

**'One of the toughest streets in the World': Exploring Male Violence, Class and Ethnicity in
London's Sailortown, c.1850-1880.¹**

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Abstract

In 1923 the author, Cicely Fox Smith described Ratcliffe Highway as 'one of the toughest Streets in the World'. Its reputation was largely made in the 1850s when the Highway was the principal sailortown of London and an international hub for foreign sailors.

Commentators feared that foreign sailors had introduced knife-fighting customs alien to the traditional 'English fair fight.' This article will explore the cultural contexts that gave rise to this narrative and demonstrate that serious male on male knife assaults heard at the Old Bailey were relatively rare in London between 1850 and 1880. The customs that upheld masculinity were important in self-regulating male violence in working-class communities. It will be argued that foreign sailors proved adept in recognizing the different customs of upholding masculinity in densely populated working-class districts. Furthermore, transient sailors, as individuals and collectively, were important agents in re-producing masculine cultures and negotiating existing ones in a multi-ethnic urban environment. Finally, within a broader context, the continuation of informally regulated violence in Ratcliffe Highway raises the question of how successful the English justice system was in 'civilising' a traditional brutal street culture in the nineteenth century.

But for fully a century it enjoyed the reputation of being one of the toughest streets in the world—on an equality with such sinks of iniquity as the ‘Barbary Coast’ in San Francisco, or Paradise Street, Liverpool, in its most unregenerate days. All the dregs and offscourings of male and female humanity swarmed in the foul and filthy dens of the Highway, ready to prey on the lusts, the follies, and the trustfulness of the sailor.

C. Fox Smith, *Sailor Town Days* (London, 1923), 27-8.

In the mid-Victorian popular imagination, London’s Ratcliffe Highway was the embodiment of urban horror and castigated for its squalor, brutality and vice. The Highway straddled and dominated the district of St George in the East and was the key thoroughfare for those living and working in London’s maritime quarter. For many who journeyed to the extremities of the East, the Highway felt both physically and morally isolated from civilized society, a place in which debauchery and viciousness reigned.² Those brave enough to visit Ratcliffe Highway were told they were entering a sailor bacchanalia in which pleasure was interspersed with horrific violence and barbarity. Ratcliffe Highway’s path to national infamy began with the Ratcliffe Highway murders in 1811 which spurred numerous ballads and continued to generate press speculation during much of the nineteenth century.³ However, popular fears about its deadly reputation were confirmed in the 1850s as the Highway became the principal sailortown district of London, the world’s largest port at the time.⁴ The large numbers of foreign sailors in traditional seafaring dress with knives strapped to their belts, along with numerous crimps and prostitutes, gave the district a dangerous but also an exotic appeal. While the authorities attempted to change the area’s image by renaming it ‘St George’s Street’, journalists and writers continued to write exposés

about 'The Highway' in evermore sensational ways.⁵ It was only with the Whitechapel murders in the late 1880s that Victorian popular culture found a new location for depictions of urban gothic horror.⁶ Ratcliffe Highway's infamy declined towards the end of the nineteenth century as new docks were constructed further East. While there remained a significant number of sailors in the Highway, these new docks dispersed sailors across the capital and diminished the Ratcliffe as London's principal sailortown.⁷

With its multi-ethnic space and transient sailortown character, Ratcliffe Highway provided the perfect copy for popular newspapers keen to attract readers with sensational and exotic stories. The Highway was framed as a wild place in which the normal rules that governed fights between men were superseded by the ubiquitous use of the knife that had been introduced by the foreign sailor. However, it will be argued that the moral panic that gripped the press did not correlate with the relatively low incidences of male-on-male knife assaults that were heard before the Old Bailey between 1850 and 1880.⁸ Indeed, levels of serious knife wounding, manslaughter or murder were very similar to other working-class areas of London. Nevertheless, London's sailortown was undoubtedly a tough masculine space in which seafarers and local working-class men stubbornly retained fighting traditions and rituals to defend their honour. However, what marked Ratcliffe Highway out from other districts was its multi-ethnic urban space. Sailortowns were international contact zones which enabled seafarers from different nationalities to become accustomed to a diverse set of cosmopolitan fighting rituals. It will be argued that the rituals which regulated violence were recognized by English, foreign and local working-class men alike, ensuring that, while brutal, the district did not fall into the anarchic violence that was imagined by the press.

Male Working-Class Violence in the Nineteenth Century City

A number of historians have argued that the nineteenth century witnessed a steady decline in male on male violence which, to a large measure, was due to the state's successful mission of civilising the streets. Martin Wiener has claimed that during the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the English judicial system pursued a 'civilising offensive' that no longer tolerated street violence as a way of settling disputes. At the heart of this shift was the justice system's attempt at reframing masculinity. He argued that the courts 'set out a more self-disciplined and pacific ideal of male violence' that was eventually accepted by the working class.⁹ Wiener added that along with rising incomes, education and welfare reform, 'English life by the outbreak of the First World War was nearing culmination of the long process of pacification'.¹⁰ Writing in a similar vein, John Carter Wood argued that as the nineteenth century progressed, the police and courts were far less tolerant to extra-legal street violence in working-class communities. This 'pacification of public spaces' saw working-class men grudgingly accept that manhood could be preserved through legal rather than violent fighting traditions. Like Wiener, Carter Wood concluded that widespread societal changes, such as political inclusion, consumption and education, were also important in forging the decline in male on male violence.¹¹ Both of these accounts identify the courts and police as major drivers in shifting a rough street culture and working-class masculinity towards a more civilized and less violent path.

Historians, however, have noted that there were some exceptions to the narrative that the century justice system was successful in its civilising mission in the nineteenth century. Andrew Davies's important body of work on working-class gangs demonstrates the longevity of the traditional working-class 'fist fight' in the industrial north of Britain.¹² Even in the late nineteenth century, Davies noted that the police were reluctant to intervene when a 'fair fight' had been organized to uphold the combatants' honour. Indeed, in

Manchester it seems, prosecutions were only pursued when fighting codes had been breached such as when men had kicked or used weapons against an opponent.¹³

Elsewhere, John E. Archer argued that the 'civilising process, although evident from the late 1860s and early 1870s, had not been successfully accomplished in Liverpool by the end of the century'.¹⁴ Liverpool's sailortown quarter, which was awash with public houses and brothels, was typical of many ports. In 1876, it was estimated that over 100,000 sailors stepped ashore to join the local population in places of entertainment.¹⁵ In such a volatile and masculine context, Archer described a culture of resistance at attempts to reduce male on male street violence. The 'fair fight' remained a significant recourse for men in Liverpool while the added fear that foreign sailors had introduced knives into fights further alarmed contemporaries.¹⁶ This continuation of traditional street violence to settle disputes bucks the trends noted by Wiener and Carter Wood.

The debate on whether the justice system was civilising English masculinity and street violence is somewhat more complicated in port towns. Graeme Milne has argued persuasively that the 'sailortown' district of a port was a maritime-urban frontier and 'should be seen in two larger urban contexts, the Victorian slum and the cosmopolitan seaport city'. Milne added that the cosmopolitan character of violent fighting traditions, gave the impression to nineteenth century contemporaries that seaports had not undergone modern and civilising improvements. Foreign sailors brought to seaports their own ethnic traditions that defended masculine honour. Certainly, the idea that the foreign sailor brought violence to British shores was a common assumption among civic port authorities.¹⁷ For example, southern European plebeian violence was often imbedded in the ethic of honour and the ritualized knife fight was governed by a code of conduct 'as rule-bound as the aristocratic duel'. This knife fight followed a 'known script' and the

combatant's aim was to cut and scar rather than kill and slay. Here, the watching crowd played an important role as once a man drew blood, men from the gathering would step into the breach and pull the fighters apart.¹⁸ Despite a codified strategy to uphold honour, Clive Emsley has shown that foreign fighters on British soil were often deemed uncivilized by the British press. The press' desire to foster the English characteristics of fairness, gentility and restraint compared favourably against the foreigners' use of knives to settle disputes.¹⁹ Similarly, Steve Poole has noted of Bristol that the local and national press vilified knife carrying foreign seamen as they provided a convenient scape goat to violent incidents that continued to occur on the city's waterfront in the late nineteenth century. However, in exploring the 'foreign devils' moral panic in Bristol, Poole concluded that 'urban coastal histories have so far offered little in the way of corrective evidence, and we still know all too little about the multi-cultural politics of British ports'.²⁰ This article, then, will examine the moral panic that centred on Ratcliffe's violent and cosmopolitan reputation and explore why the foreign sailor was demonized. Moreover, in investigating street violence the article advances our understanding of how working-men from differing nationalities navigated ethnically diverse fighting rituals within an urban working-class setting.

Ratcliffe Highway, and the sensational press c.1850-1880

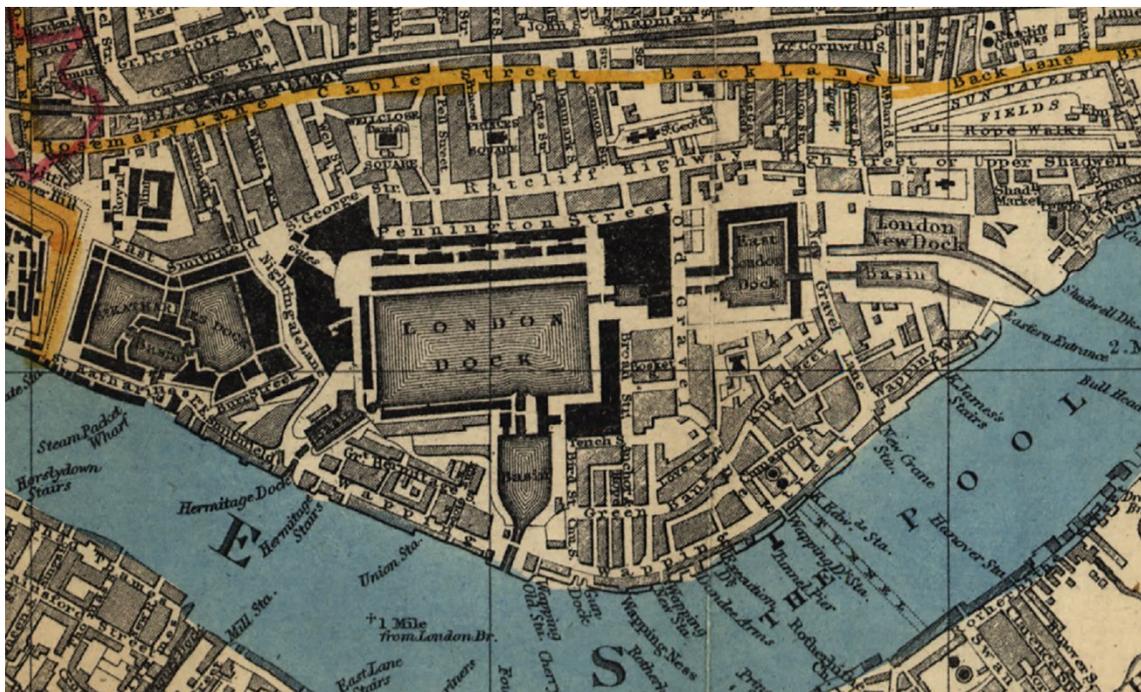
London had been Britain's largest port since Roman times. During the early modern period, London's port exported over 80 % of Britain's textile goods and imported 70 % of the nation's wine. While London lost trade to the west coast ports of Liverpool and Bristol during the eighteenth century, the port remained dominant in the North Sea trade.²¹ It was in this period that the districts of Wapping and Ratcliffe became the focal point for sailortown and where maritime traditions and living patterns became culturally

embedded.²² As Leonard Schwarz has argued, ‘the port had its own social structure and its own pattern of life’, as ‘until the advent of steam from about the middle of the nineteenth century, the pulse of the port beat to the trade winds and to foreign harvests’.²³ For example, while there was constant marine traffic throughout the year, the arrival of the American ships in the spring and autumn triggered intensive periods of activity. Moreover, the truly international character of the port meant that London’s sailor population was continually changing with seafarers lodging temporarily in the many boarding houses located in the Wapping area. By the mid-eighteenth century, Wapping High Street had become the unrivalled centre of sailortown as, due to its close proximity to the water’s edge, a microeconomy of boarding houses, public houses, brothels, sail-makers, and general marine trades had developed in the area. However, in the nineteenth century Britain’s imperial expansion and the development of larger ships merited the construction of London Docks situated to the north and west of Wapping High Street. The newly constructed Western and Eastern docks occupied approximately 30 acres of land and lay close to Ratcliffe Highway, which was situated in the civil parish of St George’s in the East.²⁴ This parish was located to the east of Whitechapel and, by the 1840s, was a densely populated working-class district.²⁵ The docks had a gravitational pull for sailors and those who catered for them and, by the 1850s, Ratcliffe Highway had become firmly established as London’s sailortown. Henry Mayhew estimated that by 1847, London Port was the biggest in the World with just over 6,000 British ships and 3,000 foreign ships docking in that year alone. This was twice the number of British and foreign ships that docked in Liverpool, Britain’s second largest port. Moreover, London Port had grown rapidly since the total number of ships docking had increased by 70 per cent since 1841.²⁶ However, according to Mayhew, the growth of the port also increased social problems and criminality in the metropolis due

to ‘the reckless and improvident character of sailors’.²⁷ Ratcliffe Highway’s association with the foreign sailor meant that it became the focal point for this narrative and assumed an exotic and dangerous reputation. Indeed, the local press cast the district as a place of mystery and its people bereft of civilising influences. One reporter on *The East London Observer* noted that

On leaving the silent city to go eastward at night, I have a feeling as though I had passed beyond the haunts of civilisation...past the postern gate of the Tower, and you are in the sailors’ *quartier*; on into Ratcliff-highway – euphemistically termed St George’s-street – where, amid frequent public houses and dancing rooms, low vice keeps perpetual saturnalia.²⁸

Figure 1. [HERE]



Throughout this period, the *East London Observer* ran sensational articles designed to spread a fear among its readers. For example, in the 1857 article 'Down the Highway,' the journalist cast himself as the intrepid explorer where he discovered 'Italians and Greeks with stilettos—women screaming obscenity—men, wild with the 'vitriol madness'.²⁹

The newspaper also played on the fears of its readers as, amidst the garrotting moral panics of the early 1860s, it reported of the dangerous 'strong masculine women' who would garrotte unsuspecting sailors in Ratcliffe Highway.³⁰ Indeed, between the mid-nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, the newspaper offered plenty of coverage of how the people of Ratcliffe Highway consistently contravened society's norms.³¹ Similarly, according to *Pearsons Weekly*, the 'Highway presented a scene of coarse debauchery which was probably unique in Europe' and where 'half the cut-throats and thieves of East London' gathered.³² Due to transient sailors, Ratcliffe Highway was dubbed a 'lawless' district and on entering the locality the traditional codes of the 'fair knuckle-fight' were superseded by the 'hordes' of knife-wielding foreign seamen. This image of Ratcliffe Highway became firmly embedded in popular culture and became the backdrop to Victorian slum novels such as Arthur Morrison's *Hole in the Wall* which was set in the 1850s. In the novel Ratcliffe Highway is described as both 'foul' and picturesque where 'everything and everybody was for, by, and of, the sailor ashore'. What struck Stephen Kemp (the main character) on his first encounter with the Highway were the plethora of knives on show and the colourful costumed foreign sailors. In one shop, he noted a row of large knives and daggers with the suggestive maxim 'Never draw me without cause, never sheathe me without honour.'³³ In the Highway itself were

Spaniards, swart, long-haired, bloodshot-looking fellows, whose entire shore outfit consisted commonly of a red shirt, blue trousers, anklejacks with the brown feet visible over them, a belt, a big knife, and a pair of large gold ear-rings. Big, yellow-haired, blue-eyed Swedes, who were full pink with sea and sun, and not brown or mahogany-coloured, like the rest; slight, wicked-looking Malays; lean, spitting Yankees, with stripes, and felt hats, and sing-song oaths; sometimes a Chinaman, petticoated, dignified, jeered at; a Lascar, a Greek, a Russian; and everywhere the English Jack, rolling of gait--sometimes from habit alone, sometimes for mixed reasons--hard, red-necked, waistcoatless, with his knife at his belt, like the rest.³⁴

While the *London News* was highly critical of Morrison's derogatory accounts of the East End in his novel *Child of the Jago*, it described *The Hole in the Wall* as 'more local history and topography, better suited to Besant's "East London" than to the pages of fiction.'³⁵ Indeed, the sense that the Highway was an exotic fusion of mystery and colour, which was plagued by menacing foreign sailors was conveyed by the press, social investigators and novelists alike. The *Daily News* perpetuated the sense of 'Otherness' about the district by proclaiming it as suitable for an 'ethnological study' as 'Lascars, with their bushy locks and swarthy skins contrasts strangely with the solitary Chinaman'. The reporter went on to describe 'half a dozen other races,' from 'hawk eyed New Zealanders, whose cheeks and forehead are fantastically tattoed [sic]' and 'full bloodied negroes from Gambia, and half caste Portuguese from Goa'.³⁶

However, while the Victorian journalist entertained readers with their exotic discoveries in London's sailortown, the foreign sailor was also presented as an urban menace. For example, James Ritchie's accounts of the Highway in the 1850s conjured-up a

mysterious but also a dangerously anarchic district of London. In one of his night time adventures he encountered

A row of foreign mariners pass me, seven abreast: swarthy, ear-ringed, black-bearded varlets in red shirts, light-blue trousers, and with sashes round their waists. Part of the crew of a Sardinian brig, probably. They have all their arms round each other's necks; yet I cannot help thinking that they look somewhat 'knifey,' 'stilettoey.' I hope I may be mistaken, but I am afraid that would be odds were to put an indefinite quantity of rum into *them*, they would put a few inches of steel into *you*.³⁷

The dangerous reputation of the foreign sailor was cemented in Ratcliffe Highway in 1857 when a series of knife assaults involving seamen received widespread coverage. Under the heading 'The use of the Knife by Foreign Seamen', one correspondent in the *East London Observer* complained that it had become unsafe to walk in Ratcliffe Highway after sunset for fear of the knife bearing foreign 'blood-thirsty villains'. He added that in London this 'deadly weapon will soon be as freely used here as in Spain, Italy and other parts of the continent'.³⁸

The following week the *East London Observer's* editor denounced the poor policing of Ratcliffe Highway and complained that 'the Lascar, Chinese, or the Italian flash their sea knives in the air, or the American "bowies"' and attack innocent Englishmen by gouging him or indulges 'in some other of those innocent amusements in which his countrymen delight'.³⁹ By 1859, the press and those in the criminal justice system were calling for laws to prohibit foreign sailors from carrying knives while ashore. When American sailors were brought before Mr Self in the Thames police court for stabbing an Englishman, the magistrate lamented that 'he was very sorry indeed there was no regulation to prevent

American and Spanish seamen from wearing their knives and daggers when they came on shore'. He added that 'foreign seamen had too often used their knives and daggers upon Englishmen in the streets and in the houses of public entertainment'.⁴⁰ Likewise in 1863, the *Express* called for legislation to prevent sailors carrying knives in London after a fatal stabbing that year. The reporter commented that:

The frequent use of the knife by the foreign seamen, in one case terminating fatally a few days ago, has created great public alarm in the district. Numerous persons have been stabbed. The foreign seamen appear in the streets of the district every night with their large sheath knives at the side of them, and they are drawn without any provocation at all.⁴¹

Discussing the same incident, the *London Evening Standard* commented that 'the use of the knife, once almost unknown in this country, is making a progress that requires some more effectual check than is given to it by an individual stabber being now and then convicted and punished.'⁴² Indeed, in 1864, on the back of the media campaign, MPs in the House of Commons pressed for new laws to prohibit sailors from carrying knives. However, the government dismissed the prospect of banning seafarers carrying knives, as it would have been too difficult to enforce.⁴³ Journalists and commentators, then, painted a horrifying picture of Ratcliffe Highway in which foreign sailors had introduced the murderous knife on to the shores of Britain.

Quantifying sailors's knife violence in St George's in the East and Whitechapel, 1850-1880

In the late eighteenth century, London was at the nation's forefront in creating new law enforcement agencies designed to deal with a rapidly growing metropolis. The development of prisons and the introduction of a new police force followed the creation in 1772 of a paid magistracy who sat in newly formed police courts. The police courts were designed to replace the amateur justices of the peace and dealt with less serious offences such as drunkenness and assault. Magistrates passed more serious indictable offences to the Quarter Sessions or Assizes where a judge and jury would sit. For the City of London and Middlesex, the court of Assize was the Old Bailey. However, from 1855 magistrates were empowered to convict and punish offenders for common assault, small theft and embezzlement.⁴⁴ By the 1850s there were 38 paid magistrates presiding over 13 police courts in Metropolitan London.⁴⁵ The Victorian police courts in London were extremely busy places with approximately 100,000 annual cases heard during the mid-nineteenth century.⁴⁶ The records generated by this more professionalised judicial process has provided historians with a wealth of evidence to examine types and levels of crime in Victorian London. However, the attempt to quantify and analyse nineteenth century urban crime is fraught with methodological difficulties. As Wiener has pointed out, there is usually a significant gap between actual and recorded low-level violence.⁴⁷ In the case of Ratcliffe Highway, the problem is magnified as the Thames police court archive, which had jurisdiction for this area, is missing records for the middle years of the nineteenth century. These records would have captured the more low-level varieties of crimes such as assaults, drunkenness and petty theft. The *East End Observer* was the principal newspaper that covered the district and, as we have seen, it undoubtedly singled out Ratcliffe Highway as a dangerous and violent area. However, despite its interest in crime, the *East London Observer* did not carry a regular and comprehensive report of the Thames police courts

rendering any quantitative analysis unreliable. Nevertheless, while the levels of street crime that passed through the lower courts has been lost, the Old Bailey-online project does allow a statistical analysis of serious crime in London for the period 1850 to 1880.⁴⁸

While the Old Bailey on-line project used modern categories to facilitate statistical analysis, they reflect, as close as possible, the descriptions of offences found in the proceedings. Using the statistical search facility, a search of the Old Bailey database can identify the location of the crime, the perpetrator and victim's gender and occupation, and whether a prosecution was successful. In searching serious knife crime for the whole of London during this era, it was possible to contrast knife crime in the Ratcliffe Highway district with the rest of the metropolis. A search was made of cases under the offence categories of 'breaking the peace' and 'killing' that were 'male on male' and involved a 'knife' between 1850 and 1880.⁴⁹ Once duplicate transcripts and assaults situated on the high seas were removed, there were 558 cases brought before the Old Bailey involving male on male knife assaults and killing using a knife in London during this 30-year period. However, while the place of the incident was usually documented, the occupation of the assailant was recorded in only 20% of the cases. Of the 20% of the offenders whose occupation was identified, almost half were sailors. However, it was more likely that a sailor's livelihood was stated during the trial, as seafarers would often be questioned about the nature of their shore leave.⁵⁰

Perhaps a more revealing approach to the nature of male knife assaults is the data related to the location of the crime. Two neighbouring civil parishes, Whitechapel and the St George in the East recorded the most cases of serious knife fights and accounted for 14% of the total number of cases brought before the Old Bailey between 1850 and 1880. These

were both solid working-class districts of similar size. Ratcliffe Highway was situated in the St George in the East district, stretching across from West to East and dominating the area with its numerous boarding houses, public houses and brothels. However, if we examine the Old Bailey data annually, there is no evidence that male-on-male knife assaults were year-on-year increasing in either Whitechapel or St George in the East. Between 1851 and 1856, there were only two or three cases recorded a year spread between St George in the East and Whitechapel. However, in 1857, seven cases were tried at the Old Bailey, of which five were located in Ratcliffe Highway. Of these five sailors, one was English and the others were from Spain, Chile, USA and Sweden. The fact that the two assailants in Whitechapel that year were also foreign (a German musician and Italian cook) only went to heighten fears about how 'alien' forms of knife crime were being imported on to the English Streets.⁵¹ It was from this year, that the Highway gained a widespread reputation for harbouring knife-wielding foreign sailors in newspaper reports and sensational journalism.⁵² Even so, 1857 was very much an aberration since numbers of serious knife assaults heard at the Old Bailey remained relatively low in Whitechapel and St George in the East between 1858 and 1880. The one exception was 1866 in which six cases were documented. Table 1 reveals that, while St Georges recorded a higher number of incidents, knife crime was also a feature of Whitechapel in which fewer foreign sailors resided. Indeed, the court's decision not to routinely record the assailant's or victim's occupation undoubtedly underestimates the numbers of labourers involved in knife assaults.

Table 1: Male on Male Knife fights in St George in the East and Whitechapel between 1850 and 1880

Location	Total number of incidents between 1850 and 1880	Percentage of total male-on-male knife assaults in London	Assailant		Victim	
St George in the East	40	7%	Sailor	25	Sailor	23
			Semi-Skilled labourer	0	Semi-Skilled labourer	3
			*Other	15	Policeman	4
					*Other	10
Whitechapel	36	6.5 %	Sailor	2	Sailor	2
			Semi-Skilled labourer	2	Semi-Skilled labourer	8
			*Other	32	Policeman	1
					*Other	25

*T. Hitchcock, R. Shoemaker, C. Emsley, S. Howard and J. McLaughlin, et al., The Old Bailey Proceedings Online, 1674-1913. *Other includes individuals where occupation was not given.*

To summarise, then, evidence drawn from the Old Bailey-on-line database indicates that the numbers of serious male-on-male knife assaults in St George in the East was relatively low between 1850 and 1880. Significantly, Ratcliffe Highway flourished as London's principal sailortown in this thirty-year period. Moreover, the data suggests that the number of incidents in St George in the East did not significantly differ from those of its neighbouring district of Whitechapel. Thus, while the use of knives in serious male on male assaults were relatively rare, they were not confined to London's sailor quarter but featured in the predominately working-class district of Whitechapel. The spike in incidents in 1857 may

also explain why, in the popular imagination, the Highway became notorious for knife assaults. Indeed, the Old Bailey data indicates that foreign sailors were concentrated in Ratcliffe Highway which, to the anxious middle-class observer, gave the street an exotic, dangerous and anarchic reputation.⁵³ However, as we have seen, the press's lurid depiction of the Highway did not correlate with the relatively low incidents of *serious* crime. This 'Othering' of the Highway failed to appreciate its importance as an international contact zone in which transient sailors familiarized themselves with the rituals of violence in sailortown. The next section argues that English and foreign sailors navigated their way through differing customs of fighting as there was a recognition that these rituals upheld one's masculinity. Significantly, it will be argued that there was a multitude of fighting rituals which were not only shared by sailors of different nationalities but also the wider English working-class community. Thus, while from the outside the Highway appeared a lawless abyss, sailors and the working-class community enacted forms of violence that was self-regulated by ritual and rarely ended in serious assault or manslaughter.

Violence and masculinity in a multi-ethnic port town community

The transient nature of sailortown and the notorious reputation of the sailor, led many opinion formers to believe that seaports lay outside of the justice system's quest of 'civilising' the English streets.⁵⁴ In one opinion piece, the *London Evening Standard* noted that fighting traditions in sailortown were very difficult to eradicate.

We do not expect Jack to have the polish, the self-control, the etiquette which prevent gentlemen when they quarrel from knocking each other about. Nay more, if persons of the grade of sailors do quarrel (and quarrelling in some form or other is a

clear human institution) we do not object to their settling a quarrel on the spot, with the abundantly sufficient materials for pounding afforded by closed fists and very hardened knuckles.⁵⁵

Indeed, in the police courts, it was common for magistrates to take a keen interest in the manner in which the men fought. Anything other than a 'clean fight' was frowned upon, as magistrates considered the use of knives as an unwelcome foreign import and often described such incidents as 'foul' murders.⁵⁶ As Robert Shoemaker has shown, the 'clean English fight' in working-class districts shared common features as they were usually 'provoked by insults which called into question the honour and honesty of one of the participants, leading to a challenge'.⁵⁷ Both parties recognized accepted rules designed to ensure the fight was conducted on equal and fair terms, that the fighters carried no weapons and were ready before combat began. Indeed, these fights attracted large crowds who played an active role in organising and monitoring the contest. It was this type of scene that confronted Dr Linklater as he made his way down Ratcliffe Highway in the 1880s. He complained that 'I saw a fight in broad daylight in the open street between two sailors who were stripped for the combat, and no policeman was to be found to stop it'.⁵⁸ The absence of the police was not unusual despite the fact that such fights could draw large crowds that blocked major thoroughfares. The 'fair' fight was a public spectacle, watched by the fighters's peers to ensure fair play and, importantly, the two combatants could confirm that honour had been restored before their own community. Though fights often broke out spontaneously, this ritualized form of pugilism evolved a remarkable level of organisation as Robert Thimbleby an East End police constable testified. On a Sunday afternoon in October 1863, he was strolling through Commercial Road East when he

chanced upon Samuel Morris, a boilermaker, and another man fighting in the middle of the street. He recalled that:

Both were stripped to the waist. A ring had formed. Lovell was acting as a second to one of the combatants. There were 300 or 400 persons surrounding the two men fighting, and the road was completely blocked up with omnibuses, cabs, and carts...⁵⁹

When he attempted to separate the two men, Thimbleby 'was assailed with a volley of abuse and threats' while 'the mob' responded by becoming 'very disorderly.' After sending for help to the local police station, Thimbleby attempted to arrest both fighters and 'their seconds' only to be thwarted by the angry crowd who rescued Morris's combatant and his second. In total, nine police officers were required to quell the resultant disturbance. The fight had broken out after a man had allegedly attempted to steal Morris's dog, insulted him and his wife, and spat in their faces. After he was struck by his assailant, Morris declared in court that he was 'compelled to fight'. The Thames police court magistrate, Mr Partridge, stated that 'it was most disgraceful for two men to be stripped to the waist and fighting on a Sunday afternoon while people were on their way to their respective places of worship and prayer and he thought officer Thimbleby had acted very properly'.⁶⁰ Significantly, a recognition that by participating in a 'fair fight', a man could restore his honour still lingered on in the upper echelons of Victorian society as the fight was not in *itself* criticized but more that it had occurred on a day of worship. In addition, Partridge felt obliged to defend Thimbleby on the accusation that his intervention had prevented a man re-gaining his honour on the grounds that the fight had occurred on a Sunday. Morris was fined 20s., and in default 21 days imprisonment, and Lovell was fined 10s., or 10 days imprisonment.⁶¹ This case also sheds light on the type of violence adopted to restore honour in English working-

class communities and how quickly the event was coordinated after the initial quarrel erupted. Once the fighters had stripped to their waists, a code of conduct was enacted in which 'seconds' came forward to support their combatants which, in the process, blocked vehicles from passing through.

In addition, the animated crowd, not only oversaw 'fair play', but also intervened to rescue the combatants when they adjudged that the police had unjustly broken the informal codified rules of a 'fair fight'. The 'fair fight', and attacks on policemen who attempted to stop them, continued into the late nineteenth century. In 1881, the Thames police court heard how Thomas Youngman a dock labourer and Henry Skinner a labourer, both in their early twenties, attempted to resist arrest after the police intervened in their fight. It was reported that Constable Samuel Dutch was on duty in the Ratcliffe Highway district when 'he saw a large crowd collected at the corner of Star-Street. He went there and saw the prisoners stripped to the waist fighting'. Skinner attacked Constable Dutch who had attempted to arrest him but was eventually overpowered by another officer.⁶² Youngman was sentenced to prison for one month and Skinner for two months with hard labour. Not only did the 'fair fight' persist into the late nineteenth century but also its tradition seems to have cut across generations. In 1889 at the Thames police court, Henry Newby, 58 and a shopkeeper, was charged with breaking James Smith's leg after a disagreement between the two men led to a fight. Newby, of Ratcliffe Highway, called upon Smith of Poplar and said

If you're a man you'll take your coat off'. Both men went into the road and put themselves in a fighting attitude. Prisoner punched Smith in the mouth, and he fell. Prosecutor called out, 'my leg is broken' and Newby helped him up...when arrested, prisoner said "I'm sorry if I've broken your ankle."⁶³

Newby was bound over to answer the charge when called upon. Not only does this suggest that recognition of the 'fair fight' was intergenerational, but also that working-class communities endorsed what they considered an acceptable level of violence to preserve one's honour, manhood and status. In helping his opponent up and apologising, Newby acknowledged that in breaking Smith's ankle he had over-stepped the mark. Furthermore, magistrates seemed to recognise that the 'fair fight' was a legitimate way to settle disputes. As late as 1888 Charles Cumming, who was described in the Thames police court as a sailor with 'no coat, waistcoat or hat', was charged with being drunk and disorderly. It was reported that Cumming was seen running up and down the Whitechapel Road like a mad man, and offering to fight everyone he met. In answering the charge, Cumming explained that while ashore

Some 'landsharks' set to him. He pulled off his coat and waistcoat to fight them like a man, when some 'varmint' ran away with his things – Mr Saunders [magistrate] said he was sorry for the defendant's loss, and allowed him to go away.⁶⁴

For the magistrate, then, Cumming's drunken and violent behaviour on the streets was forgivable as upholding one's honour and fighting like a man took priority.

Far from being a lawless district, these incidents suggest that within the Ratcliffe Highway vicinity, there were informal rules governing the 'English fair fight' which labourers, sailors, and the working-class community in general recognized. Alongside British sailors and the local working-class community were a significant number of foreign sailors residing in boarding houses or ships who had very different codes of fighting to uphold male honour, status and manhood. The most common complaint about the foreign sailor was their propensity to carry knives.⁶⁵ While contemporaries stereotyped certain ethnicities with

deviancy, as Gallant has shown, Southern European working-class cultures had a long tradition of using knives in settling disputes between men in a ritualized and far from murderous way.⁶⁶ Indeed, the East End police roundly contradicted the claim of the sensational press that foreign sailors used their knives indiscriminately on Englishmen. Sir Richard Mayne, the Chief Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, observed that foreign sailors tended to use knives on each other rather than on the police or the English.⁶⁷ Ethnic-specific fighting rituals were part of wider traditions such as language, food and dancing that seafarers preserved on English soil through a network of pubs and boarding houses.⁶⁸ Charles Dickens junior noted in 1879 that cafés, public houses, music halls and boarding houses in Ratcliffe Highway 'were each for the most part, devoted almost exclusively to the accommodation of a single nationality'.⁶⁹ For example, the 1861 census reveals that in Ratcliffe Highway, Oscar Lawson's boarding house catered for Scandinavian sailors, while in Wellclose Square (just off Ratcliffe Highway), John Leyman ran a Greek sailor boarding house. In nearby Neptune Street, Joseph Rocks and Peter Creay ran Austrian and Manilla boarding houses respectively. In all these cases, the Boarding House keepers were foreign nationals who networked their nation's seafaring community for business. However, while these boarding houses were known to cater for certain ethnicities, a closer inspection of the census reveals that they also provided opportunities for interaction between other foreign and English nationals. For example, Englishmen were also staying at Lawson's boarding house, Leyman's had seafarers from southern Europe, Germany and Austria, Rocks's also catered for Portuguese, Italian and Spanish sailors, while Creay also had Portuguese seafarers staying on the night of the census. This pattern of boarding houses that were outwardly associated with a nation while also accommodating for a range of English and foreign nationals, was repeated in the 24 boarding houses identified in Ratcliffe Highway

and the surrounding streets.⁷⁰ Thus, while boarding houses provided a cultural network for foreign sailors, they were also significant contact zones which exposed English and other foreign sailors to a variety of ethnic traditions and rituals.

Ethnic-specific rituals came into play once violence occurred and it was important for sailors to recognize the different codes of combat and establish the rules of any conflict before the fight began. In a multi-cultural space such as Ratcliffe Highway, it was not uncommon for foreign seamen to adopt the 'English fair fight' code given that they would face the English justice system if they were caught. For example in 1864, two Spaniards, Juan Du Luca and Raymond Rodrigues argued over a woman they had both been seeing with Du Luca demanding that 'if you have any spite against me, come out and fight me English fashion. If I beat you, I beat you; if you beat me, you beat me'.⁷¹ However, with sailors from different ethnicities schooled in variety of fighting traditions it is perhaps unsurprising that individuals would unscrupulously capitalize on the uncertainty of fighting rules in disputes to gain an advantage. For example, in 1857, George de Matras, a Greek sailor, remonstrated with Jose de Rosario, an Italian sailor, accusing him of cowardice for striking Alice Whitehead, in Neptune Street, just off Ratcliffe Highway. Rosario responded by shouting that 'I'll fight you, English, Italian, or Greek fashion'.⁷² At the Old Bailey trial, George Peters, a Greek sailor and witness, testified that

I understood the deceased [Matras] to say that if he had any wish to fight, he would fight in English fashion—the prisoner [Rosario] had his hand constantly in his breast—he told the deceased he should like to fight in the English fashion, but he was constantly telling him to come away from the light, beckoning with his finger—the deceased accused him of having a knife, and the prisoner said, "I have no knife

about me"—the deceased laid hold of the prisoner by the elbow; the prisoner then lowered himself, took a knife out, and gave the deceased three stabs on the abdomen, and when he went to arrest him from stabbing any further, he gave him one on the breast; that made four stabs—I put the prisoner between my legs, and then took the knife away from him—this is the knife (produced).⁷³

Rosario's use of a knife in a fight which both parties had agreed would be fought 'in the English fashion', had thrown the 'whole of the East End' into 'a state of excitement in consequence of the perpetration of a very cold-blooded murder'.⁷⁴ The high degree of consternation that the incident had generated in the locality would indicate that this type of deception was fairly rare, though it certainly added to Ratcliffe Highway's reputation as a place of fear and danger. Rosario was found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to 15 years penal servitude.

Du Luca's offer to fight in 'English' and Rosario's offer to fight in 'English, Italian, or Greek fashion,' illustrates how sailors were conversant with the different ethnic traditions of fighting to uphold one's honour. These cases also demonstrate that in multi-ethnic contact zones, it was necessary to establish a mutually agreed code of conduct before embarking in combat. Moreover, alongside a recognition of ethnic fighting traditions, both English and foreign sailors also cooperated with local working-class men who were hostile to police intervention in their community. In both St Georges in the East and Whitechapel, the police were hindered in their work by groups of local men attempting to rescue prisoners from the police after an arrest. For example, in 1861 at the Middlesex Sessions, William Reagan was sentenced to two years hard labour for endeavouring to rescue a prisoner from being taken to the magistrates court and assaulting a policeman.⁷⁵ Reagan and 'a mob' of men

surprized the policemen transporting the prisoner, beat the police with their own staffs, released their companion, and made their escape. Reagan was arrested the following day and described by the police as keeping company with 'some of the worst thieves in the neighbourhood'.⁷⁶ This attack upon the Police appears to have been conducted by well-orchestrated 'mob' of several men who knew the arrested man and had planned the rescue in advance. However, on other occasions it seems that much of the neighbourhood, including foreign sailors, spontaneously came out to prevent the police from arresting suspects. In 1854, Orlando Mosulany, a 20 year old Austrian sailor, was charged at the Thames police court with endeavouring to rescue John Macarthy, a ticket of leave convict, from the police. As soon as the police arrived in Ratcliffe Highway, a crowd of between 400 and 500 people gathered to prevent the arrest of Macarthy. Constable Hart explained that 'the street was quite full, the noise and shouts were fearful, and many took part in the disturbance'. The court heard that 'the mob attempted to rescue the prisoner and the police were compelled to draw their truncheons and drive then back'. Mosulany and Macarthy were committed to trial at the Middlesex Quarter Sessions.⁷⁷ Just as sailors attempted to rescue locals from the police, working men in St Georges and Whitechapel also endeavoured to prevent the arrest of seafarers. In 1863, two sailors fought the police to avoid arrest in Lemman Street Whitechapel. It was reported at the Thames police court that 'an up-and-down fight took place, and the roughs of Whitechapel encouraged the sailors in the resistance to the police officers'. The two sailors, William Conway and Edward Ashe, were fined five pounds each and in default, two months imprisonment.⁷⁸ Thus, despite drinking some distance away from London's sailortown, these sailors were spontaneously supported by Whitechapel's 'roughs' in their altercation with the police. Similarly, in 1878, a violent incident at the East and West Indian Dock Company revolved

around an attempted rescue of a sailor from the police. John Kelley, a labourer was charged with assaulting David Jones, a police constable. The *East End Observer* reported that

Whilst the sailor was being taken to a police box, a rush was made to rescue him by a mob of labourers who were there. The prisoner in the dock was at the head of the gang and came up to the witness [Jones] and struck him in the chest, and followed this up by kicking him at the top of the thigh.⁷⁹

Despite protesting his innocence and claiming that it was the large crowd that injured the police constable, Kelley was sentenced to one month's hard labour at the Thames police court.⁸⁰ Perhaps the most interesting feature about these cases is that sailors and local working-class people combined to obstruct the police. Despite being a foreign seaman, Mosulany was clearly familiar with the local community's antipathy towards the police, while Kelley, a labourer, along with the rest of 'the mob', risked arrest and punishment to rescue a sailor. English and foreign sailors, then, were participants in working-class street culture and active in attempting to thwart police intervention.

Conclusion

Writing in the popular periodical *Temple Bar*, a journalist in 1865 declared that by visiting Ratcliffe Highway one could learn 'the abodes, haunts, ways, manners, foibles, tastes and pleasures of the criminal classes'.⁸¹ For these Victorian journalists, such forays into the Highway proved both an exhilarating and an appalling experience.⁸² To the reading public, however, their narratives condemned the Highway as the nation's most dangerous and murderous urban abyss. While these accounts played to the gallery and undoubtedly

boosted newspaper sales they do not move us closer to understanding the nature of male violence which occurred in working-class districts. Struck by the maritime influences in Ratcliffe Highway, contemporaries were drawn to the exotic cultures of foreign sailors but also repelled by their perceived indiscriminate use of knives in street fights. However, the relatively low levels of serious male on male knife crime, suggests that male aggression on the streets of Ratcliffe Highway was relatively self-regulated through recognized fighting customs. Moreover, the Highway was a cosmopolitan space where cultural contact and exchange occurred, which in turn, affords an insight into the relationship between ethnicity, violence and masculinity. This article has argued that foreign sailors proved adept in recognizing the different customs of upholding masculinity in densely populated working-class districts. Furthermore, transient sailors, as individuals and collectively, were important agents in re-producing masculine cultures and negotiating existing ones in a multi-ethnic urban environment. Finally, within a broader context, the continuation of informally regulated violence in Ratcliffe Highway raises the question of how successful the English justice system was in 'civilising' a traditional brutal street culture in the nineteenth century.⁸³

¹ My thanks to Drs Karl Bell, Mathias Seiter, the *Social History* editors and the anonymous referees who provided helpful feedback on earlier drafts of this paper.

² *East London Observer*, 10 October 1857, 2.

³ J. Flanders, *The Invention of Murder. How the Victorians revelled in death and detection and created modern crime* (London, 2011), 1.

⁴ For definitions and discussions on sailortown see B. Beaven, 'The resilience of sailortown culture in English naval ports, c. 1820–1900', *Urban History*, 43, 1 (2016), 72-95, 74-75; S. Hugill, *Sailortown* (London, 1967), xviii; C. Fox Smith, *Sailor Town Days* (London, 1923); J. Fingard, *Jack in Port: Sailor towns of eastern Canada* (Toronto, 1982); V. Burton, 'Boundaries and identities in the nineteenth Century English port: sailortown narratives and urban space', in S. Gunn and R.J. Morris (eds), *Identities in Space. Contested terrains in the western city since 1850* (Aldershot, 2001); J. Seed, 'Limehouse blues: looking for Chinatown in the London docks, 1900-40', *History Workshop Journal*, 62, (Autumn, 2006), 58-85, 59; see also D. Renshaw, 'Prejudice and paranoia: a comparative study of antisemitism and Sinophobia in turn of the century Britain', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 50, 1, (2016), 38-60; G. Milne, *People, Place and Power on the Nineteenth Century Waterfront. Sailortown* (Basingstoke, 2016), 1.

⁵ For example see Arthur Morrison, *The Hole in the Wall* (New York, 1902).

⁶ N. Rance, 'Jonathan's great knife: Dracula meets Jack the Ripper', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 30, 2 (2002), 439-453.

⁷ *Pearson Weekly*, 6 February 1902, 504. The area's decline and change of character was also attributed to changes in the labour process. There was a widespread view in the late nineteenth century that the move from sail to steam had fundamentally reduced the maritime skills of the sailor to that of the manual worker. See B. Beaven, 'From Jolly Sailor to proletarian Jack: the remaking of sailortown and the merchant seafarer in Victorian London', in B. Beaven, K. Bell, and R. James (eds), *Port towns and Urban Cultures: International histories of the waterfront, c.1700 – 2000* (Basingstoke, 2016).

⁸ For moral panics in historical context see P. King, 'Moral panics and violent street crime 1750-2000 : A comparative perspective', in B. Godfrey, C., Emsley, G., Dunstall (eds),

Comparative Histories of Crime (Cullompton, 2003), 53-71; D. Lemmings, C., Walker (eds), *Moral Panics, the Media and the Law in Early modern England*, (Basingstoke, 2008).

⁹ Martin Wiener, *Men of Blood: Violence, manliness and criminal justice in Victorian England* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 289.

¹⁰ Wiener, *op.cit.*, p. 289.

¹¹ J. Carter Wood, *Violence and Crime in Nineteenth Century England: The shadow of our refinement* (London, 2004), 141.

¹² For an example of performative violence in an international context see T. Nilson, 'Hey sailor, looking for trouble? Violence, drunkenness and disorder in a Swedish port town: Gothenburg 1920', in B. Beaven, K. Bell and R. James (eds), *Port Towns and Urban Cultures: International histories of the waterfront, c. 1700-2000* (Basingstoke, 2016), 73.

¹³ A. Davies, 'Police violence and judicial bias in the age of mass democracy: Glasgow, 1933–1935', *Social History*, 44, 1 (2019), 57-85; A. Davies, 'Glasgow's 'Reign of Terror': street gangs, racketeering and intimidation in the 1920s and 1930s', *Contemporary British History*, 21, 4 (Dec, 2007), 405-427; A. Davies, 'Street gangs, crime and policing in Glasgow during the 1930s: the case of the Beehive Boys', *Social History*, 23,3 (1998), 251-267; A. Davies, 'Youth gangs, masculinity and violence in late Victorian Manchester and Salford', *Journal of Social History*, 32,2 (Winter, 1998), 349-369, 354. See also L. Moon, "'Sailorhoods': Sailortown and sailors in the port of Portsmouth circa 1850 –1900' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Portsmouth, 2015), 198; J.E. Archer, "'Men Behaving Badly?": Masculinity and the use of violence, 1850-1900', in S. D'Cruze (ed), *Everyday Violence in Britain, 1850-1950: Gender and class* (Longman, 2000), 52. Until recently, most studies on male on male violence have focused on the upper echelons of society see M. Roper and J. Tosh, *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800* (London, 1991); M. Barton, 'Duelling in the

Royal Navy', *The Mariner's Mirror*, 100, 3 (July 2014), 282-306, 286; D. T. Andrew, 'The Code of Honour and Its Critics: The opposition to duelling in England, 1700–1850' *Social History*, 5, 3 (October 1980), 409-434, 411.

¹⁴ J. E. Archer, *The Monster Evil. Policing and Violence in Victorian Liverpool* (Liverpool, 2011), 92.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 166-67.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹⁸ T.W. Gallant, 'Honor, masculinity, and ritual knife fighting in nineteenth-century Greece', *American Historical Review*, 105,2 (April. 2000), 359-382, 361.

¹⁹ C. Emsley, *Hard Men. Violence in England since 1750* (London, 2005), 93.

²⁰ S. Poole, 'More like savages than men: Foreign sailors and knife crime in nineteenth century Bristol', in S. Poole (ed), *A City Built upon the Waterfront* (Bristol, 2013), 174.

²¹ L. Schwarz, 'London and the Sea', <http://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/Sea/articles/schwarz.html> (accessed 6 February, 2014).

²² D. Morris and K. Cozens, *London 's Sailortown 1600 –1800: A social history of Shadwell and Ratcliff an early -modern London riverside suburb* (London, 2014).

²³ Schwarz, *op.cit.*, (accessed 6 February, 2014).

²⁴ Hugill, *op.cit.*, 114.

²⁵ *The Copartnership Herald*, vol 2, no 24, February 1933, 2.

²⁶ *Morning Chronicle*, 7 March 1850, 5-6.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *East London Observer*, 1 January 1872, 2.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 10 October 1857, 2.

³⁰ *East London Observer*, 10 October 1857, 4; R. Sindall 'The London garrotting panics of 1856 and 1862', *Social History*, 12, 3 (1987), 351-359.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 3 October 1857, 3; 6 August 1859, 2; 8 October 1864, 2; 26 August 1882, 6; 20 May 1911, 6.

³² *Pearsons Weekly*, 6 February 1902, 504.

³³ Morrison, *op.cit.*, 100.

³⁴ Morrison, *ibid.*, 101.

³⁵ *London Daily News*, 15 September 1902, 6.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 29 May 1872, 5.

³⁷ *Household Words*, 6 December, 1851, 255.

³⁸ *East London Observer*, 3 October 1857.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 10 October 1857, 4.

⁴⁰ *Morning Chronicle*, 13 May 1859, 8.

⁴¹ *Express*, 31 January 1863, 3.

⁴² *London Evening Standard*, 10 January 1863, 4.

⁴³ *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette*, 4 March 1864, 7.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ J. Davis, 'A poor man's system of justice: The London police courts in the second half of the nineteenth century', *Historical Journal*, 27, 2 (1984), 309-355, 308, 312.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Wiener, *op.cit.*, 8.

⁴⁸ T. Hitchcock, R. Shoemaker, C. Emsley, S. Howard and J. McLaughlin, et al., *The Old Bailey Proceedings Online, 1674-1913* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, March 2018), accessed 6 January 2019.

⁴⁹ *Old Bailey proceedings Online*; searched for all offences where the transcription matched “knife”, and offence categories of breaking the peace and killing, defendant male, victim male, between 1850 and 1880. The category of ‘breaking the peace’ included the offences of assault, riot, threatening behaviour and wounding. The category of ‘killing’ included murder and manslaughter. Cases that were duplicate were omitted from the statistics.

⁵⁰ If we assume that in the vast majority of cases a seafarer’s occupation was revealed in court, only 79 (14%) of the 558 men brought to trial for knife assault were sailors.

⁵¹ *Morning Chronicle*, 10 August 1857, 7; *East London Observer*, 26 September 1857, 3; *Evening Standard*, 20, October 1857, 7.

⁵² See for example J.E. Ritchie, *The Nightside of London* (London, 1857), 104; *Era*, 2 February 1862, 6; *East London Observer*, 8 October 1864, 2; *The Metropolitan*, 14 September 1872, 2; James Greenwood, *In Strange Company: Being the experiences of a roving correspondent* (London, 1883).

⁵³ Archer has found similar exaggerated stories of ‘notorious’ districts of Liverpool’s port communities see Archer, *The Monster Evil*, *op.cit.*, 8.

⁵⁴ Wiener, *op.cit.*, 289.

⁵⁵ *London Evening Standard*, 10 January 1863, 4.

⁵⁶ *Illustrated Police News*, 8 June 1867, 3.

⁵⁷ R. B. Shoemaker, *The London Mob. Violence and disorder in eighteenth century England* (London, 2004), 178.

⁵⁸ Winchester College Archive, D2/58 Envelope J, ‘St Landport, Winchester College Mission’, Dr Linklater diary, 16.

⁵⁹ *Morning Advertiser*, 20 October 1863. 7.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶² *East London Observer*, 27 August 1881, 7.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 21 September 1889, 7.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 4 February 1888, 7. A 'landshark' or Crimp was a common name for someone who would take advantage of sailors ashore, charging them high interest rates for loans or expensive lodgings see Milne, *op.cit.*, 107-8.

⁶⁵ *Morning Post*, 6 January 1899, 2. Clive Emsley has shown that, when foreign sailors appeared in Victorian court charged with knife offences, their defence counsel would stress the defendants' 'foreignness' which would usually lead to a more lenient sentence as they were not familiar with the more 'civilized' English fighting traditions. Emsley, *op.cit.*, 87.

⁶⁶ Gallant, *op.cit.*, 361.

⁶⁷ BPP, *Select Committee on Theatrical Licenses and Regulations*, 1866, Minutes of Evidence, Qs 1072-4.

⁶⁸ A good example is the Prussian Eagle entertainment venue that offered German food and dancing. See *Illustrated Police News*, 4 March 1871, 3.

⁶⁹ Quoted in J. Seed, *op.cit.*, 61.

⁷⁰ The streets surveyed in the 1861 census were St Georges, Wellclose Square, Princes Square, High St (Shadwell), Cannon Street, Cannon Road and Neptune Street.

⁷¹ *East London Observer*, 8 October 1864, 2.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 26 September 1857, 3.

⁷³ *Old Bailey proceedings Online*, October 1857, trial of Jose de Rosario, killing (t18571026-1058).26, accessed 8 August 2017.

⁷⁴ *East End Observer*, 26 September 1857, 3.

⁷⁵ There is some confusion as to whether Reagan was a sailor or tailor with different newspapers providing conflicting accounts of his employment. The *East London Observer*, 12 October 1861, 3, and *The Morning Advertiser*, 8 October 1861, 6, referred to Reagan as a sailor while the *London Evening Standard* 8 October 1861, 6, and the *Morning Post* 8 October 1861, 7, record that he was a tailor.

⁷⁶ *East London Observer*, 12 October 1861, 3.

⁷⁷ *Morning Advertiser*, 4 October 1854, 7.

⁷⁸ *Lloyds Weekly*, 4 October 1863, 4.

⁷⁹ *East End Observer*, 26 January 1878, 7.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁸¹ *Temple Bar*, June 1865, 349.

⁸² For an analysis the tensions within social explorers's research see B. Beaven, 'Slum priests as missionaries of Empire in a British naval port town, Portsmouth c. 1850-1900', *Forum Navale*, 72 (2016), 54-77.

⁸³ Wiener, *op.cit*, p. 3.

Figure 1

Smith's new map of London, 1860, courtesy of the Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division. The London Docks, built in the early nineteenth century, effectively killed off Wapping's sailortown. By the 1850s, sailors ashore made for the boarding houses and entertainment venues of Ratcliffe Highway which was the main thoroughfare north of the docks.