

‘Ghostlike’ Seafarers and Sailing Ship Nostalgia: The Figure of the Steamship Lascar in the British Imagination c.1880-1960

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In 1918 Joseph Conrad, by now critically acclaimed as one of England’s leading novelists, wrote this about his days at sea:

Of non-European crews, lascars and Kalashes, I have had very little experience and that was only in the steamship for something less than a year. It was on the same occasion that I had my only sight of Chinese firemen. Sight is the exact word. One didn’t speak to them. One saw them going along the decks, to and fro, characteristic figures with rolled-up pigtails, very grimy when coming off work and very clean faced when going on duty. They never looked at anybody, and one never saw them directly. Their appearances in the light of day were very regular, and yet somewhat ghostlike in their detachment and silence.¹

Conrad, a man of the fading sailing ship world, was profoundly ill at ease with the steamship. His characterization of the Chinese workers as ghostly, captures something common to many other British representations of Asian and African seafarers in the era of the transition from sail to steam. Steamship workers were often literally invisible to passengers and almost invisible to deck officers, for so many of them worked in the stokeholds, the coal bunkers and engine rooms, below the water line and out of sight, within, to quote Marx’s phrase, the ‘hidden abode of production’. But even those sailors who worked above the waterline, on the deck or in the catering services were in a sense outside the racialised British vision. The sea, as everyone knew, was the British key to world power. Sailors who were not British had a spectral quality; their existence was ideologically anomalous and they came into focus when there was controversy about them but, in between, they were forgotten. Conrad never sees the labourers directly. They are in a social world so marginal that they are invested with the qualities of unearthliness. Outside moments of unavoidable contact, the presence of the lascar faded from British minds.

This paper focuses on the paradoxes which infused the counterposed representations of Asian and African, as against British sailors in the United Kingdom, during the era of steamship dominance and its immediate aftermath. In that time, writers, bureaucrats, politicians, ship owners, maritime officers, sailors and medical professionals engaged in intense contestations about the supposed characteristics of these groups, and the conclusions that followed for policies toward the merchant navy. I will examine the field of discourse generated by supporters and opponents of the lascar. For the supporters of giving preference in employment to the British mariner, the Briton was unsurpassed in seamanship and endowed with plentiful moral fibre. In their view, the lascar was feeble

and prone to panic. At the same time this discourse overlapped with the persistent cultural trend to romanticize sail and denigrate steam. In this construction sail was identified (with considerable historical inaccuracy) as the heroic age of an exclusively British seafarer. Contrarily, enthusiasts for the lascar presented him as reliable, sober and hardworking, and depicted British sailors as undisciplined, alcoholic thugs.

My contention is that British constructions of British and Afro-Asian sailors were mutually dependent on each other; the lascar was constituted through his differentiation from the British sailor and vice versa. This was the case even for representations of British seafarers which overtly said little or nothing about the lascar; the lascar haunted the representation of British sailors. After examining these issues, the paper will go on to examine three main, interlocking areas of politico-technical contestation. Firstly, there was the question of seamanship. A heavily racialised discourse of lascar inferiority battled with the claims of marine experts that lascars were as good sailors as any. Secondly, there was the claim that it was unpatriotic to employ lascars at the expense of British sailors, either because the latter had a moral claim on the British community for preference in employment, or because they were a reserve of loyal naval manpower for wartime. Opponents countered that as imperial subjects, the lascars were equally entitled to be employed by British companies. Thirdly, there was the complex terrain of medical opinion. The growingly influential medical profession intervened actively from the late nineteenth century in political debates on the lascar question. But although their views were often couched in terms of social improvement, the doctors' influence on the debate was far from benign. Their investment in biological racism meant that their views frequently reinforced the construction of the lascar as ineffectual.

Finally the paper argues that the lascar remained a phantom presence in post-1945 celebration of British maritime history and prowess. As with the Chinese sailors in the memory of Conrad, in British popular and literary imagination the lascar was a never quite real, and with temporal distance his blurry image was to fade to invisibility. This was especially the case in the leisure time imagination of the marine enthusiast. The lascar remained in that secret dwelling into which, as Marx said, there was 'no admittance except on business'.

Imagining the Lascar and the British Sailor

In the same article in which he comments on the ghostlike Chinese, Conrad wrote in praise of the British sailor:

not a day has passed for many centuries now without the sun seeing scattered all over the seas innumerable groups of British men whose material and moral existence was conditioned by their loyalty to each other and their faithful devotion to the ship.²

Reflecting on his years at sea Conrad observed: "The small proportion of foreigners I remember were mostly Scandinavians, and my general impression remains that those

men were good stuff'.³ The sailors of the Baltic are here, as is typical of the racial ideas of the times, presented as worthy sidekicks to the Briton, clearly distinguished from the raffish mariners of southern Europe and points beyond.

Perhaps surprisingly, the other great literary representative of the imperial experience, Rudyard Kipling, or at least the young journalist Kipling, did not share this high estimation of his nation's mariners. Describing his visit to the shipping labour office of Calcutta in 1888, Kipling enumerates, with a kind of fascinated horror, the ethnic and racial varieties of the men he sees there. Then, with his characteristic strange compound of elitism and empathy for the common man, he asks what happens to the British sailors:

the hungry eyed men in bad clothes who lounge and scratch and loaf behind the railing? What comes of them in the end? They die, it seems though that is not altogether strange. They die at sea in strange and horrible ways. They die a few of them in the Kintals, being lost and suffocated, they die in strange places by the waterside, and the Hugli takes them ... They sail at sea because they must live; and there is no end to their toil ... the earth, whose way they do not understand, is cruel to them, when they walk on upon it to drink and be merry after the manner of beasts.⁴

Kipling empathized with the merchant marine's white sailors, even though he despised their supposedly bestial recreations and their familiarity with the Indo-Portuguese Kintals.

Where the two writers did come together though, was in seeing the world of sail as having been more admirable and more socially cohesive, than the new world of the steamship. Kipling, in his novel *Captains Courageous* celebrates the healing power of sailing ship labour for a spoilt millionaire's son, representing urbanized degeneracy. And in a 1912 article, Conrad had celebrated the seamen-sailors of the past who 'had their own kind of skill, hardihood and tradition, and whose last days it has been my lot to share', contrasting them unfavourably with the 'unthrifty, unruly nondescript crowd' who stoked the steamships' boilers.⁵ Conrad, at sea as on land had a deep suspicion of industrial modernity and the working class. He looked with a mixture of pity and contempt on: "firemen and trimmers, men whose heavy labour has not a single redeeming feature, which is unhealthy, uninspiring, arduous without the reward of any personal pride in it: sheer hard brutalizing toil belonging neither to the earth or sea".⁶

The two writers discourses embody profoundly racialised and class-based understandings life of the sea, the likes of which persist amongst maritime enthusiasts to the present day. Many British and Americans sailors, intellectuals and politicians saw the end of sail and the accompanying rise of the steamship as a combined tragedy of racial politics, aesthetics and community. The era of sail was constructed as an era of skilled seamanship, beautiful vessels, and moral integration amongst the crew. The age of steam on the other was rendered as one of mechanical crudity, grubbiness, anomic social disintegration and workforces composed of unreliable, uncommunicative Asians and suspect white lumpen-proletarians. Both in the time of the steamship, and afterwards, the

idea of the tall ship as the historic pinnacle of seafaring has remained dominant, and it has always carried with it an insidious racial sub-text of British superiority.

In British literary culture, a fascination with the sea and sailors was very much a product of romanticism. And while Conrad took writing about the sea in extraordinary modernist directions, sea writing in the early twentieth century was mainly carried forward by much more popularly orientated authors, both catering to and creating a popular nostalgia for the declining world of sail. The most able and successful representative of this trend was John Masefield. Masefield noted in his introduction to a 1906 anthology that “it is curious that a sea-going people such as the English should have written so little, of a high quality, about the sea and its sailors until comparatively recent times. It might be said that until the comparatively recent times. It might be said that until the end of the eighteenth century our poets hardly saw the beauty of the sea, though they felt its terror”.⁷ The chronology is accurate, but there was no real mystery as to the cause. It required a romantic sensibility to see the oceans as magically expressive of inner turmoil, and to see the wandering labourer as a hero. As modernism emerged on the fringes of maritime literature the tastes of many middle and working class readers clung to the more easily comprehensible tropes of a sentimentalized version of the vision of the sea pioneered by the romantics a century before. Masefield’s lines, in his 1902 poem ‘Sea Fever’

“I must go down to the sea again, to the seas and the lonely sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by”

became the world-wide mantra of the middle class Anglophone ship enthusiast. Its continuing frequent invocation reinforces the point that it is only on board the sail-powered ‘tall ship’ and not on a steamer that the true romance of the sea can take place. Such unthreatening maritime schmaltziness eventually was to secure Masefield his place as British poet laureate.

Moreover, the hero of such a world could only be Anglo-Saxon. For a figure like Masefield, sea literature is about the English sailor, who, he told his 1906 readers had ‘hardly changed since Chaucer’s time’, citing the poet’s ‘shipman’ to prove his point. In Masefield’s description this quintessential national figure is rough and drunken but an excellent fellow provided he does not forget his social station: “where he exists he is the best man in the vessel. He is not fitted to command, but he is excellent before the mast”.⁸ The latter remark is surely a stab at the rise of maritime unionism. And one would not know from Masefield’s introduction that there was at the time a raging debate on the rival qualities of the lascar and the British seamen or indeed that there were lascars or Chinese sailors on British ships at all. Yet his use of the phrase ‘where he exists’, hints that there may be some question-mark over the British sailor’s continued presence. The British seaman thus stands as a representative of national identity so long as he remains in a state of social subordination; but there is just a brief hint of a spectral threat to him as an embodiment of Englishness.

The antagonism to steam is of a piece with British literary and political culture’s strong strand of hostility to industrialism, as traced by Raymond Williams⁹ and Martin Wiener¹⁰.

If steam represented the industrialization of the sea, sail became, in many forms of British imagination, the embodiment of a lost golden age of artisanal, organic community.¹¹ There is an interestingly marginal character to interwar British literary attempts to engage with the steamship. Serious novels based on working experience in the steamships, whether the Liverpool Irish seaman James Hanley's *Boy* or the Cambridge-educated Malcolm Lowry's *Ulamarine*, explored the grotesque and the dystopic dimensions of maritime life and were only widely appreciated by critics long after their publication. Almost the only major literary attempt by a British author to romanticize the figure of the Lascar, a projected novel by the vastly wealthy gay writer Stephen Tennant, was inspired by a 1937 visit to Marseilles. It is perhaps symptomatic of the unease that the world of letters felt toward the steamship that Tennant's work resulted in a huge manuscript, extensively circulated and admired amongst his highly-placed literary associates, but never published.¹²

The Real World of Maritime Labour

The lives of late nineteenth and early twentieth century sailors, of whatever origin, were far from romantic. Maritime work in the last years of sail was simply murderous. The romantic interpreters of the sea character of marine did not acknowledge that the age of steam, for all its hideous features, represented a much better chance of survival for marine workers. In the eight years between 1875 and 1883, an incredible 26 188 sailors died in accidents on, and sinkings of, British registered ships. The fatal accident rate for all sailors at that time was six times greater than that amongst British coal miners, and 150 times greater than that for British factory workers.¹³ The age of sail was an age of mass death; mechanically powered ships were simply much safer in rough seas. Coinciding with the introduction of steamships on a mass scale, there was a qualitative drop off in fatalities; in 1874 3,533 British sailors died at sea; in 1904 1,113.¹⁴ Although administrative reforms, particularly those associated with Samuel Plimsoll, played a role in this decline in the dangers of working at sea, the greater resilience of metal hulls and engine power was surely the key factor. In 1923, the remaining sailing ships had five times the mortality rate of steamships.¹⁵

The romantic view also largely glosses over British sailors' appalling life conditions. In many ports around the world, British sailors were delivered to ships by 'crimps', dishonest boarding house keepers who defrauded the men of their money and forced them to take the next ship in exchange for payments from the captains. In the late nineteenth century's less well regulated harbours, crimps sometimes plied sailors with alcohol or drugs and dumped them on board in an unconscious condition, to awaken at sea: as late as 1906, it was common in Sydney.¹⁶ Moreover the accommodation and food on board for white sailors, while somewhat better than that for lascars was often shockingly bad, both ashore and on board.

That it became possible to create a romantic idyll out of this world is something of a tribute to the power of the imperial imagination. Yet if the British sailor was as, it were, 'over-imagined' in literary and popular culture, the lascar tended to be neglected except

at moments when his existence became the focus of political problems for the British. The marginal status of the lascar was compounded by the somewhat intangible quality of the category itself. Lascars were, in the early 20th century, effectively defined by the government of India as either 'natives' of India, or 'natives' of Africa or Asia who signed on at the Government of India-controlled port of Aden.¹⁷ The latter element comprised large numbers of Arabs and Somalis. All men hired in these categories counted as Lascars and signed a distinct contract. In the British marine racial lexicon, they were differentiated from Chinese, Malays, West Indians and West Africans, all of whom were engaged under differing forms of articles. But there is no doubt that an ethnographically ignorant, or commercially astute British officer might well sign on a sailor under the 'wrong' racial category. There was no such thing as a 'real' lascar.

Within the world of the sailing ship the very presence of the lascar was contested by British sailors and their political allies from early on. While there had been rather extensive use of Asian and African labour on late 18th and early 19th century British ships, by the mid-Victorian period, the number of such workers seems to have dwindled to low levels. The introduction of the steam ship changed things dramatically. The stokeholds of the steamers required large numbers of firemen and trimmers to move the coal. This heavy labour did not require any of the traditional skills of sailing. Deck hands too were no longer required to be equipped with the complex, artisanal knowledge that the rigging of a sailing ship required. And the palatial liners which developed needed large numbers of waiters, cooks and cleaning staff. As ship-owners sought ways to cut costs, under the pressures of competition and the rise of trade unionism amongst British sailors, it became clear that Asian and African workers could do these tasks for a fraction of the wages expected by British and other European seamen.

It is tempting to see antagonism to the lascar as driven by primarily by the raging storm of late Victorian and Edwardian racial ideology. But I would suggest that here a particular construction of sailor's economic interests was the crucial force. Amongst British sailors, popular forms of racist ideology were much less important than economic resentment in initially fuelling their racial politics. Racism amongst ordinary British seamen was specifically directed at the lascars and Chinese – who were seen as their real competition, - rather than at all people of colour. The mainstream of sailor racism on British ships somewhat by-passed sailors of colour from the Atlantic world. For example in his fascinating memoirs, the African-American sailor James Williams told of how, in the mid 1880s, he and other members of the crew were brutalized by the 'bucko' (bullying) mates of an American 'hell-ship'. (The US merchant marine fleet had much the worst reputation of any western country for its violence towards its crews). By contrast, in Hong Kong he met the quartermaster of an English steamer and they instantly struck up a rapport. Williams declares

There is a feeling of tacit freemasonry among deepwater sailors which always bids them help each other in distress and which does not take race, nationality and color into account. The young Englishman volunteered to assist me ...¹⁸

In his narrative, Williams escapes after a violent struggle and joins the British ship. He is quite lyrical concerning the camaraderie of the British merchant fleet. Going on board on a new ship at Calcutta, he describes the chief mate as greeting the sailors “with that air of gruff civility peculiar to English deepwater mates of the old school”.¹⁹ One should perhaps not make too much of such anecdotes, but the point does seem to be that a generic racial ideology was not necessarily all-pervasive in the popular culture of the merchant marine. What gave racism its real power amongst British sailors was that it worked as a supporting ideology for a form of trade unionism that mobilized British sailors as racial subjects, against clearly defined foes. It was the lascar and the Chinese sailor whom were constructed as the primary enemy, rather than sailors of colour in general.

Whether lascars suffered more from the risks of shipboard life than British sailors is a moot point. What is clear is that lascars were almost always paid a fraction of what British sailors received, that they had very much less spacious and more uncomfortable accommodation, and that their food was frequently unacceptable. A statistical study of seafarer mortality in the merchant navy from 1919 to 2005 by Stephen Roberts suggests that in the long run overall accident mortality has been a little lower for lascars than for British sailors. He explains, quite plausibly, that this is because a greater proportion of the former were employed in the engine room or catering work, which were less lethal than deck hand work.²⁰ On the other hand, contemporary statistics suggest that in the inter-war years deaths from disease were similar or higher for lascars than for British seamen in almost all categories except alcohol-related conditions, and much higher for pneumonia and tuberculosis.²¹ In the early twentieth century steamers, lascars were allocated only 40 to 50 cubic feet, while British seamen had 72 cubic feet.²² Later improvements perpetuated and actually increased this racial inequality; by the time of the Second World War, lascars’ space allocation had been raised to roughly the previous British level, at 70 cubic feet, but British sailors had a much larger, though still inadequate 120 cubic feet.²³ This had direct consequences for the problem of TB and other lung diseases. A 1942 article by John E. Wood, the medical superintendent at King George’s Home for Sailors, concluded, undoubtedly correctly, that the on-board TB epidemic was driven by “the overcrowding in living and sleeping space which is almost universal. The cubic space allotted is definitely below the minimum allotted ashore, and bad weather means closing whatever ventilation is available. ... Improved washing and sanitary facilities are badly needed on most ships, and improved arrangements should be made for sterilization of verminous and infected bedding.”²⁴

Seamanship and Safety

There was throughout the steam era, an intense British debate as to whether or not lascars were competent seamen. To take one example, in the case of the sinking of the P&O liner *Tasmania* off Corsica in April 1887, numerous survivors and others wrote to the British and Anglo-Indian press, arguing that the lesson of the wreck was that the lascars on board had shown themselves to be lacking in seamanlike abilities, and that fatalities amongst them on deck during the night in which many survivors were forced to cling to the wreck

in the face of a storm, showed they were not hardy enough to withstand cold. Those taking this view urged the unsuitability of lascars crews. However the lascars had their defenders. An anonymous correspondent in the *Times of India*, writing as 'D.R.' pointed out with some asperity that the passengers on the doomed ship had the protection of "the smoking room which was a shelter to them, while the firemen and coal trimmers had to find some shelter in the open rigging as best they could".²⁵ An 'Old Salt of the Country Service' declared that he "would sail to any part of the world with a lascar crew. Many a noble sailor I have found amongst them, and my experience is that they can stand cold and hardship as well as any crew carried by English merchant vessels as well as being cleaner and more manageable".²⁶ The P&O obviously had an interest in defending the use of lascars, but nevertheless it is notable that the Commodore of the line, George Cates, felt able to assert on the basis of his vast experience: "That lascars do our work better than any European is beyond question".²⁷ The lascars of the *Tasmania* did manage to get their voice heard via a statement to the paper *Jame-Jamshed*, which also made its way into the English language press, complaining of that their "strict obedience to orders and unflinching endeavours to afford every convenience to the passengers in the face of the bitter cold and buffeting waves to which we have been exposed" had not been appreciated.²⁸ A notable feature of the discussion is that both the Indian lascars and their defenders made a distinction between lascars proper and Seedis, the Afro-Indians extensively employed in the stoker and trimmer position. The tendency was to suggest that true lascar was more of a seaman and better at dealing with cold than the Seedi. That the lascars' statement itself took this tack, suggests the complexity of the ethnic divisions within the work force of the Indian Ocean. Some correspondents did point out that the Seedis on the *Tasmania* had come out of the stokeholds and coal bunkers with little clothing and that this had made them vulnerable to the cold. A concern that emerged even amongst the defenders of the lascars was that the replacement of the earlier system under which captains could choose their own crews with the system where the shipping office and labour brokers selected the lascars, did in fact mean that crews were less likely than before to be composed of experienced sailors.

By the turn of the century, political tensions around the lascar issue had become acute. At the sittings of a parliamentary Manning Committee in 1896, a parade of experienced officers testified to the seamanship, reliability, sobriety and trustworthiness of lascar crews, a view the committee endorsed. In 1903 Captain W.H. Hood published a book, *The Blight of Insubordination*, not only defending the lascars, but damning the contemporary British seaman as drunken, undisciplined and irresponsible.²⁹ But at both at a popular and an elite level, one has a strong sense that British opinion swung against the lascar during subsequent decades. For example, the press coverage of the 1910 sinking of the Ellerman Lines ship *Arcadian*, which crashed into a steamer in the Irish Channel, seems have produced few defenders of the lascar in the English and Anglo-Indian press. The *Times of India*, for example discussed the conduct of the twelve lascars who had died in the accident in the most hostile terms, basing itself on the views British sailors in the wreck. The paper reported that:

An opinion was expressed by the English sailors that had the coloured men been more anxious to save their lives than to save rupees, the loss of life would in all

probability have been small. ... at the first shock an extraordinary scene was witnessed. The lascars, fearful of losing the most trifling personal possession, packed all their money, including their money into parcels, which they tied with coloured handkerchiefs. They then dashed up the ladders in frantic haste, but on reaching the deck many of them were swept into the sea.³⁰

The *Times of India* report thus drew on British sailors' characterization of the lascars as avaricious, incapable and lacking in fore-thought and altruism.

Symptomatic of the ground gained by the idea of the superiority of the British sailor amongst literary elites was one of the last poems written by Kipling, in 1937. Having forgotten his earlier, grimly realist picture of the sailor's life, the poet expresses his reassurance at traveling on an all-British manned ship:

Above my early cup of tea
Contentedly I think
of such as have to sail with me
or peradventure sink

Namely Port Lifeboat, Twenty-two
Bow, Blair; Stroke, Mirrilees
Falls-Fore and After – [Kinsella] Drew-
(Both – heaven be praised – ABs!)³¹

Viewing the world from the First Class cabin, Kipling had come to view these representative Scottish, English and Irish sailors as the Able Seamen (ABs) who would save him in his hour of peril. The message was clear: thank God they were not lascars.

Hostile constructions of the lascars' alleged lack of seamanship persisted in some quarters into the time of the Second World War. In 1942, Elspeth Huxley, the celebrated Kenya colonial writer, penned a wartime propaganda pamphlet about Mary Cornish, the heroine of the sinking of the liner *City of Benares*, which carried hundreds of refugee British children en route to Canada. The villains in Huxley's story are the lascars in Mary's life boat, who respond to the crisis by going into psychological decline and obstruct her efforts to keep up morale among the children.³² But there were also very different views amongst merchant marine officers on these questions. For example, in their reports on World War II sinkings, ships officers of the *Empire Wave* and the *Bolton Castle* were scathing about the uncooperative conduct of 'Arab' sailors in the lifeboats, while the officers of the *Clan McWhirter* and the *Larchbank* gave high praise to the attitude of the lascars of their ships during their lifeboat ordeal.³³

Patriotism

The most powerful source of opposition to the use of lascars and other Asian seamen was that of the trade unions, who deplored the alleged sacrifice of British workers'

interests and jobs to the interests of Asians. J. Havelock Wilson's National Union of Seamen and Firemen was the main proponent of this view, but they received broad support from the labour movement and from xenophobe intellectuals. The rhetoric of this position came in a variety of forms. After his election to parliament in 1891, Wilson often pretended that all he wanted was equality of conditions between the lascar and the Briton, at established British rates and conditions. The underlying logic though was that if shipowners had to pay the same for British, lascar and Indian sailors, they would hire the whites.

Another strand of nationalistic resistance to the lascars, was from the strategic fears of naval strategists and blimpish intellectuals that a dilution of the workforce by colonial subjects would reduce the merchant navy's value as a reserve of marine manpower for use by the navy in war. Meliorist attempts to address the position of the lascars clashed with this notion. Representative of this was an address given by John Walsh at Caxton Hall, London, in July 1910, entitled 'The Empire's Obligation to the Lascar'. Walsh took the view that 'when led by European officers', no better crew than lascars could be found'.³⁴ But his views were greeted with less than enthusiasm by the chairman of the evening, Admiral Sir Edward Freemantle, who declared that "he would like to see all British ships manned by British seamen, except those in the far East ..."³⁵, primarily because of the strategic need for a reserve of naval ratings in case a major war broke out.

An interesting example of the politics of managing these discursive strands was provided in 1906, when the new Liberal government was faced with the problem of piloting maritime legislation through parliament in the teeth of hostility from trade-union linked MPs, notably Wilson. David Lloyd George, as President of the Board of Trade was responsible for the Bill. He argued that "shipowners had no alternative" but to employ lascars. The supply of sailors, the Welsh Wizard contended, was just not adequate. The tonnage of the British merchant marine had doubled since 1870, requiring many new workers. In roughly the same period, the navy had doubled its numbers to 129 000 taking "the cream of our men engaged in the seafaring life". To stop foreign seamen from joining the British ships would be to "ruin the British mercantile marine". Many British ships operated in foreign ports, only returning to the UK once in four years and "You cannot get British sailors to remain on ships of that kind".³⁶ European sailors were returning to the ships of their respective countries because of improvements of conditions.

Lloyd George also invoked the powerful ideology which claimed that British law had no colour bar;

A lascar, however is a Britisher [A Labour Member: Like the Chinaman] You cannot make a Britisher out of him merely for the sake of bragging of the extent of your dominions, and then the moment he asks for a share of your privileges say "You are a foreigner". That is not fair.³⁷

The Labour interjection called up the spectre of Chinese labour on the Transvaal gold mines. But Lloyd George was ahead on this game. One of the major issues in the

preceding election was the Liberal's opposition to the introduction by the Tories of Chinese workers into South Africa. While drawing support from many who opposed the economic competition of poor Asian workers to British artisans, the Liberals had pitched the issue around an ethical opposition to "Chinese slavery", thus enabling their supporters to vote both for an ostensibly philanthropic position and racial protectionism at the same time. In the lascar case however, Lloyd George was casting the position of the lascar as one of voluntary employment, enabling him to connect his defence of the rights of colonial subjects to the existing form of labour dispensation. Wilson stuck to his guns, but he had been placed on the defensive. The idea of non-discrimination in British law was a powerful ideological weapon that could be wielded against him by opponents. He then had to fall back on the argument of lascar incompetence, which was hard to sustain, given that so many marine experts opposed it. For almost the next four decades though, Labour MPs would continue to play the card of the lascar threat to British seamen as a way of 'defending' the jobs of British workers. Paradoxically, because it was their cheapness that opened up jobs for them, by and large, until the late thirties, lascars and their Indian elite political supporters accepted unequal working conditions. They proceeded on the idea that the equalization of pay and conditions was an attempt by Wilson and his supporters to price them out of the labour market.

Medical Discourse

In the latter years of the nineteenth century, as the powerful British public health movement began to shift its focus beyond the newly improved sewers of the metropolitan cities, some influential medical interested themselves in shipboard conditions. As early as 1889, an article in the *British Medical Journal* growled that "Owing to the supineness of the Board of Trade, and the shortsighted selfishness of the steamship owners, there is a danger that whole shipfuls of passengers may be landed at New York, Boston, or any other eastern port, bearing with them the germs of infection contracted during the Atlantic voyage".³⁸ But any dramatic proposals for state intervention tended to be shot down by the Board of Trade, which was inclined to be obliging toward the ship owner.

There was much attention to shipping in leading medical publications at the turn of the century, especially at the time of the late 19th century to ship-borne international cholera and plague epidemics. But even when new medical technologies became available, the colonial discourse of the medical profession often obstructed their utilization in the merchant marine. For example between the Boer War and World War One, it was still regarded by the *British Medical Journal* as an unresolved question whether Beri-Beri, prevalent amongst both lascars and white seamen, was caused by poisoning, infection or malnutrition.³⁹ The etiology of the disease – it is the result of vitamin B shortage - had in fact been established in 1899-1900 by Eijkman and Hopkins. But their findings were much disputed by *BMJ* contributors, often colonial and ship's doctors who appealed to the idea that they 'knew' conditions in the colonies. The *BMJ* did not desist from this 'discussion' until Eijkman and Hopkins won the 1929 Nobel Prize for their discovery.

The idea that Indians could not cope physically in cold climates was pervasive amongst British medical men for most of the period. They tended to see the problem as an irremediable biological one, and this notion was frequently used by political actors as a pretext for the exclusion of the lascar from sections of the labour market. Government of India (GoI) regulations, from the end of the 19th century, forbade Indian sailors from making voyages in high latitudes in the Atlantic. In 1902 the GoI had contemplated lifting these restrictions, but had decided against it under pressure from the Board of Trade (BoT) in London. Although a cloak of medical advice covered the move, the real basis was that the Board of Trade was by now under strong pressure from British unions to resist the growth of the numbers of lascars employed on British ships. In 1907 ship owners had pushed for the restrictions to be modified but on the advice of the Board of Trade, the GoI rejected the call. During World War I, the proposal was raised again, and after some hesitation suspended.⁴⁰ The BoT usually made a pretence of concern for the lascar, but the mask occasionally slipped. When in 1925 Lord Birkenhead, the Secretary of State for India, suggested that the restrictions might be relaxed for summer cruises, the BoT's response gave their real game away: "any extension of lascar limits of employment increases to some extent the number of lascars employed and tends in the long run to displace United Kingdom seamen whose Unions will certainly raise very strong objections to any such course".⁴¹ The measures continued, and were actually strengthened by the GoI in 1930.⁴² The GoI was relatively isolated from British trade union pressures and there seems to have been a genuine belief amongst its officials that Indian sailors had real health problems in cold latitudes. The regulation was supported by the India Office which pursued captains over breaches of the regulations.⁴³

The discussions in the bureaucracy reflect the farrago of nonsense which necessarily attends projects of racial classification and biological essentialism. Throughout the previous three and a half decades medical advisers had been unable to agree whether or not Indians were susceptible to cold. In a 1932 memo, H.S. Flynn, the Shipping Master of Bombay, pointed out that many of the 'Malay' sailors who were allowed to sail into far northern latitudes were actually Indians who had signed on in Singapore as Malays because of the more favourable conditions of the contracts prevailing there. Flynn observed that: "Masters report that these men always give satisfaction and stand the climate well whereas the actual Malay seaman is most unsatisfactory".⁴⁴ In the early 1930s there were new demands for the abolition of the regulations. In 1932 Indian trade unionists and sailors lobbied the GoI asking for an end to these climate restrictions.⁴⁵ The GoI changed its position, now calling for abolition of the restrictions on the grounds that this would provide more opportunities for unemployed lascars, and was unlikely to have an impact on UK employment patterns. The Board however continued to drag its feet. E. Foley of the BoT informed the India Office in August 1935 that "there is no doubt that the lascars are less capable than Europeans of resisting cold". Safety was then invoked: "deck hands should be able to perform their functions under winter conditions".⁴⁶ The GoI and the India Office however continued to gather evidence that Indian seamen were perfectly capable of working in the north. A 1937 memo from the Ellerman Lines reported that they had had no difficulty with Indian sailors whom they had employed at very cold temperatures in the northern Pacific: "it is found that the percentage of Lascars going sick and having to be landed at North China ports is practically nil".⁴⁷ Angered by

the BoT's' uncooperative attitude, the GoI unilaterally suspended most of the climate-based regulations in 1938.⁴⁸ Special regulations for larger food rations including more meat were established and the making of a voluntary agreement to travel outside the normal latitudes were required and provisions put in place for closer monitoring of sailors' health.⁴⁹ The issue continued to be a political football for British labour into the early years of the Second World War. At the time of the sinking of the *City of Benares*, a number of Labour parliamentarians claimed that the fatalities had been worse than necessary because the ship was manned by a lascar crew who were "unsuited to the Cold Atlantic Route".⁵⁰ The idea of the incompetent, sickly and therefore unsafe lascar refused to die. Only in 1941, under the pressure of sailor militancy and wartime labour need, did the GoI finally abolish the last vestiges of restriction.

In analyzing why climatic ideas about the lascar had such a purchase, we should perhaps not focus only on the numerous ways in which they served the self-interest of particular groups. As Ryan Johnson has shown, colonial ideas about the importance of climatic factors in disease causation, and the ideas about appropriate clothing for whites in the tropics that went with them, often tended to persist well after germ theory had undermined their scientific basis.⁵¹ If as Johnson suggests, climatic notions of disease and the associated practices helped reinforce symbolic lines of cultural and sartorial differentiation between the British and their colonial subjects, then the idea that lascars belonged in the tropical oceans and Europeans in the northern seas may have had a strong cultural logic of its own. The Government of India could thus think that it was protecting the lascar by keeping him out of the north Atlantic, while at the same time having the psychological comfort of reinforcing the social lines between British and Indian people.

The rise of psychiatry as a branch of medicine in the inter-war years initially did little to shift stereotypical readings of lascar behaviour. Indeed, some medical experts provided a pseudo-scientific rationalization for the supposed moral failings of the lascar. For example, in his 1943 book on shipwreck survivors, MacDonald Critchley, a London neurologist who was also a naval reserve officer, told his readers that:

Surgeon-Captain Curran has emphasized how creditably the Anglo-Saxon emerges in such ordeals, no doubt because of the high standards of demeanor and conduct which are so important in his social code. The disapproval of emotional extravagances, and more particularly of emotional display, conduce to an equipoise which counts for a great deal in circumstances such as these. Coloured races however, particularly the low-class Indians, may behave badly while adrift, as shown by refusal to work, pilfering of stores, unco-operation (sic) early despair and in consequence, a heavy and early mortality.⁵²

Critchley cited in support of his view a case of a British ship sunk in the Atlantic during the current war, in which 18 Europeans and 64 Indians had made it into the lifeboat. Of these 12 whites but only 25 lascars had survived.⁵³ He does not appear to have considered whether differences in previous nutrition and training might have been responsible.

Restructuring in the 1930s and 1940s

This field of racialised contestation over the supposedly intrinsic characteristics of seamen of various nationalities remained remarkably stable until the Second World War. But the outbreak of war contributed to a rather rapid change of official and professional discourses about the lascar. A very militant world wide lascar strike threatened the imperial war effort in 1939 and resulted in the British cabinet forcing the ship owners into a massive improvement in pay and conditions. The delicate political situation in India encouraged both the British and Indian bureaucracies to favour reforms that might buy some time. A more progressive ideological climate affected the medical profession. And as increasing numbers of old ships were sunk and replaced by oil-fired ones, with their smaller crews, improved on-board living conditions became easier to contemplate for both bureaucrats and owners. Indicative of this shift was an important symbolic gesture by the government itself. As tends to happen more generally to racial terminology used by officialdom, the word 'lascar' had become resented by those to whom it was applied. In November 1940, Minister of Labour Ernest Bevin called in a speech for dispensing with the use of the term.⁵⁴

A change the ideological climate amongst doctors is also reflected in one response to Critchley's shipwreck book. As Barkan has shown, there was a strong turn away from biological racist discourses amongst cutting-edge British and American intellectuals in the 1930s, under the influence of biologists such as J.B.S. Haldane and Julian Huxley and cultural anthropologists such as Franz Boas.⁵⁵ *The Lancet's* anonymous reviewer questioned Critchley's racial assumptions, adopting a cultural relativist mode of explanation. The reviewer asked whether "an excessive response, (by Anglo Saxon standards) necessarily impl[ied] inability to endure; indeed, it may have the opposite significance ... It is possible that ... whereas the Anglo-Saxon behaves in a more controlled way under circumstances of stress, he is more liable to subsequent anxiety, while persons more outspoken in their emotional response throw off the after-effects more rapidly".⁵⁶

Yet what is striking is that the move in Britain toward a more welfarist and inclusive national community also resulted in a new form of exclusion of the lascar. Plans for post-war reform increasingly were underpinned by a vision of Britain as a nation, not an Empire, and by default, a nation which was imagined as white. By the end of the thirties, the enthusiasm for planning which was increasingly enthusing the British intelligentsia and bureaucracy seems to have created a greater receptivity to meliorist measures. In 1939, a joint union-management National Maritime Board Agreement was introduced to improve on board living conditions. Many years of pressure for reform of shipboard conditions from the Association of Port Health Authorities culminated in 1937, when the Board of Trade created new 'Instructions to Surveyors' which vastly raised the standards of sanitation, sleeping and cooking facilities for new ships. The contingencies of war produced a more active and interventionist role for Whitehall, with for example a Seaman's Welfare Board set up in 1940 by the Ministry of Labour. There was also some improvement in the medical services available to sailors.⁵⁷ The BBC launched a highly successful radio program for sailors 'Shipmates Ashore' which ran a campaign to raise

money for retired sailor housing.⁵⁸ There was great concern to improve the clothing of sailors, who were encouraged, in the tropics to give up such absurdities of colonial medical science as pith helmets and cholera belts in favour of sandals and shorts, and to adopt the Brynne system of cold weather clothing.⁵⁹ The ILO held its first postwar seaman's conference in late 1945, with enthusiastic support from the new Labour government.⁶⁰ There were notable improvements in the quality of officer and crew accommodation in newly built ships.⁶¹ However what is clear is that the imagined beneficiaries of these changes were the white British sailor. The social solidarity that was aimed for in Attlee's Britain was of a specifically white and British workforce. Lascars were not excluded from the benefits of reform but the discussions around these issues were clearly addressed to an image of a better Britain, rather than a better Empire. In the texts of these discussions on the more egalitarian future, the sailor is not imagined as an Indian or a Somali. As a rehabilitated, modernized and national sailor became more visible in the British official imagination the lascar became less so.

The Phantom Lascar

The post-war world saw an endless celebration of the British sailors' virtues, just as the country was losing its century and half long domination on the world's oceans. This wave of nostalgia also constituted a kind of silent attack on the lascar, whose role in the story was actively forgotten. The growing enthusiasm for sail went along with a fading of the memory of the lascar, even by those who had worked alongside him.

The presiding genius in the new phase of cultural production of age of sail nostalgia was the British-based Australian sailor, writer and photographer Alan Villiers. Villiers was undoubtedly a creative artist, publicist and entrepreneur of a high order. Between the 1920s and the 1970s he published some 45 books on the sea in Britain and America, a number of them bestsellers, 31 articles in the American *National Geographic* magazine, and many pieces in other publications.⁶² He was involved in several projects of re-creation of historic ships, notably captaining the 1957 voyage of a mock *Mayflower* from England to America. This event attracted enormous publicity and acclaim, and Villiers was greeted at Plymouth Rock by Vice-President Richard Nixon and Senator John Kennedy.⁶³ He also took charge of the nautical side of a number of feature films, including John Huston's celebrated 1954 version of *Moby Dick*.⁶⁴ Villiers' formidable range of skills enabled him to both help generate and to ride a long wave of popular nostalgia for pre-industrialised seafaring. His work may indeed also have shaped the way in which elderly British and American seafarers remembered their youth

Villiers however had a very confined vision of maritime history. He was notably misogynist and intensely anti-Semitic. His enthusiasm for the age of Henry the Navigator made him into something of an apologist for Dr Salazar's version of the Portuguese empire. His racial attitudes were complex. He did acknowledge the achievements of Asian and African seafarers – for example in *Sons of Sinbad*, his beautifully written, if somewhat orientalist, account of a 1939 voyage in an Arabian dhow.⁶⁵ But lascars are consistently placed outside the mainstream history of western shipping by Villiers. His

generally sympathetic recent biographer remarks: “In Villiers’ square-rigger world there could be no genuine sailors who were women or Jews or blacks”.⁶⁶

An interesting indicator of post-war maritime specialists attitudes to the past is to be found in the magazine *Sea Breezes*, published in London. Flourishing in the inter-war years, it espoused a high romanticism about the age of sail. The magazine was remarkably purist: no articles on steamships were published. After a hiatus during World War II, the publication was revived in a much more ecumenical New Series, which did venture into the world of steam as well. *Sea Breezes* made it clear though that having sailed in a tall ship, preferably around Cape Horn, remained the true test of seamanship. *Sea Breezes (New Series)* was enlivened by a remarkably dense stream of articles and letters from retired merchant marine officers, reminiscing about their early years at sea, a genre that persisted in its pages until through the 1950s. Given that British boys had often gone to sea in their mid-teens, many of these articles harked back to the late Victorian and Edwardian eras. What is notable in these narratives is that no one dwells on the lascar, even amongst those who worked with them for most of their lives. For example in the short memoir by Captain G.V. Clark, who made his career as a pilot on Calcutta’s Hoogli, there is no mention of lascars.⁶⁷ Captain C. Hesletine, an experienced officer of the British India Steam Navigation Company, viewed Bombay lascars favourably – ‘fine fellows they were’ – but said no more about them.⁶⁸ Out of contemporary sight was very much out of mind.

It obviously required a considerable feat of imagination to turn the world of crimps, bad nutrition and rampant mortality into a British mariner’s paradise, but contributors to *Sea Breezes* generally rose to the task. A small explosion was evoked amongst them in October 1953 when someone dared to disrupt the consensus. A project had been launched to restore the classic clipper ship *Cutty Sark*. In response to a piece by Alan Villiers lauding the move, T.A. Porter, a tough-minded retired ship’s officer living in Bournemouth, wrote in to pour cold water on the idea:

To support an epoch of sea-going when men were treated as dogs at appallingly low wages is unreasonable in this year of grace ...

I accepted conditions as they were before the First World War because I had to live somehow and jobs were hard to get, but I have no illusions that I was living in Arcadia.

... Well do I remember going aboard an iron barque in Salthouse Dock, Liverpool, about 1902. Her half-deck for four apprentices was alive with cockroaches; it was a filthy hole ...⁶⁹

Porter’s views provoked a torrent of outraged letters to *Sea Breezes*. These insisted on the aesthetic of sail, linking it to their claims to skill, to self-reliance, to masculine identity and to Britishness. One correspondent wrote;

I well remember I knew the men who served in those ships, and well remember the pride we took in our ships, and no more “kindly-natured” gentlemen could be found in the forecastles. I spent 45 days doubling Cape Horn and 145 days from

London to Frisco. It was this trial which proved to me that great comradeship which could not be found in any other phase of life, except perhaps in the trenches at Ypres, or in desert warfare in the 8th Army.
... we led the world in ships and seamanship ...⁷⁰

The contemporary world was seen in a perspective of decadence from the era of sail. Geoffrey Robertshaw, who had served four years in sail, recalled a recent gathering in a pub in Falmouth where

Eight real old-timers of the hard days of sail recal[ed] those happy days ... referring disparagingly to the molly-coddled young seamen (not sailors) of today. Evidently Mr. Porter was a misfit in sail ...
An old Swede I sailed with once said to a young sailor who was always grumbling: "Why did you come to sea? Better stay in your mother's arms"⁷¹

Porter remained unrepentant:

there is some sort of concerted Hallelujah chorus in favour of the early shipowners. Do these vocalists, I wonder, admit that the present conditions are the ... result of hard-headed bargaining of the various associations and unions?⁷²

But in holding out for a rationalistic and collectivist view of the marine world, Porter was clear out of step with his peers. Their ideas about the sea was pervaded by a romantic emotionality and individualism.

Throughout this debate, the lascar and other non-British seamen were the absent presence. The invocation of the superiority of the white British seaman constantly begs the question; than whom were they better? To some extent the answer is of course, the allegedly molly coddled younger generation in the West. But it is also implicitly an assertion that they were better than the lascars with whom they sailed. This may suggest a broader point about how to understand the operations of racial ideas. Racism is sometimes portrayed as consisting as highly theorized ideologies, but it often actually functions through a blunter process of non-recognition. Simon Dagut has shown that in high imperial southern Africa, settler racism often took the form of an intense social distancing, manifesting in obliviousness toward the social existence of the black workforce. Thus a single Englishman, camped out in the bush with a score or more of African workers could declare himself in his diary to be 'alone'.⁷³ In the same way, the lascar was often unreal to the British imagination. But the lascar was the doppelganger of the British seaman; the one could not be thought of without the other. The celebration of the British seaman was, and remains, a deeply racialized text, silently contrasting him with his usually unmentioned Asian and African crewmates, even when they seem not to be there.

- ¹ Conrad, 'Well Done', in Conrad, *Notes on Life and Letters* [J.H. Stape with Andrew Burza eds.] Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.143-4.
- ² Joseph Conrad, 'Well Done' p. 157
- ³ Conrad, 'Well Done', p.143.
- ⁴ Rudyard Kipling, *City of Dreadful Night*, (New York, Alex Grosset, 1899) p. 49.
- ⁵ Joseph Conrad, 'Certain Aspects of the Admirable Enquiry into the Loss of the Titanic', in Conrad, *Notes on Life*, p. 186.
- ⁶ Conrad, 'Certain Aspects', p. 185.
- ⁷ John Masefield ed., *A Sailor's Garland* (New York, Macmillan, 1906), p. x.
- ⁸ Masefield, *A Sailor's Garland*, p. x.
- ⁹ Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1750-1950* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1983).
- ¹⁰ Martin J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981).
- ¹¹ My argument differs from that of John Peck, *Sailors and the Sea in British and American Novels, 1719-1917* (Palgrave, Houndmills, 2001), who argues that stories of the sea, after a long period of centrality in British novels, reached the limits of the form with the collapse of British maritime predominance before and around the First World War which rendered the sea novel and inappropriate vehicle for exploring society. This seems to me wrong on two counts; firstly, although Britain was somewhat less dominant on the naval front from the early 20th century, its dominance of world commercial shipping lasted until World War II. Secondly, with a few exceptions, novels dealing with the sea had always been a more salient genre in popular than in high culture literature, and the former strand of writing continued to flourish until the 1960s.
- ¹² Philip Hoare, *Serious Pleasures: The Life of Stephen Tennant* (London, Hamish Hamilton, 1990).
- ¹³ Stephen E. Roberts, 'Fatal Work-Related Accidents in UK Merchant shipping from 1919 to 2005', *Occupational Medicine*, vol. 58, 2008, pp. 129-137.
- ¹⁴ Roberts, 'Fatal Work-Related Accidents'.
- ¹⁵ W.E. Home, 'The Deaths of Merchant Seamen in 1923', *The Lancet*, 3 October 1925, p. 731.
- ¹⁶ Frank Broeze, *Island Nation: Australia and the Sea* (St. Leonard's, Allen and Unwin, 1998), p.157.
- ¹⁷ India Office Records, British Library (hereafter IOR) L/E/7/433/1 Revenue and Statistics minute Paper n.d.; IOR L/E/7/433 Lord Curzon, Simla to Lord George Hamilton, India Office, London, 10 May 1900 ; IOR L/E/7/439 Minute Paper 28 May 1900; Leo Barnes, *Evolution and Scope of Mercantile Marine Laws Relating to Seamen in India* (New Delhi, Maritime Law Association of India, 1983), p. 38.
- ¹⁸ James H. Williams, *Blow the Man Down! A Yankee Seaman's Adventures Under Sail* (New York, E.P. Dutton, 1959), p. 58.
- ¹⁹ Williams, *Blow the Man Down*, p. 68.
- ²⁰ Roberts, 'Fatal Work-Related Accidents'
- ²¹ Home, 'Deaths of Merchant Seamen', p. 731.
- ²² Parliamentary Debates, First Session of the Parliament of the United Kingdom of Britain and Ireland 6. Edward VII volume CLXIII, col.263
- ²³ Dinkar Desai, *Maritime Labour in India* (Bombay, Servants of India Society, 1939) p. 97.
- ²⁴ Wood, 'Tuberculosis'.
- ²⁵ *Times of India*, 19 May 1887.
- ²⁶ *Times of India*, 20 May 1887.
- ²⁷ *Times of India* 24 May 1887.
- ²⁸ *Times of India* 16 June 1887.
- ²⁹ Captain W.H. Hood, *The Blight of Insubordination* London, Spottiswoode, 1903).
- ³⁰ *Times of India*, 2 February 1910.
- ³¹ *The Times*, 2 October 2007.
- ³² Elspeth Huxley, *Atlantic Ordeal: the Story of Mary Cornish* (New York, Harper, 1942) ; Wendy Webster, "Elspeth Huxley: Gender, Empire and Narratives of the Nation, 1935-1964", *Women's History Review*, 8:3, 1999, 537-545.
- ³³ G.H. and R. Bennett, *Survivors: British Merchant Seamen in the Second World War* (London, Hambledon, 1999), 187-189.
- ³⁴ *Times of India*, 13 August 1910,
- ³⁵ *Times of India*, 13 August 1910.
- ³⁶ Parliamentary Debates, First Session of the Parliament of the United Kingdom of Britain and Ireland 6. Edward VII volume CLIV 1906, cols 237-8
- ³⁷ *Ibid* 243
- ³⁸ Anonymous, 'Steamship Sanitation', *British Medical Journal* (hereafter *BMJ*), 12 October 1889, p.832
- ³⁹ D.W. Keillor Moodie, "Beri-Beri among lascar Crews On Board Ship", *BMJ*, 28 March 1903, pp. 728-729; George A. Turner, 'Ship Beri-Beri', *BMJ* 1 April 1905, pp. 712-713.
- ⁴⁰ IOR L/E/9/970/92 Anonymous memo 13 March 1934.
- ⁴¹ IOR L/E/9/956 Baker, Board of Trade, London to Undersecretary of State, India Office, 28 August 1925.
- ⁴² IOR L/E/970/258 'Department of Commerce Resolution Merchant Shipping 27 March 1930'.
- ⁴³ See file L/E/9/970 throughout.

- ⁴⁴ IOR L/E/9/970/216 H.S. Lynn, Bombay to Principal Officer, Mercantile Marine Dept 29/30 Dec 1932.
- ⁴⁵ IOR L/E/9/970 Syed Munawar, General Secretary National Seamen's Union of India to Shipping Master, Bombay, 26 December 1932.
- ⁴⁶ IOR L/E/9/970/158 E. Foley, Mercantile Marine Dept Board of Trade to Under Secretary of State for India, India Office 22 August 1935.
- ⁴⁷ IOR L/E/9/976/117 R.J. Bucknall, Ellerman and Bucknall Steamship Co, 'Notes on Restrictions on the Employment of Indian Seamen in Northern Latitudes 1937'.
- ⁴⁸ IOR L/E/9/970/82 memorandum 4 May 1938.
- ⁴⁹ IOR L/E/9/970 H. Raison, Undersecretary, to GoI Department of Commerce, Simla, 22 August 1938.
- ⁵⁰ *Hansard*, 15 October 1940.
- ⁵¹ Ryan Johnson, "European Cloth and 'Tropical' Skin : Clothing Material and British Ideas of Health and Hygiene in Tropical Climates", *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, volume 80, no. 1, Spring 2006, pp. 39-72.
- ⁵² MacDonald Critchley, *Shipwreck Survivors: A Medical Study* (London, Churchill, 1943), p. 73.
- ⁵³ Critchley, *Shipwreck Survivors*, p.73.
- ⁵⁴ Barnes. *Evolution and Scope*, p. 39, citing the Daily Mail, 25 November 1940.
- ⁵⁵ Elazer Barkan, *The Retreat of Scientific Racism: Changing Concepts of Race in Britain and the United States between the World Wars* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992).
- ⁵⁶ Anonymous, 'Exposure and Thirst', *The Lancet* 12 June 1943, p. 729.
- ⁵⁷ Anonymous, 'The Seaman's Able Body', *The Lancet*, 26 July 1943, pp. 807-808.
- ⁵⁸ *Sea Breezes New Series* vol. 1, Jan-June 1946, pp. 102-103 (hereafter *SBNS*).
- ⁵⁹ *SBNS* vol 1 Jan-June 1945 pp. 150-153.
- ⁶⁰ *SBNS* vol. 1 Jan-June 1946 pp. 374-375
- ⁶¹ *SBNS* vol. 1 Jan-June 1946 pp. 368-372.
- ⁶² Kate Lance, *Alan Villiers: Voyager of the Winds* (London, National Maritime Museum, 2009).
- ⁶³ Lance, *Voyager*, pp. 218-24.
- ⁶⁴ Lance, *Voyager*, pp. 213-4..
- ⁶⁵ Alan Villiers, *Sons of Sinbad* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1940).
- ⁶⁶ Lance, *Voyager*, 267.
- ⁶⁷ *SBNS* vol. 1, January-June 1946, p. 376-382.
- ⁶⁸ *SBNS* vol. 18, July-December 1954.
- ⁶⁹ *SBNS* vol. 16, July-December 1953, p. 297.
- ⁷⁰ *SBNS* vol. 16, July-December 1953, p. 447.
- ⁷¹ *SBNS* vol. 16, July-December 1953, p. 448.
- ⁷² *SBNS* vol. 18, July-December 1954, p. 385
- ⁷³ Simon Dagut, 'Racial attitudes Among British Settlers in South Africa c.1850-c.1895', D.Phil dissertation, University of Cambridge, 1997.