned. It is only later that words are differentiated out of the larger wholes.¹¹

In a non-literate society, the understanding of language remains holophrastic, for the speaker has no means of separating the utterances into lesser components, that is, he has nothing, such as a printed page, which focuses him to visualize the individual words. Lord writes:

Man without writing thinks in terms of sound groups and not in words, and the two do not necessarily coincide. When asked what a word is, he will reply that he does not know, or he will give a sound group which may vary in length from what we call a word to an entire line of poetry, or even an entire song.¹²

Thus, we can see that for the oral poet, a formula is not representative of "a group of words," but of an idea. When he wishes to convey that idea to his audience, he relies on the utterance which he associates with it and, therefore, he is never plagued with the problem of thinking of the right words to use. Again, we should remember that this is not a matter of mechanically arranging pre-programmed phrases, for just as our speech, although highly collocational, is capable of a wide range of com-

binations and permutations, so it is with the oral poet and his formulas. At the same time, this does not mean that the poet's use of language is without restriction; for as one of Parry's early converts, Frederick M. Combella, states, "The epic language was not entirely the servant of the poet; it was partly his master."¹³

For an explanation, let us return to the study of collocations. In the following passage, Bolinger demonstrates that even after we learn to break the larger segments down into smaller components, that is, words, we are prevented by force of habit from rearranging the lesser units with complete freedom, for even though the result may be, strictly speaking, grammatical, it will "sound" illogical because it will conflict with the "maternal associations" that we have developed for a particular word or word group:

Words become more and more sharply defined for us as we grow older. So when we finally notice that the word "else" has a peculiar distribution, one that permits it to be used right after indefinites (somebody else) but not after nouns (*some person else), and not even after all indefinites (someplace else, where else, *sometime else), we tend to suppose that we always had it as a free combinatory unit but some mysterious process has entangled it with a particular set of words. Actually, it has never disentangled itself. We go on using it exactly as we have heard it used. "Sometime else" is impossible for the same reason that "to uncomfot" is impossible: neither "else" nor "un-" has fully emancipated itself from the maternal context.¹⁴

While the above quote deals only with the construction of words, a similar phenomenon occurs in the grouping of words, and even related collocations vary considerably in their ability to take on new forms:

We might describe these differences as degrees of tightness. The three idioms "to take fright," "to take courage," and "to take heart" stand in order of increasing tightness, as can be seen when the normal order is reversed:

The fright that he took was indicative of his timidity.

*The courage that he took was indicative of his inner resources.

*The heart that he took was indicative of his optimism.¹⁵

Similarly, the oral poet is bound, to a certain degree, by his traditional language. As with conversational speech, this does not involve the regurgitation of "memorized" units, but a continual reworking of familiar patterns; patterns, however, whose capacity for the acceptance of new forms is tempered by habitual useage. The capacity for change is present, but the singer will find embodied in his tradition the means to express just about anything he may wish to say and, therefore, he has little cause to seek for new forms. Furthermore, in the oral poetic language, as compared with everyday speech, the need for the singer to store an immense number of such patterns is greatly diminished, for the number of ideas he needs to express and the number of referents to which he must allude

are infinitely fewer. As Parry well shows, the art of the oral poet lies not in his aesthetic use of his language, that is the concern of the literate man, but rather in his ability to use his tradition creatively.¹⁶

In order to develop his song, the oral poet must, of course, have some means of compiling his formulaic elements into larger units. The manner in which this is achieved is probably the most complex and intricate aspect of this style of composition, for in a genuine oral text, a group of lines will exhibit a variety of syntactic, acoustic, and rhythmic patterns and syncopated or chiasmic structures which are generally referred to as the "parallelisms" or oral composition.¹⁷ Fundamentally, however, the building up of lines is accomplished through a process that Parry has termed the "adding style." In stichic poetry, such as epic, this process is most plainly characterized by unperiodic enjambement; that is, the sentence is complete at the end of one line, but it continues in the next. The value of this method of composition is that the bard avoids the problem of becoming bogged down in a long, meandering sentence. Each image or action is stated clearly and concisely, and detail is added in a way that allows the singer to move on to another idea at almost any given point:

In rapid, almost staccato, style the singer may add together a series of actions, moving the story quickly forward.... Or he may

break in on a series of actions with description, providing at one and the same time a more leisurely tempo and a richness of detail.¹⁸

In an analysis of 2400 lines of Yugoslav epic, Lord found that 44.5 per cent of the lines involved no enjambement, 40.6 per cent involved unperiodic enjambement, and the remaining 14.9 per cent required additional lines to make the sentence complete. But even in these latter instances, the sequence usually contained a subordinate clause or a line giving the subject plus modifiers, and thus, a complete thought, though not a complete sentence, was still embodied in each verse.¹⁹

In stanzaic oral poetry, such as ballads, the adding style is characterized by a "parataxis of narrative imagery,"²⁰ that is each stanza presents an image or action that is counterbalanced or expanded on in the stanza or stanzas that follow. Again, there are a number of fairly complex parallel relationships and structural patterns involved in the compilation of stanzas, and the process is not simply a matter of tacking one onto the end of the other. A more complete description of these patterns will be given later on.

The larger compositional units on which the bard relies are the "themes," which Lord describes as "...groups of ideas regularly used in telling a tale...."²¹ Essentially themes are the lesser narrative elements, which in Yugoslav epic include battles, marriages, rescues, the

writing of letters, etc., that the bard weaves together to form an entire tale. These elements are by and large confined to longer forms of oral narrative, such as epic, and have little bearing on a discussion of the shanties. Therefore, we do not need to say a great deal about them other than that they, like the formulas, belong to the tradition as a whole and not to individual tales, and thus, they also function as ready-made, though not memorized, compositional elements.

There is, however, one aspect of thematic development, or perhaps more correctly, textual development that bears relevance to almost all forms of oral poetry, and that is Lord's recognition of a "tension" operating within the tradition that governs, to a significant degree, the grouping of narrative components. The force in question dictates that when a given situation arises, its development and conclusion will almost always proceed along a traditionally predetermined course. Lord's example deals with the theme of "the hero's return":

It is a curious fact in the Yugoslav tradition, when a hero has been absent for a long period, or even when a long war is an element in the story, whether the hero has been in that war or not, a deceptive story, or its vestige, and a recognition, or its vestige are almost invariably to be found in the same song. Some force keeps these elements together. I call it a "tension of essences."²²

Thus, while a given tale may have its own particular scenario, that is, its own particular sequence of themes, the inclusion

of many of the specific narrative elements is determined not only by "the story," but also by the traditional patterns that govern the development of tales in which similar themes are found.

When first confronted with the recorded texts of oral performances, most of us are immediately taken by the amount of variation that such texts exhibit, and indeed, for a performer to take such liberties seems truly remarkable to those of us who were forced to learn our poetry by rote -- punctuation included. But in attempting to understand the intricacies of oral composition, one continually finds oneself drawn not to the variation, but to the underlying patterns that the poet relies upon in his performances and that shape his creations to a significant extent along predetermined lines. Such patterns, we have seen, exist in his basic poetic language, the formulas; the basic narrative elements of the tale, the themes; and in the force that binds certain thematic elements together -- Lord's tension of essences. One should not, however, view the importance of these patterns as undermining the creative ability of the poet, for as Lord states, oral composition is "...a living, changing, adaptable, artistic creation."²³ Instead, one should recognize that in an oral society, the mode of composition is not a random, haphazard affair and does not merit the seemingly pejorative label of "improvised." Furthermore, one should perhaps take care not to regard these patterns solely as

restrictions on the poet; rather, they are the tools of his trade, and like any instrument, they have certain prescribed applications and limitations. The oral poet, under no compulsion to do otherwise, transmits his tradition in the same manner in which it was transmitted to him. His mark as an artist is determined by his ability to use that tradition.

While an examination of the formula and theme can tell us much about the style of oral composition, further insights into the dominant patterns of the poetry may be had by examining its structure. In recent years, scholars have shown that works emanating from oral cultures have an inherent structural pattern that is substantially different from those created in a literate culture. Whereas the literate man tends to compose his story through a steady linear progression of events, the oral poet builds his tale through a network of scenes that are both constructed and linked in an annular, rather than a linear, fashion.

Following the work of Homerist Cedric Whitman, David Buchan has shown that prior to the wide-spread influx of literacy into the Northeast of Scotland during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the ballad singers in the region composed by coupling related lines to form stanzas and by arranging stanzas in binary and trinary groupings to form scenes, and each of these

elements exhibits some kind of balancing relationship with other components of the song. He writes:

The habit of thinking in balances, antitheses, appositions and parallelisms is intrinsic to the oral mind. It manifests itself both conceptually, in the arrangement of narrative 'ideas,' and verbally, in the arrangement of line and stanza word groups.²⁴

He illustrates simple binary construction with the first four stanzas of Anna Brown's version of "Child Waters" (Child 63B):

'I warn ye all, ye gay ladies,
That wear scarlet an brown,
That ye dinna leave your father's house,
To follow young men frae town.'

'O here am I, a lady gay,
That wears scarlet an brown,
Yet I will leave my father's house,
An follow Lord John frae the town.'

Lord John stood in his stable-door,
Said he was bound to ride;
Burd Ellen stood in her bow-door,
Said she'd rin' by his side.

He's pitten on his cork-heeld shoone,
An fast awa rade he;
She's clad hersel in page array,
An after him ran she.

Binary line construction is most readily apparent in stanzas three and four in which the singer juxtaposes the images of the hero and the heroine, and binary stanza structure is noticeable in the balance of announcement of intention and subsequent action. In stanzas one and two, the balance occurs in the apposition of the warning and

the dismissal of the same. There is a further balance between the two sets of stanzas, again, through announcement of intention and subsequent action. The various relationships within this sequence can be represented graphically as shown in figure 19:

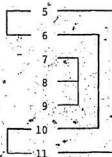
Figure 19: Binary stanzaic construction in "Child Waters":



This particular form is the simplest found in balladry, and most units are considerably more complex; for example, stanzas five to eleven of the same text. In stanza five, the couple arrives at the river and Lord John indifferently plunges on ahead, his only thought for Ellen being, "Lady, can you wade?" The following stanza balances with the fifth with Ellen's assertion that she can "...swim like any eel," which leads to a triad of stanzas detailing her attempt to ford the river. Stanza ten is an admission of her inability to cross, thus making it an oppositional balance with stanza six. In the same stanza, the heroine points out to her unborn child the indifference of its father, an idea that is balanced in the next stanza which has the hero returning to her rescue.

Stanza eleven is also appositionally balanced with stanza five through the desertion/return of the hero. This sequence can be represented as follows:

Figure 20: Structural analysis of "Child Waters," stanzas 5-11:



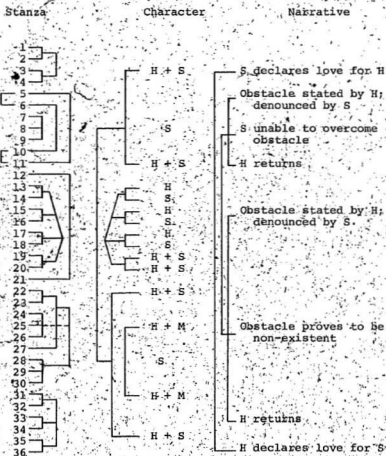
Stanzas seven through nine are a straightforward example of the trinary structure found in oral narrative. In other instances, this element manifests itself in more elaborate rhythms, such as a triad of balancing stanzas or an "extended triad" in which three units are rounded off by a related, yet slightly different fourth, for example, when three stanzas of dialogue are followed by a single narrative stanza detailing the action intimated in the previous triad.

The relationship of stanzas five/six and ten/eleven illustrates the annular framing device which Buchan describes as "...a pair of aural bookends".

The oral maker progresses by a 'divide and control' policy; he breaks down his narrative into constituent scenes, then uses frames to impose a tight unity within each scene. The form repeats itself on a major level, for he also uses the constituent scenes of some ballads as framing scenes to unify the ballad itself.²⁵

Thus, on both a micro and a macro level, the singer uses his frames to control the development of his tale and to provide a framework into which the body of his narrative can be woven. In addition to the stanzaic structure, Buchan shows that balancing and annular patterns also operate within the character and narrative structures as well. Hence the overall structure of "Child Waters" exhibits a tightly-knit arrangement of stanzaic, scene, character, and narrative elements, as is shown in figure 21.

An analysis of the stanzaic structure reveals that this ballad is composed of two "acts," with two scenes in each. Contained in the first act is the river episode and the completion of the journey to the castle, and in the second there is the dinner scene and the birth scene which leads to the reunion of the hero and heroine. From the character and narrative structures, we can see that the second act, thematically, is an expanded -- and, in a sense, appositional -- version of the first, thus in-

Figure 21: Structural analysis of "Child Waters"²⁶

Abbreviations: H - hero
 S - heroine
 M - Mother

dicating that a basic narrative pattern underlies the composition of each act. Buchan also notes the triad within a triad in stanzas twenty-two to twenty-seven, in which three stanzas of dialogue between the hero and his mother are embodied within three stanzas of dialogue between the hero and the heroine. This, Buchan states, is the ballad maker's way of coping with three characters in the one scene, whereas according to Axel Olrik's epic laws of oral narrative, each scene normally has only two dramatically interacting characters.²⁷ For our purposes, this element is particularly helpful in showing at least one instance of an oral poet's ability to creatively re-work her material to create a delightful comic effect through the use of simple, traditional patterns. But most importantly, the figure shows the various balancing and framing patterns that pervade the piece at the stanzaic, character, and narrative levels.

Before moving on to a discussion of the formulaic nature of the shanties, we must deal with one last aspect of oral composition, and that is its relation to literacy. Lord and others staunchly maintain that the influx of literacy into an oral culture inevitably leads to the demise of traditional methods of performance. But at the same time, they allow that the alteration in compositional style is not brought about simply through the ability to read and write, but through a change in the attitude of new singers entering the tradition after the advent of literacy.

Lord states that at some point in every oral culture, the time comes when a singer is asked to dictate "the words" of his songs for a scribe or, in more modern instances, a recording device. For the singer, it is just another performance, although as Lord points out, the slowness of the dictation or the presence of a mechanical, rather than a human, audience may at first seem unsettling to him. At any rate, he composes in his accustomed manner and his performance, as always, is oral. But the implications of this event run much deeper than the simple recording of a traditional song:

...unwittingly perhaps, a fixed text was established: Proteus was photographed, and no matter under what forms he might appear in the future, this would become the shape that was changed; this would be the "original." Of course, the singer was not affected at all. He continued, as did his confrères, to compose and sing as he always had and as they always had. The tradition went on.... But there was another world, of those who could read and write, of those who came to think of the written text not as the recording of a moment of the tradition but as the song. This was to become the difference between the oral way of thought and the written way. 28

Of all Lord's assertions about oral composition, his statements concerning its relation to literacy have come under the severest attack, particularly from some folklorists in the United States. As fodder for their arguments, they recall the claim of Maine folklorists, Phillips Barry and Fanny Eckstorm, that the songs collected

from literate informants were infinitely superior to those collected from illiterate men and women.²⁹ In this instance, of course, the writers have failed to appreciate the distinction between "illiterate" and "non-literate;" the former indicates a person who is unable to read and write in a community that is predominantly literate, whereas the latter refers to a person living in a society in which none or only a small minority of the inhabitants are literate.

One of the most notable studies countering Lord's views is Bruce Rosenberg's The Art of the American Folk Preacher, in which the author examines the formulaic nature of the sermons of the spiritual preachers in the United States, all of whom have had some formal education and a few at the post-secondary level, and he concludes that for this particular tradition, "The ability to read and write does not seem to hinder the oral tradition at all."³⁰ Rosenberg also opposes Lord's belief that the existence of printed texts leads to an irreversible attitude of fixity of text, for he states that most of the spiritual preachers own collections of sermons from which they draw many of their ideas. The material obtained from these volumes is not memorized but is combined with other sermon material through the formulaic process.³¹ But in spite of Rosenberg's claims, some of the data presented in his thesis raise a few fundamental queries as to the surety of

his conclusions, but these will be discussed more completely later on. His study is most helpful, though, in showing that at least some form of formulaic composition can exist over an extended period of time in a literate culture.

This leads us to the question of whether or not there is a "transitional" period between the oral and literate phases of a culture during which the oral patternings of the past are, to a certain degree, retained, but their manifestation is slightly altered by attitudes inherent in the literate mind. The first to postulate such a stage in the evolution of literature was the Beowulf scholar, Francis P. Magoun,³² but to date, few researchers have attempted to investigate this particular aspect of their respective traditions. Lord rejects the idea, stating with reference to Homeric scholarship that such a notion is merely an effort by "diplomatic" scholars who

...would like to find refuge in a transitional poet who is both an oral poet -- they cannot disprove the evidence of his style -- and a written poet -- they cannot, on the other hand, tolerate the unwashed illiterate.³³

Buchan, however, found that during the first half of the nineteenth century, ballad singing in the Northeast of Scotland did, in fact, pass through a transitional period in which songs were still re-created in performance but not through traditional methods. He defines the process as being "loosely re-creative,"³⁴ and in order to distinguish

between the two phases of traditional art, he suggests the adoption of the terms "oral tradition," to signify word-of-mouth transmission in a non-literate society, and "verbal tradition," to signify the same in a literate culture.³⁵

The most significant change in the oral style of ballad singing as the tradition enters the verbal phase is the breakdown of the annular structure and its replacement by linear development, and thus, the later texts lack the tight symmetry of the oral ballads. Other changes also occur. The repetitive patterns, which rarely exceed three units in length in oral songs, now comprise up to ten stanzas. The all-important formulaic language of the ballads, the Scots dialect, tends to fade as it becomes mingled with English, the "language of literacy in Scotland," and traditional motifs give way to those obtained from English chap-literature, broadside ballads, the Bible, and the literature of Scotland. Aesthetic changes are also evident in a greater emphasis on lyric, as opposed to narrative, style, and a thematic concentration on moralism, sentimentality, and rationalism.³⁶ Thus, although the ballad singers are not yet relying on rote memorization, and formulas of a kind are still used in composition, the oral process has undergone a considerable change, and particularly in its more intricate aspects. The facets of oral composition that are most readily apparent to the literate

listener -- the realization that the words are not fixed, that the songs are "improvised," and that such improvisation is contingent on the use of "stock phrases" -- remain. But the more subtle elements, those which are the key to a truly vibrant oral art form -- the annular archetectonic and the importance of an overall formulaic diction, which gives the singer greater scope in his means of expression -- these are being lost to the new generations.

The shanties, at least those that have been collected and preserved in books and archives, are part of a verbal tradition, that is to say, the seamen of the last century were part of a literate community. In spite of the stereotyped image of the nineteenth century sailor as being, among other things, illiterate, marine historian, David Alexander, working with computer files of shipping articles signed in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, between the years 1865 and 1899, has shown that the literacy rate among crew members rose from 69 per cent in the former year to 85 per cent in the latter. By assuming that most people acquire their reading and writing skills before the age of fourteen and correlating this with the ages of the crew members, he also postulates a literacy rate for the years 1835-39 of 51.7 per cent among non-Canadian seamen, excluding officers.³⁷

These figures are based solely on the seaman's ability to sign his name to the shipping articles, and Alexander admits that this is not a completely accurate guide, for

many people were taught to sign their names but not how to read and write fluently. The results, he writes, may be "...taken as a 'middle estimate' of literacy,"³⁸ that is, the actual percentages are probably slightly lower. However, when cross-referenced with Carlo Cipolla's estimates of literacy among the English labour classes during the same period, which are based on the ability of bridegrooms to sign the marriage register, the rates for seamen are only marginally less than for their land-based counterparts.³⁹

Attempting to determine what percentage of a community is required to be able to read and write before that community can be considered "literate" is, needless to say, a fruitless pursuit. But in dealing with oral culture, we are not concerned simply with reading and writing, but with literate attitudes and the attendant complications these present for the person attempting to compose in an oral fashion. The ability to compose orally is not a natural gift we all bring into the world with us only to have it perverted and abused by the "disease" of literacy; it is a highly developed poetic style that can only be fostered and maintained with any degree of stability in a non-literate culture. The illiterate man living among literates will absorb notions of fixity and originality if such ideas are prevalent in the community. Thus, we should perhaps consider that the figures for the period 1835-39 are significant enough to represent some effect on the oral process.

This presents something of an enigma to the student of oral performance, for with the rise of literacy among seamen in the first half of the nineteenth century, we find not the demise of an oral art form, but the birth of a song tradition which, if it is not oral, is very close to it. One wonders, then, if the Anglo-American shanties were ever part of a genuine oral tradition? The answer to this question is impossible to determine from texts, for none dating from the early years of the last century have survived. On the basis of the type of text that was sung, one is inclined to answer in the negative, for we have seen that it was a common practice on board British and American ships to adapt the words of established songs -- hardly an idea born of an oral mind -- such as "Nancy Dawson" and "The Drunken Sailor," to fit the shanty format. Consequently, if we are determined to find an oral ancestor for the shanties, it would appear that we shall have to look elsewhere.

The most obvious choice for the tradition as a whole is the worksongs of the Blacks in the southern United States and the Caribbean, for even though these people lived in the midst of a literate white society, the cultural and social segregation of the two races ensured the continuation of oral modes of thought. Oral texts from Black singers have been collected well into the present century, and some of them from eminent popular performers.⁴⁰

The best evidence in support of this hypothesis lies in the number of formulas and formulaic moulds the shanties and Black folksong have in common. An element that plays a significant role in both traditions is the "hinting" line, which, in the case of the shanties, is used when the shanty-man wishes to make an informal request to the skipper or to voice his opinion on the progress of the work. The following is a common pattern for making such requests:

Oh, I thought I heard the Ol' Man say,
He'd give us rum three times a day.⁴¹

I thought I heard the Old Man say,
Another pull and then belay.⁴²

Similar elements occur frequently in the worksongs of the Blacks, and the likeness exists both in sentiment and verbal structure:

O Lord, captain, O Lord, captain!
Well, it's captain, didn't you say, O Lord!
You wouldn't work me in the rain all day?⁴³

Lawd, captain, captain, did you hear
Lawd, captain, did you hear about it?
All your men gonna leave you,
All your men gonna leave you on next pay day.⁴⁴

In the songs of the Blacks, however, this type of pattern is more than a vehicle for hinting or making threats to the "captain," for it has the broader and deeper purpose of expressing ideas pertaining to people and events over which the singer and his companions have no control:

Thought I heard a sheriff comin,
Lawd, bring my breakfas' to me!

Thought I see my coffin,
Lawd, rollin up to my do'. 45

Thought I heard - huh!
Judge Pequette say - huh!
Forty-five dollars - huh!
Take him away - huh! 46

The data presented so far show only that the shanties share certain formulaic patterns with Black folksong, and indeed, there are many other elements common to both other than hinting lines. The evidence pointing to the likelihood that the shanty patterns were derived from those in Black folksong lies in the assumption that the elements showing a broader formulaic utility belong to the parent tradition. This is visible, to a degree, in the example of the hinting line, but it is even more apparent in elements that are found in a variety of shapes and contexts in Black folksong, yet acquire a certain degree of stability in the shanties. In the former, one often comes across constructions such as the following:

Dig-a my grave wid a silver spade,
Let me down wid a golden chain. 47

In the shanties, this element is confined solely to the song "Stormalong" and its derivatives, and furthermore, the inclusion of this element is often contradictory to other information presented in the song, for "Ol' Stormy"

is generally buried at sea. In some versions of the song, the shantyman tries to eradicate the error by altering the first line of the couplet:

We rolled him up in a silvery shroud.
We lowered him down with a golden chain.⁴⁸

Even here, while the wrapping of the corpse in a shroud is more representative of a burial at sea, the lowering down aspect is still indicative of internment in a grave. On board a ship, the body rests on a plank while the Mass is read, and at the end of the service, the board is tipped and the remains slide over the rail into the sea. Thus, the somewhat erroneous application of this formula in the shanties, and the fact that it has no compositional utility outside the "Stormalong" family, would seem to indicate fairly conclusively that Black folksong is the original source. Such substantial proof of origin cannot be offered for every element the two traditions share, but this evidence, coupled with the historical evidence given in a earlier chapter, tends to lead one to the conclusion that the worksongs of the Blacks had an extremely significant influence on the shanty tradition.

Black folksong, however, is essentially lyric, and narrative development does not appear to have been a factor of any significance in that tradition.⁴⁹ By contrast, there are many narrative songs embodied in the shanty tradition. The period during which shantying became an

established practice in the merchant marine, the early nineteenth century, is not so very far removed from the time when the rural ballad makers of Britain re-created their texts through an oral process, and during the first third of the nineteenth century, the ballad tradition of northeast of Scotland was still in the transitional phase. Therefore, one wonders if the Anglo-American ballad tradition did have some effect on the recreation of shanties. When discussing the history of the shanties, we noted that narrative songs were adapted into the tradition by the white shantymen due to their cultural preference for songs that told a tale, and that this addition occurred at a later stage in the tradition, presumably during the eighteen forties and fifties. Many of the narrative shanties were derived from non-traditional sources, such as broadside sheets and music hall songs, and, therefore, their existence is due to a direct adaptation from a literate, rather than an oral, source. There are a few narrative shanties that appear to be the products of traditional singers, but they were not all originally composed as shanties, for most were forebitters the shantymen adapted to the work context, primarily for use at the capstan and pumps. The history of these songs is almost impossible to recover, for the early ballad scholars, Child included, paid little attention to nautical songs. With two notable exceptions, the texts of these songs that

have come down to us in printed collections are relatively standardized and exhibit few traces of formulaic diction or oral patternings, and going by this evidence, one can only conclude that such songs were neither composed nor transmitted in an oral environment. As for the narrative songs that were composed as shanties, such as "The Alabama" and "Reuber-Ranzo," they presumably date from the middle of the century and later, and even though they, like all shanties, did not have absolutely fixed texts, their recreation does not appear to have been through an oral formulaic process. Therefore, while shantying was influenced by the ballad tradition, in that its narrative style was preferred by most singers, the oral roots of balladry do not appear to have been responsible for the notions of "improvisation" that were so deeply ensconced in the minds of shantymen of later years.

As part of a verbal tradition, the re-creative phase of shantying lasted perhaps slightly longer than in other traditions due to certain factors peculiar to this context, and primary among them is the inseparable link between the re-creative style of performance and the functions of the shanty. Although few shanty experts address the question of variation at any length -- the only one to devote an entire paper to the subject is the ballad scholar, Percy Adams Hutchinson, who seeks to use the loose formulaic style of the shanties as fodder for the "communal creation"

theory⁵⁰ -- those who do make an effort to provide some sort of explanation are of two minds on the matter. Some, such as Grainger and Whall, view improvisation as a means of fitting the song to the situation. The former writes:

...as the length of a chanty depends upon the duration of the shipboard work to which it is sung, only a few of its verses are fixed and widespread, the remainder being made up on the spur of the moment.⁵¹

In Whall's appraisal, variation plays a considerably more limited role, and he states that on the East-Indiamen in which he served:

...the old-time shanties were sung to their proper words, and most of the good ones had a story in verse that never varied, though in a long hoist, if the regulation words did not suffice, a good shanty-man would improvise to spin out.⁵²

In contrast to those who view improvisation in purely practical terms, other writers tend to see it as serving a more rhetorical role, that is, as enhancing the diversionary function of the shanty. Cecil Sharp writes:

To the sailor the chief attraction of the chanty was that it infected his work with the spirit of play -- as a chantyman once said to me, "It was only just a few words we had, but it made the thing come lighter." Although the words of the refrains were often mere jingles...[w]ith the words of the soloist it was otherwise, for these were improvised and it was the excitement which this aroused that riveted the attention of the workers. It was for

The common denominator among these different viewpoints is, of course, the relationship between textual variation and the two chief functions of the shanty, coordination and diversion. Obviously, a song in stable form would be of little value in regulating tasks of varying lengths, and also, if the crew were to hear exactly the same thing over and over again, then the shanties would probably have become as monotonous as the labour itself. Furthermore, in light of the comments made by Hugill and Harlow, one might add that for the shanties to be effective as incentives to work, the shantyman would have to be able to tailor his lyrics to the mood of the crew.

In addition to purely functional considerations, there are other factors that contributed to the maintenance of the re-creative phase of the tradition, and these deal with the shantyman's awareness of textual variation and with an irregularity in the learning process that is peculiar to the nautical context. In a non-literate society, the singer's only means of performance is through oral composition, and when re-creating his songs, he attempts to transmit his tradition as faithfully as he can. Thus, in oral texts, variation is essentially a natural by-product of a method of composition, and the singer earnestly believes that he repeats his songs "word for word." In the transitional context, on the other hand -- and herein lies the fundamental difference between an oral and a verbal

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tradition -- both variable and stable modes of performance are current in the community, and thus, the singer is very conscious of variation that occurs within his texts.

Shantyman Richard Maitland once remarked to a collector:

...I suppose it's just as I've told you before, another man singin' that song, he might sing it different -- I might sing it different the next time I sing it, see? A shanty was never composed in its entirety...[and] the shantyman, he's got to keep a good memory to know that he won't sing the look of it.⁵⁶

In determining the significance of the singer's awareness of variation in this particular tradition, one should not overlook the age at which many future shantymen were first exposed to this style of performance. When examining a tradition, one is generally dealing with an aspect of culture as practiced by people who were born and raised in a particular community, but with seafarers, this is not necessarily the case. Granted, many sailors came from seafaring families, but as children, their knowledge of the sea and the customs of sailors was obtained second hand, and upon entering the merchant marine, usually between the ages of thirteen and eighteen, there were many things about life at sea that were new to them. Consequently there were probably many first-voyagers for whom the re-creation of shanties contrasted sharply with their previously held notions of song performance, as was the case with Frank Bullen, who himself became a shantyman on

several vessels:

...when I first heard "Mudder Dinah" and being extremely fond of singing I became most anxious to learn it, so I asked one of our two boat-boys to teach me.... He set about his pleasant task at once but was very soon pulled up by his mate who demanded in indignant tones what he meant by teaching "dat buckra chile" dem rude words. They nearly had a fight over it and then I learned the words didn't matter, that you varied them according to taste, but as taste was generally low and broad the words were usually what my negro friend called, in cheerful euphemism, rude.⁵⁷

The factor of age is significant for it separates the shanties from other re-creative verbal traditions where the singer, growing up in a newly-literate society, develops a feel for the variable style of performance from traditional sources at approximately the same time he assimilates notions of stable performance through his educational training or from fixed media, such as records and books. The shantyman, on the other hand, spends his formative years in completely literate surroundings, and upon going to sea, he discovers, if you will, a style of performance that to him is truly unique, and consequently, the re-creative aspect becomes one of the chief attractions of the tradition. In the shanties, then, as in modern jazz, variation is an integral aesthetic component of the performance; a good shantyman is expected to "improvise," and his ability to vary his texts is one of the main criteria for judging his excellence as a singer:

Many a Chantyman was prized in spite of his poor voice because of his improvisations. Poor doggerel they were mostly and often very lewd and filthy, but they gave the knowing and appreciative shipmates, who roared the refrain, much opportunity for laughter.⁵⁸

Conversely, most old-time shantymen had little regard for seamen who were ignorant of this facet of the shanty tradition. Richard Maitland, in one of his renditions of the shanty, "Paddy, Get Back," sings with great disdain of a wretched crew whose failings include the inability to "improvise" their songs:

We had tinkers, we had tailors, and firemen also cooks,
And they couldn't sing a shanty, unless they had the book.⁵⁹

Thus, the re-creative phase of the shanty tradition was maintained artificially, in a sense, for two reasons: first, out of the need for fitting the song to the situation, both in terms of its duration and its thematic content; and second, through the shantyman's awareness of and his conscious efforts to exploit his ability to vary his texts. For as long as the shanties remained an indispensable aid to shipboard labour, the nature of the work context ensured the perpetuation of the re-creative style of performance, but toward the end of the century, as more mechanical devices became standard equipment on sailing ships, the functional necessity for shantying declined. During the same period, the seamen came to view service

in sail as a second class occupation, and this attitude was reflected in their regard for the shanties. With both the functional and aesthetic importance of variation diminished considerably, the natural progression from oral composition to rote memorization became almost complete, and in the few texts that have been collected from seamen of the present century, variation is negligible.

The transition from oral to rote essentially involves the progression from variable to stable modes of performance, or as blues researcher, John Barnie, puts it, the "ossification" of tradition.⁶⁰ Such a transition, however, is not normally executed smoothly, but rather, entails the gradual erosion of oral compositional principles, the introduction of the notion that texts can be fixed, and the growth of a new sense of aesthetics in which originality figures prominently. As a result, at the apex of the transitional phase, re-creation is characterized by greater stability in some areas and in others by a marked attempt on the part of the singer to break away from the traditional norm and compose texts that are substantially his own. In other words, the bond between the forces of stability and variation, which is an integral facet of oral composition, breaks and one force or the other tends to dominate. In the following chapters, we shall examine how the collapse of the traditional tensions complicates the singer's compositional process at virtually every level of performance.

...241

FOOTNOTES

¹Albert Bates Lord, The Singer of Tales (1960; rpt. New York: Atheneum, 1978), p. 13.

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⁴Lord, p. 24.

⁵Lord, p. 26.

⁶Milman Parry, "Studies in the Epic Technique of Oral Verse-Making. I. Homer and Homeric Style," Harvard Studies in Classical Philology, 41 (1930), 80.

⁷Parry, 81.

⁸Parry, 85.

⁹Lord, p. 37.

¹⁰Lord, pp. 35-36.

¹¹Dwight Bolinger, Aspects of Language, 2nd ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Janovich, Inc., 1975), p. 100.

¹²Lord, p. 25.

¹³Frederick M. Combellack, "Milman Parry and Homeric Artistry," Classical Literature, 9 (1959), as cited in Frederick G. Cassidy, "How Free was the Anglo-Saxon Scop?" in Medieval and Linguistic Studies in Honour of Francis Peabody Magoun, eds. Jess B. Bessinger, Jr., and Robert P. Creed (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1965), p. 76.

¹⁴Bolinger, p. 104. An asterisk before a word or phrase indicates an impossible construction; a question mark indicates an unlikely construction.

¹⁵Bolinger, pp. 101-102.

¹⁶Parry, pp. 137-47.

¹⁷Lord, p. 54.

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¹⁹Lord, p. 54.

²⁰David Buchan, The Ballad and the Folk (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 53.

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²²Lord, p. 97.

²³Lord, p. 94.

²⁴Buchan, p. 88.

²⁵Buchan, p. 96.

²⁶Buchan, pp. 88-91, 94-97, 103-104, & 108-110; also, lecture notes from Folklore 6445, March 12, 1981.

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³¹Rosenberg, p. 29.

³²Francis Peabody Magoun, "Oral-Formulaic Character of Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poetry," Speculum, 32 (1957), pp. 446-463.

³³Lord, pp. 128-129.

³⁴Buchan, p. 243.

³⁵Buchan, pp. 1-2.

³⁶Buchan, pp. 205-243; also, lecture notes from Folklore 6445, March 19, 1981.

³⁷David Alexander, "Literacy Among Canadian and Foreign Seamen, 1863-1899," in Working Men Who Got Wet, eds. Rosemary Ommer and Gerald Panting, Proceedings of the Fourth Conference of the Atlantic Canada Shipping Project (St. John's: Maritime History Group, 1980), pp. 12-13.

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⁴³Howard W. Odum and Guy B. Johnson, The Negro and his Songs: A Study of Typical Negro Songs in the South (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1925), p. 256.

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⁴⁸William Main Doerflinger, Shantymen and Shantyboys (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951), p. 83.

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⁵²W.B. Whall, Sea Songs and Shanties, 6th ed. (Glasgow:
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⁵³Cecil J. Sharp, English Folk Chanteys (London:
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⁵⁴Hugill, p. 32.

⁵⁵Frederick Pease Harlow, Chanteying Aboard American
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"IT'S A LONG, LONG TIME SINCE I MADE UP THIS RHYME":

SHANTY COMPOSITION AND PERFORMANCE - I

The manner in which a shanty is re-created in performance is not a process easily defined, for unlike that of an oral body of material, there is no unified compositional pattern that pervades the entire tradition. Many of the compositional idiosyncracies in the shanties are similar to those encountered by David Evans in his study of the blues tradition of Drew, Mississippi, after the influx of recorded blues into the community. In his examination of the material, Evans found no less than thirteen types of modification to the recorded versions of songs in that community's tradition.¹ Essentially, there are two major factors that contribute to the multiplicity of compositional forms that exist in the shanty tradition. The first is the shantyman's awareness of textual variation. In an oral society, the singer re-creates by basing each text on patterns with which he is completely familiar, or as Lord says of epic composition, "...there is a pull in two directions: one is toward the song being sung and the other is toward the previous uses of the same theme."² Thus, in oral texts, there is a clear balance between stability and variation. The shantyman also relies on his tradition as a basic guide when performing, but he cannot completely divorce himself from the notion that some types of songs are fixed, nor from the idea that the shanties are improvised, and therefore, the scales tend to get tipped in one direction or the

other, that is, some texts consist mainly of memorized elements, while others exhibit a good deal of obviously deliberate variation. Also, since the re-creative style of singing is not the shantyman's natural method of performance, different singers have different interpretations of what is meant by "improvisation," and while some adhere quite closely to traditional patterns, others take greater liberties with their basic material.

Second, the shanties have been influenced by such a wide variety of sources that they represent, in reality, a mongrel tradition, a loose grouping of songs exhibiting different meters, different stanzaic structures, and derivation from both oral and stable sources, and they are unified only by the fact that they were all used as shipboard worksongs. Of these three basic differences, the first and last are the most significant in terms of their effect on the re-creational process. Metrical inconsistency is a major problem, for it prevents the shantyman from using his formulas freely throughout his tradition. The most common meter in the shanties is iambic or trochaic tetrameter, but songs in iambic or trochaic trimeter and dactylic tetrameter are also widespread. More obscure meters can also be noted, such as the iambic pentameter of "Paddy, Get Back." The fact that the shanties were influenced by both oral and stable sources complicates matters for the shantyman since it resulted in a tradition that embodies no unified formulaic diction, but rather, one that consists of a variety of poetic

styles. Some songs are based on traditional formulaic patterns while others are based on a pattern that is found only in one particular shanty, and still others exhibit no trace of formulas or formulaic patterns of any kind, and yet, all shanties are subject to some sort of variation.

When all these factors are taken into account, both those relating to the tradition as a whole and those pertaining to each shantyman's approach to the tradition, one is hardly surprised to learn that shanty re-creation involves a hodgepodge of compositional styles that run the gamut from almost verbatim repetition to seemingly random collations that are practically without a definitive thematic pattern. Furthermore, no one of these factors is dominant over the others, but rather, they all interact and have reciprocal effects over almost every facet of the tradition.

One of the major areas in which the shanties depart significantly from oral traditions is in the role of the formulas and the formulaic patterns, and, in fact, "formulaic composition," as defined by Parry and Lord, is not necessarily the cornerstone of shanty re-creation. Generally speaking, the shantyman's method of performance is not so much a question of using traditional language to compose a text as of re-creating, and sometimes deliberately varying, "the song." The distinction may seem unclear, at first, but in reality it underlines a crucial difference between oral and verbal traditions. The oral singer's concept of "the song" is a rather nebulous one by our

standards; it is simply a series of events that involves a certain set of characters. When performing the song in front of an audience, the singer must rely on his traditional language, for therein the various ideas embodied in the narrative are immediately assimilated with the appropriate verbal expression, and consequently, the "words" he uses to perform the song are more or less the same words he uses when singing any other song. In an analysis of 12,000 lines of Yugoslav epic, Lord found that "...one quarter of the whole lines in the sample and one half of the half lines are formulas. It is most significant that there is no line or part of a line that did not fit into some formulaic pattern."³ He adds that had the analysis included a larger body of material, the number of formulas would undoubtedly have increased significantly, and he concludes that "The formulas in oral narrative style are not limited to a comparatively few epic "tags," but are in reality all pervasive." In other words, the oral singer derives his verbal material from "the tradition," not from "the song."

In a literate society, the concept of "the song" becomes more concrete in the mind of the singer, for it embodies not only a series of events or lyric images, but also "the words" that express those ideas. As a member of a literate community, the shantyman tends to adhere to this notion, and it is reinforced by the fact that in his tradition, similar ideas are often expressed in substantially different words. His consequent approach to re-creation

can be quite clearly shown by examining different renditions of a "scene" that occurs frequently in narrative shanties; a seaman's encounter with a prostitute. The following versions of this scene are taken from different renditions of three songs: "Blow the Man Down," "A-rovin'," and "Can't They Dance the Polka," all from the singing of Richard Maitland:

As I was a-walking down Paradise Street,
A dashing young damsel I chanced for to meet.

I hailed her in English and hailed her all round.
I hauled up along side and asked where she was bound.

She's left the Black Garden bound for the Shakespeare.
We went in and had two big glass of beer.⁴

As I was a-walking down Paradise Street,
A dashing young maiden I chanced for to meet.

And then arm in arm we went walking around.
We went all the way down on [Lion's Head?] ground.

We stopped on the corner of old London Road,
And we went in for a drink at the Three [unintelligible].⁵

In Amsterdam there lived a maid,
And she was mistress of her trade.

Her eyes were like twin stars at night,
And her cheeks they rivalled the roses red.

I asked this fair maid where she lived;
She rooms up on [Skidanski?] Heights.

I took this fair maid for a walk,
For I like to hear her pretty talk.⁶

In Amsterdam there lived a maid,
And she was mistress of her trade.

This last six months I've been to sea,
And boys, this maid looked good to me.

Her cheeks were like the roses red,
And her eyes were like twin stars at night.⁷

Last two years I've been to sea,
And saved up sixty pounds.
I left my ship just yesterday,
And to Boston I am bound.

While walking down to Chatham Street,
A fair maid I did meet,
Who kindly asked me to see her safe home
(She lived on Bleeker Street).

Says I, "My dear young lady,
I'm a stranger here in town.
I left my ship just yesterday,
And to Boston I am bound."

"Now, if you'll only come with me,
The distance is not far."
This fair maid seemed so kind to me.
I quickly hailed a car.⁸

Shipmates if you'll listen to me,
I'll tell you in my song,
Of things that happened to me
When I came home from Hong Kong.

As I walked down through Chatham Street,
A fair maid I did meet,
Who kindly asked me to see 'er safe home,
She lived on Bleeker Street.

Says I, "My dear young lady,
I'm a stranger here in town.
I left my ship just yesterday,
And for Boston I am bound."

"Now, if you'll only come with me,
You can have a treat,
You can have a glass of brandy dear,
And something nice to eat."

"And if you'll only come with me --
The distance is not far!"
This fair maid seemed so kind to me.
I hailed a passing car.⁹

As one can see, there are a number of similarities among these different songs, and while the likenesses are mainly conceptual, there are also a few lines that one might describe as "formulaic," that is, they are derived from a traditional verbal pattern through which similar ideas are expressed. All the same, the number of verbal differences in these scenes far outweigh the similarities, and also, an examination of the variation that exists in the different renditions of the same shanty reveals that most of the verbal patterns on which the re-creation of the song is based are established by the song itself and not the tradition, per se. Obviously, the conflicting meters are partly responsible for preventing the shantyman from relying completely on the same series of formulas and formulaic patterns, but as we shall see, metrical inconsistency does not automatically deter him from adapting some formulaic elements to different songs. One might describe Maitland's performance of these scenes as being "partially formulaic," that is, he relies partly on material obtained from the tradition in general, but mostly on the verbal elements he associates with each individual song. One should also note that the shantyman's reliance on "the words" of the song is especially strong in the shanty, "Can't They Dance the Polka," for with the exception of the first stanzas and the addition of an extra stanza in the second version, there is very little variation in the two texts. As we shall see, rote memorization does play a significant role in the

performance of some songs.

Thus, the shantyman tends to think not in terms of his tradition, but on the narrower level of "the song," and in many instances, traditional formulas and formulaic patterns play only a secondary role. In fact there are a number of songs that the shantyman is perfectly capable of re-creating in performance that are utterly devoid of traditional formulaic elements. Richard Maitland has recorded three versions of the shanty, "The Alabama" -- which we shall examine in greater detail later on -- and they consist of six, nine, and twelve stanzas. Thematically, the texts are identical, but there is considerable variation in the actual verbal components embodied in them; and yet, there is not a single traditional formulaic element in any of the three separate renditions.

The shantyman's orientation toward the song raises a fairly important question about some of the elements in the scenes examined above. When Parry defined the formula, he added the condition that the element under discussion must demonstrate that it serves a compositional function. Some of the elements in the scenes clearly meet this requirement, such as the following formulaic pattern:

Last two years I've been to sea
And saved up sixty pounds.

This last six months I've been to sea
And boys, this maid looked good to me.

The basic concept behind this pattern, that is, the given idea it expresses, is the condition of a sailor after returning from a voyage; in the first place he has money in his pocket, and in the second place, he is "disposed for carnal women." By virtue of these elements not being present in both renditions of the same song, one can see that they are not regarded by the shantyman as immutable parts of "the song," or at least of the scene, for in the second version of "A-rovin'," this element is used in the scene dealing with the sexual intercourse between the sailor and the prostitute, and, obviously, in both contexts its inclusion is appropriate. Thus, the re-creative function of this pattern is clearly visible.

But what of those elements that, although formulaic, are used in a stable manner by the shantyman every time he sings a particular song, such as:

As I was a-walking down Paradise Street,
A dashing young maiden I chanced for to meet.

While walking down to Chatham Street
A fair maid I did meet.

Do these elements serve a re-creative purpose, or are they merely "part of the song?" Were the shantyman an oral poet who has to rely on such patterns in performance, then the re-creative function would be assured, or conversely, were he a contemporary performer who has simply memorized an oral text from a book or a recording, then the re-creative function would definitely not be present. But his method of

performance falls somewhere in between the two, and, therefore, one cannot be absolutely sure of the role played by such elements. As Lord states:

The oral singer thinks in terms of these formulas and formulaic patterns. He must do so in order to compose. But when writing enters, the "must" is eliminated.¹⁰

This is not to say that formulaic patterns play only a very minor role in shanty performance, for there are a number of songs that are re-created solely through the manipulation of traditional verbal moulds, and this is particular noticeable in the lyric shanties. But even here, the shape of the pattern is sometimes determined by the shanty in which it is used, which again underlines the shantyman's orientation toward the song. A system dealing with ports and their trades and entertainments, which is found in several shanties, is generally worded along the following lines:

Were you ever in Quebec,
Stowing timber on the deck?

Were you ever in Dundee?
There are some pretty ships you'll see.¹¹

In the shanty, "Tommy's Gone to Hilo," the system takes on a slightly different form in order to agree with the theme established by the title:

My Tommy's Gone to Liverpool;
To Liverpool and then to school,

And now he's gone over to Quebec,
Where they load lumber on the deck.¹²

Since the shantyman's method of performance is not totally reliant of the manipulation of formulaic patterns to express ideas, one would expect the role of these elements to be altered in some way in this tradition. Indeed, such is the case, for in contrast to the organic reworking of material that occurs in oral performance, the manipulation of formulaic moulds in the re-creation of shanties is very often quite conscious and deliberate. This is evidenced in part by the fact that formulas -- that is, stable verbal units designed to express a given idea -- of greater than half a line in length are quite rare in this tradition. In other words, the shantyman is attempting to vary his material at even the most basic level. Furthermore, in the shanties that consist mainly of formulaic elements, there is often only one pattern through which most, if not all, of the stanzas are created, although some shanties are based on two or three such patterns. Thus, in this tradition, one of the most important functions of the traditional formulaic mould is that it provides a convenient and reliable means of "improvisation."

In addition to the formulaic patterns and other verbal elements that the shantyman associates with a particular song, there are a number of other elements that may be incorporated into a text, and this is usually done to extend the song for the duration of the task. This is the process commonly referred to as "stringing-out." This facet of shanty performance plays a much greater role in the hauling

8

shanties than in those used to accompany heaving tasks due to the greater importance of the function of co-ordination in the former context. Not surprisingly, then, the formulaic lines and stanzas most often used for this purpose are those encouraging the men to pull harder. Lines alluding to the seaman's desire for liquor are repeatedly used as stringing-out elements, as well, and one also finds lines referring to the ship's afterguard, its voyage, the weather, and a number of other topics fulfilling this function.

When adding material to the standard solo pattern, the shantyman usually relies on lines that are either formulas or formulaic, but he sometimes includes elements in his shanties that appear to be of his own invention; after all, one of the blessings attendant with the advent of literacy is that originality attains an aesthetic value. This raises the question of whether or not "improvisation," in its truest sense, actually plays a role in shanty performance, for, like the term "oral tradition" itself, this word has both a general and a specific meaning. The term "improvisation" is often loosely applied to refer to the re-creative style of performance, regardless of the precise nature of the tradition, and it is in this sense that the word is used by shanty researchers and, sometimes, performers. As we have seen, this useage is somewhat inaccurate, for it tends to imply a rather aleatory process, which oral composition clearly is not. In its more precise useage, improvisation indicates "inspiration of the moment."¹³

and, therefore, one is faced with the problem of attempting to ascertain whether or not some shanty lyrics were actually "made up on the spur of the moment."

Some shantymen claim to have the ability to do this, though they are more pragmatic about the subject than the blues singer who, describing his art as "air music," professed that the words came to him out of thin air at the time of performance and ascribed this rather mystical gift to a change in the atmosphere about 1942.¹⁴ An informant of A.L. Lloyd's once told him, "...I was a good hand at making up little rhymes which would fit in; I should think of the next verse while they were singing the chorus."¹⁵ Such lines and stanzas appear to be something different from what one would regard as formulaic constructions, for Lloyd adds:

...like all shantymen, he would fall back on certain commonplace rhymes or jingles when he had exhausted both the stock of verses associated with the tune and his capacity for extemporizing topical tags.

Unfortunately, he does not provide any examples of his informant's extemporized stanzas, and so it is difficult to tell whether or not they were actually composed on the spur of the moment or based on some kind of formulaic pattern.

There are some elements that one occasionally finds in recorded or printed texts that appear to be the result of improvisation, but while the creation of these lines and stanzas is not totally based on the manipulation of

formulaic elements, it is usually based on some kind of pattern of repetition. Harlow gives an example of this kind of construction in a version of "Tommy's Gone to Hilo."

The shantyman, a fellow named Brooks, has taken the first line of the opening stanza of the shanty and a variant of the second line and divided them to form the first lines of two separate stanzas. The improvised elements, which carry the "essential idea" being expressed by the singer -- a slur against the mate -- are embodied in the second lines of each couplet:

Oh, Tommy's gone, what shall I do?
The mate is sore and so are you.

Oh, Tommy's gone and left us, too;
We like the mate -- like hell we do!¹⁶

This type of stanzaic structure is extremely rare, and in this instance, the singer has most likely used the first lines as a stalling device to give himself more time to properly form the second lines, which are clearly improvised.

In other instances, the patterning becomes more obscure, for it tends to be based more on an idea than on a verbal mould. An element that Patrick Tayluer sometimes adds to his shanties deals with the naming of a vessel, and although this idea is standard in some shanties, Tayluer incorporates it into songs in which the identification of a specific vessel is neither a usual occurrence nor necessary in the shanty in question, for example, in "Blow, Boys, Blow," "Reuben Ranzo," and the "China Clipper" version of "A Long

Time Ago" (Tayluer normally sings each solo line twice to form a stanza, which is a style adopted by many singers):

Oh, you'll see her name on the bow forever,
You'll remember that she's a Yankee clipper;
It's the Ellen-May Ropes from Boston river.¹⁷

His first and last and only ship
Was the Morgan and she's known everywhere.¹⁸

Now, you all remember the ship that I mean,
It was the Cutty Sark, her name was so high.¹⁹

There are a couple of things to note about these items, and the first is the prosaic nature of the lines, for there is not a coherent meter embodied in any one of them. This kind of awkward line construction is very common in the shanties, and it often occurs when the shantyman attempts to introduce non-formulaic elements into a song, as is the case here, or when he uses a formulaic element in a song with a conflicting meter, or when he re-creates a shanty that is not based on formulaic patterns, and since he is faced with any of these conditions on numerous occasions -- the latter two more often than the first -- he becomes quite proficient at incorporating such lines into his shanties by making minor adjustments in the melody. Thus, the problem for the shantyman in dealing with such elements is not so much a question of putting his ideas into words

as of fitting the words to the song. Surprisingly enough, this is usually executed quite smoothly, but there are instances where either substantial alteration of the melody is required to accommodate the words; or the thought is carried over into the next line, and sometimes even into the chorus; or the shantyman creates garbled and confusing lines that make little or no sense.

Second, there is more to the basic concept behind these elements than simply the naming of a ship, for an idea that is also common to all of them is the shantyman's acknowledgment of his audience's familiarity with the ships or type of ships in question:

You'll remember that she's a Yankee clipper;
Was the Morgan and she's known everywhere.
Now, you all remember the ship that I mean.
It was the Cutty Sark, her name was so high,

Thus, while the verbal components of these items vary considerably, there is a unifying conceptual thread underlying the composition of all of them, and when we come to examine the shantyman's use of his formulaic material, we shall find that in this tradition there is sometimes a partial breakdown of the bond between the "essential idea" and the verbal element that expresses it. In some ways, such elements bear a vague resemblance to the "conceptual formulas" discussed by James Ross in his analysis of Gaelic folksong, which, like the shanties, are not part of a metrically coherent tradition. This type of pattern, he states,

...emphasizes the continuity of the idea which is found in the "formulaic system," while at the same time its metrical diversity throws the fact of variation of expression into greater prominence.²⁰

There are some fundamental differences between the manifestation of conceptual formulas in Gaelic folksong and in the shanties, but these will be discussed more completely later on. For the moment, we need only point out one fact about the particular items under discussion, and that is, they are not part of a traditional pattern; it is as if this shantyman has devised his own means of coping with the expression of this idea. Therefore, these elements are not, strictly speaking, formulaic, but neither are the products of "inspiration of the moment," for they are based on a pattern, albeit a rather crude one. In effect, Tayluer's handling of this idea is another example of the betwixt and between process that is so characteristic of the shantyman's method of performance.

One might also point out that the choice of vessels is determined by the thematic content of the shanty. "Blow, Boys, Blow" deals specifically with the conditions that exist on board Yankee clippers, and while the Ellen May Bopes is not a ship of any particular note, she is possibly a vessel with which the shantyman has some connection. In the other two examples, the shantyman names what are perhaps the most famous vessels associated with the trades that provide the backdrop for these two particular songs. "Reuben Ranzo" is a song about the whaling industry, which immediately

brings to mind the Charles W. Morgan, and likewise, the Cutty Sark is without a doubt one of the most, if not the most, famous of the China clippers. Thus, these elements are clearly logical, almost obvious, additions to the respective songs.

There is one other kind of element that may be added to a basic solo pattern, but in this instance, improvisation is definitely not a factor. The shantyman will sometimes create, or more often borrow from another song corpus, an element which he then incorporates into a shanty and repeatedly uses in future performances of that song. Such an item can be noted in Maitland's versions of the shanty, "A-rovin'":

Her eyes were like twin stars at night,
And her cheeks they rivalled the roses red.

Her cheeks were like the roses red,
And her eyes were like twin stars at night.

These items are not formulaic, at least, not as far as the shanties are concerned, nor are they standard elements in this shanty. They are, on the other hand, fairly common elements in other types of songs, and their inclusion here would appear to indicate a borrowing by Maitland from some other song corpus. Another method of altering the basic text is related to this type but on a larger scale, and that is the borrowing of the words to a ballad, popular song, or poem and using them as solo material. Doerflinger, for example, gives two versions of the shanty, "Blow the

"Man Down," composed in this manner, one containing a version of the ballad, "The Two Corbles," and the other based on the poem, "The Sailors' Grace."²¹

Thus, while one should not completely discount the possibility of improvised lines and stanzas, one must stress caution against overemphasizing the frequency of their occurrence in the shanties, for much of what has been presented by collectors as "improvised" is based on patterns of repetition well known to the shantymen involved. Even in those instances where the singer appears to be departing quite substantially from his tradition, such as in Tayler's use of specific ships in the aforementioned songs, there is generally a pattern of some kind that guides him in the creation of those elements. The most important thing to note about such items is they indicate that the shantyman does not feel bound to his tradition, and, in fact, given the aesthetic importance of variation in this context, one suspects the singer feels almost obligated to expand on his tradition in some way. Such expansion, however, is not achieved through the wholesale alteration of a song in performance, but through the interpolation of one or two new ideas into the basic thematic substance of the song. There are rare instances where a particular shantyman's version of a song is radically different from the traditional norm, but as we shall see, the alteration does not occur at the time of performance. For the most part, the re-creation of a shanty text is guided, as Lloyd states, by three

basic principles: first and most important, each shanty has at least one standard solo pattern associated with it, and most have more than one; second, there are various formulaic elements that can be added to almost any text, usually for the purpose of stringing-out; and third, the shantyman occasionally exercises his right to a little poetic license.

Thus far, we have seen how the shantyman's literacy and his notions of improvisation, coupled with the diverse nature of his tradition, affect his general approach to the re-creative process, and in his method of composition, there are two primary features that stand out as being in sharp contrast to an oral style of performance. First, most of his verbal material is derived from the song rather than from a traditional poetic language. Second, in consequence of his orientation toward the song, the shantyman tends to rely on traditional formulas and formulaic patterns as secondary compositional elements, and in this role they are of more use to him as a convenient means of altering or extending a song than as a stable means of expressing an idea.

In addition to affecting the function of formulaic elements in this tradition, the above factors also influence the manner in which the shantyman reworks his basic formulaic material, and while his use of such patterns is sometimes very similar to that of an oral singer, the situation often becomes confused through his desire for

innovation and the metrical inconsistency of his tradition. In order that we may fully appreciate the idiosyncracies of formulaic construction in the shanties, we must first examine more closely the mechanics of the formulaic mould.

As an aid to composition in performance, the primary value of the formulaic pattern is that it provides the singer with a verbal template so that he is not faced with the problem of deciding what words to use, but at the same time, it must allow some room for variation in order that the performer may adapt it to the specific situation with which he is contending, and, therefore, the key to the formulaic mould must lie in the relationship between its static and variable components. The principal features of the pattern are, of course, the grammatical elements, and there are three fundamental aspects of any phrase or sentence that have a direct bearing on the formulaic pattern: first, it is made up of words; second, the words are arranged in a given order; and third, they express an idea. Thus, the formulaic mould consists primarily of lexical, syntactic, and conceptual components. With regard to this last element, some writers have questioned Parry's inclusion of the phrase, "given essential idea," in his definition of the formula. Carl Lindahl, for example, has declared it "...doubly redundant: What idea is not essential? Does not any random group of words express an idea?"²² The fact remains, however, that in the oral mind, the link between the idea and the verbal element that expresses it is inseparable.

Having established the basic components of the mould, we should now examine the motivations for variation. In most oral traditions, the main reason for formulaic adjustment is in order to satisfy the metrical and acoustic requirements dictated by the particular type of poetry in question, assuming, of course, that one is dealing with a poetic tradition. Needless to say, metrical accuracy is determined by the stability of the verbal components, but the need for the singer to adapt his ideas to different metrical environments has been emphasized by Ross's study of Gaelic folksong, in which different songs are constructed in different meters, and also by Lord's analysis of Yugoslavic epic where the bard may express his ideas in four, six, or ten syllable structures. In this latter study, the author shows that metrical alteration does not present much of a problem for the singer, for the tradition provides him with different formulas, which express essentially the same idea, to meet these various metrical conditions.²³ In Gaelic folksong, the demands placed on the singer by metrical inconsistency are also not very great, for Ross states:

What evidence is available shows that there is less variety in the expression of formulas in the repertoire of a single singer than in the tradition considered as a whole. That is to say, verbal formulas are more common in a single singer's repertoire.²⁴

By "verbal formulas," Ross means elements that are metrically consistent, and in this statement, he would appear to be indicating that while metrical variation does occur at

the larger level of the tradition, it is not a problem with which the individual singer has to cope. Exactly how the metrical inconsistency of the tradition is manifested, whether on a regional basis or through different types of songs -- waulking, dance, etc. -- he does not say. In these two oral traditions, then, either the means to accommodate metrical variation is provided by the formulaic language, or the rhythmic inconsistency of the tradition as a whole does not significantly affect the re-creative process of the individual performer. This latter case also points to the essential difference in the conceptual formula as analysed by Ross and as manifested in the shanties, for in this tradition, each singer must deal with the problem of adapting his ideas to songs with different metrical structures.

As for satisfying the acoustic requirements of the poetry, the means to this end is also usually provided by the traditional language, and in an analysis of the diction of Old English poetry, John Niles shows that there are some formulas that, in fact, do not express an essential idea, but whose main function is to meet these acoustic criteria. He exemplifies this claim with a formulaic system in which the stable component is a word meaning "of noblemen":

This constant element is fairly negligible in meaning. In the heroic context of Beowulf, to say that a man is a "son of noblemen" is simply to say that he is a man; to say that treasure is "treasure of noble-men" is simply [to] say that it is treasure.

In the case of this system, then, the constant element supplies the alliteration, while the variable element carries the burden of the meaning.²⁵

As Niles points out, however, the conceptual component of the pattern is the more important of the two, and when coupling these items, the singer must take into account the meaning of the formula that satisfies the acoustic requirements, although in some instances, the semantic relationship can be fairly loose. In the shanties, acoustic formulas are sometimes used in rather dubious contexts, but there is usually some kind of conceptual agreement between the two components of the pattern. Take, for example, the use of the element, "through frost and snow," in the following hauling lines:

We'll hoist her up through frost and snow.

 And we'll make her go through frost and snow.²⁶

The fact that such lines could be sung while raising a yard in the tropics quite readily shows the conceptual redundancy of the formula in this context, but one might allow that "through frost and snow" is, in a loose sense, semantically compatible with these hauling formulas, for "travelling" of some kind is an underlying concept in any of the contexts in which it is found:

Across the Alps through frost and snow.²⁷

Around Cape Horn through frost and snow.²⁸

Also, if one abandons the literal in favour of the metaphorical, then the hauling lines make even more sense, for the unpleasantness of exposure to "frost and snow" may be viewed as being connotative of the unpleasantness of hard work. Thus, while the acoustic formulas' specific meaning is often of secondary importance, their application is governed fairly rigidly by the conceptual component of the mould. Furthermore, one might care to query the degree of conscious manipulation involved in the reworking of these patterns, for, as is the nature of the formulaic language, such elements are often wedded through habitual usage; their linkage is generally a reflex action, and the contexts in which they "make sense," either literally or metaphorically, are determined traditionally.

In general, the poetic components of the formulaic pattern are of considerable importance in oral traditions, for here, much of the "art" of the re-creative process lies in the metrical and acoustic relationships of the poetry. In the shanties, these poetic considerations are sometimes taken into account by the shantyman, but they are not considered an indispensable part of the songs, for in this tradition, the art of the re-creative process lies mainly in the re-creation itself. The simple fact that the shantyman can "improvise" his songs is his chief claim to fame, and consequently, rhyme, while preferred, is not

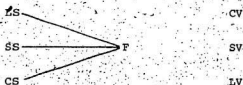
essential, and the metrical structure of lines will often vary considerably, even within a single text.

The formulaic pattern, then, consists primarily of lexical, syntactic, and conceptual components, and while the metrical and acoustic aspects are, in a truer sense, conditions to be met rather than actual components of the mould, they do have an important influence on formulaic variation. The manipulation of formulaic material is not, however, a foolproof operation, and one sometimes finds minor, and occasionally major, departures from the metrical and acoustic patterns normally embodied in a tradition. In the shanties, one even finds instances where the singer's ideas become clouded in a confused jumble of words or phrases. Thus, for the purposes of this thesis, we shall employ the term "re-creative accuracy" to signify the ability of the singer to maintain poetic uniformity and also to his ability to express his thoughts clearly.

In performance, the re-combining of formulaic elements is guided by one general principle: the less the singer has to rely on his own powers of innovation, or, in the case of the shantyman, tries to rely on his own powers of innovation, the more "accurate" his reworking of formulaic material will be. Thus, the most basic structure that exists in a re-creative tradition is the formula, that is, an element whose lexical, syntactic, and conceptual components are unchanging and firmly unified; when the singer wishes to express an idea, the complete verbal element is

already there at his disposal. As one can see from the following diagram, stability is the predominant force and no variation of the element is required. (In this figure and the others that follow, a solid line indicates a predominant force and a broken line indicates a balance of forces.)

Figure 22: Stability of components in the formula:



Abbreviations:

LS - Lexical stability
 SS - Syntactic stability
 CS - Conceptual stability
 CV - Conceptual variation
 SV - Syntactic variation
 LV - Lexical variation

In the shanties, such elements consist of half-lines, lines, and stanzas, but needless to say, the likelihood of variation increases in direct proportion to the size of the verbal unit, particularly since the shantyman is deliberately attempting to vary his material as much as possible. In fact, to find stanzas, and even whole lines, that exist in stable form, one cannot really look beyond the repertoire of the individual shantyman, for at the larger level of the tradition, one is bound to find considerable variation.

in these longer elements. A stanza that Richard Maitland uses quite consistently is the following hauling formula:

Now, it's growl you may but go you must; 29
If you growl too much your head they'll bust.

Stan Hugill, on the other hand, gives two responses to the initial line; the one given above and "It matters not whether yer last or fust."³⁰ Even, in Maitland's singing, verbatim repetition of the formula is not guaranteed, for in another song he sings:

Growl you may, but go you must.
If you growl too loud your head they'll bust. 31

Such minor change does not really constitute variation of the basic formula, for in this context, the words "much" and "loud" are roughly synonymous.

Thus, while formulas occupying a line or an entire stanza do exist, they are so rare as to be a rather insignificant part of the tradition. Consequently, most shanty formulas consist of half-line units, and since the shantyman composes a line at a time, the most significant role of the formula within this tradition is as a stable element within a formulaic system. This by itself does not immediately separate the shanties from oral traditions, for Niles states that half-line formulas are the basic compositional element in Old English poetry, as well.³²

When analyzing the relationships between the stable and variable components of a pattern, one soon realizes

that to divide the poetic diction of the re-creative performer into formulas and formulaic systems is a slight oversimplification of the matter, for, in reality, there are different types of moulds, and the delineation may be made on the basis of which component or components establish the pattern. One of the simplest patterns in the shanties involves the juxtaposition of half-line formulas. The following hauling lines, all taken from the repertoire of Richard Maitland, are created through the manipulation of two groups of formulas, one conceptual and the other acoustic. The elements that are not underscored appear only once in Maitland's songs, but one should not rule out the possibility that they are, in fact, formulas, for we are working with a rather limited sample of his material:

Hoist her up from down below
We'll hoist her up through frost and snow
Oh, we'll hoist her up and show her clew
Now, pull away and show her clew
Now, pull away, my bully boys
Now, one more pull and we'll show her clew
Now, one more pull and that will do
Now, one more pull and then belay
Oh, one more pull and we'll send her alo'
Up aloft that yard must go
Now, up aloft from down below

The dozen or so elements embodied in these lines comprise the basis for the majority of Maitland's hauling lines, and as one can see, the creation of these lines is achieved through a very simple process. Again, the accent is on stability, particularly in the conceptual and syntactic components. The different combinations of formulas

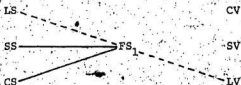
have virtually no effect on the essential idea established in the first half of the line, and each time an element is used it occupies the same position in the mould. While this latter fact may seem insignificant in view of the conceptual versus acoustic functions of the two groups of formulas, one will note that the shantyman does not attempt to alter the rhyme either by inverting the formulas, as in, say, "From down below we'll hoist her high," or by coupling two of the conceptual elements in the same line, as in, "We'll hoist her up, now, pull away." Some hauling formulas can exist in either half of the line, and usually, when the position changes, so does the function; for example, the element, "We'll (will) make her go," provides the essential idea in the first of the following lines and the rhyme in the second:

And we'll make her go through frost and snow
Oh, we'll sing a song that will make her go

Such elements, however, are fairly uncommon in hauling lines.

In the lines given above, there is considerable lexical variation among the lines based on any one formula, but since most, and perhaps all, of the second half-lines are also formulas, there is a clear balance between the forces of stability and variation in the lexical components. Thus, this particular type of pattern can be represented as follows, and the diagram clearly shows that true variation plays a very limited role in the creation of these lines:

Figure 23: Stability and variation "hauling" systems:



Of particular interest in these hauling lines is the fact that the shantyman has a variety of formulas that express exactly the same idea, and this stands in contrast to Parry's "Law of Economy," which holds that the singer will normally rely on the same verbal element or pattern to express an idea whenever it arises.³³ This is due, in part, to the stringing-out function of these particular lines, for they are without a doubt the most widely used formulas in Maitland's repertoire, and while they can be, and are, added to almost any song, they are sometimes used as the basis for an entire text, such as in the halyard shanty, "So Handy":

Handy high and handy low,
Oh, it's handy high and away we'll go.

Hoist her up from down below,
We'll hoist her up through frost and snow.

We'll hoist her up from down below,
Oh' we'll hoist her up and show her clew.

One more pull and that will do.
Oh, we'll sing a song that will make her go.

Now, it's growl you may but go you must;
If you growl too much your head they'll bust.

Now, one more pull and then belay,
And another long pull and we'll call it a day.

Now, handy high and handy low.
Oh, one more pull and we'll send her alo'.

We'll hoist her up and show her clew,
And we'll make her go through frost and snow.³⁴

Thus, the shantyman requires a variety of hauling formulas so that he may compose or expand a song without relying too heavily on repetition, and in some instances, the shantyman composes a stanza by merely re-wording a single line simply to avoid repeating himself, regardless of whether or not the two lines establish a rhyme, as in the following:

We're the gang that can do it again!
Oh, we're the boys that'll do it once more!³⁵

This general desire for variation of expression is also a factor contributing to the multiplicity of forms in which a basic idea may be presented, for even when formulas are not used in concentrated groups, the shantyman will sometimes vary the content of a line for reasons other than to meet different metrical or acoustic demands. In the following stanzas, for example, there is no change in the meter or rhyme, nor in the essential idea:

Around Cape Horn through frost and snow
An' up th' coast to Callao.³⁶

Around Cape Horn you've got to go;
That's the way to Callao.³⁷

The formula, "Around Cape Horn," (figures prominently in the shanties, for as we noted in an earlier chapter, it is a sort of instant metaphor for a hard voyage, particularly when coupled with a reference to Callao or Valparaiso, the two major nitrate ports. As part of a mould, this element is regularly used in either half of the line, but in this instance, the formula tends to maintain its conceptual importance regardless of its positioning due to its metaphorical importance within the tradition as a whole, and also, its function as a rhyming agent is fairly insignificant. The following lines embodying this formula are, again, from the singing of Richard Maitland:

Around Cape Horn through frost and snow
Around Cape Horn you've got to go
Round Cape Horn I had to go
We're bound away around Cape Horn
In a red-hot yank bound round Cape Horn
And then back again around Cape Horn

This system, then, is similar to the last except that the syntax is subject to variation, but since the alteration amounts to little more than an inversion of the formulas rather than a complete reworking of the syntactic arrangement of the line, there is a balance between stability and variation in the syntactic component of the mould. Therefore, this system may be represented as follows, and, again, variation is not a significant force:

Figure 24: Stability and variation in "Cape Horn" system:



With regard to the syntactic variation in this system, one will note that the location of the constant element is, to a certain degree, pre-determined. When "Around Cape Horn" is the only essential idea in the line, the formula invariably occupies the first half of the line, but when the elements with which it is coupled also impart specific information -- the type of ship making the voyage, or indications of being outward or homeward bound -- then it is used in the second half. Thus, the location of this formula is subject to a greater degree of stability than one might first imagine.

Perhaps the most common type of formulaic pattern in the shanties is that which Lord calls a "substitution system,"³⁸ and this is a syntactic pattern that provides a verbal basis for the expression of related ideas. Again, the reason for the importance of this type of pattern in this tradition is that it provides a very simple means of song expansion, and in many instances, a single pattern will form the basis for an entire text. Therefore, it is best to examine such patterns from the point of view of

stanzaic, rather than merely line, creation. In a pattern dealing with ports and their trades and entertainment, the actual substitution system is embodied in the first line and simply involves the naming of a port, or in the case of the ubiquitous Cape Horn, a sailing region. In the second line, a prominent feature of the locale is mentioned, and the response or responses for a particular place are usually pre-determined.

Wuz ye ever in Quebec,
Launching timber on the deck?

Was ye ever in Mobile Bay,
Screwin' cotton on a summer's day?

Wuz ye ever off Cape Horn,
Where the weather's niver warm? ³⁹

This pattern is found in a number of shanties, though in some cases, it must be modified slightly to fit into an unusual stanza structure, as, for example, in the triplet structure of the shanty, "Donkey Riding." The extra line poses no problem for the shantyman, for he usually has a number of alternate response lines and he simply tacks one of these onto the end of the couplet:

Wuz ye ever off Cape Horn,
Where the weather's niver warm,
When ye wish to hell ye'd niver been born? ⁴⁰

Even when an alternate line is lacking, as is the case with the Mobile Bay stanza, there is generally an associated line of some sort that can be added. In the version of the

shanty, "Lowlands," which deals with cotton screwing, one often finds a couplet such as,

Five dollars a day is a white man's pay,
A dollar and a half is a colored man's pay.⁴¹

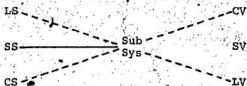
Thus, for the final line of the stanza in "Donkey Riding," the shantyman gives:

Wuz ye ever down Mobile Bay,
Screw in' cotton all the day,
A dollar a day is a white man's pay?

Substitution systems are particularly helpful in showing how the conceptual component of the formulaic mould has a limiting effect on formulaic variation. These patterns offer great latitude to the singer in terms of the specific elements they can accommodate, but at the same time, they tend to establish a basic theme from which the performer will not depart under normal circumstances. In the system under consideration, for example, the shantyman confines himself mainly to ports-of-call and does not attempt to integrate into the system other "places" that are also important parts of his occupational environment, such as types of ships and boarding houses, or places that figure prominently in his life in general, such as taverns or brothels. Thus, the conceptual component tends to maintain a fairly tight control over the elements that may be incorporated into the mould. It will allow considerable variation in the specific idea, but the general idea is quite unyielding.

The substitution system, then, is characterized by syntactic stability, and a balance between stability and variation in the lexical and conceptual components:

Figure 25: Stability and variation in substitution systems:



One can, however, cite instances in the shanties where certain elements represent a moderate departure from the basic conceptual component of the mould. In the shanty, "Hanging Johnny," for example, the shantyman usually confines himself to hanging relatives -- parents, grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, etc. -- and rarely does he use this song to seek imagined revenge on boarding masters, shipping masters, prostitutes, or merchants:

Now, they call me Hanging Johnny,
Oh, they say I hang for money,

They say I hung my daddy,
Oh, they say I hung my mammy.

I hung my sister Sally,
Now, they say I've hung the fam'ly. 42

In Huggill's version, however, we find as victims the "mate and skipper" and a "copper," but in these lines, the mood of the verb, oddly enough, is altered from the indicative to the subjunctive:

I'd hang the mate and skipper,
I'd hang 'em by their flippers.

I'd hang a ruddy copper,
I'd give him the long dropper. 43

As one can see from this example, the workings of the conceptual component of the mould are not easily determined in the absolute, for while verbal elements may be printed on a page and visually analyzed, it is much more difficult to grapple with the abstract and intangible qualities of an idea as it exists in an individual's mind. One might prefer to regard the conceptual component as a kind of focusing device built into the mould which tends to channel the singer's thoughts in a certain direction but which can be subjected to some conscious manipulation. Thus, deviation from the basic idea is a likelihood, particularly in verbal traditions where individual inventiveness is a valued feature of the performance. As we shall see, however, if the singer departs too significantly from the basic idea, the re-creative utility of the mould will fail him.

As was mentioned before, substitution systems are probably the most common formulaic patterns in this tradition, and while they can be applied individually or in smaller groups in many different shanties, there is usually one song, sometimes two or three, whose re-creation is based largely on the manipulation of a particular pattern. The ports and trades system, for example, provides most of the solo material for three shanties: "Highland Laddie,"

"Donkey Riding," and, in a slightly altered form, "Tommy's Gone to Hilo." The following patterns are also found in a wide variety of texts, either as individual stanzas or in a series, but they are most commonly associated with the shanty, "Blow, Boys, Blow," which deals with the conditions that existed on board Yankee clipper ships:

How d'yer know she's a Yankee liner?
By the stars an' bars streamin' out behind her.

How d'yer know she's a Yankee packet?
She fired her guns and we heard the racket. 44

(The following solos are from Tayluer's version of the shanty and are sung twice in each stanza).

Now, who is the captain of 'er?

Why, it's Yankee Pete from Massandatter.

Oh, who is the chief mate of 'her?

Why, it's Big Black Pete, the Boston slugger.

Oh, what do you think they'll have for dinner?

It's a monkey's heart and a donkey's liver. 45

Each of these questions has a variety of traditional responses associated with it. Hugill gives a list of thirty-nine answers for the questions referring to the ship's afterguard and ten for those referring to the food served on board in addition to the responses he includes in his own texts.⁴⁶ Most shantymen would probably know several different responses for each type of question, for the primary value of the substitution system is that it provides

a fairly simple method of textual expansion, and thus, the singer can compose a song of considerable length through the manipulation of three basic ideas.

The elements described thus far are the basic kinds of traditional moulds that guide the singer in his creation of lines and stanzas, but patterns also exist on a larger level. As was mentioned earlier, themes, by Lord's definition, do not exist in the shanties, for the brevity of these songs renders such elements unnecessary. There are, however, unified sequences of lines and stanzas that often form the whole or part of a shanty text, and these elements are probably more akin to Lord's formulaic "runs," which he describes as "...larger groups of lines which the singer is accustomed to use often, and through habit they are always found together."⁴⁷ In Maitland's songs, a sequence dealing with the "Black Ball Line" appears in a number of texts, and this pattern is invariably developed in two stages. First, a young sailor announces his intention of sailing on a vessel owned by one of the larger shipping lines and often a famous ship is mentioned. Second, the sailor obtains a berth on such a vessel and finds that the state of affairs on board to be less inviting than he first imagined. Hugill gives a third stage involving the voyage of the ship and the brutality of the officers,⁴⁸ but this part is not present in any of the texts recorded from Maitland. The following version of this run is from a rendition of the shanty, "A Long Time Ago," in which it forms the entire text:

When I was young and in my prime,
Oh, I thought I'd go and join the line.

I thought I'd join the Black Ball Line,
I joined the Isaac Webb in that line.

And for a soger caught a shine;
I thought I'd go and be the one.

And as a sailor I really did shine
When I sailed in the Webb on the Black Ball Line.

Just see the Black Ballers preparing for sea;
You'd split your sides laughing the sights for to see.

There's tinkers 'n' tailors, shoemakers and all,
Oh, they're all shipped as sailors on board a Black
Ball.⁴⁹

In this particular sequence, the first, penultimate, and last stanzas are by and large fixed and are present in almost every rendition. In essence, they act as a frame for the run itself. These elements are not, however, without their re-creative usefulness, for "When I was young and in my prime" is a very common shanty formula, and in other situations, this shantyman uses variants of the "tinkers 'n' tailors" line when he wishes to portray the inadequacy of a ship's crew. The middle stanzas are subject to a considerable degree of variation, and as one can see from the above text, this generally involves the manipulation of half-line formulas and formulaic elements. There are other basic patterns that can be incorporated into this sequence, such as the following groups of stanzas; the first taken from an alternate version of "A Long Time Ago," and the second from a rendition of "Roll the Cotton Down";

And as a sailor caught a shine
In a lot they called the Black Ball Line.

Now, come all you young feller's that's going to sea,
And just listen a while unto me.

I'll sing you a song and I won't keep you long.
It's all about the Black Ball line.⁵⁰

And as a sailor caught a shine;
I shipped on board of the Black Ball Line.

Now, the Black Ball Line is the Line for me;
That's when you want to go on a spree

In the Black Ball Line you can cut a big shine;
For there you'll wake at any old time.⁵¹

While the versatility of this pattern would appear to offer the shantyman an excellent opportunity for expanding the song within the run itself, this does not seem to happen very often. In the versions recorded from Maitland, the middle stanzas rarely exceed three in number, and in some instances, the shantyman adds standard stringing-out elements to the song after the conclusion of the run.

There are also sequences based on substitution systems, and while most stanzas based on such patterns are generally found in groups, these particular elements differ in that the stanzas are arranged in a coherent narrative sequence rather than in a more or less random fashion. The most common of these runs in the shanties is that known as the "anatomical progression," which is found in many songs but is most often associated with the shahty, "A-rovin'." The stanzas in this sequence are based on

an interplay between a sailor's sexual advances to a woman and her reactions, and both lines are based on a substitution system:

I put me arm around her waist,
Sez she, 'Young man, yer in great haste!'

I put me hand upon her knee,
Sez she, 'Young man, yer rather free!'

I put me hand upon her thigh,
Sez she, 'Young man, yer rather high!'⁵²

In the appropriate context, the shantyman usually goes farther and can draw the sequence out to considerable length, but, in the interest of decency, most printed versions of the song end the sequence at this point, and so shall we.

The formulaic patterns examined above constitute the basic types of traditional moulds one is likely to encounter in the shanties, and, in essence, they are similar to the kinds of patterns found in almost any body of oral literature. As Lord and others have repeatedly shown, these moulds are the most important feature of a re-creative tradition, far more so than the "tags" and "commonplaces," and the continual reworking of these elements is imperative in order that the singer may meet the demands of the situation he is facing. In oral traditions, the pattern allows the singer to express his ideas consistently and coherently, and at the same time meet the rhythmic and acoustic demands of the poetry. In the shanties, the mould serves this

function but to a lesser degree, for it also serves to provide the singer with a simple means for Textual expansion. A similar phenomenon, we noted earlier, occurred during the verbal phase of the ballad tradition in the northeast of Scotland.

Yet, the degree of variation to which a given pattern may be subjected is limited by certain tensions operating within the traditional language, and as we have seen from the patterns analyzed above, the force of stability tends to outweigh the force of variation. One would imagine it unlikely that all the patterns manifest in other traditions will fit into such neat structures as those given here, for we are specifically dealing with a tradition in which the formulaic language plays a rather limited role. At the outset of this discussion, however, our basic principle was that the mould is of greatest use to the singer when it provides him with the means to compose "accurately," and this precision may be judged on the basis of clarity of expression, and metrical and acoustic uniformity. When adhering to these stable and rather basic types of moulds, the shantyman usually achieves this accuracy.

But the shantyman is by no means an expert at formulaic composition, and when creating lines and stanzas, he sometimes is forced, and at other times chooses, to sidestep his tradition and go it alone. One of the greatest obstacles that prevents the shantyman from using his formulas and formulaic elements freely throughout the tradition is

the metrical inconsistency of the songs, but, at the same time, he is rarely bothered by such academic concerns as scansion, and the only metrical constraint to which he normally adheres is the four beat measure established by the music, and in some cases even this rule goes for naught.

When creating lines he feels at liberty to add or omit syllables as he chooses by making minor, and sometimes major, alterations in the melody. In Tayluer's version of "Sally Brown," a song that generally accomodates eight syllables per line, we find the following line with thirteen:

Aw, Sally Brown, I been a long while a courtin'
ya.⁵³

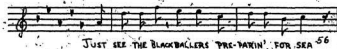
and in Maitland's version of "Paddy, Get Back," the number of syllables per line varies from eight to fifteen.⁵⁴

Such irregularities are commonplace in the shanties, and yet, in most cases, the extended or shortened line is made to fit smoothly into the four beat rhythm of the tune.

The hauling lines, due to their importance as stringing-out elements, have alternate formulaic patterns pre-constructed to fit different rhythms, as in the following trimeter versions:

We'll bust or break or bend her!
We'll haul away for roses.
We'll haul and haul together. 55
We'll haul for better weather.

Not all the formulaic ideas encountered in the shanties, however, have these alternate forms; in fact, the hauling formulas are the exceptional case. In some instances, the shantyman is able to transpose the pattern or formula without altering its normal wording by giving greater or lesser note values to the syllables in the line. In the "Black Ball" sequence, for example, the elements that make up this run are themselves not metrically consistent: the stanzas in the first part of the run are structured in iambic tetrameter while the concluding formulas are in dactylic tetrameter. As a result, in any performance of this sequence, the shantyman must deal with the problem of fitting some of the lines into a melody with a conflicting rhythm. In a shanty such as "A Long Time Ago," in 6/8 time, the latter stanzas fit naturally into the established rhythm, whereas those at the beginning of the run are given a quarter-note for each stressed syllable and an eighth-note for each non-stressed syllable:



The reverse process occurs when the longer line structure has to fit into a song in 4/4 time, such as in the following version of "Roll the Cotton Down":



WHEN I WAS YOUNG AND IN MY PRIME



JUST ~~SEEK~~ BLACKBALLERS PRE-PARIN' FOR SEA 57

Quite often, the simple alteration of a melody is not sufficient to allow for the smooth adaptation of a formula into an alien rhythm, and when this occurs, the shantyman tends to abandon his traditional phraseology and compose his lines through a sometimes prosaic arrangement of elements embodied in the standard verbal pattern. This is where the "conceptual formulas" come into play, although, in this tradition, it is better to describe these elements as "conceptual moulds" since they are subject to a considerable degree of variation. As manifest in the shanties, the conceptual mould usually contains the bare bones of a verbal pattern, but it is generally not concrete enough to allow the shantyman to maintain the metrical and acoustic requirements of the poetry, and, in some instances, even the concept becomes confused in an obscure conglomeration

of words.

In Maitland's repertoire, a pattern that he sometimes uses for the ending of a song is based on the following stable elements: Cape Horn, Callao, saltpetre, and return. In the shanty, "A-rovin'," these elements are easily presented in the 4/4 rhythm, through the manipulation of traditional phrases:

Around Cape Horn through frost and snow
An' up the coast to Callao,
To load saltpetre, (sic) for Liverpool,
An' back around Cape Horn again.⁵⁸

In the shanty, "Paddy, Get Back," the singer cannot rely on the syntax provided by his tradition and is forced to compose by re-wording the traditional idea using the stable elements as a guideline:

It was three long months before we got to Callao,
And the ship she was a-called a floating hell.
We filled up there at Callao with saltpetre,
Then back again around Cape Horn.

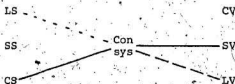
On another occasion, the shantyman sang the last stanza as follows:

We filled up with saltpetre to the hatches,
Then back around Cape Horn to Liverpool.⁵⁹

While the four elements establish a fairly strong conceptual basis for the mould and, to a lesser extent, a lexical pattern as well, they undergo considerable syntactic variation in the different manifestations of this system.

Also, while one might ascribe a balance between stability and change to the lexical components, the tendency is toward variation, as is shown in figure 26.

Figure 26: Stability and variation in conceptual systems:



In this instance, the departure from the basic formulaic pattern has little effect on the shantyman's ability to express his idea, though his means of expression does tend to be quite prosaic. The main problem caused by this type of construction is that it inhibits the singer's ability to compose metrically consistent lines or to establish any kind of a rhyming scheme. One should also note that the method of line construction used is not entirely dependent on the particular shanty being sung, for in the last line of the second stanza from "Paddy, Get Back," the shantyman manages to employ a version of the original pattern by giving greater note values to the syllables "-round Cape Horn." Also, even when the rhythm of a song readily allows for the inclusion of a formula whose syntax is pre-established, the shantyman does not always choose to use it. In a separate rendition of "A-rovin'," Maitland expresses the ideas embodied in two stanzas in one, which in

this instance makes for a very cramped and metrically awkward first line:

Bound around Cape Horn and up to Callao
And then load 'petre for Liverpool.⁶⁰

Obviously, for a formulaic pattern to be truly useful, it should be able to be reworked in a variety of forms, particularly in this tradition where variation has both a functional and an aesthetic value. But the verbal looseness of these conceptual moulds, which play a significant role in shanty performance, tends to hamper the shantyman's "re-creative accuracy."

Patterns based more on an idea than on a verbal mould can also be noted in sequences of stanzas, and the most common example involves the detailing of a voyage by listing the places, landfalls, and/or sailing regions passed along the way. Maitland's "Cape Horn" pattern is a kind of abbreviated form of this type of run, though in most instances, the sequence occupies a larger role in the songs in which it is found. In Patrick Tayluer's version of "Sacramento," which is very loosely based on the "Cape Horn" version of the song given by Hugill,⁶¹ the ship sails northward from Cape Horn through the various wind belts. In the following text, the minor variations in the repeated solos are shown in parentheses:

It was in the year eighteen hundred and forty-nine.

We're going around the Horn and home again!

We sailed away one day in May,
And when we came out into the Bay,

We got into the Bay and then did sail!

Into (Oh, into) the Forties soon we (a-we) did sail.

Now we came to the h-edge of the Trades and there
did sail.

We set our stuns'ls on a quatering wind,

Now, when our sails were full on every stay,
With our old sails and every stay,

She (Oh, she) strained her bustle and dipped
her nose!

Now, our royals one day we took them in.

Oh, the qoldrums came, and came so very slow.

We climbed for days and we climbed for a week!⁶²

While the four stanzas dealing with the working of the sails appear to indicate a change in the concept, they are actually quite closely related to the underlying idea of the mould, and, in effect, the shantyman is merely shifting his focus from the general to the specific. This is similar to the "montage" device, or the "leaping and lingering" effect often noted by ballad scholars.⁶³ The image being presented is that of a ship entering a region where the wind decreases and then re-intensifies. Upon leaving the Forties, the ship enters the "h-edge of the Trades," and as the wind abates, every sail is set. As the ship proceeds, the wind increases, and the royals, the lightest

sails on the vessel, are taken in lest they be carried away. Thus, in spite of the change in the specific image, the shantyman is still building his text by moving the ship from point to point along her course.

In this text, the shantyman has, for the most part, refrained from the use of formulas and formulaic elements and has chosen instead to compose by expressing a traditional idea in his own words. The most obvious problem with the text is metrical uniformity, or rather lack of it. The standard metrical structure of this shanty is iambic tetrameter, but here we find lines containing as many as thirteen syllables. When singing these longer lines, the shantyman manages to maintain the four beat rhythm but only by expanding the normal 4/4 time of the song to 12/8. Several of the lines are marked by prosaic, almost conversational, syntax, and there is one, "With our old sails and every stay," that makes little sense at all. In contrast, perhaps the only line that has any poetic merit, the one entailing the feminine personification of the vessel, is formulaic. Thus, when the shantyman abandons the traditional patterns of the shanties, it may well be to the fascination of folksong collectors, but it is very often to the detriment of his texts.

The most important ramification of these very loose formulaic structures is that they indicate a breakdown in the bond between the "given essential idea" and the verbal pattern that expresses it, and the extent to which this

occurs in the shanties can be shown quite clearly through an instance where the shantyman has attempted to use a common syntactic pattern to express a new idea. A complete version of the shanty, "A-rovin'," consists of three scenes: encounter, sex, and departure. The second scene is normally based on the anatomical progression, and the third is usually patterned on its own series of formulas, but in Tayluer's version of the shanty, this latter segment is based very loosely on the syntactic structure of the anatomical run. As a result, the shantyman is unable to complete his thought within the boundaries of the stanza and must carry it over into the chorus:

So at last we chatted and chaffed away;
Said she, "Young man, you're goin' today!"
When all I want to leave is for me, fair maid.

When I laid my hand on her shoulder then,
She looked at me and gently cried,
"You're goin' away today, you are, so farewell
now." 64

One suspects that "improvisation" is the cause of this mistake -- if it may be termed so -- not only because of the awkwardness of the lines, but also because of the excessive emotion. Tayluer is prone to sentimentality in his songs about women, whereas the general attitude in the shanties toward the instability of a sailor's relationships is one of resignation or indifference; a woman is more or less a plaything that is enjoyed and then discarded for another. There are a few shanties in which women are

praised, but the adoration is usually directed toward their physical attributes and the sailor's love for and devotion to a woman are rarely expressed. These stanzas, then, signify a deliberate departure from the traditional norm, both verbally and thematically, and in his attempt to improvise, the shantyman has, in effect, pushed the pattern beyond its limits. Thus, as this example and the others given previously show, when a singer tries or is forced to depart from the basic traditional pattern, either verbally or conceptually, he is likely to undermine his ability to compose with a fair degree of "accuracy," which again emphasizes the fact that formulaic composition is not a totally free re-combinatory process, but one that does have certain limitations.

In the shanties, then, there are essentially two types of compositional patterns. First, there are the lines and stanzas created through the manipulation of formulas and other fairly stable kinds of traditional patterns, and when relying on this type of element, the shantyman is usually able to express his ideas clearly and maintain metrical and acoustic uniformity in his texts. These elements are basically the same as patterns found in almost any re-creative tradition, and the only major difference is in their function; for in the shanties, these basic moulds are valued not only as a reliable means of expressing ideas, but also as vehicles for textual expansion. Second there are the more freely formed constructions where traditional ideas,

or the ideas associated with a particular song, are remoulded to fit the situation at hand with little regard being shown for established verbal patterns or the metrical and acoustic aspects of the poetry. These latter elements result in part from the shantyman's belief that he must improvise his texts and also from the metrical inconsistency of the songs, which makes the transference of formulaic patterns from song to song a rather difficult, or at best awkward, process.

These looser types of patterns probably represent a later development in the verbal phase of the tradition that came into being when shantymen attempted to adapt existing formulas and moulds to songs with rhythms for which they were not suited, or to introduce new ideas or the ideas expressed in non-formulaic songs into the shanties, and still maintain the ability to vary the forms at will. The textual evidence to support this hypothesis is not absolutely conclusive, due to the multiplicity of compositional forms -- fixed lines, formulas, formulaic patterns, and looser elements -- one is likely to encounter in any given text, and in relation to this, one should bear in mind that virtually all existing texts were collected from shantymen who gained their experience in the latter half of the century. However, the shanties generally regarded as being the oldest, particularly those that emanated from the cotton ports, tend to exhibit a greater number of lines and stanzas that are recognizable as formulas than do the later songs, particu-

larly the narrative shanties, which tend to be composed of lines and stanzas that are either fixed or show little trace of a coherent formulaic diction.

FOOTNOTES

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⁵Lomax, AFS 2516a.

⁶Lomax, AFS 2516b.

⁷William Main Doerflinger, Shantymen and Shantyboys (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951), p. 56.

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¹⁰Lord, p. 130.

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¹²Lomax, AFS 2522b.

¹³V. V. Radlov, Proben der Volksliteratur der türkischen Stämme (St. Petersburg, 1866-1904); as cited in David Buchan,

The Ballad and the Folk (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 56.

¹⁴Evans, p. 114.

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¹⁶Frederick Pease Harlow, The Making of a Sailor, or Life Aboard a Yankee Square-Rigger, Marine Research Society, No. 17 (Salem, Mass.: Marine Research Society, 1928), p. 259.

¹⁷William Main Doerflinger, Sea songs and shanties collected from Capt. Patrick Tayluer, recorded 1942; Library of Congress, Archive of Folk Culture, LWO 3493, reels 47B-50A (7 1/2 ips, 7" reel), AFS 6591a.

¹⁸Doerflinger, Shanties collected from Tayluer, AFS 6593b.

¹⁹Doerflinger, Shanties collected from Tayluer, AFS 6589a.

²⁰James Ross, "Formulaic Composition in Gaelic Oral Literature," Modern Philology, 57:1 (1959), 7.

²¹Doerflinger, Shantymen, pp. 21-22.

²²Carl Lindahl, "Recent Folkloric Approaches to Oral Formulaic Theory," Folklore Preprint Series, 6:5 (1979), 5.

²³Lord, pp. 34-35.

²⁴Ross, p. 9.

²⁵John D. Niles, Beowulf: The Poem and its Tradition (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1983); as cited in Ms. copy of chapter V, "Formula and Formulaic Systems in Beowulf," pp. 5-6.

²⁶ Lomax, "So Handy," AFS 2529a.

²⁷ Doerflinger, Shantymen, "Boney," p. 6.

²⁸ Doerflinger, Shantymen, "A-rovin'," p. 57.

²⁹ Lomax, "So Handy," AFS 2529a.

³⁰ Stan Hugill, Shanties from the Seven Seas (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), p. 293.

³¹ Doerflinger, Shantymen, "Poor Old Man," p. 14.

³² Niles, Ms. p. 8.

³³ Milman Parry, "Studies in the Epic Technique of Oral Verse-Making. I. Homer and Homeric Style," Harvard Studies in Classical Philology, 41 (1930), 86.

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³⁵ Doerflinger, Shantymen, "So Handy," p. 12.

³⁶ Doerflinger, Shantymen, "A-rovin'," p. 57.

³⁷ Doerflinger, Shantymen, "A Long Time Ago," p. 39.

³⁸ Lord, p. 35.

³⁹ Hugill, "Heiland Laddie," p. 145.

⁴⁰ Hugill, p. 148.

⁴¹ Doerflinger, Shantymen, p. 80.

⁴² Doerflinger, Shantymen, p. 31.

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- ⁴⁵Doerflinger, Shanties collected from Tayluer, AFS 6591a.
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- ⁴⁹Lomax, AFS 2515b.
- ⁵⁰Doerflinger, Shantymen, p. 39.
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- ⁵²Hugill, p. 48.
- ⁵³Doerflinger, Shanties collected from Tayluer, AFS 6586a.
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- ⁵⁶Lomax, AFS 2515b.
- ⁵⁷Doerflinger, Shantymen, pp. 33-34.
- ⁵⁸Doerflinger, Shantymen, p. 57.
- ⁵⁹Doerflinger, Shantymen, p. 55.
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- ⁶²Doerflinger, Shantymen, pp. 68-69.

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Chapter VII

"IT'S A LONG, LONG TIME SINCE I MADE UP THIS RHYME":

SHANTY COMPOSITION AND PERFORMANCE - II

Whereas the formula or mould is the basic verbal element in this tradition, the stanza is normally the basic structural element, and in most cases, this unit consists of two solo lines, each one punctuated by a refrain. The composition of stanzas in performance is not usually a serious problem for the shantyman, except when he decides to deviate from a basic traditional pattern, for the response or type of response is generally conditioned by habitual usage, and even when a choice of responses is involved, the options are often limited by the context. There are, of course, certain principles of stanzaic construction and "exceptions to the rule" that should be noted.

In oral traditions, such as balladry, the balancing of the first and second halves of a stanza is usually quite distinct on a number of levels, but the relationship between the two solos of a shanty stanza is often only thematic and the parallelisms of oral texts are markedly absent. As was noted earlier, even rhyme is not an essential part of stanzaic construction and the absence of acoustic patterns does not necessarily indicate an improvised element. Basically, the solo lines are built on a statement and response pattern quite similar to that found in the blues:

Either the response part expands, illuminates, justifies, explains, or gives grounds for the statement; or it offers an antithesis to them (sic), so that the statement and response form a confrontation.¹

The statement and response pattern in the shanties sometimes consists of two simple sentences coupled together to present a unified image or action, and this type of construction, which is highly characteristic of Parry's adding style, is most readily apparent in hauling sequences where the stanza is built through the juxtaposition of two lines based on a standard formulaic pattern, but it also occurs in other instances, such as in the following:

I served my time in the Black Ball Line.
It was there I wasted all my prime.²

I packed by bag and I'm going away.³
I'll make my way down to Mobile Bay.

More often, the response line represents a continuation of the sentence established in the initial line, and, as in oral poetry, the enjambement tends to be non-periodic and can range from two separate statements joined by a conjunction,

I thought I'd go and join the line,
And as a sailor caught a shine.⁴

to a basic statement followed by a prepositional phrase or a subordinate clause:

I shipped on board and I'm going away,
Across the sea to Liverpool town.⁵

I took this fair maid for a walk,
For I liked to hear her pretty talk.⁶

Thus, the stanza may also embody a fairly basic compound or complex sentence.

In the shanties, however, the number of lines requiring enjambement is far greater than one normally finds in an orally composed text. Usually, each line does contain a complete thought if not a complete sentence, for example, when a prepositional phrase or adverb clause is used for the initial solo line, as is frequently the case in introductory stanzas:

Away down south where I was born,⁷
I used to work from night til morn.

As I was a-walking down Paradise Street,
A dashing young maiden I chanced for to meet.⁸

At the same time, there are instances where the line concludes in the middle of a thought:

When the pilot left the ship the captain told us
We were bound around Cape Horn to Callao.⁹

He was known all over the world as (twice)
As the worst old bastard on the seas! (twice)¹⁰

Needless to say, this kind of enjambement occurs only in the more freely formed elements, and yet, even when this loose method of composition is adopted, these rather awkward line

formations are relatively rare. Furthermore, in the material examined during the preparation of this thesis, there is not a single instance where a thought was left incomplete at the end of a stanza, barring, of course, texts in which each solo line was repeated twice, such as in the second example above.

Thus, a stanza normally contains one complete thought or two related thoughts, and each couplet stands as a unified whole, but as one can see, the rules governing stanzaic construction are not exactly rigid, at least not in comparison to a tradition such as the ballads. We have already noted on several occasions that the verbal phase of the shanty tradition is characterized by a tendency towards stability in some areas, counterbalanced by a leaning toward variation in others. In stanzaic construction, stability is apparent in the habitual coupling of lines, and in this facet of performance, the shantyman is not without parallels, for in an examination of recorded blues, John Barrie found that the ability of some performers to recombine their various formulaic elements was rather limited. He writes:

...a singer will often show a preference for a particular coupling of formulas, so that in his blues, that coupling becomes ossified -- a set piece committed to memory. Lines and stanzas of this kind are widespread...and some singers, at least, had clearly lost the potential for creative change that is an essential feature of any truly oral formulaic tradition.¹¹

We have already seen something of the predetermined linkage of formulas in the "ports and trades" system where only one activity is associated with certain places, such as Quebec or Mobile Bay, and in Maitland's customary usage of the "Growl you may but go you must" stanza. In other cases, one finds rather unusual combinations in which the paired lines demonstrate little overt relationship. Maitland, for example, invariably pairs versions of the following lines:

Away, haul away, git around the corner, Sally!
 Away, haul away, Saccarappa sailors!¹²

"Round-the-corner-Sally" is a seaman's euphemism for a prostitute, and thus, there is a loose connection among the lines by virtue of the sailor's natural desire for women. Still, whenever this shantyman uses a version of the line, "Get around the corner, Sally," he invariably follows with the above line or a variant of it, such as, "We'll make you, Saccarappa!"¹³ With a singer such as Maitland, however, the ossification of traditional elements is not a significant problem and the examples given here are merely a few isolated cases that appear in his repertoire, but if one were to consider ossification from the point of view of the stability of elements as embodied in a specific shanty or run, which is perhaps justifiable in this context given the shantyman's basic orientation toward the song, then the number of ossified elements would increase dramatically. An example from

Maitland's singing that comes readily to mind is the "tinkers 'n' tailors" stanza which is used very stably in the "Black Ball Line" sequence but is found in different shapes in other areas. The habitual coupling of lines is even less apparent in Patrick Tayluer's shanties for a number of reasons: first, in his method of performance, stanzas are generally created by repeating each line twice; second, traditional formulas are not a prominent feature in his compositions; and third, he is far more prone to depart from the traditional norm than is Maitland, that is, his desire for innovation in his means of expression is much stronger.

Variation in the stanzaic patterning is apparent in instances where there is a breakdown in the unification between the first and second solo lines and also in the deterioration of the stanza as a basic structural unit. An example of a shantyman deviating from the standard stanzaic format was noted earlier in Harlow's version of "Tommy's Gone to Hilo," in which the singer took the first line of the opening stanza and a variant of the second line and divided them to form the first two lines of two separate stanzas. The second solos consisted of improvised elements indicating the crew's disrespect for the mate. In this particular instance, then, the initial lines of each stanza are related as are the second, and yet there is no internal unity, but as was mentioned previously, this type of stanzaic structure is extremely uncommon.

In shanties consisting mainly of semi-stable elements, the singer will sometimes repeat or omit a line with the result that the couplets that follow occupy the last line of one stanza and the first line of the next, as in one of Maitland's versions of "Stormalång":

We buried old Stormy off Cape Horn,
Our sails were split and the main mast gone.
Our sails were split and the main mast gone.
Our eyes were wet but 'twas not with rain,
Old Stormy's gone and we'll ne'er see again,
We rolled him up in a silv'ry shroud.
We lowered him down with a golden chain.
How I wish I was old Stormy's son,
I'd build a ship of a thousand ton.¹⁴

The breakdown of the stanzaic structure is not nearly so noticeable in performance as on the printed page, for what one hears is a continuous string of lines, each one punctuated by a chorus. By the same token, the deterioration of the stanza as a compositional unit does tend to indicate the shantyman is building his text through the juxtaposition of more or less stable couplets, or, in other words, is compiling rather than composing. In a second version of this song by the same shantyman, all of the above elements are included, though the arrangement is slightly different.

The construction of stanzas by repeating each solo line is a style of composition adopted by many singers, although Harlow maintains that it signifies an inferior

shantyman.¹⁵ The advantages of the style are two-fold: first, it helps to string-out the song, and second, it gives the shantyman more time to think about what is coming next. A curious feature of this style of composition is that the coupling of related lines ceases to be a primary compositional concept, and the texts tend to have a stichic quality. A pair of stanzas often represents the same unified whole found in a normal stanza, but just as often, the thought is carried on for a number of stanzas, as in the following segments from Taylor's version of "Blow, Boys, Blow," the first containing three lines/stanzas and the second containing four:

Now, how do you know that she's a Yankee clipper?
Oh, her spars are of gold and her masts of silver.
She's got a bronco mate and a bronco skipper.

Well, how do you know the skipper of 'er?
Oh, you'll see her name on the bow forever,
You'll remember that she's a Yankee clipper;
It's the Ellen May Ropes from Boston river.¹⁶

Thus, the coupling of related ideas is the most common form of stanzaic construction in the shanties, but it is not the only one, and as we shall see, even Maitland sometimes abandons his customary binary stanza patterns and composes line by line. This multiplicity of stanzaic forms is another indication that the tradition is going through a state of

flux as literate men, who are in the habit of memorizing their songs, attempt to grapple with the notion that shanties are improvised.

When re-creating a shanty, the singer is able to vary many aspects of the piece, but at the same time, he is guided in his composition by a number of stable or semi-stable elements. David Evans found a similar style of composition in the blues tradition of Drew, Mississippi, after the mass influx of "race records" into the community. He writes:

Sometimes a group of traditional blues elements remains fixed in a performer's repertoire. Usually this group of elements consists of the melody, instrumental part, and a single stanza of the text, normally the opening stanza. These elements form a stable unit which we shall henceforth call a "core".... To the core the singer adds stanzas drawn from his repertoire of traditional formulas at the time of performance. These added stanzas vary with each performance by the singer.¹⁷

Evans's concept of the "core" also applies to the shanties, though there are a few differences in the specific elements involved. First, there is no instrumental accompaniment in the shanties. Second, while the opening stanza of a song tends to be fixed, it can be subject to a certain amount of variation, and such change can consist of minor lexical variation that embodies no significant alteration in meaning, as in the following stanzas which Maitland uses to introduce two separate renditions of "Roll the Cotton Down,"

Away down south where I was born,
I used to work from night til morn. 18

Away down south where I was born,
I worked in the cotton and the corn. 19

or it can involve a complete alteration of the basic idea, as in the stanzas that Maitland uses to begin different renditions of the shanty, "Can't They Dance the Polka":

Last two years I've been to sea,
And saved up sixty pounds.
I left my ship just yesterday,
And to Boston I am bound. 20

Shipmates if you'll listen to me,
I'll tell you in my song,
Of things that happened to me
When I came home from Hong Kong. 21

In this latter example, in fact, the opening stanza is one of the few parts of the song that is subject to variation. Thus, for the initial stanza of a shanty to be fixed is a general, but not an absolute, rule.

Third, the additional stanzas do not always vary from performance to performance; their order and shape in any given rendition of the song may vary, and a common means of shortening a song is through the omission of stanzas. But although one occasionally encounters a text that appears to be a more or less random collation of formulaic elements, the wholesale alteration of stanzaic content is a very rare phenomenon. Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, every song the shantymen sings has one or more standard solo :

patterns associated with it that serve as a guide to any performance. Some shanties, such as "Hanging Johnny," and "Hello Somebody," have only one such pattern, whereas others have a considerable number; Hugill lists six for the tune of "Blow the Man Down"²² and eight for the shanty, "A Long Time Ago."²³ Also, as was mentioned earlier, a common means of "improvisation" sometimes adopted by the shantyman is to borrow the words to a popular song or ballad and use them as solo material.

With songs based largely on one formulaic pattern, particularly those based on a substitution system, composition is a very simple matter, for the shantyman has enough versions of the pattern already at hand to compose a song of considerable length, and the mould usually does allow room for even a moderately gifted singer to extemporize to some extent. In songs of this type, which are predominantly lyric, it is not important that the shantyman adhere to the established theme for the entire song, and there is a wealth of other formulaic material he may add for the purpose of stringing-out. One should not get the impression, however, that these alternate patterns are merely reserve elements that the shantyman relies on only when he has exhausted his supply of stanzas based on a given solo pattern, and this is particularly true of the hauling lines, for while such elements may not be directly related to the theme embodied in a particular song, they do have an important relationship to the work being performed. Consequently, the shantyman

will often resort to the use of stringing-out elements after only a few stanzas, as in the following version of "Hanging Johnny," sung by Maitland:

Now, they call me Hanging Johnny,
Oh, they say I hang for money,

They say I hung my daddy,
Oh, they say I've hung my mammy,

I hung my sister Sally,
Now, they say I've hung the family.

Oh, we'll hang, and hang together,
And we'll hang for better weather.

Now, get around the corner, Sally,
Oh, we'll make you, Saccarappa!²⁴

One will note that in the fourth stanza, the standard formula, "We'll haul and haul together," has been altered to agree with the basic theme of the song. This alteration is common in other versions of this shanty, but the lexical change does not constitute a change in the essential meaning of the line, that is, one should view the referent as being labouring sailors hanging onto a halyard fall rather than condemned men hanging by their necks.

Nor does the shantyman always save his stringing-out material until the end of the song, for in some instances, he interpolates alternate elements at various points in the shanty merely to break up the monotony of the repetitive pattern, as Maitland does in the following version of "Tommy's Gone to Hilo":

My Tommy's gone, what shall I do?
My Tommy's gone, what shall I do?

My Tommy's gone to Liverpool,
Tommy's gone to Liverpool,

Now, Tommy's gone and I'll go too,
My Tommy's gone and I'll go too.

Now, pull away and show her clew.
We'll hoist her up and show her clew.

One more pull and that will do.
One more pull and that will do.

Tommy's gone to Baltimore
And where they carry the cotton ashore.

Now, pull away, my bully boys,
Oh, pull away and make some noise.

Now, Tommy's gone to Mobile Bay.
Tommy's gone to Mobile Bay.

A-screwing cotton by the day.
A-screwing cotton by the day.

My Tommy's gone, they say to Bombay.
Tommy's gone, they say to Bombay.²⁵

The repetition of solo lines this many times in a single text is highly uncharacteristic of Maitland's style, and why he does so here is a complete mystery. A second version of this shanty by the same singer consists of five stanzas with couplet solos, and all but the first are based on the "ports and trades" system. In that text, the ports visited are Liverpool, Quebec, Baltimore, and Singapore, and the opening stanza is a combination of stanzas one and three in the text given here. Thus, the composition of these very basic shanties often involves little more than a loose handling of one or two formulaic moulds. One should perhaps

note here that there are no heaving shanties based on such simplistic patterns, for in that area of the work context, the emphasis is on the diversionary function of the shanty, and thus, songs with a bit more substance are preferred.

Earlier we noted that the various elements that make up an oral text are woven together through an intricate network of syncopated and chiasmic structures which give the overall piece an annular, rather than a linear, shape. As one can see in the above texts, shanties do not generally exhibit such meticulously organized structures, and re-creation is often achieved through the mere collation of standard and stringing-out elements rather than through the interweaving of thematically related components. One might argue that the absence of annular patterns and other typically oral rhythms is because the songs are lyric, and therefore the tight control over the development of the text, which the oral structures provide, is not necessary. David Evans, however, has discovered through his analysis of Bessie Smith's early blues that annular relationships do exist in oral lyric poetry.²⁶

In shanty composition, then, the linear composition of texts is the general trend, and this replacement of the oral structures by linear development is the same change in compositional style that Buchan found in the verbal phase of the ballad tradition in the northeast of Scotland. He writes:

Instead of seeing the ballad as one coherent dovetailed piece, where the individual scenes, characters, and narrative strands are integrally welded together by the binary, trinary and annular patterns into an overall narrative conception, the singers began to view it as a story where simply one thing followed another. It was as if a three dimensional view of the ballad were succeeded by a two dimensional view.²⁷

But while annular patterns are not an inherent compositional feature in the shanty tradition, they are occasionally found in some texts, such as in the following version of "Lowlands," sung by Maitland:

I was born in Virginia lowlands:
I worked all day down on the farm.

I packed my bag and I'm going away.
I'll make my way down to Mobile Bay.

They screw the cotton and are paid by the day.
Five dollars a day is a white man's pay.

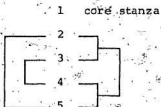
I thought I heard our old man say,
That he would give us grog today.

I shipped on board and I'm going away,
Across the sea to Liverpool town.²⁸

The latter four stanzas of this text are arranged in a chiasmic structure; that is, stanzas two and five are related thematically and to a lesser extent verbally, and stanzas three and four are related conceptually by virtue of the work and reward theme. On land, the labourer's compensation is his daily wage, whereas at sea, the sailor's only immediate reward for his efforts is the small drink that he might receive from the captain. There is a further balance between stanzas two and three and stanzas four and

five by virtue of the land versus nautical motifs. The structure of this particular text can therefore be represented as follows:

Figure 27: Annular patterns Richard Maitland's version of "Lowlands";



Although one might be initially surprised to find annular patterns in a shanty text, their appearance is actually quite easily explained. The fact of the matter is that oral structuring is not an immutable compositional template that is imposed upon the singer and into which he compresses his ideas in the way one might put together a jigsaw puzzle, for if such were the case, once the template were broken, so to speak, such patterns would undoubtedly disappear forever. Rather, annular patterns result from the singer's conceptual approach to re-creation. As Buchanan puts it, "The habit of thinking in balances... is intrinsic to the oral mind."²⁹ (Underscore added). In other words, it is the singer's habitual patterns of thought that determine the structure of his texts, and in an oral society, the singers always think in these terms. The shantyman, on the other hand, sometimes thinks in terms of balances

and appositional relationships, but as a member of a literate community, he is more accustomed to thinking linearly, and, as a result, linear development is the most common structure in his texts. It is interesting to note that in other renditions of the shanty, "Lowlands," Maitland does not always compose by balancing images as he does in the above text. A shorter version is composed through the balancing of the reward themes, whereas another version consists of a linear progression of stanzas embodying only the themes relating to the cotton industry. In the first of these texts, the opening stanza contains only one solo line, and the reason for this is that the shantyman began the song by singing the first chorus. This feature of shanty performance is not common in printed versions, but it was frequently resorted to on board ship so that the crew would be able to instantly identify the shanty that was being sung. One will also note that in this instance, the couplets are staggered as a result of this type of introduction, though the shantyman is able to return to the normal stanzaic structure by adding a third line to the second sequence:

Ch: Lowlands, lowlands, away, my John.

Five dollars a day is a stevedore's pay,

Ch: Five dollars and a half a day.

A dollar a day is a nigger's pay.
I thought I heard our old man say,

That he would give us grog today,
When we were leaving Mobile Bay.³⁰

In the Virginia lowlands I was born,
I worked all day down in the corn,

I packed my bag and I'm going away;
I'll make my way to Mobile Bay.

In Mobile Bay where they work all day,
A-screwing cotton all the day,

Five dollars a day is a white man's pay,
A dollar and a half is a colored man's pay. ³¹

In some shanty texts, the progression of thoughts appears to be random and inconsistent so that the overall text does not really embody a unified theme. Researchers working with other traditions have found similar constructions and state that in most cases there is a loose strand of logic that binds these compositions together. Bruce Rosenberg, for example, writing of a rather garbled sermon given by the Rev. Rubin Lacy, states: "Now little enough logic holds in this sermon, yet all the stories are related if we use the associational leaps in Lacy's mind as a guide."³² Similarly, one can sometimes trace the "associational leaps" that the shantyman makes in the composition of his texts. In a rendition of "Haul Away, Joe" collected by Doerflinger,³³ Maitland begins with the line, "Away, haul away, rock and roll me over," which is a hinting line challenging the men at the falls to pull hard enough to knock the shantyman -- who is doing little other than holding onto the rope -- off his feet. To this he adds, using a repetition of the word "roll" and a rhyme for "over," the common expression, "Away, haul away, roll me in the clover!"

Working along the lines of this theme, He proceeds with a line making a euphemistic reference to a prostitute, "Away, haul away, git' around the corner, Sally!" This line is, of course, followed by its customary partner, "Away, haul away, Saccarappa sailors!" Lines five and six are a standard couplet that appear in many, if not most, versions of this shanty, and their inclusion at this point is precipitated by the mention of "sailors" in the preceding line:

Aw, but once I was in Ireland a-digging turf
and praties;

Aw, but now I'm in a Yankee ship a-hauling on
sheets and braces.

Lines seven through nine are a triad based on the line, "Aw, but once I had an Irish gal and she was fat 'n' lazy," and are clearly related to the preceding pair through their syntactic structure. Again, this sequence is standard in most versions of this song.

While associational leaps may be of help to the researcher in determining the train of thought that guided a singer in the re-creation of a particular piece, they are of little use to the singer as a reliable compositional aid in the way that the balancing of concepts is to the oral performer. In fact, what this method of re-creation does underline is a breakdown in the annular thought processes and that the singer is now composing through a steady progression from one idea to another.

By placing even a moderate amount of emphasis on the compositional importance of associational leaps, a researcher would appear to be allowing for a re-creative tradition in which there is a substantial degree of overt, and some might even suggest creative, variation in different renditions of a single song, for the phenomenon would seem to suggest that at the overall level of the song the singer is composing more or less blindly and is not exactly sure of what he is going to sing before the performance begins. Given Evans's comments on blues performance, it is possible that such is the case in that tradition. In the shanties, one occasionally encounters a text that appears to be composed in this aleatory fashion, but on the whole there is little evidence to suggest that the singer tries to radically alter the basic song in performance, for as was mentioned before, he is normally guided by a stable solo pattern. In Maitland's versions of "Lowlands," for example, the stanzas are drawn from a fairly stable stock of material; and in a second version of "Haul Away, Joe," the shantyman varies relatively little of the song except for the order in which the stanzas appear and the specific hauling formulas used. (In this song, as in all sheet shanties, a stanza consists of one solo line and one chorus):

Away, haul away, we'll haul and haul together.

Oh, but once I was in Ireland a-digging up turf
and praties.

Aw, but now I'm in a Yankee ship a-hauling on
sheets and braces.

Oh, once I had an Irish gal but she was fat 'n' lazy.

And next I got a German girl but she was fat 'n'
greasy.

Oh, but now I've got a Yankee girl, she damn near
drove me crazy.

Away, haul away, 'round the corner, Sally.

Away, haul away, oh, Saccarappa sailors.

Away, haul away, we'll bust, we'll break or bend her.

Away, haul away, we'll haul for better weather. 34.

The stability and structuring of Patrick Tayluer's lyric shanties is rather difficult to assess, for two reasons: first, only single versions of his shanties have been collected and, therefore, it is impossible to tell how much and in what way his texts vary from one performance to the next; and second, some of his texts represent such a significant departure from the traditional norm that a comparison with the texts of other singers also provides little insight into his compositional style. At the same time, there are some interesting traits, which may be said to be characteristic of his style of singing, that exemplify the problems that arise when originality of expression becomes a dominant force in re-creative singer's method of performance.

In his version of the outward-bound capstan shanty, "Rio Grande," Tayluer begins with a stanza from a popular song of the period called "The Farmer's Daughter," which was frequently used as solo material for this and a number

of other shanties. (Remember, each solo line is repeated twice):

"May I come with you, my pretty maid?"

"You can please yourself, young man," she did say.³⁵

There follows a series of six stanzas that appear to be of Tayluer's own invention, but again, the degree of genuine improvisation involved in the creation of these lines is difficult to determine. The lines embody a relatively coherent "farewell" theme, which is a standard inclusion in many capstan shanties, and a formulaic treatment of this concept is generally worded along the following lines:

Our anchor's aweigh an' the rays we will get,
Them Liverpool jodies we'll never forget.³⁶

Oh, farewell to Sally an' farewell to Sue,
An' you on the pierhead it's farewell to you.³⁷

Tayluer's handling of this theme is not, strictly speaking, formulaic; but the lines do belong to a pattern in that they exemplify this shantyman's general predisposition for excessive sentimentality. Thus, one might allow that there is a loose conceptual basis underlying the creation of these elements, but by departing verbally from the traditional norm, the shantyman runs into a few problems, and the most readily apparent one is that the clarity of his expression suffers severely; the words he uses fit smoothly into the melodic structure of the shanty, but they say very little:

Now, when I can come to you with open arms.

God bless you, may I only hope for your hand,

Now, there is a thing that I would love to say,

When I return, oh, may I have your hand?

Now, if you come back as you went away.

Oh, I'll marry you when I come back and we'll say,

The last three lines of this sequence exemplify the kind of garbled phraseology that results when this loose method of composition is adopted. The sequence does make sense, but, again, one must analyze the "associational leaps" made by the shantyman for the meaning to become clear. The basic concept behind the run is a dialogue between two people, one about to embark on a journey -- presumably a sailor going to sea -- and the other, the woman, remaining behind. By virtue of the second person subject in line five, one can assume that the lady is speaking, but this line, being only a conditional clause and not a complete sentence, should be continued in the following verse, and yet, in line six it is the sailor who speaks. One might allow, however, that the appropriate additional information is implied rather than stated, that is, in response to the proposal of marriage in line four, the complete thought embodied in line five is "[Yes, I will marry you] if you come back as you went away," to which the sailor replies in essence, "[It's agreed, then,] I'll marry you when I come back...." Thus, one can make sense out of the basic concept behind this

sequence by analyzing the associational leaps in the mind of the singer, but by the same token, one finds a considerable degree of confusion in the actual verbal elements that express this idea if one takes them at their face value.

The last verse of this sequence is yet another example of a line that demands some kind of response since the last three words introduce a continuation of the sentence, but the line that follows, although it represents a logical conclusion to the sequence as a whole, embodies a rather sudden shift in the train of thought and an equally sudden shift from the future to the present tense:

Oh, I'll marry you when I come back and we'll say
Now, our anchor's aweigh and aboard I must go.

Abrupt and awkward transitions of this sort are not at all uncommon in Tayluer's shanties. In his rendition of the shanty, "Roll the Cotton Down," for example, the first six stanzas establish the foundation for a narrative involving a "young lady" and "her man," but then, seemingly out of nowhere, the shantymen's focus of attention suddenly shifts to general images of the cotton industry:

Oh, away down Mobile where I was born,
Oh, we'll roll it down and we'll roll it along.
Oh, a fair young lady I did see.
Oh, they rolled her up and they rolled her down.
Oh, a long time she was waitin' for a date.
But I seen her man who wasn't very [soft?].

Oh, they bring it in in big truck loads.

Oh, the Negro he's a beast to man,
Oh, the Negro says, "Oh, mister man,

Ch: You'se going to roll the cotton down!"

Yes, we'll roll and roll and roll and roll.

Oh, we've rolled our long strip and now our short
strip.³⁸

In this text, the creation of lines two, four, and seven through ten results from the shantyman responding to the chorus, "We'll roll the cotton down," rather than to the narrative pattern, which is seemingly abandoned at the end of the sixth stanza. This interplay between chorus and solo lines is most readily apparent in the eighth stanza in which the chorus represents a continuation of the last solo.

The vagarious nature of this text would appear to indicate that the shantyman is, in fact, attempting to compose blindly without relying on a familiar solo pattern, and as one can clearly see, when this method of performance is adopted, the shantyman's thoughts are almost completely controlled by his powers of association; where they lead, he must follow. In effect, he loses conscious control of the thematic, and therefore the logical, development of the text. To say the least, aesthetically pleasing effects, such as Maitland achieves in the balance of land and sea images in his rendition of "Lowlands," are virtually impossible for the shantyman to attain when composing in this manner.

Some of the more complex lyric shanties are structured in segments, and these elements function in a manner similar to the "scenes" in balladry, that is, they serve as larger compositional units that are linked together to form a text. The shanty, "Blow, Boys, Blow," which deals with an American clipper ship and the conditions on board, consists of three segments: an initial, impressive view of the ship; questions as to the nature of the afterguard, the food served on board, and sometimes her cargo; and a concluding view of the vessel, usually with an unfavourable comment on some aspect of her appearance, rigging, or construction. Not all of these segments, however, are present in every rendition of the shanty, nor is each one always fully developed. Rather, they are the basic stuff upon which the shantyman may draw to compose a text. Maitland's version, for example, is based on a fairly cursory handling of the first two segments. The two opening stanzas of this text are common introductory elements to this song, and many other shanties have similar openings that are related to the chorus rather than to the main theme. By the same token, ending a song by recapitulating the initial stanza, or a variant of it, is also a common feature of shanty performance.

Oh, blow away, I long to hear you,

Oh: Blow, boys, blow!

Oh, blow away, I long to hear you,

Oh: Blow, my bully boys, blow!

Oh, blow today and blow tomorrow,
Oh, blow away all grief and sorrow.

Now, A Yankee ship in the Congo River.
Oh, there's a Yankee ship coming down the river.

Oh, how d'ye know she's a Yankee clipper?
Her spars is white 'n' they shine like silver.

Oh, who d'ye think was the captain of her?
Old Bully Gardner, way from Bangor.

Now who d'ye think was the chief mate of her?
Long John Hathaway from Arizona.

Oh, blow today and blow tomorrow, 39
Oh, blow away all grief and sorrow.

Taylor's version of the shanty is considerably longer and contains all three segments. The first two are largely based on the same patterns given in the above text, though he adds his own feature of naming the specific vessel:

Now, it's blow you winds, how I long to hear you.

Oh, there's a Yankee ship lies a-yonder in the river.

She's a Yankee ship and a Yankee clipper.

Now, how do you know she's a Yankee clipper?

Oh, her spars are of gold and her masts of silver.

She's got a bronco mate and a bronco skipper.

Well, how do you know the skipper of 'er?

Oh, you'll see her name on the bow forever,

You'll remember that she's a Yankee clipper;

It's the Ellen May Ropes from Boston river

Now, who is the captain of 'er?

Why, it's Yankee Pete of Massandatter.

Oh, who is the chief mate of 'er?

Why, it's Big Black Pete, the Boston slugger.
 Oh, what do you think they'll have for dinner?
 It's a monkey's heart and a donkey's liver.
 Now, who do you think is the "doctor" of 'er?
 Oh, it's Slushy Sam, the dirty big brother
 Of Dick Murphy, the boarding master.
 Oh, you'll blow now and you'll blow forever.
 Oh, look at her now as she comes down the river,
 Look at the "scotchmen" all a-hangin' in the riggin',
 Oh, the shine like gold instead of silver.
 Oh, look at the heavy tops'ls on 'er,
 Oh, her course is low and her fores'l forever,
 Oh, her course is low and her fores'l 'fore head 'er.
 Now, it's blow you winds, 'ow I've longed to hear you.⁴⁰

The structure of Tayluer's text can tell us much about the compositional process involved in the re-creation of this shanty. The most salient feature of the text is the "almost staccato" line development which is so characteristic of the adding style, but in this text, as in most other shanties, there are none of the binding parallel relationships among the line groupings that are an inherent feature of an oral text. This leads one to conclude that the singer is composing line by line with little thought for the intertwining and balancing of elements, and consequently, the text has, by comparison to oral texts, a rather bland, linear quality. Maitland's text demonstrates the same kind of structure, although in his case, the stanza is the dominant compositional element.

In a "complete" version of this shanty, that is, one containing all three segments, there is a loose appositional balance between the impressive view of the ship in the first section and the frayed image of her given in the third. This kind of parallel relationship between the beginning and ending of a shanty is quite common, but given the absence of complementary internal structures and the fact that the balancing segments are not considered necessary in every rendition, it cannot be regarded as an inherent compositional structure. At this stage in the tradition, these relationships exist simply because the various elements involved are regarded as being part of the song. Their existence does, however, point to the possibility that the composition of this shanty was, at one time, governed by an oral archetectonic, but that through the passage of time, the more intricate aspects of the compositional process went by the boards until only its most basic elements remained.

These two texts of "Blow, Boys, Blow" provide us with an excellent opportunity to contrast the styles of the two shantymen under discussion in this thesis, for this particular shanty represents one of the few instances where their repertoires overlap. Apart from the obvious difference of couplet as opposed to repeated-solo stanzaic forms, the main point of variation lies in Tayluer's general tendency to take greater liberties with his basic material. Maitland's text is based solely on the standard traditional patterns commonly associated with this song, and while there is

nothing particularly innovative or exceptional about his rendition, he does manage to express his ideas clearly and the overall text is virtually free of any blatant conceptual illogicalities. Tayluer does not depart quite so radically from the traditional norm in this shanty as in others, but he does show his customary predilection for deliberate textual additions and alterations in some areas, and this kind of freedom inevitably leads to a greater number of mistakes in his texts than in those rendered by a singer who adheres fairly closely to pre-established patterns. A rather modest example of such an error can be seen in the first segment where, in spite of the change in topic suggested by the line, "Well, how do you know the skipper of 'er?" he continues to talk about the ship. A more glaring example occurs in the third segment:

Look at the "scotchmen" all a-hangin' in the riggin'.
Oh, they shine like gold instead of silver.

The last line, of course, is based on the fifth line of the first segment, but its inclusion at this point in the song, especially as a modifier for loose bits of rope "all a-hangin' in the riggin'," makes absolutely no sense whatsoever. This particular mistake is similar to the incongruities in epic poetry generally referred to as "Homeric nods,"⁴¹ where a poet's over-reliance on familiar verbal patterns causes him to use a formula that incorrectly describes the object, person, or event to which he is

referring. In the shanty tradition, however, the songs are simplistic enough and their patterns well enough established that errors of this sort can normally be avoided. Thus, in this instance, the misplaced formula is another indication that the shantyman is attempting to break away from his tradition, to "improvise."

Through an analysis of lyric shanties, one can get a fairly good idea of the general principles that govern the re-creation of texts in this tradition. For the most part, the fundamental stanzaic content of a particular song is taken from a relatively stable body of ideas, often expressed through the medium of formulas or formulaic elements, that the shantyman habitually associates with a given song or solo pattern. In many instances, the composition of a text is based on the simple manipulation of a solitary pattern with perhaps a few alternate elements thrown in for the purpose of stringing-out the shanty or merely for the sake of variation. In other songs, re-creation involves the handling of a number of different ideas, but even so, the singer is usually guided in his performance by a basic pattern that represents either the traditional norm or his own preferred manner of rendering that particular song.

The re-creation of lyric shanties also shows that this tradition differs from an oral tradition in two major areas. First, while annular patterns are found in a very few texts, linear development is the most common structure encountered in this tradition. This feature of shanty performance is

plainly evident in texts composed through the reworking of a single formulaic pattern since the different manifestations of the mould do not represent a coherent balancing of concepts but a more or less random compilation of similar ideas. Even when alternate elements are interpolated into these texts, they rarely exhibit any kind of parallel relationships with the standard elements. In other situations, linear development is characterized by a collation of related images and ideas that are sometimes connected only by obscure "associational leaps," and when this occurs, the thematic unity of the piece is often sacrificed.

Second, due to the shantyman's notions of originality and improvisation, he sometimes has a tendency to deliberately ignore the traditional patterns and re-create, or in some instances create, material by relying on his own powers of innovation. But in the composition of texts, as in the manipulation of formulaic material, any significant departure from the traditional norm is likely to result in confused and awkward constructions. This clearly indicates that creativity, by literary standards, is not conducive to the re-creative style of singing, and that the "accuracy" with which a singer can compose a text in performance depends heavily on his adherence to traditional patterns.

FOOTNOTES

¹Janheinz, Jahn, Neo-African Literature (New York: Grove Press, 1968), as cited in David Evans, Big Road Blues: Tradition and Creativity in the Folk Blues (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), p. 31.

²Alan Lomax, Sea songs and shanties collected from Richard Maitland, recorded May, 1939, Library of Congress, Archive of Folk Culture, LWO 4872, reels 161B-162B (7 1/2 ips, 7" reel), "Roll the Cotton Down," AFS 2520b.

³William Main Doerflinger, Shantymen and Shantyboys (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951), "Lowlands," p. 81.

⁴Lomax, "Roll the Cotton Down," AFS 2520b.

⁵Lomax, "Lowlands," AFS 2517a.

⁶Lomax, "A-rovin'," AFS 2516b.

⁷Lomax, "Roll the Cotton Down," AFS 2520b.

⁸Lomax, "Blow the Man Down," AFS 2516a.

⁹Doerflinger, "Paddy, Get Back," p. 55.

¹⁰Doerflinger, Sea songs and shanties collected from Capt. Patrick Tayluer, recorded 1942, Library of Congress, Archive of Folk Culture, LWO 3493, reels 47B-50A (7 1/2 ips, 7" reel), "Reuben Ranzo," AFS 6593b.

¹¹John Barnie, "Formualic Lines and Stanzas in the Country Blues," Ethnomusicology, 22:3 (1978), 457.

- ¹²Doerflinger, Shantymen, "Haul Away, Joe," p. 4.
- ¹³Doerflinger, Shantymen, "Hanging Johnny," p. 31.
- ¹⁴Lomax, AFS 2523a.
- ¹⁵Frederick Pease Harlow, Chanteying Aboard American Ships (Barre, Mass.: Barre Publishing Co., 1962), p. 2.
- ¹⁶Doerflinger, Shanties collected from Tayluer, AFS 6591a.
- ¹⁷Evans, pp. 154-155.
- ¹⁸Lomax, AFS 2520b.
- ¹⁹Doerflinger, Shantymen, p. 34.
- ²⁰Lomax, AFS 2525b.
- ²¹Doerflinger, Shantymen, p. 58.
- ²²Stan Hugill, Shanties from the Seven Seas (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), pp. 203-211.
- ²³Hugill, pp. 97-105.
- ²⁴Doerflinger, Shantymen, p. 31.
- ²⁵Doerflinger, Shantymen, p. 30.
- ²⁶Evans, p. 69.
- ²⁷David Buchan, The Ballad and the Folk (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 230-231.
- ²⁸Lomax, AFS 2517a.
- ²⁹Buchan, p. 88.

- 30 Doerflinger, Shantymen, pp. 80-81.
- 31 Doerflinger, Shantymen, p. 81.
- 32 Bruce Rosenberg, The Art of the American Folk Preacher
(New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 34.
- 33 Doerflinger, Shantymen, pp. 4-5.
- 34 Lomax, AFS 2524a.
- 35 Doerflinger, Shanties collected from Tayluer, AFS
6584a - AFS 6584b.
- 36 Hugill, "Rio Grande," version (a), p. 90.
- 37 Hugill, "Rio Grnde," version (d), p. 92.
- 38 Doerflinger, Shanties collected from Tayluer, AFS
6592a.
- 39 Doerflinger, Shantymen, pp. 25-26.
- 40 Doerflinger, Shanties collected from Tayluer, AFS
6591a - AFS 6591b.
- 41 Frederick M. Combellack, "Some Formulary Illogicali-
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Philological Association, 96 (1965), 41-56; see also;
Albert B. Lord, The Singer of Tales (1960; rpt. New York:
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Chapter VIII

"IT'S A LONG, LONG TIME SINCE I MADE UP THIS RHYME":

SHANTY COMPOSITION AND PERFORMANCE - III

Narrative shanties are not normally subjected to the same amount of variation, formulaic or otherwise, as the lyric songs, although there are some that do undergo a considerable degree of reworking in performance. One of the reasons for the relative stability of these songs is undoubtedly that the functional demand for variation is not as great here as in the lyric shanties, and this applies at both the practical and the aesthetic levels. In the first place, most narrative shanties are sung at the capstan, windlass, or pumps, and at these devices, the need for the shantyman to extend the song to fit the duration of the task is greatly reduced, for he normally strikes up a new song when the first has ended if the heaving task continues for a long period of time. Some expansion and contraction of narrative songs does occur, but it is usually achieved through the addition or omission of stanzas rather than through the formulaic restructuring of the song. Also, it is significant to note that the narrative shanties having the least stable texts are those used in hauling operations, such as "The Alabama," "Boney," "Reuben Ranzo," and the narrative versions of "Blow the Man Down" and "A Long Time Ago."

The aesthetic importance of variation is also reduced in the singing of narrative shanties, since the audience's

attention is directed toward the development of the tale, rather than toward the shantyman's ability to improvise. One must also take into account the fact that many narrative shanties were adapted directly from previously existing ballads, and during the nineteenth century, it appears that in many regions "the folk" took their ballads very seriously and frowned upon singers who tried to alter a song. Buchan, for example, states that the Scottish singer, Bell Robertson, often included words and phrases that she did not understand in her ballads, simply because she operated under the belief that "...she must give it as she received it."¹

Although it may appear odd that a single folk group could adopt a re-creative approach to performance for one body of songs and demand rigidity in another, such a distinction between shanties and ballads appears to have been made in some instances by the seamen of the last century. In Thomas H. Raddall's short story, "Blind MacNair," a piece written largely from the author's acquaintance with the customs of Nova Scotian sailors,² the action centres on a song competition between two seamen and the hero, who is an ex-seaman. The contest begins with the singing of shanties, but the men soon shift their attention to the ballads:

They turned to ballads now, as men turn from the morning chores to the real work of the day. Any fool could sing chanteys, and the man with the most verses won the score. But with the ballad it was as with hymns, a proper set of verses handed down from the past, and woe to the man who altered so much as a word.³

To what extent the alleged sacrosanctity of the ballad affects the performance of narrative songs in the work context is difficult to assess, for there is often minor variation in separate renditions of a song as sung by Maitland, and in a few instances, both his narrative texts and Tayluer's represent a departure from the traditional norm. Yet, Raddall's appraisal of the tradition in Nova Scotia clearly indicates that at least some seamen have completely contrasting aesthetic views on the two groups of songs, and it is possible that the attitude toward the ballad does have a general stabilizing effect on the performance of such songs when used as heaving shanties. In some cases, however, the tendency toward stability is offset by the shantyman's desire for originality.

There is a third factor that also contributes to the stability of narrative shanties, and that is their non-formulaic verbal structure. There is some formulaic material in these songs, particularly in the opening stanzas where introductory elements such as, "As I was a-walking down Paradise Street (Chatham Street, Ratcliffe Highway, etc.)" or "Come all you young sailors that follow the sea," are commonplace, but, again, one is plagued with the question of whether such lines actually serve a re-creative function or if they are considered as being part of the song. Also, it is very uncommon to find a narrative shanty that contains an abundance of these elements; in fact, perhaps the only songs whose performance depends heavily on the manipulation

of traditional formulaic patterns are those based on the anatomical progression, such as "A-rovin'."

Thus, the manner in which a given narrative shanty is performed depends mainly on whether or not there is a functional need, an aesthetic desire, or the verbal means for variation, and if any one of these factors is present, then the song will likely be subjected to a certain amount of alteration. The shanty, "The Alabama," for example, is not based on formulaic patterns and its narrative development negates the aesthetic demand for variation, but since it is a hauling shanty, it must be reworked in performance due to the need for fitting the song to the situation. On the other hand, "Paddy, Get Back" is a capstan shanty and is not based on formulaic patterns, yet Maitland's versions differ considerably from the traditional norm and, to a lesser extent, from each other. Variation in this case is seemingly born out of the shantyman's desire for originality. Finally, the shanty, "A-rovin'," is a pumping song and, therefore, variation is neither functionally nor aesthetically necessary, yet its verbal structure is deeply rooted in formulaic patterns, and so the shantyman takes advantage of them and often varies this song.

On the whole, the most stable shanties are the heaving songs adapted from forebitters or from non-traditional sources, such as music hall songs, and some "purists," in fact, such as Whall⁴ and Bullen⁵, do not even consider these songs to be shanties but classify them under the more general

heading of "sea songs." This discrimination is perhaps justifiable, for apart from the fact that these songs are popular in both the work and entertainment contexts -- and one should bear in mind that when forebitters are used to accompany work, their primary function is normally to provide a diversion from the labour -- they differ considerably in style and in method of performance from what one might regard as a "true" shanty.

As traditional songs in their own right, regardless of the function they serve, they embody many of the traits commonly found in broadside ballads, and several of the songs used in the work context are listed in G. Malcolm Law's, American Balladry from British Broadsides, under the heading, "Ballads of Sailors and the Sea." They include "The Banks of Newfoundland" (K 25), "The Flying Cloud" (K 28), "High Barbary" (K 33), "Captain Kidd" (K 35), "The Saucy Sailor" (K 38), "Jack Tar" (K 39), and "The Shirt and the Apron" (K 42).⁶ There are many other narrative sea songs not mentioned by Laws that also bear the broadside stamp, and thus, one may assume that such items are either the products of the "penny-presses" or were composed, in the literary sense of the word, by traditional singers imitating the broadside style.

The stylistic feature which most readily betrays these songs as being non-oral is a marked tendency toward first person narration, for in almost every forebitter, the narrator either is the hero or establishes himself as a witness.

to the events. The narrative sea songs also lack the temporal and contextual "distancing" and the objectivity of the classical ballad. They deal with the everyday world of the seaman and generally focus on the abuses heaped upon him by those to whom he is subservient or indebted, such as captains, boarding masters, shipping masters and prostitutes. Thus, the song's effectiveness depends heavily on the audience's ability to empathize with the situation of the hero. In many cases, the song begins or concludes with a stanza directing the audience to pay heed to the moral embodied in the narrative, as in the following:

Shipmates, if you'll listen to me,
I'll tell you in my song
Of things that happened to me
When I came home from Hong Kong.⁷

Now, come all you young sailors, take warning from me.
Never take a young Highway girl on your knee!⁸

These are just some of the traits found in virtually every narrative sea-song that are generally held as being indicative of broadside origin.⁹

Except for certain commonplace openings and, to a lesser extent, endings, the language of the forebitters is essentially non-formulaic. On rare occasions, one encounters texts that do contain some internal repetition, but the reiteration of a line or a motif does not usually represent a balancing of ideas or images in the way that a similar construction does in an oral ballad, nor does it achieve the

same dramatic effect. Writing of the use of dialogue in broadside ballads, Laws states that it "...is used less effectively than in the Child ballads. It tends to be expository rather than dramatic...."¹⁰ The same may be said for the use of repetition. In the following stanzas from Anna Brown's version of "Child Waters" (Child 63B: 7-9), for example, the repetition of a basic verbal pattern serves to develop the narrative in a logical fashion, yet at the same time, each stanza heightens the predicament of the heroine, which, of course, helps to build the dramatic intensity of the scene:

But the firstin stap the lady stappit,
The water came til her knee;
'Ohon, alas!" said the lady,
'This water's oer deep for me.'

The nextin stap the lady stappit,
The water came til her middle;
An sighin says that gay lady,
I've wat my gouden girdle

The nextin stap the lady stappit,
The water came til her pap;
An the lairn that was in her twa sides
For caul begane to quake.

In Maitland's version of "Can't They Dance the Polka," which is derived from the forebitter, "The Shirt and the Apron," the stanzas based on a repetitive pattern clearly lack the dramatic tension apparent in Mrs. Brown's composition and merely serve either to move the narrative forward or to present additional information:

"Now, if you'll only come with me,
You can have a treat.
You can have a glass of brandy, dear,
And something nice to eat."

"And if you'll only come with me --
The distance is not far!"
This fair maid seemed so kind to me
I hailed a passing car.

.....
When I awoke the next morning,
I had an aching head.
There was I, Jack all alone,
Stark naked in the bed!

My gold watch and my pocketbook
And lady friend were gone.
There was I, Jack all alone,
Stark naked in the room.!!

The expository function of repetition is readily apparent in both sets of stanzas. In the first pair, it can be noted in the linear development of the segment, for whereas an oral singer would balance the woman's proposition with an acceptance -- or refusal -- of the same by the hero, the singer of this song moves directly from "offer of shelter" to "transportation to shelter;" the repetition of the line, "And if you'll only come with me," merely serves to introduce the idea of "distance" which in turn leads to the idea of "transportation." Thus, the singer is using repetition simply as a means of moving the narrative forward and is not composing by balancing antithetical or parallel ideas, hence the lack of dramatic tension in the episode.

In the latter pair of stanzas, the expository function of repetition is even clearer, for the first establishes

the temporal change in scene and the physical condition of the hero, and the second reveals the robbery and the woman's disappearance. Again, the two stanzas represent a steady progression from one idea to another rather than a balance between action and reaction or image and counter image. Actually, in terms of its relevance to the narrative, the second stanza is redundant, for the subsequent action in the tale hinges on the fact that the hero's clothes have been stolen and so he is forced to go about town wearing a flour barrel. This detail, if not apparent from the first stanza, is certainly not made any clearer in the second. That the singer is aware of this redundancy is evidenced by the fact that in a second rendition of the song, Maitland combines the two stanzas into one:

When I awoke next morning,
 My lady friend had fled.
 Left me, poor Jack, there all alone
 Stark naked in the bed.¹²

By expanding the segment into two stanzas, the singer is able to incorporate the fact that the hero has a hangover and to present a partial list of the stolen articles. The repeated element functions more or less as filler, but since the information embodied in these lines has the greatest relevance to the action that follows, both its revelation in the first stanza and its reiteration in the second tends to weaken the dramatic impact of the scene.

From this example, one can see that the manipulation of verbal patterns can occur in the performance of forebiters, but as was stated earlier, this is a far from common occurrence. In most instances, the inclusion or omission of detail in such songs involves little more than the inclusion or omission of whole stanzas. One should also be aware that the repeated elements in this text are derived from the song itself and do not represent the introduction of traditional formulaic material. In fact, with regard to the latter segment, the theft of a sailor's personal effects is not even a common motif in narrative sea-songs.

For the most part, the variation that exists in different renditions of a narrative heaving shanty by a single performer amounts to little more than minor lexical changes and the omission of one or two stanzas containing peripheral information relating to the narrative. To see how songs of this type are performed in the work context, let us examine the solo pattern of the capstan shanty, "Heave Away," based on the comic stage song, "Yellow Meal." The story deals with the encounter of a prospective Irish emigrant with one of the owners of the shipping line, W. and T.J. Tapscott, of Liverpool. The catalyst of the song is a pun on the word "meal," pronounced "mäl" in the Irish brogue. Thus, when the devious owner informs his passenger that his ship is "...taking on board a thousand bags of mail," he creates the illusion that the ship is a fast mail packet; when in reality the cargo is corn meal, which was the meagre fare on which steerage

passengers were expected to survive. In some texts, the deception is discovered prior to embarkation,¹³ but in most, the vessel is well out to sea before the emigrant realizes that she has been duped, and even then her troubles are not over, for we are told:

The sailors got drunk and broke open my trunk
And stole all my yellow male.

These are the essential thematic elements in the song and they are generally presented in stanzas that are by and large fixed, although fairly minor changes in wording do occur. The following stanzas show the alterations made by Maitland in two renditions of the song; the first stanza of each pair is from the version collected by Lomax¹⁴ and the second is from the text published by Doerflinger¹⁵:

One morning as I was a-walking
down by the Waterloo Dock,

As I was a-walking one morning
down by the Clarence Dock:

"Oh, have you got a ship or two
that will carry me over the sea?"

"Oh, have you got a packet ship
to carry me over the sea?"

"Now, the Joshua Walker on
Friday she will make sail.
The present day she's taking on board
a thousand bags of mail."

"Now, one is the Joshua Walker and
on Friday next she will make sail,
And the present day she's taking on board
a ton of yellow (sic) male!"

With the exception of the first pair of lines, none of the above is even remotely formulaic, and thus the singer is clearly not relying on traditional verbal patterns as a guide to performance. Nor is the variation in the two renditions significant enough to indicate that he is actually re-creating the shanty, but merely that some of the stanzas are loosely memorized. Buchan states that much of the variation in the ballads also consists of "verbal minutiae,"¹⁶ but the oral ballad singer will always organize his material in balancing structures, and no such patterns exist in versions of this song at the stanzaic, character, or narrative levels. The lack of annular relationships is most plainly evident in the handling of the characters, for in the opening stanza, the use of the first person establishes the narrator in the role of observer:

One morning as I was a-walking
down by the Waterloo Dock,
I overheard an emigrant
conversing with Tapscott.

Yet, in the latter stanzas, this individual has ceased to exist and the emigrant herself is telling of her misadventure:

Bad luck to the Joshua Walker
and the day that she made sail.
The sailors got drunk and broke open my trunk
and stole all my yellow male.

This kind of inconsistency clearly indicates that the singer performing this song is not conceptualizing his work in the same manner as a non-literate performer, that is, he is not

consciously balancing the actions of a set of dramatically interacting characters, but rather is repeating, almost unconsciously, a set of more or less memorized stanzas.

For a heaving shanty, it is not important that this song be expanded to great lengths, but, nonetheless, some lengthening does occur and there are two ways this can be accomplished. First, in addition to the essential stanzas, there are a couple of others containing peripheral ideas: one deals with a storm encountered by the ship shortly after leaving port, and the other is a vow made by the emigrant never to sail on such a vessel again:

One day as we were sailing through
the Channel of St. George,
An ugly nor-west wind came up
and drove us back again.

.....
When I get to New Yor-ik
I'll cross the say (sic) no more.
I'll marry some find Yankee boy, 17
stay all my life on the shore.

Again, these stanzas are part of the song and their inclusion does not represent the introduction of formulaic elements. They are merely "extra" stanzas, so to speak, that the shantyman may include or delete as he chooses. There are shanty formulas that express both these ideas, but they are worded quite differently.

Second, if the shantyman wishes to expand the text further, he can resort to stringing-out, but how often this method of textual expansion is used in the performance of

narrative heaving shanties is not easy to determine, for, functionally, it is redundant, except, perhaps, in instances where the shantyman feels that the time remaining in the task does not warrant starting a new song. Virtually all of Maitland's narrative heaving shanties are devoid of stringing-out elements, and as no shanties of this type have been collected from Tayluer, an analysis of his repertoire cannot provide either a positive or negative answer to this question. In printed texts, one rarely finds additional stanzas tacked onto the end of a narrative. Possibly, many editors felt that the "song" consisted of the story and that all else was superfluous and, therefore, omitted stringing-out elements from the texts they published. At the same time, one does encounter the odd instance where the song continues beyond the end of the narrative. Harlow, for example, concludes his version of "Heave Away" with two stanzas from an alternate, non-narrative solo pattern commonly associated with this shanty:

Some say we're bound for Liverpool;
Some say we're bound for France;
But now we're bound for Melbourne town,
To give the girls a chance.

The clouds are floating steady;
The wind is blowing free;
We'll heave her short and be ready.¹⁸
For the towboat to take us to sea.

Most of the shanty tunes to which forebitters and other non-traditional songs were adapted, such as "Heave Away" and "Can't They Dance the Polka," do have alternate solo patterns,

and so stringing-out by the method demonstrated by Harlow is possible in many instances; but since most other recorded texts do not feature this trait, it does not appear to be a common occurrence.

The heaving shanties adapted from forebitters, then, are characterized by a greater tendency toward stability than the lyric shanties analyzed in previous chapters. Needless to say, stability is greatest in the texts rendered by a single shantyman; Maitland's versions of the capstan shanty, "Rolling Home,"¹⁹ for example, are almost identical, the only notable differences being that in the version recorded by Lomax, one stanza is omitted and the destination of the vessel is altered from "New England's shore" to "old England's shore." Yet, while texts sung by separate shantyman can exhibit a number of differences -- Maitland's version of "Heave Away," for example, differs in several respects from Harlow's text -- it is not uncommon to find almost identical texts given by two or more singers. Maitland's version of "Can't They Dance the Polka" is very similar to that given by Hugill.²⁰ To find such uniformity among lyric shanties is highly uncommon.

One of the major reasons for the stability of these songs is they lack the oral devices, primarily the formulaic patterns, that are so vital to the re-creative process. This fundamental difference in poetic style and in style of performance quite clearly demonstrates the merging of traditions manifested in this rather diverse body of songs known

simply as "the shanties." On the one hand, we have a group of lyric songs, presumably derived from the worksongs of the non-literate Blacks in the southern United States and the Caribbean Islands, that embody a number of traits commonly found in orally performed material. These songs, we have seen, undergo a considerable degree of reworking in performance. On the other hand, we have a group of narrative songs that, although crude, are literary in style and have been transplanted into the work context due to the Anglo-American seamen's desire for songs that tell a story. They lack, however, the verbal patterns and traditional motifs that the shantyman could use as a framework in performance. Also, from a purely functional stance, these songs do not need to be significantly altered in performance, and, therefore, the shantyman is content to rely on his "literate" method of performance -- memorization. This in turn underlines the duality in the singer's attitude toward performance at this stage of the verbal tradition.

Every rule, however, has its exceptions, and so it is with the tendency toward stability in narrative heaving shanties. Essentially, there are two circumstances under which one is likely to encounter songs of this type that undergo a fair degree of reworking in performance: the first is when the song in question embodies the formulaic patterns to make re-creation a fairly simple undertaking; and the second is when the shantyman deliberately revises a song and creates a scenario which is more or less his own. One

of the few narrative shanties based largely on formulaic patterns is the pumping song, "A-rovin'," and like the more complex lyric shanties it is structured in segments, or in this case, scenes, but again, not every text contains all the components. Maitland's versions of this shanty, in both the Dörflinger and the Lomax collections, contain all three scenes, and the various stanzaic elements found in them include formulaic patterns, standardized couplets used only in this song, as well as one or two elements that appear to be the shantyman's own invention. The first scene deals with the hero's initial encounter with "the maid," and in both versions, Maitland begins with the standard opening couplet found in most versions of this shanty, but from this point on, he can tailor his composition through the addition or deletion of detail. In one version, the first scene consists only of a brief description of the woman:

In Amsterdam there lived a maid,
 And she was mistress of her trade,
 This last six months I've been to sea,
 And boys, this maid looked good to me.

Her cheeks were like the roses red,
 And her eyes were like twin stars at night.²¹

Through this one brief episode, one can already note the three types of stanzaic elements embodied in this shanty. The initial "core" stanza is unique to this song and is used as an introduction to most versions. In our general discussion of the verbal morphology of shanties,²² we noted that

the second stanza, is, in fact, formulaic and that the third is Maitland's own addition to the song.

Maitland's other rendition of "A-rovin'" contains an inverted form of the descriptive stanza, and the shantyman adds a few details relating to the hero's initial introduction to the woman:

In Amsterdam there lived a maid,
And she was mistress of her trade.

Her eyes were like twin stars at night,
And her cheeks they rivalled the roses red.

I asked this fair maid where she lived;
She rooms up on [Skidanski?] Heights.

I took this fair maid for a walk,
For I liked to hear her pretty talk. ²³

The first lines of stanzas three and four in this text are based on a syntactic pattern often used in this shanty. The fourth stanza can be found in many versions, though the third appears to be Maitland's own invention. It is, however, conceptually formulaic in that references to local landmarks are quite common in scenes dealing with a seaman's encounter with a woman, both in Maitland's songs and in the tradition as a whole. In a version of "Blow the Man Down," this shantyman builds a scene where the sailor and his lady-friend wander about visiting the local pubs and parks of Liverpool; ²⁴ again, a simple use of geographical elements to create stanzas.

The second scene of "A-rovin'" is based on the anatomical progression, but on tape, Maitland is a trifle reserved

in his treatment of the sexual details. In the version collected by Doerflinger, this scene consists of only one stanza, though it, in itself, is interesting by virtue of the combination of formulaic patterns it represents. This first line, one will note, is a fusion of the "I...this fair maid" pattern and the anatomical pattern; the second line is a standard response often found in the anatomical progression:

I kissed this fair maid on both cheeks.
Says she, "Young man, you're rather free!"

In the version on the Lomax tapes, the shantyman gives two stanzas based on the standard pattern, but, again, he refrains from "going all the way" and proceeds only as far as the woman's thigh. However, as he explained to the collector, "I've heard lots worse, but that wouldn't be a nice record to be put out in front o' women."²⁵ This statement is important for it goes a long way in providing an answer to the question of obscenity in the shanties.²⁶ It shows that a singer's repertoire does not consist of "clean" and "dirty" songs and that individual shanties do not necessarily need to be subdivided into clean and dirty versions, but rather that through the manipulation of verbal patterns, the shantyman can tailor his text to fit the situation. In the presence of passengers or in front of the collector's microphone, he can, as Maitland has done in this instance, create a text that is as pure as the driven snow, yet in the company of a

more familiar audience, his formulaic variations can be as coarse as he cares to make them. Other shantymen, not quite so inhibited as Maitland, have recorded samples of this latter type of stanza:

When I laid my hand upon her snatch,
She said, "Young man, that is my main hatch."²⁷

I laid my hand right on her quim,
Said she, "For Chris' sake, shove it in!"²⁸

This principle of substitution is undoubtedly the simplest means the shantyman has for concealing obscenity, and it is most likely the reason why A.L. Lloyd has put the word "cap" in parentheses in the following stanza which, like the anatomical progression, is formulaic:

Sally in the garden sifting sand,
Bosun watching with his (cap) in his hand.²⁹

The same principle can also be noted in more general types of formulaic systems. The following pattern, as manifested in Huggill's version of "Sally Brown," presents a very innocent image of rural romance, yet through a relatively minor lexical alteration, Tayluer manages to establish a lewder referent:

Sally Brown, I love yer daughter,
I love yer farm beside the water.³⁰

Aw, Sally Brown, well, I loves your daughter.
Aw, Sally Brown, oh, I love the place you make
your water.³¹

Obscenity, of course, bears relevance to the aesthetic function of variation, and as one can see, formulaic patterns, such as the anatomical progression, play a significant role in the exposition or covering up of these bawdier themes.

The third scene of "A-rovin'" contains the departure sequence, and in Maitland's singing, this is invariably expressed through the manipulation of the "Cape Horn" patterns. Like the first scene, this segment is expanded through the addition of detail rather than through the manipulation of a substitution system, and it can vary from quite cursory, two-stanza forms, such as,

In three weeks' time I was badly bent,
And then to sea I sadly went.

On a red-hot Yank bound round Cape Horn,
My clothes and boots were in the pawn!³²

to longer formations, such as,

In three weeks' time I was badly bent,
And then to sea I sadly went.

My clothes and sea-boots in the pawn,
On a red-hot Yank bound around Cape Horn!

Around Cape Horn through frost an' snow
An' up th' coast to Callao,

To load saltpeter (sic) for Liverpool
An' back around Cape Horn again!³³

The importance of verbal moulds in the re-creation of this shanty is clearly visible, but as was mentioned earlier, very few narrative shanties are so deeply rooted in formulaic patterns. In determining a reason for the formulaic con-

struction of this song, one cannot neglect its age, for not only is it one of the oldest narrative shanties known -- perhaps the oldest -- but it also existed in other contexts prior to its adaptation into the shantyman's repertoire.

Therefore, the possibility exists that it did emanate from an oral source. As a shanty, however, its re-creation is achieved through the same linear form of the adding style of composition noted earlier in the shanty, "Blow, Boys, Blow." In Maitland's texts of "A-rovin'," this is most apparent in the first and third scenes where expansion or alteration is achieved through the linear interpolation of new ideas. In other words, although the scenes that make up the shanty are quite distinct, the structure of each segment does not represent any kind of annular balancing, but rather a steady progression from one thought to the next.

Examples of narrative heaving shanties that have been deliberately revised by the shantyman are also not very common. One might expect that the texts of a singer like Tayluer, who tends to take a good many liberties with his lyric shanties, would tend to exhibit this trait, but in his narrative hauling shanties, he seems to adhere quite faithfully to the standard scenario and this same tendency is also apparent in his versions of forebitters. An instance where such revision has been made can be noted in Maitland's versions of the capstan shanty, "Paddy, Get Back," and in our examination of his two renditions of this song, we shall have cause to look at the feature of oral

composition about which we have said little so far -- Lord's "tensión of essences." We have already seen that the methods used by the shantyman to re-create his songs in performance are substantially different from those used by the oral performer. Certain features of oral composition remain, such as formulaic patterns, scene structures, and, in a few cases, elements that balance thematically, but in the shanties, the manifestation of all these patterns is not as tightly unified as in oral texts, and the symmetrical structure of line groups, stanzas, and scenes, and the dynamic interaction of characters and events which the symmetrical patterns establish, have eroded considerably. Since the tension of essences governs the development of a scenario through the binding of thematic elements, one feels safe in saying that the dissipation of this force indicates the complete deterioration of oral structures, for the conscious alteration of the wording of a song is one thing, but the alteration of what the oral poet views as an immutable pattern shows that the singer is genuinely attempting to create something that is new.

The simplicity of shanty narratives and the rather limited scope of the various themes embodied in the tradition make the delineation of thematic elements that are inherently bound together a fairly difficult process. There is, however, one pattern that recurs again and again in many songs. If a tale begins with a sailor going to sea, it will inevitably end with his return or his arrival in another port, and conversely, if the song deals with his exploits ashore, the

standard conclusion involves his return to sea. The former pattern is generally a part of "Paddy, Get Back." This song is a forebitter often sung for entertainment during the dog-watches, and in that context, it consists of four or eight line solos followed by a fairly lengthy chorus. The standard version concerns a sailor who ships on board a vessel commanded by a set of bullies and manned by a crowd of foreign seamen who are not only unfamiliar with seafaring life, but are also unable to speak a word of English. The hero, unable to establish a rapport with either the crew or the officers, heads for the fore'sle to seek solace from a bottle of liquor, which he had seen the boarding master tuck into his kit, only to find that the bottle contains cough medicine. In most versions, the hero jumps ship at the first port-of-call, though in others, the mate demands that the captain return to port for a new crew. The forebitter versions are fairly stable in their wording and are not formulaic, and when sung at the capstan, the song is often performed without variation. But the shantyman, of course, is always free to "improvise."

Maitland's version of the shanty consist of two-line solos, and according to Hugill, his melody is based on the first and last sentences of the four line version.³⁴ He retains some of the basic ideas of the song but little of the standard wording. Some of the verbal elements he employs are representative of ideas he uses in other situations while others appear to be constructions he has devised

specifically for this song, and in the two renditions recorded from him, the wording of these latter elements is quite stable.

Perhaps the most astounding feature in Maitland's reworking of the song is that through a shift in emphasis in the final scene he creates a dramatic change in the thematic core of the piece. In the text included in the Doerflinger collection, the song deals with the alleged corruption and treachery in the hierarchy of the merchant marine. The narrative structure is fairly straightforward and follows the gradual revelation of a deception and its consequences. In the first scene, the sailor obtains a berth on a vessel which he is led to believe is heading for New York: a voyage that would take roughly between two to three weeks to complete:

I was broke and out of a job in the city of London;
I went down to Shadwell Docks to get a ship.

There was a Yankee ship a-laying in the basin.
Shipping master told me she was going to New York!

If I ever get my hands on that shipping master,
I will murder him if it's the last thing that I do. ³⁵

The second scene presents the listener with a clearer idea of the deception and also with an implication of a link between the shipping master and the captain of the ship, for the latter does not inform the crew of their true destination, the guano islands off the west coast of South America, until after the pilot has left the ship, or in other words, when

their last means of communication with shore authorities has disappeared. This scene also indicates, in general terms, the type of conditions that exist on board the ship:

When the pilot left the ship the captain told us
We were bound around Cape Horn for Callao!

And he said that she was hot and still a-heating,
And the best thing we could do was watch our step.

Now, the mate and second mate belonged to Boston,
And the captain b'longed in Bangor down in Maine.

The three of them were rough-n'-tumble fighters.
When not fighting amongst themselves they fought with us.

The third scene provides specific examples of the miserable environment created by the violence of the afterguard: "belayin'-pins a-flyin' around the deck," threats on the lives of the crew and specifically the hero, and perhaps worst of all in the eyes of the sailor, an acute animosity among the crew itself:

Oh, they called us out one night to reef the tops'ls.
There was belayin'-pins a-flyin' around the deck.

We came on deck and went to set the tops'ls.
Not a man among the bunch could sing a song.

Oh, the mate he grabbed ahold of me by the collar.
"If you don't sing a song I'll break your blasted neck!"

I got up and gave them a verse of "Reuben Ranzo."
Oh, the answer that I got would make you sick.

Maitland concludes with a version of the "Cape Horn" pattern and leaves the hero safely ashore in Liverpool.

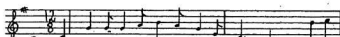
In his second version, he again focuses most of his attention on the characters, but in this text, the crew, as

well as the afterguard and the shipping master, are included in his menagerie of undesirables. Although much of the basic stanzaic material remains, the alteration of the role of "the crew" precipitates some rather pronounced changes in the overall text. First, in order to maintain his own respectability, the narrator must dissociate himself from the rest of the fo'c'sle, and consequently, the tension in the song ceases to be a question of the afterguard versus the crew and becomes one of the narrator versus everybody else. The separation is plainly stated in the altered third scene, but in order for the distinction to be as complete as possible, the singer also omits the fifth stanza, for it is here that the battle lines between officers and crew are first drawn:

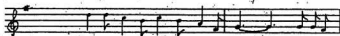
And he said that she was hot and still a-heating,
And the best thing we could do was watch our step.

Second, the narrative action tends to recede into the background and each scene becomes a sort of vignette portraying the unsavoury qualities of the characters involved. The first two scenes remain basically unchanged and depict the deviousness of the shipping master and the ruthlessness of the afterguard. The first two stanzas of the third scene also remain, but instead of the confrontation between the hero and the mate, the ineptitude of the foremast hands becomes the centre of the shantyman's attention. The alteration of the scene, however, is not without its attendant problems for the shantyman. In place of the two stanzas in

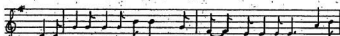
the previous version, he gives a single stanza based on the "tinkers 'n' tailors" pattern, but in this instance, the problem of metrical inconsistency forces a more than substantial alteration in the melodic line:



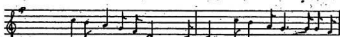
WE CAME ON DECK AND WENT TO SET THE TOP-S'LS. NOT A



MAN AMONG THE BUNCH COULD SING A SONG. (PADDY, GET...)



WE HAD TINKERS, WE HAD TAILORS, AND FIVE - MEN ALSO COOKS, AND THEY

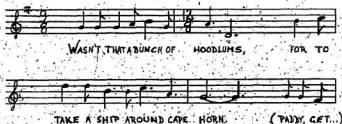


COULDN'T SING A SHANTY UN-LESS THEY HAD THE BOOK. (PADDY, GET...) 36

As one might expect, the transition from one melody to the other is not executed smoothly by the shantyman, for there is a five second pause between the two stanzas. "One would imagine that during this interval the singer is adjusting his thoughts to the new melody rather than needing the time to actually compose the lines, for by virtue of the rhyme, the humorous image embodied in the lines, and the compatibility of the melody to the meter of the verse, it seems that this version of the formulaic patterns and the

accompanying melody are elements with which the singer is quite familiar.

The final stanza of this text is also at odds with the melody of the song, particularly the first line which is a foot short of the standard iambic pentameter, and so, again, alterations to the tune are made:



This stanza is rather peculiar, not only because it breaks the traditional pattern of embarkation and debarkation, but also because of the editorial comment it presents, for such blatantly subjective remarks are not normally found in the shanties. There are two possible reasons for its inclusion, and perhaps both have influenced the shantyman to a certain degree. First, given the lack of emphasis on narrative action, the shantyman may feel that the "Cape Horn" pattern, which is a narrative element in its own right as well as providing a logical conclusion to the previous action, is not really an appropriate ending. A resolution to the narrative which sees the hero safely returned to England is not absolutely necessary for there is really nothing to resolve.

The hero's predicament is not the primary focus of attention in this text, but rather the main concentration is on the unscrupulous and inept characters one is likely to encounter in the merchant marine, and so the shantyman merely sums up with a general comment on the characters he has just described. Second, the remark may be intended for the benefit of an audience that is not familiar with seafaring life, for it seems an unlikely statement to make in front of a ship's crew. As a frequent performer at folk festivals, Maitland would have encountered such audiences on numerous occasions.

In his renditions of "Paddy, Get Back," Maitland departs from the traditional norm in a number of respects, and yet, with the exception of a few metrical difficulties and a general absence of rhyme, the alterations are executed successfully. But there is more to his textual changes than the mere breaking of a traditional pattern for the beginning and ending of a song, and his revisions even go beyond the simple addition of new ideas to an otherwise traditional text, such as one finds in Tayluer's shanties. In this instance, the shantyman has reworked the basic material almost completely. Maitland's texts share some common elements with the standard version of the song, such as a thematic concentration on the misbegotten characters of the merchant marine, and, in the first text, the confrontation between the hero and the mate, although in Maitland's handling of the episode, the violence is more explicit and has a greater relevance to the narrative than in the forebitter. The

treachery of the shipping master and the implication that he has been bribed by the skipper to secure hands for a ship that is "hot and still a-heating" appear to be Maitland's own inventions, as does the use of the crew's refusal to sing a shanty to indicate the state of their morale in the first text and their inability to shanty to indicate their incompetence in the second.

It is possible that Maitland's texts are based on an alternate traditional solo pattern for this song, but if so, it is extremely odd that of all the former shantyman from whom songs have been collected, he is the only one to produce a version of this pattern. Hugill, who has amassed the largest collection of shanties known, says of the text published by Doerflinger: "It is very interesting since it appears to be a real shantyman's effort at making up the story as he goes along."³⁷ The stanzaic similarities in the two texts clearly show that Maitland is not, as Hugill suggests, improvising an entire text, but his compositions do indicate a deliberate deviation from the standard form of the song. In essence, the shantyman has not re-created a traditional shanty, but rather, has created a new solo pattern using his tradition as a foundation. This is the most extreme example I have encountered of a shantyman's attempt to break free from his traditional bonds, and it plainly demonstrates that the shantyman's attitude toward "improvisation" is that it is a creative, as well as a re-creative, process, which in turn underlines the influence

of non-oral patterns of thought on his method of performance.

The narrative heaving shanties, then, are subject to a certain amount of variation in performance, though this is, for the most part, confined to minor lexical changes and the omission or inclusion of one or two peripheral elements. This style of performance, in which memorization figures prominently, is most commonly employed in the singing of shanties derived from the forebitters that entered the tradition by way of the broadside press. There is little doubt that the pseudo-literary style of these pieces is largely responsible for their stability, for the formulaic variations present in Maitland's versions of "A-rovin'" and his substantial reworking of the scenario in "Paddy, Get Back," indicate that the shantyman does not feel bound to an established form of a given song. Because the forebitters lack the verbal patterns that provide the necessary foundation for re-creative performance, the shantyman is more or less forced to rely on memorization. In some cases, a singer's text is supplemented with formulaic material, but this usually occurs only in the introductory and/or concluding stanzas and rarely is such material used to actually develop the narrative. Significant variation, such as that found in Maitland's version of "Paddy, Get Back," tends to indicate a reworking of an entire song rather than a remoulding of elements at the time of performance, and alterations of this type are clearly creative, not re-creative. Furthermore, the thematic changes present in his two

renditions of this shanty indicate something that goes beyond the re-creation of a stable scenario, which in turn demonstrates that the shantyman is, in effect, modifying his own modifications, that is, his desire for originality is ongoing. Thus, when contrasted with oral performance, which depends heavily on a balance between stability and variation, the performance of narrative heaving shanties clearly exemplifies the tipping of the scales that frequently occurs in verbal contexts. The singer either relies on memorization or strives for originality, both concepts are alien to oral modes of thought.

The narrative hauling shanties, like their counterparts used in heaving tasks, are by and large devoid of any typically oral characteristics, but due to the nature of the work in hauling operations, textual expansion is an important facet of performance with these songs, and for some reason, the shantyman shows a surprising reluctance to fall back on hauling patterns to string-out narrative shanties. To extend a text to fit the duration of the task, the shantyman relies on a controlled development of scenes, and when composing in this manner, he normally manages to tell a clear and consistent tale in each performance. His main obstacle, of course, is the wording, for although he knows exactly what he wants to say, in his texts the "marriage of thought and sung verse," as Lord once described oral composition,³⁸ is not always a compatible union. The most common faults are lack of rhyme, metrically irregular lines, and conversa-

tional and at times awkward syntax, but the pressure of spontaneous composition can also cause the shantymen to include confusing, redundant, or contradictory elements in his text.

Maitland's versions of "The Alabama," a shanty dealing with the exploits of the infamous Confederate frigate, provide good examples of how, through the expansion of scenes, the shantymen is able to compose texts of varying lengths despite the absence of traditional formulaic elements. We are fortunate in having three texts on which to base the study: two from the Doerflinger collection and one from the Lomax recordings, and the texts are of six, twelve, and nine stanzas respectively. The shortest text consists of the bare bones of the shanty and, thus, clearly illustrates the basic components on which the longer versions are based. The song is composed in three scenes: the construction of the vessel in England; her provisioning with men and guns, and her departure in search of enemy ships; and her final overthrow by the Union sloop-of-war, Kearsarge:

When the Alabama's keel was laid,
They laid her keel in Birkenhead.

Oh, she was built at Birkenhead,
She was built in the yard of Jonathan Laird.

And down the Mersey she rolled away,
And the British supplied her with men and guns.

And she sailed away in search of a prize.
And when she came to the port of Cherbourg,

It was there she met the little Kearsarge.
It was there she met the Ke-arsarge.

It was off Cherbourg harbour in April, '65
That the Alabama went to a timely grave.³⁹

The three features of songs re-created without a formulaic base are plainly evident in this text. The first and most obvious is the lack of rhyme. The second is the lack of metrical unity among the lines. The melodic line allows for verses containing nine syllables, two leading into the bar, four in the first measure, and three in the second. But melody, as we have seen, is an element easily distorted by the shantyman in his efforts to set his thoughts to music, and in this text, the lines consist from eight to thirteen syllables and the average is ten. The third feature is the prosaic presentation of the material, a mere stating of the "facts" as opposed to the dramatic intertwining of characters and events prevalent in oral texts. These, however, are only the surface features, and a comparison with the other texts reveals other characteristics of the method by which this song is re-created.

The shanty consists of a number of stable elements structured in a stable order that serve as an overall framework for any rendition. In the initial scene, the stable element in the first stanza is the laying of the keel, and in the second, it is the identification of the specific place of construction, the yards of Jonathan Laird. References to the town of Birkenhead function more or less as a filler that can be used in either stanza or both. The first scene of the text on the Lomax tapes consists of a

stable rendering of the first stanza with only very minor verbal changes, and an inverted form of the second:

When the Alabama's keel was laid,
They laid the keel at Birkenhead.

She was built in the yards of Jonathan Laird.
She was built in the yards at Birkenhead.⁴⁰

In the second version collected by Doerflinger, the alteration is more substantial:

In eighteen hundred and sixty-one,
The Alabama's keel was laid.

'Twas laid in the yard of Jonathan Laird
At the town of Birkenhead.⁴¹

Already one can see that line and stanza composition in this shanty is achieved through a process similar to that found in the more freely formed patterns noted earlier. The shantyman bases his constructions on a group of predetermined elements, loosely arranged and without a firm syntactic or metrical structure, which he rearranges in a variety of forms at the time of performance. The looseness of this method of composition is, of course, the primary reason for the singer's inability to compose lines that rhyme or adhere to the metrical format of the melody. In this instance, however, the patterns have no usefulness as compositional elements throughout the tradition but are confined to this particular shanty. In essence, we are dealing with conceptual moulds that function only in a restricted fashion.

In the second scene, we find further evidence showing that the framework of the song is based on a stable ordering of events. Upon hearing the third stanza, the uninitiated critic could be tempted to query whether or not it might be wiser to first provision the ship with men and guns and then allow her to proceed on her journey. This view, however, sees the equipping and manning of the ship as being part of the construction process, but in this case, it is not. What we have is an abbreviated version of the second scene, from which a fairly important element has been omitted. In other versions, the ship leaves Birkenhead, crosses to the island of Fayal in the Azores, where she is provided with guns and a crew, and then she begins her search for enemy shipping:

And away down the Mersy she sailed one day,
And across to the westward she plowed her way.

'Twas at the island of Fayal
Where she got her guns and crew on board.

Then away across the wat'ry world
To sink, to burn, and to destroy

All the [flags?] of commerce that came her way.⁴²

While the inclusion of the visit to Fayal gives us a clearer picture of the ordering of events and, thus, a better understanding of the structure of the scene, its omission in the first text does not really represent an error by the shantyman for two reasons. First, the absence of this detail is not so significant as to make the scene incomprehensible. Second, Anna Caraveli has shown in a recent

article that the traditional audience is expected to be familiar with certain information embodied in a song, including historical facts, to a degree where the occurrence of an action or event can be understood without being directly stated. In accounting for the satisfaction of her informants' audiences with "incomplete" texts, she writes:

A significant factor is that almost all present were familiar with the local song repertory, such that a line or two was sufficient for them to recall other lines not sung and bring them to bear in making a critical appraisal. In a way, then, each such line and stated idea is mentally complemented by contextual meaning created by the audience's knowledge of other lines, themes, or words that complete the idea.⁴³

An assumption by the shantyman of his audience's familiarity with the events would also account for the rather skeletal version of the third scene of the shortest text, which, again, contains only the basic details: the arrival of the Alabama off Cherbourg on the channel coast of France, her encounter with the Kearsarge, and her defeat.

A second feature of the compositional process employed in the re-creation of this shanty is visible in an examination of each text but becomes clearer when a comparison of the three versions is made, and that is the compiling of a text line by line rather than stanza by stanza, which is Maitland's customary style of composition. This is plainly evidenced by the increased occurrence of enjambement between stanzas, and the following stanzas from an expanded version of the first scene, which clearly demonstrate the non-periodic

enjambement that is so characteristic of the adding style, will serve to exemplify this trait: (The number "Two-ninety-two" refers to the Alabama's listing on the registry at Laird's):

At first she was called the "Two-ninety-two,"
For the merchants of the city of Liverpool

Put up the money to build the ship,
In the hopes of driving commerce from the sea. ⁴⁴

Constructions similar to this can be noted in the enlarged version of the "Cape Horn" sequence in "A-rovin'," which is also composed through the manipulation of freely formed elements.

Thus, the texts and sequences that Maitland composes in this manner tend to have a stichic quality about them, and their overall development is quite similar to that found in Tayluer's texts. Not surprisingly, then, this mode of textual development does tend to result in the deterioration of the stanza as an integral structural element. Although a sequence usually begins with the first line and ends with the second line of a stanza -- not necessarily the same one, of course -- the instances where complete changes of thought occur within a stanza emphasize the fact that the shantyman is composing line by line rather than using each stanza to present an image or idea and then, by adding stanzas together, compiling a text. In some cases, not only a change of thought occurs within a stanza, but a change of scene:

Then away across the wat'ry world
To sink, to burn, and to destroy

All the [flags?] of commerce that came her way.

'Twas in the harbour of Cherbourg one day,

The stanzaic form, however, is not without its influence, for the shantyman is accustomed to using it as a structural element in most of his songs, and there are a number of indicators pointing to this fact. The first and most obvious is that he usually attempts to present each idea within the stanzaic boundaries. Second, when a change of idea does occur within a stanza, he will, if possible, try to make the transition as smoothly as he can. In the shortest text, for example, the transition between the second and third scenes occurs in the fourth stanza, and yet, it appears to be composed of two naturally related lines:

And she sailed away in search of a prize.

And when she came to the port of Cherbourg,

Third, once the shantyman breaks the stanzaic pattern, he will normally try to re-establish it, either by repeating a line,

And when she came to the port of Cherbourg,
It was there she met the little Kearsarge.
It was there she met the Ke-arsarge.

or by adding extra lines to the sequence:

All the [flags?] of commerce that came her way,

'Twas in the harbour of Cherbourg one day,

The little Kearsarge she did lay.

When Semmes and Wilson (sic) made...met ashore,

Winslow challenged him out to sea;

He couldn't refuse, there were so many around.

Thus, the basic compositional unit in songs of this type is the individual line, and the shantyman does not organize his material in stanzaic groupings, at least not to the same extent as in lyric shanties or other types of narrative songs. The development of the text is guided by a "divide and control policy," though it is a much cruder form than that used by the oral ballad singer. The overall piece is structured in scenes and each of these segments can be expanded internally, but since the shantyman has no awareness of the tight balancing patterns and annular framing devices, he conceives of each scene simply in terms of the events and ideas embodied within it, and so scene composition involves little more than the linear exposition of events, each one following the other in chronological order. The expansion of a scene is achieved merely through the interpolation of detail. Thus, to the skeletal version of the third scene found in the shortest text, the shantyman adds the introduction of Captain Winslow of the Kearsarge, his challenge to Captain Semmes of the Alabama, the location of the battle outside the three-mile limit in international waters, the fatal shot, and Semme's escape, and thereby

spins the scene out to twice its original length:

Till one day in the harbour of Cherbourg she laid,
And the little Kearsarge was waiting there.

And the Kearsarge with Winslow was waiting there
And Winslow challenged them to fight at sea,

Outside the three mile limit they fought,
Outside the three mile limit they fought,

Till a shot from the forward pivot that day
Took the Alabama's steering gear away,

And at the Kearsarge's mercy she lay, 45
And Semmes escaped in a British yacht.

In Maitland's repertoire, the only texts composed completely in this manner are the narrative hauling shanties that are devoid of formulaic elements, such as "The Alabama," "Boney," and "Reuben Ranzo." In these latter two shanties, the stichic style of textual development is characterized not so much by non-periodic enjambement as by very terse, succinct statements of the events with almost every line introducing a new sentence. In essence, the "staccato" effect of the adding style becomes highly emphasized, as can be seen in Maitland's version of "Reuben Ranzo" from the Doerflinger collection:

Oh, poor old Reuben Ranzo,
Oh, Ranzo was no sailor,
But he was a Boston tailor.
He went on a visit to New Bedford.

He was shangaied on a whaler.
He could not do his duty.

So they put him holystoning.
They took him to the gangway,

They tied him to the grating,
And they gave him five and forty.

The captain's youngest daughter
Begged her father for mercy:

The captain loved his daughter,
And he heeded her cries for mercy.

He put Ranzo in the cabin,
And taught him navigation.

Ranzo married his daughter,
And now he's skipper of a whaler,

And he's got a little Ranzo!⁴⁶
And he's got a little Ranzo!

Much of this text consists of related line couplings that conform to the standard stanzaic format, but in the few instances where single and triplet structures can be noted, primarily in the first half of the song, one can see the shantyman is, in fact, composing line by line. An alternate rendition of this shanty sung by Maitland differs little in length -- it is two stanzas shorter, -- but some of the specific details about Ranzo's career are altered. In the opening scene, for example, the lubber's true occupation and his visit to New Bedford are omitted and replaced by a single line stating that he was shipped as an able-bodied seaman. Similar changes can be noted at other points in the text:

Now, poor old Reuben Ranzo.
Oh, poor old rovin' Ranzo.

Now, Ranzo was no sailor,
But he shipped on board of a whaler.

Oh, they shipped him as an able sailor,
And he could not do his duty.

Oh, they took him to the gangway,
And they gave him five and forty.

Now, they put him holystoning,
'N' they made him eat whale blubber.

Now, the captain had a daughter.
She took pity on Reuben Ranzo.

And he took him in the cabin,
And he taught him navigation,

And he married the captain's daughter.
Now he's skipper of a China clipper.⁴⁷

Hypothetically, then, if the shantyman were to include all these details, he could compose a fairly lengthy text.

Taylor's narrative hauling shanties, as with his lyric songs, are also composed through the line by line compilation of a text, but his sense of scene structure is not nearly so well developed as Maitland's. Consequently, his texts have a very drawn-out, rambling quality, and they sometimes consist of long episodes in which one idea tends to drift aimlessly into another. In one of his versions of "A Long Time Ago," which is a loose rendition of Huggill's "h" version,⁴⁸ the shantyman sings fifteen stanzas before there is a clear change in the narrative strand:

Oh, a long, long time and a very long time.

Now, there was an old lady who lived in Dundee.

Now, out of her ass there grew a plum tree.

Now, the plum tree bore fruit and she had three
fine sons.

Now, the song grew up and they all went to sea.
 One became mate and the other a sailor,
 But the one I'm going to tell you of, the story is:
 He joined a h-ark bound out for the east,
 And not as a sailor nor yet as a mate.
 He joined as the master of that fine clipper ship.
 Now, you all remember the ship that I mean;
 It was the Cutty Sark, her name was so high,
 Now, he took her out east and he lost his old ship.
 He took her out east and he lost his whole trip.
 Oh, he took her out east, as these words I have
 told you,
 Out to a-Poochou and then home again.⁴⁹

The complete "scene" is given in order to show how, in Tayluer's style of performance, one idea tends to lead to the next which in turn leads to another and another in straight linear fashion and without a definite break in his train of thought. It is as if he were deliberately attempting to carry the adding style to an almost illogical extreme. Furthermore, while these lines make up nearly half the song, they are really only the introduction, and the dramatic core of the shanty, which involves the hero's marriage to a Chinese girl and the apparent problems this causes on the return voyage, is gradually revealed over the course of the next sixteen stanzas.

Once more, the looseness of Tayluer's method of composition leads to the inclusion of a few incongruities in his

text, apart from the relatively minor problems of awkward syntax and meter. The loss of the hero's ship is an idea that this shantyman sometimes uses when he wishes to portray the incompetence of a skipper, and he uses a different verbal form of this motif in his version of Reuben Ranzo:

He lost the only ship he had.
His first and last and only ship
Was the Morgan and she's known everywhere. 50

The two songs are similar in that they both deal with underdog seamen who, by chance rather than by design, meet with a fair degree of success, which explains the appearance of this element in "A Long Time Ago." But in this shanty, the idea is definitely misplaced, for the simple reason that the hero cannot lose his ship since the narrative demands that he sail home in it. The shantyman, of course, is aware of this fact and tries to ameliorate the error by changing the line in the second solo:

Now, he took her out east and he lost his old ship.
He took her out east and he lost his whole trip.

Unfortunately, this line also does not jibe with the events that follow, for upon the captain's return to London, the owners inform him that he made a record voyage, in spite of his wife's "unluck aboard." Once again, it appears that the shantyman has tried to overstep the boundaries of his tradition by composing without paying sufficient attention to the material already provided for him. When

the shantyman adheres to his tradition, he can still find considerable latitude for variation and expansion, as Maitland's texts show, but radical alterations, whether they are formulaic or not, inevitably lead to confusion.

Since Tayluer normally creates stanzas by repeating each solo line twice, almost all of his texts are developed through the stichic form of the adding style, and there is relatively little difference in the way he performs his narrative and lyric shanties. In Maitland's singing, on the other hand, the stichic style of composition figures most prominently in the narrative hauling shanties, and the significant factor here appears to be the area of labour in which the songs are used. In hauling shanties, the function of co-ordination is of primary importance and, therefore, the shantyman must have the ability to extend the song to fit the situation at hand. But when a chronological series of events must be embodied in the verse, and the verbal structure of the piece does not provide a repetitive pattern or another type of formulaic base, this is not an easy thing to do. Therefore, he must rely on the addition or omission of detail to compose a suitable text, and the stichic adding style is the most efficient means of achieving this end.

The frequency with which these two shantymen adopt the stichic adding style of textual development, in conjunction with other traits of their individual styles noted earlier, underlines a fundamental difference in their approach to re-creative performance. The line by line compilation of a

text tends to indicate a freer overall compositional style than does the couplet form; the lack of an adherence to a set stanzaic structure is certainly one indicator pointing to this tendency, and as we have seen, this form of textual development tends to go hand in hand with the use of the more freely formed types of verbal moulds, which, of course, normally results in a lack of rhyme and consistent meter. In effect, this method of performance signifies a general lack of coherent and stable patterns at virtually every level of composition. On the basis of the number of incongruities in Tayluer's texts, we have assumed that his general approach to performance is much freer than Maitland's whose texts are, in the main, without such glaring contradictions. The prevalence of the stichic adding style in the former's compositions would appear to confirm this notion, for it demonstrates that this shantyman is not overly concerned with establishing patterns to serve as a framework for his texts and that change, regardless of whether or not genuine improvisation is involved, figures prominently in his concept of re-creation. He possesses an inherent desire for personal input in his songs, and this desire is manifested through his expression of traditional ideas in his own words and through his frequent interpolation of extraneous motifs. In other words, Tayluer is responding mainly to the aesthetic desire for variation.

This fundamental desire for variation is also present in Maitland's approach to re-creation but to a lesser extent

than in Tayluer's, for although virtually all his renditions of individual shanties exhibit some differences, he tends to rely quite heavily on traditionally established patterns, both verbal and structural. In the texts that embody his most extreme attempts at innovation, his two renditions of "Paddy, Get Back," the alterations are plainly premeditated; the performance is not based on a loose accumulation of ideas, but on the shantyman's own modified version of the scenario, and this "new" version, we have seen, provides a fairly stable foundation for each performance. One will note that in these texts, the ideas are presented in clearly defined couplet stanzas.

In the instances where Maitland adopts the relatively loose, stichic performance style, spontaneous variation is normally demanded by the particular area of labour in which the songs are used. This division between his heaving and hauling songs is not, of course, absolute, for several of his heaving shanties do contain segments that reveal traces of the stichic adding style, such as the final scene in the version of "A-rovin'" mentioned earlier, and one of his renditions of the capstan shanty, "Sally Brown," contains an epilogue of sorts that is also composed in this manner.⁵¹ But the songs he performs solely through this method of composition are the narrative hauling shanties, and his decision to adopt this style would appear to be made largely on the basis of necessity. Thus, while the purely practical aspects of re-creative performance in the work context do

not completely dominate Maitland's approach to composition, they do have a greater influence on him than on Tayluer. That different shantymen have different fundamental approaches to composition again indicates that significant changes are occurring in the transmission and performance processes during the verbal phase of the tradition. Such differences could not exist in an oral society, for they are contingent upon each singer being aware of variation and developing his own ideas as to its function within the tradition.

In the performance of narrative shanties, the oral roots of the tradition disappear almost completely and the many peculiarities embodied in the re-creative process during the transitional phase come into prominent view. As a group, these shanties demonstrate, to a much greater extent than the lyric songs, the influence of literate, and in many instances literary, poetic styles on this tradition and the attendant problems this causes for the singer attempting to re-create in performance. But most importantly, perhaps, the narrative shanties help to clarify the relationship between re-creative performance and the two chief functions of the shanty, co-ordination and diversion. The songs derived from literary sources, primarily from broadside ballads, tend to be used mainly for heaving tasks where the function of co-ordination is not of great importance. Here the shantymen is not compelled to rely on his re-creative abilities to the same extent as in other situations, and

his role is mostly that of an entertainer. Consequently, the story becomes the focus of his attention and that of his audience, thereby allowing him to rely largely on memorization as a means to performance.

At the same time, the aesthetic value placed on the singer's ability to "improvise," which we can perhaps loosely interpret in this context as meaning to "change," is also an important component in the diversionary function of shantying. Therefore, while variation is not important from the standpoint of co-ordination, it does occur because of the shantyman's desire for change; his skill as a singer is being measured in part by this facet of performance. In the few instances where a narrative shanty embodies a sufficient number of familiar verbal patterns, such as in "A-rovin'," alteration can be achieved quite simply and the singer's ability to re-create "accurately" is usually not compromised to a great extent. But even when re-creative devices are lacking, some changes do occur. While this normally involves little more than a few minor lexical alterations of the omission of stanzas, the shantyman can, if he chooses, develop his own version or versions of the narrative. This type of alteration, however, is generally effected through a creative, not a re-creative, process and the revised version tends to provide a fairly stable foundation for each performance.

In the hauling context, the function of co-ordination is of primary importance and, therefore, variation is

demanded by the need for the singer to extend the song for the duration of the task. Most of the shanties used here are, therefore, lyric in style, for the predominance of formulaic patterns in songs of this type makes expansion a relatively simple proposition. The narrative songs used at the halyards do not possess a greater number of verbal patterns than their counterparts used at the capstan and pumps, but since memorization is not a viable means to performance in this context, the shantyman must adopt a loose, prosaic style of composition in which texts are built through the line by line exposition of events and extended through the addition of detail. Quite possibly, the introduction of narrative songs into the hauling context, presumably brought about out of the Anglo-American seamen's desire for songs that told a story, precipitated the development of the freely formed type of verbal pattern, which can be found in virtually all shanties but which are an inherent characteristic of narrative hauling songs.

The principles of performance outlined above are, of course, only trends, and one must realize that the method of composition used under any one set of circumstances can vary depending on the shantyman involved. If a singer prefers to disregard the established patterns and adopt a looser approach to performance, it is his prerogative to do so. His texts will probably contain a number of inconsistencies, which may be disconcerting to the academic critic, but the shantyman is not performing for an academic audience,

and within the nautical context, his attempts at "improvisation" may be received favourably by the crowd, in spite of the crudeness of the results.

Thus, the narrative shanties are crucial to an understanding of the vagarious nature of this tradition, for they point to so many of the idiosyncracies present in the shantyman's overall approach to performance, particularly his reliance on memorization in some areas and his attempts to compose without the benefit of traditional verbal patterns in others. They also point to the presence of both oral and literate poetic traits in this tradition, and while the former is apparent mainly in the fact that virtually all the songs are, to some extent, re-created in performance, there are a few narrative shanties that possess some oral features, such as formulaic patterns, thereby indicating the possibility of oral origins. The literate influences in this tradition are readily visible in the many narrative songs adapted either directly from broadside ballads or from songs composed within the tradition in imitation of the broadside style, and one might allow that these items are to the shanty tradition what the motifs derived from the Bible and various forms of chap literature are to the ballads. In essence, the diversity of the narrative shanties, their different styles, structures, and methods of performance, mirrors the diversity of the shanty tradition as a whole.

FOOTNOTES

¹Gavin Greig, Last Leaves of Traditional Ballads, ed. A. Keith (Aberdeen: 1925): as cited in David Buchan, The Ballad and the Folk (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 250.

²Thomas H. Raddall, Letter to Edith Fowke, dated May 16, 1975, in Sea Songs and Ballads from Nineteenth-Century Nova Scotia: The William H. Smith and Fenwick Hatt Manuscripts (New York: Folklorica, 1981), pp. 1-2.

³Thomas H. Raddall, "Blind MacNair," in Tambour and Other Stories (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1945), pp. 379-380.

⁴W.B. Whall, Sea Songs and Shanties, 6th ed. (Glasgow: Brown, Son & Ferguson, 1927), p. vi.

⁵Frank T. Bullen and W.F. Arnold, Songs of Sea Labour (London: Orpheus Music Publishing Co., 1914), p. vi.

⁶G. Malcolm Laws, American Balladry from British Broad-sides (Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1957), pp. 140-163; as cross-referenced by title and/or scenario with songs included in Stan Hugill, Shanties from the Seven Seas (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961).

⁷William Main Doerflinger, Shantymen and Shantyboys (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951), "Can't They Dance the Polka," sung by Richard Maitland, pp. 58-59.

⁸William Main Doerflinger, Sea Songs and shanties collected from Capt. Patrick Tayluer, recorded 1948, Library of Congress, Archive of Folk Culture, LWO 5111, reel 197A (7 1/2 ips, 7" reel), "Ratcliffe Highway" version of "Blow the Man Down," AFS 9168b.

⁹Laws, pp. 78-83; see also, Buchan, pp. 239-242.

¹⁰Laws, p. 82.

¹¹Doerflinger, Shantymen, p. 60.

¹²Alan Lomax, Sea songs and shanties collected from Richard Maitland, recorded May, 1939, Library of Congress, Archive of Folk Culture, LWO 4872, reels 161B-162B (7 1/2 ips, 7" reel), AFS 2525a.

¹³Frederick Pease Harlow, Chanteying Aboard American Ships (Barre, Mass.: Barre Publishing Co., 1962), p. 15.

¹⁴Lomax, AFS 2524b.

¹⁵Doerflinger, Shantymen, pp. 62-63.

¹⁶Buchan, p. 167.

¹⁷Doerflinger, Shantymen, p. 63.

¹⁸Harlow, p. 15. The second stanza given here is a good example of how some editors try to give their texts more poetic flair than they may have had in the original context. Such pastoral imagery as,

The clouds are floating steady;
The wind is blowing free;

is a far from common feature in the shanties, and the internal rhyme between "steady" and "ready" is another element that seems alien to shanty composition.

¹⁹Lomax, AFS 2520a and AFS 2521a, and Doerflinger, Shantymen, pp. 155-156.

²⁰Hugill, pp. 374-375.

²¹Doerflinger, Shantymen, p. 56.

²²See chapter VI, p. 253 and p. 263.

²³Lomax, AFS 2516b.

²⁴Lomax, AFS 2516a.

²⁵Lomax, AFS 2528b.

²⁶For a concise summation of the different viewpoints on this matter see Hugill, pp. 33-34.

²⁷William Main Doerflinger, Sea songs and shanties collected from Capt. Patrick Tayluer, recorded 1942, Library of Congress, Archive of Folk Culture, LWO 3493, reels 47B-50A, (7 1/2 ips, 7" reel), AFS-6585a.

²⁸Robert Winslow Gordon, Shanties collected from various singers in California, recorded 1920-23, Library of Congress, Archive of Folk Culture, LWO 9347, reels 1, 2, 3, 16, & 18 (7 1/2 ips, 7" reel), AFS 18,996, cylinder 122; copies housed in the Memorial University Folklore and Language Archive, MUNFLA 78-240, tape no. F4168.

²⁹ A.L. Lloyd, Folk Song in England (1969; rpt. St. Albans (Herts.: Paladin, 1975), p. 295. This item is given by Lloyd as an example of a shanty commonplace and not with reference to its use in any particular song.

³⁰ Hugill, p. 162.

³¹ Doerflinger, Shanties collected from Tayluer, LWO 3493, AFS 6586a.

³² Lomax, AFS 2517b.

³³ Doerflinger, Shantymen, p. 56-57.

³⁴ Hugill, p. 325.

³⁵ Doerflinger, Shantymen, pp. 54-55.

³⁶ Lomax, AFS 2518b.

³⁷ Hugill, p. 325.

³⁸ Albert B. Lord, The Singer of Tales (1960; rpt. New York: Atheneum, 1978), p. 31.

³⁹ Doerflinger, Shantymen, pp. 35-36.

⁴⁰ Lomax, AFS 2527a.

⁴¹ Doerflinger, Shantymen, p. 36.

⁴² Lomax, AFS 2527a.

⁴³ Anna Caraveli, "The Song Beyond the Song: Aesthetics and Social Interaction in Greek Folksong," JAF, 92:2 (1982), 133.

44 Doerflinger, Shantymen, p. 36.

45 Doerflinger, Shantymen, p. 36-37.

46 Doerflinger, Shantymen, pp. 23-24.

47 Lomax, AFS 2515a.

48 Hugill, p. 102.

49 Doerflinger, Shanties collected from Tayluer, LWO
3493, AFS 6589a-APS 6589b.

50 Doerflinger, Shanties collected from Tayluer, LWO
3493, AFS 6594a.

51 Doerflinger, Shantymen, pp. 74-75.

Chapter IX

"WE SWEAR BY ROTE FOR WANT O' MORE":

SHANTYING IN THE LATTER DAYS OF SAIL

The shanties of Richard Maitland and Patrick Tayluer give us a good indication of what the tradition was like from the late 1860's to about the mid-1880's, and the style of performance during this period embodies virtually every characteristic of the "loosely re-creative" process commonly found in the transitional phase of a tradition: linear development, an over-reliance on repetitive patterns, the borrowing of material from a variety of different sources, and the "ossification" of elements in some areas, tempered by the singer's deliberate attempts to expand on his tradition in others.

Some writers on the subject of shanties state that the tradition went through some rather marked changes about this time, but their assertions indicate that it was affected as much by a decline in the role of the shanties in the work context as by a greater influx of literate modes of thought into the traditional community. Whall, who first went to sea in 1861, writes: "Since 1872 I have not heard a Shanty or Song worth the name. Steam spoilt them."¹ He marks the date so precisely because he abandoned his seafaring career in that year, and thus, his opinion is perhaps the result of a nostalgic bias. There is, however, a good deal of truth in his basic statement. By 1875, steam-driven vessels were the dominant force in ocean travel, and although service

in sail was still a necessary "rite of passage," so to speak, for advancement within the merchant marine, most sailors preferred to seek out berths on steam ships, for these vessels normally promised a faster, safer passage under more agreeable conditions and often at a higher rate of pay. Consequently, sail came to be regarded as a throwback to the past, and this attitude was often reflected in the sailors' disregard for the shanties.

The stylistic changes in shanty performance were also precipitated by certain innovations in sailing-ship technology, for with the introduction of labour-saving devices, such as brace and halyard winches and small main-deck capstans, the work could be conducted at a much faster pace, and consequently, the shantyman of later years generally delivers his songs at a faster tempo. Tayluer's version of "Blow, Boys, Blow" is rendered at 92 beats per minute, but a young singer recorded by Robert W. Gordon in the early 1920's gives his version at a rate of over 150 beats per minute,² and the shanties of a bargeman, Bob Roberts, are also delivered at a fairly brisk tempo.³ In a conversation with Doerflinger, Tayluer expressed quite plainly his disapproval of this modern style of singing:

...when you hear the shanties being sung at a quick rate, that is not right. Those songs should be sung slow, so as to give the sailors and the men who are on the downhaul part their wind and breath.⁴

Stan Hugill, on the other hand, allegedly the last man to sing a shanty on board a ship of British registry, has this to say about the tempo at which shanties should be sung:

...the shanties were very rarely sung as slowly as they are often voiced by a "pride" of nautical octogenarians in some "sailor's snug harbour", when labouring forth for the benefit of some enthusiastic shanty collector. It is fairly certain that such men in their prime would have sung much faster...⁵

Hugill's statement would appear to be more representative of the shanty tradition as he knew it in the early years of the present century than of the tradition in total, for virtually all of the collectors who have worked with shanty-men who obtained their experience in the mid to late nineteenth century state that the shanties were sung slowly and deliberately.

Our immediate concern, however, is to decide what changes, if any, occurred in the shantyman's approach to re-creative performance. Such changes could not be attributed solely to mechanical modifications in the work context, although the faster tempo, while it would not make a re-creative style of performance impossible, would make it more difficult. Shanty texts obtained from singers who first went to sea in the latter days of sail are quite rare, since most collectors sought out older informants. In Hugill's collection, one of the few that consist of texts garnered from latter-day seamen, the texts are, for the most part, collated and therefore cannot be said to be representative

of actual performances. The Gordon collection contains alternate versions of two songs given by the same singer, and these texts provide us with some interesting data on the twentieth century shantyman's approach to performance, for variation is almost non-existent. The two texts of "Blow, Boys, Blow" are identical to the letter, and in the two renditions of "Haul Away, Joe," the only alteration made by the singer is the addition of an extra couplet in the second text; in all other respects, the song is repeated verbatim.⁶

While Hugill's published texts can tell us little about his method of performance, some insights into the matter can be obtained from his comments on his own singing style and on shanty performance in general. Of his own style, he writes:

The writer is aware that he, too, has this loose, variable way of delivering his shanties to the audiences, and he doubts if he ever sings them quite the same way twice.⁷

Although he acknowledges that his texts do vary, his statement would seem to indicate a style that is considerably less variable than that of Maitland or Tayluer, and from his comments on improvisation, one can sense that he does not have the same awareness of the function of formulaic patterns as his predecessors:

All British and American...shanties had a theme or pattern telling some kind of consecutive story, only in typical Negro shanties were the first two or three verses so-called 'regulation' and the remainder

improvised in the manner of calypso singing. Normally in an English-worded shanty the fact that the shantyman improvised, used verses from other shanties, or repeated solo lines twice in each stanza, showed that he had an imperfect memory.⁸

This last statement in particular shows that Hugill regards many of the features inherent in the re-creative styles of singers such as Maitland and Tayluer as mistakes, and one can perhaps deduce from his initial comment that he views only those songs that are clearly based on a substitution system as allowing for a substantial degree of variation. If this is true, and given the fact that most songs of this type are hauling shanties, then variation would appear to be limited, in Hugill's experience, mainly to the context where the deliberate expansion of texts is a functional necessity. His use of the phrase, "used verses from other shanties," would also seem to indicate that he views each song as having its own set of words and not as a piece composed of traditional moulds or other variable patterns. This attitude can also be noted in another of his assertions: "Many shantymen would, of course, improvise even if they knew the real words..."⁹ (Underscore added). Indeed, even the hauling patterns, which play such an important role in Maitland's singing, are viewed by Hugill as having been borrowed from the shanty, "So Handy."¹⁰

It is not my intention here to criticize Hugill as a shanty researcher for being unaware of the Parry-Lord approach to oral composition, for since he is not an

academically oriented folklorist, his works are not ultimately concerned with the theoretical implications of this tradition. Furthermore, I am inclined to believe that his statements are guided, at least in part, by the writings of other researchers:

J. Glyn Davies, writing about the 'stringing out' some shantymen indulged in (i.e. the repeating of a solo line), suggests that repeated lines were a certain sign of a defective text. With this I agree.¹¹

The fact, however, that Hugill corroborates, rather than refutes this assertion says a great deal about his own attitude toward shanty composition as a performer, and his notions are representative of more contemporary views on song performance.

Further evidence of Hugill's reverence for "the text" can be noted through his careful documentation of omissions made due to obscenity. As a preface to his version of "A-rovin'," he writes:

In all the versions sung by Sailor John the main theme was frankly Rabelaisian.... In my version I have tried to keep as much as possible to the story as it used to be sung at sea, bowdlerizing only at impossible places. The first six verses are unaltered, and in the subsequent verses I have kept the rhyming words at the end of each solo intact. This is the nearest attempt yet made to give the shanty as Sailor John rendered it.¹²

Thus, in contrast to Maitland, who operates under the belief that "A shanty was never composed in its entirety,"¹³

Hugill would definitely seem to be of the opinion that each shanty does have "a text" and that "improvisation," by whatever means and for whatever reason, involves some kind of deliberate departure from this stable entity.

According to Lord, the final blow to a re-creative tradition comes when printed texts become widely circulated within the community, and after this point in time, singers tend to learn their songs from the stable source and perform them by rote.¹⁴ Shanty collections first began to make an appearance in the late 1800's and were produced in ever increasing numbers until shortly after the First World War, by which time the context in which the songs thrived had, to all intents and purposes, ceased to exist. Although most of these publications were designed to appeal to a non-nautical audience, many of them containing arrangements for piano accompaniment or copious notes on the function of the songs, some of them undoubtedly found their way into the hands of sailors. Still, it is difficult to assess the effect of printed texts on the performance process for a number of reasons. Among other things, the versions in print were free of obscenities and, therefore, the sailors would probably show a preference for the versions circulating within the tradition itself; a shantymen who relied on published texts would surely be hard-pressed by his shipmates to explain why Sally Brown was leading a cloistered existence or why the sailor making advances to the Maid of Amsterdam suddenly lost his nerve. But most importantly,

the need for variation still remained. When tracing the transition from oral to rote performance, one is generally dealing with material that functions mainly as entertainment, but with the shanties this is not the case, and the necessity of fitting the song to the situation would inhibit any singer from relying solely on a fixed form of a given song. Furthermore, although the tendency towards rote performance appears to be stronger at this point in the tradition than in previous years, a certain amount of aesthetic value is still being placed on a shantyman's ability to vary his texts, at least by some performers. This is evidenced by Hugill's praise for Maitland's and Tayluer's more obvious attempts at "improvisation." In reference to the latter's version of "Sacramento" he writes, "...the singer improvises in true sailor fashion...."¹⁵ At no time, however, do either his comments or his texts indicate that he approaches performance with the same degree of freedom as Tayluer.

Thus, the shanty collections did not, in all probability, have the same effect on singers that, say, printed ballad sheets did in the previous century. In many ways, the shantyman of this later period is similar to the blues singer who bases his performance on a record. He is aware of the fixed text and can use it if it suits his needs, but he is also aware that his skill as a singer is determined in part by his ability to alter his texts to some extent. With shanties, the importance of change is mainly a question of extending the song for the duration of the task, but as with

blues, aesthetics is also a factor:

...the ability to improvise, even when it involves only the recombining of traditional elements, gives the...singer a feeling of originality. This feeling is highly valued among both performers and audiences. Improvisation allows the singer to be an individualist at the same time that he expresses sentiments which are familiar and relevant to himself and to his audience.¹⁶

Although one balks at the prospect of having to make conclusions on the basis of four texts and inferences drawn from the writings of one man, this, unfortunately, is all we have to go on. What data is available tends to indicate that memorization is becoming a dominant feature in the latter-day shantyman's approach to performance, but since the need and, to a lesser degree, the desire for variation have not been totally eradicated, texts do vary from one performance to the next, though not to a significant extent. Thus, while the transition from variable to rote performance does not appear to have been completed in the nautical context, the tradition does appear to be heading in that direction.

But according to Lord's basic premise that the advent of literacy leads to rote performance, there should be a definite end to the re-creative phase of the tradition, and yet, this final step in the transition does not appear to be forthcoming in this instance. The shanties, however, are a special case, and the fact that the re-creative method of performance survived for over a hundred years in this

literate context in no way disproves Lord's theory, for one must remember that a singer's attitude toward the performance of shanties is not necessarily indicative of his attitude toward the performance of other types of songs. At no point in this tradition was the shantyman's method of singing a natural and unconscious process, but rather one that involved a substantial degree of license; and as we have seen, the novelty of this style of singing contributed significantly to its maintenance. The fact that the shantyman's ability to change his texts becomes more restricted in the latter years of the tradition would actually tend to reinforce Lord's premise.

On many occasions we have noted that the link between method of performance and the function of the shanties, particularly that of co-ordination, is inseparable, and there is little doubt but that this is the key to the perpetuation of the re-creative process. In some regions of the globe, such as the West Indies, shanties were used as accompaniment to shipboard labour as late as the 1970's, and the research of Horace P. Beck¹⁷ and Roger D. Abrahams¹⁸ has shown that in this context "ad libbing" remained an integral feature of the performance. But from the point of view of most Anglo-American seamen, the context in which the shanties thrived had all but disappeared by the time of the Great Depression, and once removed from the work environment, the functional demand for variation terminated. Singers who learned their shanties through service in sail,

such as Mailtand, Tayluer, and Hugill, continued to recreate the songs in performance, and while this occurrence can be attributed at least partially to force of habit, it also demonstrates that these men continued to respond to the aesthetic desire for variation, that they have a high esteem not only for the songs themselves but for the traditional method of performance as well.

As the shanties become relegated to the entertainment context, however, a curious thing happens. Rather than finding the simple completion of the transition from variable to rote performance, one encounters instead a sharp decline in the popularity of shanties among traditional singers whose sailing experience is confined to service in steam. With reference to the Anglo-American context, Beck states that "...the well-known traditional chanteys...are seldom sung today by seafaring people."¹⁹ This, he adds, stands in distinct contrast to the "fo'c'sle songs" (forebitters), which have "had a better life."²⁰ His assertion is supported by the fact that surprisingly few shanties have been recorded from singers in Newfoundland, and recent attempts by the Archive of Folk Culture, in Washington, D.C., to collect shanties on the eastern seaboard of the United States have yielded no results whatsoever.²¹ In fact, it is generally conceded by shanty collectors and enthusiasts that the shantyman in the years "A.H." (After Hugill) is more than likely a professional or semi-professional singer performing for a paying audience or a "crew" of tourists. Of the type

of shanty sung by such performers, Beck concludes: "its relation...to the real thing is analagous to an animal in the zoo compared to one in the wild."²²

FOOTNOTES

¹W.B. Whall, Sea Songs and Shanties, 6th ed. (Glasgow: Brown, Son & Ferguson, 1927), p. xiii.

²Robert Winslow Gordon, Shanties collected from various singers in California, recorded 1920-23, Library of Congress, Archive of Folk Culture, LWO 9347, reels 1, 2, 3, 16, & 18 (7 1/2 ips, 7" reel), AFS 19,009, cylinder G 12; copies housed in the Memorial University Folklore and Language Archive, MUNFLA 78-240, tape no. F4182.

³Bob Roberts, Songs from the Sailing Barges, Topic 12 TS 361, n.d.

⁴William Main Doerflinger, Sea songs and shanties collected from Capt. Patrick Tayluer, recorded 1948, Library of Congress, Archive of Folk Culture, LWO 5111, reel 197A (7 1/2 ips, 7" reel), AFS 1968b.

⁵Stan Hugill, Shanties and Sailors' Songs (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1969), pp. 85-86.

⁶Gordon, AFS 19,009, cylinder G 12, and AFS 19,010, cylinder G 100; MUNFLA 78-240, tape no's. F4182 & F4184.

⁷Hugill, pp. 111-112.

⁸Stan Hugill, Shanties from the Seven Seas (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), p. 32.

⁹Hugill, Seven Seas, p. 32.

¹⁰ Hugill, Seven Seas, p. 32.

¹¹ Hugill, Seven Seas, p. 19.

¹² Hugill, Seven Seas, p. 46.

¹³ Alan Lomax, Sea songs and shanties collected from Richard Maitland, recorded May, 1939, Library of Congress, Archive of Folk Culture, LMO 4872, reels 161B-162B (7 1/2 ips, 7" reel), AFS 2519a.

¹⁴ Albert B. Lord, The Singer of Tales (1960; rpt. New York: Atheneum, 1978), p. 130.

¹⁵ Hugill, Seven Seas, p. 111.

¹⁶ David Evans, Big Road Blues: Tradition and Creativity in the Folk Blues (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), p. 165.

¹⁷ Horace P. Beck, Folklore and the Sea, the American Maritime Library, No. 4 (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1973), pp. 133-160.

¹⁸ Roger D. Abrahams, Deep the Water, Shallow the Shore: Three Essays on Shantying in the West Indies (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1974).

¹⁹ Beck, p. 140.

²⁰ Beck, p. 165.

²¹ Conversation with Gerry Parsons, Archive of Folk Culture, Jan. 13, 1982.

²² Beck, p. 165.

CONCLUSION

Whenever one is dealing with something that is in a state of transition, one can perhaps expect to encounter a certain amount of confusion, and certainly the shanties, as a tradition representing the transitional period between oral and literate methods of performance, are no exception. In essence, there are three major factors contributing to the diverse and sometimes erratic methods of performance in this tradition: literacy, the poetic diversity of the tradition, and the specific functions of the various songs. As was stated previously, no one of these influences can be said to have greater importance than the others, for in addition to their individual effects on the tradition, they often have reciprocal effects on each other. In very general terms, however, literacy might be said to have a broad, conceptual effect on the shantyman's approach to performance, whereas the other two factors affect the performance of specific songs in specific situations.

Crucial to an understanding of shanty performance is an awareness of the breakdown in the traditional forces or tensions that govern an oral singer's performance. As a member of a predominantly literate community, the shantyman possesses two concepts that make an oral approach to re-creation impossible: first, he is aware that some types of songs exist in a fixed form, and second, he is aware

that the shanties change with almost every singing. Neither of these concepts exists in an oral society. In consequence, the transitional singer displays a tendency toward memorization in some areas and toward a rather unstable method of performance in others. In most transitional contexts, the tendency is probably toward the former, for as Barnie shows, as the principles of oral composition become lost to the new generations of literate singers, many elements become "ossified," and eventually, a single version of a song will become "the song." In the shanty tradition, however, the re-creative style of performance is maintained and, in fact, nurtured by the practical demand and aesthetic desire for variation in the work context.

The consequences of these changes in attitude are clearly visible in transitional texts at both the verbal and structural levels. In the shanties, the basic verbal elements consist of a peculiar mix of memorized, formulaic, and more freely formed units, and the first and last of these plainly demonstrate the influence of literate concepts on oral tradition. One should also note that a distinction between the different types of elements is not always easy to make. When a traditionally formulaic element, for example, is used stably in a given song by a single shantymen, the re-creative function of that item may be said to be absent, and thus, according to Parry's doctrine, it is neither a formula nor part of a formulaic system. The third type of element, which includes those

items based on an idea or a loose grouping of lexical components, is perhaps the easiest to recognize, for when the shantyman employs such patterns, he often sacrifices poetic considerations, such as stable meter and a coherent acoustic pattern, in favour of the ability to vary the forms at will. Even so, he will sometimes pair formulaic elements that do not rhyme, and so, again, a clear division between the different types of elements cannot always be made. The important point to establish, however, is that when dealing with shanty performance, one is faced with the unusual occurrence of formulaic elements that do not serve a re-creative function and non-formulaic elements that do, which ultimately points to the non-oral nature of this tradition and underlines the "loosely re-creative" method of performance that is common in transitional contexts.

The shantyman's loose approach to performance also results in an erosion of the balancing and parallel structures that are an inherent feature of oral texts. Some shanty texts do exhibit annular relationships, but they are rare; so rare, in fact, that one might easily dismiss them as a mere matter of coincidence, for linear development is by far the most prevalent structure in this tradition. Virtually all the narrative shanties, even the few that contain formulaic elements and those that, for functional reasons, require substantial reworking in performance, are developed through a linear exposition of the events. In lyric shanties, particularly those based on a substitution system, linear

development is characterized by the use of a single repetitive pattern for the composition of most, if not all, of the stanzas. When not employing this rather simplistic form of composition, the shantymen sometimes compile a text through a linear progression from thought to thought, and the relationships between the various parts are traceable only through an analysis of the "associational leaps" made by the singer at the time of performance. As we have seen, this approach to performance is quite unreliable, for it offers the singer little control over the thematic development of his text. This type of compositional process is another example of how the shantymen will often disregard established patterns in his attempt to achieve a significant degree of variation.

Literacy, then, does not necessarily deter the shantymen from re-creating his songs, but rather, affects the manner in which re-creation is executed, for whereas variable performance is a natural and almost unconscious process in non-literate societies, it is a highly conscious and often deliberately manipulated process in literate cultures. In effect, performance becomes not only a matter of re-creating a song, but also of changing or adding to it; variation becomes an objective, not merely a result. When consciously attempting to rework his material in performance without paying sufficient attention to the established tradition patterns, the shantymen frequently loses the ability to control the specific shape of the element and his "re-creative accuracy" tends to suffer. For a singer such as

Richard Maitland, who tends to adhere relatively closely to his tradition, this normally results in a lack of rhyme and/or metrical inconsistencies, but with a singer such as Patrick Tayluer, who has a rather loose approach to performance, it can distort his composition to a point where the exposition of the text or the meaning of the individual lines becomes unclear.

The second major influence on the shantyman's approach to performance is the poetic diversity of the shanties. During the transitional phase of a tradition, innovation often involves the borrowing of material from outside the tradition and the invention of new material by the singers themselves. The shantymen of the last century appear to have had a remarkable penchant for these activities, for the tradition they have handed on consists of an eclectic body of lore that manifests different metrical and stanzaic structures, lyric and narrative development, and a wide range of origins and influences. The shanties, in fact, are considerably more diverse than the ballads and blues of their respective transitional periods, for in contrast to the borrowing of motifs that occurs in the other two contexts, entire songs, particularly those derived from the minstrel and music hall stages and from forebitters, have been incorporated almost wholesale into the shanty tradition.

The poetic diversity of the shanties, of course, has a profound effect on the way different songs are performed, for three main reasons. First, the various metrical

structures prevent the shantyman using his formulaic material freely throughout the tradition. In some cases, an element can be adapted more or less intact by making minor alterations in the melody, but in other situations, a syntactic reworking of the element is required, which often results in the addition of hypermetrical syllables or the composition of stanzas that do not rhyme. Second, the shantyman is less likely to strive for variation in narrative shanties than in those that are lyric. This is partly because the audience derives much of its enjoyment of the performance from the narrative itself, and since the story consists of a series of events laid down in a set order, both the desire and opportunity for variation are reduced. In some instances, a shantyman will revise a narrative song and construct his own version of it, but this is essentially a creative, not a re-creative, process.

The narrative shanties are also affected, to a much greater extent than the lyric songs, by the third and most important factor pertaining to the poetic diversity of the tradition, and that is the non-formulaic verbal structure of some songs. The predominance of formulaic patterns in lyric shanties makes the deliberate manipulation of these songs a relatively simple undertaking, particularly when substitution systems are involved, and as we have seen, these are the most common type of formulaic element in the shanties. This is not to say that all variation in lyric shanties is effected through a formulaic process or that

the shantyman adheres religiously to the patterns associated with a given song, for as Tayluer's texts show, a singer will sometimes desire a greater degree of variation or personal input in his performance than a reliance on formulaic patterns can accommodate, and such deviation from the traditional norm is frequently responsible for the aberrations in meter and rhyme that are common in lyric shanties. At the same time, even those shantymen who do not take such liberties do manage to find considerable latitude for variation in their lyric songs through the manipulation of formulaic elements.

The performance of narrative shanties, on the other hand, tends to depend quite heavily on memorization, and one can see that a general lack of formulaic material is largely responsible simply by examining the amount of variation that occurs in the performance of the few narrative shanties that do contain a number of formulaic elements. In some instances, a functional demand for expansion does necessitate the reworking of non-formulaic narrative songs in performance, but in such cases, the shantyman is forced to adopt a rather loose compositional approach, and again, poetic and sometimes thematic inconsistencies inevitably result. Furthermore, this style of composition is normally confined to the handful of narrative shanties used to accompany hauling tasks. Narrative heaving shanties are not generally subjected to any significant amount of variation apart from a few inconsequential lexical changes and the inclusion or omission of

One or two peripheral stanzas.

Thus, the poetic diversity of the shanties does have a direct influence on performance, and while the absence of a firm metrical format and the presence of both lyric and narrative songs are contributing factors, the most significant effect is caused by the presence of both formulaic and non-formulaic verbal structures. What we are dealing with here is essentially a matter of oral versus literary, or at least literate, origin, and thus, some insights into the evolution of the shanties can be gained by analysis of this facet of the tradition. The lyric shanties, particularly those having strong associations with the cotton ports, are predominantly formulaic, and thus offer the best evidence for the hypothesis that Black worksong represents the primary oral influence on this tradition. This assertion, we have seen, is supported by historical evidence and by the number of formulaic elements the two traditions share. The non-formulaic shanties consist mainly of narrative pieces that were adapted from popular shore songs and from forebitters, which are by and large an offshoot of the broadside "tradition." Shanties derived from these sources represent later additions to the tradition that were incorporated due to the Anglo-American sailors' cultural preference for songs that tell a story.

Finally, there is the relationship between performance and function. The shanties themselves have two chief functions, co-ordination and diversion, and recreative

performance is linked to both. Since the task or tasks for which a particular song is used can vary in their duration, the shantyman must have the ability to extend or shorten his song to fit the situation at hand. This is most important in hauling tasks where the rhythm of the song is used to time the intervals at which the men pull, and thus, for as long as the task continues, the shantyman must maintain an unbroken succession of solos. The expansion of lyric shanties is often achieved through the addition of extraneous "stringing-out" elements that bear little relevance to the thematic core of the song, but when singing narrative songs, the shantyman tends to adhere quite closely to the story and normally expands his text through the addition of detail. In heaving tasks, the function of co-ordination is not quite so important, for they involve continuous motion, and the song, rhythmically, does little more than establish a suitable working tempo. Furthermore, the desired tempo often changes during the operation, particularly at the capstan or windlass, and so the shantyman is frequently encouraged to change songs in the middle of the task, thereby reducing the need for expansion. Consequently, memorization tends to play a significant role in the performance of heaving shanties, and most of the non-formulaic songs are used in this context.

The shanties also function to provide a diversion from the labour itself, and at least part of the distraction is derived from the shantyman's "improvisations," for as

Sharp states, "...it was the excitement which this aroused that rivetted the attention of the workers."¹ One of the shantyman's most important obligations, from the diversionary standpoint, is to tailor his lyrics to the mood of the crew; his words should have relevance to the voyage, the conditions on board, the task at hand, or any other topic he may feel would motivate his shipmates, such as liquor or women. By "improvising," he can allude to specific details of his immediate environment and bring to his song a sense of spontaneity that makes each rendition live for the moment. In this context, however, the term "improvisation" must be applied in its general sense, for the shantyman's performance process rarely, if ever, involves the creation of an entire text on the spur of the moment; most of the elements on which a given performance is based are commonly associated with the song in question, and added elements are normally based on a pattern of some kind, either verbal or conceptual. At the same time, the aesthetic desire for innovation, which is very strong in the shanty tradition, does provide an incentive for the shantyman to depart from the traditional norm, which generally results in the adoption of an unstable re-creative approach.

In addition to affecting the method of performance, these functional considerations have a much broader influence on the tradition as a whole, for they are largely responsible for the growth and maintenance of the re-creative style in this literate context. As new singers enter the

tradition, they are more or less forced to develop some understanding of the re-creative process, in spite of their literate upbringing, simply because there is a practical demand and an aesthetic desire for variation in the work environment. Consequently, the decline of re-creative performance in this tradition is contingent not only on the growth of literacy, but also in a decline in the importance of the shanties as aids to shipboard labour. With the introduction of labour-saving devices, such as deck capstans and brace and halyard winches, the function of co-ordination is reduced to some extent, for virtually every operation essentially becomes a heaving task. The need for extending the song for the duration of the task, however, still remains, and so for as long as the shanties maintain their rôle as worksongs, stringing-out continues to be an important feature of performance. During the same period, there is also a growing apathy among sailors toward most things associated with sailing ships, and since the shanty tradition falls victim to this change in attitude, there is a significant decline in the value placed on a singer's ability to vary his texts. With both the practical and aesthetic incentives for variation either diminished or eliminated, memorization becomes a key element in the performance of all shanties.

Thus, when analysing shanty performance, one must take all these considerations -- literacy, the poetic diversity of the tradition, and the specific functions of the songs --

into account, and there is clearly little to be gained by attempting to define a single compositional process that applies throughout the tradition. Instead, one must analyse the different compositional processes that each shantyman uses when performing different songs or types of songs in different situations. In this study, we have focused mainly on the styles of two singers, Richard Maitland and Patrick Tayluer, and have noted differences not only in their individual approaches to performance, but also in each man's approach to different types of songs. A further analysis of other singers could quite possibly uncover more traits and peculiarities of shanty performance not present in the styles of these two men, for in this context, re-creation is not governed by culturally predetermined absolutes but by the whims, desires, and abilities of the individual singers. In any transitional context, performance is a "loosely re-creative" process, and when dealing with shanties, one must accept that term in its broadest possible sense.

FOOTNOTE

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