

## 6: Variation and Innovation Quotes, Texts and Sources

### Actuation/Innovation and Transmission of Songs

‘The creation of song by one hand or many, and its adoption, variation and communal transmission, typify classic folk song’ (Palmer 1990: 15)

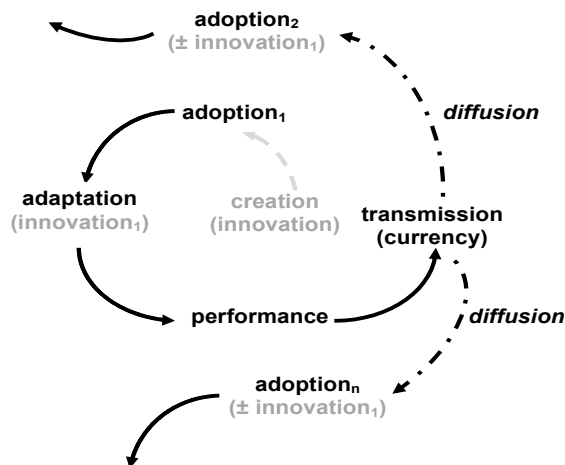


Figure 1: The ‘Catherine Wheel’ of the Transmission Process

### The principles for tracing the history of folk songs

1. *The Principle of Increasing Variability:*
  - a. The greater the number of existing versions of a song, the lower the probability of finding an ‘original’ version.
  - b. The smaller the number of versions of a song, the greater the probability of finding an ‘original’ version, particularly in the case of more recent songs.
2. *The Principle of the Extent and Type of Variability:*  
Given the same song schema, there is a point at which two versions differ from one another to such an extent that they require two different cognitive strategies to store each version. Beyond that point, the two versions are likely to be perceived by the singer (and the audience) as two different songs.
3. *The Principle of Currency:*  
Regardless of whether or not the source of a song can be traced, its appearance as a broadside, or part of a broadside/broadsheet, is an indicator of its currency (or popularity), a factor in the stabilisation of its variability and a significant reason for its increased diffusion, but not necessarily for its transmission from singer to singer.

(Watts and Andres Morrissey 2016)

### Song Schemata

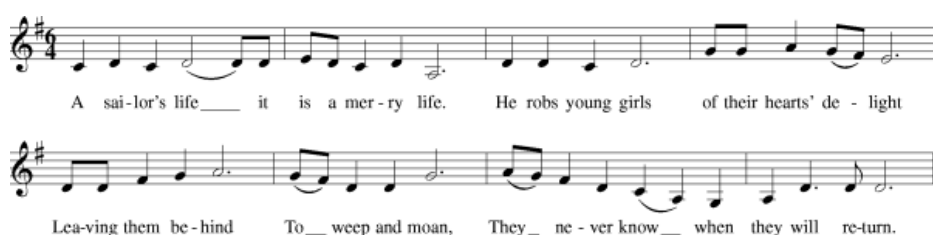
‘Lyrics ... let us into *songs as stories*. All songs are implied narratives. They have a central character, the singer; a character with an attitude, in a situation, talking to someone (if only to herself)’ (Frith 1996: 169–170; italics mine).

## Two songs or one? (Child Ballad 110)

The Knight and the Shepherd's Daughter	Earl Richard
<p>It's of a pretty shepherdess Kept sheep all on the plain; Who should ride by but Knight William And he was drunk with wine. Rite fal le riddle fel ridoh, rite fal le day</p>	<p>It's of a brisk young shepherd maid kept sheep one summer's da,y and by there came a fair young man who stole her heart away line, twine, the willow and the dew</p>
<p>You've stolen all my heart, young sir, Yourself you are to blame; So if your vows are made in truth Pray tell to me your name.</p>	<p>You've stolen all my heart, young sir yourself you are to blame. But if your vows are made in truth, pray tell to me your name</p>
<p>O some do call me Jack, he said, And some do call me John; But when I'm in the fair king's court My name is Sweet William.</p>	<p>Oh some do call me Jack, fair maid, and others call me John, but when I'm in the King's own court, Sweet William is my name.</p>
	<p>Then I'll gang to the King she said he'll do a fair maid right to woo and mock a shepherd maid it ill becomes a knight.</p>
<p>He mounted on his milk white steed And away then he did ride; She tied a handkerchief round her waist And rode by the horse's side.</p>	
<p>She rode till she came to the river's side She fell on her belly and swam; And when she came to the other side She took to her heels and ran.</p>	
<p>She ran till she came to the king's fair court She pulled at the ring: There was none so ready as the king himself To let this fair maid in.</p>	
<p>Good morning to you, my pretty maid. Good morning, sir, said she; You have a knight all in your court This day as a-robbed me.</p>	
<p>O has he robbed you of your gold, Or any of your fee? Or has he robbed you of the rarest branch That grows in your body?</p>	
<p>He has not robbed me of my gold, Nor any of my fee; But he has robbed me of the rarest branch That grows in my body.</p>	
<p>He's twenty pounds for you, he said, All wrapped in a glove; And twenty pounds for you, he said, To seek some other love.</p>	

I will not have your twenty pounds, Nor any of your fee; But I will have the king's fair knight This day to marry me.	
The king called up his merry men all, By one, by tow, by three - Young William once the foremost was, But now behind came he.	Now the King's called up his merry men all, by one by two by three. Earl Richard used to lead them all, but far behind came he.
Accurs'ed be that very hour That I got drunk by wine. To have the farmer's daughter here To be a true love of mine!	
If I a farmer's daughter am Pray leave me all alone; If you make a lady of a thousand lands I can make thee lord of ten. (probably means 10'000)	
	And he's brought up all fifty pounds, brought up all in a glove. Take this, take this, fair maid, and go and seek some other love
	Oh I want none of thy red gold, nor any of thy fee, but I will have thy body fair, the King has given me
	Earl Richard frowned, Earl Richard sighed, an angry man was he. If I'm to wed a shepherd maid, you'll rue it bitterly.
The dog shall eat the flour you sowed, And thou shalt eat the bran' I'll make thee rue the day and hour That ever thou wast born.	The dog shall eat the wheat and flour and thou shalt eat the bran. I'll make thee rue the very day, and hour thou were born.
	I care not for thy threats, my love, nor all your words of ill. You've vowed to wed the shepherd maid kept sheep upon the hill.
He mounted on his milk-white steed, And she on her pony grey; He threw the bugle round his neck And together they rode away.	
The very next town that they came to The wedding bells did ring; And the very next church that they came to There was a gay wedding.	

## ‘A Sailor’s Life’: Song Schema according to Labov and Waletzky



A sailor's life, it is a merry life  
He robs young girls of their heart's delight  
Leaving them behind to weep and mourn  
They never know when they will return

"Well, there's four and twenty all in a row  
My true love he makes the finest show  
He's proper, tall, genteel withal  
And if I don't have him, I'll have none at all"

"Oh, father build for me a bonny boat  
That on the wide ocean I may float  
And every Queen's ship that we pass by  
There I'll inquire for my sailor boy"

They had not sailed long upon the deep  
When a Queen's ship they chanced to meet  
"You sailors all, pray tell me true  
Does my sweet William sail among your crew?"

"Oh no, fair maiden, he is not here  
For he's been drowned, we greatly fear  
On yon green island, as we passed it by  
There we lost sight of your sailing boy"

Well, she rung her hands and she tore her hair  
She was like a young girl in great despair  
And her little boat against a rock did run  
"How can I live now? My sweet William is gone"

### An illustration of 9 versions of ‘A Sailor’s Life’

Abstract	1) 3 <sup>rd</sup> person narrator/commentator, general statement on how sailors love and leave their sweethearts lamenting
	2) 3 <sup>rd</sup> person narrator tells of how a pretty girl is down by the river side lamenting the fact that her lover has left her
Pre-Orientation	pO) 1st p. extols virtues of lover's beauty and depth of their love
Orientation	1) 1 <sup>st</sup> p claims that lover would be finest in any group of sailors and vows she will have only him
	2) 1 <sup>st</sup> p laments true love leaving to serve the king
Narrative Events	1) 1 <sup>st</sup> person expresses the intention to build a boat to sail after him/requests her father to build a boat or: 3 <sup>rd</sup> person states that she built a boat
	2) 3 <sup>rd</sup> person narrator>1 <sup>st</sup> person actor. Maid meets another ship and asks after her sailor boy
	2a) 2 <sup>nd</sup> person (ship's crew/captain) ask her to describe her true love, colour of hair, what he was wearing and 1 <sup>st</sup> person maid describes him
Complication	C) 2 <sup>nd</sup> person (ship's crew/captain) tell her that he is dead and is buried on an island
Pre-Resolution	1) 3 <sup>rd</sup> person narrator, maid sits down to write a song
	2) 3 <sup>rd</sup> person narrator>1 <sup>st</sup> person. Maid dashes her boat against a rock avowing that she cannot live without her William
	3) 3 <sup>rd</sup> person narrator. William's body is washed ashore
Resolution	1) 3 <sup>rd</sup> person narrator>1 <sup>st</sup> person. Maid dashes her boat against a rock avowing that she cannot live without her William
	2) 3 <sup>rd</sup> person narrator. Maid throws herself into the sea to be with her sailor in death
	3a) 1 <sup>st</sup> person (maid) asks for her grave to be dug and a dove/rose to be placed on her breast
	3b) 1 <sup>st</sup> person (maid) asks for a willow tree to be planted by her grave and a dove to be placed on her breast
	4) 3 <sup>rd</sup> person narrator, maid sits down to write a song
Coda	1) 3 <sup>rd</sup> person narrator. Narrator addresses other maids who have lost their true love
	2) 1st person (maid) consigns herself to mourning for her love

Table 5.1 Narrative elements and contents in the ‘Sailor’s Life’ complex

Title	Abstract	Orientation		Narrative Events			Complication	Resolution				Coda	
1) A Sailor's Life	1			2	3	4	5	6					
	Abstract1			Narr. Ev. 1	Narr. Ev.2	Narr. Ev.2a	Comp.	Resol. 2					
2) A Sailor's Life	1		2	3	4		5	6	7	8			
	Abstract1		Orient.1	Narr. Ev. 1	Narr. Ev.2		Comp.	pre-Resol. 1	pre-Resol. 2	Resol. 2			
3) A Sailor's Life	1		2	3	4		5	6	7	8			
	Abstract1		Orient.1	Narr. Ev. 1	Narr. Ev.2		Comp.	pre-Resol. 2	pre-Resol. 1	Resol. 2			
4) Sweet William	1		2	3			4	5	6	7			
	Abstract1		Orient.1	Narr. Ev.2			Comp.	pre-Resol.1	Resol.3a	Resol.2			
5) A Sailor's Life	1			2	3		4	5					
	Abstract1			Narr. Ev. 1	Narr. Ev.2		Comp.	Resol. 1					
6) The Sailor Boy and his Faithful Mary	1		2	3	4		5	6	7	8			
	Abstract1		Orient.1	Narr. Ev. 1	Narr. Ev.2		Comp.	pre-Resol.1	pre-Resol.2	Resol.2			
7) Sailor Boy	1			2	3		4	5				6	7
	Abstract2			Narr. Ev. 1	Narr. Ev.2		Comp.	Resol. 1				Coda1	Coda2
8) A Sailor's Life	1		2	3	4		5	6	7	8			
	Abstract1		Orient.1	Narr. Ev. 1	Narr. Ev.2		Comp.	pre-Resol.2	pre-Resol.1	Resol.2			
9) The Maid's Lament for her Sailor Boy	1		2	3	4		5	6				7	8
	Abstract2		Orient.1	Narr. Ev. 1	Narr. Ev.2		Comp.	Resol. 1				Coda1	Coda2
10) Moment's River Side	1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9	10		
	Abstract2	pre-Or.	Orient.1	Narr. Ev. 1	Narr. Ev.2		Comp.	pre-Resol.3	pre-Resol.1	Resol.3a	Resol.3b		
11) no local title	1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9			
	Abstract2	Orient.1	Orient.2	Narr. Ev. 1	Narr. Ev.2		Comp.	pre-Resol.1	pre-Resol.3	Resol.4			
12) no local title	1			2	3	4	5	6	7	8			
	Abstract2			Narr. Ev. 1	Narr. Ev.2	Narr. Ev.2	Comp.	pre-Resol.1	pre-Resol.2	Resol.3b			

Table 5.2 Organisation of narrative elements and contents into stanzas of the 12 variants of the Sailor's Life complex