"In the gutters of Antwerp" – Georg Dahlin, undercover journalism and representations of sailor-life during the interwar period

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In *The People of the Abyss* (1903), perhaps the most famous piece of undercover journalism of the early 20th century, Jack London posed as an American seaman in order to blend in and discover the real living conditions of the slums of London´s East End. His method turned out to be a very successful way of exploring and describing the reality facing the inhabitants of a very poor neighborhood.

Almost thirty years later, the Swedish journalist Georg L Dahlin mimicked London and published a book – *Sailors and Shanghaiers* (1931) – of his experiences as an undercover seaman in the port of Antwerp. Dahlin had impersonated a destitute Swedish sailor, living for six weeks during the summer of 1930 among other sailors in the same situation in order to explore their hardship and frustration.[1]

Dahlin gave a rather favorable description of some individual seamen he met while others were addressed in a more negative manner. But

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above all he was fiercely critical of the physical and social environment in Antwerp, which he viewed as dirty, cramped, degrading and morally corrupt, inhabited by conmen, tricksters and prostitutes with the sole intent of swindling seamen. Dahlin's book, then, is firmly anchored in the Victorian literary genre of "slumland literature". At the same time, the book is Dahlin´s personal statement on the "Seaman Question" of the inter-war period – a debate between those focused on the low morality of seafarers (their alarming drinking habits and the many cases of sexual transmitted diseases among them) and other who blamed such behavior on the grim environment of the large continental port cities, so tempting and so dangerous to young and innocent seamen.

My critical analysis of Dahlin´s book concerns how a contemporary issue – the Seaman Question – was interpreted and framed within a literary genre – slumland literature. This article uses Dahlin to investigate how representations of sailor life in port cities were constructed and disseminated during the interwar period.

Down into the abyss – undercover methods and the complete participant

Undercover journalism was not an unusual method during the late 1800s and early 20th century: contemporary with Dahlin was George Orwell. In 1927, he started, incognito and without telling anyone close to him, to walk the streets of the poor parts of London, collecting material for a project he called *The Spike*.[2] The year after Orwell moved to Paris to continue his work on the lives of the urban poor by taking up menial low paid jobs. His experiences during those years were regularly described as "nonfiction slum stories" in French and British journals, and these short pieces formed the basis for his first published book *Down and out in London and Paris* in 1933.[3]

Similar efforts had been made earlier. Jack London´s undercover stay among the poor in London has been mentioned already; in the US, Upton Sinclair´s serialized novel, and subsequent 1906 book, *The Jungle,* documented Sinclair´s undercover work in Chicago´s meatpacking district, all the while gathering information on working conditions for his exposé.

Methodologically, undercover journalism is a form of participant observation. For a long period of time, undercover quests had been carried out by people contemporaries often referred to as Amateur Casuals.[4] These were often journalists or social explorers who attempted to recreate their experiences as accurate and vividly as possible with the purpose of advocating a certain political or social solution. This sort of investigation became known as the "journalistic method".[5] In modern terminology, the citizen-journalist can be labeled as *complete participants* – individuals who "become a complete member of an in-group", through assimilation.[6]

The contemporary practitioners of the art of going undercover were convinced that this was the only way of obtaining any kind of relevant knowledge of the poor and underprivileged. But it was a difficult method to use: to blend in seamlessly was hard because a lot of factors could give you away - accent, manners, habits and clothing to name a few. But the most important prerequisite for success was a ready credible background story.[7]

Those examples of undercover journalistic work presented above must be viewed within the historical context of the turn-of-the-century slum. During the Victorian period, the slum and the poor who lived within these destitute areas were both of great interest to government, to a wide range of social and religious reformers and philanthropists and to members of the press. The motivations for their accounts differed, but the narratives were strikingly similar in content. The literary construct of the metropolis differed little from accounts from social inspectors or from what the most sensational newspaper article recounted: the poor parts of town were always drawn in dreary colors. A huge corpus of writing, the so-called slumland literature, developed, shaping popular understanding of the slum and eventually becoming influential and highly normative.

As scholars have pointed out, there are striking similarities between imperial travel writing and descriptions of conditions in the slum. Marina Valverde, the Canadian criminologist, has studied the use of "the Jungle" as a metaphor for life in the slum during the late Victorian period. Her conclusion is that already known knowledge of "the savage Other" abroad was used to construct and also disseminate knowledge on domestic urban slum milieus.[8]

This metaphor is evident in any kind of slumland literature, and one that was easily understood, especially amongst an educated middle-class audience well read on imperial exploits. Valverde even suggests that knowledge about the exotic flora, fauna and people of foreign countries was greater than their understanding of "the lives of the poor around the corner."[9]

In slumland literature, two strands coexisted – an older strand associated with different forms of undercover participation, often framing people and their lives in sensationalist and moralistic tones, and a new strand that concealed a set of moral prescriptions with the language and methodologies of science. In this second form, descriptions of people were replaced by accounts of place, and these urban spaces were ascribed human traits such as vice, divergence, and idleness.

In 1889, the first volume of an ambitious project named *Life and Labour of the People in London*, was published by the English social researcher and reformer Charles Booth. The inquiry intended to study the conditions (poverty, industry and religious influences) of the working class in London, initially in the East End, later covering the rest of London, The second volume of the project was released in 1891.[10]

Booth´s inquiry is a good representative of this latter strand. It was a study of the poor districts of London, not different from previous studies save one exception: mapping. The two volumes included maps of different kinds, all laid out in different colors. The purpose was to designate different areas according to their economic and moral typology. Black areas where considered the worst, and "better" regions were coded in lighter colors. This technique caught the imagination of urban reformers, who began to speak about changing color patterns instead of discussing real people. Latter studies broadened the scope by also depicting race, vice, crime, and disease.[11]

But above all, slumland sexuality was of great interest to the late Victorian middle-class visitor, as the American historian Seth Koven has emphasized. According to him, those writing about the slums "tended to romanticize and exoticize them as sites of spectacular brutality and sexual depravation" according to the well-known formula of Empire, Class and Race. The perceived inherent sexuality of the slum had a strong lure –

Koven writes that visitors were “compulsively drawn” towards these constructed sexual landscapes of prostitution, working-class sexuality and homoerotic vibes, either in order to clean them up, challenge prevailing norms or indulge their vices.[12]

American historian Judith Walkowitz identifies the Victorian “flaneur” as particularly important for the construction of the slum. Beside social and religious reformists and philanthropists roamed the sole middle-class man (the “flaneur”), who explored and interpreted the poor areas. Authors and journalists predominated in this role. From the 1860s and onwards, the “flaneur” visited the urban poor, exploring territories unknown but at the same time dangerous and exciting, in order to describe them to an eager public. Sometimes “flaneurs” were accompanied by the police, and sometimes they operated in disguise.[13] Like explorers of foreign continents they met the slum with preexisting ideas about how exciting and uncivilized it would be and set about confirming those preexisting notions, constructing the urban poor in anthropological terms as different, somehow extra-national. These literary explorers often used the metaphors of colonialism – referencing the Jungle and its (people´s) lack of civilization.[14]

Koven has shown how the image of the slum as late as 1900 was shaped by the well-to-dos who went slumming. Complaints both from the inhabitants, who felt depreciated and assigned a stereotypical role of subordination, and from social investigators (Herbert Spencer, William Booth) who objected on scientific grounds were common, but failed to alter the public perceptions.[15]

Women also took part in the mapping and exploration of slumland – the decades around the turn of the century 1900 (1880-1920) were a time when female social investigators joined men in writing about the slum. According to the American literary scholar Deborah Epstein Nord, they mostly did so in the new scientific way.[16] Like the American reporter Nellie Bly, who acted insane in the 1880s in order to study conditions for women at a psychiatric clinic in New York. She published her experience in the book *Ten Days in a Mad-House* (1887). In England, the social investigator Beatrice Potter used undercover methods – she impersonated a poor Jewish seamstress in her attempts to get a close look at low-paid jobs in the textile business. While in Sweden, the female journalist Ester Blen-

da Nordström, gained great attention in 1914 with her portrayal of life as a farm maid, published as articles and in the book *A maid among maids*. Nordstrom worked undercover in order to better understand the working conditions among agricultural workers.[17]

Not only written words were important when it came to depicting the slum. The new technology of photography was a powerful tool in creating a sense of understanding of the slum. The Danish emigrant Jacob Riis took photos of the slums of New York, and published articles and eventually a book – *How the other half lives* – in 1890. Riis combined photos and other visuals with statistics, creating powerful images of dark, dirty and menacing alleys and backstreets and overcrowded tenement houses. His photographs had a huge impact on the public, effectively leading to the demolition of some of the worst apartment blocks on the Lower East Side.[18]

Researching the slum

During the 1960s and onwards a new way of studying the social history of the slum emerged from Britain. The common denominator was a focus on the structural forms and spread of slums; their material incarnation and economic development within the urban fabric. The market capitalism of the Victorian era formed the backdrop. Beginning in the 1990s, scholars began to challenge the prevailing structural approach and tried to address the (contemporary) social construction of the slum. The concept of the "flaneur" was used as an analytic tool in such studies.[19]

Alan Mayne, argued that the slum is an invention by the press and the many social reformers of middle-class origin, designed to strengthen bourgeois values and to mould an appropriate city culture. The writings on the slum (slumland literature), then, were not accurate descriptions of material and social conditions in the slum but rather a literary genre, populated by stereotypes. Certain key words were used to create a simplified setting, void of the multidimensional culture and experience of the poor as well as the variation in slum housing.

Those representations of the poor and the slum are, according to Mayne, by no means objective accounts. Instead they use a set of "negative sig-

nifiers", which very straight-forwardly aims at promoting an "ideal community" and the qualities attached to it. The contrast of the slum, then, became a necessary prerequisite. Mayne concludes that the press used its information monopoly for political purposes in that journalists acted as mouthpieces for just one discourse – the dominant middle-class life style of market capitalism and class conflict – whilst subduing alternative interpretations.

In Mayne´s view, any kind of texts on slumland is pure popular entertainment, detached from real life. He unveils a hidden dramaturgy, described in terms of a graded descent into the unknown, where light is dimmed, the smells unfamiliar (and foul) and time seems to stand still. The inhabitants are listless and sinister, and the unfamiliarity of the surroundings, the "otherness" of the slum, is highlighted through consistent references to the fact that animals and people lived side-by-side: everywhere sties, warrens and rookeries.

In various forms of slumland literature, Mayne identifies and describes five standard characters: (1) the Woman, (2) the Foreigner, (3) the Landlord, (4) the Child, and (5) the Inspector. Of those, only the Inspector is associated with positive connotations (representative of the state) whilst the others are linked to crime, vice, greed, dirt and other unpleasantness.[20] For my textual analysis, I find Mayne´s deconstruction of the general content in slumland literature into a fixed dramaturgy with stereotypical characters very useful. Therefore I will frame the account of Dahlin within the general genre of this type of literature. But I will also take into account prevailing opinions and perspectives from the Seaman Question since this is the contemporary ideological context within which Dahlin existed.

When it comes to Dahlin himself, I view him as a combination of the slumland *observer* of both the Victorian era (including the "flaneur") and later periods, and the Jack London/George Orwell-type *participator*. It is obvious that Dahlin used the method of complete participation: by sharing the hardships of Scandinavian sailors over a longer period of time, he obtained insights and a personal understanding of what life on the bum means. Dahlin cannot claim any scientific reliability given his method of choice, a point made already in the 1890s by for example Spencer in his critique of undercover methods.

I will pay attention to in what ways Dahlin describes sailors and others he met in Antwerp – Koven points out that the Victorian observers tended not to distinguish between different categories in slumland: instead every inhabitant became a negative stereotype.[21] But does Dahlin see differences?

The bigger picture(s) – the Seaman Question in Scandinavia and Sweden during the interwar period

The contextual backdrop to Dahlin´s stay in Antwerp was the so called "Seaman Question". In Sweden this question had been discussed and fought over since at least the early 1920s. This political and social issue concerned, among other things, the social welfare of seamen aboard and in port towns (pay, living conditions, safety and health issues) as well as the moral aspects of seafarers, like their perceived violence, their drinking habits and their ability to catch venereal diseases while ashore.[22] In Britain and on the continent, similar discussions had taken place earlier, like the ILO (International Labor Organization) held conferences in 1924, 1926 and 1929 to push for improvements of both working and living conditions. Of the Scandinavian countries, Norway was ahead of Sweden.[23]

The public conversation about the moral aspects of the Seaman Question in Scandinavia kicked off with the publication of two books in 1929. The authors, the Norwegian journalist Carl Huitfeldt and Laura Petri, a soldier in the Swedish branch of the Salvation Army, both wrote about the dangers of sailor town – women, alcohol and venereal diseases. At the heart of the debate were the alarming conditions in foreign port towns.[24] The book by Petri (*From a Foreign Port)* described the conditions of Swedish sailors in the Antwerp docklands in especially dreary colors.[25]

The obviously unhealthy social conditions were criticized but the behavior of the Swedish seamen received the most attention - Petri regarded seafarers as morally weak, naïve and impressionable, and therefore in need of spiritual guidance. In Petri's view, Swedish sailors "gild the gutters (…) and waste their manhood on foreign harlots. Without money, but with poi-

son in their blood, many a sailor returns home to Sweden."[26] Petri´s description of sailors ultimately prompted numerous critical letters to the editors of the maritime labor press.[27]

One of the main characters involved in the "Seaman Question" in the interwar period was the Swedish consul in Antwerp, Harald Petri, who first came to the city in 1911[28]

Through his office, Petri had close daily contact with sailors in trouble - whether they had been left stranded, detained, robbed, destitute or assaulted, it was for Petri to find suitable solutions in accordance with existing regulations.

Petri himself was very critical of the prevailing conditions in the Antwerp docklands. Sailors' own organizations and the Swedish Seamen's Mission voiced similar critique. All warned of the many dangers encountered by sailors in foreign ports. Such concerns eventually lead to a public inquiry in 1931, lasting through 1934.[29]

Contemporary Swedish criticism of conditions in Antwerp

Antwerp received a lot of criticism during the interwar period – from the Seaman´s Unions, the Consular Services, and the Seaman´s Mission as well. In one of those critical pieces, a memorial publication to the 50th anniversary of the Seamen´s Care of the Swedish Church from 1926, there are descriptions of the situation in port towns where the Seamen's Mission was represented. Altogether nineteen ports, were treated, Antwerp included. The author of the book, the former Seamen´s Mission chaplain in London, Carl Renström, describes Antwerp in this way:

> "In regard to the moral status of its sailor town, Antwerp occupies the ambiguous rank of being the worst port town in Europe. Everywhere in foreign port towns, there are an abundance of taverns and miserable dens. But such a refined tavern and brothel-misery as in talked about town, is nowhere to be found. Well known among the sailors are especially Schipperstraat. There drunkenness, accompanied by shrieks and howls and fights, are the order of the night."[30]

The consequences of living in the docklands among 700 taverns and pubs were easily anticipated according to Renström – at Schipperstraat alone, there were 31 taverns with Scandinavian names, where Nordic girls lured sailors to drink.

Because of the lack of alternatives, sailors literally live in taverns that in many cases were ”connected with lodging houses”. Renström claimed that in many cases, the boarding master saw to that ”the sailor gets drunk, or that he is served a spiked drink, which makes him helplessly drunk. When he comes to himself again, he has lost everything, often both money and clothes.”[31]

The lax oversight of local authorities, who shut their eyes to the most serious incongruities in the docklands, was the reason why sailors could be treated this way. There were no rules regulating either the provision of alcoholic beverages or closing hours, because those in power had little interest in interfering with these businesses.[32] Renström was very adamant in criticizing a system he sees as unjust.

The public inquiry on the welfare of seamen in foreign ports from 1934 included information on several foreign port towns, one of them being Antwerp. Among others, pastors from the Seaman´s Mission were asked to provide data on social conditions and the behavior of Swedish sailors. The Antwerp report was written by pastor N. O. Tofft (who served in Antwerp 1927-32). The post was long and detailed, addressing a number of aspects of the prevailing conditions for seafarers in Antwerp.[33]

Tofft has a fairly bright picture of the Swedish sailor corps - he does not agree with the negative image of sailors expressed in the press and in books. His own experience has given him a different view. The images built on aggregated data supplied by consul Petri were especially unconvincing – ”the accuracy of the conclusions that can be drawn from this material, partly by Petri himself and partly among those who read his protocol” is debatable according to Tofft. ”If statistics can prove that the sailors in general are hopeless wretches - then I doubt the statistics”.[34]

In Tofft´s opinion, Swedish sailors

> ”consist of about 85 percent of decent and conscientious people, as you certainly do not need to be ashamed of.” But it can´t be ”denied that the seaman's character has a trait of carelessness combined with gullibility. Basically, it seems to me to be good, especially if you look at it in comparison to the lure of scheming materialism, as so often is the sole spirit of the people of the land.”

Tofft concluded that he had noticed an awareness amongst sailors themselves, who had begun to work against the ”frivolous squander of earned money.”[35]

As for the group of former seamen living on the fringes of society – the so-called “bums” – Tofft say that these can be divided into three categories: the antisocial, the asocial and the temporary. Of the mentioned typologies, the first was the worst: these were well-dressed, very frugal with alcohol and ”operate always with a calm and cold calculation, shamelessly and unscrupulously. It is they who often work for the café and brothel owners, and as runners develop a phenomenal ability to fool decent people into those evil nests. And there are certainly many times those who carry out robbery and murder in port cities.” The second typology was more modest - their ”noblest trait is apathy bordering on indolence” according to Tofft. Only when it came to bumming money did “these people sometime show unsuspected vigor.” This group lived in abject misery and poverty, and most of them also suffered from severe alcohol problems – ”without a doubt, these people are the worst to themselves”, Tofft concluded.[36]

The third type was basically decent people, but for different reasons gone down a wrong path, they had been left behind, spent their last coins and had not received any new employment, ending up among the impoverished “asocial” group. This type generally had the “will to pull themselves together and become good men again.”[37]

Tofft asserted that he felt deeply upset every time he met a Swedish bum of the antisocial typology, ashamed when he dealt with one of the asocial bums but only sad when he came face-to-face with a temporary

vagrant. Therefore, when one talks about Swedish seafarers, one must disregard these three types according to Tofft.

The public inquiry also included, the consular service´s impressions of conditions in various port towns, including that of consul Petri.[38] The consul was very critical towards the social milieu of sailors in Antwerp. He claimed that when Swedish sailors left their ships, ruthless boarding masters were waiting outside the consulate "like sharks" who would only release sailors when their money was spent. At the same time, he was not surprised by such behavior since Scandinavian sailors usually had plenty of money by the time they went ashore, making them perfect prey to sharks, because they were of "a weaker composition".[39]

Of the categories previously referenced, Petri was writing within the scientific tradition of slumland literature, considering his extensive use of statistics and official data. But he was also part of an older moralistic discourse, one that ascribed inherent, almost always negative, qualities to sailors and to the dockland milieu. The pastors of the Seaman´s Mission on the other hand, were more inclined to be impressionistic in their responses, and dismissive of big data and statistics. Though they were also moralistic in their outlook, these observers dealt less in stereotypes than the consular service.[40]

Dahlin in Antwerp

Dahlin begins his story by telling us that he now was a bum, a beachcomber, someone totally alien to his original middle-class background.[41] His transformation into character included false papers, seaman´s clothing, and changed manners.

He writes that he had "cut the cords with everything that I had imagined me to be. I am only a sailor left behind with 50 franc in my pocket. All I own is a bundle of clothes (…). I have nothing that ties me down."[42] He was now ready to join the ranks of the outcasts.

Or at least he thought so. His journey into this unfamiliar world proved to be problematic – to be able to succeed with his task he needed assistance: through contacts he rented a private room, providing him space to

write and think without being interrupted or exposed. He also had support of the Swedish general consul in Antwerp, Harald Petri, when it came to securing necessary paperwork.[43]

The methods Dahlin used were to observe people and the environment around him by either taking long walks along the docks and in sailor town, or sitting in bars and cafés where he sometimes acted drunk to better be able to interact with seamen, proprietors, prostitutes and pimps, so that he could hear and record their stories.[44] His chosen behavior was thus similar to the "slumland observers" or the "flaneur" of the Victorian period, but Dahlin was also influenced by the more recent work of Jack London, Upton Sinclair, George Orwell and others. Dahlin was, as I have noted above, a complete participant.

The main narrative technique employed in the book was to tell parts of the story in the third person. This narrative style is close to what is called "telling" or "narrative exposition", and occurs when the author uses other characters' speech to describe events, milieus and characters. For instance, early on in the text Dahlin is lectured by the elderly seafarer Farman on the dangers of Antwerp, and Dahlin is later taught how to survive a lifestyle without resources by his bum companions. Farman, the bums and others become his chaperones in sailor town, introducing him to a new reality, and enabling him to articulate and communicate his (and theirs) experiences to the public in an authentic way.[45]

I have divided the content of Dahlin´s book into two themes to be able to better understand the many topics that he addresses. The first theme focuses on Dahlin´s highly critical description of Antwerp and its administration, the conditions in sailor town and the individuals making a living there (interpreted through the stereotypes of slumland literature). The second theme concerns his formative relationship with the Scandinavian sailors/bums with whom he socialized during his stay, and the camaraderie and solidarity that existed among individuals with nothing to lose.

It is obvious when reading Dahlin that he is framing sailor town as "the Jungle" in a way that mimics late Victorian British literature. Dahlin highlights the violence, the general unpleasantness and the untidy dimensions of port cities, as well as the notion of "Otherness". He writes – "[i]t might seem not nice to talk only about crime, vice and rottenness, but when those things are the overwhelming majority, as in this case, such speech becomes necessary."[46]

This passage also reflects the grave concerns for the low morality of seamen raised in writings on the Seaman Question. Dahlin also criticized the corruption that characterized sailor town, treating such corruption as a sign of the lowest moral standards.

Indeed, Dahlin gave ample examples of the filth and the vices he encounters during his stay. Vice is depicted spatially, centered in *Spuystraat*, where the brothels used to be. There, among badly lit alleys, prostitutes patrolled the narrow sidewalks, suspicious-looking persons stood in dark hallways, stinking garbage filled the gutter, and only a few windows were lit. All in all, Dahlin described a dark and cramped place, just like "the bottom of an abyss".[47]

At *Spuystraat*, Dahlin visited an establishment called The Crystal Palace. It was decked out in mirrors from floor to ceiling and though it used to be a respectable place for dancing, was now rundown and shabby. One of the girls working there approached him and tried to get him interested in what she had to offer. But after a drink and a long conversation Dahlin was suddenly overcome by disgust: "I felt a need to spit, to curse and to disappear, and that's what I did – and at the door the woman spat at me. I had had enough for tonight, the filth became too much for me".[48]

Also at *Schipperstraat*, the most infamous street in sailor town, were at least 30 cafés and bars with Scandinavian names, where the girls and their madams spoke the language of "Scandinavis". There vices could be found aplenty. According to Dahlin, Schipperstraat was "poisoned". In fact, the whole neighborhood is poisoned, the whole of the harbor is permeated by the spirit that prevails here. Here are loopholes to everything that human rottenness has to show for, in those dim alleyways and narrow passages live

those that keep away from the light by necessity or the inability to stand it. Here thrive stench plants and poisonous snakes."[49]

Even though *Schipperstraat* had a reputation, life there was monotonous, totally focused on alcohol and women – without those two components there were, according to Dahlin, no incentives to visit this place.

From *Nassaustraat*, another of the streets in sailor town where bars and cafés were located, Dahlin described the smoke filled bar as packed with drunk and howling dockers and others belonging to the working class; people playing cards and drinking, loud voices, noise from the mechanical piano and clinking from glasses – all of which together became a "cacophonic concert from hell."[50]

In order to further highlight the infernal, cynical aspects of the milieu, Dahlin described another incident from the same café. One sailor had fallen asleep at the table. Behind the counter, the proprietors, a married couple, had noticed. According to Dahlin, the woman, middle-aged with her hair in a strict bun, her blouse all buttoned up, and with "a stern, puritan face and an acrimonious prying look" told her husband to wake the sleeping sailor up – "[s]he was the soul, he was the tool. She scouted the field. He executed her commands". By pouring ammoniac in the sailors cap and then forcing his face in it, the sailor got a very rough awakening. This happened twice before the sailor understood that he had to order another glass of beer if he wanted to remain at the table.

To one of the band of Scandinavians that Dahlin socialized with, such a behavior just showed that restaurateurs and café-owners were "scum", exploiters without conscience, motivated by one thing: greed.[51]

In his book, Dahlin gives many examples of drugging, robbery and assault. These are depicted as more or less endemic and perpetrated in a systematic fashion: sailors are lured to bars and cafés by runners or women, sedated with spiked drinks, robbed and left for dead on the street. As noted above, Dahlin often used the technique of "telling/exposition". When it comes to this specific theme it is Farman, the old and washed-up seaman left behind in Antwerp, who acts as narrator. Dahlin observed that Farman was familiar with Shipperstraat, and that "he knows of all it secrets". Farman is therefore reliable.[52] By crafting his narrative in this way, Dahlin added greater empirical credibility to his writing and allowed him to reach

beyond his own limited experiences. But to ensure his own authenticity as the possessor of firsthand knowledge, he added a story of his own about a young Norwegian sailor he had met who had been swindled and robbed of all his money in a similar fashion.[53]

Dahlin also referred to other sources. As a complement to his own research, he presented several official documents from consul Petri in order to solidify the representative nature of Farman and his own experiences. All in all, eleven protocols from the Swedish Consulate in Antwerp, dating from 1928 and 1929, are reprinted. In those, druggings, robberies and assaults on Swedish seamen are described very vividly. This content supported Dahlin´s own description of the violent aspects of life in sailor town very well.[54]

It seems then that Dahlin did not fully trust the persuasive power of his own observations and experiences as a complete participant. By including official documents in his exposé, he gained needed objectivity, and became part of the scientific strand of slumland literature rather than being a representative of the earlier more sensationalist strand.

Workings of a corrupt system

One of the aims of Dahlin's book is to expose the incongruities facing seamen in Antwerp, especially the challenges faced by Scandinavian sailors.

The prevailing system in the docklands of Antwerp was, as in any sailor town, informal, fluid and very complex. It consisted of loosely fixed networks of people providing accommodation to sailors – like landladies, proprietors, owners of cafés – as well as runners, pimps and prostitutes furnishing the needs of sailors back from long periods at sea. At the bottom were the outright bums/beachcombers, trying to muddle along on a day-to-day basis. But those networks were also connected to the authorities in ways that Dahlin perceived as unjust and corrupt.

When Dahlin tries to explain this complicated system and its constituent parts in more details, he argued that the runners were most dangerous to sailors – "for them no moral, no consideration, no compassion exist. They are men that already performed closure, and their lives are solely a

pursuit of money without having to work."[55] Dahlin was only interested in runners with Scandinavian heritage who, as far as he could see, were not the majority. These runners were the ones that befriended Scandinavian sailors new to Antwerp by offering them advice and knowledge of life in sailor town, and they were often in the service of "[c]afés and boarding houses, secret bordellos and private women". This group had the best chance of success in catching "prey, whose habits they know and whose language they speak".[56]

Dahlin concluded that among the runners, the most "dangerous poison snakes" are the "well-dressed men", who got into the business by either marrying the Madame of an establishment, or by running girls as a pimp (a so-called monsieur le Blanc). Because this category was "not visibly and doesn´t appear in the open (…) it is the hired hands that do the dirty work. It is merely the organization, the planning and the collecting of the profit, and if necessary, to erase the traces, that they meddle in."[57]

Another category among the runners was the bums/beachcombers. They acted alone (not employed by any proprietor or woman) or in gangs and were ruthless and very dangerous. This is a topic that appears in Dahlin's many conversations with Farman. The old man often warned him of the bums, that they were the true gangsters, and Dahlin should stay away from them:

> "[d]on´t you ever get into a fight with them, and never touch their women, if they have an interest in them. And you shouldn´t be impress when they approach you and speak Scandinavian to you. There are many brutes among them as well, born in Scandinavia."[58]

Dahlin related his process to one of these bums – he acted drunk in order to find out the behavior of runners and beachcombers. In one of the bars, where the mechanical piano relentlessly blasted out loud music and the girls smiled and offered glasses of beer, two big and heavy men in overalls sat at a table next to Dahlin. They tried to figure out if he was worth anything. According to Dahlin

> "[o]ne of the men bent his head down and looked at me secretly. All I could see was his eye, big, shining, alert, canvassing me from head to feet. The sharpness of his gaze gave away that his intoxication was only an act. He evaluated me."[59]

Because his clearly down-and-out appearance and the fact Dahlin also was a big man, he was deemed not interesting by the two bums.

The main lubricant in this system of exploitation of which Dahlin was so critical of was a piece of paper, the *Scaldis*, that was printed five times a day and contained information on every ship that entered and left Antwerp, its port of departure, its port of destination, the duration of its stay, under what flag it sailed and what dock it was assigned. The *Scaldis* thus provided a total oversight of what happened in the docks. This was a document used by everyone. Dahlin writes that it hang on the walls of every bar and café in sailor town, forming the basis for decisions and actions taken by every madam, proprietor, boarding master, runner, prostitute and beachcomber.[60]

But it is corruption that really kept the system afloat in Antwerp. Dahlin discusses at great length what he considers to be the double standards regarding how the authorities viewed prostitution, alcohol, treatment of sailors and the behavior of the police force.

1930, when Dahlin spent his six weeks in Antwerp, the regulated brothels were technically closed, but in reality prostitution was still an important part of life in sailor town. Dahlin observed that women instead operated as employees at bars and cafés. The difference between this arrangement and independent brothels was negligible, at least in economic terms since proprietors payed a tax of 1000 francs for each girl, the equivalent of the sum payed for a mechanical piano. If women decided to work independently, they had rooms in the back alleys around Schipperstraat.

In an obvious cynical tone, Dahlin noted that according to the authorities now that the bordellos were gone, ”all is cleaned up, all is nice and neat. Those in charge are happy. They have done their part”.[61]

The police were a vital part of the system, working with the owners of bars and cafés to skirt the regulations stipulating that no alcohol could be served after certain hours. To uphold such regulations, mobile squads of inspectors existed, made up of ambitious men who roamed the city on fast motorbikes.

According to Benny Lorentz, one bar owner whom Dahlin had befriended, the local police tipped him off when the inspectors would be coming around, so that he could avoid being caught serving alcohol illegally, thus risking the loss of his license. Benny asserted that he regularly treated the policemen with a free glass of beer, and when the inspectors arrived for a "raid", they warned him by kicking the door a couple of times. Benny´s stories clarified the behavior of the policemen Dahlin had earlier witnessed in another bar – drinking without paying, socializing and making jokes with the girls and then positioning themselves outside the door after closing time. Dahlin writes – "I didn´t understand the meaning of all this back then. (…) But now I dare imaging the bearing of it".[62]

In a concluding remark, Dahlin pointed the finger at those governing Antwerp – the politicians and people associated with the political sphere. Dahlin accuses the authorities of looking the other way when it came to corruption, choosing instead to profit from the dual systems in place in Antwerp. According to Dahlin, the authorities needed to implement measures regulating women, alcohol and closing hours, begin to deport not wanted foreigners and eradicate corruption from the police force. But none of this would ever take place because money talks! This is Dahlin's main conclusion – he wrote that "[t]axes from sailor town, from pianinos and women, alcohol and boarding houses, the money from sailors, are like a golden river not to be disturbed by damming it." And no one in Antwerp was going to give up this gold mine.[63]

Stereotypes in (Dahlin's) Antwerp

Regarding the five stereotypes of slumland literature, some are easily discernibly in Dahlin's writing (the Woman, the Foreigner, the Child) while others (the Landlord, the Inspector) are sketchier or infrequent. Some of the categories overlap – I have not found any descriptions of landlords as presented in the Victorian texts but Dahlin describes individuals who let out rooms (among them women) as driven purely by greed and marked by a total lack of compassion, traits that also distinguish landlords in slumland literature.

The Inspector is also hard to pinpoint – instead I have used this stereotype to represent figures of authority (policemen, politicians, consuls). The big difference is that Dahlin does not recognize any positive qualities in these figures, in contrast to their depiction in slumland literature. Instead these individuals are all instruments of corruption.

One additional stereotype that must be regarded is of course the Sailor. In a port town milieu he is always present. Earlier studies have pointed out the stereotypical descriptions of sailors and their behavior, stereotypes that have been investigated in modern scholarly studies as well.[64] Therefore it is important to understand in what ways Dahlin´s text reinforces these conventional descriptions of sailors.

Women

When Dahlin describes *women* (and the only women in his book are either prostitutes or former prostitutes turned madams or restaurateurs), they are depicted as filthy, limited, cynical, calculating, constantly cheating, and always past their prime even when they are not older. Physically, they are dirty, fat, smelly and therefore in his eyes repugnant. The feeling of disgust that Dahlin obviously harbored towards women in sailor town is very clear-cut and recurrent.

In one scene he paints a portrait of a prostitute he encountered in one of the many bars. Dahlin writes: "she was not old, only about a few years older the 30. But her body was ravaged. Under the redlined eyes, the

skin hung like big blue bags, and from her mouth flowed an acid vapor of tobacco and ale. Her service was done. She had no advantages that enticed".[65] Akin to this description, another prostitute is described as wasted – "she had red runny eyes and dirt under her nails", and a bloated face with bad teeth in her mouth.[66] In another example one of the numerous madams was portrayed as "a small fat women with a swollen face, dressed in poor clothes and with torn shoes of cloth on her feet." Importantly, Dahlin extended his criticism of the woman´s external appearance also ascribing vices and animalistic behavior to her: she took "a sugar cube in her mouth and poured coffee on the saucer and drank it with pleasure in long guzzling gulps." This description employs habits and practices associated solely with the lower class, using bestial analogies (animal-like noises while drinking) so common in slumland literature.[67]

Women´s part in keeping this exploitive system going was criticized – on numerous occasions Dahlin records incidents when prostitutes conned sailors into buying drinks (the girls received a bonus for every drink sold), beer and wine, while the women proprietors sold overpriced and diluted beer.[68]

Dahlin's opinion that certain women in sailor town were the driving force behind male vice, according to Dahlin *she* was the brain (soul) while he was merely a tool, has been mentioned before. Another example of this generalization is the description of an episode Dahlin witnessed in a bar. The woman behind the counter was reading the Scaldis, when she suddenly became agitated and called on her man. She had found a newly arrived ship, and

> "[o]n board were people with money. And they should know the address were to go. Her man should hand out calling cards and describe the place – tempting – music, women and alcohol."

Reluctantly the man collected his cap and brought with him a deck of calling cards and was on his way.[69]

All these women pictured by Dahlin were products of a certain milieu, pre-determined to behave this way because there were no other known alternatives open to them. In a sense Dahlin relieved them of some respon-

sibility, noting that "those who have been born in the filth and always have lived there, are not bigger sinners then the rest of us" – they had never experienced any another behavior! They were thus pre-programmed, mere victims, caught in a terrible system without a way out. And this seemed to be the eternal (and inevitable) "cycle of life" in sailor town, at least according to Dahlin.

One example of this presupposition is very telling: in a café Dahlin met a woman employed as a hostess. She was young and not yet legally permitted to be sexually active. But when Dahlin asked about a room for the night, she immediately assumed that he wanted to have sex with her. She hesitated and wanted to ask the madame if she could. Such behavior happened according to Dahlin simply because "of the milieu in which she lived. She just assumed that a question about a room was a question about a woman. She was so used to this that she not for a moment reflected on other possibilities than me wanting her to spend the night with me".[70]

For what reasons then, did Dahlin view women so negatively? One explanation is that the majority of women Dahlin encountered in sailor town were in fact prostitutes. Prostitutes were, during the late Victorian period (second half of the 19th century, early 20th century) the central female figure of public space: simultaneously objects of erotic fantasies and of loathing.[71] But prostitutes were also regarded, as Walkowitz has pointed out, as representatives of disorderliness and licentiousness, typical of the lower class, and were therefore the public symbol of a threatening and very sinful sexuality – marked by animal passion and bodily odors – defined in opposition to the "domesticated feminine virtue" of the middle-class housewife ("the angel in the house").[72]

Another explanation is that prostitutes as a group were not homogenous. Amongst this group were both elegant courtesans of the exclusive neighborhoods and women of the slums who were forced by poverty to sell their bodies cheaply. The women and girls Dahlin met in sailor town came solely from the latter category, a fact that reinforced the established negative image of the prostitute.

Dahlin then, could be seen as just a typical (albeit late) representative for opinions widely held by a large spectrum of observers, researchers, journalists and officials of the middle-class, but at the same time was a per-

son who understood that the women of sailor town were caught in a terrible system, a fact that, in his eyes, absolved them of some blame.

Foreigners

The stereotype of the foreigner was also painted in bleak colors, despite that fact that Dahlin himself was a foreigner, a Scandinavian, in Antwerp. His perspective was thus, importantly, that of a foreign man contemplating about other foreign men.

In Dahlin´s text, nationalities like Italians, Spaniards and Greeks, were grouped together as "southerners", and were almost always perceived as bad people, inclined to crime and foul play. Ethnical groups like the Jews, the Chines, and blacks were part of such a category, though they were not exclusively associated with crime.

"Southerners" were especially dangerous, wily because they had no honor, no sense of a fair fight. In one incident, Dahlin was warned about the cowardly ways of Spaniards: they don't dare pick a fight in the open because "knifes demand darkness and no beholders".[73] Others in Dahlin´s company also reported on "southerners" – those at Shipperstraat should be avoided at all costs, they say: "You have to be careful when you walk there, Greeks and Spaniards are dangerous people, they operate in gangs and if they catches someone, he is doomed".[74] Yet another incident is representative of how Dahlin viewed "southerners". Picking up a forged passport at a bar near the harbor, he encountered a bar patron whom he later described as a "swarthy, yellow-skinned southerner, Italian, Spaniard, Greek, half-blood or something like that – a distinctive criminal character."[75]

Jews were also in the same bracket as southerners. When Dahlin described the men involved in the business of conning, robbing and physically abusing Scandinavian sailors, he mentioned other Scandinavians but added that "if I must disregards Greeks, Spaniards, Italians and other southern elements from this context, the Jews must not be forgotten as they to a large extent consist of criminally accentuated individuals."[76] Describing a Jew named Levi, a person not very well liked by Dahlin and his acquaintances, Dahlin asserted that Levi was "a loathsome creature, dis-

gusting and one weak, degenerated individual that you didn't want to socialize with."[77]

Traditional ethnic stereotyping is evident when it comes to blacks and Chinese. The latter were seen as inscrutable in their religious dealings, aloof and "deaf to the world around them". They quietly went about their business, were never drunk and did not react to jeering and taunting. The Chinese all lived at Verversrui, labelled "Chink Street" by Dahlin.[78] Black people were described in an even more openly racist manner. Recounting one dinnertime at the Salvation Army hostel, Dahlin observed that "four Negroes keep a table to themselves. No one will sit next to them. They smell like only Negroes can smell. They dig their fingers through the sausage and potatoes at their plates. They are at home."[79]

Children

Descriptions of children are not very frequent, but during his strolls around sailor town, Dahlin sometime ran across them. In one passage he casually mentions "dirty kids on an ordinary street" without bothering to interpret this chance encounter.[80]

One evening while Dahlin was on a walk, he entered a "badly lit street, filled with the sound of mechanical music, babbling women and children playing despite it being late at night." As amusement, a fight between two men: and the "kids yelled aloud with excitement" as they watched the violent fight.[81] Here Dahlin implies that violence was mere entertainment, enjoyed by everyone (including children), and a natural aspect of life in sailor town. The street was an arena for socializing and playing. This was a bad place to grow up – this interpretation is evident when Dahlin talks about what will become of the children. He viewed them as "wretched, weak bugs, who have no knowledge about life more then what they see in front of their eyes, that grew up to continue the art, the whoring, the crimes and the vices." And nothing could change this![82] Dahlin believed that children were bounded by the same form of social determinism used to describe the situation of women: born under a bad sign, it was impossible to break free. The impact of the social milieu is to powerful.

The Landlord

The landlord is a somewhat problematic figure, since there is no exactly comparable character to the Landlord as portrayed in Victorian slumland literature. As a result, I have tried to equate him/her with boarding masters, owners of cafés and bars and the staff at the Belgium Seaman´s Home as well. Two of the most distinct traits of the landlords described by Dahlin are their deceitful and condescending manners.

One boarding master Dahlin encountered was Benny Lorentz, who ran an establishment in Schipperstraat where most of Dahlin's companions live.[83] Although Lorentz was both friendly and true to those he trusted when it came to food and lodging, he was very calculating and fastidious regarding drinking. According to Dahlin, Lorentz was not as bad as other boarding masters with the drink tabs – in other boarding houses, it was possible to run up massive imaginary drink bills. When these were challenged, the complaining sailor was usually met by violence and intimidation.[84]

At the Belgian Seaman´s Home, the sailors staying there were treated with open contempt: the service they received was poor and materially inadequate. One telling episode is when Dahlin was about to get his room, paid for by the Swedish consul. The man in charge, described as an untidy and belligerent Belgian, refused to admit Dahlin because he lacked the necessary paperwork. During the following (long and heated) discussion, it dawned on Dahlin that the Seaman´s Home "was only for their people and their equals" and that he and his peers were considered inferior. It occurred to Dahlin that his treatment was due to xenophobia.[85]

In this case the ethnic dimension of being a sailor of foreign origin became obvious to Dahlin, but in an earlier episode, the class dimension was more important. When he was about to rent a room from a landlady to use as the basecamp for his undercover project, Dahlin made the mistake of asking his landlady for clean sheets The old lady became enraged and began to shout at him – "Clean!?! Is this not clean enough for someone from the street?!" She then dashed from the room, but not before she had spat at Dahlin and cursed him. When she came back with the clean linen she screamed at him: "Are those clean? Are they good enough for his lordship? Or..?!"[86]

The Inspector (figures of authority)

The inspector is also a character hard to capture – as figures of authority they were either directly involved in Dahlin's life (the police, the personnel at the Seaman´s Home and at the Belgian Seamen Agency, the Swedish consul) or influencing him from a distance (the Belgian State, the authorities of Antwerp). But those two levels were interconnected, since the police and the personal at the Seaman´s Home and Seamen Agency were both representatives of the State and local authorities.

Dahlin very clearly linked figures of authority to corruption: the police facilitated criminal activities and the authorities allowed an unjust system to continue. From a moral perspective, figures of authority acted unfairly – Dahlin repeatedly asserted that the staff at the Seaman´s Home discriminated against certain individuals and nationalities and behaved in an insolent manner towards foreigners staying at the home. At the Seamen Agency, Belgian sailors were preferred to foreign.

It is only the Swedish consul Petri that escaped criticism – Dahlin got to know the clientele for whom Petri was responsible and understood the difficult position of the consul. Additionally, he was a fellow Swede and an accomplice of Dahlin.

The Sailor

The Sailor is a stereotype not common in slumland literature, even though Jack London chose to impersonate an American sailor when he researched his book on the poor parts of London in 1903.

Dahlin view of sailors was similar to Tofft´s, the Swedish seaman mission chaplain that was stationed in Antwerp during Dahlin´s visit. Both believed that most of the sailors were decent and hardworking people, and it was only a small minority that caused all the problems. This minority, the bums/the beachcombers, could be divided into three categories: the antisocial, the asocial and the temporary. Dahlin met all three categories in Antwerp, but he got to know and interact with the second and the third categories best.

Initially Dahlin found it problematic that a large percentage of the despised bums were of Scandinavian descent but after having shared their hardship during six weeks he changed his opinion and was able to understand their rational view of life. Because of those experiences, Dahlin´s stereotyped descriptions of sailors gave way to more nuanced attitudes and a deeper knowledge.

Down into the Abyss – among the bums

In this section, I will discuss Dahlin´s personal experiences of descending into and living the abyss. This narrative was partly about him getting to know the system, understanding its mechanics and how these could work to his advantage. But Dahlin also became concerned with those Scandinavian sailors living at the margins of society, and the strong solidarity among them.

Still, it is important to pay attention to Dahlin´s use of aspects of slumland literature when it comes to his descriptions. As many before him, he employed a certain dramaturgy, in which he very vividly retold leaving the familiar to enter the unknown – a journey traditionally framed as moving away from civilization and towards a state of wild disorder – but in Dahlin´s case, the descent into the abyss, and the subsequent race to the very bottom of it, was both a gradual and intentional process. First he engaged with a group of Scandinavian seamen temporary down on their luck and still with the ambition to find a new hire. But as time passed, he gradually ingratiated himself with the bums, with whom he shares everyday hardships and wretched living at the Belgian Seaman´s Home and the Salvation Army Hostel, the focal points of the abyss.

One of us?

Dahlin’s initial inexperience was clearly evident in Dahlin´s description of his lack of knowledge about the informal rules in sailor town. He learned the hard way that an empty glass was refilled automatically and that drinking was required if one wanted to occupy a place at the table. It came as a surprise that rooms for rent, were always situated in a public house (with alcohol and women easily available), and, as was mentioned earlier, that clean linen was not provided to the down-and-out.[87]

Obviously, Dahlin needed someone to guide him in this new universe. But to be able to interact with those he intended to study, he first had to win their trust. His undercover project started in earnest when he met two Norwegian sailors. Dahlin was standing outside the bar *Vlaamsche Kelder* near Nassaustraat, when he encountered the two sailors. He engaged in conversation and suddenly was part of their drinking gang. He was soon introduced to the other members – two Danish sailors. After a long night drinking in various bars and cafés, Dahlin and his new friends decided to meet the next day at the boarding place they were staying at in Schipperstraat. After this point, these men acted as Dahlin´s cicerones.[88]

Trust was fundamental to Dahlin’s project. When he met up with the gang again, the boarding master asked him who he is. Immediately one of the Norwegians answered, and gave Dahlin the necessary support – “He. The fat one. (…). He´s a jolly buffoon. He was with me at *Fattiga Augusta* when I got drunk some days ago.”[89]

Dahlin wrote that he was grateful for this introduction as it spared him the possibility of getting his story mixed up. If that would have happened,

> “a distrust would have arisen, that I never could have dismissed. The uncertainty of my position would increase, and I would not have any use of my poor clothing, my foul, curse-filled language or my dirty hands. Details, insignificant, invisible for a non-sailor, in my appearance, would stir up mistrust and raise questions that I would not have been able to answer without giving me away. I would have had to pull out, either because of legible hints or open threats of violence.”[90]

Parallel to his method of the "flaneur", it was through this gang of Scandinavian sailors that Dahlin got his first important glimpses of how life for seamen unfolded in Antwerp. Even though he never lived with them at Benny´s place, he nevertheless shared their life on the streets and at the bars and cafés.[91] His narrative is filled with stories from these men about bad luck, naivety, stupidity and sometimes sheer malice – a sort of anecdotal and fragmented knowledge that Dahlin tried to assemble into a coherent picture of sailor life in Antwerp.

Stories of deceitful madams and girls recurred, whether it came to selling overpriced beer or love and affection without commitment. Dahlin also recounted numerous stories of disillusionment after a long wait for employment. Just like them, Dahlin harbored personal rage after being treated badly by the authorities. These tales came in many versions, but were always told as dejected stories that demonstrated the universal destiny of sailors: hard work and abuse.

When Dahlin summed up his experiences socializing with the Scandinavian gang, he described them as basically good people caught up in an evil system. Powerless to change the system, they instead needed to master and overcome it. He saw nothing evil or malicious in them: they are just "big children, that had fun as long as their money lasted". In some cases they were too kind, trusting and generous for their own good.[92]

My interpretation of Dahlin´s view of the Scandinavians is that he meant they did not belong to the group of anti-social bums that Tofft later would describe so vehemently.[93] Instead, those Scandinavian bums were people who could be categorized as *asocials* or those only *temporary* down and out – Tofft´s second and third categories. Dahlin states:

> "They were sailors, which from their first day ashore, had become part of this milieu, and made their temporary home here and then stayed on. (…) The fact that they drank beer and sometimes viewed life in rose tinted colors, are no proof of inherent malice. They do not try to make themselves out better than they are, and their comradeship is a model for high level pretensions. I definitely harbor greater sympathies for these men than for the well-dressed individuals, which beneath an exemplary surface hide paltry dispositions."[94]

Stavanger, Sampo and the others were well aware of whom they were, having constructed their self-images in opposition to the asocial bums. Their collective identity as sailors was still valid and cherished, and their honesty and camaraderie as well. Such qualities were important markers and a source of pride to the group. This was why Dahlin held them in such high esteem.

Members of the group viewed the bums as parasites and hangers on – like Farman and Levi (nicknamed the millionaire), as well as an unidentified Dane, who always excused themselves when it was their turn to buy drinks. When Levi asked why he was the only one not permitted to become drunk, one of the Norwegians answered him simply– "that's because you never pay for your own drunkenness".[95] They also dislike this group of often foreign bums, because they were conmen, violent and ruthless people.

Deeper down the abyss

Until now, Dahlin had spent his time in Antwerp with the Scandinavian gang of seamen, but his gradual descent into the abyss accelerated when he met the bums of the Belgian Seamen´s Home, and they become his guides in his journey to the bottom of the abyss.

Originally it was Benny Lorentz, the boarding master, who had suggested that Dahlin contact the Swedish consul to obtain papers that would qualify him for a bed at the Belgian Seamen´s Home. To Dahlin it seemed like a useful idea:

> "Seamen´s Home. The word sounded so tempting. It had an inviting ring to it. And it meant regular sleep, food at settled hours, a reading room, an assembly room, a place to stay, where it was possible to sit all day without drinking just to placate the madam of the establishment, and where it was possible to discuss with other men without a girl insisting on attention."[96]

Before Dahlin went to the consul, he sought a closer look at the Seamen's Home. But both the premises and the food on offer were deeply disappointing. Dahlin had imagined the interior to be as imposing as the exterior of the building. Instead, the dining hall had bare walls, simple wooden tables without tablecloths, broken and chipped plates, and the staff wore greasy clothes. The food consisted of watery soup, potatoes and meat that "would have been condemned by a visiting health inspector. It had been purchased at a sale, it was garbage, not possible to sell to other people, had black edges, and was old, chewy and indigestible."[97] But the people around the tables ate without hesitation. Dahlin's description of the meal and the bestial behavior of the eating seamen closely resembles scenes from slumland literature and its references to the Jungle: the place was rowdy, noisy and the people governed by the unwritten law that no respect was to be given to the needs of others, and only one's own wants were to be taken into consideration.[98]

Dahlin had no choice though, and at the consulate, he got a permit to stay one week free of charge at the Seamen´s Home.[99] When Dahlin arrived to claim his bed, he was made to wait in a dirty corridor - he wrote: "the bad impression from the dining hall, that cleanliness, comfort and the intention to keep a high standard were unknown concepts, was further reinforced."[100] After a slow process, he at last was admitted and was assigned to room 68.

At first glance, the room reminded Dahlin of a prison cell: whitewashed walls, small windows with a view of only roofs and chimneys. Ten beds, all in all. Unclean mattresses filled with bedbugs. Eight Swedes stayed there, "all at the expense of the consul".

Immediately Dahlin became one of "the brotherhood", and within an hour he knew the life stories of those sharing the room. For Dahlin's cause, the most important figures were Charles, Magnus and Söder, down-and-out sailors all in their 30s, and Bladh, a young stoker, who like Dahlin had little experience amongst the bums.[101] Bladh was the odd man out because he was the only one looking for a job. To Dahlin, then, he represented the personal ambition to find a way out of the abyss, and was dramaturgically used to show that even an honest man, temporarily in trouble, faced insurmountable obstacles due to the corrupt and degrading environment in Antwerp.[102]

But it is the trio of Charles, Magnus and Söder with whom Dahlin mainly socialized. Through their stories, Dahlin got to know the daily life of those at the very bottom of society. Once again the technique of "telling" was deployed. Dahlin described various situations using the words of his informants: the behavior of the police, how to fool the consul and how to work the Scandinavian seamen in order to obtain a few francs.[103]

As with the Scandinavian gang Dahlin used to be part of, trust was a prerequisite for interaction. Dahlin wrote that before the bums got to know a person they are reluctant to let you in, but once you have been accepted, they will share everything with you – "[t]heir comradeship is impeccable, they will not accept any violations as the unwritten law upon which their existence is built must be respected at all costs."[104]

Dahlin had passed the test, and after some time he was himself able to give first-hand accounts of the reality, and monotony, of being a bum. In one telling passage, he describes the effects and tediousness of poverty – the daily routine of bumming for cigarettes and alcohol, while avoiding the police and pretending to look for work in order to keep his eligibility for support from the consulate.[105] He also mentions the feeling of being unfree, restricted by the imaginary boundaries of sailor town, and the physical filth and psychological alienation that came with being an outsider. Condescending and judgmental looks from people passing by were something Dahlin came to accept as normal.[106] This was a lifestyle that, according to Dahlin, eventually would wear anyone down.[107]

One thing Dahlin repeatedly discusses is the Catch 22 of being a bum: because of your appearance you were automatically passed over for a job opportunity, since the employers sought only proper, descent people. Equivalent qualifications did not matter. Employers only saw a man's clothing and the status of his teeth. A proper appearance increased your chances of getting a job, but a proper appearance was impossible to maintain unless you already had a job! The ambitious stoker Bladh was a constant victim of such rules.[108]

After a while, Dahlin's time at the Seamen's Home was up, and he was forced to find alternative places to sleep. He alternated between sleeping rough (often inside staples of planks at the dockside – dry but full of bugs and vermin) and the Salvation Army Hostel. This accommodation

was cheaper than the Seamen's Home but not subsidized by the Consulate, a fact that paradoxically made it a less plausible alternative. The hostel at Rue Debois was a last resort – "a rat hole" – a fact that was evident from Dahlin's description of the place and its clientele. Every afternoon, a large group of "the less wanted members of society" waited eagerly to be admitted, the majority of them "ruined by alcohol, degenerated, the broken dregs from every corner of the world." They constituted according to Dahlin, the "people of the swamp".[109]

Dahlin began mixing with others among his now extended circle of bums. A man named Raggen, a fellow Swede who had been out of work for a long time, became Dahlin's companion. Together they shared the daily hardship of begging and bumming, just as Dahlin had done before with Charles, Magnus and Söder from the Seamen's Home.

Dahlin reflected on his current position – "Now I have reach the bottom. My day is that of a bum. I walk the docksides and the backstreets hour after hour and look for opportunities to earn me a few centimes."[110] He had nothing, and it dawned on him that to others, the greatest service to society he could do was to simply die![111]

Dahlin's project ended in the company of the bums. He was very critical of them, describing them as parasites, dangerous men with no morals, but also as a group with a strong solidarity among themselves, generous with the small resources at their disposal, and always ready to share knowledge or opportunities. He was very careful to differentiate between different groups of seamen, placing the bums in what Tofft, the seamen pastor, later labelled as the antisocial category.

The bums were stuck in a system that was hard to escape. But Dahlin had the opportunity: after six weeks in Antwerp during the summer of 1930, impersonating a destitute seaman, he left for Sweden. His book was published in 1931, the same year as the public inquiry into the welfare of seamen in foreign ports was initiated. In my view, Dahlin's book is an objective, and very sympathetic, commentary on the situation facing Scandinavian seamen abroad, his personal statement on the Seaman Question.

Conclusions

After having read Dahlin's account of his stay among the down-and-out seamen in Antwerp 1930, its similarities to slumland literature are obvious: like an explorer Dahlin charts the unknown territory he encounters (the Jungle), and describes its inhabitants in mannered and stereotypical ways. Analogies to the Victorian tradition of the middle-class "flaneur" are clear-cut. But I view Dahlin as a complete participant as well, mixed up with daily life in sailor town. Because of the latter methodology, his narrative is not objective from a scientific point of view.

But from where did the images and counter images Dahlin puts forward emanate? Are they genuine testimonies from his informants or just constructions based in slumland literature? Paradoxically, I believe that they are both. His narrative (the dramaturgy, the stereotypical characters and the negative signifiers) is clearly framed within the slumland literature genre while his descriptions of the Scandinavian seamen he had met in Antwerp are full of compassion, driven by a genuine sense of solidarity with those at the bottom of the abyss that is not usually found in slumland literature. And his position is built on an extended body of empirical findings from his stay among sailors and bums. It is also clear that he employed less stereotypical descriptions the more he got to know the Scandinavian seamen with whom he socialised.

Dahlin's own reflections on his experiences were existential and continuously evolving. He discusses the effects that living on the fringes of society had on the individual – no sleep, no food, dismissive looks and a feeling of inferiority. His text shows a deep understanding of the situation facing the sailors he encountered, as well as the effects of living in such harsh and degrading circumstances, in a city described by Dahlin as dominated by corruption and greed.

It is important to put Dahlin's narrative into context – even though it mirrored and partly reinforced already existing views of Antwerp (like the opinions of Swedish pastors and consuls), Dahlin's greatest aptitude was his ability to see beyond the stereotype and focus on the real people, full of faults but nevertheless human.

But also important to highlight is Dahlin´s contribution to maritime and

port town studies. His study, using undercover methods, provided hard, empirical facts and first-hand knowledge of the hardships facing seamen in one of the most notorious ports of Europe. His analysis was also, uniquely, not solely based on contemporary prejudice and stereotypes. In this respect, Dahlin´s study is both valuable and unusual.

Yet because of this study´s affinity with the huge existing corpus of mainly Victorian slumland literature, it becomes possible to "historicize" the perception of the slum: the conditions in sailor town 1930 can be compared to circumstances prevailing during earlier periods in many large British metropolises. These similarities prompt further questions: are these evolving urban spaces mutable or stable when it comes to material conditions and psychological modes, like fear, loathing and pity? Is it possible to distinguish between maritime contexts and others?

And finally, this study has showed that it is possible to use the theoretical insights and methodology of scholars like Maynes, Koven, Walkowitz and others also within a maritime context.

Noter

[1] The Swedish title of Dahlin´s book is *Sjömän och Shanghajare*; the book was published by the leading Swedish publisher Albert Bonniers Förlag. Dahlin was born in 1889 in the Swedish town of Helsingborg, situated in the south of Sweden, and passed away in 1979. He graduated from upper secondary school in 1912 and worked in business for many years. He and his wife had a comfortable lifestyle. His first publication, a collection of travel stories from the Tropics, was released 1926, and was followed by three more publications in quick succession (1928 and 1929) – one of them another travel novel. These were published under the name J.L. Kessel. After the publication of *Sailors and Shanghaiers* he exclusively used his birth name. By then he was an established writer who published with the well-known publishing houses in Stockholm.
[2] The Spike was jargon for the Casual Ward within the workhouses of the Victorian period. The term referred to a form of temporary shelter provided to those in need – vagrants, tramps etc. – in exchange for pre-stipulated hours of work.
[3] Seth Koven, *Slumming. Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London*, Princeton and Oxford, 2004, p 82. A few years later, in 1937, Orwell returned to the topic in the book *The Road to Wigan Pier*, where he again had shared the lives of Britain´s unprivileged.
[4] The term was originally coined to describe journalist James Greenwood, who worked undercover in the 1860s. His published articles on his encounters with the underworlds of the slum and the workhouse gained him respect and gave his career a huge boost. He was duly followed by other journalist as his method became the vogue of its time. Mark Freeman, "Journeys into Poverty Kingdom: complete participation and the British vagrant, 1866–1914", *History Workshop Journal*, 2001: No. 52 (Autumn), p 104.
[5] Freeman, p. 104.
[6] Freeman, p. 99, 101. In contemporary research, such a method is now seldom used due to methodological complications. When Freeman labels Jack London et al as "complete participants", it is not only an objective description of the method used but a way of pointing out their pre-scientific practices and use of research to advocate for specific changes in policy.
[7] Freeman, p. 107-110.
[8] Marina Valverde, "The Dialectic of the Familiar and the Unfamiliar: 'The Jungle' in early Slum Travel Writing", *Sociology*, 1996: 30, p. 494.
[9] Valverde, p. 494.
[10] A second edition, consisting of nine volumes, was published 1892–97 while the third edition of 17 volumes appeared in 1902–03. Assisting him and his wife Mary Booth during the duration of the project was a team of social investigators, among them Beatrice Potter, a cousin of Mary. https://booth.lse.ac.uk/learn-more/who-was-charles-booth
[11] As Valverde points out, mapping could be seen as an objective and scientific transcription of reality, but without an explicit statement of the mapper´s purpose and perspective, the technique loses its objective value and becomes no more than a constructed social landscape. Valverde, p. 498–99.
[12] Koven, p. 4.

[13] In 1866, the above-mentioned Greenwood said after one of his missions that "suitably "attired and of modest mean", any individual "may safely venture where a policeman dare not show his head". Quoted from Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight. Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*, Chicago 1992, p 19 (the whole of chapter 1 is valuable from this point). Jack London was accompanied by a private detective, "Johnny Upright", who acted both as protection and his assistant. Freeman, p. 99, 105.
[14] Walkowitz 1992, p 18–20.
[15] Koven, p. 12–14.
[16] Earlier women had written on the subject but purely in fictional form. Nord states that the catalyst for this change of direction was new methodological and ideological conceptions that emerged at roughly the same time. In the wake of Booths inquiry of the poor of Britain, scientific methods were accentuated, especially the use of statistical analyses. Through them it was deemed possible to extract exact conclusions. This was a very powerful strand, still valid. The ideological thought mentioned was labeled "maternalism"; a focus on improving the domestic sphere as an antidote to declining birthrates and infant mortality as well as fears of a degenerating race. The role of motherhood than became important to the safekeeping of the family, and in the end, to the Nation/the Empire. Deborah Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets. Women, Representation, and the City*, Ithaca 1995. See chapter 7 "The female Social Investigator: Maternalism, Feminism, and Womens´s Work" (p. 207–236) for a thorough analysis of this development.
[17] See a collection of Nordström´s texts in *Tio reportage som förändrade världen – från Strindberg till Hemingway* (Stockholm 1995). The introductory essay on Nordström by Otto von Friessen is especially useful (p. 65–78).
[18] Christopher Carter, "Writing with Light: Jacob Riis´s Ambivalent Exposures", *College English*, Vol 71, No.2 (2008), p. 117–121.
[19] For an account of the early research turn in Britain, see Barry M. Doyle, "Mapping slums in a historic city: representing working class communities in Edwardian Norwich", *Planning Perspectives*, 2001:16, p. 47–48.
[20] Alan Mayne, *The Imagined Slum. Newspaper Representation in Three Cities 1870–1914*, Leicester 1993.
[21] Koven, p. 13
[22] For Swedish conditions, this topic is yet to be studied in a systematic way. My article on consuls and seaman pastors and their views of sailors during the interwar period is a first attempt. Tomas Nilson, "Konsul Petris tårar. Bilder av sedernas tillstånd och sjömännens väl och ve i utländska hamnstäder under mellankrigstiden", *I främmande hamn – Den svenska och svensk-norska konsulattjänsten 1700–1985*, Stockholm 2015.
[23] See Richard Gorski´s text on the British case – "Protecting British Seafarers on the Continent: The Export of Attitudes, Ideals and Systems in the late Nineteenth Century", *The Parallel Worlds of the Seafarer: Ashore, Afloat and Abroad*, (eds. Richard Gorski and Britta Söderqvist, Göteborg 2011 – and Elisabeth Koren's texts on the Norwegian discussions, especially during the interwar years – *Beskytte, forme, styrke. Helsefremmende arbeit ovenfor norske sjøfolk I utenrikesfart med hovedvekt på oerioden 1890–1940*, Bergen 2008. This subject was part of an even bigger picture – the fear and loathing of the urban poor. Most contemporary commentators perceived the issue as equally frightening and nauseating, a key part of the dangers associated with the big metropolis. The

topic was discussed in the press and the weekly magazines, and was a running theme, as has been made clear above, in the slumland literature discourse as well. See Walkowitz 1992, chapter 1.
[24] For Huitfeldt´s work, see Koren 2011, p. 97–98.
[25] The original title is *Från främmande hamn*, and was released in 1929 by the Church of Sweden through Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelses Bokförlag in Stockholm. Petris book is also obviously embedded in the slumland literature discourse as described earlier, and it is possible to detect quite a few of the stereotypical characters that according to Mayne, distinguish that literary genre. But foremost, Petri was commenting on the Seaman Question in a way that resembled Huitfeldt´s earlier work.
[26] Petri, p. 7
[27] A year later, in 1930, Wallentin Eliason, ombudsman at the Swedish Seafarers' Union published a response to Petri´s analysis. He argued that Petri´s book was defamatory to all sailors, that the book embraced an old patronizing posture, filled with stereotypes. Wallentin Eliason, *Sjömannens liv och leverne. Svar på förtal om sjömannen*, Göteborg 1930. Huitfeldt´s articles provoked similar responses in Norway. Koren 2011, p. 97–98.
[28] He was the brother of Laura Petri and had helped her during her stay in Antwerp when she was collecting material for the book *From a Foreign Port*.
[29] The public inquiry (SOU 1934: 5) had been preceded by attempts by Harald Petri to influence Swedish politicians and stir up public opinion. Through a campaign of newspapers articles and public lectures, coupled with petitions to the Foreign Office and other relevant committees, bureaus and offices, Petri worked tirelessly during most of the 1920s to achieve his goals. The campaign gained real momentum in 1929, when two parliamentary motions were submitted (by parliamentarians close to the sobriety movement). See Nilson 2015.
[30] Carl Renström, *I hamnar och storstäder. Svenska kyrkans sjömansvård och diaspora verksamhet under femtio år*, Stockholm 1926, p 167.
[31] Renström, p. 167–68, quote p 168.
[32] Renström, p. 168–69. Political initiatives to improve seafarers' living and working conditions had a long history. A good example is the Englishman Samuel Plimsolls request that each vessel would have a sign on the hull, marking the maximum loading limit, the so-called Plimsoll mark. In Sweden, Charles Lindley was the foremost champion of sailor´s rights.
[33] Tofft´s post is dated November 1932.
[34] SOU 1934:5, p. 156.
[35] SOU 1934:5, p. 157 (all quotes)
[36] All quotes from SOU 1934:5, p. 157.
[37] SOU 1934:5 p. 154.
[38] For an overview of opinions held by other consuls, see Nilson 2015, pp. 237–245.
[39] SOU 1934:5: pp. 6–7.
[40] For a more detailed discussion, see Nilson 2015.
[41] Bum means a vagrant or a tramp, and is derived from the word beachcomber, literary meaning a person who´s looking for scraps at the beach. In a maritime context, the expression refers to a down-and-out sailor, making a living from begging, hustling and even stealing. "Bommare" is the corresponding word in Swedish for a bum/beachcomber.
[42] Dahlin, p. 22.

[43] Dahlin, p. 26–28, 117. Manfelt, a resourceful Swede Dahlin met by chance in Antwerp, arranged the room through his many local contacts. Manfelt is let in on the mission.
[44] Regarding his methodology, Dahlin wrote: "I acted intoxicated in order to get closer to the very soul of the street. It interested me to see if I would be a guinea pig to some beachcomber, and therefore I took the risk" (p. 65) In another case, he made contact with a prostitute at a dance palace by paying for her drink. Even though he "felt disgusted" by her presence, she nevertheless "belonged to this place", and "her word could be of interest, her ways worth to study" (p. 69).
[45] Several scholars have examined the working systems of sailor towns. I have used their work to provide context for Dahlin´s account. For a description of the second half of the 1800s, see Judith Fingards´ classic narrative of Canadian port towns from 1850–1870. Judith Fingard, *Jack in Port. Sailor towns of eastern Canada*. Toronto 1982. For an analysis of sailor town as a mixture of lived-through experiences, history and folklore, see Stan Hugill´s *Sailor town* (London 1967). For a critical assessment of sailor town and the stereotypical understanding of its inhabitants, see Valerie Burton, "Boundaries and Identities in the Nineteenth-Century English Port: Sailor town Narratives and Urban Space", *Identities in Space: Contested Terrains in the Western City Since 1850*, Simon Gunn & Robert J. Morris (eds.), Aldershot 2001. Most recently, Graeme Milne have published an extensive study of life in sailor town during the 19th century from a global and comparative perspective. Graeme J. Milne, *People, Place, and Power on the Nineteenth-Century Waterfront: Sailortown*, Basingstoke 2016.
[46] Dahlin, p. 92.
[47] Dahlin, p. 68.
[48] Dahlin, p. 69–70.
[49] Dahlin, p. 68–69, 76,
[50] Dahlin, p. 129–130. Other streets with popular bars and cafés were Amsterdamsstraat and Londonstraat. Tofft, the Swedish Seaman´s pastor in Antwerp during Dahlin´s stay, even claimed that around that time, both Spuystraat and Schipperstraat had begun to lose its appeal to sailors because they had become too dangerous. Sailors instead frequented establishment on the three streets mentioned. *SOU* 1934:5, p. 155–156. Dahlin was aware that (especially) Schipperstraat was not what it used to be – it had become part of the common sailor narrative, a kind of "symbolic capital" in a Bourdieuian sense. Dahlin, p. 72.
[51] Dahlin, p. 130–31.
[52] Dahlin, p. 56–60.
[53] Dahlin, p. 91–92. The interesting part of this encounter is Dahlin's wish to seek revenge by badly hurting those responsible (a Swede with red hair called Ping). One might wonder if it was Dahlin position as a complete participant that triggered such a response: not responding in kind might have compromised his flaneur-like approach. In the end Dahlin came to his senses – he wrote that his rage "stayed an intention. The impulse of the moment folded for a sounder consideration."
[54] Dahlin, p. 92–102.
[55] Dahlin, p. 75.
[56] Dahlin, p. 89–90.
[57] Dahlin, p. 90. As mentioned above, this happened because Scandinavian sailors were entitled to their entire salary when they left their ships in contrast to other nationali-

ties. Because of this rule, Scandinavians were known to be very profitable victims. But Dahlin also more or less explicitly viewed Scandinavians as naïve and easy to fool. See also Nilson 2015.
[58] Dahlin, p. 59–60.
[59] Dahlin, p. 65.
[60] Dahlin, p. 62–64.
[61] Dahlin, p. 73–74.
[62] Dahlin, p. 82–83. In this passage Dahlin uses the technique of telling/exposition by letting Benny the bar-owner expose the secret alliance with the police.
[63] Dahlin, p. 106–107. The only solution Dahlin believed would work was a dictatorship which, though distasteful, seemed necessary. A man of steel was needed, someone who without mercy would clamp down on vice and corruption in Antwerp. Dahlin implies that Genoa used to be similar but now had been rehabilitated after a man of power has swept away the crime and delinquency. When will such a man appear in Belgium? Dahlin, p. 77–78.
[64] The British historian Robert Lee have in a seminal study showed that the majority of descriptions of sailors, including those featured in modern historical studies, use traits associated with the stereotypical construction of "Jack Tar", and therefore must be treated with caution. Robert Lee, "The seafarers´ Urban World: A Critical review", in *International Journal of Maritime History*, 2013:2.
[65] Dahlin, p. 18.
[66] Dahlin, p. 69–70.
[67] Dahlin, p. 67. Dahlin´s way of describing women is similar to fictional descriptions of sea life from the same period. Se Tomas Nilson, "Fiktion, hierarki, och havets hårda arbete: skönlitterartur som källa till svensk maritim historia", *Historisk Tidskrift* 2014:3.
[68] See Dahlin, p. 35–36.
[69] Dahlin, p. 67.
[70] Dahlin, p. 23.
[71] According to Leonore Davidoff, prostitutes had during the Victorian period, became the focus of keen interest for a huge cadre of male urban explorers, who were so fascinated by their allure and concurrent threatening presence that they actively sought them out and recorded their encounters in every little detail. Leonore Davidoff, "Gender and Class in Victorian England: The Diaries of Arthur J. Munby and Hannah Cullwick", *Feminist Studies*, Nr 5, 1979.
[72] Walkowitz, p. 21–22.
[73] Dahlin, p. 32. This was the common perception of "southerners" during the turn of the 20th century. According to the British social historian John Archer, the big difference was that a true Englishman fought honorably according to the informal rules of the "fair fight". Archer points out that no weapons, like knifes, were allowed: additional implements were viewed as cowardly and "foreign", John E. Archer, "Men behaving badly? Masculinity and the uses of violence, 1850-1900", *Everyday Violence in Britain 1850–1950, Gender and Class*, Shani D´Cruze (ed.), Routledge 2014, pp. 93–95.
[74] Dahlin, p. 186.
[75] Dahlin, p. 194.
[76] Dahlin, p. 89–90.
[77] Dahlin, p. 157.
[78] Dahlin, p. 154, 21, 81. Chinese had started to settle in ethnic communities in European port cities from the late 1800s starting with London and Liverpool. After the

First World War, the biggest Chinese community was to be found in Rotterdam. There, and in other large North Sea port towns, the Chines had settled in areas adjacent, or in the middle of, rough districts – like for instance in Hamburg's St. Pauli. For most parts, these ethnic communities did not interact with the surrounding society and formed more or less parallel entities. The inhabitants frequently encountered racist and discriminatory behavior so in this respect Dahlin's derogatory comments were in common use. Lars Amenda, "A Parallel World Within? Chinese Seafarers in European Shipping and in European Ports 1880-1950", in *The Parallel Worlds of the Seafarer: Ashore, Afloat and Abroad*, (eds.) Richard Gorski and Britta Söderqvist, Göteborg 2012.
[79] Dahlin, p. 181. It is difficult to know though, if Dahlin had genuine racist inclinations or just used the lingo of the time - the contemporary parlance - when he discussed people from foreign countries. Not all the time it is his own remarks but rather someone else´s because he uses the method of "telling/exposition". The influence of the milieu that somehow softens his opinion of women in sailor town is not overly evident in Dahlin's descriptions of ethnicity. How come? On this topic, one can only speculate.
[80] Dahlin, p. 76.
[81] Dahlin, p. 41–42.
[82] Dahlin, p. 76.
[83] Benny Lorentz was initially suspicious of Dahlin, but was won over when the others acknowledged Dahlin's credentials as a left behind sailor.
[84] Dahlin, p. 44–47. See above how the general system in sailor town functions. It is through Lorentz and others voices that Dahlin explained Antwerp´s specific social geography. Once again Dahlin used "telling/exposition" as his preferred method.
[85] Dahlin, p. 118–119.
[86] Dahlin, p. 29. What had happened made Dahlin reflect on his current situation – he realized that he had not yet aligned himself with his new class position: "[s]he was right; I couldn´t expect clean sheets. That was an absurd thought (…). I no longer belonged to those who slept between clean sheets, my position was lower. I was part of those without pretentions, and I didn´t have the right to ask for any (…). I should have stayed silent and been content with the situation (…)".
[87] Dahlin, p. 16, 29.
[88] The gang consisted of Stavanger and Sampo, Fettis and Mongolen – the first two were sailors who had just disembarked after a long period at sea, and with lots of money to spend; the other two had been ashore longer and where actively looking for new employment.
[89] Dahlin, p. 44.
[90] Dahlin, p. 45. To ask too many questions could arouse suspicion. In one incident, retold by Dahlin, Farman became furious when he thought Dahlin was prying, shouting at him – ""[w]ho are you? You ask so much and about so many things. Are you a spy trying to sniff out how we fare and how we live? Don´t you try this with me, you will not be told anything." Dahlin, p. 60.
[91] Dahlin had told them that he lived with a woman near Mexico-dock. To stay with a woman was good enough and something that wasn´t asked about. According to Dahlin, this was what everyone wanted. Dahlin, p. 86–87.
[92] Dahlin, p. 87, 81.
[93] Tofft´s three categories were formulated in 1932 (or at least put in writing then) so Dahlin did not use them in his text. But I find them useful as analytic tools, as a way to

distinguish between certain groups of men in sailor town. And because Tofft´s analysis is contemporary with Dahlin´s, his categories therefore have an authentic ring about them.
[94] Dahlin, p. 87.
[95] Dahlin, p. 52.
[96] Dahlin, p. 85.
[97] Dahlin, p. 111.
[98] Dahlin, p. 111, 140–141.
[99] As noted before, Dahlin was cooperating with consul Petri. Dahlin paid for the permit himself (17 franc a day) in order to further his investigation, p 117.
[100] Dahlin, p. 118.
[101] Dahlin, p. 120–121. The other of the gang were Den gamle, an older stoker with a broken and disfigured face, a man who never spoke, and therefor was called the Sphinx, and a "handsome and greatly tattooed" cook who spent his day reading books and newspaper.
[102] Bladh never got any new employment during Dahlin's stay in Antwerp. After one particulary depressing rejection, Bladh said: "Yes, I will stop roaming the docks looking for employment. It is better to stay at home flat on my back or playing Pinochle. It will get me hired as quickly." Dahlin, p 146. According to Magnus, Bladh is too shy and delicate for his own good. If he doesn't change, Magnus said, "he will die here in Antwerp. He will never get employment or the ability to leave if he stays as he is now." Dahlin, p 165.
[103] Dahlin, p. 114, 131–134.
[104] Dahlin, p. 151.
[105] Dahlin mentions that if a foreign sailor got caught by the police without money and the required passport, he would be sentenced to labor at the Farm outside of Antwerp, and not released before he had earned 50 Francs. To be sent there was a constant threat and a fate the bums wanted to avoid at all costs. Dahlin, p. 236–237.
[106] Dahlin twice tried to get a room at the Scandinavian Seamen's Home but was denied. According to Dahlin it was because his appearance reminded too much of a bum, and those were not welcome. But by letting the pastor in on his mission, he was allowed to stay one night. In his opinion, the standard was so much higher than he had gotten used to and the men staying there "genuine seamen". Dahlin, p. 234–235.
[107] Dahlin very honestly addressed his companions: "[t]he bars become your homes and the docks your walking paths without any other differences than names and location. And this you do day in and day out, night after night…". Dahlin, p. 86.
[108] Dahlin, p. 169–171, 166–168.
[109] Dahlin, p. 180.
[110] Dahlin, p. 229.
[111] Dahlin, p. 233.