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Seaside Ports, Coastal Cities and Tropical Islands: Songs of Sex Work and Inequality by the Sea

Introduction

This chapter considers the representation of sex work by the sea in popular song. Drawing on a travelling literature review - from British resorts and ports to New Orleans in the United States, to Trinidad and Jamaica in the Caribbean - I identify themes of gender, sexuality and race intersecting with public order concerns, military presence, postcolonialism and economic precarity. This literature provides rich context for exploring the songs chosen for this chapter and highlights in particular the relationship of sex work with inequality. I conclude by recognising the bioethical implications of an instrumental desire for the 'tender shelter' of coast and body.

Literature review

This literature review is divided into four parts. The first section introduces the theme of desire and sex by the sea in popular song. I then draw on social science and humanities literature to explore three distinct areas relevant to this analysis: (i) seaside, sauciness and marginality; (ii) coastal cities, space and exclusion; and iii) paradise beaches, globalisation and 'ethnosexualities'.[1]

Beach songs, desire and gendered topography

If love and sex are the most common themes for popular music,[2] it is not surprising that a good proportion of songs released in Britain and the United States tell of summer romances - *Boys of Summer* (by Don Henley, 1984); *August* (by Taylor Swift, 2020) - and sex on the beach - *Under the Boardwalk* (by The Drifters, 1964); *Cake by the Ocean* (by DNCE, 2015). Partly, as this unfolding literature review will show, this is because holidays are spaces for combining leisure and pleasure. In studies of geography and sexuality, it is recognised that there are "mutually constitutive relationships that exist between bodies and places".[3] The beach is a place of freedom and hedonism, where parties, alcohol and sex substitute the daily

[1] Joane Nagel, "States of Arousal/Fantasy Islands: Race, Sex, and Romance in the Global Economy of Desire," *American Studies*, 41, No. 2/3 (Summer/Fall, 2000)2000): 159-181.
[2] David Hajdu, *Love for Sale: Pop Music in America* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2016); Stan Hawkins, *The Routledge Research Companion to Popular Music and Gender* (London: Routledge, 2017); Primack, Brian A., Melanie A. Gold, Eleanor B. Schwarz, and Madeline A. Dalton. "Degrading and Non-Degrading Sex in Popular Music: A Content Analysis." *Public Health Reports*, 123, No. 5 (September 2008): 593–600.
[3] Lynda Johnston and Robyn Longhurst, *Space, Place, and Sex: Geographies of Sexualities* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009).

realities of school, work and commitment.[4] In addition, there is a romantic symbolism invested in the coast as the edge of the landscape: a threshold place of transgression and yearning.

In literature and the visual arts, Trowbridge (2020) (who incidentally titles her article using Dante Gabriel Rosetti's beautiful line: 'The very sky and sea-line of her soul') describes how often "the natural world is allied to the female figure".[5] We can see this grafting of the female body onto nature, including the coast, in popular song. The narrator in Joe Cocker's *Delta Lady* identifies his woman as 'of the country', and longs for her 'soft and fertile delta' to provide 'warmth and shelter' for his body.[6] In *Sailor*, sung by Petula Clark, a lover calls for her sailor sweetheart to come from 'Capri or Amsterdam/Honolulu or Siam/ To the harbour of my heart'.[7] Describing one of the case studies for this chapter, Long (2007) refers to the United States' coastal city of New Orleans lying 'on the edge of the nation like a languid and alluring courtesan'.[8] While these are all metaphors of love and longing, beneath the surface is also the hint of territorial conquest and sexual penetration. Land and the female body are melded in a gendered topography. This echoes the colonial incursions of Western Europeans into countries around the globe, often accompanied by the sexual subjugation of national women, and homoerotic encounters. [9] As Catherine MacKinnon[10] reminds us: through power, desire is linked to dominance.

These complex dynamics of sex, pleasure, yearning, inequality and dominance combine in different ways in the three coastal contexts outlined below. First, to the British seaside and ports, and the concepts of marginality, liminality and carnival.

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[4] R.L. Rutsky, "Surfing the Other: Ideology on the Beach", *Film Quarterly*, 52, No.4 (Summer 1999): 12-23.
[5] Serena Trowbridge, "'The very sky and sea-line of her soul': Nature, Destruction, and Desire in Dante Gabriel Rossetti's Poems", *Victoriographies*, 10, No.1 (2020): 71.
[6] Joe Cocker, "Delta Lady", written by Charlie Midnight and Dan Hartman (1969).
[7] Petula Clark, "Sailor", written by originally written in German by Werner Scharfenberger and Fini Busch (1959): lyrics in English by Norman Newell (1961).
[8] Alecia P. Long, Poverty Is the New Prostitution: Race, Poverty, and Public Housing in Post-Katrina New Orleans. *The Journal of American History*, 94, No. 3 (2007): 797.
[9] Stephen Garton, *Histories of Sexuality: Antiquity to Sexual Revolution* (Durham: Acumen Publishing, 2004); Lee Wallace, *Sexual encounters: Pacific texts, modern sexualities* (Ithaca, N.Y. : Cornell University Press, 2003).
[10] Catharine A. MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of State* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989)

Context 1: Seaside, sauce and marginality

Penny peep shows and Donald McGill postcards: the British seaside has historically been identified as a liminal, marginal and hedonistic space.[11] The term *liminal* refers to an "in-betweeness", a "temporary loss of social bearings" that can occur when people are in transition, physically through space, and emotionally, at significant life events.[12] Seaside resorts and ports can be places where people set aside the expected social codes and indulge in the pleasures afforded by anonymity and transience. This liminality may be experienced and utilised by tourists and visitors, as well as migrant workers and local residents.

Ryan and Kinder (1996) identify sex work and tourism as sharing liminal qualities. Both represent fantasy fulfilment and a 'break from the norm'.[13] Accordingly, the authors see commercial sex by the sea as a consistent element of, rather than a deviation from, tourism. In their study of the social and (non-commercial) sexual behaviour of seasonal workers in the seaside tourist industry, Hennink, Cooper and Diamond (2000) find that workers tend to have more sexual partners, more casual sex and engage in risker sexual behaviour, than they would outside of the holiday environment.[14]

This hedonism has led some writers to use Bakhtin's term *carnival* to describe the British seaside ethic. Bakhtin[15] identifies the characteristics of free association, unity, eccentricity and the toppling of hierarchies, which makes carnival a liminal space, freed from everyday constraints. In this way, carnival has some overlap with the British notion of *sauciness*, in the sense of being bold, impertinent and (sexually) wanton. In Bakhtin's conception, this applies to both participants (here, visitors and tourists) and spectators (the local residents and migration workers). However, Clisby (2009) is cautious as to whether carnival really applies to the British seaside.[16] In her study of white working-class young women's sexual encounters with holidaymakers, she argues that their acts of apparent liberation are simultaneously consistent with prevailing social hierarchies. While not seeking to undermine their subjective sexual agency, Clisby argues that the construction of working-class young women as objects of "illicit erotic desire" has long been central to the conception

[11] Clisby, 2009; Anya Chapman and Duncan Light, "Working with the carnivalesque at the seaside: Transgression and misbehaviour in a tourism workplace," *Tourist Studies*, 17, No.2 (August 2016): 182-199. Robert Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1991).
[12] Monique Hennink, Philip Cooper and Ian Diamond, "Seasonal work and sexual behaviour" *Journal of Sex Research*, 37, No.2, (May 2000): 181
[13] Chris Ryan and Rachel Kinder, "Sex, tourism and sex tourism: fulfilling similar needs?" *Tourism Management,* 17, No.7, (November 1996): 507-518.
[14] Hennink, Cooper and Diamond, 2000.
[15] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).
[16] Clisby, 2009.

of the British seaside resort.[17] In more recent times, Club 18-30 embodied the ethic of sun, sea, sex and alcohol. Though physically situated in the resorts of Ibiza or Ayia Napa, young Britons often brought the British seaside culture with them. Briggs (2013) writes that this moulded the 'holiday career' of a generation of British adults who continue to seek to re-visit that template of hedonistic behaviours when abroad.[18]

Coastal spaces are also at the physical periphery, and this can be reflected in social marginality and exclusion. For example, Clisby (2009) writes of people running away to the "edge of the land", to escape trouble, consequences or family.[19] The seaside can remind people of holidays when they were young, of happier times, engendering a bittersweet nostalgia.[20] The coastal economy is also fragile, dominated by tourism and, in the British context, subject to changing holiday tastes and cheap flights.[21] A combination of older populations, low incomes and poor housing has created a 'coastal effect' of poor health, according to the latest Department of Health and Social Care report into coastal communities.[22] British seasides have been identified too as places of exclusion for Black African, Black Caribbean, South and East Asian or Middle Eastern people, albeit the visual culture of British seaside amusements often incorporates Arab and African orientalist tropes.[23]

The final element, historically, of the British seaside and sex imaginary has been the figure of the 'sailor'. Led by the heteronormative framing of the song selection analysed in this chapter, the focus here is on male sailors seeking female sexual liaisons: there is however a rich history emerging of gay, trans and queer seafarers.[24] Reviewing the prospects of implementing a managed prostitution zone in Liverpool, Bellis and colleagues (2007) note that the city had a long history of sex workers providing services for sailors, though in more

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[17] Clisby, 2009, 53.
[18] Daniel Briggs, "Capitalismo extremo, ideology and Ibiza A new perspective of youth deviance and risk on holiday," *Papers from the British Criminology Conference*, 13, (2013): 33.50; Kamila Rymajdo, *Sex, Sun Beds and Brits Abroad: The Legacy of Club 18-30 Holidays* (London: The Vice Media Group, 2019).
[19] Clisby, 2009, 60.
[20] Clisby, 2009.
[21] Sheela Agarwal and Paul Brunt, "Social Exclusion and English Seaside Resorts," *Tourism Management*, 27, No.4 (August 2006): 654-670.
[22] Chris Whitty, *Chief Medical Officer's annual report 2021: health in coastal communities* (London: DHSC, 2021).
[23] Daniel Burdsey, "Strangers on the Shore? Racialized Representation, Identity and In/visibilities of Whiteness at the English Seaside," *Cultural Sociology*, 5, No.4 (December 2011): 537–552.
[24] Baker, P. and Stanley, J., 2014. Hello Sailor! The hidden history of gay life at sea. London; New York: Routledge.; Anthony Tibbles, 2012. "*Hello Sailor*! How maritime museums are addressing the experience of gay seafarers," *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 18, No. 2 (September 2012): 160-173.

recent decades, sex work has moved from the docks to the city centre.[25] Lee (2013) describes how seafarers – the 'Jack ashore' - were known across European ports for "their boisterous revelry, as hard-earned money was invariably spent on beer, women and song".[26] Freed from the restraints of family and community, they were characterised by some contemporaries as "easily led astray" and potential victims to wily sex workers "ready to deprive an unknowing sailor of his money and clothes".[27]

It is notable that the literature on British seaside culture is written mainly in the 1990s and early 2000s, and a good proportion looks back through the decades, even centuries. There is then a certain nostalgia sewn into discussion of this space. Next, I move to the coastal city, with a particular focus on New Orleans, Louisiana in the United States, to consider poverty, race and spatial exclusion at America's southern edge.

Context 2: Coastal cities, space and exclusion

Historically, cities provided a sense of physical liberation and economic independence from the close-knit familial and community relations of rural towns and villages, first for men and latterly for women.[28] In nineteenth century England, and likely elsewhere in Europe, "urban spaces [...] enabled bourgeois young men to transgress the oppressive codes of morality of the time", including paying for sex and enjoying heterosexual or gay relationships.[29]

At the same time, cities have tended to evolve zones of activity, with authorities concerned to confine commercial sex and sexual entertainment to designated spaces. As such, cities commonly have 'red light' areas with outdoor sex work or clusters of off-street parlours and brothels. These spaces periodically come under pressure from public order concerns and policing crackdowns. For example, in Paris and London through the early 2000s, Hubbard (2004) argues that there was a drive to remove sex workers and other groups deemed 'undesirable' (including homeless individuals and street performers) in order to reposition city centres as safe, family-friendly spaces, dedicated to leisure and consumption.[30] This can be seen as a form of moralising-capitalist governance.

[25] Mark A. Bellis, Fay L. D. Watson, Sara Hughes, Penny A. Cook, Jennifer Downing, Peter Clark and Rod Thomson. "Comparative views of the public, sex workers, businesses and residents on establishing managed zones for prostitution: Analysis of a consultation in Liverpool" *Health & Place*, 13, No. 3 (September 2007): 603-616.
[26] Robert Lee, "The Seafarers' Urban World: A Critical Review," *International Journal of Maritime History*, 25, No. 1 (June 2013): 23.
[27] Lee, 2013, 58.
[28] Johnston and Longhurst, 2009.
[29] Johnston and Longhurst, 2009, 72.
[30] Phil Hubbard, "Cleansing the Metropolis: Sex Work and the Politics of Zero Tolerance", *Urban Studies*, 41, No.9 (August 2004): 1687-1702.

The gentrification movement has occurred in cities around the world. In Salvador, coastal capital of the state of Bahia in the Northeastern region of Brazil, Williams (2014) describes how the commercial sex industry and tourist industry operate side-by-side in the historic centre.[31] Drawing on Piscitelli (1996), Williams explains that sex work between local women and visiting male tourists is complex, ranging from sex-for-money to money-for-gifts, to companionship and dating. The dating model allows local women to engage directly in the tourist scene, a space that is nominally theirs, but which is in practice reserved and priced for outsiders. Williams argues that race and class are key signifiers in the zoning of the Salvador cityscape. She identifies AfroBrazilians and sex workers as spatially excluded, except insofar as they maintain the Black 'authenticity' of Bahia for tourist marketing purposes.[32]

These practices of spatial exclusion by class and race apply also to New Orleans, a coastal city on the southern edge of the United States, and the largest in the state of Louisiana. In the nineteenth century, New Orleans was a port of entry for many European immigrants and this was reflected in the predominantly Irish and French nationality of sex workers in the city (San Francisco on the West Coast, by contrast, had majority Chinese and Japanese sex workers).[33] Indeed, brothel keepers would wait at the docks to persuade Irish girls disembarking ships from Europe to work for them.[34] By the end of the nineteenth century, immigrants from Sicily and Black African Americans relocating internally from the plantation countryside, also came in numbers into the city. It was around this time that jazz or 'Dixieland' emerged as a distinct American sound. New Orleans was known to Americans as an "exotic, erotic hot spot".[35]

Sex workers were single or married and many had children, some of whom who entered the sex industry at a young age, either selling sex or running errands. Foster (1990) writes that mother-daughter teams (as well as sisters working together) were an attractive prospect to sex buyers and "more common than might be expected".[36] Work was highly stratified by race and space in this coastal city:

[31] Erica L. Williams, "Sex work and exclusion in the tourist districts of Salvador, Brazil," *Gender, Place & Culture* 21, No.4 (2014): 453-470.
[32] Williams, 2014, 462.
[33] Craig L. Foster, "Tarnished Angels: Prostitution in Storyville, New Orleans, 1900-1910," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, 31, No. 4, (Winter 1990): 387-397.
[34] Foster, 1990.
[35] Long, 2007, 797.
[36] Foster, 1990, 390.

> The parlor houses and cribs that were located south of Liberty Street were white clientele only, consequently commanding higher prices. The houses and cribs between Liberty and Villere streets were occupied and frequented by both races. The section between Villere and Robertson streets was the black section. This area charged the lowest prices, had the roughest clientele, and had numerous streetwalkers doing back-alley trade.[37]

Today, New Orleans continues to capitalise on its libertine reputation, attracting tourists to enjoy music, festivals, nightlife and Creole and Cajun food. However, Dewey and St Germain (2015) argue that African American and transgender women can "struggle to make ends meet" in an area with a high unemployment rate, if they cannot secure tourism and tourist-related jobs. Some women seek to combine 'mainstream' work with sex work but have found themselves convicted under the "Crime Against Nature by Solicitation" (CANS) statute.[38] Adopted originally in 1805 and targeting gay men, the law criminalises "unnatural carnal copulation"[39] and in recent years has been used increasingly against sex working women, including trans women, of colour. The law requires the convicted individual to register as a sex offender and may also include spatial exclusions from core service sector areas such as the French Quarter.[40] This can prevent convicted sex workers from pursuing their other paid work.

Finally in this review, I move to the 'paradise beaches' to outline the impact of globalisation on inequality and the consumption of paid sex. Race, gender and the post-colonial experience are important here in the context of sex tourism and sex work around coastal military bases.

Context 3: Paradise beaches, globalisation and ethnosexuality

As outlined above, central to tourist strategies are themes of bodies, sexuality, romance and love.[41] This can include formal and informal sex work and sex-for-gift exchange between individuals living in resorts and incoming tourists. The academic research in this area has focused particularly on the Caribbean. Kempadoo (2001), for example, critiques how the

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[37] Foster, 1990, 395.
[38] Susan Dewey and Tonia P. St Germain, "Sex Workers/Sex Offenders: Exclusionary Criminal Justice Practices in New Orleans," *Feminist Criminology*, 10, No.3 (July 2015): 212.
[39] Louisiana Statute 14:89.2.
[40] Dewey and St Germain, 2015, 222.
[41] Johnston and Longhurst, 2009.

Caribbean has been positioned "in the international imagination as a 'naturally' sexual playground".[42] She contends that emerging sex tourism here reflects:

> …the global repositioning that is occurring between post-industrial and postcolonial societies, where Black and Brown bodies become (or continue to be) the sites for the construction of (white) North American and Western European power, wealth, and well-being. […] Territories that once served as sex havens for the colonial elite are today frequented by sex tourists, and several of the island economies now depend upon the region's racialized, sexualized image.[43]

This perceived intersection between ethnicity and sexuality is termed 'ethnosexuality' by Nagel (2000).[44] As Kempadoo observes, it can be found in colonial tracts - see for example Gilberto Freyre's on *Lusotropicalism*[45], his account of the Portuguese conquest of Brazil, and Brazilian women – and more recently in research interviews with those travelling from the West for sex and/or romance. In Frohlick's (2008) study of relationships between European and North American women and local men in Costa Rica, women describe to her feeling 'more sexy' in the Caribbean.[46] Frohlick's interviewees position their Costa Rican holiday lovers as virile, capable and close to nature. Their dreams then are of a 'tropical sexuality'[47] "firmly enmeshed in the fecund and ecologically lush environment"[48] of the coast, but also drawing on a sexualised and stereotypical version of Black masculinity.[49]

Yet the position of those engaged in 'sex and romance work' is often precarious.[50] With few other opportunities of formal employment, these women and men seek to leverage their 'ethno-erotic' capital.[51] Their labour sustains the façade of paradise and brings in the tourist

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[42] Kamala Kempadoo, "Freelancers, Temporary Wives, and Beach-Boys: Researching Sex Work in the Caribbean," *Feminist Review*, 67 (2001): 57.
[43] Kempadoo, 2001, 58, 1.
[44] Nagel, 2000, 159.
[45] Luís Madureira, "Tropical Sex Fantasies and the Ambassador's Other Death: The Difference in Portuguese Colonialism," *Cultural Critique*, 28, (Autumn 1994): 149-173.
[46] Susan Frohlick, "Fluid Exchanges: The Negotiation of Intimacy between Tourist Women and Local Men in a Transnational Town in Caribbean Costa Rica," *City & Society*, 19, No.1, (2007): 139-168.
[47] Teela Sanders, Maggie O'Neill and Jane Pitcher, *Prostitution: Sex Work, Policy and Politics*. (London: SAGE Publications, 2009): 115, citing Piscitelli, 2007.
[48] Johnston and Longhurst, 2009: 128)
[49] Frohlick, 2007.
[50] Lauren C. Johnson, *Selling Masculinity and Profiting from Marginality: Sex Work and Tourism in a Jamaican Resort Town*, [Thesis] (USA: University of Florida, 2012); George Paul Meiu, "'Beach-Boy Elders' and 'Young Big-Men': Subverting the Temporalities of Ageing in Kenya's Ethno-Erotic Economies," *Ethnos*, 80, No.4 (2015): 472-496; Edward Herold, Rafael Garcia and Tony DeMoya, "Female tourists and beach boys: Romance or Sex Tourism?" *Annals of Tourism Research*, 28, No.4, (2001): 978-997.
[51] Meiu, 2015.

dollar but does not confer them any security or validity as "working participants in society".[52] This is despite increasing numbers of Caribbean colonial and postcolonial states "incorporating sexuality into their national strategies for competing in the globalized economy".[53] Sharpe and Pinto (2006) see this development as the direct legacy of slavery and colonialism, whereby racial hierarchies are repackaged into the service sector for Western markets.[54]

A final important theme to mention is the existence of Western military bases near many of these 'paradise beaches', both in the Caribbean and in Asia.[55] In the twentieth century, Western governments and military leaders were complicit in supporting prostitution involving local women around and within military bases, where Western soldiers were stationed. This was to, so called, "maintain morale" and "protect respectable women".[56] Prior to, and during the second world war, Japan organised women and girls into forced prostitution to serve soldiers in their occupied territories. This practice was more accurately recognised later as sexual *slavery* and a war crime.[57]

As in New Orleans, Americans sought also to racialise military prostitution through segregation. In Hawaii's 'Hotel Street', for example, a known red light district on Mãmala Bay, brothels were established for African American male soldiers during the second world war, separate from those designated for white male soldiers. As in tourist contexts, the nature of the relationship between local women and male soldiers ranged from money-for-sex to temporary intimacy and dating. Indeed, it is estimated that around "30,000 children [...] were born of Filipino mothers and American military fathers each year during the 1970s and 1980s".[58] Thousands of women in the Philippines worked in American military base-dependent entertainment venues during this period, often migrating internally to coastal ports. Their labour increased the profits of venue bosses, family remittances and national gross domestic product. Interestingly, there is evidence that as the US military withdrew

[52] Johnson, 2012, 276
[53] Kamala Kempadoo, *Sexing the Caribbean: Gender, Race and Sexual Labo*r, (Taylor & Francis Group, London, 2004): 3.
[54] Jenny Sharpe and Samantha Pinto, "The Sweetest Taboo: Studies of Caribbean Sexualities; A Review Essay," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 32, No.1 (Autumn 2006): 258.
[55] Harvey Neptune, "White Lies: Race and Sexuality in Occupied Trinidad," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 2, No. 1 (Spring 2001); Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Oakland: University of California, 2014). Saundra Pollock Sturdevant and Brenda Stoltzfus, (eds), *Let the Good Times Roll: Prostitution and the US Military in Asia* (New York: New Press, 1992).
[56] Enloe, 2014, 61.
[57] Enloe, 2014, 161.
[58] Enloe, 2014, 166.

from these countries, national leaders were encouraged to plug the economic gap by transitioning to mass tourism, including sex tourism.[59]

This geographical tour from British seaside to coastal city to paradise beach has identified themes of gender, sexuality and race intersecting with public order concerns, military presence, postcolonialism and economic precarity. All provide rich context for exploring the songs chosen for this chapter. Before presenting that discussion, I summarise here the chosen song sample and approach to analysis.

Methods

Data sampling and collection

This study draws on a purposive sample of tracks, identified in part through prior familiarity with some of the songs but also by searching musical lyric databases (such as http://www.mldb.org/, https://www.lyrics.com/, https://www.letssingit.com/) combining terms such as 'beach', 'sea', 'holiday' with terms relating to sex, sex work, or paying for sex, as well as the places of interest, 'New Orleans', 'Caribbean', 'seaside', 'port'. Of course, it is hard to identify songs related to sex work, because they are almost all written in euphemism, e.g. 'painted lady', 'working for the dollar' etc., so this required some online research. In truth, the numbers of songs on this theme are small in number and tend to be dated between 1940s to 1970s, although exactly why is not clear. In addition, the common framing is of female sex workers and male buyers. I am pursuing that template for consistency of analysis, but mindful that, as the literature review above shows, alternative configurations of sex work occur, and would likely reveal further themes. The table below summarises the sample song collection. The songs are organised by sub-section heading, as presented in the Findings and discussion.

[59] Ryan Bishop and Lillian S. Robinson. In the Night Market: Tourism, Sex, and Commerce in Contemporary Thailand. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 27, No. 2 (Spring/Summer 1999): 32-46.

Table 1: Song Sample (information verified using jaxsta.com and lyrics.com)

Findings and Discussion sub-section	Song title (Singer, Date)	Credits for lyrics/version used in this chapter
Sailors ashore in Britain	Song 1: **Sweet Painted Lady** (Elton John, 1973)	Written by Bernie Taupin and Elton John.
	Song 2: **Maggie May** (Traditional; also Vipers Skiffle Group, 1957; also The Beatles, 1970). Multiple other versions available.	Arrangement for The Vipers Skiffle Group by Wally Whyton.
	Song 3: **Go To The Sea Once More** (Traditional; also The Dubliners, 1968 as 'Go to sea no more'; and The Byrds, 1969, as "Jack Tarr the Sailor"). Multiple other versions available.	Traditional, but The Dubliners version arranged by Ciaron Bourke, Ronald Joseph Drew, Luke Kelly, John Edmund Sheehan and Barney McKenna.
Hedonism and hustle in New Orleans	Song 4: **House of the Rising Sun** (The Animals, 1967; also Traditional)	Traditional, but The Animals version arranged by Alan Price.
	Song 5: **Fancy** (Bobbie Gentry, 1969)	Written by Bobbie Gentry.
	Song 6: **Lady Marmalade** (Patti Labelle, 1969)	Written by Bob Crewe and Kenny Nolan.
Tropical sexuality in Trinidad and Jamaica	Song 7: **Island Girl** (Elton John, 1975)	Written by Elton John and Bernie Taupin.
	Song 8: **Jean and Dinah** (Mighty Sparrow, 1956). Also known as 'Yankee Gone'.	Written by Slinger Francisco (also known as the Mighty Sparrow).
	Song 9: **Rum and Coca Cola** (The Andrews Sisters, 1945)	Original by Lionel Belasco with lyrics by Lord Invader (Rupert Grant). The Andrews Sisters' arrangement attributed to Morey Amsterdam (words), Paul Baron, Jeri Sullavan (music).

Approach to analysis

As I have written elsewhere, "In analysing song lyrics (or any text), we might attempt to discern the author's intention or meaning in the lyric or offer our own reading".[60] While I do offer some detail on authorship and context for the songs in the analysis, as a criminologist writing on the sex industry, I am also focused on interpreting the lyrics thematically, in relation to the literature. I also pay attention to lexical choices and phrasing, particularly where it seems that form illuminates content. Finally, it is worth noting that I treat songs as cultural artefacts that tell us something about social (contemporary or historical) life. They are not 'true', in the sense that they may not tell us about real individuals involved in selling sex by the sea: but they are a touchstone for an imaginative truth, which can be just as important. In other words, they have cultural verisimilitude.[61]

Song lyrics were downloaded, including variations of traditional music, where available, for comparison. The nine song transcripts were read and coded inductively to generate a first level of codes.[62] Codes were then clustered and merged into eleven final themes. Rather than punctuate the findings and analysis with multiple thematic sub-headings, themes are interwoven in the following discussion of three locations – Britain, New Orleans; Trinidad and Jamaica. This discussion is situated within the social and historical context and relevant concepts identified in the literature review above.

Findings and discussion

Sailors ashore: Britain

Sailors with wages paid and off the ship, ready to spend, is the opening theme of all three of the British songs:

> We're all hunting honey with money to burn.
>
> (*Sweet Painted Lady* [Elton John])

> With a pocket full of tin, I was very soon taken in/
>
> By a gal with the name of Maggie May.

[60] Natasha Mulvihill, "Should real love hurt? The eroticisation of dominance, submission and coercive control in contemporary pop music," in Glenn Fosbraey and Nicola. Puckey (eds.), *Misogyny, toxic masculinity, and heteronormativity in post-2000 popular music* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021): 22.

[61] Steve Neale, "Questions of Genre." in Robert Stam and Tony Miller (eds.), *Film and Theory: An Anthology*, (London: Blackwell Publishers, 2000).

[62] Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, (2nd edition) (Sage Publications: London, 1998).

(*Maggie May*, [The Vipers Skiffle Group])

When first I landed in Liverpool, I went upon a spree.
(*Go to the Sea Once More*, [The Dubliners])

The heady atmosphere of the seaside for these sailors is marked by reaching the edge of the sea, rather than the edge of the land, but the effect is the same. As explained by Bellis and colleagues (2007), women working the docks would know a new ship arriving meant new customers. However, while Elton John's sailors appear to 'hunt' in hypermasculine packs, the protagonists in *Maggie May* and *Go to the Sea Once More* are alone and, it is suggested, this is the start of their undoing. The sailor is 'very soon taken in' by Maggie May, which could signify a warm and welcome bed - or being hoodwinked. Similarly, in *Go to the Sea Once More*, the protagonist is already rueing: 'Me money *alas* I spent it fast, got drunk as drunk could be' [emphasis added]. In the second and third song, the sailors are positioned as victims of wily sex workers. Following Lee (2013), a just-paid sailor, possibly carrying their belongings if they were at the end of a voyage (a 'homeward bounder'), was a potential target:

Now, in the morning I awoke, I was flat and stony broke
No jacket, trousers, waistcoat did I find
(*Maggie May*, [The Vipers Skiffle Group])

Me watch was new and me money too, in the morning with them she fled
(*Go to the Sea Once More*, [The Dubliners])

One sailor finds that his belongings have been pawned; the other searches in vain through the streets for the woman who robbed him while the 'whores they all did roar' (*Go to the Sea Once More*). However, Maggie May's sailor victim gets his justice as we learn that Maggie is transported to 'Van Diemen's shore', which is in Tasmania; in other versions, she is shipped to 'Botany Bay', in Australia. Angeline's victim in *Go to the Sea Once More,* however, has to follow the song title and try and make his fortune at sea all over again. Towards the end of the song, the singer laments his luck and cautions other sailors to avoid drink and women, get married and stay home in bed. So, these songs are meant to be amusing but also function as a morality tale. While it is likely that sailors were on occasion robbed, these narratives build both on the 'madonna/whore' representation of women (following Freud) and the

longstanding misogynistic trope that women are sexually deceitful (see criminologist Pollak, 1950 for one example of how this idea was formalised in scholarship).[63]

Sweet Painted Lady is slightly more ambivalent, almost melancholic. The narrator appears to have a sex worker whom he returns to, as he describes lying with her 'again', although she has 'no name'. This is an interesting detail which marks the boundary between work and intimacy.[64] In a line recently echoed in Ed Sheeran's *Shape of You* (2017), the narrator muses on how many sailors this 'painted lady' has slept with:

> And we'll leave the smell of the sea in your beds
> Where love's just a job and nothing is said
>
> (*Sweet Painted Lady* [Elton John])

Note that the singer leaves *his* scent, rather than carrying *her* scent away. It is as if the sailors washed in on the tide into the beds of local women and washed out again to sea: a temporary incursion.

Hedonism and hustle: New Orleans

Bleak poverty characterises both *House of the Rising Sun* and *Fancy:* however, while the first is a plaintive lament, *Fancy* is the story of a girl escaping poverty through prostitution. *House of the Rising Sun* is a traditional song, dating possibly to around 1900 in America, although made famous particularly by the all-male band, The Animals, in 1964.[65] Over time, it has had both female and male narrators and is a story of ruin in New Orleans. The term 'Rising Sun' may be an old English phrase for a 'bawdy house' or 'brothel', but it is not certain if this is its meaning in use in the song.[66] In the version recorded by folk song collector Alan Lomax in 1937, the female narrator is ruing the day she "let a rambler lead me astray" – a pimp or lover, perhaps: it is not clear – and ended up at the "house in New Orleans/they call the Rising Sun". The singer pleads that someone warn her baby sister not to follow her footsteps. In the 1937 version, her sweetheart is a drinker; in The Animals' 1964 version, the narrator's father is a "gamblin' man" and a drunk.

The setting for *Fancy*, written by Bobbie Gentry, is equally insalubrious.

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[63] Otto Pollak, *The criminality of women,* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1950).
[64] Margaretha Järvinen and Theresa Dyrvig Henriksen. "Controlling Intimacy: Sexual Scripts among Men and Women in Prostitution," *Current Sociology*, 68, No.3 (May 2020): 353–71.
[65] Ted Anthony, *Chasing the Rising Sun: The Journey of an American Song*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007).
[66] Anthony, 2007.

We lived in a one room, rundown shack
On the outskirts of New Orleans
(*Fancy* [Bobbie Gentry])

Fancy has just turned eighteen and her mother, sick, and facing penury with a starving baby, helps Fancy to dress up and make a living walking the street. In a startling lyric which serves to stiffen Fancy's resolve, the young girl is described vividly on the liminal threshold between her past and future:

And I shivered as I watched a roach crawl across
The toe of my high-heel shoe
(*Fancy* [Bobbie Gentry])

Later, the narrator sings that she might just have been "born plain white trash" but she goes on to charm powerful men, earning enough to buy herself a "Georgia mansion" and an "elegant New York townhouse". Fancy calls out the "self-righteous hypocrites" that would frown on what she does and criticise her mother for turning her out to sell sex. The choice of the name *Fancy* is important. Green (2013) explains how a 'fancy' or 'fancy girl' was a term applied to light-skinned African-American women sold by slave owners to become "slave mistresses or prostitutes", commonly in New Orleans or Lexington, Kentucky.[67] Green notes that later the term appeared to apply to women of any ethnicity coerced into prostitution, as used by Gentry.

The description of Fancy's mother "painting" her eyes and lips echoes the song *Sweet Painted Lady* discussed above: 'painted lady' is a colloquial term of a sex worker. It reminds us too of the performance involved in sex work and the need to get into role. Similarly, in *Lady Marmalade*, Marmalade is "strutting her stuff on the street" in New Orleans. Her job requires her to sell a 'fiction of mutuality'[68] to potential customers: "Hey Joe/You wanna give it a go?"

Lady Marmalade is depicted in ethnosexualised terms: her skin is described as "silky smooth/ Colour of café au lait" and the refrains "Creole Lady Marmalade" and "Mocha Chocolata" are written with the presumed intention of combining colour and sensuousness.

[67] Sharony A. Green, *Dropped "from the clouds": Cincinnati and manumission among the fancy and newly freed, 1931-1901,* [PhD thesis] (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2013): 24.
[68] Julia O'Connell Davidson, *Prostitution, Power and Freedom* (Cambridge: Policy Press, 1998).

To modern ears, these phrases jar. They are metaphors which fetishize Black skin and are consistent with notions of appropriating and consuming.[69] McClintock (1995) describes how *fetish* has both an individual, private resonance and a public, social meaning:

> …fetishes can be seen as the displacement onto an object (or person) of contradictions that the individual cannot resolve at a personal level. These contradictions may originate as social contradictions but are lived with profound intensity in the imagination and the flesh. The fetish thus stands at the cross-roads of psychoanalysis and social history, inhabiting the threshold of both personal and historical memory.[70]

In this case, the fetishization of Marmalade's skin at the individual level sits in a tradition of white men objectifying and sexualising racial difference through colonialism and slavery, a practice continuing into her present, as a sex worker, at the social level. The idea is developed also later in the song when the sex buyer is described as recalling his night of passion:

> Now he's at home doing 9 to 5, living his grey flannel life
> But when he turns off to sleep, old memories creep
> More, more, more!
>
> [*Lady Marmalade*, Patti Labelle])

Marmalade is glamourised as a sex worker but also potentially exoticised in the buyer's memory. Singer-songwriters Bob Crewe and Kenny Nolan wrote the song for Patti Labelle, Nona Hendryx and Sara Dash, a Black women trio from Philadelphia. Patti Labelle, interviewed by NME in 1986, was not asked about these ethnosexual references (likely because, at the time, they were hardly noted), but rather about the theme of sex work. She said:

> "That song was taboo. I mean, why sing about a hooker? Why not? I had a good friend who was a hooker, and she died. She never took the mike out of my mouth and I never took the mattress from under her. She was a friend, doing her thing."

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[69] Irene López-Rodríguez, Are We What We Eat? Food Metaphors in the Conceptualization of Ethnic Groups. *Linguistik Online*, 69, No. 7 (September 2014).
[70] Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, (London: Routledge, 1995): 184.

Following Foster (1990), this corner of the Gulf of Mexico is a place where many women have come to do their thing, to hustle in the city, and contribute to the construction of New Orleans as an "exotic, erotic hot spot".[71]

Tropical sexuality: Trinidad and Jamaica

Turning to the Caribbean, two of the songs in this final set of three have an important backstory. *Jean and Dinah* was originally composed by Mighty Sparrow, then a novice singer, to offer as a radio jingle to an important local store in Trinidad. The offer was declined and Mighty Sparrow drew instead on the social context to re-write in the lyrics. As explained by a *Trinidad and Tobago Newsday* feature in 2019:

> The narrative [of Jean and Dinah] reflects the large-scale prostitution that was supported by the US marines who were stationed at American military bases in Chaguaramas, the impact of US naval withdrawal on local sex workers, and the desperation of those women after the closure of the bases in the post-war period.[72]

Rum and Coca-Cola on the other hand, takes us back to the boom time. The original tune was composed in 1906 by Venezuelan-Trinidadian Lionel Belasco and was entitled "L'Année Passée". Calypso singer Rupert Grant, known as Lord Invader, had visited Point Cumana, a beach near the naval base at Chaguaramas, and decided to change the words of the song to describe the context of American soldiers "flirting with the island girls, and drinking rum followed by a chaser of Coca-Cola".[73] The American writer and entertainer Morey Amsterdam heard, slightly revised and took back the song to the United States, where it was sung by the Andrews Sisters in 1945 and spent ten weeks at the top of the US Billboard singles chart. While the song popularised Calypso among American audiences, it was also an example of cultural appropriation. Echoing Kenneth Coutts-Smith's exploration of 'cultural colonialism', *Rum and Coca Cola* symbolises how dominant groups extract and profit from cultural resources, as well as economic resources and land. In the event, Lord Invader had his day in court and secured recognition and royalties for the song, although Amsterdam retained copyright for his version.

[71] Long, 2007, 797.
[72] Trinidad and Tobago Newsday, *Sparrow's Jean and Dinah* [online feature, 20 Oct 2019]. Available at: https://newsday.co.tt/2019/10/20/sparrows-jean-and-dinah/
[73] Wayne Curtis, "Rum and Coca-Cola: The murky derivations of a sweet drink and a sassy World War II song," *The American Scholar*, 75, No. 3 (2006): 67-70.

Similar to Foster's (1990) description of familial pairings of sex workers, the six-times repeated refrain in *Rum and Coca-Cola* (which surprisingly, given it was the 1940s, remained unedited in The Andrews Sisters' version) describes how:

> Both mother and daughter
> Workin' for the Yankee dollar
>
> (*Rum and Coca-Cola*, The Andrews Sisters)

American soldiers are described as making "the native swoon", positioning the relationships as mutual and romantic, rather than commercial or exploitative, and locating the American GI as an irresistible alpha male occupying both territory and local female affections.

> Out on Manzanilla Beach
> G.I. romance with native peach
> All night long, make tropic love
>
> (*Rum and Coca-Cola*, The Andrews Sisters)

Following Kempadoo (2001) and Frohlick (2007; 2008), and again employing objectifying metaphors of food, local Trinidadian women are consumed and conflated with and within the 'lush environment'.[74] Elton John's *Island Girl* engages similar language in depicting his protagonist, 'Island Girl', a street sex worker working in New York:

> I see your teeth flash, Jamaican honey so sweet [...]
> Oh she's a big girl, she's standing six-foot three
>
> (*Island Girl*, Elton John)

In the middle of song, Island Girl is described as "black as coal" and wrapping herself around sex buyers like a "well-worn tyre". Exploring the representations of race, gender and sexuality in American popular culture in the twentieth century, Mellinger and Beaulieu (2010) argue that:

> Racialized gender relations were depicted as symbolic inversions of bourgeois sexuality, with African American women masculinized and African American men symbolically castrated.[75]

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[74] Adriana Piscitelli, "Shifting Boundaries: Sex and Money in the North-East of Brazil," *Sexualities*, 10, No.4, (October 2007): 489–500.
[75] Wayne M. Mellinger and Rodney Beaulieu, "White fantasies, black bodies: Racial power, disgust and desire in American popular culture," *Visual Anthropology*, 9, (No. 2): 117.

Their observation appears to capture well the dynamic in the three songs, as Caribbean women are hypersexualised and White American men positioned as their seducers. By default, this is to the cost of Caribbean men, or "boys" as they are described in *Island Girl*. The choice of 'Black *boy'*, in contrast to 'white *man'*, is reminiscent of the colonial and Jim Crow era in the US: "What you wanting with the white man's world?" the narrator repeats eight times through the song, and then, three times: "Black boy want you in his island world".

Just as Lord Invader was able to retain recognition for his authorship of *Rum and Coca-Cola*, Mighty Sparrow sings of Trinidadian men re-asserting their dominance over their drinking clubs and women once the 'Yankees' were gone. In particular, Sparrow commends that Trinidadian men can now exploit the loss of the American GI market and pay a fraction of the former price to sex workers, who have migrated from the closed military bases into the town:

> Brother, it's now they park up in town
> In for a penny, and in for a pound [...]
> Dorothy have to take what she get
> All of them who used to make style
>
> (*Jean and Dinah*, The Mighty Sparrow)

Island Girl, *Jean and Dinah* and the mother and daughters in *Rum and Coca-Cola* therefore stand at the intersection of race and gender, colonialism and patriarchy, in America and in the Caribbean.

Conclusion

The analysis in this chapter demonstrates how, expressed through popular song, and consistent with historical commentary, the sea and coast have been constructed as a sexual imaginary. The seaside is a place of carnival,[76] where responsibilities and social expectations are loosened – at least for some.[77] It is associated with nostalgia and yearning, re-visited physically in person and emotionally through memory. Indeed, there is a double nostalgia in listening to these songs, as almost all date back to the 1940s-1970s, some longer. People

[76] Bakhtin, 1984.
[77] Clisby, 2009.

come to the 'edge' of the land to indulge in sensual pleasure, including paying for (directly or indirectly) sex and romance.[78]

On the one hand, these songs could be said to celebrate these pleasures and recognise female agency in profiting from them. *Maggie May* and Angeline (in *Go to the Sea Once More*) exploit the drunken sailors; *Jean and Dinah* and the unnamed 'native peaches' of Trinidad target their market of soldiers; *Lady Marmalade* captivates her conventional office worker client; *Fancy* earns her way out of a New Orleans shack and into a New York apartment. There is, simultaneously, another interpretation. In these songs, as in life, bodies are objectified and rendered into the landscape, producing a gendered and racialised topography of the coast.[79] Fetishization, instrumentality and the desire to dominate are not just discursive whims: they have material and bioethical implications. These impulses tend to extract value and dignity and prevent thriving, in nature and in humanity. This is why the liberation of the natural environment from appropriation and misuse is consistent with the liberation of people from social oppression and inequality.

[78] Long, 2007; Clisby, 2009.
[79] Kempadoo, 2001, 2004; Johnston and Longhurst, 2009.