Popular Culture, Piracy, and Outlaw Pedagogy

A Critique of the Miseducation of Davy Jones

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Independent Scholar

Popular Culture, Piracy, and Outlaw Pedagogy explores the relationship between power and resistance by critiquing the popular cultural image of the pirate represented in Pirates of the Caribbean. Of particular interest is the reliance on modernism's binary good/evil, Sparrow/Jones, how the film's distinguish the two concepts/characters via corruption, and what we may learn from this structure which I argue supports neoliberal ideologies of indifference towards the piratical Other.

What became evident in my research is how the erasure of corruption via imperial and colonial codifications within seventeenth century systems of culture, class hierarchies, and language succeeded in its re-presentation of the pirate and members of a colonized India as corrupt individuals with empire emerging from the struggle as exempt from that corruption. This erasure is evidenced in Western portrayals of Somali pirates as corrupt Beings without any acknowledgement of transnational corporations' role in provoking pirate resurgence in that region. This forces one to re-examine who the pirate is in this situation.

Erasure is also evidenced in current interpretations of both Bush's No Child Left Behind and Obama's Race to the Top initiative. While NCLB created conditions through which corruption occurred, I demonstrate how Race to the Top erases that corruption from the institution of education by placing it solely into the hands of teachers, thus providing the institution a "free pass" to engage in any behavior it deems fit. What pirates teach us, then, are potential ways to thwart the erasure process by engaging a pedagogy of passion, purpose, radical love and loyalty to the people involved in the educational process.
Popular Culture, Piracy, and Outlaw Pedagogy
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Popular Culture, Piracy, and Outlaw Pedagogy

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Elizabeth Alford Pollock
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For Tommy, Emily, and Abby
And for all those teachers who have the courage to embrace the pirate within.
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INTRODUCTION

PIRATES AS TREASURE CHESTS OF CURRICULAR EXPERIENCES

DISCOVERING THE TREASURE

I am not sure when it happened— the transition from childhood pirate curiosities to outright obsession was a slow process. Like many children reared under the influence of Disney Imagineering, I grew up with Peter Pan, Wendy, and the Lost Boys. We hid from Captain Hook in trees, behind bushes, and sometimes in the creek that ran through my backyard. As time evolved from childhood to my teenage years, the Lost Boys were replaced by living peers who provided more entertainment than my imaginary friends of long ago. But I never escaped the feeling that pirates were trying to teach me something; there was more to their story than hooked hands, eye patches, or pegged legs.

My curiosity peaked again in high school while reading Stevenson’s Treasure Island, and then again with the release of Tri-Star Picture’s cinematic adaptation of Hook in 1991. These moments would take me back to my backyard and my childhood hideouts where I felt safe behind the bushes, beyond the clutches of Captain Hook. But it wasn’t until I met Jack Sparrow and Davy Jones that my curiosities developed new meanings. By this time, I had two children of my own, and they had petitioned to have a movie-watching marathon, wanting to view the Pirates of the Caribbean trilogy in one sitting. It was cold, raining, and no other activities presented themselves so we embarked on what we called our “pirate expedition.” Of course, once the infamous Davy Jones commandeered the screen, my children scattered like the wind, abandoning me with only my thoughts.

Jack Sparrow’s image as the honorable pirate juxtaposed next to a corrupt and mutated Davy Jones appeared to be a little too scripted for my taste, and the blaring dichotomy rekindled questions from my childhood relating to what pirates were attempting to instruct. Smith, Smith, and Watkins suggest “pop culture crosses time and also changes with time since pop culture icons can disappear as quickly as they become popular, return with a wave of nostalgia, or stay around for decades” (2009, p. 4). Pirates in popular culture have a tendency to ride these cultural shifts of time, fading away into rose-tinted memories only to re-emerge again to recapture the imagination of a new generation of youngsters. Perhaps nostalgia is what has kept pirates alive since the height of their escapades in the early 1700’s- I do not know; whatever the reasons, the image of the pirate has remained relatively stable.

My first question regarding the juxtaposition of Sparrow/Jones in relation to the stability of the pirate image over time was “why,” meaning, was there some sort of
cultural benefit in perpetuating these stable significations? *Pirates of the Caribbean* certainly embraced the stereotypes in the characterizations of Ragetti with his eye patch in *At World’s End*, Sailor Cotton with his parrot, trained to speak for him as he had no tongue and present in all three films, and Captain Barbossa with the peg-leg he adorned for *On Stranger Tides* - the fourth installment of the pirate films and not discussed in this text. There appeared to be an underlying master narrative scripting what culture - popular and otherwise - teaches regarding the pirate. Steeped in postmodern theory, my thoughts began to hoist their own colours, raise the proverbial black flag, and I began to question these narratives.

Lyotard teaches:

> The popular stories themselves recount what could be called positive or negative apprenticeships...in other words, the successes and failures greeting the hero’s undertakings: These successes or failures either bestow legitimacy upon social institutions (the function of myths), or represent positive or negative models (the successful or unsuccessful hero) of integration into established institutions (legends and tales). (1979, pp. 19-20)

Jack Sparrow is the unsung hero in the pirate films with the antagonist shifting from Captain Barbosa in *Curse of the Black Pearl* to Davy Jones in *Dead Man’s Chest* to Lord Cutler Beckett in *At World’s End*. Throughout each story, Sparrow’s heroic image is tested as he faces one moral dilemma after another. Through his trials and tribulations, I questioned what institutions or ideologies he and other characters were legitimizing. Whatever they were, the pirate films make explicit the slippery slope dividing Sparrow/Jones was a process one engaged to become a delegitimized Other; a conscious choice one makes for one’s self. The process itself reflected a narrative of privilege contradicting historical images of pirates as second-class citizens—pirates had no privileges in society. Some pirates did make the choice to enter the world of piracy, but this choice was influenced by the lack of opportunities they had available while on land. Some pirates were press-ganged onto ships and forced to sail under the black flag, but they faced the gallows unless they could substantiate their impressments with circumstantial evidence. This evidence was rarely enough to sway a jury of their peers which had already condemned pirates to death upon acknowledgement of the pirate label. After all, in a pirate’s world, you were guilty until proven innocent.

When I began the daunting task of researching pirate history (for there are literally hundreds of texts in pirate culture and cultural studies), I came to understand that the binaries employed in *Pirates of the Caribbean* were an extension of a dichotomy constructed in seventeenth century culture and society between a privateer (read legal) and a pirate (read illegal). What became apparent through these constructions was the struggle between power and resistance. Pirates not only resisted the colonization of their ships, they rejected being defined by imperialism and a social hierarchy through which they rarely benefitted. Of course, that did not stop them from bringing these codifications onto the ships themselves through their own
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language and cultures. In so doing, they inadvertently assisted in the construction of the need to be re-presented as the piratical Other to the privateer, which cultural and governmental institutions had already legitimized through pirate actions.

What also became evident was how these historical and popular representations have worked to benefit a neoliberal ideology with traces of corporate allegiance dating back to the Golden Age, leading up to twenty-first century representations of the pirates of Somalia. I find no coincidence that the height of pirate activities in the 1700’s paralleled with the height of expansion via the East India Company’s imperial reign of terror on India, other regions involved in maritime trade such as China, and also the height of British colonization. While other Empires existed during this time period such as the Spanish and the Portuguese, the pirates of the Golden Age, at least the ones written about, tended to be of European descent. And the Golden Age marked a time of birth for pirate history and popular cultural images of the stereotypes we live with today.

READING THE TREASURE MAP

As a result of historical struggles between pirates and the forces of imperialism and colonialism, I also came to recognize the history of pirates as a history of people, with the interconnections between power and resistance in effect today acting mimetically to the interconnections between power and resistance operating during the Golden Age. The pirates’ curriculum explored in this text traverses the boundaries of the historical struggle between imperial powers and pirate resistance. This struggle points towards potential new directions for the field of Curriculum Studies in relation to our own struggles with boundaries imposed by neoliberal ideologies working to delegitimize teachers and public education for the benefit of privatization.

Since the field of Curriculum Studies has been relatively silent on the subject of pirates, it is necessary to present a historiography of their struggles and the relationship pirate representations have within the limited neoliberal framings of their experiences. Chapter One explores the language constructing early representations leading up to present images we have of the pirate while introducing the frameworks of postmodern and postcolonial theory to question this language. By drawing on Derridian interpretations of the pharmakon, I am able to introduce what has been consistently absent in pirate cultural debates: the absence of the trace of the verb piraõ and its meaning of “getting experience.”

Chapter Two focuses on the historiography of pirates from a postmodern lens while engaging various arguments for and against the possibilities a postmodern perspective offers. By juxtaposing this historiography next to the images and language represented in Pirates of the Caribbean, its neoliberal ideology becomes evident as it works to limit individual interpretations of freedom. Chapter Three engages a postcolonial perspective, offering a historiography of imperialism, colonialism, and the effects a British East India Company had both on a colonized
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India and the pirates in general. This history is also juxtaposed next to the images and language represented in *Pirates of the Caribbean*, and the imperial codifications embedded within contemporary systems of language are opened.

Weaver and Daspit argue “popular culture texts offers a pedagogy of possibility in which societal problems are addressed [and] silenced voices heard” (2000, xxvii). Chapter Four marks a shift in my writing by employing the historiography of pirates and the external forces applied by British colonization and imperial East India Companies presented in previous chapters as a framework for questioning how the pirates of Somalia are represented within cultural spaces. In effort to create a location for the silenced voices of Somalia to be heard, I draw on references interacting directly with pirates such as an interview conducted by Jay Bahadur in *The Pirates of Somalia* (2011) and also the interviews and quotations of Somali citizens such as rap artist K’Naan and those who identify with the pirate label. By exploring the conditions of pirate resurgence, the struggle between power and resistance reactivating itself in twenty-first century culture becomes evident.

While working on the first four chapters, my mind kept conjuring up images of historical pirates, the characters in *Pirates of the Caribbean*, and contemporary pirates, all positioned in chronological order. I began to sketch these images in my journal: elaborate displays of stick people with elongated swords, triangular hats perched atop their perfectly round heads, and the best interpretation of a feather I could muster, protruding at unequal intervals from each pirate’s hat. All of them were perched atop a half-moon shaped vessel with wavy lines symbolizing water. I did not notice initially, but as the sketches evolved, I had begun to insert rectangular-shaped buildings in the background, oblivious of the illogic involved in picturing buildings floating on the sea. But once my eyes fixated on the image, I recognized that the one thread weaving throughout the three sets of pirates was the image of the corporation run amok, a more logical conclusion when one views current corporate activities as the modus operandi of contemporary interpretations of imperialism. Ideologies are versatile, traveling to any and all places in the world. During the Golden Age, there was the ruthless behavior of individuals on behalf of the East India Company, with the pirate films reinforcing this image. But as I toyed with the chronology of the pictures, repositioning the present as the past, I realized the modern day actions and interpretations of the corporation appeared to be reliving the brutality and callous disregard to human life displayed during the Golden Age of Piracy. The real treasure being sought was not some fabled interpretation of Aztec Gold as in *Curse of the Black Pearl*, but the hearts of the people constructing contemporary culture and society within the U.S. and abroad- i.e. the hearts of you and me.

Of course, this was only a picture. I needed a perspective articulating the image I had already drawn. The image was the key to unlocking the secrets embedded within *Pirates of the Caribbean*. I found what I was looking for in Gasset’s *Revolt of the Masses*. When I reviewed the pirate trilogy through the eyes of Gasset, the picture I had sketched began to reveal itself in words. Chapter Five presents this image by exploring how the brutality embraced by the characters in the pirate films emulates
the brutality on display in contemporary cultural contexts at the hands of individuals reflecting Gasset’s characterization of the mass man. In order to understand the context in which a contemporary revolt of the masses may occur, I engage the use of a conjecture, positing a “what if” scenario by positioning the corporation personified by the U.S. Supreme Court to fill the role of Gasset’s hypothetical mass man. Included in this chapter is an explanation as to how Gasset defines his concept of the mass man as well as how I define the corporation. In so doing, I am able to view the shape of empire’s structural violence as a set of catachrestic boundaries impressing on every facet of our lives. This brutal structure is where we, as teachers and as human beings, are presently situated.

Continuing the conjecture initiated in chapter Five, chapter Six situates the teacher in between the pirate and the hypothetical mass man to explore how imperialism and the corporation’s desire to capture our hearts induces an existential crisis experienced when caught in between these two worlds: a crisis leading to the potential revolt Gasset depicts in his text.

Here is where the Sparrow/Jones dichotomy collapses into itself, symbolizing the weakest point of the mass man’s DNA but the strongest point in ours. Here is where we may counter the brutality we are witnessing at the hands of the mass man with the radical love and will to power pirates reflected in their individual and collective actions. In so doing, the miseducation of Davy Jones is revealed and, should we choose to learn from this, Jones’s miseducation may become an experience we bring with us to all future readings of the world in hopes of thwarting the miseducational process.

Chapter Seven applies the lessons learned from a pirates’ curriculum by offering Outlaw Pedagogy as both a pedagogy of possibilities Daspit and Weaver argue are necessary for interpreting popular culture texts, and also a pedagogy of passion and purpose reflected in the lived experiences of historical pirates such as Bartholomew Roberts and one of the greatest educators of our time, Paulo Freire. It is my hope this text contributes to the “complicated conversation” Pinar (2004) believes is crucial to understanding curriculum. In so doing, we expand the circle of catachrestic boundaries imposed on us through language systems, learn to pirate moments of authentic learning for ourselves and our students, and contest the limitations imposed on our spaces through neoliberal ideologies shrouding schools today. Whereas Davy Jones literally had no heart in the films, both Roberts and Freire teach us that a Pedagogy of the Heart (Freire, 1997) is our best recourse as teachers. By re-engaging the heart in educational settings, we may learn to embrace the pirate we always already are.

LIMITATIONS TO THE TEXT

There are some limitations to the text I wish to acknowledge as they frame my account of piratical experiences. For starters, piracy has historically been considered “a man’s world.” While there were female pirates such as Anne Bonny and Mary
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Read operating during the Golden Age, our understanding of their experiences was written by a male Captain Johnson. Contemporary accounts offer no exception to the patriarchal view of the pirate. Most of the narratives emerging out or on behalf of Somalia are still penned by masculine hands. While I do offer a challenge to this perspective in chapter Four, the historiography presented in the first three chapters utilizes the masculine pronoun to reflect the patriarchy embedded within both European and colonial (U.S.) culture during that time period. Once the challenge presents itself, the male phenomenon we call piracy is opened to include the female pronoun which I embody.

The second limitation deals with my representation of Somali pirates. Throughout the chapter addressing pirate resurgence, I struggled with the possibility that my own Western situatedness would add to the silencing of Somali voices rather than carving a space for their voices to be heard, or would contribute to Western representations delegitimizing potential reasons for pirate resurgence. I take my lead from Marla Morris. While researching the events at Auschwitz and the Holocaust, Morris recognized her limits to knowing the events first-hand as these were not experiences she had actually lived. Even reading the accounts of the terror that constructed Auschwitz could not completely relay the horror of the past. Yet she tells us, “If we refuse the call of remembering this event altogether because of the ineffableness of Auschwitz, we lapse back into silence. Silence kills” (2001, p. 6). I wish not to add to the death of Somali voices in my struggle to understand their plight. So my own situatedness inside the Western perspective becomes my limit to knowing. It is the boundary which seeks to divide me from Somali voices, reinforced by the geographical and cultural distance we share.

I have already discussed the employment of first-hand accounts emerging out of Somalia to address this limitation. I also focus my attention on how the West presents Somali pirates in order to open the dialogue to questions, such as, who benefits from such re-presentations? Who pays the cost? In so doing, I am able to understand how their silencing parallels to contemporary constructs of K-12 teachers and how the corporation of the past appears to have doubled its efforts to further silence the voices of a population of people desperate to be heard; the delicate dance between power and resistance reinserts itself into culture and society. These are the limitations constructing my reading of the pirate. It is my hope that by understanding these limits to knowing, I may teach others that pirates were much more than the tyrants of long ago. They were also human.
CHAPTER 1

ON BEING/BECOMING A PIRATE

CONSTRUCTING AN IMAGE

Imagine if you will a circle massive in construction and over three hundred years in the making. We are sitting inside this circle, you and I. You may not yet see its construction, but I do. Curve-shaped bookcases assemble three-fourths of its circumference, extending upwards as far as the eyes can see. Volumes upon volumes of leather-bound texts adorn the shelves. The folds in their bindings reflect centuries of engagement and use by their patrons. Each bookcase is erected out of mahogany posts, providing a structure for much of what have been written. One cannot help but feel engulfed by this knowledge, where Coleridge’s *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* sits comfortably next to *Lemprière’s Dictionary*—the age difference is vast.

The remaining fourth houses a fireplace with flames barely escaping the lids of the logs as they fight to sleep. A wrought-iron fire poker leans effortlessly against the fireplace’s mahogany encasement. Above the mantle stands a large map of the West, overbearing in its presence both in the map itself and in the influence over many of the ideas set forth in the literature present. On each side of the map, sextants are cast aside by technological advances, honorably refusing to relinquish their importance in maritime history.

The center of the room is canvassed with tapestry rugs, hiding the wear of travelers past. Several wooden tables are positioned at random, with brown high back leather chairs anchoring each end. There are others in the room but they do not see us. A teacher is sitting in one of the chairs, attempting to call roll, it seems, and trying desperately to capture the attention of the others.

“Henry,” she says, “William, are you here?”

“Aye,” claims the man with his back to her. She cannot see him, but he is making faces at the others. They are lying on the tables.

“Edward, please pay attention,” she says to the man whose presence cast an eerie shadow over the others.

“John, that leaves you. John?”

“I’m here,” retorts a man whose existence has been influential in the cultural construction of his kind. They, too, are sitting on top of the tables. All except Jack, who is sitting in a boxcar; the kind you find on a roller coaster. A rowdy bunch to say the least and one whose presence has stirred the imagination of many who have read of their adventures. Two women are accounted for, Anne and Mary, but they are on another table, set apart from the others and conversing quietly amongst themselves. A few spaces beyond this motley crew stands Derrida, at a distance,
mixing something in mortars and pestles. At first glance, he appears strangely out of place. But then again, wasn’t it Derrida who warned us to be mindful of what first hides itself from view? Curiosity gets the best of us and we begin to walk in his direction. We are ready to speak with him through his writing, approaching with caution. But just as we are within reach, enormous crab-like claws grab hold of our being, nearly crushing us as they thrust us down a desolate black hole...to nothing. We are caught inside the abyss known as Davy Jones’s locker. But we never reach the bottom. We are caught in between. We hear Jones’s voice vibrating down the shaft:

“Tell me,” he says, “do you get the picture?”

Laughing, I say to no one, “yes, I get the picture,” and my eyes open once more to the recurring image I have envisioned for months. During that time, I have deliberated on whether to begin a writing project with such an ill-conceived fiction, but Derrida convinced me. Derrida believed the reader held a certain degree of responsibility to the text. “One must manage,” he argues, “to think this out” (1981, p. 63); “this” being whatever is first hidden from the reader; “the hidden thread,” as Derrida phrased it. What is hidden in my own introduction is why Derrida belongs in an image constructed of pirates. But to understand what is hiding, I first had to provide you with the image, even when there is no guarantee that what you constructed through your reading is the same image I intended to construct through my writing. So again, forgive me, and let us do as Derrida instructs; that is, “let us begin again” (1981, p. 3).

READING THE IMAGE

Hopefully, the first reading generated some questions for us to ponder. The most obvious being how we knew the characters in the room were pirates. Quite simply, I told you. Because history has delegated pirates to outlaw status, the study of these ancient mariners is relegated mainly to pirate lore, popular culture, or specific literary pursuit. Unless you know the socially constructed fables of the past, you may have missed this nod to their identification. When the teacher was calling roll, she announced the presence of Henry, William, John and Edward. These are none other than the Captains Henry Morgan and William Kidd, both famous for their relationship with British Parliament; the former a legendary buccaneer so beloved by his fellow citizens of a Caribbean Island he was afforded Knighthood status by the Kings Court of Jamaica; the latter famous for his burying of gold and silver, thus giving birth to the myth of pirates burying their plunder on exotic islands as this was actually not standard practice. Most pirates spent their loot as soon as they reached port. For those who didn’t, they rarely let it out of their sight. Captain Kidd was granted a commission by British Parliament to embark on a privateering mission in the Indian Ocean but was betrayed by a supporter and ultimately tried and hanged as a pirate, to which he never conceded.
John’s birth name was Long John Silver and was delivered to us via the literary genius of Robert Louis Stevenson (1993/1905). Stevenson is credited with the popular cultural construction of pirates with wooden legs, parrots on their shoulders, buried treasure, and maps with big red X’s marking the spot where this treasure could be found. Because of his meticulous attention to the details surrounding actual pirate adventurers such as the Captains Morgan and Kidd, Stevenson was able to construct an image that popularized these attributes and heroicized maritime villains, a construction in existence to this day. As a result, Long John Silver became a more famous pirate than any who literally sailed the seas. All except one: Edward Teach. Teach, however, was no fiction. His accounts were recorded by a handful of merchant sailors who lived to write of their encounters. One such account was recorded by Henry Bostock on December 5, 1717 describing “a tall spare man with a very black beard which he wore very long” (as quoted in Cordingly, 1996, p. 13). This description was embellished as the legendary status outlived the actual life of the man who came to be known as Blackbeard.

Captain Charles Johnson recorded Blackbeard’s appearance as such:

This beard was black, which he suffered to grow of an extravagant Length; as to Breadth, it came up to his eyes; he was accustomed to twist it with Ribbons, in small Tails...and turn them about his Ears...and stuck lighted Matches under his Hat, which appearing on each Side of his Face, his Eyes naturally looking fierce and wild, made him altogether such a Figure, that Imagination cannot form an Idea of a Fury, from Hell, to look more frightful. (Defoe, 1999/1972, pp. 84-85)

One may be so inclined as to think Blackbeard a myth if it weren’t for the accounts of Bostock, Robert Maynard, who led the attack against Blackbeard ending his life, and logbook entries of the HMS Lyme, the HMS Pearl, and others (Cordingly, 1996).

Captain Johnson’s text, A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pyrates, chronicles the events of Blackbeard and others associated with the “Golden Age of Piracy,” dating from 1716-1726. Johnson includes the adventures of Anne Bonny and Mary Read, the only two women afforded pirate status, largely due to their inclusion in Johnson’s text. Here we see a blurring of the boundaries between fact and fiction in that the histories of these two women became less about their own personal experiences and more about Johnson’s account of these women. Both sailed under the command of a lesser-known pirate named Calico Jack. But this is not the Jack sitting in a car in the image I constructed. That particular Jack is the newly-famed maritime hero Jack Sparrow, born of the minds of Disney Imagineers who needed a character to embellish a theme park ride. This birth is precisely why Jack could not be found lying on a table in my image as his umbilical cord was not directly attached to a specific historical or fictional text. Thus, as the others were lying on the tables, they were, in fact, or in fiction, depending on your perspective, resting between the words, past and present tenses, and prepositional phrases one associates with language. They were, in fact, books. I have little doubt these literary pieces
CHAPTER 1

influenced the construction of Jack Sparrow as Calico Jack is depicted as a “reckless character whose colorful clothes had earned him the nickname” (Cordingly, 1996, p. 57), but one cannot know for certain. And Jack Sparrow’s image, if anything, portrays the recklessness associated with Calico Jack.

This blurring of the boundaries between fact and fiction is precisely why a study of a pirate’s curriculum must be conducted, so that we may explore this construction whose curriculum is taught predominately within popular cultural spaces. Thus, one of the posts constructing the bookshelves, symbolically “holding up” knowledge only to disrupt this structure, is postmodernism. As Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery and Taubman suggest, “The postmodern answer suggests there is an increasing awareness that there are only fantasies, fictions, versions of reality which claim to represent nothing but themselves” (1995, pp. 470-471). This statement is evidenced in how we in contemporary society approach the concept of pirate: as a thief, a robber, or, at a minimum, a questionable member of society.

Pinar’s et al. statement is further evidenced in the controversy surrounding Captain Johnson. Considered the premier text on pirate history first published in 1724, Johnson relied on letters and Naval logbooks, trial documents, government reports, and depositions of both captured pirates and their victims to construct his General History of Pyrates (Cordingly, 1996). There has been little debate as to the validity of his claims. His text represents a personal relationship with the events unfolding at that time, and they further represent a person who was both well-traveled and well-connected with agencies associated with the adjudication of pirate crimes.

What has been debated since Johnson’s publication was who Captain Johnson actually was. Outside of the General History of Pyrates, there is no evidence to suggest a Captain Johnson ever existed. There is no mention of a Captain Johnson in seaman’s journals, naval logbooks or any traditional mode of record-keeping during that time period. There existed a persistent rumor that he was the playwright Charles Johnson who wrote The Successful Pyrate in 1812, but, according to Cindy Vallar and other websites addressing the mystery, that rumor was highly unlikely as the playwright publically rebuffed the fame associated with the text (2010, website). This left Johnson’s identity to fanciful speculation for centuries.

Then, in 1932, American Scholar John Robert Moore presented a theory that Johnson was none other than celebrated writer Daniel Defoe, famous for his authoring of Robinson Crusoe and Captain Singleton (Cordingly, 1996; see also Parry, 2006). Moore compared the literary styles of Johnson and Defoe, the travels and connections both men are believed to have shared, and a fascination with pirates Defoe was reported to have embodied. His conclusion was that Defoe had to be the enigmatic Captain Johnson. Moore’s argument was so convincing during that time period many scholars began to cite Defoe instead of Johnson in their work. Indeed, the copy of the General History of Pyrates I draw on for my research is authored by Defoe, but I have no way for knowing for certain. I give credence to the name on the text before me, but I do not know whose ideas I am perpetuating in my own epistemological pursuit.
To complicate matters, in 1988, Moore’s theory was “demolished,” as Cordingly articulates, by two scholars who argued there “was not a single piece of documentary evidence to link Defoe with *The General History of Pyrates*” (1996, xx) and focused their attention on the discrepancies between this particular text and Defoe’s other work. Since this time, the authorship of the text in question has been returned to Captain Johnson. But that still leaves open the question of Johnson’s identity and may very well be the greatest mystery of all emerging out of this time period.

The debates, questions, and historical fact or fictional accounts of the Golden Age of Piracy are reflected in the map of the West in the image I constructed. A World Map is also embedded within the text of *Pirates of the Caribbean, At World’s End* (2007). This map is viewed in one of the opening scenes of the film as it is initially being painted. Throughout the movie, the painter is seen working towards completion, when, in one of the final scenes, the map is finally finished. The antagonist in *At World's End* is Lord Cutler Beckett. Representing the operations of the East India Trading Company and its relationship with British Parliament, Beckett also sees the completion of his dream to seize total control over global waters once all pirates have been eradicated from the seas. The map’s completion symbolizes this conquest.

I, however, include the map for a very different reason. I argue the interpretation of pirate is itself a Western construction, built out of the need to delegitimize an entire sect of people who were deemed outside of what it meant to be a good and productive citizen. In this process, another group of people, privateers, were afforded legitimacy by both British and Spanish Parliaments and the “commoners” who inhabited both land and sea, when many of the actions and behaviors of privateers were actually no different than pirates.

David Cordingly distinguishes between pirates and privateers via a “Letter of Marque” privateers were afforded by the King: of England, of Spain, for example. This letter granted independent sailors reprisal against those who were deemed enemies of the King, with varying proportions of goods accumulated during an expedition shared between the King, ship owners, the Captain and his crew. Pirates did not possess such letters. Cordingly states, “In theory, an authorized privateer was recognized by international law and could not be prosecuted for piracy, but the system was wide open to abuse and privateers were often no more than licensed pirates” (1996, xvii-xviii). The murky waters existing between these two terms are exactly how Captain Kidd was tried and hanged for piracy. Having taken advantage of the ability to raid ships of their riches, Kidd seized the *Quedah Merchant’s* cargo yet failed to arrest its Captain. When word of his actions reached port—along with rumors of his other escapades—Kidd sought refuge in both Long Island and his business partner, Lord Bellemont, now Governor of New York, who was entangled in his own political game. In an effort to distance his actions from Kidd’s to protect his own reputation, Bellemont called for Kidd to be placed on trial for piracy.

Now, according to Dan Parry, “since the idea of stepping beyond the law was largely dismissed by privateers, it is a mistake to think of them as simply ‘legalized pirates’” (2006, p. 38). Yet Captain Kidd never conceded his acts as piracy as he
viewed these acts well within the realm of the law. He did not have to. Others seeking to protect their own political ambitions such as Bellemont afforded Kidd the pirate label in an effort to delegitimize Kidd while further securing his own legitimacy in the eyes of his constituents.

The experience of Captain Kidd demonstrates how our knowledge of pirates is due largely to how others depicted these individuals as few pirates kept journals of their travels. I contend the construction of pirates is emblematic of Edward Said’s Orientalism. Said argued Orientalism was less about actual cultural and societal practices of those inhabiting the Orient and more about how the West constructed the image of the Orient in its place (1979). Likewise, the cultural construction of pirate as a murderous, treasure-hunting villain with no morals and distinct from privateers is also a Western construction embellished by three hundred years of fiction, film, and legend which have converged to construct our image of these outlaws. The map of the Western hemisphere reflects this cultural construction with Said serving as the original artist to the ideas perpetuated in my work. Therefore, not only is Said’s presence felt in the map, but also in another post I draw on to construct my theoretical framework, that of postcolonialism.

Another scholar associated with postcolonialism is Gayatri Spivak. Of particular interest is her interpretation of the catachresis. Spivak instructs:

Within the historical frame of exploration, colonization, decolonization- what is being effectively reclaimed is a series of regulative political concepts, the supposedly authoritative narrative of the production of which was written elsewhere...They are being reclaimed, indeed claimed, as concept-metaphors for which no historically adequate referent may be advanced from postcolonial space, yet that does not make the claims less important. A concept-metaphor without an adequate referent is a catachresis. (1993, p. 67, emphasis in original)

Indeed, there is no concept-metaphor existing outside of a language system in which we are born, and which we perpetuate daily through our teaching and interacting with others. Yet, because we are immersed in this language, we are often blind to other interpretations beyond that which dominates the conversation. The catachresis is not necessarily a place we wish to inhabit, but we have no way of escaping (Spivak, 1993; Coloma, Means, & Kim, 2009). This symbolizes, not only my own predicament in relation to Jones and the clutch he currently holds on my being for which I can escape, but also in the interpretation of what it potentially means to be a pirate, for which no exodus is available.

DERRIDA...A PIRATE?

The above statement provides an entry into what may be the other prevailing question of my image. Why does Derrida belong in an image full of pirates? The answer to this question rests in Derrida’s actions. Derrida was not just mixing something. Rather, he was mixing words and interpretations in an effort to demonstrate how
these words always carry multiple meanings, and how these words also rest on a
fabled desire to oppose an Other through their own construction. Nowhere is this
more evident than in Derrida’s interpretation of the pharmakon. The pharmakon, the
written text, acts as a drug that both remedies and poisons the body. Therefore, any
inscription of the pharmakon necessarily inscribes two possible meanings that both
oppose and support each other (1981). But, because language systems or arguments
born out of this language do not always engage multiple meanings of a term, other
potential interpretations may become momentarily concealed.

The concealing of other interpretations is precisely what has occurred in the
construction of popular cultural images of pirates. By definition, pirate refers to one
who robs or commits illegal violence at sea or on the shores of the sea, which is in
keeping with the images constructed out of historical and literary accounts. This
definition has been expounded upon in recent decades to include those persons who
rob or commit digital pirating of software, movies, or music, to name a few, in a sea
of technological space and time for which no specific boundaries exist. The Latin
derivative of pirate, pirata, means sea robber. But the Latin derivative also includes
roots in the Greek noun piratis and also the Greek verb pirao. Pirao does translate
into an attack, to make an attempt or to try, therefore upholding the definition of thief
or robber engaged in historical or contemporary discursive practices. However, there
is another interpretation which makes problematic how we have, and may continue,
to define pirate.

Pirao also means to get experience. Historically, pirate has embodied a negative
connotation: to rob, to steal, to appropriate, to plunder. But this negative connotation
actually negates its own definition in that getting experience can be both a negative
and/or a positive encounter. I ask you, what individual living on Earth today does
not get experience from each moment that is lived? Could not this experience be
considered positive in that it reflects an experience of life itself, regardless of
whether this moment encompasses feelings of pain and anguish or laughter and joy?
What individual does not experience texts, images, technologies, the environments
in which we dwell and the constructions that emerge as a result? How do we interact
with multiple epistemologies if we do not first experience questions and/or quests
for knowledge? How may we engage in ontological endeavors without considering
how we gained insight into our being through the experience of living? If we ignored
these questions, then how would our being ever be considered Becoming?

Heidegger tells us language is a “‘house of being’...because language, as saying,
is the mode of Appropriation” (1971, p. 135). Saying, as Heidegger informs, is how
appropriation speaks as it shows itself through the process of appropriation. He tells
us, “The moving force in Showing of Saying is Owning” (1971, p. 127, emphasis
in original), not in the sense of owning as possessing for no one “owns” language,
but in the sense that through language, we may come to understand more about
ourselves as new meanings show themselves and are understood. Thus, owning, as
appropriation, is the owning of the experience of appropriating new meanings as
we name them. It is the process itself which Heidegger refers to as being “on the
way to language.” This way, this appropriation, is the “getting” of the experience of language, and “getting experience” can be interpreted as pirating meaning as we understand it.

Yet for three hundred years pirate as a negative term has been accepted as a cultural norm which has failed to be challenged by virtue of the very language which has constructed its meaning. Let us take Socrates as a brief example. All we know of him is what Plato scribed or, more specifically, our appropriation of Plato’s words as we understand them. Likewise, our interpretation of pirate rests solely on how we appropriate the meaning others have conveyed over the centuries. If we accept uncontested these meanings, we perpetuate through silence an ignorance of a possibility that pirate may also be a positive affirmation. No matter if Plato’s interpretation of Socrates’ words were recorded verbatim, this interpretation has already inculcated our being. And like our understanding of Socrates through Plato, it makes no difference whether Johnson was a man in his own right or a pseudonym for a playwright or Daniel Defoe, for our present-day interpretation of pirate has been largely understood through direct or indirect interpretations of The General History of Pyrates. No matter who authored this seminal text, its meaning has already inculcated our being through its influence on fiction, film and other popular cultural texts in which we interact.

In light of this uncontested appropriation centuries in the making, I now ask that consideration be given to the idea that, not only Derrida, but all humans are pirates because we all get experience, as I stated when I claimed you and I were already a part of the image. I do not wish to offer the verb pirao or its offspring pirate as an essential form of being, for the experiences we engage are rich with diversity stemming from our own relationships with myriad environments in which we dwell. By exploring the possibility that, by its own definition, we are all pirates because we all get experience, we may bring to consciousness how we extract meaning from these experiences and how the term pirate evolved to reflect only the negativity historically associated with that term. And while I do not necessarily believe Derrida would claim to be a pirate, I do believe he would explore the conditions for which the cultural construction of piracy has emerged out of its opposition to that of a privateer given his desire to suspend words and meaning into free play. Through this free play, I also believe Derrida would identify the act of labeling one a pirate as nothing more than a reflection of the pharmakon, in that the interpretation was meant to poison one’s minds against these individuals, concealing a potential healing effect as we contest its meaning. In other words, pirates were scapegoats for a society wrenched in violence associated with colonial and imperial control.

TEACHERS AS PIRATES

The final question to consider then is how, exactly, all of this relates to the teacher in my image. As I viewed Disney’s interpretations of Pirates of the Caribbean, I found myself asking, at what point had Davy Jones been miseducated in such a way that
promulgated his corruption, and thus the corruption of others? Whatever signified the point at which Jones became corrupt, many with whom he came into contact also embodied that corruption through choice; a choice always premised with the eerie sound of Jones’s guttural voice asking his victim, “Tell me, do you feel death yet?” (Dead Man’s Chest, 2006). Of course, the choice given was not much of one: die instantly at the hand of Jones’s sword or exchange death for one hundred years of service aboard Jones’s ship, The Flying Dutchman, which equated to a death by prolonged extension. If his victims chose the latter, their physical form soon mutated into a monstrous figure and they literally became “part of the ship” (Dead Man’s Chest, 2006; At World’s End, 2007) because they had chosen to become part of a corrupted crew.

The complexity of the plot of these movies mimics the complexity of educational institutions in which teachers dwell; a complexity contingent upon the policies, procedures, and norms of the future and present while historically situated within those of the past. Thus, we may ask the same question of educators that I posed of Davy Jones: At what point may teachers become miseducated in such a way that promulgates an already corrupt interpretation of learning via standards and testing, distracting us from a libratory praxis? Once we educators recognize a particular site or act as possessing the potential for corruption, how may we respond in such a way that promotes continuous consciousness of this potentiality as it constructs while simultaneously being constructed within the catachresis?

I do not wish to mislead the reader into believing I compare the corruption and heartless acts of Davy Jones to that of a teacher. On the contrary, what I hope to accomplish is a demonstration of what can happen to our own souls, and thus the souls of our students. If we choose to ignore potential sites of corruption due to our contractual relationship with the state, our modern-day “Letter of Marque,” we may suffer a fate no less violent and grotesque as Jones himself, forever silenced in the abysmal sea of “red tape” and political name-calling and rhetoric. What I seek to explore is how the educational implications embedded within the texts of Pirates of the Caribbean speak directly to a time period where past and future collide with the present via the same imperial strategies implemented during the Golden Age of Piracy. In this light, many teachers embody, not Jones, but the pirates who fight against him and also Lord Cutler Beckett in the name of hope, freedom, and social justice.

The society of yesterday is very similar to the society of today in relation to imperialism and colonialism of the past with neoliberal interpretations of globalization and neocolonial control of developing nations of the present. The rhetoric associated with the delegitimizing of pirates is similar to rhetoric associated with the delegitimizing of teachers as specific cable news networks such as Fox News work to poison the minds of the public against teachers in order to pave the way for privatization in the future (explored in chapter Four). In my image, the teacher plays a minimal role, having been reduced to a technician whose only task is to take attendance and maintain order in her classroom. She represents the limited
role for which teachers are being reduced in a consumer-driven society whose only product of concern appears to be those generated out of test scores. If there is any person who should embody the definition of pirate as getting experience, a teacher should be that person. She must experience the reclamation of classroom spaces as cultural and critical pedagogical seascapes for which meaning is constantly contested and explored. Like historical pirates, contemporary teachers are positioned as the proverbial scapegoats of societal ills. Like the pirates of the past, teachers are struggling for the hope and freedom to define the conditions through which knowledge is obtained outside of dominating discourses on testing.

The present and the past are engaged in a complicated conversation, but I fear we may not be listening. Pinar suggests “‘Complicated Conversation’ is the central concept in contemporary curriculum studies in the United States. It is...the idea that keeps hope alive” (2004, xiii). Complicated conversation, to Pinar, is a curriculum which invites educators to “talk back” to those who seek to limit our roles in our own classrooms. But Pinar also believes complicated conversation can be conducted within the self, where self-reflexivity and thoughtful consideration of the power struggles emerging both within and out of our actions may be contested.

As Pinar further suggests, “Curriculum as complicated conversation invites students to encounter themselves and the world they inhabit through academic knowledge, popular culture, grounded in their own lived experience” (2004, p. 208). This means constructing conditions in classroom spaces which promote connections to the world in which students live. No doubt these experiences must be pirated from a rigid schedule of teaching prescribed standards and a test curriculum while the captain of the ship, the school, watches intently for even the slightest sign of a mutiny. And yet, these experiences also define piracy as getting experience, for each moment we seek to explore modalities of authentic learning for ourselves and our students is a piratical moment, a moment of possibilities. If we do not become cognizant of these possibilities, then what is portrayed as the miseducation of Davy Jones, divulged as we embark together on our voyage towards understanding, may very well become our own.
CHAPTER 2

FROM PAST PIRATES TO POST-PIRACY

READING THE HOOKS AND CRANNIES

Chapter one introduced us to the social construction of pirate and the relative stability of its association with negativity, thievery, and murder, over time. This was in effort to engage Michael Peters’ historiographies as “encouraging the greater awareness of the constructedness of disciplinary history and their ability to wrongfoot us” (2011, p. 218). Peters argues now that the major texts within postmodern frameworks have been established, new writings will extend out from these texts, into the peripheries of culture and society where the relationship between power and resistance exists in its most subtle and nuanced forms. The “canon” of pirate history was established centuries ago through The General History of Pyrates, with this history re-presented in myriad formations through the work of Cordingly, (1996), Gosse (1988/1932), Konstam (2006), Lewis (2008), Parry (2006), Rediker (1987), and Sanders (2007). This list is by no means all-inclusive and does not represent the plethora of individual pirate histories written about Blackbeard, Captain Kidd, Bartholomew Roberts and a host of others sailing the seas under a pirate’s flag during the Golden Age of Piracy. But while these and other authors explored pirate history, none engage a historiography which exposes the wrongdoing within its constructedness, instead perpetuating that wrongdoing through the absence of any trace; namely, that pirate also means to get experience. My writing serves as a corrective to this oversight while also exploring the constructedness for its cultural impact on current interpretations and what we may learn from this process.

Patti Lather argues the question of postmodernism asks, “How do our very efforts to liberate perpetuate the relations of dominance?” (1991, p. 16). This is the question framing this chapter’s reading of Pirates of the Caribbean, where Sparrow’s interpretation of freedom and our consent to this interpretation fails to liberate us from the larger systems we resist. The postmodern question is also located in John Fiske’s interpretation of popular culture where the popular is constructed within the relationship it has with these structures of dominance. To Fiske, popular culture “is always in process” (1989, p. 3), where the relationship occurs as a text, image, clothing, language, video, etc. is being read. What postmodernism offers, then, are multiple readings of a text to explore how our acts of resistance inadvertently perpetuate that which we are resisting. Indeed, Weaver and Daspit caution us against the dominating effects one reading of a text may engender, telling us “any reading of popular culture texts should reflect multiple readings that often contradict each other or act independently from each other” (2000, xix). This is precisely why my
framework consists of multiple theoretical lenses and particular authors’ perspectives in each chapter in an effort to question the cultural construction of piracy, to resist the new branding of piracy as “just another business model” (Mason, 2008, p. 8), and to open the term to the possibilities piracy entails.

Interestingly, one of the critiques against postmodernism is that it fails to challenge capitalism (see Atkinson, 2002; Cole & Hill, 1995; Rikowski & McLaren, 2002). I will discuss this critique in relation to postcolonialism and Marxism in chapter three, along with Marx’s own interpretation of the East India Company through several editorials written during that time period. At this time, I wish only to suggest that capitalism is itself framed within a larger system of language in which it thrives on the unconscious consent of the individual to perpetuate its power. Atkinson, in particular, explores this critique in relation to arguments posed by Cole, Hill, and Rikowski, where they declare postmodernism to be a “theoretical virus which paralyzes progressive thought, politics and practice” (1997, pp. 187-188). To Cole et al., postmodernism is a “destructive force” promoting “radical right” agendas and politics. This is a common misconception in postmodern readings; one in which Derrida addresses directly. Many scholars writing under the umbrella of postmodern theory engage Derrida’s deconstruction as a way to examine the language which perpetuates power. Lather terms this “deconstructive pedagogy,” where language usage and its categories is precisely what is being resisted. And Derrida argues deconstruction is not destruction, in his case, of philosophy. Rather, deconstruction is a close reading of language in order to re-position terms and their meanings, exposing underlying assumptions being used to ground particular arguments; a repositioning where meaning is both different and deferred for readers. Atkinson draws on this difference, arguing postmodernism offers “different ways of seeing the limits to their freedom in the real world” (2002, p. 81), that paralysis occurs when these differences are ignored.

Paula Moya, however, suggests the postmodern approach to difference “ironically erases the distinctiveness and relationality of difference itself... [reinscribing]...a kind of universalizing sameness” (2000, p. 68). Moya’s argument stems from what she perceives as “methodological constraints,” where feminists scholars who wish to engage categories such as race or gender will be labeled as essentialists. Her concerns also include the broader concepts of experience and identity where she argues scholars will be “dismissed as either dangerously reactionary or hopelessly naïve” (p. 68). This, to Moya, is the postmodern predicament which has had a debilitating effect on those who draw directly from their experiences with race or gender to understand these experiences. But Lather addresses these concerns by telling us, “While we cannot help but be engulfed by the categories of our times, self-reflexivity teaches that our discourse is the meaning of our longing” (1991, p. 119). Categories such as race, class, or gender are themselves sites of struggles between power and resistance; the “trick,” as Lather suggests, is in learning how to read our own writing against this struggle as we write, and then reflect on what our writing teaches us about ourselves; the “trick,” as Captain Teague suggests to Jack
Sparrow, his son, in *Pirates of the Caribbean*, is in “learning to live with yourself” (2007, *At World’s End*). This resembles the Heideggarian notion of Being “on the way to language” (1971); that who we are becoming is inescapably intertwined with the language we engage to name the experiences that make us who we are.

Moya, however, exposes a limitation in my own work in that by considering the possibility that all people are pirates, the term loses its effectiveness as a category of possibilities and potentially essentializes all experiences. But I do not assume we all experience language in the same way, or that the cultural constructions emerging out of that language will be similar for all people, even if we are always already pirates. Postmodernism affords me the space to question the differences experienced as a result of these myriad constructions. We may use Atkinson’s concern on the limitations to freedom she employs as an example. Freedom does not read the same across race, class, or gender lines. Nor does it read the same for individuals within these same categories. Yet freedom is the question to be considered when traversing the cultural terrain of piracy, and freedom is the question being addressed in *Pirates of the Caribbean*. My question, then, becomes one of how the Pirate films define freedom, and how this definition presents itself within multiple framings. The remainder of this chapter explores this question and how freedom’s representation in the Pirate films intertwines with the polity of our cultural space and time. Against a Foucauldian backdrop, we begin with history’s engagement of the public spectacle, extend outwards to encompass more subtle forms of power and control through the films’ reliance on the binary between good/evil, Sparrow/Jones, and conclude with emerging means of resistance through which power reasserts itself in society.

**DEAD MEN TELL NO TALES**

“Though the passing of the pirate has taken some of the colour out of the world...it is difficult to deplore his disappearance. For he was not on the whole an attractive individual: and the more we learn about him the less attractive does he become. The picturesque swashbuckler...makes a very good subject for a story, but in actual life he must have been an exceedingly unpleasant character...on the whole a coward and a cutthroat who made away with his victims because dead men tell no tales.”

-Phillip Gosse, 1988/1932, p. 298

With the demise of piracy in the eighteenth century, pirates were forced to find new homes in pirate lore and popular culture as the lands they once sought refuge such as Port Royal, Jamaica and Tortuga on the Island of Hispaniola became the sight of ferocious attacks on their Being. As the King’s empire grew, so too did the need to transport goods such as tea and spices to and from its colonial possessions, making the Caribbean and Indian Ocean prime locations for pirate aggression. This evolved into an increase in presence of the Royal Navy and other sovereign fleets in order to escort merchant vessels traveling these popular trade routes.
Cordingly reports an estimated 2,000 pirates trolling these waters in 1720, which is large given the sparse population of individuals on nearby lands. By 1723, that number had decreased by half with less than two hundred in operation by the year 1726. He attributes this decrease in numbers, not only to heightened naval patrols and visibility, but also to rewards offered for attacking and capturing pirate ships and their crew. All of these efforts worked in conjunction with new legislation granting authority to colonial court systems to adjudicate and then hang those convicted of piracy against the King, replacing a previous mandate of shipping pirates back to England to be tried in the High Admiral’s Court. This became an effective device in pirate eradication through its embrace of the public spectacle (Cordingly, 1996).

Foucault asserts “the public execution did not re-establish justice, it re-activated power” (1977, p. 49). Once pirates were sentenced to death by public hanging, the hanging itself became a ceremonial and celebrated event. Now visible for all to see, individuals were no longer detached from these events as they had previously been when the public spectacles occurred exclusively in England. The bodies of pirates were often left hanging near ports or other public spaces to make visible the punishment in hopes of deterring others from engaging in future crimes. Of course, their hope was constructed out of the fear induced by the spectacle; a fear which did little to alter the acts of more established pirates but was effective in converting the environments of Port Royal, Tortuga, and other safe havens into a bounty hunter’s paradise. Once power was re-activated in these ports, justice was redefined in terms of what was just for the King.

The re-inscription of power through the spectacle is interesting in that, in the first installment of the Pirate films, *Curse of the Black Pearl*, our introduction to Jack Sparrow is of him paying homage to this spectacle. As he arrives in Port Royal via a sinking vessel large enough to hold but one passenger, Sparrow passes by the skeletal remains of three pirates dangling from ropes. A single bird of prey feasts on what few pieces of festering flesh still clings to bone. An epitaph reads “Pirates ye be warned” (2003). Gosse’s usage of the pirate mantra “dead men tell no tales” becomes obsolete as the skeletal remains speak volumes across space and time through the absence of any life.

It is this absence of life which Peter Leeson counters, suggesting “dead men tell no tales” relies on the presence of pirate victims to recall their experiences to others. To Leeson, the popular images constructed of tortuous madmen also constructed what he terms the “branding” of the pirates’ image so they could capitalize on the reputation constructed out of that image (2009). This image is what prompted a fear of pirates who did not necessarily need to kill at all, for most sailors surrendered upon sight of a pirate ship’s flag or colours. Indeed, Angus Konstam claims the infamous Blackbeard never actually killed anyone. His reputation led most to surrender upon sight of his colour flag (2006). I wish not to negate the probability of pirates engaging in multiple formations of torture and cruelty in their own right. As I stated earlier, there are hundreds of texts addressing this violence. At this point, I want only to demonstrate how the public spectacle participated in the demise of the pirate. This
participation is evidenced in Maynard’s manipulation of Blackbeard’s body for the benefit of the public spectacle. Upon striking Blackbeard a deathly blow, Maynard removed Blackbeard’s head and displayed it proudly on the bowsprit of his ship. Legend has it Blackbeard’s decapitated body circumnavigated the ship three times before descending to the ocean floor. Maynard’s act embraced the spectacle in his public statement of the horror to be experienced when pirates were captured; piracy was no longer tolerated by the King.

Another testament to the power re-inscribed by the spectacle is the actual testament of John Phillips, a pirate whose career lasted a meager nine months before his demise. Phillips’ testimony against his assailants depended not on his words but on his posthumous appearance in court. His murderers were members of his own crew who decided a mutiny against the severely injured Captain Phillips was their best course of action, thrusting his wounded body overboard to drown. According to Brenda Lewis, “officers of the court had recovered Phillips’ body, cut off the head, pickled it to make sure it remained identifiable and entered it as prosecution evidence” (2008, p. 89). It was through Phillips’ absence of life, demonstrated via the presence of his pickled crown, that these pirates were also condemned to death. His crown made a spectacle of those who wish to defy the crown of authority in which pirates are historically depicted to have done. And it is through this absence of life which historically situates the Pirate films while also serving as a reminder of the absence in modern society of the brutal, public statements regarding punishment and torture as experienced at the end of the Golden Age of Piracy.

The demise of the pirate is a classic example of Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*. Once a flagrant form of punishment, the public spectacle evolved into more subtle, nuanced forms of control where the individual embodies the panopticon, constantly surveying the actions of the self and others, as is evidenced in the number of “landlubbers” who no longer offered protection to pirates seeking refuge in Tortuga and other locations. Foucault argues these new mechanisms of power “are not ensured by right but by technique, not by law but by normalization, not by punishment but by control, methods that are employed at all levels and in forms that go beyond the state and its apparatus” (1978, p. 89). What became normalized through the body of society, extending out to encompass what Foucault termed “capillaries,” those minute aspects of culture including individual bodies, was the belief that pirate meant only the negative. Cultural keepsakes such as the *General History of Pyrates* re-inscribed this belief until the pirates association with negativity was no longer questioned. As the distance between the public spectacles occurring at the end of the Golden Age of Piracy and modern-day forms of control widened, a sort of romanticizing of the pirate began to evolve. Cordingly’s text chronicles this evolution and credits authors such as Stevenson with the popularized, contemporary image of pirates as we view them today. And it is through these cultural constructions that the deceased pirates of the Golden Age have been able to tell their tales, never once objecting to the embellishments granted through cultural shifts in space and time: embellishments such as treasure maps and dead men’s
chests, talking parrots and black schooners, most of which may be attributed to Stevenson’s *Treasure Island*.

Gosse suggests “it is likely the disappearance [of pirates] is permanent...yet it is possible” (1988/1932, p. 298). This statement adheres to a privileging of speech. What Gosse failed to recognize, however, was how historical pirates continued their speech through multiple writings, fictional tales, and visual images constructed by others well into the present. The initial scene where Sparrow pays his respects to this speech appears to be a direct rebuttal to Gosse in that pirates have not disappeared at all. Rather, they have been dormant, lying just beneath the fluctuating tides of culture and society. Indeed, the first decade of the twenty-first century has witnessed a resurgence of piracy, not only in popular cultural spaces such as the Pirate films, but also in the Horn of Africa, the Gulf of Aden, the Niger Delta, in the virtual world and cyberspace, as well as an increase in the number of arguments engaging a pirate metaphor.

Reading this resurgence of piracy requires what Said refers to as a “contrapuntal reading” which takes into account how processes of imperialism and resistance work themselves into a “vision of the moment” (1993, p. 67). This vision must then be juxtaposed with the “revisions it later provoked” (p. 67). Pirates operating off of African coastlines will be explored in chapter four, only after present-day revisions of piracy have been detailed. At this time, I wish to address the duality between good/evil and how this comparison is being engaged in the Pirate films to redefine freedom; a freedom that present-day pirates seek to obtain. And to address this duality, we must read Davy Jones.

**DAVY JONES: MONSTROUS MUTATION OR ZOMBIE POLITICIAN?**

Popular culture as a site of struggle and possibility needs to be understood not only in terms of its productive elements, but also in terms of how its forms articulate processes through which the production, organization, and regulation of consent take place around various social practices at the level of daily life.

-Giroux and Simon, 1989, p. 14

When *Curse of the Black Pearl* debuted in 2003, it had to sever the centuries-old stronghold culture had with the pirate as a negative being. This severing was accomplished via persuasion, which Giroux and Simon suggest is how consent is garnered. After Sparrow enters Port Royal, he finds himself engaged in battle with Will Turner. As Sparrow rids Turner of his sword, Turner, recognizing Sparrow broke the rules of engagement, shouts, “You Cheated!” To which Sparrow responds, “Pirate!” Here, attention is called to the identification of pirate as a thief. *Pirates of the Caribbean* acknowledges the centuries-old interpretation, pays its respects, and then sets its course on reconfiguring the meaning. As Turner finds himself in need of Sparrow’s assistance in rescuing his beloved Elizabeth Swann from a crew of cursed pirates, the two set sail in search of the ship *The Black Pearl*. The distinction previously made of pirates as thief soon becomes blurred as Sparrow informs Turner...
that Turner’s father, “Bootstrap” Bill, is “a good man...a good pirate” (2003). Similar statements are made by Elizabeth Swann as she describes Sparrow, a known pirate, as a good man, and later Turner, portrayed as a good man, as a pirate. In the conclusion of *Curse of the Black Pearl*, it is Turner who finally recognizes Sparrow as being a good man, thus legitimizing the statement that pirates are also good people. And if Turner is accepting of this notion, surely the audience will as well, for Turner is depicted as the quintessential good man.

This persuasion, however, does not rest solely on the words spoken by Sparrow, Turner, or Swann; rather, the engagement of modernism’s dueling opposition between good/evil is employed. Sparrow and the others are juxtaposed next to the infamous Davy Jones and his crew of the damned. Jones has an interesting evolution in his own right in that it was never determined that Jones was actually a living person. His signature appearance emerged out of comments written by Defoe where he recorded “Heaving the rest into Davy Jones’s locker,” (as quoted in Curran, 2007, p. 112) in his essay. Curran presents several theories associated with Jones’s construction. One popular belief is how many sailors constructed the term “Davy Jones” as a euphemism for the Biblical Devil and Jonah; both names were considered a bad omen to utter while at sea. The Welsh believed Jones’s locker was akin to purgatory, where people were sentenced to await the time when a final judgment would be handed down by God. Those of the Caribbean and West Indies believed Jones was not a reflection of Christian Europe but a Creole ghost associated with witchcraft and black magic. These ideas offer Jones as an evil spirit that would “store” his victims on a remote island and feed on them at leisure while wreaking havoc on ships unfortunate enough to sail adjacent seas. Curran’s other theories do present Jones as an actual person; from a not-so-famous pirate sailing the Caribbean in the 1600’s to a pub owner in Cornwall, England who press-ganged drunken patrons onto ships in need of a crew. What is explicit in all of the theories posited by Curran, albeit in various cultural contexts, is that Davy Jones is synonymous with destruction, Jones’s locker is synonymous with death, and that our negotiations with the terms constructing Davy Jones have been a negotiation through silent acceptance of these ideas. To my knowledge, there has not been one representation of Davy Jones and his locker as meaning anything other than some form of destruction.

*Pirates of the Caribbean* certainly does not challenge Jones’s relationship with death and destruction; on the contrary, the films usher Jones into the twenty-first century by constructing an image of what Jones looks like. What has been left to the imagination since Defoe’s inscription in 1726 is now solidified through Disney’s imagineering of his appearance. A horrid, grotesque looking figure, grey in color with octopus-like tentacles protruding from his jaw, crab-like claws in the place of his extremities, this larger-than-life mutant of a man is depicted as the ultimate tyrant of the sea. What make-up and wardrobe fail to accomplish, computer-generated technology succeeds in bringing to life that which imagination could only dream of: a nightmare.
CHAPTER 2

Lawrence Grossberg asserts:

The specificity of popular discourses depends upon the powerful affective relations which they establish with their audiences. Struggles over the construction of the popular are, in fact, less economic and ideological than affective. They are fought on the terrain of moods, emotions, passions, and energy.” (1989, p. 107, emphasis in original)

Jones’s appearance is meant to induce fear in the audience and engages the affective in that we become emotionally attached to the plight of the pirates as a result of that fear. But what are we afraid of? What about these films engages our energies and our passions so readily that we permit ourselves to ignore the fact that Jones is himself portrayed as a pirate, a robber of souls whose treasure is those bodies he condemns to his locker? What is the difference between Jones and his crew and Sparrow and his friends, for are they all not pirates? I contend this difference is the precise point where the films engage modernism’s binary of good/evil as the terrain on which our personal struggle with difference is fought.

This difference is evident in Pirates of the Caribbean’s repeated message that pirates are also good people and that it is not only acceptable, but encouraged, to embody their plight for freedom. To help persuade us of the validity of this claim, Pirates of the Caribbean shifts the focus from good/evil to that which the movies imply distinguishes the two: corruption. Sparrow, Turner and “Bootstrap” Bill are all pirates, and all good men. Yet they are nothing like Jones, grotesque in appearance and worse than a pirate in that he is corrupt. This imagery continues to persuade us as the effects of corruption are further demonstrated in the pirates who mutinied against Sparrow when he captained The Black Pearl. Now under the command of Captain Barbossa, the pirates become corrupt through the greed experienced upon the appropriation of Aztec gold treasure, rendering them walking skeletons upon moon’s light.

The repetitive use of horrific imagery of those deemed worse than evil works to persuade us to attach ourselves to Sparrow and the others because, even though they are pirates, they are still better than Jones, Barbossa, or his cursed crew due to their refraining from some form of corruption. As we consent to this imagery, the affective becomes a willing accomplice. The pirates’ struggle for freedom becomes our personal struggle in that we all want to be free, however we choose to define that term.

We must tread lightly here; there is danger lurking in these waters because how the Pirate films define freedom is what we ultimately consent to via the persuasive techniques already mentioned, and not merely Sparrow’s struggle to attain it. I contend Pirates of the Caribbean presents what Giroux defines as a neoliberal interpretation of freedom. He tells us this concept “is largely organized according to the narrow notions of individual self-interest and limited to the freedom from constraints” (2011, p. 9). This narrow interpretation of freedom is precisely the
freedom Sparrow seeks in his plight. As we attach ourselves to this plight, we also consent to this narrowness with issues of social justice reduced to side-effects in his quest to be free from all constraints. Giroux argues this passivity towards social responsibility hinges on the simultaneous notion that power is perceived as a “necessary evil” (2011, p. 10) within the framing of a neoliberal freedom. Jones represents that evil, and his corruption is also grounded on the idea of a freedom to engage in one’s own choices. So the dichotomy between good/evil becomes the technique in which neoliberal policies reassert themselves in society, freeing us from social constraints while repositioning us further within a narrow view of our own role in that society.

In the Pirate films, Sparrow collaborates with Turner, Swann and others to fight against Jones. But each individual has his or her own goal. Sparrow wants to be free to sail the seas aboard his beloved Black Pearl; Turner wants to free his father, “Bootstrap” Bill from the Flying Dutchman and the clutches of Davy Jones; Barbossa wants to free Calypso, the Sea Goddess, from human form in which she is imprisoned, but only in hopes she may help free him from the constraints imposed by Beckett; Swann wants to free all pirates from the control of the East India Trading Company, but only so she may live happily-ever-after with Turner. But Maxine Greene argues these acts are “antithetical because they alienate persons from their own landscapes because they impose a fallacious completeness on what is perceived” (1988, p. 22). Greene argues this alienation is promulgated by an acceptance of a particular structure in society where individuals feel hopelessly trapped. Even though the pirates collaborate, their efforts are presented as the means to an end, a freedom from constraints as each individual defines them. And it is this definition of freedom in which the characters appear hopelessly trapped. As a result, the films engage multiple narrative threads involving the constant manipulation of one another, making it difficult at times to follow individual plights. The one consistency is the dichotomy between good/evil, Sparrow/Jones, which potentially serves two purposes. 1.) The dichotomy distracts us from the neoliberal vision of freedom being re-presented to which we may consent. 2.) The dichotomy serves to remind us that even though pirates are now good people, they must refrain from any sort of corruption lest they (we) end up like Jones.

So the question becomes, is Jones a monstrous mutation evolving out of his own personal choices in which he is free to decide? Or is Jones emblematic of Giroux’s zombie politician? Giroux argues:

the correlation between the growing atomization of the individual and the rise of a culture of cruelty [represents] a type of zombie politics in which the living dead engage in forms of rapacious behavior that destroy almost every facet of a substantive democratic polity. (2011, p. 12)

As a result of this atomization, individuals become indifferent to issues of social justice and become numb to the idea that individual freedom is not without its consequences imposed on others. Giroux cites examples such as Limbaugh, Beck, and Palin for the outright indignation they display towards the Other in their public statements. Jones
exemplifies this zombie politics in his rapacious behavior on the seas. He destroys ships, souls, anything unfortunate enough to cross his path. Jones embraces fear both through the affective and through language. Where Palin might yell “reload” (Giroux, 2011) against a Beckian backdrop of the return of Hitler, Jones asks, “Do you fear death? Do you fear that dark abyss? All your deeds laid bare, all your sins punished? I can offer you...an escape” (Dead Man’s Chest, 2006). His escape, however, is framed in the context of a freedom from being judged for how one chooses to live one’s life, promulgating what Adam Smith referred to as individual self-interest as the driving force motivating the movements between society and culture, a force he defined as the “invisible hand” (2003/1776) guiding a capitalist economy; an invisible hand which has been replaced by an “invisible hook” in the world of piracy (Leeson, 2009).

At this moment, when we are engaged in an affective rebuttal against evil, the fear becomes, not of Jones, a “necessary evil,” but of the possibility that we are already more like Jones than we care to admit; the culture of cruelty in which we live has already inculcated our being. Like Jones, those who choose to join his crew become zombies, the living dead whose appearances transform into monstrous mutations. Not because of a particular choice, but because of the presentations of choice as being either/or, as if no other possibilities existed. We consent to a neoliberal interpretation of freedom supported by the invisible hand which cares not what the Other is doing for it is in one’s best interest not to acknowledge such cultural and societal cruelty. To ignore one hand in favor of the other produces an existential crisis where we not only isolate ourselves from others, perpetuating the atomization of the individual which Giroux suggests encourages zombie politics, but also in repressing those elements of the self which need to be fleshed out and understood. In response, we act as Jones did; we lash out against society in violent calls to reload, or worse, we cease caring altogether. In this light, Jones becomes a monstrous mutation as a result of his engagement with zombie politics. All those who acquiesce to his power out of fear of the Other become the living dead where individual indifference literally feeds the monster Jones has become; a monster in which capitalism and the promulgation of corporate self-interest (read profit) has also become.

Punk Capitalist or Postmodern Pirate?

My intention in this text is not to paint a bleak portrait of today’s culture and society where the complexities of this culture are reduced to some arbitrary dichotomy between Sparrow/Jones. By exposing the dichotomy for which Pirates of the Caribbean situates itself, along with a very brief rendering of the history of piracy through the engagement of the public spectacle, and stemming out to include more subtle forms of power and control, we may be better positioned to problematize the binary and its reliance on corruption. The images constructed in the Pirate films are themselves situated with/ in a culture where corporate influence and a consumer-driven economy impress upon every facet of life. As neoliberalism gains momentum through globalization, cultural representations (popular and otherwise) and the number of living dead increases in
population through the influence corporations now have on political campaigns, legislation, and educational policies; the space to resist this narrowness increasingly becomes the focus of these influences in order to decrease the space itself.

But as Foucault asserts, “where there is power there is resistance, and yet...this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power” (1978, p. 95). Power and resistance are inescapably bound to one another at multiple sites. Even though the Pirate films define freedom in the narrow sense, we cannot deny Sparrow is resisting the power imposed on him by Jones, whose own power is granted by his immortal state. And yet, this immortality is rendered a useless power without the desire of Sparrow, and also others, to resist. What the Pirate films neglect to consider is how good/evil do not actually oppose each other; rather, they reify the other’s position. Sparrow is now “a good man...a good pirate” (Curse of the Black Pearl, 2003); but he is only a good man so long as Jones is used comparatively. As soon as a pirate emerges in the context of the larger culture, he is immediately stripped of his goodness and becomes once again subjugated as the Other in order for privateers, or, in the case of our cultural space and time, corporate privatization, to legitimize the actions of private industry as it permeates society. Matt Mason’s recent argument on The Pirate’s Dilemma exemplifies the relationship between power and resistance. Mason’s thesis is that capitalism needs pirates in order to shift the market forward in new directions. He informs:

Pirates have been the architect of new societies for centuries: they have established new genres of film and music and created new types of media, often operating anonymously and always- initially, at least- outside the law...
Pirates create positive social and economic changes, and understanding piracy today is more important than ever. (2008, p. 34)

Mason recognizes pirates to be good people although this acknowledgement hinges on their benefits to a capitalist economy. To support his claims, Mason interviews Richard Meyer (Richard Hell), a former front-man for several punk music bands during the 1970’s. Meyer is perhaps most famous for his construction of the image of the punk rocker with spiked hair and ripped jeans. Drawing his inspiration from “rebellious French poets,” Meyer constructed his image as a “rejection of having who you are imposed on you by corporations” (in Mason, 2008, p. 11). This example embraces the definition of pirate as getting experience; an experience of resistance to the power structures imposed on one’s being. But just because one works outside the law, as Mason suggests all pirates originate, does not exempt them from a system of power manifesting itself within the larger system of language. When I read Mason’s example, what Meyer appeared to be doing was attempting to construct a new language where he was free to express himself with others. There is a consciousness about Meyer’s actions that resists a neoliberal interpretation of freedom as evidenced in Pirates of the Caribbean. What happened to Meyer, and punk music in general, was that corporations, recognizing this new space, commodified the look Meyer and others constructed that reflected their resistance in punk style and music
(Mason, 2008). As a member of several bands, Meyer utilized the stage to engage in conversation with the new language being constructed. Thirty years after this conversation began, Mason proclaims “punk is dead” (2008, p. 11), having been commodified by the market and branded “alternative” music.

Mason then argues the “independent spirit” of punk spawned a “do-it-yourself” revolution (2008, p. 12) where creativity and innovative ideas allowed others to reject authority and carve out niches of their own. But where Mason views this space as propelling the market forward into new spaces, I view this as the commodification of these spaces. The D.I.Y. revolution Mason cites has been sensationalized through outlets such as D.I.Y. networks on cable and satellite channels. Home Depot’s slogan of “You can do it, we can help” is matched by Lowe’s proclamation of “Let’s build something together.” Yet, in the interview with Meyer, there is a consciousness of resistance to the very structures of society which branded the image he constructed. Yes, these forms of resistance did shift the market into new directions, but that was not Meyer’s intention. His goal was to remain “unclassifiable. Then they [corporations] don’t own you” (Meyer, in Mason, 2008, p. 11). So as these new industries shifted, so, too, did Meyer. No longer branding the punk hairstyle he made famous, Meyer shifted his actions and style into poetry, writing, and art, and continues to look for ways to resist power structures (Mason, 2008).

Even piracy is shifting in meaning, where Peter Leeson contends pirates operating during the Golden Age were strictly profit-driven. He engages Smith’s invisible hand and re-presents it as an invisible hook with subtle differences such as the consideration that criminal self-interests relied on cooperation amongst pirates as well as those legitimate organizations such as corporations. Where Leeson differs from Mason is that Mason challenges the negative connotation associated with pirates while Leeson embraces that connotation to promulgate his contention that pirates were only motivated by money.

Leeson’s reliance on “criminal self-interest” stems from Smith’s belief that to serve one’s own interests, we must serve others as well. “Serving others’ interests gets them to cooperate with us, serving our own” (Leeson, 2009, p. 2). Criminals, or “sea dogs,” as Leeson calls pirates, were no exception (“Sea dogs” is a peculiar term for Leeson to use because, according to Gabriel Kuhn, the term actually refers to privateers (2010)). Leeson’s criminal self-interest views issues of social justice as a means to individual ends without acknowledging the possibility that pirates engaged in piracy to be free from the constraints imposed by merchant seamen and what Leeson depicts as “captain predation” (2009), where legalized sea merchants sometimes tortured crew members. Even though Mason’s argument is firmly situated in capitalism and his advocating for the necessity of pirates to propel the economy forward, he does acknowledge modern-day pirates such as Meyer are not motivated by profit but by a desire to be free. Yes, this freedom is a freedom from constraints, but it is also a freedom with others to explore the new terrains being created.

The dilemma to consider, then, is whether to negate these acts of resistance due to their eventual commodification or whether to embrace the efforts of resisters and
then consciously choose to learn from the limitations imposed on them through the commodification process. Mason utilized the term “punk capitalism” to describe individuals such as Meyer and “to describe the new set of market conditions governing society” (2008, p. 8). In this society, pirates become co-chairs, the limitations are “established ideas” and “outdated dogma” (Mason, 2008, p. 13), and the greatest resource is creativity. I reject Mason’s contention of punk capitalism on the basis that his approach appears merely to update the dogma he believes has become “old,” and it reduces the concept of piracy as a corporate business model which Mason advocates in his writing.

I prefer to engage the term postmodern pirate as a path to challenge the language system in which capitalism is firmly situated. But even postmodernism does not operate beyond its own limitations. Michael Peters informs “different scholars have suggested that once the meanings of the term have been fixed and stabilized, the life will have been drained from it and the debate will be over” (2011, p. 25). Such is the case with pirates, with the cultural consensus of pirate as a negative. But even though the primary texts were established centuries ago, the fascination with pirates has continued to exist through imagination and cultural images and texts offering new perspectives on how one reads the pirate. Once a stable pronunciation of negativity, new interpretations of pirates are emerging in discursive practices that engage Peters’ description of “post” as meaning “‘the new,’ ‘the beginning,’ or ‘a return,’ historically speaking” (2011, p. 24). The return of pirate themes has moved beyond the history of piracy and is promulgating a “new” vision where piracy is reduced to a business model through which we may experience life, but it still maintains that pirates function on the outside of the law, perpetuating the myth that pirate is only a negative but now has hopes of evolving into positive consumers in a product-driven world.

What we must resist, then, is this “new” brand of piracy through the very language presently attempting to rebrand pirates as “punk capitalist” because this term ignores how pirates’ resistance has historically been against a system of imperialism. And we must explore how this resistance is being matched by those with the power to name them pirates as a way to delegitimize that resistance. In so doing, those in power continue to provide legitimacy to privatization which often acts in similar fashion as a pirate. As Brenda Lewis makes clear, “this [the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries] was a cruel world, and pirates, who frequently came from the most desperate sections of society, often regarded piracy as a way out of its toils” (2008, p. 78). Profit may very well have been a motive for entry into piracy, but it was not the only motive. Piracy provided a path away from the culture of cruelty evidenced in that society; a culture of cruelty Giroux identifies as evident in today’s society as well.

Lewis’s argument on the culture of cruelty of the past is framed within the economy of competition where “access to material advantage” (2008, p. 78) was open to those outside of the “rich, influential, and fortunate” (p. 79). This economy is consistently reapplied throughout pirate texts and reasserts itself continuously in
society and in schools as an avenue upon which power and resistance engage each other. Mason’s argument is no exception. The pirate’s dilemma he discusses is a corporate dilemma in that industries must now decide whether to silence resisters through legal channels or compete with them by commodifying the resistance so that it becomes normalized in culture until it is no longer perceived as resistance. Interestingly, he cites Disney’s co-chair, Anne Sweeney, as saying “Pirates compete the same way we do...we understand now that piracy is a business model” (in Mason, 2008, p. 59).

The idea of piracy as a business model is disturbing in that it suggests a commodification of resistance itself. Indeed, both Mason and Leeson’s arguments attest to this emerging technique of power, repositioning piracy in a more positive light, that is, as a “necessary evil” for the benefit of the corporation. Mason relies on the pirates “outlaw” status as a distinction between pirates and legitimate private corporations now co-opting its meaning. Leeson relies on his distinction between the invisible hand and the invisible hook. The former being a legitimate economic principle as viewed by those in society who legitimize this ideology though various acts of self-interests and indifference to social responsibility. The latter an illegitimate act due to the lack of papers offering any sort of validation: papers such as business licenses, legal documents, school and corporate partnerships, political action campaigns, and employee and teacher contracts. What Leeson advocates, then, is that it is morally acceptable to engage in cooperation to serve one’s own purpose. Leeson’s invisible hook becomes Jack Sparrow, legitimized in the eyes of the audience through the embodiment of his plight for freedom. But is it Davy Jones who secures this invisible hook to the historical depiction of pirates as negative and corrupt people intent on destroying anything in their wake.

This is an interesting parallel in the Pirate films because it is Sparrow who has the established relationship with Beckett, not Jones, as evidenced in the branded “P” on their persons marked by the Other. The mark is also reminiscent of a lesson learned by Captain John Avery, heralded as an exceptional outlaw in that he was never killed or captured while pirating. What Avery learned was that pirates operate on land as well as the sea, and it is to this land we must now turn our attention.