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SUCCESSFUL PIRATES AND CAPITALIST FANTASIES: 
CHARTING FICTIONAL REPRESENTATIONS OF EIGHTEENTH- 
AND EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH FORTUNE HUNTERS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the 
Louisiana State University and 
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in

The Department of English

by

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Abstract

Successful Pirates and Capitalist Fantasies investigates British pirate fiction during the emergence of capitalism. I initially began my dissertation with the intention of focusing on historical pirates, privateers, and common sailors (the men who “turned” pirate) in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but after close readings of pirate ballads, rogue biographies, plays, novellas, and novels by (among others) Daniel Defoe, John Gay, Charles Johnson, and Jane Austen, I determined that this pirate fiction is not about the historical pirate at all; the deployment of pirate figures in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British fiction is an invented tradition of representation that has far more to do with British ideology—social, political, and economic structures within the homeland and throughout the evolving British empire—than it does with the historical pirate figure. From the first, depictions of the pirate abroad correspond to the desires of the emerging commercial and trading classes at home. Pirates understand the world’s trade routes, practices, and commodities better than most Europeans, and they become (for the emerging middle class) educational guides who inspire trading, investing, fortune hunting, and colonizing. Pirate fiction, which sensationalizes the fortunes that can be made in the East and West Indies, functions as a didactic tool, or a kind of chap book for eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century readers.

My analysis of British pirate fiction spans the century-long period from the early eighteenth to the early nineteenth century, wherein the pirate/fortune hunter evolves from an outlaw to a well-moneyed and powerful middle-class subject, a legitimate...
member of the British empire. I argue that this change results precisely from England's increasing dependence upon the colonial realm for economic success. In the early eighteenth century, Captain Avery is the pirate king/colonizer of Madagascar; in 1728, the pirate is reconfigured (and satirized) as a colonial merchant/plantation owner; and finally, the pirate emerges in the early nineteenth century as a successful and wealthy British naval officer, a prominent member of the middle class.
In A Cruising Voyage Round the World Captain Woodes Rogers recounts his adventurous circumnavigation, long since considered "the most successful privateering expedition ever undertaken." In addition to rescuing Alexander Selkirk, and communicating with the Madagascar pirates (whom he dubs "miserable Wretches"), Rogers returns from his travels with £800,000 of plunder for his Bristol backers. I begin my discussion with Rogers's remarks from his Preface (above) because they demonstrate that as early as 1712 a tradition of writings about the pirate figure had already been well established in Europe. According to Rogers the pirate is a "despicable" outlaw, a criminal on the high seas who must be brought to justice.
However in his introduction to *A Cruising Voyage*, Rogers expresses trepidation about former pirate representations which configure the outlaw as a “romantick” hero, a “knight errant,” a “prodig[y] of courage and conduct,” a Robin Hood of the deep. By comparison, Rogers fears that his “truthful” narrative will “look flat and insipid.”

Rogers’s heightened self-conscious awareness of the difference between pirate fact and pirate fiction marks the occasion of *Successful Pirates and Capitalist Fantasies*. My discussion, which spans the period from 1694 through 1814, investigates the evolving tradition—the invention and reinvention / facing, defacing, and refacing—of pirate identity in English fiction. As the pirate figure matures during this century, his myriad faces illuminate England’s own identity both at home and in the colonies—the inside and outside of the English empire. The pirate’s is a vital story intertwined with the rise of the English empire, the rise of capitalism, the imperial conquest of other lands, and the emergence of English trading peoples whose wealth and power is derived increasingly, not from land but from mobile property. The pirate of the English imagination is a product of English nationalism; he is alternately defiant, compliant, a student, and a teacher of English ideology, trade, and colonial conquest, and as such, he eventually becomes the rightful inheritor of English wealth and power, a legitimate and respected member of polite English society.

The nexus between the fictional pirate and the English nation resides in trade, the planting of English colonies, and the fortune-hunting mentality which, beginning in the late seventeenth century, consumes members of the English middle-class. Tales of the pirate’s prodigious success at accumulating spoils in the East and West Indies conflate
with trading desire; pirate stories evidence that fortunes can be made abroad.

Throughout the eighteenth century, however, the distinction between trade and piracy is narrow indeed. Although the trade merchant’s actions and ambitions in the colonial arena begin to be perceived as heroic, accumulation of possessions and property—power—in the colonies do not rival land, title, and credit at home as the means to an elite status within polite English society until the early nineteenth century.

The intention of this project then is to chart the evolution of the pirate / fortune hunter in fiction as he proceeds towards this time in English history where his colonial authority and material possessions position him as a well moneyed and legitimate member of the English nation. The pirate transitions from rebel to legitimate subject by virtue of a thorough rehistoricization of historical pirate identity which I interpret as an evolving invention of tradition, the replacement and refacing of pirate characteristics with middle-class characteristics. The representation of the pirate figure in fiction has everything to do with British ideology—social, political, and economic structures within the homeland and throughout the evolving British empire—and conversely little to do with the historical pirate figure. From the first, fictional depictions of the pirate abroad correspond to the desires of the emerging commercial and trading classes at home.

Colonization and trade are the overriding ambitions of the fictional pirate figure of the early eighteenth century. In the anonymously written rogue biography The Life and Adventures of Capt. John Avery, and Charles Johnson’s play The Successful Pyrate (fictional works based on the historical exploits of the pirate Captain Henry Avery), middle-class desire for land and wealth is fulfilled outside of England through the theft of
Indian riches and the establishment of a pirate nation on the island of Madagascar. Furthermore, the desire to climb the social ladder by way of the marriage market is underscored in these two works through both an unsuccessful attempt at, and a successful union between an Indian princess and a pirate. Indeed, the representation of the pirates' island mirrors the desires of middle-class subjects on the island of Great Britain. And while desire for trade and international business is significantly present in these tales, it becomes fully manifested in Defoe's fiction where the pirate's behavior is virtually indistinguishable from a (ad)venture capitalist hero. Pirates, who understand the world's trade routes, practices, and commodities better than most Europeans, become for Defoe educational guides designed to inspire trading, investing, fortune hunting, and colonizing. In this sense, early pirate fiction functions as a didactic tool, or a kind of chap book for early eighteenth-century readers. Unlike the earlier colonist pirates of Madagascar, Defoe's pirates demonstrate a significant shift in pirate identity; in place of the theme of marriage, Defoe substitutes a rape of Indian spoils. Defoe underscores his nationalist agenda in The King of Pirates and Captain Singleton by inventing pirates who are loyal to England. Accordingly they rob the Indian princess rather than marry her.

In Polly, John Gay further complicates the identity of the fictional pirate by conflating pirate identity with the fortune hunting practices of the colonial merchant/plantation owner. In his colonial satire Gay begins to question the presence, motivations, and destructive potential of the English merchant in the colonial setting. Gay is among the first of eighteenth-century writers to represent the English colonial
merchant / fortune hunter as a kind of pirate. As the middle-class country gentleman proceeds from his position as a capitalist inside the English empire, to his position as a colonial merchant in the West Indies, he begins to exploit the economic potential outside of England on the borders of the empire. Finally, the piratical behavior of the fortune hunter surpasses that of the literal pirates of the opera. Gay’s treatment of the figurative pirate who wield power in the colonial domain foreshadows by eighty years the figurative pirates of Jane Austen’s novels, the naval officers who are perceived by aristocrats as “dangerous” figures connected with buggery, infidelity, alcoholism,crudeness, and violence. However, as Austen demonstrates, the shift in England’s economy away from credit, title, and landed interest in favor of a material culture which becomes increasingly dependent on colonial production for domestic comfort, produces an environment in which prosperous naval officers (men not dissimilar from Gay’s colonial subjects) emerge as part of a well monied, respectable, and increasingly powerful middle-class. The lands of the English empire are now locations where merchants and naval officers, once depicted as pirate-like, are able to make respectable fortunes.

The fictional pirate of the deep requires more than a century to evolve fully into a legitimate member of the British empire. In the early eighteenth century, Captain Avery is the pirate king / colonizer of Madagascar; in 1729, the pirate is reconfigured as a colonial merchant / plantation owner; and finally, by the early nineteenth century, he emerges as a well-moneyed British naval officer, a prominent member of the middle-class.
The depiction of the pirate figure as a heroic outlaw, or as Rogers states, a "prodig[y] of courage and conduct," originates in Alexander Exquemelin’s first-hand pirate narrative, *The Buccaneers of America* (1678) in which Exquemelin documents the exploits of Henry Morgan, and other West Indian buccaneers who waged war against the Spanish, in the mid seventeenth century. Rife with descriptions of battles and buccaneer behavior, Exquemelin’s narrative lionizes the pirate figure as a kind of "knight-errant," a romantic hero fighting for liberty against an oppressive enemy. One of the earliest fictional pirate tales, a broadside ballad entitled *A Copy of Verses, Composed by Captain Henry Avery, Lately Gone to Sea to Seek His Fortune* (1694), echoes the buccaneer glory of Exquemelin’s narrative by depicting the pirate as a revolutionary, a Robin Hood-like figure who retaliates against an oppressive English regime. This pirate tale, the first that I discuss, is the fictional work which most closely parallels the trajectory of the historical pirate out of English society. *A Copy of Verses* describes the harsh conditions within England that provoke the pirate to mutiny. The spirit of the ballad coincides with much of the pirate history that has been recuperated, particularly in the last twenty years. The historical pirate figure symbolizes resistance to European laws, social, moral, ethical, and religious codes of conduct, and the encroachment of empire.

Christopher Hill and Marcus Rediker have both been instrumental in re-reading the historical pirate as a radical—a persecuted lower-class European subject who
established an egalitarian/democratic form of government outside of Europe, which briefly blossomed in the midst of (and as a result of) the tyrannical and hierarchical forms of government and social structure that existed within European society. These scholars gathered evidence from court records, ship logs, songs and ballads, Daniel Defoe's *A General History of the Pyrates*, and from the few first-hand pirate/buccaneer accounts, including Alexander Exquemelin's *The Buccaneers of America* (1678), and William Dampier's *A New Voyage Round the World* (1697), to posit that pirate and buccaneer communities were uniformly loyal to one another, were empowered to elect and impeach their captains, were able to distribute their wealth in a relatively egalitarian manner, and progressive enough to establish a kind of pirate insurance policy for men who were injured in battle. Indeed, this reading of the pirate community—and of the common sailor as the first wage laborer in the capitalist system—lends itself to a Marxist analysis of seafaring labor exploitation, one which Rediker provocatively pursues.

Following from this reading of the historical pirate community as egalitarian/democratic, Christopher Hill, Max Novak, Joel Baer, and most recently Hans Turley have interpreted portions of English pirate fiction as reflecting the historical pirate's revolutionary spirit. For example, Hill and Novak have written on the pirate captain Mission who appears in the second volume of Defoe's *A General History of the Pyrates*. Although not communist, the government of Libertalia, founded by Mission and the priest Caraccioli, was undoubtedly democratic. In his work on Captain Avery, Joel Baer also argues that the fictional pirate's "chief motive for becoming a pirate [is] love of independence." Baer, along with Hill and Eric Hobsbawm, connects the pirate...
with the Medieval Robin Hood figure—the sea takes the place of the forest, and this new heroic outlaw inspires admiration in the lower classes of English society.\textsuperscript{12} Hans Turley, building on the historical work of B. R. Burg's \textit{Sodomy and the Pirate Tradition}, investigates the homoerotic and culturally transgressive aspects of the historical and fictional pirate.\textsuperscript{13}

The primary source for interpreting the pirate community as egalitarian, one which myriad historians and critics have turned to, is the report in Defoe's \textit{A General History} on pirate "Articles" drawn up by Captain Bartholomew Roberts. The Articles underscore the pirates' democratic desire to share wealth and to protect one another in the community; they speak to an ordered society which completely contradicts the notion of the pirate as an unjust criminal.\textsuperscript{14} I concur with these critics that a portion of eighteenth-century pirate fiction demonstrates a defiance of English laws and codes of normative behavior; indeed, much of the evidence is indisputable. However, substantive conflicting evidence which aligns the fictional pirate with trade and English middle-class desires prevents me from participating in the tradition of criticism which interprets the fictional pirate as a transgressive figure. I view the fictional pirate's behavior as antithetical to the radical nature of the historical figure.

The eighteenth-century pirate text that has received the most critical attention is Defoe's \textit{The Life, Adventures, and Piracies of the Famous Captain Singleton}.\textsuperscript{15} Apart from being viewed as a pirate, Singleton, like Robinson Crusoe, has been interpreted as "economic man." For example, Novak argues that "Singleton sets out with the sole purpose of making money; he subordinates every other human drive to this single
goaL.”16 And in his article, “Defoe’s Captain Singleton: A Reassessment with Observations,” Manuel Schonhorn argues that William the Quaker “makes a comic trading venture out of an unexpected piratical excursion.”17 Additionally, in his analysis of Defoe’s New Voyage Round the World, Novak underscores the “dubious” correlation between business and theft, commerce and piracy, in both privateering and the slave trade.18 My analysis of the evolution of pirate identity in British fiction builds upon these provocative interpretations of Defoe’s fiction.

I first discover evidence in English fiction which begins to conflate pirate identity with middle-class identity in two works based on Captain Henry Avery’s pirate career: the anonymously written rogue biography, The Life and Adventures of Captain John Avery, the Famous English Pirate, (rais'd from a Cabbin-Boy, to a King) now in Possession of Madagascar (1709?) and Charles Johnson’s play, The Successful Pyrate (1713).19 Revolutionary spirit is initially expressed in both of these tales when Avery fails in his ambitions to accumulate and manage wealth through honest industry and inheritance at home. However, I interpret Avery’s regeneration of wealth, land, and power in the pirate community as a dramatization of English commercial prosperity regained. After he loses his inheritance (land and money) to the hands of a treacherous lawyer, and is tricked into marrying a farmer’s daughter who is already pregnant with an innkeeper’s child, Avery incites mutiny and learns, in the colonial realm of the East Indies, to acquire that which he was denied in England: land, wealth, and a lucrative marital arrangement. Instead of demonstrating revolutionary spirit, I read these pirate tales as instructional texts which teach the middle-class subject—who is initially a failure,
a dupe—how to get ahead in business, and how to succeed in the marriage market. Even the description of Avery as “middle-siz’d [and] inclinable to be fat,” underscores his middle-class identity.

Furthermore, the Orientalist fantasy of marrying Indian royalty, as Edward Said would argue, has little to do with the historical pirate figure and even less to do with the real Orient. Not coincidentally the fictional accounts of the pirate’s marriage to the royal princess follow closely on the heels of the initial stages of the British occupation of India; the city of Calcutta is colonized in 1694 by the English East India Company. This marriage between the pirate and the princess is a fantasy of the British global subject who lives vicariously through the pirate. Arviragus, the pirate king of *The Successful Pyrate*, who is also patterned after Captain Avery, correctly declares that “Marriage is the bond of Government, / That Cement fixes us by Natural Ties, / By joining our Affections to our Interest.” Although Avery’s legitimate attempt to marry at home proves counterfeit, the pirate’s marriage in Madagascar is supremely profitable. The union of marriage between East and West is symbolic of a trading relationship between England and India; marriage is employed as a metaphorical trope for colonial acquisition. Because the state sanctioned institution of marriage is invested necessarily with legal, religious, and economic obligations, the pirate’s success through marriage outside of the legal parameters, and his establishment of a pirate empire on the island of Madagascar, become symbols of world market potential for the British middle class.

The theme of pirate marriage to Indian royalty, one that increases the pirate’s class status, correlates precisely with the obsessive desire of middle-class English
subjects to climb the social ladder at home in England. Beginning in the first quarter of the eighteenth century, social status becomes increasingly important for the "commercial," enterprising middle-class. In *A Polite and Commercial People*, Paul Langford argues that social status becomes the primary motive to enterprise and industry: "There seemed no shortage of Englishmen, or, as it was often said, of Englishwomen, whose prime ambition in life was to rise higher up the social ladder. Above all there beckoned the lure of acceptance into that great and growing, yet tantalizingly unattainable, class composed of gentlemen and their ladies."\(^2\)

Tradesmen, Langford argues, no longer wished to be perceived as members of a working class; now they desired to be referred to as gentlemen. And it is precisely this "aping" of the manners and customs of the landed aristocracy by the commercial middle class which produces a period of drastic social change and reformation of class structure in England. Langford refers to this period as a "revolution by conjunction rather than confrontation, but it was a revolution nonetheless, transforming the pattern of social relations, and subtly reshaping the role of that governing class which was the object of imitation."\(^2\)

The English social class hierarchy precludes the middle-class subject from attaining the status of gentleman at home ("tantalizingly unattainable"); therefore, the rise in class status must be achieved, or imitated, in the colonies. Avery's experience as a lucrative fictional colonial pioneer demonstrates a conflation between border crossing in the East Indies and class crossing at home.

The representation of pirate identity which is most indicative of English middle-class identity positions the pirate as a trading merchant adventurer. In the hierarchy of

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middle-class positions, the trading merchant adventurer, if successful, stands atop the middle-class social ladder. The pirate adventurer, whom I often refer to as a businessman, is conceived and imagined by middle-class authors, infused with middle-class characteristics, and fashioned to entertain and educate a middle-class audience. Ian Watt locates the eighteenth-century middle-class as the “intermediate class, between the poor and the well-to-do,” that segment of the population involved in the occupations of commerce, administration, and the professions, earning between £38 and £60 annually. However, the middle-class should not be so singularly defined; the most successful members are the affluent trade merchants whose children mingle in the marriage market with those of the landed gentry, and its base is comprised of tradesmen and shopkeepers.

In Defoe’s terminology the trading part of the British nation is divided into laborers, mechanics, dealers (all of whom he defines as Trading Men), and trade merchants. The laborers, or “Drudges,” as Defoe refers to them, consist of the laboring poor; “Those concern’d in the meaner and first Employments . . . such as meer Husbandmen, Miners, Diggers, Fishers, and in short, all the Drudges and Labourers in the several Productions of Nature or of Art.” Mechanics, the masters of the Drudges are comprised of artists and craftsmen, such as clothiers, weavers, and metal smiths. These lower segments of the trading arena are part of the lower middle class of English society, earning between £6 and £20 annually. By and large, these English subjects are not included in the emergent middle-class, although Watt does indicate that a small segment of the artisan population was literate and earned enough annually (£38) to
purchase reading material. The Dealers, or shopkeepers, are securely seated in the middle-class. Defoe, who also refers to them as "tradesmen," states that they "supply the merchants with all of the several kinds of manufactures and other goods of the produce of England, for exportation." This segment of the middle-class earned £45 annually. Finally, the merchant, or trade merchant adventurer, is the resourceful, and exceedingly powerful, member of the middle-class who buys and sells in the colonial arena. Defoe defines him as a man of "Correspondence," who "besides his own Adventure, receives Commissions from Abroad to buy such and such Goods, and good Remittances by Bills to pay for them, then he ships them according to Order."9

Beginning in the early eighteenth-century, the trade merchant adventurer, a pioneer and leader of the trade arena, is perceived as a gallant figure. As John McVeagh confirms, the trader "is a hero not only because he achieves the near impossible, going where even Nature almost dare not follow him, but because trade is intrinsically glorious and beneficial. Yet it is also universal, for everyone is a trader every day of their lives."30

The rise of trade and the coexisting perception of the tradesman as a heroic figure results from significant economic changes—the Financial Revolution—in English society. Although Tory neo-classicists maintained their belief that landed property was, as Colin Nicholson argues, "the guarantee of a civic virtue that enabled the citizen as the head of his oikos or household to rule . . . as one of a community of heads making decisions which were binding on all," the system of public credit—"paper promises"—began to challenge the "social and ethical supremacy of the traditionally valorized landed gentleman."31 In the years immediately following the creation of the Bank of England,
English commerce expanded worldwide, stimulating what Nicholson describes as a “restless spirit of economic innovation in England and particularly in London.”

However, accompanying the romanticized perception of the trade merchant, and the restless spirit for trade expansion, is the association of trade with theft, overseas trading companies and stock-jobbers with thievery, which is engendered by economic calamities—in particular the bursting of the South Sea Bubble in 1720. Daniel Defoe spent most of his career trying to correct the negative association of trade with theft. As Lincoln Faller argues in regard to Defoe’s *The Compleate English Tradesman*, “Defoe was never quite able to argue his way out of the ‘scandal’ [the South Sea Company fiasco] that trade was inherently dishonest and so comparable to theft. However much he tried to make it seem a worthy and heroic endeavor . . . he could never quite erase its bad name.” But as Faller indicates, Defoe was persistent in his attempts to reface the trade merchant as a hero adventurer. Defoe’s didactic texts, from his late seventeenth century *An Essay on Projects* (1697) to *A Plan of the English Commerce* (1730), paint the trade merchant as the most brilliant and enlightened of English subjects, one who possesses the true essence of ingenuity, imagination, and invention. Following from his adamant didactic stance, Defoe considerably contributes to the tradition of representing the pirate figure by inventing him in fiction as an instructional guide to global commerce. I read Defoe’s pirate fiction as a deliberate and calculated attempt to enlighten and instruct—not entertain—his middle-class audience. I concur with McVeagh who posits that Defoe’s reason for writing is “to put into words his vision of things and men radiant with improvement and growth.” Pirates are useful for Defoe
because their occupation—their job description (so to speak)—involves dissecting the anatomy of trade. In this sense, pirates are ideal for informing and educating an inexperienced population about trade, turning deals, conducting international business, products produced by the various trading nations of the world, and, of course, the abundant quantities of gold, silver, and jewels which so attract pirates (and those who read about them). Defoe’s pirates are as knowledgeable as any merchant about the origin, destination, and value of all commodities, and as they journey from one conquest to the next, the pirates prolifically catalogue the details.

In 1719 Defoe reinvents Captain Avery in his novella, The King of Pyrates. Now the middle-class desire for economic enfranchisement in the global market becomes less symbolic and more directly focused on trade instruction. Defoe erases both the pirate’s marriage to the Indian princess and his reign as king of the Island of Madagascar, formerly depicted in The Life and Adventures of Capt. John Avery and The Successful Pyrate. Conscious of the tradition of pirate writings which precede his own, Defoe has Captain Avery vehemently reject the marital bond as a lie: “On the contrary,” Defoe states, “we find here that, except plundering that princess of her jewels and money to a prodigious value . . . the lady was used with all the decency and humanity, and perhaps more than ever women falling among pirates had found before, especially considering that, by report, she was a most beautiful and agreeable person herself.” Defoe shifts the representation from a preoccupation with the Oriental female as a means to capital, to a bolder and more directed preoccupation with capital itself. Defoe’s denial of the union between the pirate and the Eastern female signals a progression in England’s
thinking about and understanding of its colonial desires. For Defoe's pirate, there is no longer a regard for the overt acquisition of the Indian female; acquisition of the princess is always already implied. Defoe's pirate now operates solely in the name of business. The waters of the world are a free and open market waiting to be exploited by the pirate's interest. When this new breed of entrepreneurial pirate encounters the Indian princess, he states accordingly, "I, like a true pirate, soon let her see that I had more in mind to the jewels than to the lady" (54).

In the spirit of invention, Defoe's process of defacing and refacing pirate identity unabashedly demonstrates his participation in the evolving invention of tradition, one that, according to Raymond Williams, contains the potential to be a most powerful hegemonic process, and necessarily affects economic realities. Instead of viewing tradition as inert, Williams describes it as "the most evident expression of the dominant and hegemonic pressures and limits" (115). Consequently, tradition is the "most powerful practical means of incorporation. What we have to see is not just 'a tradition' but a selective tradition: an intentionally selective version of a shaping past and a pre-shaped present, which is then powerfully operative in the process of social and cultural definition and identification." In other words, Defoe (along with each of the authors who participates in the tradition) invents tradition by virtue of a process of selective substitution; he includes "certain meanings and practices" while "excluding or neglecting" other meanings and practices. By fusing pirate rebellion with merchant ingenuity, he rehistoricizes the pirate's past, limiting his subversive and transgressive strength, and maximizing the potential for social identification with the pirate for trade,
travel, and adventure (incorporation). These new pirate characteristics are identical to Defoe's "Projecting Merchant," described in An Essay on Projects as, "an admirable type, a sort of middle-class hero, a productive picaro, a speculator, an adventurer." The end product—the selective tradition—is a revised pirate figure who is thoroughly at odds with his historical counterpart; he is now socially, politically, and economically aligned with both English trade and the imperialist attitudes which accompany the English merchant as he journeys across the globe.

Defoe's preference for the economic over the romantic is explained on three levels: Firstly, as I have argued, Defoe's revision of the pirate—the incorporation of the pirate into the mainstream English commercial imagination—is a deliberate attempt to invent a new tradition of pirate representation whereby the figure is associated with trade, travel, adventure, and money; he is disassociated from his position as an exploited laborer (a member of the lower classes), and he is removed from his radical opposition to capitalist social control. Secondly, the preferencing of the economic over the romantic is one of the primary characteristics that defines the eighteenth-century novel. Ian Watt argues that the emphasis placed upon individual economic advantage has "tended to diminish the importance of personal as well as group relationships, and especially those based on sex; for sex . . . being one of the strongest non-rational factors in human life, is one of the strongest potential menaces to the individual's rational pursuit of economic ends, and it has been placed under particularly strong controls in the ideology of individual capitalism." The selection of the economic over the romantic, demonstrated in the early English novel, signals the invention of a new tradition—an ideological
switch—to a national literature which promotes the economic superiority of a social class—the English middle, or commercial class. Thirdly, the economic emphasis, which supersedes romantic affection for the Indian princess, demonstrates a nationalist agenda which is steeped in hegemonic imperialism. In Defoe, we witness a transition from the curiosity and desire for the Indian princess as a human commodity—a wife—to a dismissal of her value beyond the material she represents. Here the Indian is erased by England’s evolved imperial hegemonic ideology. Beyond her material possessions, the princess exists only to provide—to “give”—the pirate his treasure.

As a conqueror in the colonial domain, Defoe’s pirates are predecessors of the colonists / “buccaneers” Joseph Conrad describes in Heart of Darkness. Conrad’s description of the members of the Eldorado Exploring Expedition underscores the intentions and disposition of the modern colonist, a product of the adventuring spirit Defoe infuses in his pirate fiction:

Their talk... was the talk of sordid buccaneers. It was restless without hardihood, greedy without audacity, and cruel without courage. There was not an atom or foresight or of serious intention in the whole batch of them, and they did not seem aware these things are wanted for the work of the world. To tear treasure out of the bowels of the land was their desire, with no more moral purpose at the back of it than there is in burglars breaking into a safe.

Although the English empire—the big business of colonial trade/ appropriation—is relatively young compared with the “horror” that Conrad witnessed in Africa nearly 200 years later, Defoe could still write in 1711 in “An Essay on the South Sea Trade” that
we are to understand by a Trade to the South Seas, (viz.)
That we shall, under the Protection, in the Name, and by the
Power of Her Majesty, Seize, Take, and Possess, such Port
of Place, or Places, Land, Territory, Country or Dominion.
call it what you please, as we see fit in America, and keep it
for our own, Keeping it implies Planting, Settling,
Inhabiting, Spreading, and all that is usual in such Cases."44

Didactic trade instruction belies the fact that Defoe’s pirates—fashioned as middle-class
traders—themselves become a kind of pirate in the colonial domain. Even at this early
date the English pirate / trade merchant could utter the words, “exterminate the brutes.”
As McVeagh argues, Defoe’s description of South Sea tyranny implies the use of slave
labor, and the extermination of indigenous peoples (“All that is usual in such Cases”).45

John Gay’s Polly, the sequel to The Beggar’s Opera, further explores the
ambitions and expanding role of the middle-class subject outside of England in the
colonies of the West Indies. His opera, which has thus far received little critical
attention, is an important eighteenth-century text because it begins to question the
presence, motivations, and destructive potential of the English merchant in the
colonies.46 As the middle-class country gentleman proceeds from his position as a
capitalist inside the English empire, to his position as a colonial merchant in the West
Indies, he begins to exploit the economic potential and the inhabitants outside of England
on the borders of the empire. Like Defoe’s trade merchant adventurer, Gay’s
businessman is another predecessor of the members of Conrad’s Eldorado Exploring
Expedition; however, unlike in Defoe’s texts, the fortune hunter in Gay’s opera is not
depicted as heroic. Gay extends his critique in The Beggar’s Opera, springing from the

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pervasive corruption in the commerce-centered city of London, to an equally commerce-centered British empire, by situating that argument in the West Indies. Gay's decision to remove the country gentleman, and the gentleman of the road (the highwayman), from London and its fringes to the West Indies is an attempt to explore the nascent role of these English subjects—both merchant and lower class—as fortune hunters in the colonies. As a result of being transported to the West Indies, Macheath turns pirate and continues his criminal quest for wealth. No less criminal in Gay's estimation, however, is the plantation owner, Ducat, who ventures to the West Indies to seek his treasure. Although Macheath (who dons a black-face disguise, turns pirate, and renames himself Morano) is the obvious outlaw of the sequel, Ducat is an early example of a merchant class adventurer for whom the colonies signify, as Raymond Williams argues, "an idyllic retreat, an escape from debt or shame, or an opportunity for making a fortune." Ducat profits from his marriage, land, trade in slaves, and dubious business practices. He not only survives, but prospers, because he is adept—like his fellow merchants back in England—at the art of making money without morals. And, similar to the members of his class back home, Ducat basks in the decadent "Luxuries" that his new money can buy. Gay invents Ducat—as his name suggests—as a stereotype, the merchant / planter as fortune hunter in West Indian colonial society.

At face value, the juxtaposition of the black-faced pirate and the white colonist begs the obvious interpretation of evil verses good. And, in fact, at the conclusion of the opera, Gay stages the only execution of a pirate in eighteenth-century fiction when he has Morano captured and hanged. However, Gay's depiction of the middle-class
fortune hunter is even less flattering than that of the pirate figure. Gay's opera accentuates the ambiguity between pirate and trader/colonist identities—the label “pirate” is now interchangeable with the merchant/fortune hunter; his ambitions and his deeds are no less piratical than the pirate's. In my reading of Gay's opera, the pirate Morano fails as a pirate/businessman because he refuses to wear the disguise of the colonizer. Although the handsome and crafty Captain Macheath, of The Beggar's Opera, is accustomed to keeping company with the aristocracy of London, Morano of the sequel makes no attempt to insert himself into colonial society. Like Ducat, Morano could have been a successful pirate within the colonial establishment by marrying for treasure and buying a plantation and slaves to work it. However, because Morano chooses to assume the identity of a black pirate—even as he approaches the scaffold—he must die; there is no place for him in colonial society.

Here as elsewhere I am indebted to Max Novak, who, in Economics and the Fiction of Daniel Defoe argues that the distinction between the English trade-merchant/businessman and the pirate of the early eighteenth century was inexact indeed. Novak informs that “Investors sometimes sponsored pirates in the manner that the Whig cabinet supported Captain Kidd, whose greatest mistake was not that he turned pirate but that he failed to earn enough money for the shareholders.” Gay's opera exploits the conflation/interchangeability of these identities and begs the question: who is the real pirate? The pirate-like stigma which Gay attaches to the middle-class fortune hunter, the
colonial subject of the English empire, did not, in fact, dissipate until the early nineteenth century. Gay's conflation of these identities would be echoed in Jane Austen's novels eighty years later.

In *Persuasion*, Jane Austen demonstrates that changes in England's economic system (changes that were set in motion a century earlier during the Financial Revolution), coupled with the increasing influence of middle and upper-class careers in the colonies, reduce the importance of land and title at home. As Julia Prewitt Brown argues, "Anne and Wentworth inherit the England of *Persuasion*, if only because they see it, and will experience it as it really is: fragmented and uncertain. For the first time in Jane Austen, the future is not linked with the land, and the social order is completely dissociated from the moral order."50 The system of credit, or "good credit," as Edward Copeland argues, "opens the economy in *Persuasion*." Good credit "becomes the talisman for future expectations."51 And conversely, "Material culture mismanaged lays a deathlike hand on the world of *Persuasion*."52 Aristocrats who can no longer afford to pay their bills are evicted and replaced / refaced by naval officers (members of the "pseudo gentry") who can.53 And accompanying the shift in importance from landed credit to earned income is the increasing opportunity for the middle class, the "pseudo gentry," and the gentry to acquire respectable fortunes abroad in the colonies.

As Austen demonstrates in *Mansfield Park*, even for the gentry, ready money within England will more often than not be attainable (and respectably so) outside of England through myriad endeavors in the colonial empire. Sir Thomas Bertram of Mansfield Park sustains his country estate in England by managing his sugar plantation in

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Antigua. Conversely, Sir Walter Elliot of Kellynch Hall must vacate his country estate because he fails to pursue colonial business ventures. The “respectability” that Bertram achieves through his colonial endeavors does, however, link him (in a socially pejorative sense) with the middle-class trade merchant/plantation owner. As Moira Ferguson argues, “In order to stage a future society peaceably perpetuating British rule, Jane Austen transforms Sir Thomas Bertram of Mansfield Park—who is also a plantation-owner in Antigua—from a characteristically imperious ‘West Indian’ planter—stock figure of ridicule in contemporary drama, poetry and novels—into a benevolent reforming landowner.” In this sense, Bertram is not unlike Ducat in Gay’s Polly, a pirate-like middle-class figure of ridicule. However, unlike Gay’s negative depiction of the colonial merchant/plantation owner, Austen’s country gentleman and naval officer wield power and privilege at home precisely because their usefulness and productivity in the colonies yields fortunes that now translate into “good credit.” They are English subjects who, as Said states, “synchronize domestic with international authority.” The material necessities that are “wanting within” are paid for by wealth that is derived from without. The Bertrams, Said confirms, “could not have been possible without the slave trade, sugar, and the colonial planter class.” And similarly the successful naval officers of Persuasion would not be possible without war for territory and colonial proliferation.

Like the middle-class trade merchant, Austen’s successful naval officers, who “hover on the brink of gentility” are scorned by the gentry and perceived as piratical in their advances upon polite society. Juliet McMaster explains that the gentry and the professional classes “felt somewhat threatened by the large changes that were coming
with the Industrial Revolution, and tended to close ranks against the newly powerful and the *nouveaux riches*. Trade represents new money, and money, like wine, isn’t considered quite respectable until it has aged a little. Although Austen’s naval officers are certainly not pirates in a literal sense, i.e. at war with all mankind, they conform to the evolving tradition of pirate representation in that, as members of an emergent middle class, their money making practices, like Gay’s fortune hunter of the colonies, are perceived by polite society as suspect. Both the “prize system,” and the naval officer’s responsibilities in the transportation of “Treasure,” (precious metals that are “looted,”—in the Conradian sense—from various locations in the English empire) were commonly understood as nefarious practices. The naval profession provides the officer with both precise knowledge of the expanding empire, and an increasing sense of colonial authority in the empire. Captains and admirals, like Wentworth and Croft, understand the circulatory system of world trade, and increasingly they establish themselves in positions of authority within that system. Although these men return from their successful campaigns against the French in the Napoleonic Wars as well-financed and powerful middle-class gentlemen, Austen underscores how they are perceived by aristocrats as pirate-like—low, weathered, *dangerous*, and *evil*. Lady Russell’s opinion of the “degrading alliance” which would result from the marriage between a baronet’s daughter and a naval captain underscores aristocratic prejudices that are centuries old. Anne Elliot, she laments, “with all her claims of birth, beauty, and mind, to throw herself away at nineteen in an engagement with a young man, who had nothing but himself to recommend him, and no hopes of attaining affluence, but in the chances of a most
uncertain profession, and no connections to secure even his farther rise in that profession, would be indeed, a throwing away which she grieved to think of!” (18-19).

Ultimately, the practices of naval officers and the ambitions of the middle-class merchant adventurer do not change; England’s economy does. And now that England is dependent upon external productivity in order to maintain internal comfort, the naval officer—once regarded as pirate-like—is now regarded as a champion of empire, the admirable, virtuous, and dashing Captain Wentworth.

* * * *

Pirates, traders, plantation owners, and naval officers repeatedly inhabit eighteenth and nineteenth-century fiction because audiences are fascinated by the story of the fortune hunter and the stories told by fortune hunters. These figures, simultaneously occupying the unfamiliar yet increasingly accessible space of the colonies, can be thought of as border figures. Their identities are formed and informed by both their homeland and by their ability to traverse, extend, and redefine the borders of that homeland / empire. As pioneers, fortune hunters engender speculation, wonder, and fantasy. Authors “who write ashore” project their desires, fears, and prejudices onto those who travel abroad; they shape and are shaped by the ever widening sphere of empire. This process of mutual exchange is akin to transculturation, the transmission of ideas, beliefs, and behaviors between the European homeland and its colonies. As Mary Louise Pratt argues, “Borders and all, the entity called Europe was constructed from the
outside in as much as from the inside out. . . . While the imperial metropolis tends to understand itself as determining the periphery (in the emanating glow of the civilizing mission or the cash flow of development, for example), it habitually blinds itself to the ways in which the periphery determines the metropolis—beginning, perhaps, with the latter's obsessive need to present and re-present its peripheries and its others continually to itself."59 The shaping process necessarily involves a quest for identity. The presentation and re-presentation of pirates and fortune hunters in fiction underscores an engagement with the discovery of an emerging identity at home. Quite provocatively (and appropriately), one of the most popular figures of English border curiosity is the pirate—not merely as a figure of fancy, but as an educational guide. The irony, however, is that the wondering/wandering middle-class English imagination necessarily evolves into a piratical identity (in a Conradian sense) as knowledge and control of the borders of the English empire increase. What begins for the middle class as a fantasy of acceptance—the ability to achieve abroad that which is unattainable at home—evolves into a troubled reality; as the border figure forges an empire, he increasingly garners acceptance at home. So that by the early nineteenth century, border figures, such as naval officers and plantation owners like Frederick Wentworth and Sir Thomas Bertram—men whose fictional representations have evolved from piratical ones—must be depicted as "benevolent reforming" British subjects in order to "stage a future society peaceably perpetuating British rule."60 Thus, the process of inventing tradition—rehistoricizing the pirate figure—culminates when the marauder of the deep is finally invited home from his pillaging escapades abroad. With ample plunder in
tow—valued as a "respectable" fortune—the fortune hunter can now wield power and command respect both at home and in the colonies.

Endnotes


2. In *A Cruising Voyage Round the World* (London, 1712), Rogers states the pirates of Madagascar are "miserable Wretches, who had made such a Noise in the World, were now dwindled to between 60 or 70, most of them very poor and despicable, even to the natives" (419). In his Introduction to *A General History of the Pyrates*, Schonhorn reports on Rogers's yield of plunder, xxviii.

3. In his Introduction to *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1, Eric Hobsbawm argues that " 'Invented Tradition' is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past.” Hobsbawm’s definition of *tradition* as an evolving process invented and reinvented through repetition is an influential theoretical base for my discussion of evolving fictional pirate identity. I also describe the process of inventing tradition as a *selective tradition* based on Raymond Williams’s definition of the *Selective Tradition* from *Marxism and Literature* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 115.


7. For example, in *The Buccaneers of America*, Exquemelin states that

When a ship is robbed, nobody must plunder and keep his loot to himself. Everything taken—money, jewels, precious stones and goods—must be shared among them all, without any man enjoying a penny more than his fair share . . .

The buccaneers are extremely loyal and ready to help one another. If a man has nothing, the others let him have what he needs on credit until such time as he can pay them back. They also see justice done among themselves. If anyone has a quarrel and kills his opponent treacherously, he is set against a tree and shot dead by the one whom he chooses. But if he has killed his opponent like an honourable man—that is, giving him time to load his musket, and not shooting him in the back—his comrades let him go free. The duel is their way of settling disputes.

(71–72)

8. See especially chapters 2 and 3 in Rediker’s *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*.


10. In his Introduction to Defoe’s *A General History of the Pyrates*, Manuel Schonhorn calls Mission a “leader of a floating commonwealth and the founder of the communist utopia, Libertalia” (xxxviii).


16. In *Economics and the Fiction of Daniel Defoe*, 117–121, Novak analyzes Defoe’s use of the Quaker William Walters in the novel arguing that “Defoe used William’s Quakerisms for at least two economic purposes: to suggest a relationship between the Quakers and the West Indian pirates, and to satirize the Quakers’ abilities in business” (118).


20. In *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979), Edward Said argues that “Orientalism is—and does not simply represent—a considerable dimension of modern political-
intellectual culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with ‘our’ world” (12).


22. Ibid, 67.


24. In *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Penguin, 1982), Roy Porter states that “the alliance of a gentleman’s son with a merchant’s daughter, the landed embracing the loaded, . . . was *marriage à la mode*” (52).


27. Watt, 40.


29. Defoe, *A Plan*, 4. Within this hierarchy of middle-class positions, Defoe is quick to stipulate that there is ambiguity and overlap when it comes to a tradesman’s station. For example, in *The Complete English Tradesman* Defoe reports that more often than not, the shopkeeper, who conducts his business in port towns, must serve double-duty as a merchant:

> Almost all the shopkeepers and inland traders in seaport towns, and even in the waterside part of London itself, are necessarily brought in to be owners of ships, and concerned at least in the vessel, if not in the voyage. In this case the shopkeeper is unavoidably, sometimes both a tradesman and a merchant adventurer at the same time; and some of his business runs into sea adventures. (x)

Audiences that read pirate fiction include all of these middle-class positions: those who were literate and who could afford to buy reading material. However, more specifically,
middle-class authors who fantasized about the pirate's escapades in international waters perceived a definite connection between all middle-class trading positions; the shopkeeper who sold a garment was connected to the same trading process as the merchant/adventurer who purchased the raw materials the year before in India. The prospects that trade brought to these middle-class positions engendered a tremendous level of excitement. As the eighteenth century progressed, the amount of money that was earned through overseas trade increased, and so did the incomes of shopkeepers, tradesmen, and merchants, many of whom a decade earlier would not have been included in the ranks of the middle-class.


32. Ibid, 12.


35. In *Finance and Fictionality in the Early Eighteenth Century*, Sandra Sherman demonstrates that the damage caused by public debt inspired the creation of not only didactic and economic treatises and essays, but also plays and poetry where credit, debt, and the South Sea Bubble became a "metonym of greed and corruption" (23). Sherman widens and challenges the definition of genre to allow for an overlap between the "fictional" and the "didactic / economic" text. She states that

Defoe's valenced logic, defining the imaginative component of credit as pointing towards fiction and truth, is homologous with inscribing literary fictions that conflate fiction and truth. Defoean credit posits a narrative theory premised on the fluidity of fiction and truth, an enterprise that defers to the reader's imagination while it claims to invoke history. (38)

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Sherman reads Defoe’s overtly didactic / economic texts as a fiction. Following from her example, I view Defoe’s fiction as didactic / economic.

36. McVeagh, 58.


38. *King of Pirates*, xvi.

39. Williams, 115.


41. Watt, 67.

42. Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1988). In his Note preceding the novella, Conrad describes—and aligns—himself with the European colonizer; he describes these men (like himself) as “curious men [who] go prying into all sorts of places (where they have no business) and come out of them with all kinds of spoil. This story . . . [is] the spoil I brought out from the centre of Africa, where, really, I had no sort of business” (4). Conrad, a self-proclaimed interloper (ad)ventures into the colonial domain on business where he “has no business,” and extracts commodities from the colonial domain. Conrad describes his act as piratical, and the European colonizer, as a kind of pirate. Although Conrad, the chronicler of colonial devastation in Africa, is an enlightened European who witnesses, understands, and records “The horror! The horror!” he also perceives himself as guilty—inextricably bound to the process of plundering the rest of the world for “treasure.” Conrad, as Edward Said argues in *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1993), is different from other colonial writers because he was “so self-conscious about what he did” (25); however, the indisputable fact is that as a “creature of his time,” Conrad could not ultimately escape being a part of the process of imperialism that he critiques. I view Defoe in a like manner.

43. Conrad, 32–33.

44. qtd. in McVeagh, 54.

45. McVeagh, 54.
46. In “The Beggar’s Triumph,” 43–69 in John Gay’s The Beggar’s Opera, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1988), Patricia Meyer Spacks argues that Polly is an unimportant work. She states that Polly “can only be seen as an essentially frivolous and meaningless exercise. . . . There’s no use flogging a dead horse, and Polly is a very dead one indeed.” The only critic who has seriously considered Polly thus far is Albert Wertheim in his “Polly: John Gay’s Image of the West,” in Theatre West: Image and Impact, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1990), 195–206. I am in agreement with Wertheim’s thesis that for Gay, the West Indies “creates not an Edenic innocence but a warm atmosphere in which the vices of England can thrive and grow large” (206).


48. Defoe reports on several pirate hangings in A General History, but they are presumed to be based on factual accounts. In Crime and Defoe, Faller details the hanging tradition in criminal biography. His remarks may explain the dearth of fictional pirate executions: “Readers and writers of criminal biography could . . . still find the hanging of thieves bothersome, or at least embarrassing, however well they died. Thus there was a curious tendency over time to ‘forget’ or suppress the moral and religious lessons that might be drawn from thieves’ cases and to de-emphasize what they had come to at last” (17).


55. Said, Culture and Imperialism, 87.
56. Ibid, 94.


60. Moira Ferguson, “Mansfield Park: Slavery, Colonialism, and Gender,” 118.
Chapter 2

Business as Usual; or, Instructing the Pirate King of Madagascar

Hunting for prey in East Indian waters, the pirate captain, Henry Avery, plunders a treasure ship belonging to the fleet of the Grand Mogul of India in 1695, and, unbeknownst to the pirate, he becomes a celebrity during the next quarter century, a king in the imaginations of early eighteenth-century English mercantile subjects. Speculation about Avery’s life and piratical conduct begins prior to his sacking of the Mogul’s ship in a ballad entitled, A Copy of Verses, Composed by Captain Henry Avery, Lately Gone to Sea to Seek His Fortune (1694), and the discursive pondering continues in the anonymously written rogue biography, The Life and Adventures of Capt. John Avery, the Famous English Pirate, (rais’d from a Cabbin-Boy, to a King) now in Possession of Madagascar (1709?) and Charles Johnson’s play, The Successful Pyrate, which is produced at the Drury Lane theater in 1713. Even Daniel Defoe, the so-called “father of the English novel,” scripts events from Avery’s life into three separate works: a picaresque novella, The King of Pyrates (1719), a novel, The Adventures and Pyraclies of the Famous Captain Singleton (1720), and his pirate who’s who, A General History of the Pyrates (1724).¹ This profusion of texts, as well as wonder, fantasy, and speculation that surrounds this act of piracy suggests an emerging lust from England’s trading people for adventures and fortune hunting in the colonial empire. (Ad)venture capitalism is conflated with piracy and trade conflated with theft, directly on the heels of
the “Golden Age of Piracy” (1700). Apart from teaching the reader about Captain Avery, however, the fictional pirate informs the monetary disposition of the pirate’s creators. Differing from the historical figure, the Captain Avery of fiction conforms to the social, political, and economic desires of the emerging trading class in England, for he, like other fictionalized pirates, represents the fantasy of heightened social status through marriage, the acquisition of land, and the accumulation of wealth in global markets. The fictional pirate both mimics and instructs a trading people striving to accede to the ways and means of the landed gentry.

In his *General History of the Pyrates*, Defoe acknowledges that as a result of Avery’s rumored marriage to an Indian princess, his accumulation of Indian spoils, and his establishing a pirate nation on the island of Madagascar, the pirate thereby “raises himself to the Dignity of a King.” These achievements—success in the marriage market, and the accumulation of East Indian property and possessions—are precisely the ambitions of most eighteenth-century English trading peoples, whom John McVeagh characterizes as “ruthless and fraudulent” businessmen. Avery’s story is reappropriated by this class and transformed into an instructional tale that teaches prospective merchants: in order to become rich and powerful, they must act like pirates in their business dealings. These pirate texts are middle-class conduct manuals on how to become a successful merchant. Avery is employed as a poster-boy, an advertisement, and a didactic model for trading with, and colonizing the East.

These early eighteenth-century writings about Captain Avery’s acts of piracy are also significant in that they evidence an emerging Orientalist discourse. Edward Said
pinpoints the late eighteenth century as a “very roughly defined starting point” where Orientalism “can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient”; however, the pirate in these early eighteenth-century texts is a predecessor to the corporate institution of Orientalism, a pioneer in the liaison with the East. He is one of the first fictive European figures to encounter and conquer an imagined Orient. And congruent with the fictive Orient imagined later in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, the real Orient and the real, historical pirate do not appear in this pirate fiction, corroborating Said’s observation that “Orientalism . . . has less to do with the Orient than it does with ‘our’ world.” The marriage of a Western pirate to an Eastern princess can be viewed as an accurate metaphor for the ways in which the English empire invades India over the course of the next two hundred years, with these fictional representations of Captain Avery’s conquests marking the origin of the invasion.

The ballad, *A Copy of Verses, Composed by Captain Henry Avery, Lately Gone to Sea to Seek His Fortune*, and the first portion of the rogue biography, *The Life and Adventures of Capt. John Avery, the Famous English Pirate*, (rais’d from a Cabbin-Boy, to a King) now in Possession of Madagascar, are rooted in the heroic tradition of the noble outlaw, patterning the pirate captain after a Robin Hood-like figure. But in subsequent versions of the story, the outlaw’s motivations for occupying the transgressive position outside the law are stripped away, and Avery is eventually left bereft of any substantial rationale for his resistance to English laws and customs. The change occurs during the second half of *The Life and Adventures of Captain John Avery* (the rogue biography) when the pirate’s actions in Madagascar begin to mimic those of
an English trading company. Indeed, in this text we find revealed the true colors of colonial propaganda. As in Charles Johnson's play, *The Successful Pyrate*, the central action in *The Life and Adventures of Capt. John Avery* focuses on the conquest of, and marriage to, an Indian princess, colonizing the island of Madagascar, and extinguishing a mutiny plotted by a Frenchman. Madagascar is portrayed as an exotic island ripe for conquering and colonization, and as well, like the island of Britain where the French are also not welcome. Again, pirate marriage to Indian royalty looks like both a metaphor for the early stages of English colonization, and a social fantasy of the English commercial subject's desire to climb the social ladder by way of the marriage market.

**Avery, the History**

Aside from the capture of the Grand Mogul's ship, the historical facts surrounding Captain Avery's acts of piracy are meager and contradictory. The historical information we do have stems from depositions given by six of Avery's crew members who were captured months after the sacking of the Mogul's ship, the *Gang-I-sawa* (Gunsway). Avery, who has been referred to in different accounts as John Avery, Henry Avery, Henry Ivory, Benjamin Bridgman, and Long Ben is first mentioned in historical records in 1693 when a Guinea slave trader, Captain Phillips of the ship *Hannibal*, writes in his log that Avery was involved in the trading—and stealing—of slaves. As a result of the "kidnapping tricks played on [the indigenous peoples of that area] by Long Ben, alias Every and others of his Kidney who had seized upon them and carried them off without
any payment,” the slavers in that region “never found the Negroes so shy and so scarce.”

Henry Bruce, a West Indian merchant, records in his memoirs that, from 1690 to 1694, Avery worked under the protection of Sir William Jones, Governor of the Bahamas, “exact[ing] illegal contributions from the Colonists by threats of armed force.” Avery and some of his “old comrades” then sailed on board a ship called the Charles II (a ship built by the London merchant, Sir James Houblon), hired by the Spanish to transport “Spanish Gentlemen” from Coruna to New Spain. The pirate historian, Charles Grey, speculates that the men likely sailed on the Charles II with the “deliberate intention” of taking it for their own. In his deposition of August 3, 1696, the mutineer, John Dann, testifies that “The shipps Company mutinied at Corunna for want of their pay, there being eight months due to them; some of the men proposed to Captain Every, who was a master [navigating officer] of the Charles II, to carry away the Shipp, which was agreed on and sworne to.”

Following the mutiny, the progress of the Charles II, now in Avery’s hands, is documented in the deposition of Avery’s crew member, Phillip Middleton: after renaming the ship, Fancy, the crew plunders three English vessels at the Isle of Maio, and nine Englishmen agree to join the band. At the Isle of Princes they plunder two Danish ships, taking “a quantity of Elephants’ teeth, and divided about eight or nine ounces of gold per man.” At Johanna, the crew is increased by 12 Danish and 52 French men. Before departing from Johanna, Avery deposits the following document—a
“Declaration”—of his piratical intentions with the chief of the Comoro Islands. His declaration is a manifesto of sorts, expressing a strong sense of English patriotism. Avery announces,

To all English Commanders, let this satisfie, That I was riding here at this instant in the ship Fancy Man of War, formerly the Charles of the Spanish Expedition, who departed from Croniae the 7th of May 1694 Being (and am now) in a Ship of 46 Guns, 150 Men, and bound to seek our Fortunes. I have never as yet wronged any English or Dutch, nor ever intend whilst I am Commander. Wherefore as I commonly speak with all Ships, I desire whoever comes to the perusal of this to take this Signall, That if you, or any whom you may inform, are desirous to know what wee are at a distance, Then make your Ancient [Ensign] up in a Ball or Bundle and hoist him at the Mizenpeek, the Mizen being furled. I shall answer with the same and never molest you, for my Men are hungry, Stout, and resolute, and should they exceed my Desire I cannot help myself. As yet an Englishmans Friend[,] Henry Avery.13

According to his statement, Avery’s turn to piracy does not preclude his sense of English identity. In fact, his mutiny against the Spanish merchants of Coruna anticipates the War of Spanish Succession, wherein England becomes aligned with Holland, Austria, and Bavaria against King Louis XIV’s France and Spain. Avery acknowledges England’s alliance with Holland when he writes that he has “never yet wronged any English or Dutch,” but, adding to the contradictions surrounding the pirate’s history, his statement conflicts with the report (above) that he had already attacked three English ships. Nonetheless, a copy of his “Declaration” eventually reaches the East India Company in Bombay and is transported back to England. This public record of Avery’s allegiance to England undoubtedly contributes to the attention that he receives from the English pen.
Avery's next move is to attack two Indian ships in the Red Sea belonging to the
Grand Mogul. Middleton describes an encounter fraught with rape and theft:

We took out of the said ships provisions and all other
necessaries, and all their treasure which was very great. But
what we got was little in comparison to what was said to be
aboard, of which none told, though we put them to the
torture. Yet they would not confess. We took great
quantities of gold, silver and jewels and a saddle set with
rubies destined a present to the Great Mogul. The men lay
with the women aboard, and there were several that, from
their jewels and habits, seemed to be of better quality than
the rest. The great ship was called the *Gang-I-Sawai*.\(^\text{14}\)

An excerpt from a 1695 letter written at the Bombay headquarters of the East India
Company corroborates Middleton's confession:

it is certain the Pyrates, which these People affirm were all
English, did do barbarously by the People of the *Gunsway*
and Abdul Gorors Ship, to make them confess where their
Money was, and there happened to be a great Umbraws
Wife (as wee hear) related to the King, returning from her
Pilgrimage to Mecha, in her old age. She they abused very
much, and forced several other Women, which caused one
person of Quality his Wife and Nurse, to kill themselves to
prevent the Husbands seeing them (and their being)
ravished.\(^\text{15}\)

Finally, John Dann states that the pirates "tooke out of that Ship soe much Gold and
Silver in Coyned Money and Plate as made up each mans share . . . about £1000 a man,
there being 180 that had their Dividets, the Captain having a Double Share and the
Master a Share and a halfe" (169).

After brutally assaulting, plundering, and raping the occupants of the Indian
vessel, the *Fancy* moved south to Rajapore, on the west coast of India, where the pirates

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prepared for a lengthy voyage. The men took 90 slaves into the ship and headed for the West Indies. The depositions provide no evidence to indicate that the crew sailed for Madagascar. To the contrary, John Dann testifies that Avery, using the name Bridgman, made his way back to Ireland, and eventually returned to London. In London, Dann states that he came in contact with the wife of the quarter-master who had served on the Charles, and she told Dann that “She was going to Captain Bridgman but would not tell him where he was.” Dann’s conclusion, that Avery successfully made his way back to England, is in agreement with Daniel Defoe’s, who in A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pyrates, argues that Captain Avery never sailed to Madagascar. Defoe, who makes no mention of the Indian princess in his description of the attack on the great Mogul’s ship, writes that Avery actually double-crosses the other two vessels in his own convoy by slipping away in a dense fog, escaping back to England with the treasure.

Despite the lurid nature of these brief histories of Captain Avery, none explains why he became so famous. We learn that he is a slave trader, he strong-arms for a corrupt governor in the Bahamas, he participates in the mutiny on board the ship Charles II, plunders an Indian ship, and rapes the female passengers. These contradictory historical accounts, which certainly do not depict Avery favorably, also fail to explain why he attains a deified status in England. What we do learn is that Avery was, in fact, a true outlaw, and we discover why he became a pirate. Low pay and poor working conditions incited many ship crews to mutiny. In addition to treating their hands well, pirates also distributed their plunder in an egalitarian manner, there being only a slight
difference in pay from the captain to the lowest crew member. Beyond these facts, Indians, commonly referred to as "heathens," were not accepted as social equals by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europeans, so it is not a stretch to believe that these accounts of rape and torture are accurate. What is difficult to understand is why this pirate history was re-presented to include the pirate’s marriage to an Indian princess and the founding of a pirate kingdom on the island of Madagascar.

Looking ahead to Defoe’s account in *A General History*, a clue emerges that begins to explain the connection between the desires of the commercial class and piracy. In Defoe’s version, Avery, appealing to the services of a group of merchants back in England, attempts to liquidate his fortune in gold and diamonds, but is himself swindled in the bargain. Defoe seizes this opportunity to critique his own country’s capitalist (even piratical) greed when he states that Avery “went privately to Bristol, to speak with the Merchants himself, where instead of Money he met a most shocking Repulse, for when he desired them to come to an Account with him they silenced him by threatening to discover him, so that our Merchants, were as good Pyrates at Land as he was at Sea.” Shortly thereafter, Avery becomes sick and dies “not being worth as much as would buy him a coffin.” Defoe’s retelling of Captain Avery’s story reveals that in 1726 the merchant class was not always viewed as inventive and entrepreneurial, but was perceived, on occasion, as criminal. Defoe’s equation of the merchant with the pirate, although clearly a fictional exaggeration of the history of Captain Avery, does furnish merit historically. Max Novak argues this same point when he states that in Defoe’s day, “the line between business and theft or between commerce and piracy was not very

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exact." For example, during the 1690s in the East Indies, North American merchants supported pirates who operated from the island of Madagascar. These traders established a lucrative exchange with the pirates: colonial products for slaves and luxury items captured through piracy. Large numbers of corrupt customs officials routinely turned a blind eye to ships transporting slaves and contraband back into the North American territory.

Although pirates and merchants have been known to collaborate, and merchants have been known to behave like pirates, these facts still fail to explain adequately the commercial class’s fascination with Captain Avery’s exploits in the East Indies. The cornerstone of the interest in Avery’s story lies less with the pirate and more with English commercial involvement in the region itself. During the 1690s merchants, predominantly composed of Whig party members, were determined to stake a claim to the trade that had, up until the turn of the eighteenth century, been controlled by the Tory backed English East India Company. In 1694, Whig merchants, who opposed the Tory monopoly on Eastern trade, passed a resolution through the House of Commons which stated that “all subjects of England have equal right to trade to the East Indies, unless prohibited by Act of Parliament.” The increasingly influential Whig merchants were insistent upon gaining access to the rich markets of the East Indies, and the inevitable outcome was competition with the English East India Company. In 1695, the same year that Avery attacked the Mogul’s treasure ship, a group of Whig merchants, backed by their political allies in Westminster, established a Scottish East India Company, which immediately threatened Tory control over Eastern trade. The Crown,
however, stepped in and rejected this maneuver by “forbidding all English investment in
the Scottish East India Company as well as any assistance overseas with its trade.” 25
Heated battles between the two groups were waged for the next fifteen years until, in
1709, the United Company of merchant trading to the East Indies was established. The
United Company, as Philip Lawson reports, “certainly represented something bigger and
better able to exploit eastern markets than what had existed before. In theory it offered
an opportunity for all merchants interested in the East to participate in the trade,
including those in London, the outports, and after the Union of 1707, those in Scotland
too.” 26 This change in early eighteenth-century trade policy opened the floodgates for
collective participation in East Indian trade. The shift ignited the imagination of the
mercantile subject who could now invest in government stock, the Bank of England, and
both East and West Indian trading companies. 27

Evidence explicitly suggesting that the English commercial imagination was
fixated on both pirate presence and trade potential in the East Indies is discovered in the
Marquis of Carmarthen’s proposal, Reasons for Reducing the Pyrates at Madagascar,
which was delivered to the House of Commons in 1707. 28 Close inspection of this
document informs that the Crown’s commercial interests in Africa and the East Indies at
least equal their concerns about pirates. In addition to expressing fear that the pirates of
Madagascar will “generate” with the women of the island, the proposal focuses on the
rich potential that might be harvested from that region. “Madagascar,” the document
relates, “is one of the Largest Islands in the World, and very Fruitful, lies near the
Entrance into the East-Indies, and is divided into a great many petty Kingdoms
independent of each other, in that there is no making Application to any Supreme Monarch (or indeed any else) to Expel or Destroy the Pyrates there.” Carmarthen’s proposal underscores the advantages that possession of the “Fruitful” island, the gateway to the East Indies, would provide to England; these advantages, he argues, would justify expelling pirates who operated from Madagascar. What Carmarthen could not anticipate, however, was that following his appeal to the House of Commons, a fictional pirate colonizer would be invented by the English imagination. Aping Carmarthen’s concerns, the fictional pirate and his band would “generate” with East Indian women and exploit the potent resources contained by that region. Rather then looking like England’s foe, one who must be “Expell[ed]” or Destroy[ed], the fictional pirate closely resembles the English businessman / trading company. Indeed, England’s early eighteenth-century intentions to trade and colonize the East Indies engender a fictional pirate who will instruct English businessmen to capitalize on the Eastern bounty that awaits them.

**Avery, the Hero**

The heroic aspects of Captain Avery’s piracies are closely tied to the historical facts surrounding the transition, or “turn” (as it was called), from common sailor to pirate. Turning pirate was a turn away from class hierarchy and the tyrannical rule which existed aboard English merchant and naval vessels. As Marcus Rediker argues in *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, “turning pirate” was a class-based revolution,
and piracy was an occupation that inspired an oppressed English underclass. The common sailor, as a member of the underclass and one of the first wage laborers in the capitalistic system, was also the first wage laborer to be exploited. Sailors had to contend with low pay, hazardous conditions, and tyrannical discipline. The discipline meted out by ships' officers was justified as “the necessary and bloody complement of the increasing productivity of seafaring labor in the eighteenth century.” It was a “class discipline” both personal and sadistic, and it resulted in “many disabling injuries inflicted by masters and mates upon the common men of the deep.”

The turn, then, from common sailor to pirate, marks an about-face away from, or against, the discipline and ill-treatment endured by common sailors. The mutiny of Avery and his men at Coruna demonstrates this heroic turn.

The earliest popular account of Captain Avery is in the form of a ballad entitled *A Copy of Verses, Composed By Captain Henry Every, Lately Gone to Sea to Seek His Fortune*, which is first published in 1694 as a broadside by the London printer, Theophilus Lewis. As Joel Baer reports, a variation of the ballad is also published two years later in the London newspapers, *The Flying Post* and *The Post Boy*, and is included in the diaries of Samuel Pepys (vol. 384). The content of the ballad (published prior to Avery’s attack of the *Gang-i-sawa*) is based on Avery’s 1694 mutiny at Coruna, Spain, and is steeped in the tradition of the noble / heroic outlaw. Like the Medieval Robin Hood, Avery is an heroic figure whom an oppressed English underclass can respect. Unlike the pirate texts which follow, the ballad, which is rooted in the oral tradition, would have evolved from and been accessible to the illiterate classes. Avery and his men
are depicted as justified in their departure from England. Their turn away from England and toward a life of piracy is perceived not so much as a choice; rather, it is the only alternative available to them. The explicit message emphasizes how these adventurous and “brave sparks” have been unjustly treated by a “false-hearted nation”; sailors will not bend or break under the weight of the tyranny they experience, but will strike out on their own for “glory.”

The ballad opens with a promise of gold to any of the “brave boys” who will join Avery in the mutiny at Coruna. The first two stanzas promptly initiate the spirit of adventure; the final two lines of the second stanza present the pirate’s transgression against all mankind (excepting England).

Come, all you brave boys, whose courage is bold,
Will you venture with me? I’ll glut you with gold.
Make haste unto Coronna: a ship you will find,
That’s called the Fancy, will pleasure your mind.

Captain Every is in her, and calls her his own;
He will box her about, boys, before he has done:
French, Spaniard, and Portuguese, the heathen likewise.
He has made a war with them until he dies.

The fourth stanza informs that Avery had been a wealthy landowner who, after being “disown’d,” or dispossessed, curses his birthplace, “abdicates,” and renounces his homeland. The fact that he had owned land is significant. Baer argues that Avery “comes from royalty, or at least [from] those who ‘owned’ England.” Since ownership of property in the early eighteenth century was equivalent to ownership of social, political, and economic rights, Avery views his own departure from England as that of

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“an honorable warrior, not a detestable pirate.” Avery’s forced “abdication” positions him as either a victim, or as one who has mismanaged his affairs. The implication (of the somewhat imprecise verb “disown”) is that Avery’s land and power have been taken from him. The ballad defends the pirate’s departure from his homeland as a justifiable alternative to subjection by tyranny:

Farewell, fair Plymouth, and Cat-Down be damn’d: 
I once was part-owner of most of that land; 
But as I am disown’d, so I’ll abdicate 
My person from England to attend on my fate.

In stanzas six and seven the balladeer glorifies the pirate as explorer, adventurer, and pioneer. Piracy is not only presented as an occupation to be proud of, but also as a route to (regain) glory and fame. The pirate is akin to the English explorer who desires to be the first to travel, see, experience, learn, and conquer:

I am not afraid to let the world know 
That to the South Seas and to Persia I’ll go.

Our names shall be blaz[on]ed and spread in the sky, 
And many brave places I hope to descry. 
Where never a Frenchman e’er yet has been, 
Nor any proud Dutchman can say he has seen.

In the final stanzas of the ballad we find an expression of impassioned flight, or turn, to piracy with no re-turn possible. Religion—or more accurately, the turn away from European religious institutions—is also summoned. Piracy is depicted as a kind of baptism outside the pale of British society. In contrast with piracy, organized religion is deemed less than “serious.” The reference to the “bread and the wine” positions piracy
as an occupation to be “sworn” into—in this case the paralleling of turning pirate with
the receiving of the holy communion. In the pirate community (as contrasted with a
“false hearted nation”) the hero survives by wielding the sword, his shepherd’s staff.

No quarters to give, no quarters to take;
We save nothing living: alas! 'tis too late;
For we are now sworn by the bread and the wine,
More serious we are than any divine.

Now this is the course I intend for to steer;
My false-hearted nation, to you I declare
I have done thee no wrong, thou must me forgive;
The sword shall maintain me as long as I live.

The pirate figure in the ballad is akin to the peasant outlaws of the Middle Ages
who are regarded as criminals by the law and state, but who, as Eric Hobsbawm argues,
“are considered by their people as heroes, as champions, avengers, fighters for justice,
perhaps even leaders of liberation, . . . men to be admired, helped and supported.”35
Painting the pirate in the likeness of a Robin Hood figure expresses revolutionary spirit,
except that for the pirate, the sea takes the place of the forest as a lawless space where
this new breed of heroic outlaw can proceed towards a more ideal existence. Like the
Robin Hood of previous centuries, who “was a symbol of independence, of resistance to
authority in church and state.” the pirate was considered a kind of hero to the oppressed
majority.36 Ship names, for example, often reflected this heroic spirit of resistance,
vengeance, or revenge; Black-beard’s ship was called Queen Anne’s Revenge, Stede
Bonnet’s ship Revenge, and, the pirate captain Ward renamed his captured French vessel
the “Little John.”37
The first half of the anonymously written narrative The Life and Adventures of Capt. John Avery, the Famous English Pirate, (rais'd from a Cabbin-Boy, to a King) now in Possession of Madagascar (1709?) echoes the heroic spirit of the ballad, A Copy of Verses Lately Composed by Henry Avery.38 The twelve page rogue biography claims to be an account extracted from the journals of Adrian Van Broeck, a “Dutch Gentleman, who, after a very liberal Education at Leyden, apply’d himself, as Men of the best Fashion in Holland do, to the Business of Trade” (1). Van Broeck befriends Avery after the merchant’s vessel is intercepted by the pirate’s band. His occupation as merchant is significant because the lens through which he (and the anonymous author) views the actions of the pirate is colored exclusively by the value potential of the Indian Princess, Indian spoils, and the Madagascar territory. The merchant/narrator imparts lessons—through the pirate—on how to acquire these possessions. Van Broeck not only receives “free Residence” in, but also a “Share” of Avery’s “new[ly] erected Government,” and maintains that he is “admitted into [Avery’s] most secret Thoughts; which gave him Occasion to know such a part of these memoirs” (2). The author does not invent Avery as a member of the lower class, nor as a wealthy landowner (as he is depicted in the ballad), but now Avery, who “descended from Parents noted for their Industry, [rather] than [their] Birth” (2), is invented as a member of the working class. A description of Avery confirms his middling station. Far from appearing as a dashing and winsome young man, Avery is described as being physically quite common: “He was, as to his proportion, middle-size’d, inclinable to be fat, and of a gay and jolly Complexion” (6).
The rogue biography reports that young Avery is a "forward Genius," a "promising" child who at school could "not only out-strip those of his own Years, but those that had been born some Years before him" (3). The future pirate, however, does not possess an inclination for colonial conquest and acquisition. He is described as exhibiting a "tyrannical" disposition towards his schoolmates, and he rebels against his superiors, but unlike a pirate, "Nature had eradicated in him a Thirst of Empire." Unlike Robinson Crusoe, the popular archetype of middle-class identity, for example, Avery is not initially consumed by a thirst for adventure, or a journey outward, a desire commonly embraced by young middle-class men of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Crusoe's "wandering inclination," as Defoe puts it, is founded in a fascination with the exoticness of other lands and peoples, and with economics, the desire to accumulate bountiful profits in the rich markets of the New World. A future pirate would possess the same wandering inclination, for the motivation in voyaging outward is to increase prospects. Crusoe's father tells his son that the middle position, "had the fewest disasters, and was not exposed to so many vicissitudes as the higher or lower part of mankind." but the fact was that the middle classes desired change; they wanted to climb the social ladder. Middle-class subjects did not generally accept class divisions and were constantly preoccupied by trying to increase their social status; they "studied and aped the manners of their superiors." Undoubtedly, they studied and attempted achieve upper-class financial holdings as well. In Robinson Crusoe, the voyage out of England demonstrates this important social desire, but the early portion of Avery's Life and Adventures complicates this common preoccupation. Avery's father, through his
industriousness while employed by the merchants, becomes a merchant land-owner; his service at sea enables him to improve drastically his social position on land. He retires from the sea after purchasing “near Plymouth, at a place called Cat-Down, a sort of Eminence over-looking an Arm of the Sea; which, by its various Meanders and Windings, runs several Miles into the Country” (3). Unlike his father, and Crusoe, however, Avery departs for the sea less because of his desire to improve his social station and more because the narrative needs to educate Avery in the business practices of his not always upstanding English society. When he initially sets out to sea, Avery does not possess a “Thirst for Empire,” but when he returns to find himself swindled, he quickly learns the protocol of the English business community. His turn to piracy is not so much a turn away from English society as it is a success story where, through the process of turning pirate, Avery is educated and conditioned to mimic English trading / business practices.

Defoe steers clear of any kind of social, political, or economic critique of the society that Crusoe departs from, but The Life and Adventures of Capt. John Avery is deliberate in its positioning of Avery as a victim, a pawn who falls prey to the ruthless and underhanded legal and economic practices of his community. Following the death of his father, and his aunt four years later, Avery inherits his family’s estate: £500, and the land that his father owned at Cat-Down. The estate is managed by a friend of Avery’s father, a Mr. Bartholomew Knowles, who is described as “a Sea-faring Person, who was equally rich with old Avery, but not equally honest” (3). When Avery is eleven, he, like his father before him, takes to the sea as a legitimate sailor aboard a privateer in search
of Algerian pirates. But unlike Crusoe, Avery’s departure from England is brought about when he is “encouraged” by the dishonest lawyer (who wants to get Avery out of the way) to sail abroad. The narrator does not elaborate upon Avery’s motivations for pursuing a life at sea. Instead, the central focus is on the corrupt practices of the family executor. While Avery is away at sea fighting piracy, Mr. Knowles is at home committing piracy upon Avery’s inheritance. The integrity of the English legal system is called into question when the executor befriends a “Backslider” lawyer who “knew as well how to forge Deeds, as his Brother in Iniquity how to persuade him to it, and it took not up much Labour, but Conveyances were made, and other Instruments drawn, which entitled Knowles to the Possession of the Estate” (4). Avery’s removal to sea to fight piracy makes him vulnerable to the “legal” piracy that is committed, without “much Labour.” at home in England. The scene underscores how pervasive piracy (legal and illegal) is, both inside and outside England.

Following a tour of duty in the Mediterranean and the West Indies, Avery returns to England to discover that he has been “disposses’d not only of his Estate, but Aunt’s Legacy, by a pretended Deed of Conveyance, and Bill of Charges” (5). In both economic and political senses, Avery’s inattentiveness to his father’s estate causes him to be victimized by an aggressive English society. This interpretation depicts the struggle to climb the social ladder as somewhat futile. Avery’s family almost reaches the margins of the status of landed gentry; Avery’s father, through his “Industry,” is able to climb to a position of respectability when he purchases his own land. But because of a legal system that can be corrupted, there is no protection, security, or safety for Avery unless
he “works” to protect and maintain his estate. Avery prepares a lawsuit against
Knowles, but his attempt at legal restitution is futile. The narrator emphasizes that
English “landed” society seems quite as lawless as the English seafaring society:
“[Avery] commenc’d a Suit against Knowles his Executor, but all to no Purpose; for
what by the Treachury of his own Lawyers, and what by the Pre-Possession of the
Judges in his Adversary’s Favour, [Avery] found himself under the necessity of going to
Sea again, by losing his Favour” (5).

This “Loss of Favour” now follows Avery back into the navy. He had been a
sailor who, according to his superiors, “shews uncommon Readiness in the Practice of
Maritime Affairs” (4), but when he makes an “Application for Preferment” to be
considered for the position of an officer—being one who “attended the Board of
Admiralty”—Avery discovers that with “his Fortunes being lost, his former Favours
were vanish’d also, and though he had serv’d so long under a more genteel Character, he
found himself oblig’d to submit to a Fore-mast-man’s [common sailor’s] Place” (5).

When in possession of land and money, Avery receives recognition in the navy; now
being stripped of his material status—the loss of his inheritance—he is reduced to the
position of a common sailor. The seafaring community provides Avery no more
recognition for his accomplishments at sea than does his father’s executor on land. His
career in the navy is torpedoed. Like his father, Avery turns to the merchants who, he
believes, will deal more favorably with him. And, for the moment, he is correct.

Contrary to his treatment in the Navy, in the realm of the merchants Avery is
initially recognized as a seafaring genius. The merchants compare his abilities at sea with
those of the naval admirals, Drake and Hawkins, who like Avery, had “been Inhabitants of Plymouth, and were rais’d from no higher Beginnings, than our modern Adventurer” (6). And like the former “legal” privateers, Avery is heralded as one who “might advance . . . far upon the Surface of the Ocean, and make his Signal Discoveries” (6). This description furthers the notion that the middle-class individual could greatly increase his lot in life through the channels of capitalism, in this case, while employed by the merchants, in their trading practices.

The narrator’s comparison between Avery and Queen Elizabeth’s “Sea Dogs,” Drake and Hawkins, may also contain a hidden meaning. At face value, the narrator refers to John Hawkins, who was a cousin, and contemporary, of Drake’s, and who also served as one of the Queen’s Sea Dogs. However, William Hawkins, who was the elder brother of John, journeyed to Agra, India, on behalf of the nascent English East India Company in the early seventeenth century, and took up a brief residence at the court of Jehanghir; this moment is considered to be the “opening scene” in the history of British India. Hawkins married the daughter of a Christian Armenian named, Mubarik Khan, and when he was dismissed from the emperor’s court in 1611, he took his new wife with him. This fact is surprisingly synchronous with Captain Avery’s fictional history.40

Avery, already the victim of legal and economic schemes engineered by an executor and a lawyer, gets cheated one last time through a sham marital arrangement to a farmer’s daughter. The narrator describes the final act of deception as follows:

Tho’ it prov’d, that the Farmer was none of the honestest, as his Daughter happen’d afterwards to fall under the Character of none of the Chasted; for the first took
Advantage of his Son-in Law's taking his word for his Daughter's Portion, and refus'd to pay him one Farthing, the last was hopefully brought to Bed of a Champion Boy, six Months after the Bridal Night, as much like a certain Inn-Keeper in the Town, as if it had been spit out of his Mouth. (6)

The Innkeeper, a land merchant, has plundered Avery's bride three months before his own marriage. This final injustice, described as a "shipwreck," positions Avery as one who has been "plunder'd of his Patrimony." This final act of land piracy sours Avery's attitude toward all merchants. He now gains a temper which is "daring and good-humour'd, if not provok'd, but insolent, uneasy, and unfatiguing to the last Degree, if at any time impos'd upon" (6). These deceptions function as lessons. Avery is taught that in order to gain material and personal fulfillment, in order to be successful, he must become a pirate. If he had been a pirate on his father's estate, he would never have lost it to legal pirates. Echoing the ballad, *A Copy of Verses*, Avery chooses piracy as a result of the misfortune he experiences; however, Avery's metamorphosis, his "turning" pirate, is a learned behavior, part of his educational process in the practice of a middle-class business ethic of exploitation.

Consonant with the historical account of his trajectory into piracy, Avery takes part in a mutiny in Coruna, Spain, where he is elected captain of the pirate crew, and he and his men go "upon the account." During the mutiny, Avery's appeal to his followers is both heroic and overtly political; initially, his turn to piracy is painted as a revolt against the exploitation of the labor of the common sailor. His intention is not merely to pirate for plunder's sake, but to act justifiably against an oppressive capitalist regime.
which exploits the common sailor. In this sense, his action can be successfully interpreted as Marxist. Avery tells his men that

if they would permit him to lead them on, he promis’d one Day’s resolute Fight should make the Residue of their Lives an uninterrupted Scene of Pleasure: That it was mere Madness to depend on the Merchants, who suffer’d the bravest Fellows to grow old, lame, and miserable in their Service, without having any Regard to their Labours: That ’twas an equal Frenzy, to hazard all for the Government, where, as he had personally experienc’d, Promotion seldom attended true Merit; where the Insolence of Commanders was insufferable, and where the Tarpawlins of Honour had nothing to expect for the Reward of their Wounds and Bravery, but a poor Apartment in an unprovided Hospital, when Age and ill Usage had render’d ’em unfit for Farther Service. (7)

In basic Marxian terms (in the spirit of Robin Hood), the merchants provoke Avery’s mutiny by exploiting the common sailor’s labor. In the hands of the merchants, private property excludes the common sailor from empowerment in the labor process. The common sailor is not “the private owner of his own means of labor set in action by himself; the peasant of the land which he cultivates, the artisan of the tool which he handles as a virtuoso.”41 To the contrary, the common sailor, as Avery states, is “dependent” upon both the merchants, who have no “Regard to their Labour,” and “Government,” where “Promotion seldom attended true Merit.” The common sailor—a laborer no longer working for himself—is part of the new system where the capitalist merchant, through the ownership and power invested in private property, exploits the laborer.
Avery’s Marxist stand recalls the spirit of the ballad, *A Copy of Verses*, which, apart from inventing Avery as a moneyed individual, would have appealed most to the lower classes, seamen and their families, who, as Baer states, “might have found in the ballad a spirited expression of their grievances against a faithless nation and naval administration, and, . . . apprentices, labourers and strollers . . . might have been moved to imagine a life of independence, fellowship and venture, a life worthy of a man of spirit.”

Intended for middle-class audiences, however, the rogue biography mimics the class-based revolution in order to capitalize on the success and familiarity of the earlier work. The ballad, as Baer notes, “must have been an attractive commodity, for it skillfully combined well-known methods of defining, attracting and holding an audience with an unconventional and subversive theme as irresistible to landsmen.” Avery’s radicalism in the rogue biography belies capitalist, imperialist, and didactic agendas which emerge at the heart of this narrative. Obviously the author was familiar with the kinds of struggles that were taking place between the common sailor and the employers in the seafaring community—the merchants, privateers, and the navy. Initially, the author represents the worker’s revolt—the mutiny of the common sailor—with precision, but as the narrative advances, it aligns Avery with the practices of British mercantilism and colonialism; Avery takes to the sea, not to create a new order in opposition to the capitalist system he leaves behind, but to acquire what he has been denied at home. Avery’s pursuit of wealth, land, and an Indian Princess positions him as a member of the colonial middle-class, the *nouveau riche*. The spoils taken from the Indian ship make Avery a wealthy man, his marriage to the Indian princess makes him a
king, and his pirate nation on Madagascar, his dominions, serve as his colonial estate.
Avery finally attains the recognition he feels he lost to the legal system in capitalist
England. And, once he achieves his heightened status, after he becomes the king of his
domains, Avery desires to return home again. With the wealth that he has attained, and
the knowledge of how to keep it, Avery will finally be prepared to protect himself
against future loss. The narrative coincides with the capitalist ideal which is based, not
on inherited wealth, but upon acquired wealth. Avery can only achieve the status of a
capitalist hero by first losing his money. His experiences as a pawn instruct him in how
to become the capitalist regained. His measure of economic suffering entitles him to
wealth and riches; moreover, his experiences with poverty enable his character to offer a
point of identification for the audience.

Avery, the Conqueror

The second half of The Life and Adventures of Captain John Avery demonstrates
a progressive erasure of the pirate's class-based motivations for turning pirate. Avery is
no longer depicted as a member of the lower class—as one of the common laborers who
mutinied for their independence at Coruna—but, through the process of turning pirate,
he has learned how to achieve and maintain the status of the moneyed classes. Avery no
longer represents a revolutionary outlaw on the high seas, but is depicted as an emperor
ruling newly acquired dominions in the East. Apart from its subversive quality, this
particular representation is yet another appendage in the many delineations of how to be
educated so that one can participate successfully in the acquisition of an empire. The fantasies invested in "trade" with the East are acted out by the pirate; Avery becomes a capital subject, and while his means of acquisition are different from those of the enterprising merchant, the methodology and the outcome are the same.

The fictional pirate's actions in the East mimic those of a European trading company. Later in the eighteenth century Edmund Burke would remark that the English East India Company "did not seem to be merely a company formed for the extension of the British commerce, but in reality a delegation of the whole power and sovereignty of this kingdom sent into the East."44 Trading companies, which were generally granted full sovereign power, completely controlled the regions in which they operated by raising armies and navies, building forts, coining money, establishing governments, making treaties, and declaring war at their own discretion. The English East India Company, in fact, "used piracy" in order to intimidate, or punish, local rulers for refusing company demands for trading privileges. In 1610, for example, the English East India Company "seized Indian ships, forced the Indians to trade their goods for [English goods], then ransomed the ships back to their owners."45 When the Dutch East India Company took over the Banda Islands in 1621, it accomplished the conquest by executing the leaders and enslaving the inhabitants.46 And between 1688 and 1691 the English East India Company "lost sight of its corporate purpose, [and] declared war on the Mogul empire."47 Numerous examples like these can be found throughout the seventeenth,
eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Trading and mercantile companies were state-created and state-sponsored institutions that used violence and piratical tactics in order to acquire wealth and land.

This exercising of total control over another land is precisely the type of power that Avery wields in the East. Avery and his crew are not long in the East Indies before they encounter an Indian vessel “freighted with the richest Merchandizes of all the East” (7). In addition to the treasure, the ship also contains “a Prize of greater Value . . . I mean a Grand-Daughter of Aurenzebe, who was then the Great Mogul and commanded an Empire almost as extensive as any known Quarter of the World” (7–8). The Indian princess is the symbolic object of exchange, or appropriation, between East and West. In this sense, Avery’s acquisition is imperial. Described as “the Reward of his Victory[,] . . . the most charming of the fair Sex, and the most precious of all inestimable Things that the East could present him with” (8), the pirate’s seizing of the princess represents the Western conquest of the East. The pirate plunders the East of its commodities and capital, but his marriage to the Indian princess signifies a “marriage” between East and West; trading and piracy conflate. Avery’s marriage to the Indian princess is also a correction, a drastic improvement over his former marriage to a farmer’s daughter that failed because of marital and filial piracy.

Avery’s interception of a treasure ship belonging to the Great Mogul of India strips from the pirate a kind of innocence, or at least sympathy / empathy, that he had formerly elicited as the heroic outlaw figure. The ballad, and the first portion of The Life and Adventures of Capt. John Avery, encourage a kind of understanding, and

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justification for the pirate’s actions. Now, however, the pirate attracts mercantile interest. He has learned how to execute his capitalistic desires. Avery wastes no time in sizing up the Indian ship according to the value of its contents and the value of its occupants: The princess, his future bride, is his “Prize,” the ship contains the “richest Merchandise of all the East,” and his future grandfather-in-law “commands an Empire almost as extensive as any known Quarter of the World” (7–8). These descriptions of plunder are particularly invested in mercantile capitalist concerns, not only of their immediate value, but of their future value potential. The ship is not simply rich, it is the richest merchandise in the East, and the granddaughter of the Great Mogul, the “Prize of Greater Value.” is referred to in association with the Eastern empire that her grandfather commands.

Accompanying the exaggerated descriptions of vast Indian wealth are the particularly racist, Orientalist descriptions of the Indian men who are weak, ineffectual, and entirely inferior to the pirates. This Orientalist discourse, typical in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries, is constructed in binary terms where Westerners dominate and Easterners must be dominated, which, as Said states, “usually means having their land occupied, their internal affairs rigidly controlled, their blood and treasure put at the disposal of one or another Western power.” Avery and his crew are described as having “Strength,” “Bravery,” and “wonderful Skill in naval encounters” while the Indians have a “Want of being unexercis’d in military Affairs [which] render’d them as weak as they were numerous” (8). The Indians’ lack of military expertise renders their wealth and their women available for the taking. And this is exactly what
the pirates proceed to do. Avery reverses his former misfortunes—the losses of his estate, wife, and child. He had once been powerless, lacking the “Skill” to protect his wealth and his wife from pirates, but now Avery has attained the knowledge of how to commit piracy on others who cannot defend themselves.

In addition to meeting with no serious resistance from the Indian men, the Indian women, likewise, do not protest the sexual advances of the pirates. The narrator states that the pirates were now in possession of “the Value of a Million of Money in Silver and Rich Stuffs . . . and a very agreeable Lady into the Bargain” (8). The Indian female is equated with commodities, and she becomes the ideal object of exchange, the precious “Thing,” in this scenario. Employed throughout eighteenth-century British fiction, the Eastern female is a symbol of imperialist ideology—in this case imperialist acquisition. Mercantile capitalism is demonstrated through the “fetishization of the figure of the woman as agent, proxy, prototype, or embodiment of the effects of mercantile capitalism.”49 The Indian princess functions as the “Prize” and the “Reward” of the British empire, an empire embodied, appropriately, in the figure of the pirate.

Even as she becomes commodified, the Indian princess also produces commodities; she is the means to the extension of the English empire in the East. The princess’s ship is intercepted while she is en route to be married to a Persian emperor. With her dowry on board, the princess is intended as the object and agent of the exchange between two powerful Eastern rulers; the reader assumes that the princess’s marriage is a strategically designed consolidation of power in the East and opposed to England’s political interests. Avery’s interception of the princess positions the pirate as
a champion of English colonial ventures. Now Avery abruptly inserts himself between the transaction and makes off with the spoils. The Persian emperor—now resembling the earlier depiction of Avery as the victim of the Innkeeper's act of piracy—will "never have the fortune to enjoy the glittering Cargo, nor his intended Spouse" because the Captain "plunder'd her of something more pleasing than the Jewels tho' not without her Consent" (8). The implication is that, in addition to possessing the princess's material wealth, the captain (like the Innkeeper before him) pirates her virginity. Unlike the farmer's daughter, Avery successfully deflowers this virgin. But the piratical act is legitimized so as not to defy the custom of the Church of England. In order to acquire her sex, Avery must first marry her.

Marriage between the pirate and the princess, and between the crew and her servants, is achieved, not through force—through rape, as has been charged in the historical reports—but here, marriage and sex are accomplished with the consent of the Eastern women. Typical of Orientalist discourse, the females never speak; they are represented entirely through the voice of the narrator who speaks for them, and appraises the value of their sex. After Avery's marriage ceremony is performed, the crew draw lots for the remaining women. The balance of the non-royal marriage ceremonies is performed to give legitimacy to the conjugal activity, which the narrator, calls a "feast." Following Avery's marriage "the rest of the Ships crew drew lots for the Servants, and to follow the Example of their Commander, even stay'd their Stomachs 'till the same Priest had said Grace for them... when they fell to as heartily, as if they were to feast after that Rate no more during their Lives; and being as full of Wealth,
when they were almost empty of Love, came in sight of the Island of *Madagascar*" (8). The "feast" of women is yet another example of how the narrative conflates piracy with mercantilism and "proper" English behavior. Sex is valued as "something more pleasing than the Jewels," but it can only be accomplished after the ceremonial rites are performed.

The pirate’s arrival in Madagascar mimics the colonizing practices of a European trading company. Indeed, with its elaborate details of bountiful resources, the description of the "Republic of Pyrates," which is christened "Fort Avery," mirrors an English colony. Avery presides over his dominions like an English king. Madagascar is described as "fertile," it is situated in the "Neighborhood of Several Spice Islands," prospects for "Trade" are excellent because the island "lies... between the East and West Seas," the "Disposition of the Inhabitants" is "civil," and the pirates immediately locate a "large and capacious Bay" which will protect their vessels from "the Fury of the most tempestuous Weather." As expressed in Carmarthen’s document, "Reasons for Reducing the Pyrates at Madagascar," the pirate’s island is depicted as an ideal location for an English colony. And like a group of colonists, the fictional band of pirates weigh the positive and negative characteristics of their new island, not simply for its inhabitability, but precisely for its value as a dominion of mother England. Pirate criteria ape colonial criteria for investing in a settlement. Like a group of mercantile colonists / businessmen / trading company employees, the pirates build "Towns," "Communities," "Fortifications," and "Entrenchments."
In addition to its fecundity, its prime location, and its friendly and submissive inhabitants, the pirate colony is also a location where women are readily available, an imperative criterion for colonial propaganda. Not only have the pirates been successful in marrying the Indian women from the Gang-I-sawa, but now, the colony's first voyage is dedicated to a "quest of Women, to perpetuate [their government] by way of Generation" (11). Synchronous with the way in which the Indian women are valued in economic terms, the "Cargo of Ladies" that the pirates purchase in Africa is strictly a commodity. Speaking like the economist, Daniel Defoe, or the American Patriot, Ben Franklin, the narrator states that although the women have a "Complexion . . . none of the fairest, Necessity takes up with everything" (11). Ironically, the fictional pirate figure is invested with the English / American mercantile ethic, 'necessity is the mother of invention.' Avery discovers that in Africa, the inhabitants "barter for Wives as they do for Cattle, and you might as easily purchase a young Virgin of her Parents, as a Tooth of Ivory, both being the Commodities and Merchandize of those countries, only here lay the Difference, the Lady was of less Value than the Tooth." When the pirates "grow weary" of the women they have purchased, they are comforted in the knowledge that "'twas in their Power to have more at the same Price" (11).

In addition to aping the colonizing practices of a trading company / colony, the fictional pirates' xenophobia matches England's own; in particular, Avery hates the French. Contrary to this fictional account, historical pirate communities created a supra-nationalism—a loyalty to their fellow outlaws—which replaced the parochial loyalty to their countries of origin. Historical information gathered from Avery's captured crew
members informs that “English, American, and French pirates sailed together and fought effectively together in Henry Avery’s crew, despite the fact that France was at war with England and her colonies.”50 Neither did religious differences divide pirate communities; Protestant Scots and Irish Catholics “worked alongside each other without friction aboard scores of pirate vessels, despite religious antagonism that divided their nonpirate countrymen.”51 In England, however, foreigners were looked upon in general with contempt. The French, routinely called “French dogs,” were hated most of all. Avery’s contemporary, Fougeret de Montbron, remarked that before an Englishman learns that “there is a God to be worshipped,” he learns that “there are Frenchmen to be detested.”52

Faithful to English prejudices, the fictional pirates of Avery’s band, composed mainly of English and French sailors, mimic their home countries by going to war with each other. Unlike the historical pirate, these fictional figures fail to shed their European identities in the pirate community. The Frenchman, DeSale, Avery’s second in command (who is also reminiscent of the Innkeeper of Avery’s past), attempts to seduce the princess and instigate mutiny while Avery is at sea. However, when the planned seduction and revolt fail, the conspirators are tried, and found guilty, and in a gruesome plan of national cleansing, Avery, who again refuses to have his “possessions” stolen, determines to “exterminate” the French on the island.

After the mutiny is put down, Avery drafts a letter to a representative of the English East India Company to discover a way back in to the English empire. His fictional plea for readmittance is perhaps borrowed from Avery’s historical “Declaration,” delivered on his way out of the English empire. Religious thoughts,

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considerations of his mortality, approaching death, and his belief that he will be forced to answer to the “Heavenly Tribunal” in the next world, all combine to inspire Avery to request a pardon from England. Similar to his inability to shed his national identity, the fictional pirate is also unable to shed his religious identity. Avery “Desire[s] of finishing the Remainder of his Days where he first had the Happiness of seeing the Light, which was increased by looking into his Past Crimes, and a just survey of what he one Day must answer for.” Avery’s religious sentiment initiates a moment of reflection for the pirate / merchant. Although he has learned how to be a success, his methods, which ape the business practices of his countrymen, would appear to be in conflict with his Anglican notions of predestination. In a gesture of repentance, the pirate appeals to the British authorities that,

> Nothing lies more at Heart on my side, then that I have given Occasion for her Majesty’s Subjects formerly to complain of me; but as I have it in my Power to make ample Amends, so I am now ready to do it after what manner shall be thought convenient, provided I may be suffer’d to return Home to my own Country in Safety, with such Effects as shall be though needful. . . . tho’ I am capable of maintaining my self where I am, . . . yet my Disrelish of Things that are unjust, and my Inclination to do my own Country Service, as well as close my Eyes in it, are so prevalent with me, as to make me desire your good Offices in this Affair, and tell you, that I am, with all imaginable Respect, Sir, Your most obedient Servant, John Avery. (14)

When British authorities reject his appeal for a pardon, Avery’s religious convictions crumble, and he turns even more lawless, as if to become more mercantile than the British. He passes a “Resolution” to exterminate the French “wheresoever they should
find 'em,” and he plunders the French settlements on the island (which the British have been doing, and will do, for centuries, even after Waterloo). Because Avery is unable to make a return to England, he aspires to recreate England on the island of Madagascar.

Continuing to mimic British colonial practices, Avery becomes obsessed with power and transforms his once (so called) egalitarian government into a monarchy: “he had nothing short of the Regal authority, but the Right to exercise it. For the Fame of his adventures had brought all manner of People to live under his Government; and he not only coin’d money with his own Impress upon it, but took upon him the Stile, in his Edicts and Declarations, that is to be made use of by Sovereign Princes” (36). His self-aggrandizing gesture of coining money in his own likeness is a symptom of Avery’s obsession with power and wealth. He pictures himself on the counters of power. Avery, who initially sets out to change his fortune by pirating a Mogul’s ship, has become a king in his own right.

Avery accomplishes the final step of mimicking the government he had once left behind when he wages war with the native inhabitants “that had so handsomely receiv’d him at his first coming to” the island (15). This final action marks a full “turn” for Captain Avery; he becomes the master that he had formerly cursed. He has now reduced the status of those under his rule to “the Denomination of a Subject.” He “set himself to ... regulate, arm, and discipline his militia, and having formed himself into several Regiments, found them to make fifteen thousand effective men.” With his “forty Vessels of War, from seventy to thirty-six Guns” (15), Avery has successfully become the king of a non-egalitarian colony.
At this point, Captain Avery's fictional progress toward colonizing Madagascar leaves off abruptly, the narrator stating that "To go farther than this, would be to impose upon the Veracity of the Relators, as well as the Belief of the Reader, because the Person that gives the Memoirs, left the Captain when he first made Overtures for Pardon" (15). The narrator does, however, deem it imperative to describe in detail, from an economic point of view, the natural resources of the island of Madagascar. This description underscores the author's ultimate motivations for publishing his rogue biography: mercantile instruction and colonial propaganda. Madagascar is ripe with trees, fruit, grains, nuts, honey, pepper, sugar, tobacco, hemp, rocks, marble, iron, steel, and gold. The inhabitants, their customs, language, and disposition are also discussed in some detail, and, as Carmarthen does, an appeal is made to the British government to acquire Madagascar as a colony. The narrative, scripted by a man who "apply'd himself... to the Business of Trade," has an eye specifically on economic potential:

From the foregoing description [of Madagascar], may be concluded what a mighty Advantage it would be to the Crown of Great Britain, if Means could be found out by our Superiors, either to Suppress the Pyrates by Force, and to get Possession of the Wealthy Island, or by Compliance with such Advances as have been made by the Chief towards his Pardon which must terminate in an entire Surrendry of a Country that not only abounds with so many useful Commodities, but, by its Extent and Strength, will add to the Renown of the British Arms. (16)

This passage illustrates the two major concerns of early eighteenth-century mercantile England: how to locate and exploit foreign markets and how to protect them. As a didactic tool, Captain Avery evolves from an English subject who is not able to protect
his resources into an aggressive and savvy merchant / king who succeeds in dominating foreign markets. Ironically, the pirate stands in to mentor the mercantile segment of the British middle-class. The “illegal” actions of the historical pirate are reinvented in fiction to mimic the “legal” desires of the British merchant.

Avery, the Successful Pirate

Charles Johnson’s play, *The Successful Pyrate*, was not a monetary success, but it did reach the stage of the Drury Lane Theater in 1713 for a run of four nights. Based on the fictional biography of Captain Avery, *The Life and Adventures of Capt. John Avery, rais’d from a Cabbin Boy, to a King* (discussed above), the play embellishes the already initiated mythology of the famous pirate king of Madagascar, and in it Johnson both employs Avery as a didactic tool, and contributes to the tradition of turning the pirate into a saleable commodity in early eighteenth-century capitalist culture. Johnson banks on the prospect that the pirate will draw at the box office, and he confesses his artistic and capitalistic collaboration with the pirate in the play’s Epilogue: “The Poet stands indicted, for that he / Combin’d with a grand Thief, one Avery, / Illegally seducing Half a Crown / From ev’ry Lover of a Play in Town” (63). Although Johnson parallels the seafaring pirate captain with his own—so called—piratical practice of seduction on the stage, the subversion in the drama has little to do with the pirate’s actions in the East Indies. Similar to Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (although not as cleverly constructed) Johnson’s satirical target of ridicule is England, and his strategy involves
transporting English society to the pirate's island, Laurentia (Madagascar). In this manner, Johnson camouflages his prescriptive critique of English society. Johnson's thesis in *The Successful Pyrate* is that the economic methods of the pirate who steals outside of England are comparable with the economic methods of capitalists within English society; he illustrates myriad faces of England's capitalist personality at home and in the colonies, and, perhaps unwittingly, Johnson includes his own face in the portrait. But Johnson's conclusion, that indeed, the face of England will change in the colonies, is quite unusual. Unlike the rogue biography, *The Life and Adventures of Capt. John Avery* (which functions explicitly as colonial propaganda) the conclusion of *The Successful Pyrate* communicates a warning to English society: Johnson's prescriptive message is that England's greed—its "ill-taught Ambition"—at home may engender damaging consequences in the colonies. Exploiting the fears expressed in Carmarthen's proposal that pirates will "Generate" with Madagascar women, Johnson (perhaps unwittingly) posits that the changing face of England's capitalist personality in the colonies may not long resemble the face of England at home.

Although no one is exempt from mockery in Johnson's play, the most potent stings are delivered to the English judicial system and the mercantile class, both depicted figuratively as bands of successful pirates. The pirate abroad, for Johnson, becomes a corresponding metaphor for pirates at home, the puppeteers who pull the strings in the judicial and economic realms of English society. Coinciding with these attacks is Johnson's expression of merchant class economic desire—conveyed through the
character of the "Beau," Sir Gaudy Tulip—to emulate the rich. The hostility that this mercantile character has for his king likely corresponds to Johnson's own.

Johnson was an artistic capitalist—somewhat of a hack—who was famous for "writing a play every season," and his personal history locates him in the middle-class ranks as lawyer, and shopkeeper. Johnson, however, could identify with the fictional Captain Avery of the rogue biography, for he, like Avery, inherited a "fortune" in the marriage market. After writing seventeen plays during his career, Johnson married a wealthy young widow and opened a tavern on Bow Street, Covent Garden. Although "bred to the law," Johnson switched to a career of writing plays after he befriended Robert Wilks, the actor; because Wilks was a joint manager of the Drury Lane Theater, Johnson had little difficulty in getting his plays produced. Johnson is remembered in Genest's History of the English Stage for being a mimic, or "plagiary," who did not "acknowledge his obligations to others"; generally he claimed to have only "pretended" to borrow a "hint, when he had borrowed a great deal."53 The Successful Pyrate is no exception to this allegation. His propensity for appropriation locates Johnson even more securely as a successful pirate himself.54

Although the basic structure and mythology of Captain Avery's story remains intact, The Successful Pyrate contains significant sensational differences that demonstrate the playwright's desire to capitalize on his re-presentation of Captain Avery. Similar to the rogue biography, the pirates capture an Indian ship containing a great quantity of gold, the Indian princess, and her attendants; the pirate captain desires to marry the Indian princess, a lottery for wives is conducted, the Frenchman, DeSale,
incites a mutiny that is quickly put down, and, in the end, Avery decides to return to England. Within that basic structure, however, Johnson continues to fictionalize the tale. Now the Indian princess, Zaida, refuses to marry the pirate captain, whom Johnson renames Arviragus; her affection resides with Aranes, a member of her Indian entourage. Initially the couple views their abduction as a potential “blessing,” because Zaida, as in the previous tale, had already been contracted to a Persian potentate. Arviragus ignores the bond between the Indian lovers and repeatedly attempts to convince Zaida to take his hand in marriage so that they can rule Laurentia together as king and queen of the pirate’s island. After a lengthy tug-of-war (and Arviragus’s attempted execution of Aranes) the king discovers (in an Oedipal plot twist) that Aranes is his long lost son. Additionally, the audience learns that before establishing his pirate government, Arviragus had already been married to Zelmane, the daughter of an Indian Omrah, who bore him a son. During his stint in India, Arviragus ventures to sea for an undisclosed purpose (presumably piracy) when his ship is wrecked in a storm (Zelmane believes that her husband has been killed at sea). Miraculously he is rescued by another ship of pirates. The band sets sail for Madagascar, and so begins the occupation of the pirate republic on the island of Laurentia. Unlike the ending of The Life and Adventures of Captain John Avery, when Arviragus discovers that Aranes is his son, he abdicates his throne, handing it over to his son and the princess, and he, presumably, makes a successful return to England to “die a private man.” He is now racked by guilt, and by the end, he repents his piratical actions. His “turn” to England, however, should not be interpreted as a turn to honesty; by conflating tyranny on the pirates’ island with tyranny
and corruption in England, Johnson demonstrates that the pirate’s re “turn” to England is simply a change in venue; the outlaw jumps from one pirate ship to another.

The arbitrary legal power that the pirate king wields is the central catalyst for the play’s action. Lower and middling ranks of society stand in defiance against Arviragus’s mandatory law dictating that all members of the pirate community must take part in a lottery for wives. Arviragus’s intention is to perpetuate his new government, by way of generation, through marriage. His law exploits English fears, as expressed in Carmarthen’s “Reasons for Reducing the Pyrates at Madagascar,” that if pirates were to “generate” with the native women of Madagascar, forthcoming generations will no longer possess a sense of loyalty to England, but will come to recognize Madagascar as their native land. Arviragus announces his intentions to his subjects:

We hold our self indebted to each man / Who gives the Common-wealth a Legal Heir. / For Marriage is the Bond of Government, / That Cement fixes us by Natural Ties, By joining our Affections to our Interest. / Each Monarch Husband in his private Realm, / While he with virtuous Order rules his House, / Persues the general Good—Obedient Children. / This Lottery of Love you all must win, / And Fortune often chuses better for us / Than we for ourselves. (18–19)

The lower classes of Laurentian society respond to the mandatory law as an abuse of power threatening their identity, ideology, and liberty. The dandy Sir Gaudy Tulip (who represents the merchant class) is also disgruntled by Arviragus’s mandatory law to marry, which he brands a “bitter pill.” Tulip is described as a foppish “Beau,” middle-class gentleman merchant who is obsessed with all things material. He is a “Fellow” who
is “only study’d in Tea-Tables, women, china, and snuff-boxes” (4). Tulip’s is the realm of manners and material possessions, and like the class of trade merchants in early-eighteenth century England, Tulip aims to ape the manners and moneys of the landed gentry. A recounting of his past in England expresses this desire and his failure to succeed in his goal:

Tulip had an Intreague in his youth with a Covent-Garden Madona, whom he for twenty Years together mistook for a Dutchess, ’till, as it sometimes happens in these Cases, his Mistress and his Estate took their Leave of him together; when finding the Secret, and that his Credit in Old England had given up the last Gasp, he wisely projected to transport himself, with a Cargo of Essence, Snuff, and Powder, to the West Indies, and there marry for subsistence; but the Ship was taken by Arviragus, and Tulip thus happily preffer’d, to the only Thing on Earth he could desire, or deserve— (5).

Tulip, who thinks for twenty years that he has heightened his class position through his connection with the Duchess, a noble woman, discovers that he has been swindled by a prostitute, a Covent Garden Madona. Johnson’s gentleman merchant, then, travels to the colonies in the West Indies, (as many men in Tulip’s position were wont to do) in order to regain his economic security as a gentleman of the colonies. He retires to the West Indies with his salable commodities, his “Cargo” of essence, snuff, and powder, hoping to marry and to secure, at least, a “subsistence” lifestyle. But his plans are ruined when he is captured by pirates and brought to Laurentia.
When it becomes Tulip’s turn to draw a lot for a new wife on the pirates’ island, he chooses Lesbia, the Covent Garden Madona, who, in the spirit of the absurd, has been captured on board the Indian vessel with her lover, Lydia (the former wife of Piracquo, a member of the pirate band). The reunion of partners underscores Johnson’s ambition to equate English society with the pirate/colonial society. The following exchange demonstrates the conflation of England and Laurentia:

**Lydia:** Have we ran 3000 Miles from each other to meet in this Centre?

**Lesbia:** I find I am born to break that Beau’s Heart—It vexes me tho’; I thought we shou’d have been wholly unknown here.

. . . **Piracquo:** [After drawing his former wife’s name] Ay, here she is in neat Italick—Lydia, my very Identical, Numerical London wife—Why, this is giving a new Bond for an old Debt.

Laurentia hardly departs from the “very Identical, Numerical London”; the setting has changed, but the characters have not. Sir Gaudy Tulip, who consistently attempts to emulate the ways and means of the aristocracy, tries his hand, like Johnson himself, at heightening his class position (“inheriting a fortune”) through the marriage market. After his shock and disappointment of choosing Lesbia (the “Covent Garden Madona”) in the lottery for wives, Tulip (as with Avery’s experience with the farmer’s daughter) learns not to be tricked again. Tulip evidences the desire to heighten his social position on the pirate’s island when he rejects the chance arrangement to Lydia in favor of Zaida, the Indian princess.
Mimicking the lessons Captain Avery receives in *The Life and Adventures of Capt. John Avery*, Tulip learns from his pirate king not to repeat past mistakes, not to be deceived twice. This time the gentleman merchant seeks a more valuable prize. Tulip is described as “fetch[ing] such deep sighs for the Princess, you wou’d think his lungs grew in the Bottom of his Belly” (29). He is bitter about Arviragus’s lottery for wives, not because he resents Arviragus’s display of “arbitrary power,” but precisely because Arviragus has “taken the only Dish from the Table [Tulip] could fancy.” Tulip participates in the mutiny against Arviragus’s law in order to marry up the social ladder; marriage to the princess, he has learned, will significantly heighten his social position. He thunders to Piracquo, “[Arviragus] may marry me, that is, I may have a wife *de facto*, but *Zaida* is the Sovereign Mistress of my soul *dejure*—Gad, she is a fine Woman . . . [Arviragus] has cull’d the Top o’ the Basket, and left us nothing but what is Worm eaten and Wind fall’n. But let it go, I shall have an Intreague with her; I have already squeez’d her Hand, and fathom’d her Heart by her Eye—I shall mend [Arviragus’s] Breed, if he goes to that” (14). Tulip will no longer pursue a woman who is rotten, or as he states, fruit that is “worm eaten.” Although he is unsuccessful in marrying Zaida, Tulip has cultivated a taste for fresh fruit from the Tree of Knowledge.

Tulip’s intention not to repeat past mistakes motivates him to participate in the mutiny against Arviragus. Johnson uses mutiny in order to mock the English court’s autocratic manner of dealing “justice”; Johnson seems to view the English judicial system as being entirely corrupt. Composed of Mr. Justice Bull, Mr. Serjeant Dolt, and the defense attorney, Mr. Smooth, Arviragus’s court is a circus. Judge Bull advises defense
attorney, Smooth, that "you have free liberty to say anything for your clients, provided you say nothing that shall displease the Court, or in defense of the prisoners at the bar." Unable to fathom anything beyond his own appetite, Smooth reminds the court to "Tell the Cook I would have the Venison well soak'd, and d'ye hear a Pudding in the belly of the Hare; you'll remember to fix a dozen of the Red Burgundy, the same we drank yesterday." Judge Bull acknowledges that, according to English law, these men are guilty without being proven so; he reminds Smooth that "I am resolv'd before-hand to hang 'em all; so if you have anything further to say in their defense, Heav'n forbid I should hinder you from doing your duty for your client" (52–53). When the trial ends, Tulip is the sole mutineer who is granted liberty, not because of his innocence, but, predictably, because of his social standing. Unlike the balance of the "Conspirators" who are "always fierce, bloody, secret, active, and intrepid," the "Beau," Tulip, is "gentle, tender, open, indolent, and meek." Described by the attorney as a "Gentleman," Tulip is acquitted because he resembles the "Gentlemen impanel'd on the Jury." Johnson has "lashed" out at the English judicial system by populating the members of court with a gang of narrow-minded cretins. The court, according to Johnson, is yet another pirate community that favors and protects individuals who have, and know how to maintain, money and power.

Johnson most explicitly equates England with a pirate community by emphasizing the pirate captain's (king's) ambitions to further the ends of the English empire in the East Indies. The moment the Indian ship is captured, Arviragus reveals his "Thirst for Empire," which is symbolically bound up in his desire to marry the Indian princess,

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Zaida, who attains “by Nature a Title to Empire.” Similar to the representation of the unnamed princess in *The Life and Adventures of Capt. John Avery*, Zaida is described as Arviragus’s “Labour’s fair Reward,” however, Johnson does not acknowledge her Indianness, her otherness to Western Englishness. To the contrary, her deified position defines her exclusively as a desirable object, a prize. Zaida’s royal status as princess locates her as a desirable commodity in the marriage market of Laurentia. Arviragus interprets his union with the princess as being in accord with traditional monarchical power arrangements based on primogeniture. He voices his desire (and his interpretation of the marital arrangement) to Zaida: “High Heav’n has sent you here, / Imperial Maid, to found a Race of Kings, / to be the Mother of a mighty Nation, / For late Posterity shall see your Line / Dispensing Laws, and dealing equal Justice / to Nations round us” (11). The desire to rule an empire positions Arviragus as a monarchical king.

In a Shakespearean sense, Johnson posits that jealousy is what drives Arviragus to monarchical tyranny. Like Othello before him, Arviragus learns, through his unfulfilled desire for Zaida, that “all are Tyrants in their Love.” And DeSale, acting the part of Iago, fans the flames of Arviragus’s passion. What is unique here is that, unbeknownst to either of them until the denouement, Arviragus and Aranes are engaged in an Oedipal power struggle. Arviragus wishes that Aranes will abandon his love for Zaida and recognize that as the “Conqueror,” he maintains the “Right” to Zaida. Arviragus tells Aranes, “But know presumptuous Boy, no Power on Earth / Shall ravish from my Heart this God-like Maid— / Be gone aspiring Fool— / Claim not a Right to Heav’n, and call it Justice; / Here she shall blaze like our warm *Eastern* Sun, / The Royal
Partner of my Bed and Throne” (24). But Aranes does not back down. With an
identically heroic demeanor, Aranes maintains that he will “conquer, or . . . bravely die
[Zaida’s] Martyr” (24). This clash between father and son will eventually result in the
succession of the monarchical government in Laurentia. Perhaps evoking the
Restoration of the monarchy, the pirate’s half-Indian son will ascend to the throne of the
island, and Arviragus will return to England.

Even though the playwright dismisses the otherness of these Indian and half-
Indian characters, Johnson could not expect that his audience would interpret his
conclusion as a “happy ending,” that the pirate’s island will maintain its affinity with
England. Certainly all is not well in the colonial realm when the full-bred English king
returns home leaving his “half-breed heathen” son on the colonial throne married to an
Indian princess. Early eighteenth-century audiences might have interpreted this
conclusion—that the face of England in the colonial realm will resemble a multi-colored /
multi-racial hybrid—with horror. We can perhaps surmise that Johnson’s play lasted
only four nights at the Drury Lane Theater because audiences found his conclusion off-
putting.

Johnson’s unusual ending is at once a sensational attempt to fan the flames of
England’s fears about miscegenation (as expressed by Carmarthen), and a prescriptive
warning that if England is not careful, the colonies will become a hybrid realm where
loyalty to England will be called into question. Living up to his reputation as a
“plagiary,” Johnson duplicates Carmarthen’s warning in “Reasons for Reducing the
Pirates at Madagascar” that “all Persons owe by Instinct a Love to the Place of their
Birth: Therefore the present Pyrates must desire to return to their Native Country; and if this present Generation should be once Extinct, their Children will have the same Inclination to Madagascar as these have to England, and will not have any such Affection for England, altho’ they will retain the Name of English.”

Johnson’s ending exactly corresponds to Carmarthen’s fears about pirate propagation; however, Johnson is thinking not about pirates, but about British colonists. In this sense, Johnson (perhaps unwittingly) uses the pirate figure to warn that English colonial desire may change the face of England forever. The English subject abroad (king of a colony) has produced a half-Indian / half-English son. The English subject, Arviragus, who “owe[s] by Instinct a Love to the Place of [his] Birth,” must return to England. But what of Aranes? What loyalty does he have to England? As Carmarthen forewarns, after the Present Generation of pirates / colonists is Extinct, “their Children will have the same Inclination to Madagascar as [Arviragus has] to England.” Johnson stages Carmarthen’s fears when he has Arviragus relinquish his throne to his son:

Here I resign all Power and earthly Rule : / The gaudy Tinsel of ill-taught Ambition, / First tempted me to leap at once the Pale / of Laws Human and Divine, to reign, / But here I lay it down—Take it, Aranes ; / Thou May’st without a Crime enjoy my Throne, / That was not the Foul Purchase of my Guilt, / Altho’ the Means that fixt me here were bad. / The Nation with one Voice proclaim’d me King, / And made their Gift successive—May thou both / For ever reign with Peace in Madagascar. (61 my emphasis)

Although he does not say so, Johnson (and his audience) knows that Aranes cannot be loyal to a country that he has never seen. Arviragus graces Aranes and Zaida with his
blessing; however, the new rulers will fail to employ British or pirate ideology, both of which they cannot know.

The more radical reading of Johnson's conclusion is that in contrast to Arviragus's "ill-taught Ambition," "Crimes," "Guilt," and "Foul Purchase,"—the "bad Means" that place him on the throne of Laurentia—the Indian and half-Indian characters are pure and innocent, able therefore to rule "with Peace in Madagascar." This reading presupposes that Arviragus's greed for wealth—what he calls "the gaudy Tinsel of ill-taught Ambition"—is learned by him in England. English capitalism instructs that "Ambition" for money is the aim of the colonial subject. Johnson, however, questions the result of such an ambition. Arviragus hardly resembles a successful pirate when he states

I had resolv'd to quit / Imperial Sway, and die a private Man. / As I was born—And well hop'd in Britain, / Such strong Desires mov'd me to taste again / The Sweets of Native Air—I thought with Gold, / Gold, (the World's Mistress) to attone my Crimes, / And buy off with the Prize the penalty. (61)

Arviragus, like Tulip and myriad members of the English mercantile class, is tempted to the colonies by Gold, "(the World's Mistress)." And in the colonial realm, Arviragus (like Avery in The Life and Adventures of Capt. John Avery) reinvents his former nation in Laurentia. His return to England, then, is not a turn from piracy to honesty, but a re "turn," to one piratical location from another.
Although the ballad, *A Copy of Verses Lately Composed by Captain Henry Avery, Lately Gone to Sea to Seek his Fortune*, communicates a lower-class desire for justice, the fictional biography, *The Life and Adventures of Captain Avery, the Famous English Pirate, (rais'd from a Cabbin Boy, to a King) now in Possession of Madagascar* demonstrates a commercial class agenda for trade and colonization in the East Indies. The mercantile class appropriates the common sailor, turned pirate, and redistributes him as an advertisement (propaganda) to further those ends. Avery’s story of “success” in the East Indies intersects with middle-class desire for capitalistic success. Avery becomes the commercial class’s fictional representative—in effect an ambassador—to the East Indies. The commercial classes’s ambitions for property, money, and marriage, all of which might be attained through successful investments in the widening East Indian trade market, conflate with Avery’s successes. In the final analysis, this text is about money, status, and power. The transgressive and rebellious historical pirate figure is minimally present. Like the rogue biography, *The Successful Pirate* illustrates various sides of England’s nascent capitalistic personality at home and in the colonies. However, in Johnson’s play, the historical pirate outside English society has been reinvented as the pirate within English society. By disguising England as a pirate community, Johnson has been able to criticize and parody his country at a safe
distance. Money, as the eighteenth-century mercantile class knew so well, has made a common man a king. But Johnson questions the success of the pirate/businessman; he surmises that the cost of colonial success to England may be substantial.

These stories are important because they begin to reveal myriad identities of a society undergoing radical social, political, and economic change as a result of the “turn” not to piracy (exactly), but to capitalism. And the literature underscores the need to educate the middle-classes about both the proliferation of economic development and the consequences of such an enterprise. If the fictional Western liaison to the East Indies is a pirate figure, then England anticipates its imperial ambitions in the East and begins to understand, here in the early eighteenth century, that empire educates the true pirate.

Endnotes


2. The “Golden Age of Piracy” comes to an end at the dawn of the eighteenth century. In his preface to Defoe’s A General History of the Pyrates, Manuel Schonhorn argues that the War of Spanish Succession, incentives paid to privateers, and merchant/Royal Navy convoys all contributed to the diminution of pirate activity during this period. See Defoe’s A General History of the Pyrates.
3. Defoe continues this project in *The King of Pyrates* and *Captain Singleton*. See chapter 2 of this dissertation.


7. Ibid, 12.


15. Ibid, 159.


17. In *A General History*, Defoe states that “Having taken all the Treasure . . . they either wanted or liked, they let [the ship] go” (31).


20. Ibid, 36.


26. Ibid, 56.


30. Ibid, 93.


32. Ibid, 16.

33. Ibid, 17.

34. In his essay, “Bold Captain Avery in the Privy Council,” Joel Baer locates a second version of the 1694 *A Copy of Verses* which appeared two years later in two London
newspapers, *The Flying Post*, and *The Post Boy*. In the second version this stanza reads:

Faire Plymouth farewell and Cat Downe be Damn’d
I once was part Owner of most of that Land.
But as I am dissolved [sic] so I will abdicate
My Person from England to attend on my Fate. (17)

The substitution of “dissolved” for “disown’d” does not, in my opinion, clarify how Avery lost his possessions; however, both verbs seem to indicate that he has been robbed, cheated, or has simply mismanaged his estate. Additionally, Baer argues that Avery’s claims to “high blood” “raise[s] suspicions about how [he] is portrayed. . . . Because mock heroic speeches were often placed in the mouths of thieves during this period.” Baer concludes that “The speaker may be disguised hero, unruly tar, or stage braggart posing as a dethroned Stuart . . . whether with the intent to satirize or to celebrate its hero, the song alludes to the Stuart cause in a manner that might have reinforced its appeal among those disaffected toward William’s ‘false hearted Nation’ ” (17).


37. Ibid, 115.


40. Hawkins died on the return voyage and was buried in Ireland. Mrs. Hawkins had little trouble finding another husband, as she owned diamonds work £6,000. In 1614 she married Gabriel Towerson, and in 1617 they journeyed back to India where she remained with her family. For more information on William Hawkins, see *The Hawkins’ Voyages During the Reigns of Henry VIII, Queen Elizabeth, and James I*. Edited with an Introduction by Clements Robert Markham, C.B., F.R.S (London: Hakluyt Society, 1878), 404–05.

42. Baer, 18.

43. Ibid.


45. Ibid, 32.

46. Ibid.

47. Lawson, 49.

48. Said, 36. Said’s comment is in reference to the English occupation of Egypt in the early twentieth century. His description of twentieth-century Western behavior matches the one under discussion.


50. Thomson, 48.

51. Ibid, 48.

52. Porter, 7.

53. See Genest’s *History of the English Stage*, vols. ii and iii; also quoted in *Dictionary of National Biography*.

54. In accord with appropriation techniques, Johnson also demonstrates mercantile capitalization on the exotic, the pirate and the Indian princess being prime examples. English commercial classes entertained a burgeoning fascination with imported luxuries from other European countries and the colonies. In particular, colonial imports were exceedingly valued for their exotic appeal. As Paul Langford argues in *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727–1783* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), 322, the same commercial classes which maintained and cherished traditional attitudes also “displayed their dedication to foreign fopperies. The snob appeal of imported luxuries... was one of the most obvious manifestations of the middle-class purchaser’s modishness. At the same time [imported luxuries were] subject to unremitting criticism as being incompatible with the moral standards and patriotic duty of Englishmen.” This fascination with imported goods and ideas from the borders of the English empire undoubtedly contributed to the popularity of the pirate figure and the Indian princess.

56. For a detailed discussion of the colonial gentleman/plantation owner as fortune hunter, see chapter 3 of this dissertation.

57. Although mercantile interests are at the heart of the commercial class’s priorities for social advancement, economic empowerment can also be attained through marriage. Women, most commonly, heightened their social position through marriage, however, it was not uncommon for men to better their social standing through the marriage market as well. Johnson, himself, was no stranger to this tactic. The children of wealthy eighteenth-century families have been called “strategic pawns” when they advance to the marriage market. The Georgian matrimonial arena was a market where, as Roy Porter states, “Matrimony was not narrowly about love and bliss, but involved in wider matters of policy, securing honour, lineage and fortune” (103).

58. Representing and mocking an unfair judicial system was common in eighteenth-century England. Oliver Goldsmith, for example, states in his *Citizen of the World, Letter L*, “scarce an Englishman who does not almost every day of his life, offend with impunity against some express law.” The making of laws was a practice that proliferated rapidly and provoked a great deal of criticism by the lower and middle segments of the population. The quantity of laws and the quality of the men who where employed in executing them became the targets of a flood of jokes and parodies. From Stephen Copley, *Literature and the Social Order in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 196.

Chapter 3

Daniel Defoe’s Pirate Economy; or, The Invention of Buried Treasure

She was, in a manner, covered with diamonds, and I, like a true pirate, soon let her see that I had more in mind to the jewels than to the lady.

Daniel Defoe, The King of Pyrastes. (1719)

In a Nation rais’d as we are by Trade, fam’d for carrying on the most extended Commerce in the World, . . . nothing is more wonderful, than to see how ignorant the Generality of our People are about it; how weakly they talk of it, and how little has been made publick for their better information.

Daniel Defoe, A Plan of the English Commerce. (1728)

When I first set out upon a cruising and trading voyage to the east, and resolved to go anywhere and everywhere that the advantages of trade or the hopes of purchase should guide us, I also resolved to take such exact notice of everything that passed within my reach, that I should be able, if I lived to come home, to give an account of my voyage, differing from all that I had ever seen before, in the nature of the observations, as well as in the manner of relating them; and as this is perfectly new in its form, so I cannot doubt but it will be agreeable in the particulars, seeing either no voyage ever made before had such variety of incidents happening in it, so useful and so diverting, or no person that sailed on those voyages has thought fit to publish them after this manner.

Daniel Defoe, A New Voyage Around the World by a Course Never Sailed Before. (1724)

William Dampier’s Voyage Round the World (1697), and Woodes Rogers’s A New Voyage Round the World (1712), were two of the most popular travel narratives of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. English middle-class audiences—from tradesmen and shopkeepers to dealers and trade merchants—were fascinated by the stories of exploration, sea encounters, and details of the flora, fauna, and peoples of foreign lands. The “double deed,” of circumnavigating the globe and then documenting the experience in print, produces what Mary Louise Pratt terms “the European global or planetary subject,” a European male, “secular and lettered,” who delights in touring the world in books. In addition to mapping the coastlines of the globe, and classifying plants, animals, and humans, the narratives began to interpret the
explored world in economic terms; in so doing, they answered questions which were at
the forefront of the early eighteenth-century mercantile agenda: who inhabits the lands of
the world, and what commodities do they produce, need, and / or trade? Although
English audiences, by and large, read these narratives for excitement and
adventure—entertainment—Daniel Defoe understood them as educational tools. He
believed that travel accounts could enlarge the global consciousness of the English
reader so that he “may go round the globe with Dampier and Rogers, and kno’ a
thousand times more in doing it than all those illiterate sailors.”3 But Defoe emphasized
an economic agenda, and he subsequently began asking the questions: Who do the
nations of the world trade with? And, how can England begin doing business with them?
Certainly Defoe counterfeited the travel narrative in order to capitalize on the popularity
of such books. but he also intended for them to instruct his “ignorant”
countrymen—specifically, the trading portion of the English population—about global
commerce.

The most blatant example of Defoe’s appropriation / counterfeiting of the travel
narrative form occurs in his A New Voyage Around the World by a Course Never Sailed
Before (1724), wherein he not only parodies the titles of William Dampier’s and Woodes
Rogers’s famous travel narratives, but he also borrows their facts. Defoe may have
pretended to be the pioneer-explorer, mariner, pilot, cartographer, and scientist that
Dampier was; however, Defoe’s narrative is, as Maximillian Novak succinctly observes,
“a study of big business and international capitalism.”4 Novak asserts that Defoe’s
capitalist treatise is disguised within the form of a travel narrative. Because travel
narratives were so popular with the English trading peoples, Defoe considered them a
most effective means for furthering his economic agenda. And in keeping with this
tradition, Defoe’s pirate narratives provide an ideal imaginative vehicle through which he
could deploy his economic principles.

Defoe’s pirate stories, *The King of Pyrates* (1719) and *The Life, Adventures, and
Pyracies, of the Famous Captain Singleton* (1720), were written as didactic texts that
were marketed as authentic narratives. Defoe reinvents the pirate as a champion of
English economic idealism. As Sandra Sherman notes, Defoe deplored England’s system
of public credit and argued that an enlarged National Debt was “incompatible with
freedom.” During the two year period in which Defoe wrote these pirate texts,
England’s National Debt had exceeded £50 million. Instead of representing the pirate as
a metonym for the pervasive corruption and greed that was being played out in the
speculative frenzy which exacerbated the Debt, and would eventually devastate
thousands of English investors, Defoe reinvents his pirates as students of economic
ingenuity; he creates a *selective tradition* of representation whereby the pirate figure
transmits trade knowledge and skills, ultimately fulfilling a hegemonic agenda that is
invested in the dominance of a specific class, the emerging middle—or trading—class of
the English nation.

Defoe wrote two kinds of pirate texts: the picaresque narratives, which include
*The King of Pyrates* (1719) and *The Adventures of Captain Singleton* (1720), and the
informative pirate biography, *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the
Most Notorious Pyrates* (1724). Billed as factual accounts at the time of their
publications, the picaresque stories present in actuality a complete revision of pirate
identity. Unlike the historical pirate figure, who, before turning pirate, lived as a member

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of the lower-class laboring poor in England—a common sailor—Defoe’s revised pirates aspire to a social position which mirrors that of English “Trading Men.” Although Defoe understood, and to a degree sympathized, with the myriad economic, political, and social reasons why common sailors turned pirate, in *The King of Pyrates* especially, there is a startling erasure—a total omission—of the common sailor’s social position as a “Drudge,” a member of England’s laboring poor. By conflating the pirates of *The King of Pyrates* and *Captain Singleton* with the trade merchant, Defoe reveals his agenda to utilize the pirate figure as an educational model; the outlaw, refashioned as a hero, now unveils the anatomy of the trading world for the early eighteenth-century reader. The fictional pirate’s inspecting eye—his gaze—surveys and spies on all vessels afloat; he examines the contents of every ship he meets. The pirate’s gaze creates a panopticon at sea; his vision educates Defoe’s reader about the various traders and trading nations of the world and the commodities they peddle. The pirate understands what is of value and what is not, who is rich and who is poor, who trades with whom, how deals are conducted, where and how money can be made, how to profit with minimal loss, how to build, maintain, and sail vessels strategically, and finally, in the spirit of the *Projecting Merchant*. Defoe’s pirate instructs how to invent in an improvisational manner when “Necessity” dictates.

The cloaked didactic agenda of these texts links them to the traditions of judgment stories, the picaresque, and the English rogue traditions where the intention is to instill morality through a demonstration of immorality. In his pirate narratives, Defoe follows the formulaic judgment story plot of the criminal who ultimately repents (at the conclusion of *Captain Singleton*, the pirates repent their lives of crime and “turn
merchant”); however, the greater prescriptive message—the point and intention of the narratives—is pro-trade. Defoe invents a new hero—a kinder and gentler pirate—for the English novel, one who will appeal to the English “planetary subject” and teach him how to maneuver in, and understand, England’s emerging position in the world trade arena. Like Robinson Crusoe, who was created during the same year as Captain Avery, and just a year before Captain Singleton, these pirates are single-minded businessmen.

* * * *

The difference between the historical pirate figure and Defoe’s revised pirate figure is flagged by Defoe’s emphasis upon buried treasure. The 20th Century reader believes that pirates buried their treasure, to unearth it years later, because Daniel Defoe invented the formula. In *The King of Pyrates*, Captain Avery, and a fellow pirate, “buried all [their] money (which was worth eight thousand pieces of eight a man, though most of it in gold) in a pit in the earth, which [they] dug twelve foot deep, and where it would have lain still, for no man knew where to look for it” (5–6). Buried treasure implies that the person doing the burying is mindful of the future; he is banking his money away, so to speak, for use at a later date. This pirate has forethought. Instead of squandering his money, or risking it to theft, he handles it prudently. Historical pirates, however, were not prudent with their money; they did not plan for their retirements, and given the severity of the penal code, they did not expect one. In spite of myriad legends spun, primarily by nineteenth-century authors, “pirates,” as Marcus Rediker reports, “did not bury their treasure.” Rediker states that the “trials and tribulations of life at sea
made sailors, notorious for their irreligion, a bit contemptuous of the next world. No pie
up in the sky waiting for you when you die. Many seamen decided to have their share in
the here-and-now.”13 Contrary to putting their spoils in the ground, the “first care” of
pirates, as it was reported in a 1720 edition of the American Weekly Mercury, was
always “to find out a Tavern, where they might ease themselves of their Golden
Luggage.”14 Defoe’s invention of pirate buried treasure signifies something unusual
about his pirate type: the pirate is an economic man whose single pursuit is business, the
getting and keeping of money. Buried treasure for Defoe’s pirate is a nest egg, a down
payment, an individual retirement account, but larger in scope, his pirate is an early
eighteenth-century guide to global commerce.

Defoe is, in fact, an expert on issues related to the English seafaring community.
In An Essay on Projects, for example, he describes common sailors as men who “bid
Defiance to Terror, and maintain a constant War with the Elements; who by the Magick
of their Art, Trade in the very confines of Death, and are always posted within shot . . .
of the Grave.”15 Defoe also writes sympathetically about the hazards inherent in the
common sailor’s occupation to the extent that he proposes that sailors ought to receive a
kind of insurance whereby if “a poor man Loses his Limbs (which are his Estate) in the
Service of the Government, and is thereby disabled from his Labour to get his Bread,
[he] shou’d be provided for, and not suffer’d to Beg or Starve for want of those Limbs
he lost in the Service of his Country.”16 Defoe’s social conscience even extends beyond
the sailors to their families; he proposes that life insurance be available for the widows
and families of sailors who perish in the line of duty.17
Deeply cognizant of the common sailor’s desperate economic position, which often left the sea laborer with little choice other than turning pirate, Defoe rightly acknowledges that piracy, to a great extent, results from circumstances specific to a sailor’s employment as well as salary exploitation. Jobs were abundant and wages acceptable for the common sailor during times of war; however, the opposite was true during times of peace, and the sudden shift in economic condition engendered economic upheaval for the seaman. In his preface to *A General History of the Pyrates*, Defoe maintains that England’s duty is to “find Employment for the great Numbers of Seamen turn’d adrift at the Conclusion of a War, and thereby prevent their running into such Undertakings” (3). To address the problem, Defoe compares the English seafaring system to the Dutch system, where during times of peace, sailors are employed in a national fishery, concluding that “during this long Peace, [he has] not so much as heard of a Dutch Pyrate.” Defoe describes the consequences to England for lacking such a system:

I need not bring Proofs of what I advance, *viz.* that there are Multitudes of Seamen at this Day unemploy’d; it is but too evident by their straggling, and begging all over the Kingdom. Nor is it so much after their Work is done, to starve or steal. I have not known a Man of War commission’d for several Years past, but three times her compliment of Men have offer’d themselves in 24 Hours; the Merchants take their Advantage of this, lessen their Wages, and those few [seamen] who are in Business are poorly paid, and but poorly fed; such usage breeds Discontents amongst them, and makes them eager for any Change.18

From a Marxist perspective the English trading sphere is split into two halves: the capitalists and the working class, or, according to Defoe’s definition, the “Dealers” and
the "Drudges." The merchant capitalists exercise total control over the production of social wealth, and the working class sells its labor, the "commodity labor power." in order to survive. In other words, in the capitalist economy, the majority of English subjects are forced to work to avoid starvation, rather than as a means to achieve social and economic betterment. Defoe understands the bind in which the common sailor—and English wage earner in general—is trapped; the sailor wants only to find employment and to receive a satisfactory wage for his labor. When jobs are scarce, however, he is either poorly paid for his labor (if he is lucky) or unemployed. The common sailor, one of the first wage laborers in the capitalistic system, responds to economic exploitation by turning pirate. He deliberately opposes England's nascent system of social control.

Defoe's decision to divest his fictional pirates of their exploited position in the capitalist class struggle, and to insert instead, commercial characteristics, reveals his agenda to invent a new tradition of representation. This invention, according to Raymond Williams, contains the potential to be a most powerful hegemonic process, one that necessarily affects economic realities. Instead of viewing tradition as inert, Williams describes it as "the most evident expression of the dominant and hegemonic pressures and limits." Consequently, tradition is the "most powerful practical means of incorporation. What we have to see is not just 'a tradition' but a selective tradition: an intentionally selective version of a shaping past and a pre-shaped present, which is then powerfully operative in the process of social and cultural definition and identification."20

In other words, Defoe invents tradition by virtue of a process of selective substitution; he includes "certain meanings and practices" while "excluding or neglecting" other
meanings and practices. By fusing pirate rebellion with merchant ingenuity, Defoe rehistoricizes the pirate’s past, limiting his subversive and transgressive strength, and maximizing the potential for social identification with the pirate for trade, travel, and adventure (incorporation). These new pirate qualities are identical to Defoe’s “Projecting Merchant,” described in An Essay on Projects as, “an admirable type, a sort of middle-class hero, a productive picaro, a speculator, an adventurer.”

Defoe’s end product—his selective tradition—is a revised pirate figure who is thoroughly at odds with his historical counterpart; he is now socially, politically, and economically aligned with both English trade and the imperialist attitudes which accompany the English merchant—planetary subject—as he journeys across the globe, transported by the vessels of commerce or the pages of travel narratives.

Defoe’s The King of Pyrates: Being An Account of the Famous Enterprises of Captain Avery is an epistolary novella consisting of a Preface, by Defoe, and two letters “from Captain Avery.” Although The King of Pyrates is based on the historical and fictional exploits of Captain Avery, the most famous of all pirates, Defoe deliberately breaks from the tradition of writings about Avery which precede his novella. In previous versions of the Captain Avery story, A Ballad Lately Composed by Captain Avery (1695), the anonymously written The Life and Adventures of Captain John Avery (1709?), and Charles Johnson’s The Successful Pyrate (1713), the Captain’s trajectory into the pirate community is initiated as a result of England’s hegemonic practices. Avery is cheated out of his inheritance, robbed of his land, married to a woman already pregnant with an innkeeper’s child, and, when he becomes a mariner, he is economically exploited by the merchants. These early accounts depict Captain Avery’s transition into

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piracy as empowering. In the pirate community Avery wields power that is denied him in English society. In *The King of Pyrates*, however, Defoe avoids criticizing the English capitalist economy by erasing Avery’s former victimized status, choosing instead to clothe Avery in patriotic attire.

The first letter, composed by Avery “Himself,” insists that *The Life and Adventures of Captain John Avery* is a “ridiculous book.” Defoe discredits the former depictions of Captain Avery, stating that “I shall not trouble my friends with anything of my original and first introduction into the world... the account printed of me, with all the particulars of my marriage, my being defrauded, and leaving my family and native country on that account is a mere fable and a made story” (3). By dismissing Avery’s former history, Defoe deliberately reinvents the pirate with a sense of national loyalty—English subjecthood. Rather than attack England, the new and improved identity enables Defoe to further his agenda by educating his audience about the glory of overseas trade—the primary goal of the English nation. Defoe argues that Avery’s former history is “altogether barren of anything remarkable in itself or instructing to others”; his representation of Captain Avery, however, will be “useful.” Defoe will cultivate in his audience a global consciousness, and his definition of what is worthy of instruction and “useful” for his audience is entirely based in the economics and politics of trade.

Defoe begins *The King of Pyrates* by paralleling class positions at home in England with those in the pirate community. He constructs a scenario in which Avery, like the English laborer, is employed beneath his capacity. In the tradition of the historical buccaneer of the West Indies, Avery is employed as a log-wood-cutter in the
Bay of Campeachy. In the buccaneer community the log-wood-cutter is equivalent in status with the English laboring poor, or "Drudges." This class position is not an acceptable station for Defoe's pirate; he aspires to a higher class status. While the buccaneer/log-wood-cutter/laborer "endures the fatigue of that laborious life," the pirate/merchant's existence will prove to contain satisfaction beyond that realm. Avery observes how "it was as visible to others as to myself that I was not formed by nature for a log-wood-cutter anymore than I was for a foremastman [common sailor]; and therefore night and day I applied myself to study how I should dismiss myself from that drudgery, and get to be, first or last, master of a good ship" (5, my emphasis). Avery's self-motivated initiative is identical to the drive of Defoe's True-bred Merchant, "the most Intelligent Man in the World and . . . the most capable, when urg'd by Necessity, to contrive new ways to Live." The textual implication here is that the common laborer is not locked into his position of "drudgery"; rather, the common sailor/laborer can attain a higher and more satisfying station in society through sheer will and hard work, an assertion which belies that a rise in social rank is simply not within the realm of possibility.

In order to reinvent the pirate as a loyal British subject of superior quality, Defoe juxtaposes Avery with the buccaneer, stipulating that although the latter is "at war with all mankind." Avery "would be sure not to prey upon his own countrymen" (5). In both The King of Pyrates and Captain Singleton, numerous pirate attacks occur on ships belonging to the French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Asians, but on only one occasion are the English portrayed as vulnerable to the pirate's wrath, and then, Avery comes to their rescue. In contrast to Avery, Defoe portrays buccaneers, represented through the
character of Captain Redhand Nichols, as "a worse sort of wanderers than ourselves." the evil pirate type. Redhand, who is so named for the prodigious amount of blood he has spilled, is a violent and warlike pirate stereotype, "so bloody a wretch that he scarce was ever at taking any prize, but he had had a hand in some butchery or other" (7). The juxtaposition of good vs. evil is typical of the picaresque tradition "in which the author ostensibly sets out to depict vice and its attendant follies so unattractively as to make the reader turn away in revulsion.""25 Redhand functions as Avery’s counterpart, the pirate type to which one should not aspire. In direct contrast to the buccaneer, Avery remains loyal towards England, revealing his nationalism when he rescues an English ship from Redhand’s bloody clutches. As Redhand’s ship approaches the English vessel, the pirates hoisted the black flag, as a signal that we would give them no quarter [and] they began to sink in their spirits, and soon after cried quarter, offering to yield. Redhand would have given them no quarter, but, according to his usual practice, would have thrown the men all into the sea; but I prevailed with him to give them quarter, and good usage too. and so they yielded. (9)

The scene is easily interpreted as a moralistic battle between good and evil; however, Defoe has intentions other than to imitate the picaresque and judgment book traditions. He is laying the groundwork for Avery’s mercantile foundation, selecting loyalty and nationalism, and excluding, or discrediting the pirate’s transgressive identity.

While increasing his influence over Redhand, Avery soon learns that his “Business” as an English pirate is to accumulate money and goods, not to fight, and he insists that the crew’s piratical activities be conducted “civilly.” Defoe demonstrates the pirate’s “civil” behavior when, in one example, they strip a ship of its contents and then
"let her go . . . to the great joy of the captain that commanded her." Although Redhand desires to "despatch [the crew]," during the next encounter, "that they might tell no tales," Avery's "civil" form of piracy triumphs again when he convinces his own crew to "take away all her sails, that she should not stir till we gave her leave." Early in his piratical career, Avery understands that his goal is wealth and not blood.

Blood is spilled only when Redhand is killed; his death is the only one in Defoe's pirate texts which garners applause. He, according to Defoe, gets exactly what he deserves. In the process, Defoe steals another opportunity to align his pirate type with "Englishmen," who are neither cruel, "butcherly," "merciless," or "barbarous." To the contrary, Englishmen are civilized, and they condemn violence when it can be avoided.

During a battle against a Spanish treasure ship,

the first shot took Captain Redhand full on the breast, and shot his head and one shoulder off, so that he never spoke more, nor did I find that any one man in the ship showed the least concern for him. So certain it is that cruelty never recommends any man among Englishmen; no, though they have no share in the suffering under it. But one said, "D---n him; let him go; he was a butcherly dog." Another said, "D---n him; he was a merciless son of a b---ch." Another said, "He was a barbarous dog," and the like. (20)

The evil pirate type—the bloodthirsty demon who is at war with all mankind—never enters the pages of Defoe’s *The Life, Adventures, and Pyracies of the Famous Captain Singleton*. Rather, *Captain Singleton* significantly furthers the tradition of rehistoricizing the pirate figure. The novel is divided into two adventures. In the first, the hero, Bob Singleton, "not Robert but plain Bob," is kidnapped from his middle-class roots at age two, sold to a gypsy, later apprenticed to the master of a ship, and eventually, after a mutiny erupts, marooned on the island of Madagascar with a group of
Portuguese sailors. The band proceeds to journey across Africa, and finally, Singleton, as a result of his capitalistic opportunism, returns to England a rich man. At home, however, he is unable to prudently manage his money. What he gains abroad by way of "Business" and piracy, he misuses at home by way of luxury. Singleton "hastily squander[s] away... that great Sum, which [he] got with so much Pains and Hazard... in little more than Two Years time;... it was spent on all Kinds of Folly and Wickedness; so this Scene of [his] Life may be said to have begun in Theft, and ended in Luxury; a sad Setting out, and a worse coming Home" (138). From this morally and economically bankrupt position in England, Singleton, during the second portion of the novel, takes to the seas and becomes captain of a pirate ship. The overtly prescriptive aspect of the novel is the contrast between Singleton’s inability to manage his money in England and the prudent, economic lessons that he receives from his mentor, “William the Quaker,” who had been a passenger aboard one of the pirate’s “prizes.”

Analogous to the invented pirate ideology in The King of Pyrates, William proposes the distinctly commercial notion that wealth is the goal of the pirate, not violence. Following an encounter which yields minimal gains and substantial casualties, William advises Singleton on this foundational tenet of Defoe’s pirate economy:

Why, says William gravely, I only ask what is thy Business, and the Business of all the People thou has with thee? Is it not to get Money? Yes, William, it is so, in our honest Way: And wouldst thou, says he, rather have Money without Fighting, or Fighting without Money? I mean, which wouldst thou have by Choice, suppose it to be left to thee? O William, says I, the first of the two, to be sure. Why then, says he, what great Gain hast thou made of the Prize thou hast taken now, tho’ it has cost the Lives of thirteen of thy Men, besides some hurt? It is true thou hast got the

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Ship and some Prisoners, but though wouldst have had
twice the Booty in a Merchant Ship, with not one Quarter
of the Fighting. (153–54)

William’s advice, to look to the merchant ship for booty, has a dual function: taken
literally, his advice is commonsensical—of course the merchant ship will yield the
greatest gain with the least potential loss. However, Defoe’s ulterior motive is to utilize
the pirate’s knowledge and vision (by virtue of his occupation) to create a kind of
panopticon whereby the pirate inspects the holds of all the merchant ships at sea in order
to instruct the audience about the trading practices of various nations around the globe.
The pirate’s eye scans the horizon policing and inspecting. Defoe’s vocabulary implies a
system of surveillance. Repeatedly, in both The King of Pyrates. and Captain Singleton,
the pirate is described as “observing,” “looking,” and “watching through his glass,”
“spying” for sails in the distance. No ship passes the pirate’s watch undetected.

Myriad examples in Defoe’s oeuvre support the fact that Defoe entreated his
countrymen to understand and exploit the ample opportunities available for Englishmen
in the global trading arena. By defining the tradesman as an “Adventurer,” for example,
Defoe is interested in convincing his countrymen to participate in world commerce. In
his Preface to A Plan of the English Commerce, Defoe attempts to revive the spirit of
Elizabethan adventure (and legal piracy, or privateerism) in trade when he states, “we
seem to forget the glorious Improvement of our Ancestors, such as the great Drake . . .
and above all, the yet greater Sir Walter Raleigh, upon the foot of whose Genius almost
all the English Discoveries were made.”²⁷ His Preface is a motivational speech designed
to inspire his countrymen to “open the Doors for the Encrease of Shipping and
Manufacture; the Places are so many and the Advantages so great for the making such
However, Defoe laments that his fellow Englishmen “*seem to have no Heart for the Adventure.*” This didactic speech is hardly a distant cousin to Defoe’s pirate fiction. Although the pirate narrative and the economic treatise are certainly different subgenres of instruction, their core lessons are identical.

Pirates are useful for Defoe because their occupation—their job description (so to speak)—allows an outsider to dissect the anatomy of trade. In this sense, pirates are ideal for informing and educating an inexperienced population about trade, turning deals, and conducting international business; provocatively, the pirate showcases products produced by the various trading nations of the world, and, of course, the abundant quantities of gold, silver, and jewels which so attract pirates (and those who read about them). Defoe’s pirates are as knowledgeable as any merchant about the origin, destination, and value of all commodities, and as they journey from one conquest to the next, the pirates prolifically catalogue the details. One ship contains “beef and butter and beer from Barbados,” and another journeys to St. Christopher with Madeira wine:

> We borrowed about twenty pipes of the wine, and let her go. Another was a New England built ship of about one hundred and fifty ton, bound also home with sugar and molasses, which was good for nothing to us; however, we got near £1000 on board her in pieces of eight . . . At last we met with what we wanted, and this was another ship of about one hundred ton from New England, bound to Barbados. She had on board one hundred and fifty barrels of pease, and ten ton of pork barreled up and pickled, besides some live hogs, and some horses, and six ton of beer. (*King of Pirates* 12)

Certainly the pirate’s object of desire is treasure—coins, gold, silver, and jewels—but Defoe makes no attempt to dismiss trade goods as superfluous or unworthy of mention.
The frequent appearance of these catalogues, which have no real value for the pirates, evidences Defoe's desire to describe the trade arena in its entirety for his audience. These examples of pirate inspection—the cataloguing, listing, and charting—continue to evidence the invention of a selective tradition of representation of pirate identity; however, just as important is the way in which this instruction regarding commerce and trade presents an equally conflicted and problematic method of representing the rest of the world for the English reader. In the process of “teaching” what he thinks his audience ought to know about trade routes and trading peoples of other nations, Defoe rehistoricizes and reinvents the world through the lens of English imperialism.

In pursuit of trading opportunities, the pirate’s eye becomes trained to locate the various trade routes around the globe. On Madagascar, Captain Singleton discovers that his pirate band is “not in a Place for our Business,” due to the trickle of merchant traffic. His ambition, then, is to locate a spot where trading ships “look’d for Purchase.” As Singleton circumnavigates the island he discovers the “Gulph of Mocha,” where “Trade . . . was great, the Ships rich, and the Streight of Babelmandel narrow; so . . . we might cruise so as to let nothing slip our Hands, having the seas open from the Red Sea along the Coast of Arabia, to the Persian Gulph, and the Malabar Side of the Indies” (172). Along with this crucial piece of information, Singleton returns to his comrades and reports: “I told them what I had observed when I sailed round the Island . . . that on the Northernmost point . . . were several good Harbours, and Roads for our Ships: That the Natives were . . . tractable, . . . not having been often ill treated by European sailors . . . and that we might always be sure of a Retreat” (171–72, my emphasis). This single example elucidates that Madagascar is a nexus for trade in Eastern waters. Singleton
observes, as he circles the island, that Babelmandel (the Strait of Bab El Mandeb) will serve as an excellent location for the pirate’s “Business” because “nothing [would] slip [their] Hands.” Beyond entertainment, Defoe’s readers receive lessons in history, geography, and navigation. The strait, in fact, connects the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden, and has long since been called the “Gate of Mourning” as a result of the dangers that sailing ships frequently encountered. The strait has also been branded “the Exile’s Gate” by Europeans en route to Eastern countries, because they had no choice but to pass through it.29

During their next encounter with “a large vessel” belonging to the Mogul of India, pirate investigation yields information about the commodities that India produces for trade. The ship, which has just returned from Mocha, has sold “Spices, Silks, Diamonds, Pearls, Callicoe &c. Such Goods as the Country afforded” (176). Beyond the catalogue of trade goods, however, pirate scrutiny also produces information about the trading alliances which have been established between European and Eastern trading nations. The pirates learn that this ship “of Bengal” contains a hybrid crew consisting of “a Dutch Pilot . . . and several European Seamen, whereof three were English . . . the rest of her Seamen were Indians of the Mogul’s Subjects, some Malabars.” There are also both Indian and Armenian merchants on board the ship. Defoe casually inserts these details of international trading alliance, communication, and collaboration between Eastern and Western nations. Likewise, after sitting for eleven days on the Arabian coast, the pirates “spy’d” a ship that renders information about the trading goods, and the trading relationships which exist between Europeans and Middle Easterners. Singleton states, “Indeed I thought at first it had been an English ship, but it appeared to
be an European freighted for a Voyage from Goa, on the Coast of Malabar, to the Red Sea which was very rich . . . We found her manned with Portuguese Seamen, but under the Direction of five Merchant Turks, who had hired her on the Coast of Malabar, of some Portuguese Merchants, and had loaden her with Pepper, Salt-Petre, some Spices and the rest of the Loading was Chiefly Callicoes and wrought Silks” (175). Defoe repeatedly, and stubbornly, insists upon providing information about who is trading with whom. His pirates, like connoisseurs, understand and relate the intricate and complicated details of each encounter. To sack and plunder is not enough. These pirates must comprehend and dissect the minutia of trade.

Not only do the texts identify the products and peoples aboard the world’s trading vessels, but they also highlight the pirate’s “ingenious” business practices. In *A Plan of the English Commerce*, Defoe instructs his audience—the trading part of the English nation—that “the World is wide; There are new Countries, and new Nations, who may be so planted, so improv’d, and the people so manag’d, as to create a new Commerce.” The multitude of nations and peoples around the world represent nothing more or less than markets to Defoe. He is single-minded in his vision for enlargement of the English trading sphere. “Nothing is to me more evident,” Defoe believes, “than that the civilizing the Nations when we and other Europeans are already settled; bringing the naked Savages to Clothe, and instructing barbarous Nations how to live, has had a visible Effect already, in this very Article. Those Nations call upon us every Year for more Goods, than they did the Year before.” Countless trading opportunities exist for the English merchant in the “undiscovered Ocean of Commerce.” Likewise, countless “Business” opportunities exist for the pirate, and Defoe demonstrates Singleton’s skill in
exploiting these opportunities. When Singleton and his crew are stranded in Africa, they realize the need to do "Business" with the native peoples. Their dilemma, however, lies in discovering a form of currency that the natives will value, because European currency "was meer Trash" to the Africans. The project which remedies their problem is "invented" by the artisan. Defoe describes the interaction with the Africans:

When [the Africans] came to us, they shewed themselves very much pleased, and gave us some large Fish, of which we did not know the Names, but they were very good. It was our Misfortune still, that we had nothing to give them in Return; but our Artist... gave them two little thin Plates of Silver, beaten... out of a Piece of Eight; they were cut in a Diamond Square, longer one way than t'other, and a Hole punch'd at one of the longest Corners. This they were so fond of, that they made us stay till they had cast their Lines and Nets again, and gave us as many Fish as we cared to have. (31)

The resourceful spirit of the pirates—like the English tradesman—enables them to fashion one kind of currency out of another in order to achieve their goal of doing "Business." Although eighteenth-century travel fiction commonly portrayed Africans as cannibalistic, Defoe fulfills his agenda by perceiving them—and all peoples of the world—as potential consumers waiting to be exploited. Singleton states, "as for the Inhabitants being Cannibals, I believed we should be more likely to eat them, than they us, if we could but get at them" (13). Singleton's remark delivers a potent sting; the metaphor of the Englishman's consumption of the African is apropos of both English trade and colonization.

In a more literal sense, depictions of pirates attacking the ships of other nations allow Defoe to showcase a different kind of skill: naval strategy and complicated ship technology, including detailed descriptions of how pirates commandeer wind direction
and velocity, negotiate sail position, speed, use of colors (flags), and weaponry. An
engagement from The King of Pyrates is described as follows: “As we understood he
was astern of us, we shortened sail and hung out the Spanish colours . . . However, when
we saw him come forward . . . we took care to be so much to starboard that he could not
escape us that way, and when he was a little nearer the sloop plainly chased him, and in a
little time came up with him and took him” (18–19). Another pirate chase, from Captain
Singleton, demonstrates Defoe’s understanding and mastery of the jargon of seafaring
strategy and technology:

In two hours after, we saw our Game, standing in for the
Bay with all the Sail she could make, and she came
innocently into our very Mouths, for we lay still, till we saw
her almost within Gun shot; When our Fore Mast Geers
being stretched fore and aft, we first run up our Yards, and
then hauled home the Top-Sail Sheets; the Rope Yarns that
furled them giving way of themselves, the Sails were set in a
few minutes; at the same Time slipping our Cable, we came
upon her before she could get under Way upon ’tother
Tack. (148)

The precision with which he describes the attack points to the fact that Defoe was a
student of military and naval strategy. He did, in fact, strongly believe that, in times of
both war and peace, England should have a prepared army and navy. In An Essay on
Projects Defoe asserts that he considers his plan for an academy for military study as
“the most Noble and most Useful Proposal in my Book” (97). According to Defoe, War
is “the best Academy in the World, where men study by Necessity”:

The Art of War, which I take to be the highest Perfection of
Human Knowledge, is a sufficient Proof of what I say,
especially in conducting Armies, and in offensive Engines;
Witness the new ways of Mines, Fougades, Entrenchments,
Attacks, Lodgments, . . . witness the new sorts of Bombs
and unheard-of Mortars, of Seven to Ten Ton Weight, with
which our Fleets standing two or three Miles at Sea, can
imitate God Almighty himself, and rain Fire and Brimstone
out of Heaven. (7)

Even though the pirate avoids fighting whenever possible, his occupation does provide
Defoe with ample opportunities to showcase military strategy.

The mastery and dominance of the English pirates is nowhere better represented
than in The King of Pyrates, which describes the mythic battle with a treasure ship
belonging to the Mogul of India. In typical Orientalist fashion, the battle emphasizes the
extreme military advantage of the English (the West) over India (the East). When
Avery’s crew encounters the Indian vessels, Avery’s “civil” demeanor momentarily
dissipates, and he announces that “we resolved to attack her as if she had been full of
devils as she was full of men” (52). This time the pirates do not hesitate to use force. In
comparison with the English pirates, who are masters of naval strategy and the use of
arms, the Indians are entirely incompetent at naval warfare and strategy, lacking the
abilities to either maneuver their ships or to utilize properly their weaponry:

when we came near them, we fired a gun with shot as a
challenge. They fired again immediately three or four guns,
but fired them so confusedly that we could easily see that
they did not understand their business; when we considered
how to lay them on board, and so to come thwart them, if
we could; but falling, for want of wind, open to them we
gave them a fair broadside. We could easily see, by the
confusion that was on board, that they were frightened out
of their wits; they fired here a gun and there a gun, and
some on that side that was from us, as well as those that
were next to us. The next thing we did was to lay them on
board, which we did presently, and then gave them a volley
of our small shot, which, as they stood so thick, killed a
great many of them, and made all the rest run down under
their hatches, crying out like creatures bewitched. (52–53)
The encounter, a rehistoricization of Avery’s interaction with an Indian princess, is the most vivid example of Defoe’s reinvention of the pirate as a new and improved commodity, the economic individual. Now romantic love and sexual desire for the Indian princess are discarded in favor of a rape, not of the princess sexually, but of her material goods. This preference for economic emphasis, over the romantic, is the primary divide between the old and new traditions of pirate fiction. While previous accounts of Captain Avery’s piracies are “ridiculous and extravagant,” “these letters,” Defoe explains, are the “best and truest account of Captain Avery’s piracies that ever has or ever will come to the knowledge of the world” (xv–xvi). The earlier stories, Defoe informs, “are explained here and duly exposed, and the history of Captain Avery set in a fairer light . . . But this may be said without any arrogance, that this story, stripped of all the romantic, improbable, and impossible parts . . . looks more like the history of Captain Avery than anything yet published ever has done” (xvii). Defoe informs his reader that the interaction between the pirate and the princess is conducted with the skill and courtesy of a business deal. Avery “plunder[s] the princess of her jewels and money of a prodigious value . . . but that, excepting this, the lady was used with all the decency and humanity . . . than ever women falling among pirates had found before.”

Defoe’s preference for the economic over the romantic is explained on three levels: Firstly, as I have argued, Defoe’s revision of the pirate—the incorporation of the pirate into the mainstream English commercial imagination—is a deliberate attempt to invent a new tradition of pirate representation whereby the figure is associated with trade, travel, adventure, and money; he is disassociated from his position as an exploited laborer, and he is removed from his radical opposition to capitalist social control.
Secondly, the preferencing of the economic over the romantic is one of the primary characteristics that defines the eighteenth-century novel. Ian Watt argues that the emphasis placed upon individual economic advantage has "tended to diminish the importance of personal as well as group relationships, and especially those based on sex; for sex . . . being one of the strongest non-rational factors in human life, is one of the strongest potential menaces to the individual's rational pursuit of economic ends, and it has been placed under particularly strong controls in the ideology of individual capitalism." The selection of the economic over the romantic, demonstrated in the early English novel, signals the invention of a new tradition—an ideological switch—to a national literature which promotes the economic superiority of a social class—the English middle, or commercial class. Thirdly, the economic emphasis, which supersedes romantic affection for the Indian princess, demonstrates a nationalist agenda which is steeped in hegemonic imperialism. In Defoe, we witness a transition from the curiosity and desire for the Indian princess as a human commodity—a wife—to a dismissal of her value beyond the material she dons. Here the Indian is erased by England's evolved imperial hegemonic ideology. Beyond her material possessions, the princess exists only to provide—to "give"—the pirate his treasure.

Contributing to nascent Orientalist discourse, this pirate encounter reflects the early eighteenth-century literary trend of expressing mercantile capitalism through the dress and possessions of the female. As Laura Brown states, "The image of female dressing and adornment has a very specific, consistent historical referent in the early eighteenth-century—the products of mercantile capitalism. The association of women
with the products of trade is a strong cultural motif in this period, and the concern with female adornment and particularly dress is a predominant expression of that association.\textsuperscript{33}

In addition to valuing the female as a commodity, early Orientalist discourse is also focused on penetrating the female’s hidden “essence.” The majority of early eighteenth-century representations of the commodified female, Brown argues, tend to constitute “the obsessive and ambiguous dressing and undressing [of the female] . . . as an attempt to strip away the mystifying ‘clothing’ of the commodity and to discover the lost human essence that lies beneath” (120), whereas Defoe’s pirate chooses to emphasize, as Avery states, only the “jewels” and not the “lady.”\textsuperscript{34} Defoe anticipates that his reader expects Avery either to rape or to marry the Indian princess; he protracts the suspense before his pirate unveils the princess’s chamber, the Oriental harem, where the pirate becomes “master” of the eastern treasure, disregarding the Eastern female as part of that bargain.

When my men had entered and mastered the ship, one of our lieutenants called for me, and accordingly I jumped on board. He told me he thought nobody but I ought to go into the great cabin, or, at least, nobody should go there before me; for that the lady herself and all her attendance were there, and he feared the men were so heated they would murder them all, or do worse. (53)

Raping the Indian princess and her attendants is not exactly what Defoe has in mind for his hero pirate. This encounter is a defining moment for Defoe’s pirate; when he confronts the princess, Avery, unlike the pirate in former “romantic” representations of the meeting, is bedazzled solely by her gold and jewels. Defoe’s pirate states, “She was, in a manner, covered with diamonds, and I, like a true pirate, soon let her see that I had more mind to the jewels than to the lady” (54); accordingly the pirate accomplishes the
rape of plunder—of mercantile goods. Interestingly enough, in Defoe’s version of the story, the rape of goods and jewels is not accomplished through the act of pirate theft. By way of a forced gesture, intended to demonstrate the potential for trade with the East, the Indian princess freely gives the pirate her treasures; this gesture signifies her sole function. Defoe’s description implies a learned behavior of giving; fear of the English pirate teaches her to give freely. Avery states, “At first, her fright, and the danger she thought she was in of being killed, taught her to do everything she thought might interpose between her and the danger, and that was to take off the jewels as fast as she could, and give them to me; and I, without any great compliment, took them as fast as she gave them to me, and put them into my pocket” (54, my emphasis).

In the midst of this one-sided exchange of commodities, Avery reiterates, “I have heard that it has been reported in England that I ravished this lady and then used her most barbarously; but they wrong me” (54). Defoe continues to clarify and define his pirate’s new identity as economic man: “We did indeed ravish them of all their wealth; for that was what we wanted, not the women” (54). But as the disrobing of wealth unfolds, it continues to be accomplished through the act of giving, not theft. The female, as Brown argues, is the “proxy” or “cultural focal point for the representation of the commodity.” She is the agent who makes the deal and enacts the exchange with Defoe’s pirate. The act of giving—undoubtedly forced—signals an imperialistic act of exchange—or trade—from East to West, whereby the English pirate becomes “master” of Eastern treasure. Avery instructs the attendants that he will not harm the princess, but that she must give me all her jewels and money. Upon this [her servants] acquainted her that I would save her life; and no sooner had they assured her of that but she got up smiling, and went to a fine Indian cabinet, and opened a
private drawer, from whence she took another little thing full of little square drawers and holes. This she brings to me in her hand, and offered to kneel down to give it me... She gave me the little box or casket... [which was] full of invaluable jewels (55). [And shortly thereafter] She went then to another cabinet, and pulling out a drawer, she brought it to me; it was full of small pieces of gold coin from Pegu, about as big as an English half-guinea, and I think there were three thousand of them. She opened some other drawers, and showed me the wealth that was in them, and then she gave me the key to the whole. (57, my emphasis)

The princess’s act of giving is the epitome of Defoe’s redefinition of piracy—his new selective tradition. No longer defined as a thief, the pirate, like the imperial English trader, is honored while he rapes the world of its commercial products. Defoe depicts his hero as saving the princess’s life. Whereas pirates of former traditions—Redhand, or the previous representations of Captain Avery, for example—would have raped and killed, or married the princess, Defoe’s pirate is now defined as a civilized creature who is able to accomplish his task of pirating the Indian ship as a gentleman who upholds social expectations of “civil” behavior.

Defoe concludes his encounter between the pirate and the Indian princess with another act of giving. After Defoe’s profuse descriptions of virtuous behavior, it is surprising to discover that the pirates and the “women of inferior rank... who were in number almost two hundred” engage in an orgy of sorts with the pirates for nearly a day and a half. Identical to the exchange—or “give and take”—of commodities and jewels, Defoe’s pirates have sex with all of the Indian women except the princess, for she is the solitary female who does not wish to engage in sexual activity. Defoe accomplishes the sensational sex scene at the expense of the Indian women who are represented as
lascivious, wanton, and thoroughly desiring of the sexual encounter. The pirates do not rape; the Indian women freely give sex. In the same manner in which the princess gives her riches to the pirate captain, the Indian women give sex to the captain’s men depicting a “male power-fantasy” typical of Orientalist discourse. Edward Said argues that the Oriental female is routinely depicted with “unlimited sensuality, [she] is more or less stupid, and above all [she is] willing.” In response to the charges, based on the former versions of the story, that Avery “barbarously” used and “ravished” the princess, the captain states, “I never offered anything of that kind to her, I assure you; nay, I was so far from being inclined to it that I did not like her; and there was one of her ladies who I found much more agreeable to me, and who I was afterwards something free with, but not even with her either by force or by way of ravishing” (34). Defoe tailors the interaction between the pirates and the Indian women to fit his capitalistic agenda by transferring the lascivious behavior from the pirate to the Indian female. He depicts the scene as follows:

after the first heat of our men was over, what was done was done quietly; for I have heard some of the men say that there was not a woman among them but what was lain with four or five times over, that is to say, by so many several men; for as the women made no opposition, so the men even took those that were next them without ceremony, when and where opportunity offered. (55, my emphasis)

Defoe implies that the women are willing participants in this cause and effect scenario; the pirates have repeated sex with them because the Indian women “made no opposition.” Just as in the previous exchange of material goods, Defoe includes the detail that during the exchange of sex, “all sorts of liberty was both given and taken”
Although the power relationship between the Western pirate and the Eastern female is entirely asymmetrical, sexual and material exchanges occur “freely.” Finally, after spending a day and a half in this state, one of the captain’s men confides that “there was no subsisting in that manner; besides, . . . the men would be ruined by lying with the women in the other ship” (57, my emphasis). Defoe now projects the pirate’s reputation for highly sexualized behavior entirely onto the Indian female, as if they are accustomed to orgies. Outrageously, it is the pirates who are in danger of being “ruined” by the women who, according to Defoe, are more interested in having sexual relations with Western pirates than their Indian men. The symbolic bridge of marriage that had formerly been established in the Captain Avery stories is now completely dismantled. Defoe’s pirate, thoroughly capital and imperial, no longer requires the bond of marriage to appropriate the strength of the East. Now the Indian princess’s royal status contains no value beyond the material that she possesses.

* * * *

Defoe’s rehistoricization of the pirate positions the outlaw as a close relation of the trade merchant: their ambitions, skills, world knowledge, and economic and political ideologies are nearly identical. In early eighteenth-century society, however, envisioning the pirate as a kind of merchant, and the merchant as a kind of pirate did not require a great stretch of the imagination. As Maximillian Novak has argued, Defoe defines piracy not so much as “a legal term as a word that might be applied to any type of dubious business activity. And if every businessman who deserved to be called a pirate was
arrested, all commerce would be destroyed.” In the process of conflating pirate identity with merchant identity—in order to fulfill his didactic ambition of communicating knowledge about the international trade arena through the pirate figure—Defoe fuels the English middle-class’s nascent capitalist desire for wealth and heightened social class status; the energy of Defoe’s pirate is single-mindedly focused on the object of his desire—money in all its myriad forms. Defoe is determined to dazzle his reader with the abundance of treasure the pirates accumulate—the abundance of profit floating upon the high seas of commerce; so much so that from the beginning, he enters the realm of hyperbole. By the twenty first page of The King of Pyrates, for example, the band has accumulated “one hundred and sixteen chests of pieces of eight . . . seventy-two bars of silver, fifteen bags of wrought plate, . . . 60,000 ounces of gold, some in little wedges, some in dust” (21).

Not only do Defoe’s pirates focus on attaining profit, they also share the ultimate goal of a lucrative pirate retirement. As major players in the developing capitalist economy, Defoe’s revised pirates, like the trade merchant, or the English gentleman, are compelled to end their careers in comfort. In order to retire properly, Defoe’s pirate must both maintain possession of his pirate booty, and be able to reside in, or near, English territory. As Novak has noticed, Defoe’s pirate treasure has no value outside the confines of Europe. In this sense Defoe is symbolically reclaiming his pirate as a European subject (Avery retires to France, and Singleton to England). Pirate retirement, like the invention of the pirate practice of burying treasure, locates the divide between Defoe’s economic outlaw and the historical pirate figure. Defoe instructs that in the capitalist economy, provisions must be in place for the commercial subject’s future.
Captain Singleton learns about the concept of retirement from William, who asks his pupil "whether, if thou hast gotten enough [money], thou hast any Thought of leaving off this Trade [of piracy]; for most People leave off Trading when they are satisfied with getting, and are rich enough; for no body trades for the sake of Trading, much less does any Man rob for the sake of Thieving" (256). The concept of retirement is formerly unknown to Captain Singleton; he learns that when properly satiated with wealth, protocol dictates an escape (or a "deliverance," as Captain Avery calls it) from piracy. In order to achieve his retirement, the pirate appropriately transforms into the merchant—turns merchant—and once he has settled in Europe with his pirate treasure, the metamorphosis is complete.

Captain Avery expresses his desire for retirement as being "done pirating. Our business now was how to get off, and make our way to some retreat, where we might enjoy what we had got" (79). As Avery’s “narrative” comes to a close, he writes that while presently in Constantinople, he plans to “come to Marseille, in France; from whence I intend to go and live in some inland town, where, as they have perhaps no notion of the sea, so they will not be inquisitive after [me]” (86). While Avery’s retirement from piracy, “to enjoy what we had got,” is a straightforward lesson—in a capitalist sense—of being able to enjoy the fruits of ones labor, in Captain Singleton, the instruction is complicated by William’s religious beliefs. Mimicking the tradition of the judgment book, Singleton’s retirement from piracy is intertwined with the themes of repentance and confession. Singleton states that “As to the Wealth I had, which was immensely great, it was all like Dirt under my Feet; I had no Value for it, no Peace in the Possession of it, no great concern about me for the leaving of it” (256). His religious
conversion, however, does not ultimately hinder his successful retirement in England. At
the end of the novel, Singleton recounts his retreat back to England with William.

Dressed as merchants, they

agreed to go from Venice to Naples, where we verted a large Sum of Money in Bales of Silk, Left a large Sum in the Merchant’s Hands at Venice, and another considerable Sum at Naples, and took Bills of Exchange for a great deal too; and yet we came with such a Cargo to London, as few American Merchants had done for some Years; for we loaded in two Ships seventy three Bales of thrown Silk, besides thirteen Bales of wrought Silks for the Dutchy of Milan, shipt at Genoa; with all which I arrived safely, and some time after married my faithful Protectress, William’s sister, with whom I am much more happy than I deserve.

(277)

Clearly Defoe’s economic agenda supersedes his religious inclinations. With his nest egg, Defoe’s pirate tale has a happy, storybook ending.

In the process of rehistoricizing the pirate, however, Defoe drastically complicates—or demonstrates how complicated—the identity of the trade merchant is in eighteenth-century capitalist society. By conflating merchant identity and pirate identity, Defoe participates—in a manner in which he would not favor—in a class prejudice against new money. Defoe does stipulate that Redhand is an evil pirate type, and, conversely, Avery, Singleton, and William are heroic figures, but this does not change the fact that they are all thieves; they are a hybrid, not exactly pirates and not exactly merchants. As Defoe’s pirates journey toward their capitalist dream of success—a wealthy retirement—they foreshadow recurring complications having to do with class identity in the new capitalist economy. The emergent status of the merchant / colonist, who has begun to rise to economic prominence as the nouveau riche subject, does not,
according to long-standing hierarchical social codes, gain acceptance into the upper
echelon of society. While the successful trading merchant can afford to live as a
gentleman, the landed gentry perceives him as a gentleman pirate. The emergence of this
new class of English subjects provides the background against which future depictions of
the pirate-like figure evolve. Fictional representations after Defoe begin to reflect the
evolutionary process by which the merchant metamorphoses into a figurative pirate, a
“gentleman” within English society.

Endnotes

1. In The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding (Berkeley:
University of California Press, 1957), Ian Watt observes: “Despite a considerable
expansion, [the early eighteenth-century reading public] still did not normally extend
much further down the social scale than to tradesmen and shopkeepers” (48). In A Plan
of the English Commerce: Being a Compleat Prospect of the Trade of this Nation, as
well the Home Trade as the Foreign, 1730 (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1967),
Daniel Defoe uses the term “Trading Men” to identify members of the “several Branches
of Commerce.” These members include tradesmen and shopkeepers, dealers and trade
merchants. Specifically, the “Trading Men” comprise the audience to which I refer.
Also see Michael McKeon, The Origins of the English Novel 1600—1740 (Baltimore and
London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), chapter 4, and Michael Shinagel,
Daniel Defoe and Middle-Class Gentility (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press,
1968).

2. In Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation (London and New York:
Routledge, 1992), Mary Louise Pratt argues that “Journalism and narrative travel
accounts . . . were essential mediators between the scientific network and a larger
European public” (29). The accomplishments of circumnavigation and mapping the
world’s coastlines give rise to the European planetary subject who is able to travel the
globe in books. Pratt’s definition of the planetary subject is derived, in part, from
Defoe’s description of the “armchair traveler” in The Compleat English Gentleman
(London, 1730).


4. See Maximillian Novak, Economics and the Fiction of Daniel Defoe (Berkeley:

5. Defoe’s The King of Pyrates: Being an Account of the Famous Enterprises of
Captain Avery with Lives of Other Pirates and Robbers, 1719 (New York: George D.
Sproul, 1904), claims to be a pair of letters written by Captain Avery, "Himself." The Life, Adventures, and Pyracies, of the Famous Captain Singleton was not advertised as a work of fiction until the 1780's. See the Introduction to Captain Singleton, by Penelope Wilson, in Shiv K. Kumar, ed. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), viii. Both of these works are cited parenthetically in the text.


8. In 1931 John Robert Moore produced the finding that Defoe was, in fact, the author of A General History; however, in 1988, P. N. Furbank and W. Owens took exception to Moore's assertion. Manuel Schonhorn, editor of the 1972 edition of A General History, states that while he "generally agrees with Moore's findings, ... there is not a shred of evidence that links Defoe to the authorship of the General History." See Manuel Schonhorn, ed., A General History of the Pyrates (New York: Dover, 1999), 710.

9. Instead of correctly positioning the common sailor, turned pirate, as "Those concern'd in the meaner and first Employments, ... called in common, Working Men or Labourers, and the labouring Poor; such as the meer Husbandmen, Miners, Diggers, Fishers, and in short, all the Drudges and Labourers in the several Productions of Nature or of Art," Defoe refashions his pirate figures to aspire to the highest class of trading peoples, the "Dealers who only buy and sell" (A Plan of the English Commerce 4–5).


12. To my knowledge, Defoe is the first author to connect pirates and buried treasure. The OED does not make the connection until the nineteenth century. Defoe, however, did not invent buried treasure. In 1606, for example, Fulbecke informs that "A treasure
properly is, when money or things of good value have been lost from time out of mind hidden in the ground, so that no man now has property in it.” *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), vol. 1, 459.


14. Quoted in Rediker, 149.


17. Ibid, 49–57.


25. Forrester and Sharrock, xxvi.

26. In this portion of the novel, Defoe critiques England’s middle-class economic frivolity and inclination to embrace luxury. Defoe wrote this didactic pirate text during
the collapse of the South Sea Company (1719–1720). In addition to writing about sea pirates from 1719–1720, Defoe wrote extensively, and critically, about the land piracy that he perceived was being conducted through the investment in, and management of, South Sea stock, and while he was vehemently critical of the directors of the company, he was also critical of the participants. In both Captain Singleton, and The King of Pyrates, Defoe demonstrates how money and luxury may corrupt the economic individual. Through a series of “Adventures,” however, these pirates ultimately learn how to accumulate capital, manage it wisely, and, most importantly, they learn how to discover their way out of the pirate community by making the transition from pirate to merchant.


28. Ibid.

29. Defoe, Captain Singleton. See Notes, 282.


31. Ibid, x.

32. Watt, 67.


34. Ibid, 120.

35. Ibid, 119.


38. For example, in The King of Pyrates, when Avery receives his treasure from the Indian princess, he states that he wishes his “invaluable jewels . . . were safe in England; for I doubt not but some of them are fit to be placed on the king’s crown” (56).
Chapter 4

John Gay’s *Polly*: Unmasking Pirates and Fortune Hunters in the West Indies

In December, 1728, John Gay’s opera, *Polly*, the sequel to *The Beggar’s Opera*, was banned from rehearsal by the Lord Chamberlain for being a filthy and libelous work. It must be admitted that in his Preface to the opera, Gay protests that he has been accused of “writing immoralities; that [the opera] is filled with slander and calumny against particular great persons, and that Majesty it-self is endeavour’d to be brought into ridicule and contempt” (70). W. E. Schultz speculates that, because the sequel followed so closely on the heels of *The Beggar’s Opera*, the ban had more to do with “the report of a new play bearing Gay’s name” than it did with the content. But the ban did not prevent the work from being seen: not only was it printed and sold in April, 1729, but by June of the same year, Gay and his publisher had injunctions brought against seventeen printers and booksellers for piracy of the work. Patricia Meyer Spacks argues that “The early history of *Polly* is more interesting than the play itself.” She believes Gay’s opera to be a “failure” because, unlike *The Beggar’s Opera*, which exists as a world where everyone is corrupt, in *Polly*, “society splits into heroines and villains; there is no doubt at all where one’s sympathies are to lie.” Polly and the native Indians are the honorable and virtuous characters, and the pirates, “invariably villainous,” represent evil. And while she does find limited merit in the characters, Ducat and Trapes, Spacks views the opera as being predictable and lacking “ironic perspective . . .
throughout”; *Polly*, she concludes, “can only be seen as an essentially frivolous and meaningless exercise. . . . There’s no use flogging a dead horse, and *Polly* is a very dead one indeed.”

I view *Polly*, imperfect though it may be, as an important eighteenth-century text because the opera begins to question the presence, motivations, and destructive potential of the English merchant in the colonial setting; Gay is one of the first eighteenth-century writers to represent the English colonial merchant as a kind of pirate. As the middle-class country gentleman proceeds from his position as a capitalist inside the English empire, to his position as a colonial merchant in the West Indies, he begins to exploit the economic potential outside of England on the borders of the empire. Gay extends his critique in *The Beggar’s Opera*, springing from the pervasive corruption in the commerce-centered city of London, to an equally commerce-centered British empire, by situating that argument in the West Indies. Accordingly, Gay does not represent English colonization in a flattering light. In *Polly*, Gay condemns the British planter, the British soldier, the British slave trade, the transportation of British criminals, and the pirate. In a thoroughly Swiftian style, the author damned all the characters as being either a fool or a knave, excepting, as Spacks notes, Polly and the native Indians. However, by virtue of the disguises that the characters assume, Gay anticipates the changes that colonization will make to the face of England. Although color may be tolerated when it serves the goals of empire, Gay demonstrates that there is no place for a black rebel.

Gay’s decision to remove the country gentleman, and the gentleman of the road (the highwayman), from London to the West Indies is an attempt to explore the nascent
role of these English subjects—both merchant and lower class—as fortune hunters in the colonies. As a result of being transported to the West Indies, Macheath turns pirate and continues his criminal quest for wealth. No less criminal in Gay's estimation, however, is the plantation owner, Ducat, who ventures to the West Indies to seek his treasure. Although Macheath (who dons a black-face disguise, turns pirate, and renames himself Morano) is the obvious outlaw of the sequel, Ducat is an early example of a merchant class adventurer for whom the colonies signify, as Raymond Williams argues, "an idyllic retreat, an escape from debt or shame, or an opportunity for making a fortune." He profits from his marriage, land, trade in slaves, and dubious business practices. He not only survives, but prospers, because he is adept—like his fellow merchants back in England—at the art of making money without exercising morals. And, similar to the members of his class back home, Ducat basks in the decadent "Luxuries" that his new money can buy. Gay invents Ducat—as his name suggests—as a stereotype who represents money, the merchant / planter as fortune hunter in West Indian colonial society.

Unlike Ducat, Morano is an unsuccessful pirate who is captured and executed at the end of the opera. Morano fails as a pirate / businessman because he refuses to wear the disguise of the colonizer. Although the handsome and crafty Captain Macheath, of *The Beggar's Opera*, is accustomed to keeping company with the aristocracy of London, Morano, of the sequel, makes no attempts to insert himself into colonial society. Like Ducat, Morano could have been a successful pirate within the colonial establishment by marrying for treasure and buying a plantation and slaves to work it.
However, because Morano chooses to assume the identity of a black pirate—even as he approaches the scaffold—he must die; there is no place for him in colonial society. In this moment, Morano is no longer disguised as a black pirate; he has become a black pirate, a face of resistance in the colonies.

Wedded to this disparity between successful and unsuccessful English colonial subjects, is the manner in which Gay’s characters pirate—if you will—the institution of marriage, not as a secular act, but as an economic activity by which to attain wealth. In The Beggar’s Opera, Gay implies that the polygamous Macheath uses marriage as a means of attaining wealth—marriage enables him to transcend his original social position. Marriage is a form of resistance against an economic system that is weighted against the lower class. In Polly, however, Morano’s marriage to Jenny Diver—a fellow transported criminal—is a marriage neither for profit nor for power. But, for Ducat, who marries for treasure, marriage is the means by which he establishes himself as a member of the colonial elite; marriage produces the capital that enables him to elevate his social position. Even in this remote colonial setting, Gay demonstrates that the tenor of the “marriage market” is strictly economic. And while the plantation owner prospers by virtue of his successful investment, the pirate, who fails to strengthen his position through the social bond, does not survive. This difference in the two subject positions marks a critical divide between success and failure, both, as Gay argues, at home in London, and in the colonies. Gay’s depiction of social hegemony, expressed by way of the marriage market, demonstrates how social alliances are inextricably rooted in capitalism.
Gay’s decision to set his sequel in the West Indies is in part explained by the fact that he had an interest, literally and figuratively, in the colonies. In 1720 Gay had two quarto volumes of his poetry published by Tonson and Lintot, with a frontispiece by William Kent, the architect. The volumes were a success, and Gay received over £1000 for the publication. His friends, Swift and Pope, urged him to make a prudent investment with his money in order to live upon the interest, but Gay, acting against all advice, was “bitten by South Sea Madness”; he invested his proceeds entirely in South Sea stock, issued by the joint stock venture, the South Sea Company. Conceived of in 1711 by Robert Harley, Queen Anne’s Tory Minister, the company strove to dissolve the abundance of short-term debt which had piled up during the War of Spanish Succession. By 1710 there was over £9 million of short-term debt floating in England’s financial markets. The South Sea Act declared that this debt could be traded for stock in the new company, which had been granted a monopoly on trade with the South Seas.7 Late in 1720, after Gay had made his investment, the bottom of the company fell out. On August 18th of that year, the stock price stood at £880, but by the 25th of September, the price of South Sea stock had dropped to £150.8 A massive sell-off ensued, and Gay, along with thousands of investors, suffered catastrophic losses. In his Life of Gay, Dr. Johnson informs that after his “profit and principal were lost . . . Gay sunk under the calamity so low that his life became in danger.”9 Following the South Sea debacle, investors quickly learned that the company had been a sham all along, a pyramid scheme
designed to entice investors into buying shares in a fantasy. Speculating on the dubious business practices that ultimately brought the company to ruin, Sven Armens, in his book, *John Gay, Social Critic*, rightly states that “the South Sea treasure hoard was no myth; it actually was discovered, only it was found not in South America, but in Change Alley.”

In 1728 Gay rebounded financially with the overwhelming success of *The Beggar’s Opera*, and once again his attention turned to the South Seas. This time, however, Gay did not invest in South Sea stock, but he set his sequel to *The Beggar’s Opera* in the West Indies. Considering his former investment experience with the South Sea Company, Gay’s choice to conflate the actions of pirates with those of a corrupt colonial businessman seems appropriate. In fact, in early eighteenth-century English society, equating the corrupt business practices of merchants with the nefarious activities of pirates did not require a great stretch of the imagination. This point is made, for example, in Daniel Defoe’s *A General History of the Pyrates* when Captain Bellamy argues that the difference between the business ventures of “legal” society and the “illicit” ambitions of the pirate is narrow indeed. When Bellamy, the illegal pirate, encounters a legitimate captain of an English merchant vessel, he states,

... damn ye, you are a sneaking Puppy, and so are all those who will submit to be governed by the Laws which rich Men have made for their own Security, for the cowardly Whelps have not the courage otherwise to defend what they get by their Knavery; but damn ye altogether: Damn them for a pack of crafty Rascals, and you who serve them, for a Parcel of hen-hearted Numskulls. They villify us, the Scoundrels do, when there is only this Difference, they rob

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the Poor under the Cover of the Law, forsooth, and we plunder the Rich under the Protection of our Courage; had you not better make One of us, than sneak after the A— of those Villains for Employment?12

Although he is addressing another captain at sea, Bellamy’s class-based tirade refers to the exploitation that common sailors (men who turned pirate) experienced at the hands of corrupt merchants in the seafaring community.13 In fact, Bellamy’s argument, that unlike the rich, the poor (pirates) are at least honest crooks, mirrors Gay’s message in *The Beggar’s Opera*.

Gay was not only knowledgeable, but was also personally sensitive to the class conflicts which plagued England’s nascent capitalist economy. As Dr. Johnson put it, Gay was “born without prospects of hereditary riches,” and so “was sent to London in his youth, and placed apprentice with a silk-mercera.”14 Gay’s personal experiences as a member of the working class would certainly have kept him apprized of the class exploitation which routinely resulted in mutiny in the seafaring community, and he would have been familiar with the various opinions on piracy argued by Defoe in *A General History*. Gay would have understood that the turn to piracy from legally sanctioned naval service and privateerism was a complicated transition resulting largely from Britain’s inability to employ its sailors satisfactorily during times of peace. Defoe argues the point:

> I need not bring any Proofs of what I advance, VIZ. That there are Multitudes of Seamen at this Day unemploy’d; it is but too evident by their straggling, and begging all over the Kingdom. Nor is it so much their Inclination to Idleness, as their own hard Fate, in being cast off after their Work is done, to starve or steal. I have not known a Man of War
Defoe identifies economic exploitation as being the core motivation for sailors to turn pirate. Steering clear of romantic explanations, Defoe rightly charges that the common sailor is an exploited wage laborer, who, especially during times of peace, is taken advantage of by the merchants.¹⁶

Beyond Defoe’s biography of pirates, Gay would also have been familiar with Alexander O. Exquemelin’s *The Buccaneers of America* (1678), which recounts the author’s experiences as a buccaneer on the border of the English empire in the West Indies.¹⁷ Similar to Gay’s pirate in *Polly*, Exquemelin describes his own transportation from Holland to the West Indies, his torturous labor as an indentured servant on a plantation, and his background as a member of the buccaneers who were at war with the Spanish in that region. Like Exquemelin, Gay’s pirate, Morano, is transported to a West Indian plantation, escapes, joins a pirate band, and attacks, not the Spanish, but an English plantation.

In addition to exploring issues related to the literal seafaring pirate, both at home and in the colonies, in *Polly*, Gay entertains the much more radical notion that England’s relentless acts of colonial appropriation are acts of piracy. This sentiment may have been transmitted to Gay by Swift who was a major influence upon Gay’s earlier opera.¹⁸ In *Gulliver’s Travels*, for example, which was published two years prior to Gay’s
opers, Swift radically equates the British empire and piracy. That is, at the conclusion of his adventures, Swift has Gulliver debate whether or not he should reveal the locations of the different lands he has encountered during his travels. Gulliver decides that he should not because

he had another reason, which made [him] less forward to enlarge his majesty’s dominions by [his] discoveries. . . . [he] had conceived a few scruples with relation to the distributive justice of princes upon these occasions. For instance, a crew of pirates are driven by a storm they know not whither; at last a boy discovers land from the topmast; they go on shore to rob and plunder; they see a harmless people; are entertained with kindness; they give the country a new name; they take formal possession of it for their king; they set up a rotten plank or a stone for a memorial; they murder two or three dozen of the natives, bring away a couple more, by force, for a sample; return home and get their pardon. Here commences a new dominion acquired with a title by divine right. Ships are sent with the first opportunity; the natives driven out or destroyed; their princes tortured to discover their gold; a free license given to all acts of inhumanity and lust, the earth reeking with the blood of its inhabitants; and this execrable crew of butchers, employed in so pious an expedition, is a modern colony, sent to convert and civilize an idolatrous and barbarous people.

But this description, I confess, does by no means affect the British nation who may be an example to the whole world for their wisdom, care, and justice in planting colonies.19

When Swift made these remarks in 1726, the Spanish had long since been the primary European conqueror and colonizer in the West Indies, and Swift’s statements refer, in part, to Spanish colonial practices. However, Swift’s final remark, that the description of this piratical process of colonization “does by no means affect the British nation,” is stated with tongue-in-cheek. England was, in fact, already well established in the West
Indies. As part of Cromwell’s “Grand Design” to accumulate Spanish possessions in the New World, English colonial forces captured Jamaica from the Spanish in 1655. And, as Orlando Patterson argues, “By the second decade of the eighteenth century, the first group of successful [English] planters had consolidated their fortunes [in Jamaica] and began to send their children to be educated in Britain.” Swift understood that this “success” was achieved at the expense of both indigenous peoples and imported slaves. These early English planters were dependent upon the “organization of labor,” which was, as Raymond Williams argues, “a polite term for the slave trade from Africa.” By 1700, British gains in the Americas were considerable, amounting to at least fifteen percent of Britain’s total commerce, and profits were made by both the trade in commodities and the trade in slaves.

Concurrent with Swift’s diatribe, in Polly, Gay condemns imperial acts of appropriation of lands and commodities, and the enslavement of peoples on the borders of the English empire. But instead of representing the colonial setting as a distant and disconnected location standing apart from England, Swift and Gay understood that the colony (the outside) affected and is affected by the city (the inside). Events, attitudes, and ideology in the city—the metropolitan economy—“determine and [are] determined by what was made to happen in the ‘country’; first the local hinterland and then the vast regions beyond it, in other people’s lands.” When viewed as companion operas, The Beggar’s Opera, and Polly demonstrate Gay’s acknowledgment of the dialectic current circulating between the town and the colony.
In *The Beggar's Opera*, Gay depicts the progress of the English empire in a gloomy light. He envisions London, the heart and soul of the English empire, as a location of squalor and corruption. Following such a reading, David Dabydeen, in his essay, "Eighteenth-Century English Literature on Commerce and Slavery," places Gay among a handful of writers from the early eighteenth century who are resolute in their portrayal of a London that, in the name of "progress," is a city "corrupt, putrid and anarchic to the point of insanity. London is depicted as a gigantic Bedlam riddled with crime and disease. . . . If the spirit of commerce was seen as having stimulated crime [in London] it was also seen as having created inhumane attitudes in people, a selfishness and hardness of heart" (37). From the first lines in *The Beggar's Opera*, Gay focuses on the insane corruption that characterizes London society. The law and the criminal are in harmony; they exist in a symbiotic relationship, steeped in corruption and betrayal, that revolves around a faulty economic system. And in this economy, money is the most important focus of all members of society, rich and poor. In the first line of the opera, Peachum, a dealer in stolen goods, and a "thief-taker," states that: "A Lawyer is an honest Employment, so is mine. Like me too he acts in a double Capacity, both against Rogues and for 'em; for 'tis but fitting that we should protect and encourage Cheats, since we live by them" (4). Peachum argues this point with his wife when he states, "But Money . . . is the true Fuller's Earth [a cleansing agent for stains] for Reputations, there is not a Spot or a Stain but what it can take out. A rich Rogue now-a-days is fit Company for any Gentleman; and the World, my
Dear, hath not such a Contempt for Roguery as you imagine” (16). The beggar, whose lines close out the opera, underscores Gay’s parallel between rich and poor corruption:

Through the whole Piece you may observe such a similitude of Manners in high and low Life, that it is difficult to determine whether (in the fashionable Vices) the fine Gentleman imitate the Gentleman of the Road, or the Gentleman of the Road imitate the fine Gentleman.—Had the Play remain’d, as I at first intended, it would have carried a most excellent Moral. ‘Twould have shown that the lower Sort of People have their vices in a degree as well as the Rich: And that they are punished for them. (64)

No one in Gay’s critique of English class hierarchy is exempt from the practice of deceptive and corrupt behavior; however, in Gay’s presentation of the city, only the poor pay for their corrupt behavior.

Even though Gay’s focus is on the city of London, corruption in *The Beggar’s Opera* extends well beyond the city, and beyond the islands of Great Britain so as to encompass the entire British empire, an empire steeped in philosophies of acquisition, accumulation, and production of capital. In Act II, Scene i, Gay, perhaps anticipating the staging of the opera’s sequel in the West Indies, begins to reveal his agenda to depict both the inside and outside of the English empire. At tavern near Newgate Prison, Jemmy, one of the members of Macheath’s band of highwaymen, poses a question that equates the acquisitions of the British empire with those of a common thief. Jemmy asks, “Why are the Laws levell’d at us? Are we more dishonest than the rest of Mankind? What we win, Gentleman, is our own by the Law of Arms, and the
Right of Conquest” (23). Gay’s highwayman begins to speak the language of empire; his remarks extend the critique of the city of London to the East and West Indies, and to Africa where land is being swallowed up by European countries who practice the Law of Arms and who understand only the Right of Conquest. Gay’s equation of a highwayman’s acquisitions with an empire’s acquisitions foreshadows his sequel where the highwayman becomes a pirate, and the businessman becomes a country gentleman of the colonies.

Although the identities of Gay’s characters shift when they are removed from the city to the colonial setting, Gay maintains that the marriage market, no matter where you find it, remains a purely economic institution. Marriage can either launch a character into a secure position within the establishment, or it can preclude a character from attaining a financially acceptable position. In The Beggar’s Opera, Gay frequently visits and revisits corruption in the state sanctioned institution of marriage; the outlaw’s penchant for both entering into marriage as a means to attaining economic gain, and of committing the crime of polygamy, are both, in a sense, social acts of piracy. Polly is in love with and marries Macheath only to discover in short order that he is also married to Lucy, and by the end of the opera it is possible that Macheath has at least six wives, as many children, and regularly visits countless prostitutes. The audience also calls into question the legal status of the Peachums’ marriage when her father discovers that Polly has married Macheath; Peachum thunders, “Do you think your Mother and I should have liv’d comfortably so long together, if ever we had been married?” (13). Peachum views Polly’s actions as an

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attempt to "do like the Gentry," but he reminds her that she "wilt be as ill-us'd, and as much neglected, as if [she] hadst married a Lord" (13). The gentry, Gay warns, can afford to marry; although they will be just as unhappy as the poor, their money protects them from the law and enables them to play at "gaming, drinking, and whoring." “[H]ave you enough Money," Peachum asks his daughter, “to carry on the daily Quarrels of Man and Wives about who shall squander most?” (13).

Pirating the institution of marriage (i.e. marrying for money alone, and having more than one partner) is a means to transcending poverty. In Act I, Scene viii, Peachum explains this to his wife in reference to Polly’s secret elopement: “Married! The Captain is a bold Man, and will risque any thing for Money; to be sure he believes [Polly] a fortune” (13). In a second example, Gay affirms that the highwayman’s social act of polygamy is a form of piracy by confirming that Macheath views the female as a commodity; Macheath equates women with money. In the following speech, the captain, acting as the town pimp, draws a parallel between the desirable accumulation of money and the desirable accumulation of women: “What a Fool is a fond Wench! Polly is most confoundedly bit.—I love the Sex. And a Man who loves Money, might as well be contented with one Guinea, as I with one Woman. . . . I must have Women. There is nothing unbends the Mind like them. Money is not so strong a Cordial for the Time” (26).

The final scene of The Beggar’s Opera anticipates that in Gay’s not yet composed sequel, polygamy, as a form of resistance to poverty, will again be a common practice. When Macheath is on death row, (and has just been visited by
"Four Women more . . . with a Child a-piece!" [63]), he instructs Lucy and Polly, to both of whom he is presumably married, that if they are "fond of marrying again, the best Advice I can give you, is to Ship yourselves off for the West-Indies, where you’ll have a fair chance of getting a Husband a-piece; or by good Luck, two or three, as you like best" (62–3). Macheath delivers the advice as one who has learned from a long and dedicated practice of deceiving women in marriage for gain.

But in Macheath’s final song of The Beggar’s Opera, polygamy in marriage gives way to, and anticipates, a multiplicity of identities. By depicting Macheath as a “Turk,” the author alludes to the outlaw’s transition from white to black-face. And although Macheath sings openly about his polygamous desire, his song accurately foreshadows that when he arrives in the colonies he will be wedded to a single woman (with but one he retires). Macheath fantasizes:

Thus I stand like the Turk, with his Doxies around:
from all Sides their Glances his Passion confound;
For black, brown, and fair, his Inconstancy burns,
And the different Beauties subdue him by turns:
Each calls forth her Charms, to provoke his Desires:
Though willing to all; with but one he retires.
But think of this Maxim, and put off your Sorrow,
The Wretch of To-day, may be happy To-morrow. (64–65)

In light of the location of the sequel—the West Indies—Macheath’s fantasy about women of all shades, “black, brown, and fair,” accurately suggests the polyglot mix of identities in the colonies. In Polly, Gay constructs a world derived from his knowledge of English colonial administration in the West Indies. The various identities that he creates in his opera are: The English plantation owner, the English

West Indian plantations were cultivated by enslaved transported European criminals
who served a variety of sentences as bondsmen and indentured-servants.24

Additionally Africans, who were brought to the West Indies, were enslaved and forced
to work on the plantations, as were the native American Indians, whose lands were
occupied by Europeans. Until the 1670s, resistance to European encroachment in the
West Indies was initiated, in part, by buccaneers.25 Maroons (escaped African slaves)
also waged wars against Europeans in the Americas well into the nineteenth century.26

It is no coincidence then that Gay's pirate captain in black-face is called Morano, a
name that resonates with “maroon” or “marronage” too closely to be an accident.

Calhoun Winton in, John Gay and the London Theatre, has noticed that “the name,
Morano, echoes both Marrano, the christianized—and persecuted—Jews and Moors
of Spain, and Maroon, fugitive slaves in the West Indies, some of whom were
Marranos, who had escaped Spanish captivity.”27 Morano’s transition to black-face
conflates identities, and melds the culturally marginal positions, slave / maroon with
indentured-servant / pirate. Gay designs Morano cosmetically and occupationally as a
subversive figure.28

When Morano takes the stage in Polly, Gay paints him in black-face in order to
prohibit him from participating in his polygamous fantasy. Morano masquerades in
black-face in order to prevent himself from being recognized and pursued by other
women. The disguise precludes Morano from continuing the practice of polygamy.

Although Macheath is still technically married to Polly (and perhaps others), he is
reinvented in the West Indies by Gay as a monogamous pirate who is faithfully—by virtue of his disguise—married to Jenny Diver. Morano tells Jenny:

In love, Jenny you cannot out-do me. Was it not entirely for you that I disguised myself as a black, to skreen myself from women who laid claim to me where-ever I went? Is not the rumor of my death, which I purposely spread, credited thro’ the whole country? Macheath is dead to all the world but you. Not one of the crew have the least suspicion of me. (107)

As a highwayman, Macheath counterfeits his commitment to the institution of marriage. But when depicting his hero as a pirate in the colonies, Gay removes polygamy from Macheath’s arsenal. According to Gay’s construction of monogamy, the state sanctioned institution of marriage begins to function as a state sanctioned system of control over the subject. Morano, in this sense, becomes subjected to Jenny’s control and demands, which result in a loss of power and freedom. Marriage functions as a nexus with empire. That is, marriage to Jenny prevents Macheath from severing ties with England.

At the outset of Morano’s pirate attack on Ducat’s plantation, his position as a pirate—a black pirate who is not in the employ of empire—is significantly radical. The Indians, who are in alliance with the British empire, announce to Ducat that “The pyrates are ravaging and plund’ring the country, and we are now in arms, ready for battle, to oppose ’em” (94). When asked by Ducat if Macheath is the pirate leader, the native Indian responds, “Report says he is dead. Above twelve moons are pass’d since we heard of him. Morano, a Negro villain, is their chief, who in rapine and
barbarities is even equal to him” (95). In contrast to his billing as a diabolical pirate, however, Morano together with Jenny, views piracy as a means of attaining riches and status within the English empire. They are determined to make conquests in the West Indies, and to amass a fortune, but their ultimate goal is to position themselves as king and queen back in England. Indeed the married pirate captain, Morano, cannot separate his desire for appropriation and wealth from his British subjecthood. Singing to his wife, he fantasizes a dream which relocates the riches of the empire back to the city:

When I’m great, and flush with treasure,
   Check’d by neither fear of shame,
You shall tread a round of pleasure,
   Morning, noon, and night the same

Like a city wife of beauty
   You shall flutter life away;
And shall know no other duty,
   But to dress, eat, drink and play.

When you are queen, Jenny, you shall keep your coach and six, and shall game as deep as you please. (106)

Like Jemmy, in The Beggar’s Opera, the pirates of Morano’s band also speak the language of appropriation, of empire, idolizing conquest and capital. Their fantasies, however, do not include a return to London. The following conversation between the band of four highlights the deified status of appropriation:

   Hacker: . . . My lot shall be the kingdom of Mexico.

   Capstern: Who talks of Mexico? . . . I’ll never give it up. If you outlive me, brother, and I dye without heirs, I’ll leave it to you for a legacy. I hope now you are satisfy’d. I

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have set my heart upon it, and nobody shall dispute it with me.

Laguerre: The island of Cuba, methinks, brother, might satisfy any reasonable man.

Culvern: That I had allotted for you. Mexico shall not be parted with without my consent . . . Mexico hath only silver, nothing but silver. Governor of Cartagena, brother, is a pretty snug employment. That I shall not dispute with you. (104)

Although their fantasies are quite different, the pirates of Morano’s band articulate an all-consuming desire for the acquisition of power. But while Morano and Jenny fantasize about attaining power on the English throne, the other pirates remain abroad in their fantasies in Cuba, Mexico, and Cartagena.

The general opinion of the pirate band is that Jenny is “a clog to [Morano’s] ambition” (103), and the cause of their lack of success. The pirates claim that “if it were not for [Jenny], the Indies would be our own” (103), and they berate Morano for his devotion to her. When Lieutenant Vanderbluff, for example, catches Morano and Jenny kissing, he scolds, “For shame, Captain, what, hamper’d in the arms of a woman, when your honour and glory are all at stake!” (108). The argument with his lieutenant continues:

Morano: A brave man should be cool till action, Lieutenant; when danger presses us, I am always ready. Be satisfy’d, I’ll take my leave of my wife, and then take the command.

Vanderbluff: That’s what you can never do until you have her leave. She is but just gone from you, Sir. See her not; hear her not; the breath of a woman has ever prov’d a contrary wind to great actions.
Morano: I tell you I will see her. I have got rid of many a woman in my time, and you may trust me—

Vanderbluff: With any woman but her. The husband that is govern'd is the only man that never finds out that he is so. (109 my emphasis)

The operative word in Vanderbluff’s critique is “govern’d.” This exchange between the captain and his lieutenant confirms that the once polygamous Macheath is now a “govern’d” husband who is incapable of freeing himself from his wife. Furthermore, Morano is not only a governed husband, but while married, he continues to be a governed subject.

Because the female stands between the pirate community and their “empire,” the band actively attempts to save Morano from Jenny’s and the empire’s malevolent influence. The pirate Hacker, for example, states that, “A good horse is never turn’d loose among mares, till all his good deeds are over. And really your heroes should be serv’d the same way; for after they take to women, they have no good deeds to come. That inviegling gypsy, brothers, must be hawl’d from him by force. And then—the kingdom of Mexico shall be mine” (104). Hacker’s assertion is straightforward: Jenny is trouble, she undercuts the pirates’ ambitions, and she must be physically removed from Morano’s side. Lieutenant Vanderbluff’s perception of the situation is equally dire. He implores Morano, “Come captain, a woman will never take the last kiss; she will always want another. Break from her clutches” (119). Vanderbluff metaphorically equates Jenny’s “kiss” with the “clutches” of empire. And helpless, Morano can only respond in agony, “I must go—But I cannot” (119). Wedged
between the worlds of the pirate and the empire, Morano sums up his predicament in a song. In a play on words, Gay depicts Morano as being caught between Jenny’s “arms” and “arming” himself for battle against the colony:

Hounour calls me from thy arms. [to her
With glory my bosom is beating. [to him
Victory summons to arms: then to arms
Let us haste, for we’re sure of defeating.
One look more—and then— [to her
Oh, I am lost again!
What a Power has beauty!
But honour calls, and I must away. [to him
But love forbids, and I must obey. [to her
(119)

Gay persists in depicting Jenny as a link with England when he has her attempt to convince her husband that they should “Rob the crew, and steal off to England. Believe me, Captain,” she argues, “you will be rich enough to be respected by your neighbors” (107). “Let us leave the Indies to our comrades” (II. ix; 40–44). “Let us seize the ships then, and away for England while we have the opportunity” (II, iv; 65–66). In his weakened state Morano would have “obeyed” his wife and returned to England had access to their ship not been blocked by the colonial forces. The “Power” of Jenny’s “beauty,” has an emasculating effect upon the captain. He is rendered impotent, unable to perform for his pirate band, and now, blocked from a retreat, he is also unable to perform for Jenny. Morano, who defines his own disposition as “lost,” resides in a space between the power of Jenny’s beauty (their marriage) and the power of the pirate band’s resistance to empire.
In contrast to Morano's decision to marry for beauty, Ducat's marriage allows him to be located within the colonial aristocracy. Ducat's wealth, which is gained by way of the marriage market, is a means to social, political, and economic empowerment. Ducat, who is Creole—a colonial subject "born and bred" in the West Indies—is Gay's illustration of a stereotypical colonial merchant, a businessman of the colonies whose first concerns are profit and luxuries. At the outset of the opera, Ducat tells the peddler, Trapes (who also appears in The Beggar's Opera), "There is not a man . . . in all the Indies who lives more plentifully than my self; nor, who enjoys the necessaries of life in so handsome a manner" (76). Trapes, who has recently ventured to the West Indies to "mend [her] fortune," demonstrates to Ducat the economic relationship—the parallel—between the colony and the homeland. Her speech affirms Gay's dialectic—the synchronicity of ambitions—between the border and the core of empire:

THOUGH you were born and bred and live in the Indies, as you are a subject of Britain you shou'd live up to our customs. Prodigality there, is a fashion that is among all ranks of people. Why, our very younger brothers push themselves into the polite world by squandering more than they are worth. You are wealthy, very wealthy, Mr. Ducat; and I grant you the more you have, the taste of getting more should grow stronger upon you. 'Tis just so with us. But then the richest of our Lords and Gentlemen, who live elegantly, always run out. 'Tis genteel to be in debt. Your luxury should distinguish you from the vulgar. You cannot be too expensive in your pleasures. (76)

Trapes's speech sets the tone for the remainder of the opera: the fashions and customs of the middle (or merchant) class in the colonies ape those of their economic peers at
home. Accordingly, Trapes describes the vast divide between England and the West Indies—the Atlantic Ocean—as a "herring-pond," and in the colonies, she, picks up her trade (from the Beggar’s Opera) as a peddler of stolen goods. Now, however, Trapes peddles flesh; she sells transported criminals to the plantations. Although the type of commodities that she peddles has changed, her occupation in the colonies mirrors her occupation in London.

Intent on making a sale, Trapes tempts Ducat to purchase Polly with whom he can enjoy adulterous luxuries in the manner of the gentlemen back England. She instructs him that back home “jealousy is out of fashion even among our country-gentlemen. I hope you are better bred than to be jealous. A husband and a wife should have a mutual complaisance for each other. Sure your wife is not so unreasonable to expect to have you always to her self” (77). But in the process of trying to corrupt Ducat, Trapes learns that the colonial merchant is not so naïve. Ducat is already well versed in certain deceitful practices that align him with the gentry back home; polygamy will just be added to the list. Ducat tells her: “I have a fine library of books that I never read; I have a fine stable of horses that I never ride; I build. I buy plate, jewels, pictures, or any thing that is valuable and curious, as your great men do, merely out of ostentation. But indeed I must own, I do still cohabit with my wife” (77). He adds, however, that “you can not think me such a clown as to be really in love with my wife! We are not so ignorant here as you imagine; why, I married her in a reasonable way, only for her money” (79). Like Macheath in Gay’s previous opera, Ducat is a social pirate who plunders the societal institution of

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marriage for profit. But unlike Macheath, Ducat’s marriage—his financial gain—secures his position within the establishment; he is a successful pirate. His song presents a debate between the value of beauty and money, and he decides, unlike Morano, that only in the latter, marriage for “treasure,” can there be lasting happiness:

He that weds a beauty  
Soon will find her cloy;  
When pleasure grows a duty,  
Farewell love and joy:  
He that weds for treasure:  
(Though he has a wife)  
Hath chose one lasting pleasure  
In a married life. (79)

Ducat’s song illustrates the colonial merchant’s distinction between a successful and an unsuccessful marriage. Through his act of piracy—marrying solely for treasure—Ducat attains the status of colonial gentleman. In contrast, Morano’s song demonstrates the opposite; Morano’s choice of “beauty” not treasure has left him powerless and limp. The difference in these social positions elucidates the crucial function of marriage in the capitalist economy as an economic tool, a means to power, or, in Morano’s case, a preclusion from power.

In both The Beggar’s Opera and Polly, Gay focuses on the economic implications of social relationships; however, in Polly, he advances the argument one step further by metaphorically paralleling the behavior of English subjects with the behavior of the English empire. Similar to Ducat, the wealthy colonial merchant who commits acts of piracy through marriage, England commits acts of piracy in its acquisition of colonies and its enslavement of peoples. On a figurative level, Gay
demonstrates colonial management through the Ducats’ servant, Damaris, who, like
the native Indian, or the African slave, is a pawn of empire, caught between the
disputes of husband and wife, king and queen. When Mrs. Ducat insists that her
husband discharge Polly, whom he desires to become his mistress, Gay represents the
couple as two nations at war. In this configuration, the servant becomes the pawn in
the middle, commissioned by each nation to spy on the other. Damaris describes her
undesirable position:

*When kings by their huffing*
*Have blown up a squabble,*
*All the charge and cuffing*
*Light upon the rabble.*

*Thus when Man and Wife*
*By their mutual snubbing,*
*Kindle civil strife,*

*Servants get the drubbing.* (90)

Gay parallels the leadership of royalty in England with the authority of “man and wife”
in the colonies. He intimates that in the colony, the planter and his wife are
representatives of the king and queen of England; the “King’s” authority now belongs
to the colonial merchant. And Gay parodies that authority by presenting the petty
“squabbles” of colonial subjects. Ducat’s instructions to Damaris are to “have an eye
upon your mistress . . . and inform me when she has any schemes a-foot. . . . I depend
upon you, Damaris, for intelligence. You may observe her at a distance; and as soon
as she comes into her own room, bring me word. There is the sweetest pleasure in the
revenge that I have now in my head!” (90). In the Ducats’ marriage, which functions
as a metaphor to represent a greater kind of political struggle, the servant must stand

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on the front lines of battle. Damaris, in this example, illuminates her “political” plight, which extends Gay’s metaphor from the private realm of marriage into the sphere of colonial administration: “Sure all masters and mistresses, like politicians, judge of the conscience of mankind by their own, and require treachery of their servants as a duty! I am employ’d by my master to watch my mistress, and by my mistress to watch my master” (90). Damaris’s acknowledgment, that “masters” and “mistresses” in marriage are like ministers of war, elucidates her acknowledgment of the parallel between the manner in which husband and wife delegate responsibility to their servant, and the manner in which British colonial administration delegates responsibility to its servants. Either way, while “kings do their huffing,” or husband and wife, their “snubbing,” it is always the servants who “get the drubbing.”

Colonial administration is literally demonstrated in Polly when Morano’s band attacks Ducat’s plantation. Ducat, who fulfills diverse roles in the colony, is in charge of the plantation’s militia, which consists of an incompetent and cowardly battalion of colonial soldiers, and the native Indians. Like the master / servant relationship between Damaris and her employers, Ducat’s method of colonial administration takes the form of a business relationship with the Indians who are the paid protectors of the English. When conversing before the battle with Chief Pohetohee, Ducat’s native Indian protector, the merchant reminds the Indian, “Sir, fighting is not our business; we pay others for fighting; and yet ‘Tis well known that we had rather part with our lives than our money” (125–26). The servant, Pohetohee, replies, “And have you no spirit then to defend [your colony]? Your families, your liberties, your properties are
at stake. If these cannot move you, you must be born without a heart.” Ducat replies. “Alas, Sir, we cannot be answerable for human infirmities” (126). Gay mocks Ducat for his cowardice, but his action—or rather inaction—is in keeping with the colonial subject. The English merchant has no stomach for fighting. To battle would be beneath his social position. In this economy, fighting is left to servants and hired help.

Mavis Campbell, in *The Maroons of Jamaica*, provides a parallel example that highlights England’s seventeenth and eighteenth-century method for forming English armies and enforcing colonial laws in the West Indies. Campbell’s report on the function of captured slaves in the English colonies corresponds to the role of Gay’s native Indians:

> The British had, by mid-eighteenth century, changed their attitude toward treaty making with ex-rebel slaves. The aim was no longer to integrate them into the society with as much dispatch as possible . . . now the aim was to use Maroons as a part of their defense system. They were to be a kind of glorified Plato’s auxiliaries at hand to track down internal enemies—runaway slaves—or to assist in fighting external ones like the French and the Spaniards, as the Buccaneers had done before. Indeed the use made of the Buccaneers may have suggested this policy of collaboration to the authorities.²⁹

This method of colonial administration is depicted in a literal example when the planters employ the native Indians as a kind of “Plato’s auxiliary” to protect the colony from the pirates. When the pirate band, led by captain Morano, threatens the plantation, the native Indians, the commissioned servants of empire, conduct the battle, not the British military forces. Accordingly, the servant, Damaris, sounds the
alarm: “The pyrates are all coming down upon us; . . . I hope you have time enough to fling up your commission” (93). After the commission has been established, a footman announces to Ducat that “The Indians, Sir, with whom we are in alliance are all in arms; There will be bloody work to be sure. I hope they will decide the matter before we can get ready” (94). Indeed, the “Indians,” who have no vested interest in aligning themselves with the colonists, other than by a forced alliance, take complete charge of the war against the pirates.

At this point in the opera, Gay also shows that the pirates’ strategy of fighting is identical with that of the English colony. Morano’s pirates question the status of the alliance between the native Indians and the planters. The pirate Hacker, who desires to learn the “disposition” of the native Indians, questions, “Have the Indians joyn’d the factory? We should advance towards ’em immediately. Who knows but they may side with us? May-hap they may like our tyranny better” (105). Hacker’s inquiry would seem to equate planters and pirates alike with English tyranny. Neither side values the native inhabitants for anything more than the Indians’ assistance in battle. In this sense, there are no “good guys” in Gay’s representation of colonization. Both the force of empire and the resistance to empire are equally imperial in their greed for ownership of lands, wealth, and domination of peoples. Indeed, for Gay, the colonial landscape is a desolate location, peopled by masters and slaves. The conclusion Gay arrives at does not speak optimistically for the continued progress of colonization or the resistance to that project. And Gay is right; English imperial encroachment in India after 1757, for example, makes the events in Polly seem polite in comparison.
However, the imperial voices of the pirate and the colonist are not the last words Gay scripts in Polly. Both Morano and Polly (the play’s namesake) require further investigation.

*   *   *   *

Morano is an ambiguous character, the identity in Gay’s puzzle that remains out of focus until the close of the opera. What do we make of his turn to piracy, his black-face disguise, and his location, by virtue of his marriage, between the pirate community and England? By painting the pirate in black-face, and renaming him Morano, Gay, as I have demonstrated, conflates identities that represent resistance to colonial authority. In London—the inside of the empire—Macheath practices polygamy in order to improve his financial and social positions. Polygamy for Macheath takes the form of having many wives, as a resistance to class division. In Polly, however, Gay figures polygamy as a form of resistance to colonial authority by way of having many allies who cross racial boundaries. That is, Macheath, as he is transported out of England and into the colonies, becomes a white slave / indentured servant, who then, by escaping from the plantation and turning pirate, becomes a West Indian buccaneer in black-face, a disguise that he maintains throughout the rest of the opera, even as he approaches the scaffold. Morano is not simply disguised in black-face; his choice not to reveal his identity as Macheath—even as he faces execution—demonstrates that Gay intends Macheath to become Morano. This is the point that Calhoun Winton

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misses when he says that Gay makes “something, but not much” of Morano’s blackness. Morano does not put on and take off blackness according to which disguise is convenient. From the moment he appears on stage until the moment he is hanged, Morano remains black. His affirmation to Jenny that “Macheath is dead to all the world but you,” may now be understood literally; Morano has buried Macheath. And in the process, Gay has provocatively begun to unveil the changes that early colonization are initiating on English colonial subjects. Morano’s ambiguity locks him into an inbetween space.

Morano’s skin color—his blackness—which he initially dons to protect his marriage, becomes the defining mark which precludes him from both the pirate and the capitalist economies. Progressively his difference positions him absolutely as an outsider. The only time Morano’s color is referred to in a pejorative sense occurs on the battlefield when Culverin entreats Hacker, “But I don’t see, Brother Hacker, why we should be commanded by a Neger. ’Tis all along of him that we are led into these difficulties. I hate this land fighting. I love to have searoom” (128). The married “Neger” is not welcome in either camp. Consequently, the pirates begin to plot mutiny behind Morano’s back:

_Hacker:_ We are of the council, brother. If ever we get on board again, my vote shall be for calling of him [Morano] to account for these pranks. Why should we be such fools to be ambitious of satisfying another’s ambition?

_Culverin:_ Let us mutiny. I love mutiny . . .

_I pirate._ Let us mutiny.
2 pirate Ay, let us mutiny.

Hacker. Our captain takes too much upon him. I am for no engrosser of power. By our articles he hath no command but in a fight or in a storm. Look'ee brothers, I am for mutiny as much as any of you, when occasion offers.

Culverin. Right brother, all in good season. The pass to the ships is cut off by the troops of the Plantation. We must fight the Indians first, and we will have a mutiny good afterwards.

Hacker. Is Morano still with his doxy? (129)

But Gay does not select the climax of pirate mutiny for the conclusion of his opera. With a different purpose in mind, Gay demonstrates that the process of colonization is quite literally changing the face of England. In the most poignant moment of the opera, Gay has Morano appeal to his band that “We should be Indians among ourselves, and show our breeding and parts to every body else. If we cannot be true to one another, and false to all the world beside, there is an end of every great enterprise” (130). Morano’s identification is with the new faces inhabiting the colonial frontier. As a transported indentured-servant, a pirate, and a black pirate, Morano inhabits a position on the margin. His battle-cry for the unification and solidarity of his crew presents a cross-racial and a cross-cultural blindness that conforms to the composite nature of West Indian identities. Gay continues to stage the identity shift in the colonies when escaped plantation slaves join forces with the pirates. Morano’s lieutenant informs his captain that “Our numbers are strong. All the ships crews are drawn out, and the slaves that have deserted to us from the plantations are all brave determin’d fellows, who must behave themselves well” (115). The banding together
of the maroons with the pirates, who have just been spurred on by Morano’s appeal that they be “Indians among ourselves,” illustrates the nascent hybridity of the colonial border. This climactic moment, when Morano and his crew can be interpreted as multiple identities and voices of resistance to empire, may be fleeting, but it is nonetheless boldly present.

In order to understand how firmly Morano is rooted in the colonial inbetween space, consider, for a moment, the omissions from Gay’s opera, what Morano does not do, the character Morano is not, in the West Indies. In The Beggar’s Opera, Macheath is a lady’s man, a socialite, a schemer, and a highly inventive and crafty sort of outlaw. Mrs. Peachum states, for example, that in addition to keeping company with “Lords” and “Gentlemen,” Macheath is “cheerful and . . . agreeable! Sure there is not a finer Gentleman upon the Road than the Captain!” (I, iv). With this contrast of character in mind, it would certainly have been plausible for Gay to reinvent Macheath in the West Indies as a character who resembles Ducat. As a handsome captain, well used to the company of aristocrats, Macheath perhaps should have been a country gentleman of the colonies. In keeping with his character in the earlier opera, Macheath, like Ducat, would have had little trouble pirating the colonial marriage market for treasure. But Gay refrains from dressing Macheath in the garb of the English merchant.

The aspect of disguise in Polly does not begin and end with Morano. Polly, in fact, is cross-dressed throughout the majority of the opera. When she arrives in the colonies in search of Macheath, Polly’s predicament is akin to a slave’s. Ducat
purchases her from Trapes, and, when Polly resists her master's sexual advances, he tells her, "you shall either contribute to my pleasure or my profit; and if you refuse to play in the bed-chamber, you shall go work in the fields among the planters" (93 I, xi). When Mrs. Ducat discovers that her husband has purchased a concubine, she helps Polly escape by dressing her in men's clothing, as a country gentleman of the colonies. And accordingly, Polly is Morano's captor; after wrestling him to the ground, Polly fails to recognize Morano in black-face, and he fails to recognize her cross-dressed. Polly tells her victorious Indian companions, "In the rout, Sir, I overtook him, flying with all the cowardice of guilt upon him. Thousands have false courage enough to be vicious; true fortitude is founded upon honour and virtue; that only can abide all tests. I made him my prisoner, and left him without under strict guard till I receiv'd your majesty's commands for his disposal" (135). Polly's efforts send her husband to the gallows, and forthwith, she discovers prosperity in the colonies by marrying the Indian Prince. However, the design of Polly's final identity remains a conundrum. Her disguise of colonial garb does not transform her into a colonial merchant, but, along with the Indians, she is the protector of the colony, and in that sense a heroine of empire.

In contrast, Morano must be executed. There is no place for his ambiguous identity in the colonial establishment. His final words, delivered to his native Indian executioner—who once again must perform the dirty-work of the colonizer—inform Gay's theme that capitalism, no matter where you find it, breeds inequality. When the chief questions Morano: "Have you no consciousness? Have you no shame?" The
pirate's response is poignantly: “Of being poor” (137). Indeed, Gay’s pirate is the poor subject in this capitalist economy. Although the members of his crew negotiate with the Indians and colonists for pardons, in Morano’s case, there is no room for diplomatic maneuvers.

In England, however, the white Macheath of The Beggar's Opera had also been sentenced to death before his transportation to the colonies. Alluding to the London court’s decision to overrule his execution in favor of transportation, Morano thunders: “This sentence indeed is hard. Without the common forms of trial! Not so much as the counsel of a Newgate attorney! Not to be able to lay out my money in partiality and evidence! Not a friend perjur’d for me! This is hard, very hard” (137–38). But the sentence is real this time. The white Macheath was able to get off with a lesser sentence, but the black pirate cannot escape. There is room in the English empire for subjects who will protect and serve, but there is no place for a black rebel.

Before she learns that he has been hanged, Polly discovers from Jenny that the black pirate was her husband all along. Using her influence as hero / heroine of the colony, Polly begs the native Indians to halt Morano’s execution. The Indians, who now owe a debt to Polly, agree, but the discovery comes too late. Had he been able to remove his disguise, Macheath would live again. But his inability to do so affirms that for Gay, disguises have far more significance than simply the wearing of masks. Apart from the native Indians, Gay’s characters in The Beggar's Opera and Polly—rich and poor—are the same character in myriad disguises. And the essence of that character
is, according to Gay, necessarily corrupt; the morals of one are no different from the morals of the other, however, the injustice, the hypocrisy, lies in the fact that the poor, the transported criminal, the slave, will always be the one who will pay. In Gay's estimation, capitalism protects those who wear the right disguises. Morano's final song before his death, his last words, convey this message:

All crimes are judg'd like fornication;  
While rich we are honest no doubt.  
Fine ladies can keep reputation,  
Poor lasses alone are found out.  
If justice had piercing eyes,  
Like ourselves to look within,  
She'd find power and wealth a disguise  
That shelter the worst of our kin. (138 my emphasis)

Ducat, who marries for treasure, happens to wear the right disguise. His exchange of marriage vows for power and wealth, Gay argues, is the truest and most successful act of piracy in the opera. Although he is described as "the worst of our kin," his economic prosperity positions him securely in the colonial establishment of the British empire. The contrast of the two marriages is a difference of disguise, of wealth. Morano is executed in his disguise, and Jenny will return to her position as a slave, but Ducat and his wife will prosper in their marriage as successful English fortune hunters of the West Indies.

**Endnotes**


6. Morano’s is the only known fictional execution of a pirate in the eighteenth century. Defoe reports on several pirate hangings in A General History of the Pyrates, Manuel Schonhorn ed. (New York: Dover, 1999), but they are presumed to be based on factual accounts. In Crime and Defoe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), Lincoln Faller details the hanging tradition in criminal biography. His remarks may explain the dearth of fictional pirate executions: “Readers and writers of criminal biography could... still find the hanging of thieves bothersome, or at least embarrassing, however well they died. Thus there was a curious tendency over time to ‘forget’ or suppress the moral and religious lessons that might be drawn from thieves’ cases and to de-emphasize what they had come to at last” (17).


11. In 1724 Captain Charles Johnson, whose name is believed to be an alias for Daniel Defoe, published an historical catalogue, in two volumes, of pirates and piracy called A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pyrates, and also their Policies, Discipline, and Government from their first Rise and Settlement in 1717 to the Present Year, with the Adventures of the Two Female Pyrates, Mary Read and Anne Bonny. Piracy, as a form of social, political, and economic resistance to the British empire, and piracy as carried out in the name of the British empire (privateerism) were prevalent during Gay’s lifetime. At home, the outlaw culture of the pirate “nation” was being dissected; pirates were fashionable. Defoe’s historical work was an enormous success. A second edition was published in 1724, a third in
1725, and a fourth in 1726. The first volume was translated into Dutch in 1727, and a German version was printed in 1728. *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Famous Pyrates*, Manuel Shoehorn, ed. (New York: Dover, 1999).


18. "In the same letter [Gay] refers to his next effort, the famous 'Beggar's Opera,' which he declares to be 'already finished.' The first idea was Swift's, and connects itself with the old warfare against Ambrose Philips. 'I believe,' says Swift in a letter to Pope of 30 Aug. 1716, that the pastoral ridicule is not exhausted, and that a porter, footman, or chairman's pastoral might do well. Or, what think you of a Newgate pastoral?'" Quoted in *Dictionary of National Biography*, 966.


21. Williams, 280.

22. In *Country and the City*, 280, Williams informs that by 1775, one third of British commerce was conducted in the colonies.

23. Williams, 279.
24. For a more detailed discussion of the indentured servant, see Appendix A.

25. For a more detailed discussion of buccaneers in the West Indies, see Appendix B.

26. For a more detailed discussion of maroons in the West Indies, see Appendix C.


28. For a more detailed discussion of pirates of color, see Appendix D.


30. Winton, 141.

31. In *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 1, Homi Bhabha states that "What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These 'in between spaces' provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself" (my emphasis).
Chapter 5

Jane Austen's Successful Pirates: Domestic Tranquility and Colonial Authority in *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*

*This Peace will be turning all our rich Navy Officers ashore. They will be wanting a home. Could not be a better time... for having a choice of tenants, very responsible tenants. Many a noble fortune has been made during the war.* Jane Austen, *Persuasion*. (1817)

*Every upstart of fortune, harnessed in the trappings of the mode, presents himself at Bath, as in the very focus of observation—Clerks and factors from the East Indies, loaded with the spoil of plundered provinces; planters; negro-drivers, and hucksters, from our American plantations, enriched they know not how; agents, commissaries, and contractors, who have fattened, in two successive wars, on the blood of the nation; userers, brokers, and jobbers of every kind; men of low birth, and no breeding, have found themselves suddenly translated into a state of affluence, unknown to former ages; and no wonder that their brains should be intoxicated with pride, vanity, and presumption. Knowing no other criterion of greatness, but the ostentation of wealth, they discharge their affluence without taste of conduct, through every channel of the most absurd extravagance; and all of them hurry to Bath, because here, without further qualification, they can mingle with the princes and nobles of the land. Even the wives and daughters of low tradesmen, who, like shovel-nosed sharks, prey upon the blubber of those uncouth whales of fortune, are infected with the same rage of displaying their importance.* Tobias Smollett, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*. (1771)

The remarks of Tobias Smollett's Squire Bramble (above) underscore the drastic impact that war, colonization, and commerce initiated in eighteenth-century English society. Upsetting traditional class distinctions with wealth derived from American plantations and myriad colonial outposts in the East and West Indies and Africa, the new moneyed mercantile middle-class emerges in late eighteenth-century polite English society as an “upstart of fortune.” Smollett's Squire despises the new wave of
commerce; he perceives the affluent middle-class subject of "low birth, and no breeding" as a parasitic "shark," a "whale of fortune," and an "intoxicated" piratical figure "loaded with the spoil of plundered provinces." In Smollett's representation of middle-class identity, the economic individual is condemned for instigating a new way of the world that is based exclusively, as John McVeagh notices, on the "possession of money... money however come by, and people are approved or rejected by society because of their ability or inability to pay." Bramble's perception of the middle class marks a "pessimistic reversal" from the former glory of the middle-class trade merchant as a heroic figure. Where Defoe had seen (in the first quarter of the eighteenth century) the merchant's rise into polite society—his ability to "buy old country estates as [he] merged with the established landed gentry, and building new ones as he sought to extend and rise into it"—as a sign of "national improvement," Bramble now sees the nouveaux riches, both at home and in the colonies, as thieves breaking into a safe. Consistent with John Gay's depiction in Polly of the middle-class colonial merchant/plantation owner as a fortune hunting pirate-like figure, Bramble perceives the infusion of "low" blood into polite society as diluting—even insulting—the taste, manners, and intelligence of the English aristocracy.

In Persuasion. Jane Austen's depiction of naval officers (who have just returned from their successful campaigns against the French in the Napoleonic Wars) protracts the social commentary voiced by Bramble over a quarter of a century earlier. Her successful naval heroes, who arrive back in England well-financed and powerful, ready to insert themselves into polite society as prominent middle-class gentlemen, are an extension of
the same mercantile class that Bramble characterizes as hurrying to Bath in order to "mingle with the princes and nobles of the land." Unlike Bramble, however, Austen views these men as exemplars of a new domestic model, or, as Patricia Meyer Spacks says, "a better moral as well as social order." Austen is determined to correct the representation of the middle class as fortune hunters. During the course of her two novels, Mansfield Park and Persuasion, Austen's naval officers evolve from morally bankrupt characters into prominent and respected members of polite English society. Austen demonstrates that the aristocracy's changing perception of the middle class results from a growing acceptance of wealth derived from the colonial domain. The money making practices of Austen's naval heroes have not changed; however, these men have become socially acceptable pirates. Austen's novels would seem to dissolve the pirate and piracy, but the figure remains alive and well, submerged in her texts.

As a member of the "pseudo gentry," Austen understood that the aristocracy commonly perceived the middle class as a band of fortune hunters; she demonstrates social prejudice in Persuasion when the newly arrived officers are subjected to harsh scrutiny (not unlike Bramble's) from members of the landed gentry. As an example of this contempt, the baronet, Sir Walter Elliot, and Lady Russell perceive naval officers as low, weathered, dangerous, even evil figures. For these landed aristocrats, the naval officer is an interloper in polite society, a marginal pirate-like English subject. The depiction of the naval officer as a piratical figure is even further underscored in Mansfield Park, a novel which is set before the great naval battles surrounding Trafalgar (1805). In that novel William Price becomes a "made" lieutenant, who, dressed proudly
in his new uniform, is admired by his family as he departs Portsmouth Harbor (and the novel), confident that his new position in the navy will later translate into economic and social success in English society. But in *Mansfield Park*, all William Price has is hope; he has not yet arrived as a gentleman in English society. And although Admiral Crawford, who manages William’s commission as a lieutenant, is the most successful (if peripheral) naval officer in the novel, he is depicted as tainted. The admiral’s influence on his own niece and nephew is suspected by Edmund Bertram, for example, as being corrupting; among other potentially malevolent behaviors, he is an adulterer.

Accompanying William Price and Admiral Crawford is a third naval officer, William’s father, a Lieutenant of Marines, who is disabled, alcoholic, nearly destitute, and physically violent. Mr. Price, who is arguably the lowest class representative in Austen’s novels, may not spend money like a pirate, but he has the look and disposition of one. Indeed his bad leg, penchant for drink, slothful demeanor, cantankerous personality, and violent tendencies are stereotypical pirate characteristics. Except for William Price, Austen’s naval officers in *Mansfield Park* are dangerous figures who are identified with buggery, infidelity, alcoholism, crudeness, and violence.

When examined in tandem, however, *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion* chart the progress of the naval officer as he proceeds towards a position of respectability and legitimacy in polite English society. In the former novel, William Price goes to war hopeful of success, and in *Persuasion*, officers like William Price (Frederick Wentworth, for example) return from the Napoleonic Wars, and some of them have been lucky enough to accumulate a fortune in prize-money. Furthermore, in *Persuasion*, naval
officers possess no explicit pirate-like characteristics. Admiral Croft is a respected and successful officer at sea, and correspondingly a sober, faithfully married, even comic gentleman in polite society on land. And Frederick Wentworth, Croft’s protégé, Austen depicts in the process of parlaying his military success into social success; he too has been a respected officer at sea and is well on his way to becoming an honorable gentleman in polite society.

Despite Austen’s differing representations of naval officers in the two novels, the fact is that the navy and naval personnel had not changed that much. As Austen provocatively underscores in both novels, the difference between a successful officer and a destitute officer, a Wentworth and a Mr. Price, is slight indeed. The gentleman officer owes the greater portion of his success to “luck” and connections; Austen notes that nepotism is frequently the means through which sailors become officers. If his sister had not been married to Admiral Croft, for example, Captain Wentworth would not have received his promotion; therefore, he would not have been placed in a position to acquire prize-money in the war. Had this outcome been Wentworth’s fate, he might have become a Mr. Price of Portsmouth, poor, drunk, a bad husband, and a worse father. The sailor must be lucky firstly to get a commission, and secondly to see military action which will enable him to accumulate prize money.

The difference, then, between the pirate-like depiction and perception, of naval officers in Mansfield Park and the early portions of Persuasion, and the heroic depiction that emerges at the close of the latter novel, results precisely from a change within England’s economy. As Bramble so vehemently laments, during the course of the
eighteenth century, England becomes increasingly dependent on its colonies for internal prosperity. Imperial interests in the East and West Indies and Africa transform England's economy into a capitalist-based, globally dependent system. The naval officer, like the clerks, factors, commissaries, contractors, jobbers, and brokers that Bramble points to, have all "fattened" off myriad opportunities in the colonies. However, Bramble fails to stipulate that colonial opportunism has also become increasingly necessary for the English gentry. Sir Thomas Bertram of Mansfield Park, for example, supports and maintains his upper-class lifestyle as a country gentleman through his ownership of a plantation on the West Indian island of Antigua. As Moira Ferguson demonstrates, in order to maintain the tranquility and comfort of their lifestyle as upper-class citizens at Mansfield Park, the Bertrams must possess a sugar plantation in Antigua. The inside (England) becomes increasingly dependent upon the outside (the colonies) for its survival. In Austen's two novels the middle-class positions—merchant / naval officer—overlap with the lower orders of the gentry. The presence of the gentry in the colonial arena begins to legitimize that realm as a viable and respectable location for earning money. Unlike Ducat of Gay's Polly, who is ridiculed for being a pirate-like merchant / plantation owner, both Austen's country gentleman and naval officer wield power and privilege at home because their usefulness and productivity in the colonies yields fortunes that now translate into "good credit."

They are English subjects who achieve domestic tranquility by wielding colonial authority.

The naval officer is a hunter of men, but he is also a hunter of booty. The system of incentives practiced by the Royal Navy, before and after the Napoleonic War,
fashioned the naval officer into a fortune hunter, a capitalist adventurer on the high seas. Therefore, he should not be seen exclusively as a warrior. In addition to his responsibilities in tracking, sacking, plundering, and liquidating enemy ships, the naval officer is exceedingly an opportunist in the colonial arena; he trades and transports commodities and precious metals throughout the empire, and he oversees and enforces England’s colonial policy. The lands of empire become locations where merchants and naval officers could make a fortune. As Raymond Williams argues, myriad members of this expanding middle class “found [their] regular careers abroad, as war and administration in the distant lands became more organized.”

Prior to England’s economic dependence upon the colonial domain, the landed aristocracy perceives both the English merchant and the naval officer as having gained positions within English society that they had no business attaining. The landed gentry finds the ability to climb the social ladder via commercial success—rather than through inheritance—an act of piracy. But as investment in the colonies becomes crucial for survival at home in England, the representation of the naval officer—an English subject who possesses vital colonial knowledge and authority—becomes legitimized; the naval officer is reinvented as useful, respectable, and powerful. English subjects like Sir Thomas Bertram and Captain Wentworth, men who have knowledge of, and interest in, the colonies will prosper and those with none, like Sir Walter Elliot, must “retrench.”

The colonies now contain the necessary sustenance for both the middle-class and the aristocrat. And while members of the gentry continue to extend their landed interests to the colonies, they must share the spoils with myriad members of the middle-class, men
who may have initially been perceived as pirates, but who now, according to Austen, 
look more like the elegant Captain Wentworth.

* * * *

Austen had an adept understanding of the naval profession because her brothers, 
Frank and Charles, both had distinguished careers at sea, each rising to the position of 
admiral. Her brothers' experiences also taught her how difficult it was to advance in the 
naval profession. During Frank's training, his father wrote to him that prudence "will 
teach you that the best chance of rising in life is to make yourself as useful as possible, by 
carefully studying everything that relates to your profession, and distinguishing yourself 
from those of your own rank by a superior proficiency in nautical acquirements."13

Although the possibility did exist for a young man to climb the social ladder (on land) by 
increasing his rating (rank at sea), the instances were extremely rare. Such was the case, 
however, for Jane Austen's brothers who, as the sons of a clergyman, were stationed 
somewhat below the gentry in a middle-class (or "pseudo-gentry") position.14

Fortunately for them, their father had influence. In 1798 Frank was waiting on a 
promotion for the position of Commander of the sloop, Peterel, and Charles, then only 
nineteen, expressed to his father that he too was hungry for a higher appointment. On 
December 18th of that year, Jane writes to her sister, Cassandra, that "I am sorry our 
dear Charles begins to feel the dignity of ill-usage. My father will write to Admiral 
Gambier. He must have already received so much satisfaction from his acquaintance
with Frank, that he will be delighted, I dare say, to have another of the family introduced to
him. 55  And six days later, on December 24th, Jane informs Cassandra that they have just
received a reply from the admiral stating that “I have mentioned to the Board of
Admiralty [Charles’s] wish to be in a frigate, and when the proper opportunity offers, . . .
I hope he will be removed. With regard to your son now in the London [Frank], I am
glad I can give you the assurance that his promotion is likely to take place very soon.”56

Unlike the Austen brothers, in Mansfield Park, William Price’s father has no
“interest,” but William’s good fortune is realized when he is lucky enough to be
introduced to Admiral Crawford. William is “made” as a Lieutenant through this distant
familial connection, and as an aspiring officer, he serves as Austen’s nascent example of
the hopeful sailor who will ultimately transcend the seafarer’s reputation as a fortune
hunting piratical figure. In his new naval uniform, William is perceived by his sister,
Fanny, as “looking and moving all the taller, firmer, and more graceful for it, and with
the happiest smile over his face.” William walks “directly up to Fanny—who, rising from
her seat, looked at him for a moment in speechless admiration” (318). Fanny’s pride in
her sailor brother portends hope; he departs for war in a flash of brilliance.

William’s prospects for success are dramatically superior to those of his father, a
disabled Lieutenant of Marines, “without advantage, fortune, or connections.”57
Although his rank in the navy did correspond to the position of a gentleman in polite
society, Mr. Price of Portsmouth is described by his daughter, Fanny Price, as a
thoroughly base character.58 Fanny’s illustration of her father situates him as a member
of England’s working poor. According to Fanny, her father was “more negligent of his
family, his habits were worse, and his manners coarser . . . He did not want abilities; but
he had no curiosity, and no information beyond his profession; he read only the
newspaper and the navy-list; he talked only of the dock-yard, the harbour, Spithead, and
the Motherbank; he swore and he drank, he was dirty and gross” (222–23). Although he
is obsessed with his profession, his lack of good fortune has prevented him from being
able to provide properly for his family, and in addition to his rogue-like manners and
appearance, he is “not the less equal to company and good liquor” (6).

Complementing Mr. Price’s base qualities is the fact that he is physically violent.
When he discovers in the newspaper, for example, that Sir Thomas Bertram’s daughter,
Maria, has left her husband, Mr. Rushworth, and run into the arms of Henry Crawford,
Price thunders, “I don’t know what Sir Thomas may think of such matters; he may be
too much of a courtier and fine gentleman to like his daughter the less. But by G—if
she belonged to me, I’d give her the rope’s end as long as I could stand over her. A little
flogging for man and woman too, would be the best way of preventing such things”
(363). Mr. Price’s violent response to Maria’s transgression alludes to the navy’s
traditionally violent—often described as sadistic—methods of discipline and
punishment.19 His preference for “flogging” as a means of solving problems removes
Price from the margins of polite society, far from the aristocratic gentleman.

Austen’s representation of Mr. Price demonstrates a pirate-like persona in every
sense except for his inability to make money. His manners, behavior, and violent
disposition add up to a stereotypical image of an unsuccessful pirate. What separates
him from success is simply his inability to heighten his rank in the navy; he has no
connections. The nod of nepotism, as Austen repeatedly confirms, divides a Mr. Price from a Captain Wentworth. Wentworth attains his commission as a captain through his sister’s husband, Admiral Croft; however, Mr. Price is not so lucky. Mrs. Price, whose sister is married to Sir Thomas Bertram, hopes that their cousin will be able to see Price’s advancement through. Bertram, Austen informs, “had interest, which from principle as well as pride, from a general wish of doing right, and a desire of seeing all that were connected with him in situations of respectability, . . . would have been glad to exert for the advantage of Lady Bertram’s sister; but her husband’s profession was such as no interest could reach” (5). During this period, between the American and the Napoleonic Wars, the number of naval appointments were significantly reduced, and the decline, apparently, diminishes Mr. Price’s opportunities for advancement.20

Admiral Crawford, who, in Mansfield Park, resides at the other end of the naval spectrum, is by far the most successful naval officer in the novel; however, even in Crawford’s character, Austen implants a touch of evil, a dangerous unnamed infection. The reader accesses Admiral Crawford predominantly through his niece, Mary Crawford, and her prospective lover, Edmund Bertram. Mary and her brother Henry, who have been raised by the admiral, have apparently been contaminated by his less than upstanding manners and disagreeable lifestyle. Unlike Admiral Croft of Persuasion, whose fidelity in marriage is iron-clad, Admiral Crawford is an adulterer. During a discussion with her brother, Mary tells Henry, who is still living under their uncle’s roof, that he should marry and move out on his own to London in order to escape the admiral’s influence. Pleading with her brother, Mary argues that
the advantage to you of getting away from the Admiral before your manners are hurt by the contagion of his. before you have contracted any of his foolish opinions. or learnt to sit over your dinner, as if it were the best blessing in life!—You are not sensible enough of your gain, for your regard for him has blinded you; but in my estimation your marrying early may be the saving of you. To have seen you grow like the Admiral in a word or deed, look or gesture, would have broken my heart. (244 my emphasis)

Mary’s remarks, that the admiral is inflicted by a “contagion,” and that Henry might “contract” something from his uncle, characterize the officer as socially diseased (Austen perhaps alludes to venereal disease). Mary’s appeal to her brother is desperate; she is convinced that his future behavior will be negatively affected by the admiral’s contaminated essence. And finally, Austen demonstrates that Mary’s fears are quite correct; for, as we have already read in Mr. Price’s newspaper, Henry’s final action in the novel is to run off with the married Mrs. Rushworth.

Paralleling Mary Crawford’s concern about her brother’s exposure to the admiral, Edmund Bertram believes—and fears—that the admiral has already infected Mary herself. During a discussion with Fanny Price about Mary, Edmund confesses:

‘I have been pained by [Mary’s] manner this morning, and cannot get the better of it,’ . . . ‘I know her disposition to be as sweet and faultless as your own, but the influence of her former companions makes her seem, gives to her conversation, to her professed opinions, sometimes a tinge of wrong. She does not think evil, but she speaks it—speaks it in playfulness—and though I know it to be playfulness, it grieves me to the soul.’

‘The effect of education,’ said Fanny gently.

Edmund could not but agree to it. ‘Yes, that uncle and aunt! They have injured the finest mind!’—for
Sometimes, Fanny, I own to you, it does appear more than manner; it appears as if the mind itself was tainted.' (222 my emphasis)

Similar to the way in which Mary assesses her brother’s dangerous environment.

Edmund believes that exposure to the Admiral has inflicted irreversible damage on Mary.
Although the actual pox that infects the admiral is never named, his influence is nonetheless perceived as substantial and evil. The realm of the sailor—both outside and inside society—is perceived as impure and “tainted.”

Mary Crawford affirms that exposure to the admiral has provided her with an inappropriate education when she jokes, during a conversation with Edmund and Fanny, about homosexuality in the navy. Mary sarcastically states that “my home at my uncle’s brought me acquainted with a circle of admirals. Of Rears and Vices, I saw enough. Now, don’t suspect me of a pun, I entreat” (51). As Kathryn Sutherland notes, “Mary Crawford may deny any intention to pun, but her witticism (in fact, a rather filthy joke) draws attention to the Royal Navy’s wartime reputation for homosexual activity.”

Buggery can now be added to the list of base behaviors that Austen connects with sailors in Mansfield Park.

Austen does, however, plant a seed of hope amongst the iniquitous members of the naval profession in the person of Mr. Price’s son, William, who might be judged a bridge between Mansfield Park and Persuasion. William, a midshipman, is initially depicted in the precarious position between his father—an officer who lacks connection—and a “made” officer. And unlike Mary and Henry Crawford, William has
somehow resisted his father's polluting influence. In fact, William, whose tour as a midshipman enables him to see a good deal of the world, inspires Henry Crawford to utter the novel's most positive message about the naval profession. While listening to William's stories about his adventures in the Mediterranean and the West Indies. Henry thinks to himself that he

longed to have been at sea, and seen and done and suffered as much. His heart was warmed, his fancy fired, and he felt the highest respect for a lad who, before he was twenty, had gone through such bodily hardships, and given such proofs of mind. The glory of heroism, of usefulness, of exertion, of endurance, made his own habits of selfish indulgence appear in shameful contrast; and he wished he had been a William Price, distinguishing himself and working his way to fortune and consequence with so much self-respect and happy ardour, instead of what he was.

The wish was rather eager than lasting. (197)

Henry's short-lived admiration for a sailor's "romantic" life fails to account for the fact that there is no "glory of heroism" without promotion. William underscores this fact when he converses with Fanny about the social consequences of not being "made": "I do not know that there would be any good in going to the Assembly, for I might not get a [dance] partner. The Portsmouth girls turn up their noses at anybody who has not a commission. One might as well be nothing as a midshipman. One is nothing indeed. You remember the Gregorys; they are grown up amazing fine girls, but they will hardly speak to me, because Lucy is courted by a lieutenant" (207). Fanny, reaffirming the crucial importance of attaining a commission, tells her brother, "I am sure [Sir Thomas Bertram] will do every thing in his power to get you made. He knows as well as you do, of what consequence it is" (207). Fanny proceeds to instill confidence in her brother,
explaining that his present lack of influence is “no reflection on You; it is no more than what the greatest admirals have all experienced . . . You must try to make up your mind to it as one of the hardships which fall to every sailor’s share—like bad weather and hard living—only with this advantage, that there will be an end to it, that there will come a time when you will have nothing of that sort to endure. When you are a lieutenant!” (207). Fanny’s urging, that “there will be an end to it,” foreshadows the shifting representation—the legitimization—of naval officers in Persuasion.

In the first chapters of Persuasion, Austen reveals a changing of the guard in early nineteenth-century English society, the waxing of the middle class and the waning of a portion of the landed gentry who can no longer afford to reside on their familial estates. Initially, the aristocrats scoff at the suggestion of naval officers moving into their wealthy neighborhoods. Middle-class occupation of these landed estates is perceived as a kind of theft. Austen orchestrates the changing of the guard by juxtaposing the sailor’s need for lodgings with the aristocrat’s need to “retrench” and move to Bath in order to curtail the perpetuation of debt. In the process of enacting this switch, she flashes back eight years, from 1814 to 1806, recalling a time when the naval captain, Frederick Wentworth, spends half a year with his brother in the nearby town of Monkford. During his visit the captain falls in love with, and proposes marriage to, Anne Elliot, the daughter of the novel’s baronet, Sir Walter Elliot, and, although she is in love with the captain, Anne refuses his proposal; she is persuaded by her family,
and in particular her family's "intimate friend," Lady Russell, that the marriage should not take place, that it would be a "degrading alliance."

Lady Russell's perception of the potential alliance between the daughter of a landed gentleman and a naval officer as degrading should be understood as a common eighteenth and early nineteenth-century aristocratic reaction to such an intrusion. She condemns the naval profession by drawing insidious comparisons between the influence, affluence, education, and inheritance of the gentry and the lack thereof in the navy.

Lady Russell laments that Anne Elliot, "with all her claims of birth, beauty, and mind, to throw herself away at nineteen in an engagement with a young man, who had nothing but himself to recommend him, and no hopes of attaining affluence, but in the chances of a most uncertain profession, and no connections to secure even his farther rise in that profession, would be indeed, a throwing away which she grieved to think of!" (19).

Lady Russell's remarks punctuate that the position of the naval officer is considered low indeed. However, her aversion to the marriage belies the fact that she remains deeply insecure about her own title; as the widow of "only a knight"(9), Lady Russell has comparatively low rank in the aristocratic class hierarchy. As Juliet McMaster informs, titles that are attached to the last name are held "by virtue of being married to a baronet or knight; and the lady would lose it if she were married to a plain 'Mr.' In such circles, such things matter."23

Emphasizing Lady Russell's nearly desperate attempt to prevent Anne from marrying beneath her social station, Austen has the aristocrat speak the language of naval engagement in order to underscore that to the gentry, the marriage would be an
act of war: "Anne Elliot, so young; known to so few, to be snatched off by a stranger without alliance or fortune; or rather sunk by him into a state of most wearing, anxious, youth-killing, dependence! It must not be" (19 my emphasis). Austen demonstrates that Lady Russell equates Wentworth’s advances toward Anne with acts of warfare, impressment, and piracy. Anne is perceived symbolically as a naval prize, a ship which Wentworth would track, sack, and plunder, or sink to a lowly position in England’s class hierarchy; the officer would steal Anne and take her down with him. In Wentworth, Lady Russell recognizes nothing more than a stranger, an outsider, an outlaw. She determines, or rather her class determines, that a naval officer has no right to pursue such an alliance, and a marriage between members of such diverse classes could only be consummated if the officer were to steal—snatch—Anne and run. However, her profound fear of the naval officer’s ability to wield such powerful muscle in polite social circles belies the fact that he already has power; Lady Russell’s admission that a naval officer can snatch a baronet’s daughter indicates that his power in society is already extant, or at least emerging.

In addition to perceiving him as the hunter of a landed bride, Lady Russell views Wentworth as a fortune hunter whose only hope for success is founded entirely upon “luck.” Austen informs that, “Captain Wentworth had no fortune. He had been lucky in his profession, but spending freely what had come freely, he realized nothing” (19). The description of a cavalier seaman signifies both a piratical demeanor and a stereotyped drunken sailor. Accordingly, the implication is that Wentworth has no respect for economy (the ability to save money) and that the money he has acquired—that which
has come to him "freely"—has been stolen by him. Indeed the accusations, coming from a family who cannot maintain their country estate, is almost comical. According to the aristocrat, the navy’s practice of winning prize-money is not polite, not necessarily legal. Although Anne views Wentworth’s "confidence, powerful in its own warmth, and bewitching in the wit which often expressed it," as appealing, romantic, and attractive, Lady Russell perceives Wentworth’s "sanguine temper, and fearlessness of mind" as containing "an aggravation of evil. It only added a dangerous character to himself" (19 my emphasis).

Anne’s father, Sir Walter Elliot, who is about to rent his familial estate, Kellynch Hall, to the successful Admiral Croft, also substantially contributes to the perception of the naval officer as a suspicious figure; however, the baronet, whose primary concerns revolve around vanity—how people and things look in high society—takes exception to the officer’s appearance as well as his dubious class status. Sir Walter argues firstly that the profession “bring[s] persons of obscure birth into undue distinction, and rais[es] men of honours which their fathers and grandfathers never dreamt of. . . . A man is in greater danger in the navy of being insulted by the rise of one whose father, his father might disdain to speak to” (14). Sir Walter’s sentiments echo those of Smollett’s Squire Bramble (whose remarks opened this discussion); according to old English tradition, power and privilege must be transmitted from generation to generation through the inheritance of title and wealth, not through commercial or military success. Sir Walter’s disapproval of the naval officer’s rise in polite society matches Bramble’s disdain for the
commercial success of the English merchant. Both factions of the middle-class are therefore perceived as stealing their ways into power and privilege.

Elliot's second objection to the navy relates to the appearance of the officer. The baronet equates the look of a subject with his class position, and accordingly, a life at sea "cuts up a man's youth and vigor most horribly; a sailor grows old sooner than any other man; I have observed it all my life" (14). Elliot trumpets a story about his association with an Admiral Baldwin who is "the most deplorable looking personage you can imagine, his face the color of mahogany, rough and rugged to the last degree, all lines and wrinkles, nine gray hairs of a side, and nothing but a dab of powder at the top" (14). The punch line of his story is that, although the admiral looks as if he is in his sixties, Elliot is amazed to learn this sailor is forty years old. Accelerated aging and roughness of manners indicate, for the aristocrat, that the naval officer is of a lower class status. Additionally, the identification of his skin color as "mahogany"—not quite white—positions the officer, in a racial sense, as a servant. Elliot confirms this opinion when, in anticipation of Admiral Croft's arrival at Kellynch Hall, he imagines with condescension, that the color of Croft's face will be "about as orange as the cuffs and capes of my livery" (16); the color of the officer's face matches the color of the servant's uniform; they are inextricably linked in Elliot's mind. And so, the highest ranking officer in the navy, who has just acquired "a handsome fortune in the war" is now fixed by the baronet as one whose position "speaks [its] own consequence." A naval officer, according to Sir Walter, can never "make a baronet look small" (18). As with Lady Russell, Austen again parodies the self-importance of the gentry. Juliet
McMaster identifies the comic implications of the moment when the baronet “overestimates” his own importance: “Sir Walter Elliot’s obsession with his status and the Baronetage in which it is published is made not only comic but contemptible. (In Sir Walter, Austen anticipates the Victorian social criticism of Carlyle, who characterizes the aristocrat as ‘The Dandy’, obsessed with appearances, and sick with self love.)”

In contrast to these aristocratic perceptions of the naval officer as a pirate-like figure, when Captain Wentworth arrives at the Musgroves’ estate in *Persuasion*, Austen’s description of him confirms that the hope she had formerly invested in William Price (of *Mansfield Park*) is now realized as success in the captain, who appears as an older and wiser version of William. In *Mansfield Park*, William journeys to war with optimism and pride, and in *Persuasion*, Wentworth returns from war a success in mind, body, and fortune. When the unmarried Musgrove daughters first see the captain, they perceive that he “looked and said every thing with such exquisite grace,... their heads were turned by him!—And off they ran, quite as full of glee as of love,... full of Captain Wentworth” (37). The eight years which had passed since his initial courtship with Anne Elliot gave Wentworth “a more glowing, manly, open look, in no respect lessening his personal advantages” (41). And reciprocating the desire that the Miss Musgroves have for him, Wentworth boasts that now that he is ashore, and no longer a hunter of men and money, he will set his sights upon acquiring a wife. Wentworth confesses to his sister that “Any body between fifteen and thirty may have me for the asking. A little beauty, and a few smiles, and a few compliments to the navy, and I am a lost man. Should not this be enough for a sailor, who has had no society among women
to make him nice?" (42). Wentworth now knows that he is a desirable prize. His ironic jovial disposition demonstrates a confidence in his own value within domestic society. He has ventured far from the timidity and insecurity that William Price displays at the prospect of not being able to get a commission, or a partner at the dance.

The perceptions of Sir Walter and Lady Russell aside, Austen has refashioned the officers in *Persuasion* into accepted members of polite society; even more, they are now role models. When the Crofts occupy Kellynch Hall, and the Elliots retrench to Bath, Anne expresses her emphatic approval of her father’s new tenants: “She had in fact so high an opinion of the Crofts, and considered her father so very fortunate in his tenants, felt the parish to be so sure of a good example . . . that however sorry and ashamed for the necessity of the removal, she could not but in conscience feel that they were gone who deserved not to stay, and that Kellynch-Hall had passed into better hands than its owners” (82). Austen’s staged substitution of tenants does not, however, reflect an historical trend; to the contrary, the increase in both rents and the price of land during and after the war rescued numerous early nineteenth-century aristocratic families from ruin. As F. M. L. Thompson states, “There must have been many families, with a century and more of debts behind them, who were reprieved from the sad fate of selling lands by the rise in rents after 1790. For others the same factor, with a rise in the selling price of land, presented a favourable opportunity for effecting sales which had been put off during the slump in the land market.”27 As this historical information underscores, the Elliots’ removal to Bath occurs, not because numerous aristocratic families were forced to sell off their estates, but because Sir Walter, as McMaster argues, “neglects his
Therefore, Austen’s depiction of the reversal of fortunes has much less to do with the gentry than it does with the rise of the middle class’s stock within polite society.

Nonetheless, Austen’s illustration of the naval officer’s wartime money making practices remains somewhat shady. For example, Austen has Louisa indicate that Wentworth will arrive at the Musgroves’ estate as soon as he is “paid-off.” The ambiguous term sounds like an activity connected with gaming. The sailor, in this sense, cashes in his chips and quickly comes into possession of the considerable fortune of £25,000. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the system of incentives in the English navy made the sacking of enemy vessels look like acts of piracy because the victors (the successful officers) were handsomely compensated for their captures. The first of two ways in which officers could attain money in the war was to receive “Prize Bounty,” or “Head-Money,” as it was referred to, for the capture of an enemy ship. As Michael Lewis reports in *A Social History of the Navy, 1793–1815*, money was paid to naval personnel by the English government for the capture or destruction of enemy vessels. The navy devised a system whereby the members of a victorious English ship would receive £5 for each enemy crew member (Head) captured, amounting to £3,000 for the average man-of-war. Although prize-money was distributed to all crew members, captains and admirals received the lion’s share of the profit. However, since enemy war ships were worth far more to the navy intact than at the bottom of the sea, in addition to Head-Money, the British government would also purchase the enemy vessels from a commander if he could tow his prize back into an English port. Lewis informs
that captains and admirals, in particular, were well paid for this exchange, "for skimping here would (or might) actually discourage the capture of enemy ships." 31

The prize system, however, was problematic in this regard: despite the amount of prize-money that was paid for the capture of enemy men-of-war, merchant ships were always worth considerably more to a captain. So much so that the prize system—which rewarded captains exclusively for the capture of ships-of-war—was instituted just prior to the Napoleonic Wars to deter captains from freelancing for profit, rather than defending English territory. In Lewis’s description of the problem, he finds the naval officer as pirate-like, a fortune hunter:

this whole business of ‘Prize’, as an inducement to make men serve in the Navy, had in itself some dangerous implications. Since chasing after enemy merchantmen was . . . so very profitable . . . [it was] conceivable that Captains, and good ones too, might sometimes be tempted to make this their primary occupation? Yet, clearly, the principle target of a warship in wartime should be the warships of the enemy. . . . the ‘cruiser’ Captain was not only tempted: he was apt to fall, since he cruised for the most part alone, or in the company with other Captains beset with the same temptations. After all, who was to know if, from time to time, he put profit before patriotism, chasing enemy trade when he should have been protecting [England’s] . . . Nor would his subordinates be in the least likely to give him away—their interests coincided too closely with his own. 32

Although not technically defining piracy, Lewis’s description of this practice is dangerously close. Putting “profit before patriotism,” the captain of an errant English naval vessel is, in a sense, at war for money. These naval captains, like pirates, view trade waters as promising locations for making a fortune, and the defenseless merchant
vessels become easy prey for the captain who places money before duty. Though the prize system prevented much of this illegal activity during the Napoleonic Wars, Lewis stipulates that it was by no means eliminated:

As Admiral [Nelson] knew only too well, ‘lack of frigates’ was the constant lament of Commanders-in-Chief. . . . why else did the Admirals in command always have to complain that their frigates, sent to reconnoiter this place or that, invariably exceeded the time allowed for the operation? There were certainly some Captains who never put Prize before Duty, but it is much to be feared that . . . most of them succumbed to the lure: for not all officers were dedicated men like Nelson.33

In *Persuasion*, Austen does not specify whether or not Captain Wentworth operated in a piratical manner during his lucrative service in the Napoleonic Wars, and the goal of this discussion is not to prove that Wentworth was a dishonest captain. Rather, Lewis’s provocative information simply brings to light the environment in which naval officers like Wentworth operated during the war. Not only were these piratical practices commonly carried out, but as well, knowledge of these practices was commonly known; naval officers generally understood, much to the regret of some, that members of the higher ranks behaved in a pirate-like manner. And as we have seen in Austen’s novels, members of polite society also associate the naval officer with pirate-like behavior. Instead of suspecting him of sacking a stray merchant vessel, however, Lady Russell suspects Wentworth of attempting to steal Anne Elliot; and Admiral Crawford of *Mansfield Park* is suspected by Fanny and Edmund of stealing another man’s wife. Piratical acts on the high seas are depicted by Austen as social acts of
piracy. However, the ignominy associated with the officer diminishes as the value of his stock increases. Without monetary success at sea, Wentworth and Croft would not be invited into polite society on land. Although Austen does not detail exactly how these men made their fortunes at sea, she does emphasize the lucrative aspects of their adventures.

Austen’s description of Wentworth’s action in the war is characterized by his “luck” at attaining a commission, his accumulation of prize-money, and his cavalier, almost nonchalant, attitude about his “adventures.” During his dinner at the Musgroves, with Anne and the Crofts in attendance, Wentworth refers to his prize-gathering experiences as an “entertainment,” a “lovely cruise.” He throws caution to the wind as he relates his experiences. During his first tour of duty in the ship *Asp*, he explains,

> I knew that we should either go to the bottom together, or that [the *Asp*] would be the making of me; and I never had two days of foul weather all the time I was at sea in her; and after taking privateers enough to be entertaining, I had the good luck, in my passage home the next autumn, to fall in with the very frigate I wanted. I brought her into Plymouth; and here was another instance of luck. We had not been six hours in the Sound, when a gale came on, which lasted four days and nights, and which would have done for poor old *Asp*. . . . four-and-twenty hours later, and I should only have been a gallant Captain Wentworth, in a small paragraph at the corner of the newspapers; and being lost in only a sloop, nobody would have thought about me. (44 my emphasis)

Wentworth straddles the fine line between fame and failure, fortune and poverty; he is not bred into polite society, but as his speech underscores (and as he himself well knows) several “instances of luck” correct his fate. Had he spent an extra day at sea, he
would have been “lost in only a sloop,” his heroics reduced to a few drops of ink in the corner of a newspaper. But instead, the Asp is the “making” of Captain Wentworth. Favorable weather, lucrative prizes, the ability of an old ship to stay afloat, and the tenacity of a gallant and extremely lucky captain all converge in a heroic moment at sea to make a wealthy hero of Wentworth on land.

As Wentworth continues during the dinner conversation, he contrasts his acknowledgment of his own luck with his comrade, Harville’s, lack of luck. And when he summarizes his experiences during his next tour of duty in the ship Laconia. Austen has Wentworth foreground his luck at making money, rather than his duty defending his country at war, a detail which underscores the captain’s priorities:

Ah! *Those were pleasant days when I had the Laconia!* *How fast I made money in her.*—A friend of mine, and I, had such a lovely cruise together off the western island.—Poor Harville, sister! You know how much he wanted money—worse than myself. He had a wife.—Excellent fellow! I shall never forget his happiness. He felt it all, so much for her sake.—I wished for him again the next summer, when *I had still the same luck in the Mediterranean.* (45 my emphasis)

Wentworth’s “luck,” and contrasting lament for Harville, emphasize the fortune-hunting incentive which defines his motivation for participating in the navy. Wentworth does not speak of duty to country; he boasts exclusively of personal gain. And he is not so much a hero to the Miss Musgroves for his valor and service in the war as he is a hero for the fortune he has made during that service. Charles Musgrove, who entertains hopes that Wentworth will propose marriage to either of his sisters, Mary or Louisa, elucidates this
point when he states that he "had never seen a pleasanter man in his life; and from what
he had once heard Captain Wentworth himself say, was very sure that he had not made
less than twenty thousand pounds in the war" (50 my emphasis). Wentworth defines
himself in terms of his monetary gain in the war, and the characters of the class to which
he is moving respond to him in like fashion.

In addition to attaining wealth through the acquisition of prize-money, naval admiral
and captains also profit during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth
centuries from a mercantile inducement, *Freight-money*, "a constant source of income to
those whom it touched; . . . often greater than Pay and Allowances; sometimes, even,
greater than *Prize* itself."34 Beginning in the seventeenth century, freight-money was
paid solely to captains and admirals of naval vessels for transporting non-naval goods for
both kings and merchants. In fact, naval officers were routinely called upon to "actually
and actively trade."35 The practice was considered one of the officer's most important
duties, and one of the most lucrative. During the Napoleonic Wars, however, the
practice was altered: while captains and admirals still took part in the transportation of
"Freight," "it had been narrowed down almost entirely to the carriage of one particular
type of goods—precious metals, or, to use the technical term, "Treasure.""36 No laws
officially governed the transportation of treasure; custom, however, dictated that the
captain of the ship which functioned as the mule, would receive two-thirds of the
payment by the owner of the precious metals, and the flag-officer (admiral) would take
the remaining third for overseeing the venture. No one but captains and admirals
participated in the receipt of funds for this activity.
The transportation of treasure continues to inform the naval officer as a fortune hunting pirate-like figure. Although he does not steal the gold, and he does not ultimately end up with the entire treasure-chest of booty, his participation in this nefarious activity does characterize his movements and motivations as suspicious. The pursuit of merchant bounty coupled with the transportation of treasure link the naval officer with the trade merchant adventurer, whose international business interests define him as a subject of the English empire. The naval profession provides the officer with both precise knowledge of the expanding empire, and an increasing sense of colonial authority. A captain might transport great sums of treasure from Manilla to Macao, or freelancing for the East India Company, he might work between the locations of Calcutta and Madras. Captains and admirals understood the circulatory system of world trade, and increasingly they established themselves in useful positions of authority within that system.

This was, in fact, the case for Austen’s brother Frank. In his biography of Jane Austen, Park Honan documents that Frank Austen, who had an impeccable naval record (and eventually climbed to the rank of Admiral of the Fleet), had himself participated in the transportation of “Freight,” and in so doing, he significantly helped his career. Honan informs that

Frank sailed on the Perseverance with secret and extraordinary directions from [Warren] Hasting’s friends in the East India Company to carry out a mission beyond naval orders. He had to jump his ship at Madras. Frank later petitioned the Company for expenses home. At the risk of his career and if successful to his ‘making’, since Company directors influenced naval promotions, Frank was to become
involved in profitable shipments of silver. One of his tasks later was to carry ‘93 chests’ from China to Madras and to the East India agents John and Edward Iggulden at Deal; the chests held an estimated 470,000 dollars worth of silver bullion of no concern to the Navy.\textsuperscript{37}

Frank Austen is just one example of a multitude of captains and admirals who climbed the ranks in the naval profession by participating in myriad “legal” and “illegal” colonial endeavors. And like Austen’s brother, Wentworth and Croft, who have just returned from the war, should not be viewed exclusively as successful domestic subjects; they possess authority both within polite society and throughout the colonial arena. Or rather, they possess authority within polite society \textit{because} they possess authority throughout the colonial arena.

By the early nineteenth century, colonial fortune hunting practices become “legitimate” enterprises, and the once pirate-like trade merchants, plantation owners, and naval officers who do “business” in the colonial realm are increasingly viewed as respectable bread-winning British subjects. As Copeland argues, “Credit, good credit that is, becomes the talisman for future expectations” in \textit{Persuasion}.\textsuperscript{38} Earning money is what counts; where the money comes from is less important. Austen’s key figure, the character who demonstrates this shift in the perception of money derived from the colonial realm, is Sir Thomas Bertram of \textit{Mansfield Park}. During the eighteenth century, the colonial plantation owner served as a stock figure of ridicule in drama, poetry, and fiction.\textsuperscript{39} By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, however, Austen transforms the figure into a “benevolent reforming landowner.”\textsuperscript{40} Bertram’s
dignified and respected efforts to derive from the colonies the sustenance that is needed to maintain his country estate in England evidences England’s shifting perception of the colonial realm as a respectable place of business. Now, both colonial/country gentlemen and naval officers are subjects who, as Edward Said states, “synchronize domestic with international authority.” Like Bertram, who “requires overseas sustenance” for the maintenance of his English country estate, Mansfield Park, the naval officer, who understands and participates in trade between the colonies and England, wields authority at home that is rooted outside of England. The gentry’s participation in the colonial experience validates the colonial practices of myriad members of the middle-class, including these naval officers.

During a tour in the East Indies, Frank Austen observes, records, and oversees the pirate-like nature of European capitalists who import a continuous stream of treasure from India into Europe. On the island of St. Helena, Frank Austen reports that the inhabitants, who are “chiefly English, or of English descent” participate as “traders” in the trafficking of goods and wealth. On the island, which serves as an intermediary location for re-supplying ships on their journeys home,

Every person who is above the rank of common soldier is in some shape or other a trader. A few acres of ground laid out in a meadow, or garden ground, will seldom fail to yield as much produce in the year as would purchase the fee-simple of an equal quantity in England, and this from the extravagant price which the wants of the homeward bound India ships (whose captains and passengers rolling in wealth, and accustomed to profusion, must have supplies cost what they may) enable the islanders to affix to every article they raise. To such an extent had this cause
Frank Austen’s adept observations of the colonial economy underscore both the fortune hunting nature of the entire process, and his participation in it. Wealthy European capitalists participate in looting India of its precious metals, jewels, artifacts, and resources; naval officers both transport the treasure, as Frank Austen did, and manage the process; and, as Frank Austen’s account elucidates, soldiers, and presumably naval personnel, along with a hybrid mixture of English subjects, occupy intermediary locations in order to provide for, and exploit, passengers en route from the colonies to England. This profit taking, by myriad subjects, supports both the landed aristocracy at home, and creates a powerful middle-class of multiple identities. English global expansion enables the Bertrams to maintain their aristocratic lifestyle at Mansfield Park, however, the process is also responsible for making gentlemen out of a multitude of English subjects.

At the conclusion of Mansfield Park, Sir Thomas Bertram’s son, Tom, who, “became what he ought to be, useful to his father” (381), will now make the journey to Antigua to manage his family’s interests outside of England in the colonies. Tom represents a new generation of English colonial rule. And likewise, at the conclusion of Persuasion, Captain Wentworth’s nascent ability to wield interest of his own in matters of colonial management, negotiation, and administration, corresponds to Tom’s removal to the West Indies. Wentworth exercises his influence and authority in the colonies
when he assists Mrs. Smith in regaining her West Indian property. His interest in the colonies, coupled with his marriage to Anne Elliot, symbolizes the legitimization—the arrival—of the naval officer as a subject who has the power to act in domestic and international affairs, an accepted figure within polite society and throughout the English empire.

As Austen inserts Wentworth into polite society, she simultaneously displaces the aristocrat, William Elliot (Sir Walter’s heir), from both domestic affairs (failure to marry Anne), and international affairs (his inability to act for Mrs. Smith in the West Indies). In a move which symbolizes the burial of old England and the emergence of a new capitalist England, Austen contrasts the deceptions enacted by William Elliot—who is pirate-like, in his own right, for the designs he has on Anne’s money and family title—with Captain Wentworth, who, through his service in the war, and his interest in international matters, shows up for his marriage with his own substantial fortune.43

Austen depicts the reversal of fortunes in polite society as a military showdown by employing the language of naval engagement. She orchestrates the emergence of Captain Wentworth as being achieved through a process of naval conquest. Her use of naval terminology creates a sense of Wentworth (through Austen’s own observations) as a heroic piratical / naval / adventure figure; on a deeper level, however, Austen demonstrates that the class war is a kind of revolution by supplanting the language of gentility with the language of conflict and war.

Two battles in the final pages of the novel depict Wentworth as the victor in his struggle to gain access to polite society. The first follows his confession of love (in the
form of a covertly delivered letter) to Anne which, Austen notes, produces a "revolution" in Anne (157). In closing his letter, Wentworth tells Anne that he will "follow [her] party," and accordingly, he tracks her down on Union Street where she is being accompanied home by Charles Musgrove who is "sacrificing an engagement at a gunsmith's to be of use to [Anne]" (159). Since Charles is without his weapon, he has no defense against Wentworth who approaches the pair with "a quicker step behind." As Wentworth overtakes Charles and Anne, and maneuvers directly to Anne's side, Austen indicates that Charles is "struck by a sudden thought." Charles requests that Wentworth "take [his] place, and give Anne [his] arm to her father's door" so that he may continue on his journey to visit the gunsmith (160 my emphasis). Charles surrenders Anne to Captain Wentworth in "public view." Wentworth has won his prize in Anne Elliot, and he has done so for all the polite world of Bath to witness; his action is now perceived as legitimate.

The second instance of naval engagement demonstrates Wentworth's victory over William Elliot, who had planned to marry Anne. Austen initiates her use of nautical language when she has Mrs. Smith explain that Anne's peace "will not be shipwrecked" by her intended marriage to William Elliot; Anne tentatively responds that her cousin, William, "seems to have a calm, decided temper, not at all open to dangerous impressions" (130 my emphasis). After William learns of Anne and Wentworth's marital plans, however, the information strikes him like a surprise attack from an enemy vessel at sea: "The news of his cousin Anne's engagement burst on Mr. Elliot most unexpectedly. It deranged his best plan of domestic happiness." And consequently he
“withdraw[s],” and “unfounded hopes [are] sunk with him” (166 my emphasis).

Wentworth has figuratively defeated William Elliot in battle. And with William go the suspicions and perceptions of the naval officer’s profession and money making practices as dubious, so that now, as Austen triumphantly indicates, “Captain Wentworth, with five-and-twenty thousand pounds, and as high in his profession as merit and activity could place him, was no longer nobody. He was now esteemed quite worthy to address the daughter of a foolish, spendthrift baronet, who had not had principle or sense enough to maintain himself in the situation in which Providence had placed him” (165). And thus, “with a very good grace,” Sir Walter “inserts” Wentworth and Anne’s marriage in the “volume of honour,” the Baronetage.

Austen punctuates Wentworth’s final victory in the novel by disclosing the unscrupulous deeds of Sir Walter and William Elliot. The background of this portion of the plot is supplied by Mrs. Smith: Anne learns that Mrs. Smith and her deceased husband had, through their association with Sir Walter, incurred debt well beyond their means. After realizing their poverty, Mr. And Mrs. Smith also learn that they had been completely forgotten by Sir Walter. Anne also discovers that Mrs. Smith and her husband had owned a piece of property in the West Indies “which had been for many years under a sort of sequestration for the payment of its own encumbrances,” and that the property “might be recoverable by proper measures; and this property, though not large, would be enough to make her comparatively rich. But there was nobody to stir in it” (139). Mrs. Smith admits that she had initially approved of Anne’s consideration of a marriage to William Elliot because she hoped that if they did marry, Mrs. Smith could
convince William, through Anne, to act on her behalf in regaining her West Indian property. Mrs. Smith describes her unfortunate position: "Mr. Elliot [Sir Walter] would do nothing, and she could do nothing herself. . . . she had no natural connexions to assist her even with their counsel, and she could not afford to purchase the assistance of the law. This was a cruel aggravation of actually streightened means. To feel that she ought to be in better circumstances, that a little trouble in the right place might do it" (139–40).

Wentworth’s ability to act for Mrs. Smith underscores his—and the middle class’s—value as an imperial English subject, both an exemplary domestic subject and an international administrator. At the close of the novel, Austen paints Wentworth (following his marriage to Anne) as morally sound, bold, brave, and forceful, one who is now able to accomplish an international act of negotiation that the aristocracy will not—perhaps cannot—touch. Wentworth repairs the damage that Mrs. Smith suffers at the hands of reckless and wasteful aristocrats. Affording Wentworth an armory of accolades, Austen states that Mrs. Smith “was their earliest visitor in their settled life; and Captain Wentworth, by putting her in the way of recovering her husband’s property in the West Indies; by writing for her, acting for her and seeing her through all the petty difficulties of the case, with all the activity and exertion of a fearless man and a determined friend, fully requited the services which she had rendered, or ever meant to render, to his wife” (167). Austen describes Wentworth’s behavior with a profusion of active verbs—recovering, writing, acting, seeing. Wentworth is not merely tolerated in polite society; he boldly participates, not only for his own good, but now for the good of
others as well. And the result of his acting for Mrs. Smith is that “her enjoyments were not spoiled by this improvement of income, with some improvement of health, and the acquisition of such friends to be often with” (167). The capital-centered Captain Wentworth of the early portion of the novel evolves into a thoroughly model English domestic subject, generous and powerful.

* * * *

In her two novels, *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*, Austen stages the naval officer’s evolution from the pirate-like—*not quite white*—suspect subject to the legitimate defender of imperial England. The change occurs by virtue of a growing acceptance and dependence upon production from England’s colonies. During the eighteenth century, members of the landed aristocracy could scoff at the naval officer and the merchant class—those investing in and occupying the colonial frontiers. By the early nineteenth century, as Austen demonstrates through the Bertram’s dependence (outside England) on a West Indian sugar plantation to maintain their country estate inside England, even the aristocracy must invest in colonial expansion in order to survive as upper class citizens. The gentry’s acceptance of the colonies as a legitimate and necessary location for enterprise likewise legitimizes middle-class participation in colonial endeavors. Colonial plantation owners had, in the eighteenth century, been aligned with the middle-class; now Tom Bertram will now join their ranks. And the
consequence of failing to participate in the colonial experience is depicted by Austen when the Elliots, who can no longer afford to reside on their landed familial estate, must retrench by retiring to Bath.

The naval officer’s evolution from dubious to legitimate subject results precisely because he capitalizes on war and becomes, in a imperial sense, useful to England in myriad international matters. Croft punctuates this point when he wishes for the “good luck to live to another war” (47); war is profitable. The naval officer does not change; his country does. And now that England is dependent upon external plunder in order to maintain internal comfort, the naval officer—once identified as a pirate—is now regarded as a champion of empire. In his analysis of the inside and outside of Mansfield Park, Said states that Austen, through her representation of Sir Thomas Bertram, “synchronizes domestic with international authority, making it plain that the values associated with such higher things as ordination, law, and propriety must be grounded firmly in actual rule and possession of territory. [Austen] sees clearly that to hold and rule Mansfield Park is to hold and rule an imperial estate in close, not to say inevitable association with it. What assumes the domestic tranquility and attractive harmony of one is the productivity and regulated discipline of the other.”44 Austen’s conclusion of Persuasion echoes the inside / outside interdependence which Said and Ferguson locate so provocatively in Mansfield Park. Wentworth provides Anne with a complete sense of domestic tranquility (inside) by virtue of his “productivity and regulated discipline” (outside) in the imperial domain. Although there may be a “tax of quick alarm to pay” for belonging to the navy, the payment is no longer one of class discrimination. Like
Tom Bertram, Wentworth is a member of a new generation of imperial subjects who no longer define “landed” as possessing land and authority at home. The country gentleman has evolved into the colonial gentleman, and emerging in the transition is a naval officer who—although every bit as piratical as his predecessors—is perceived as admirable, virtuous, and now rich, the gallant Captain Wentworth.

Endnotes


4. For a more detailed discussion of John Gay’s *Polly*, see chapter 3 of this dissertation.


10. In “Mansfield Park: Slavery, Colonialism, and Gender,” *Oxford Literary Review* 15 (1991): 118–139, Moira Ferguson argues that in Austen’s novel, “gender relations at home parallel and echo traditional relationships of power between the colonists and colonized peoples: European women visibly signify the most egregiously and repressed of the text—African-Caribbeans themselves. They mark silent African-Caribbean rebels as well as their own disenfranchisement, class and gender victimization.” In *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1993), 80–97, Edward Said also discusses Sir Thomas Bertram’s plantation in Antigua, arguing that Austen is naive, even complacent, about the country gentleman’s position as a slave owner. In “Jane Austen and Edward Said: Gender, Culture, and Imperialism,” *Critical Inquiry* 21 (summer 1995), Susan Fraiman criticizes Said for not acknowledging various essays (Ferguson included) on Bertram that precede his own. Fraiman argues that Said’s “typing of Austen” is symptomatic of a more general gender politics underlying his postcolonial project (807). Rather than enter this debate, I posit that Sir Thomas’s plantation in the West Indies evidences that by the late eighteenth century, the colonial domain is perceived (and utilized) by the gentry as an acceptable location for earning money. As Ferguson mentions, Austen’s depiction of Sir Thomas as a “benevolent, reforming land-owner” is new. Throughout the eighteenth century, plantation owners were represented in literature as “stock figures of ridicule.” The perception of the colonies as a location for legitimate employment directly affects the manner in which naval officers (and the middle-class) are perceived; in Austen’s novels they become “respectable” members of polite society. Also see Wylie Sypher, “The West-Indian as a ‘Character’ in the Eighteenth Century,” *Studies in Philology*, vol. 36 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1939), 504–09.

11. In his chapter, “Money,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Edward Copeland states that “*Persuasion* turns to credit as the issue that opens the economy, but with a spin that sets the topic apart from the compulsive debtors . . . found in Austen’s early works. Austen sends her two old style debtors in this novel, Sir Walter Elliot and his daughter Elizabeth, to Bath for an early, embalmed retirement. Credit, good credit that is, becomes the talisman for future expectations in *Persuasion*” (143).


14. In her chapter, “Class,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Juliet McMaster states that the navy “is the profession Austen favours next after the clergy[,] . . . she uses it as the model of a system of promotion by merit, to contrast with the old-world system of heredity” (121). In his
chapter “Money,” (from the same work) Edward Copeland states that “It may surprise some readers to know that Jane Austen does not write as a member of the landed gentry . . . but as a member of a somewhat humbler rank that the historian David Spring calls the ‘pseudo-gentry’; that is a group of upper professional families living in the country—clergymen or barristers, for example, or officers in the army and navy, retired rentiers, great merchants—allied by kinship and social ties, and by social aspirations as well, to their landed-gentry neighbours, but different in an essential economic condition: they do not themselves possess the power and wealth invested in the ownership of land, but depend upon earned incomes” (132). Also see David Spring, “Interpreters of Jane Austen’s Social World: Literary Critics and Historians,” Jane Austen: New Perspectives, ed., Janet Todd (New York and London: Holmes and Meier, 1983), 53–72.

15. Hubback, 48.

16. Ibid, 49.

17. In The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy (New York: W. W. Norton, 1986), N. A. M. Rogers describes the Marines as a detachment “with their own officer or officers. They were taught to handle a musket, and expected to fight ashore if landing parties were needed, but they were certainly as ill-trained as the average British foot-soldier of the day. Although not put in watches, and naturally not seamen, marines were expected to help with the work of the ship when required, usually in pulling and hauling, or waling round the capstan to raise the anchor. No marine could be ordered to work aloft, but they were encouraged to learn seamanship and some left the core to become able seamen, earning not only higher pay but a much higher social standing aboard ship” (28). Michael Lewis, in A Social History of the Navy, 1793–1815, London: George Allen & Unwin LTD, 1960, adds that officers in the marines (referred to after 1802 as the “Royal Marines”) were, in fact, commissioned sea officers who where likewise, “officers and gentlemen” (24).

18. In “The Boundaries of Mansfield Park,” Representations 7 (1984): 13–152, Ruth Bernard Yeazell describes Fanny’s perception of Portsmouth as “stained and polluted.” Yeazell states that “From the walls marked by the oil of her father’s head to the unclean utensils on the table marred by her brothers, the motes in the milk and the greasy bread, Austen’s heroine sees her home as stained and polluted. Fanny may have been too long pampered at Mansfield Park, or Austen may have been tempted to indulge in some conventional disparagement of town life. But neither explanation accounts for the intensity of this consciousness of dirt” (13).

19. For a detailed account of discipline in the English navy during the Napoleonic Wars, see William Robinson, Jack Nastyface: Memoirs of a Seaman (London: Wayland, 1973), 138–151. Robinson informs that “Any person who has been on board a ship of war, must be aware that discipline and subordination is necessary, but the extent to which
cruelty was carried on under the name of discipline, on board many ships during the late war [Napoleonic War], is not generally known, nor will the British public believe that any body of men would submit to such marks of degradation as they were compelled to undergo” (138). Robinson describes various naval punishments including: flogging through the fleet, running the gauntlet, flogging at the gangway or on the quarter-deck, starting, and gagging.

20. In her textual note in Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park* (London: Penguin, 1996), 391, Kathryn Sutherland states that “The American War had ended in 1783 and the war with Revolutionary France began in 1793. During the intervening ten years, so vital to Lieutenant Price’s career, Prime Minister Pitt was not only doing little to build up British seapower or naval leadership but he was actually diminishing it: 110,000 sailors in 1783 and only 16,000 in 1793. When later, during the Napoleonic War and at a high point in British naval fortunes, Sir Thomas doubts whether he has influence to secure a commission for William Price[;]... this is perhaps a sign of how far his own ‘interest’ and importance have declined in the intervening years.”


22. Emphasizing Austen’s intention to redefine the naval officer as a respectable member of polite English society, Edward Copeland in his chapter “Money,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 144, states that “it is as if Austen has singlehandedly revised the economic priorities of her society: a higher credit line for the pseudo-gentry Wentworths, and a lower one for the baronet Elliots.”


24. During the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries, impressment was routinely practiced in order to man naval ships-of-war. Press-gangs received a bounty for each pressed man that they delivered. Unwilling recruits were rounded up on the streets and in bars, by force if necessary, and carried away to the boats. In *Memoirs of a Seaman,* William Robinson refers to the press-gang as “body snatchers,” “land-sharks,” “men stealers,” and “bloodhounds.” Robinson describes his own experience with the press as follows:

I had a six days liberty ticket, with which, and two shillings and nine-pence in my pocket, I was resolved to go to London; I landed at Gosport, and proceeded on my road to
the boundary of the town, where the soldiers stopt me; but
after showing them my liberty ticket . . . I was allowed to go
on. I bent my course forward until I reached Fareham, and
being aware that a press-gang was lurking about the
neighborhood, I felt very much inclined to give them a little
trouble: I had nearly gone through the town unobserved by
them; but at length the alarm was given, that a sailor was
making good his way in full sail towards London; when two
members of that worthless set of body snatchers set out in
pursuit . . . I walked sharply on; they commenced running,
. . . but supposing I was a prize, one of them grappled me
on the starboard, and the other on the larboard side, by the
collar . . . demanding the name of the ship I belonged to,
when on coolly shewing them my liberty ticket, they
showered a broadside of curses on me for giving them such
a run . . . After this, however, I had to contend with the
land-sharks; for, on my arrival at Alton, I was stopped by a
party of soldiers, to whose inspection I had again to exhibit
my ticket of leave; and thus, for thirty miles from the sea­
port, was a poor seaman hunted by this detestable set, who
are constantly watching, in the bye lanes and fields, to
intercept any seaman who may be passing that way; the
inducement held out to these men stealers is five pounds for
each seaman they may capture; and thus many a poor fellow
is hunted by those bloodhounds, who chase them with
greater eagerness than the huntsman pursues the fox.

(66–69)

Also see J. S. Bromley, ed., The Manning of the Royal Navy: Selected Public
Pamphlets, 1693–1873 (London: Navy Records Society, 1974); and Michael Lewis, A

25. In Location of Culture (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), chapter 4, Homi
Bhaba defines the “not quite / not white” colonial subject as one who mimics the
colonizer, one who is “almost the same, but not quite.” He uses the phrase to talk about
“natives” who are educated, “civilized,” and therefore, no longer “not white.” I modify
Bhaba’s phrasing as “not quite white” to articulate a kind of inbetween space that the
naval officer occupies in the English class hierarchy. His status is emerging, and he may
be rich, but according to the gentry, his weathered and tanned skin marks and reduces his
status to that of a servant.

Cambridge University Press, 1997), 116. McMaster defines a baronetcy as “an inherited
title, passed down from father to son,” but it is the lowest of the gentry’s inherited titles, ranking just above a knighthood, which McMaster notes is not hereditary. Also see F. M. L. Thompson, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), chapter 5.


30. Lewis notes that before 1808, naval captains received three-eighths of the prize money, and after that year, their take was reduced to one-quarter, (318).

31. Ibid, 332.

32. Ibid, 331 (my emphasis).

33. Ibid, 332 (my emphasis).

34. Ibid, 333.

35. Ibid, 333.

36. Ibid, 334.


40. In “*Mansfield Park*: Slavery, Colonialism, and Gender,” Moira Ferguson argues that “In order to stage a future society peaceably perpetuating British rule, Jane Austen transforms Sir Thomas Bertram of Mansfield Park—who is also a plantation-owner in Antigua—from a characteristically imperious ‘West Indian’ planter—stock figure of ridicule in contemporary drama, poetry and novels—into a benevolent, reforming land­owner” (118). I view Austen’s transformation of the plantation owner from a figure of ridicule into a “benevolent, reforming landowner” as a demonstration of the legitimization of the colonial realm as a place to earn respectable income. The plantation owner / trade merchant / naval officer of the colonies remains a fortune hunter, a pirate-
like persona; however, the money that he earns in the colonies is now valued as respectable in polite society. For a more detailed discussion of the eighteenth-century West Indian plantation owner as a pirate like figure of ridicule, see chapter 3 of this dissertation. Also see Wylie Sypher, "The West Indian as a 'Character' in the Eighteenth Century."

41. Said, 87.

42. Hubback, 192–93.

43. Mrs. Smith reveals to Anne that William Elliot "had one object in view—to make his fortune, and by a rather quicker process than the law. He was determined to make it by marriage" (133).

44. Said, 87.
Chapter 6
Summary and Conclusions

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* sparked my inspiration for writing *Successful Pirates and Capitalist Fantasies*. In his prefatory Note to his novella, Conrad observes that “curious men go prying into all sorts of places (where they have no business) and come out of them with all kinds of spoil.” That the novella itself is a “spoil [he] brought out from the centre of Africa where, really, [he] had no sort of business,” started me thinking about how acts of plundering—doing “business”—in the colonial realm for myriad kinds of treasure (including literature)—are actually acts of piracy, and how employees of empire are a kind of pirate. By 1899, Conrad could equate the actions of European colonists with those of the pirate; the pirate functions as an accurate metaphor for the colonial ambitions of empire. Conrad's observations in Africa—along with his personal actions—re-produce the pirate figure in his own imagination as the conqueror within; the colonists are a band of “sordid buccaneers” who “tear treasure out of the bowels of the land . . . with no more moral purpose at the back of it than there is in burglars breaking into a safe.” Conrad’s metaphorical re-interpretation of the pirate figure exemplifies his understanding of empire at the dawn of the twentieth century. In early eighteenth-century fiction, however, the pirate figure is also employed—in fact, invented—by English authors who believed that they did have “business” in the colonies. These authors imagined the pirate figure as an adventure hero and his assaults on the colonies and the waterways of the world as masterful achievements. The drastic
difference between these two diverse representations of piracy evidences that the pirate figure possesses the metaphorical potential to be faced, defaced, and refaced to fit myriad cultural contexts and satisfy any number of political, economic, and social agendas. Although contemporary American culture understands the pirate differently than both Conrad and early eighteenth-century authors, the pirate figure today remains one of the most popular cultural icons, one that continues to stand up to constant recontextualization.

The difference, however, in pirate representations after the early nineteenth-century, is that, regardless of how the figure is contextualized, he is always perceived as an insider. The eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century authors who I have surveyed participate in an evolving tradition of pirate gentrification. The lawless historical outlaw of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries has been refaced by the British imagination, so much so that by the early nineteenth century, he emerges in polite society as a respectable English middle-class gentleman. The process of charting fictional representations of successful pirates reveals that British middle-class fortune hunters are truly pirate-like in their ambitions; however, they are not welcomed into the fold of polite society until the early nineteenth century. Therefore, the pirate figure in fiction has far more to do with Britain’s Financial Revolution, the rise of capitalism and credit, and the heightened value that is progressively placed upon mobile property than it does with the historical pirate figure. Indeed, the historical pirate engenders and inspires middle-class fantasies about the accumulation of land, money, women, and the heightened status that can be achieved through the acquisition of such possessions. The middle-class colonial
merchant / fortune hunter (commonly perceived in eighteenth-century fiction as pirate-like) evolves from a ridiculed subject into a respectable subject. The transition coincides with the evolving acceptance by polite English society of the colonial realm as a legitimate location for earning money. Even the gentry (as Jane Austen demonstrates through her character, Sir Thomas Bertram of Mansfield Park) begins to take advantage of moneymaking opportunities in the colonial realm as a means to supporting and maintaining their upper-class lifestyle at home in England. The evolving process of pirate gentrification in British fiction, which finally produces Frederick Wentworth in Jane Austen's *Persuasion*, serves as the fictional ground-work for the Romantic and Byronic pirate heroes of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Lord Byron and Sir Walter Scott contribute to, and significantly change, the fictional tradition of pirate representation by depicting early nineteenth-century Romantic pirates as outlaws who no longer operate explicitly for financial gain and heightened social status. Now that the pirate-like hero has been accepted into polite society (as Jane Austen demonstrates in *Persuasion*), the economic emphasis that is so prominently connected with the eighteenth-century pirate figure shifts and focuses instead on chivalrous actions and romantic interactions that are initiated by virtue of the pirate's profound sense of guilt. As both Byron and Scott demonstrate, the pirate figure now has a double identity; he descends from a moneymaking aristocratic background, and he enters the pirate community because he has committed a secret sin. Although he is invented as a perplexing and potentially diabolical figure, he ultimately performs selfless acts of heroism in order to atone for his secret sin.

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In his Oriental Tale, *The Corsair* (1814), Byron invents the pirate, Conrad, who (we discover later in the poem's sequel, *Lara* [1814]) had once been a Feudal lord of his ancestral manor. Byron's pirate figure sheds eighteenth-century ambitions for money in favor of heroic and patriotic combat against a despotic Eastern sultan and slave master, Pacha Seyd. Participating in the already initiated tradition of Orientalist discourse, Byron depicts the pirate's engagement in combat against his dark Eastern foe as a chivalrous and gallant act of righteous heroism. Complicating the poem's dramatic action, Byron has Conrad become entangled in a love triangle with the fair Medora, who resides with Conrad on the pirate's island, and the Pacha's dark and beautiful slave, Gulnare. Unlike the former pirate tradition, neither woman is depicted as a "Prize," a commodity connected to monetary value and heightened social status. For the first time, the fictional pirate experiences a profound sense of Romantic love. However, when Medora discovers that Conrad has been captured and imprisoned by the Pacha, she dies of a broken heart. When the pirate (who is freed by Gulnare after she kills the Pacha) discovers that Medora has expired, Conrad cuts a boat free, and drifting alone in Byronic fashion, he "wanders that trackless way" out of the poem with a profound sense of guilt for Medora's death. Then in *Lara*, the poem's namesake (identified by Byron in his "Advertisement" to the poem as Conrad) returns to his ancestral manor and is wracked by guilt for an unnamed secret sin (which we assume is Medora's death).

In his heroic poem, *Rokeby* (1813), we discover that Scott's pirate, Mortham, has also been a respectable member of society—of both wealth and title—but after committing a secret sin of his own, and suffering unbearable remorse and guilt, he flees
from society and enters the pirate community. Scott reveals that in a fit of jealousy (instigated by the villainous character, Oswald), Mortham has killed his innocent wife. In contrast to the pirates of the eighteenth century, who "turn" to piracy as a means of heightening their class status through the attainment of wealth, these Byronic pirates reside (hide-out) in the pirate community because they are tormented by Byronic guilt, not economic deficit. Furthermore, they possess the ability to act heroically and romantically as pirates because they have voluntarily abandoned their positions as moneyed men in normative society. In this sense, they are always already accepted by society; their mystique as pirates hinges upon their voluntary departure from society. Ultimately they are defenders of social justice, men who perform heroic acts in order to compensate for their personal failings in normative society.

On the other side of the Atlantic, James Fenimore Cooper rides the wave of patriotic American spirit in his pirate tale, *The Red Rover* (1827). Cooper, who sets his tale in the mid-eighteenth century, continues to develop the tradition of the pirate figure who has a duel identity, with one foot in the pirate community and the other in polite society. In *The Red Rover*, the pirate, Harry Wilder, leads a double existence as a gentle, chivalrous companion of the two women in the novel (Gertrude Grayson and her governess), and as a tough, rugged sailor / adventurer / pirate. Cooper demonstrates that the Red Rover’s acts of piracy are finally patriotic American acts of war against the tyrannical British Navy; Wilder is a patriotic rebel / veteran-hero from the American Revolution. The violence and pirate-like characteristics that Cooper invests in his hero are ultimately sanctioned by the author as patriotic duty. By the close of the novel,
Wilder emerges as the heroic Captain Henry de Lacy, gentleman. Cooper justifies the violent actions of the "pirate" by concocting the satisfying conclusion that the Red Rover and Wilder (one and the same) are American heroes who have been fighting for the cause of freedom.

In *Treasure Island* (1881) Robert Louis Stevenson makes another radical turn in pirate fiction by creating a genre of pirate literature written specifically for children. Stevenson writes the novel for his stepson, stating that, "If this don't fetch the kids, why, they have gone rotten since my day." His tale of pirates, a treasure map, a mutiny, and a one-legged sea cook named Long John Silver, perhaps more than any piece of pirate fiction, fashions the look of the pirate figure with one leg, one eye, and/or one hand into a stereotype, an outlaw who always buries his treasure. And although he is depicted throughout the majority of the novel as money-hungry, suspicious, and untrustworthy, at the novel’s conclusion, it is Long John Silver who rescues the boy hero and his gentleman protectors from harm. Indeed, even in Stevenson’s novel, the pirate, who is suspected of villainous intentions, emerges as a heroic figure who protects members of the gentry.

In the twentieth century we find a piratical adventure hero in the figure of Dr. Peter Blood, who is played by the young Errol Flynn in the film *Captain Blood* (1935). Rafael Sabitini, who writes the novel on which the film is based, also participates in the tradition of representing the pirate as an outlaw / hero with a double identity; he depicts Captain Blood as both an honorable doctor in polite society and a swashbuckling, Robin Hood figure who is forced into piracy after he is arrested for treating wounded rebels.
who are fighting against the oppressive regime of England’s King James II. Once again, the pirate is accepted as a hero and a lover because he descends from a legitimate and honorable position in society. In this historically-based tale, the hero is transported to Jamaica to endure a lifetime of hard-labor on a sugar plantation, but escapes when the Spanish attack Port Royal. He and his comrades steal a ship, and Captain Blood emerges as one of the most feared pirates in the West Indies. Maintaining his identity as a lover, Hollywood exploits the pirate’s romance with the daughter of a Jamaican plantation owner (Olivia De Haviland). Finally when the pirate learns that James II has been ousted from the throne and succeeded by William and Mary, Captain Blood re“turns” to polite English society, and the hero and heroine (in non-Byronic, but typical Hollywood fashion) live happily ever after. In the revolutionary spirit of Cooper’s novel, the pirate reunites with his countrymen, deified now as a hero patriot who (as a pirate) fights for freedom against an oppressive regime.

Although these pirate stories represent only a minute portion of pirate fiction after 1814, each elucidates how pirate identity becomes synonymous with heroic, romantic, and patriotic behavior because the pirate is designed (recontextualized) with a double identity, one that is legitimately configured within polite society, and another that inhabits the pirate realm. His ties with polite society preclude the pirate from having to hunt for treasure. Initially these pirates look like outlaws, but ultimately they prevail as defenders of justice. If the pirate seeks treasure, the accumulation of wealth is sanctioned as the plundering of an oppressive enemy. And since the pirate usually hails from privileged roots, he has no need to plunder in order to heighten his status when he
reunites with his society. His double is always already firmly established in polite society. The eighteenth-century tradition of pirate fiction has successfully paved the way for this new breed of outlaw.

The exception to the representation of the pirate as a hero is still, however, easily found in modern Western culture. The diabolical pirate stereotype, who buries his treasure, drinks ample quantities of alcohol, and rapes women, is nowhere more vividly portrayed than at Walt Disney’s theme park in the ride, Pirates of the Caribbean. The ride, which was one of the last to be created by Walt Disney in the mid-nineteen-sixties, is also one of Disneyland’s most popular. The pirates drink from a river that cascades, not water, but rum, hapless pirates are depicted futilely attempting to remove their chest of treasure from their pirates’ cave, and in addition to an auction scene where pirates buy and sell women, the renegades are also depicted in the process of chasing women, presumably to rape them (after complaints about the ride’s lack of political correctness, a revision of this portion of the ride was effected in 1997; although the pirates still chase the women, the victims now carry trays of food in their hands. The audience is supposed to understand that the pirates are no longer horny, but hungry). This one-dimensional representation of pirate behavior may be a departure from the Romantic and heroic depictions that I have discussed above; however, the popularity of this Disney ride—that flagship of wholesome American entertainment—demonstrates the extent to which the pirate can be recontextualized; Disney “turns” the pirate into a cartoon, and the representation is as attractive as ever. Indeed, the deeply transgressive and troubling pirate even sanitizes well.
Although Disney's ride is one of the most popular pirate representations in modern Western culture, the quintessential American venue that associates itself with the pirate figure is in Las Vegas, Nevada at the Treasure Island Casino. In Buccaneer Bay, which is located just outside the casino, a pyrotechnic battle is enacted every ninety minutes between the pirate ship *Hispaniola* and the British frigate *H. M. S. Britannia*. The pirates, who have just sailed into the Bay with their treasure, are confronted by the British man-of-war, and at the conclusion of the battle, the British are defeated, and their frigate sinks into the Bay. The marketing genius that proposed this theme for the casino possibly wanted to equate the rebelliousness of the pirate figure with the Las Vegas experience. Like the gamblers at Las Vegas, pirates can be associated with taking risks, playing the game, beating the odds, and making money. Not only are these pirates sanitized, but they are sexy too. Like Las Vegas show girls, these pirates have performed their victorious battle reenactment at Buccaneer Bay over 7,000 times to date. Audiences applaud the pirate victors at the conclusion of each contest, because these rebellious outlaws are exciting in a way that the stodgy British Navy is not. And following the spectacle, the vacationers enter the casino with a rebellious disposition in hopes of discovering buried treasure at the craps table or the slot machines.

Perhaps this spirit of rebelliousness is the common denominator that connects all fictional representations of the shape-shifter pirate, the figure who will conform to any and all agendas. Middle-class entrepreneurs of eighteenth-century England certainly understood themselves as rebellious upstarts in the growing capitalist economy. As I indicate in my discussion, these English subjects are obsessed with the prospect of
becoming gentlemen in polite society, a title exclusively reserved for members of landed families until the early nineteenth century. The process of pirate gentrification, then, parallels the process of middle-class gentrification in English society. The rebelliousness of the pirate figure is recontextualized and appropriated by the middle-class to suit its social and material designs. However, when mobile property can finally compete with landed property, the pirate figure charts a new course, and the brooding Romantic hero is born. Authors continue to equate the pirate with social misconduct, but after the early nineteenth-century, class position is no longer a point of contention.
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Appendix A: Indentured Servants

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, slavery in the West Indies was a brutal reality for transported European criminals and for Africans. For the European, transportation and indentured-servitude were different from slavery in that indentured servitude had a time limit. Exquemelin, in his *The Buccaneers of America*, relates the experience of a transported European criminal upon arrival in the West Indies:

The planters have few slaves; mostly they do the work themselves, along with indentured servants bound to them for three years. They trade in human beings just like the Turks, selling bondsmen among themselves as people in Europe deal in horses. Some of them make it their business to go to France looking for labourers in the country towns and among the peasants. They make big promises, but when the lads get to the island they are sold and have to work like horses, harder in fact than the Negroes. For the planters admit they must take greater care of a Negroe slave than a white bondsman, because the Negroe is in their service for life, while the white man is theirs only for a period.¹

Exquemelin also relates the brutality that the European indentured-servant/bondsman might suffer at the hands of a tyrannical planter. In the following account, a bondsman ran off to the woods through ill-treatment, but was fetched back again. His master tied him to a tree, beat him till the blood gushed down his back, then smeared his flesh with a sauce made of lemon juice, salt and red pepper. He was left in this state, tied to the tree, for twenty-four hours. Then the master came back and struck him again, until he died under the blows.²

¹ Exquemelin, 64.
² Ibid, 65.
Buccaneer communities, like the maroon slave communities, were made up of men who had suffered under tyrannical plantation owners. Exquemelin spent several years working for the deputy governor of Tortuga, whom he describes as “the wickedest rogue in the whole island . . . [who] did me all the harm he could think of. He even made me suffer intense hunger, depriving me of food . . . I fell into severe illness through all the discomfort I’d been through, and my master, fearing I should die, sold me to a surgeon for seventy pieces of eight.”\(^3\) When he is finally able to buy is freedom for 150 pieces of eight, Exquemelin describes his release from bondage as feeling “like Adam when he was first created. I had nothing at all, and therefore resolved to join the privateers or buccaneers.”\(^4\)

\(^3\) Ibid, 34.
\(^4\) Ibid.
Appendix B: West Indian Buccaneers

The buccaneers initially inhabited the island of Hispaniola, but when they took to the seas in their war against the Spanish, they occupied the island of Tortuga, portions of Jamaica, and various other locals throughout the West Indies. Buccaneers earned their livelihood by trading log wood, hides, meat, and tallow for gunpowder, cloth, or brandy with European traders (predominantly Dutch). These men were nicknamed “buccaneers” after the process for smoke-drying beef “hung in long strips over a frame of green sticks, and dried above a fire fed with animal bones and hide trimmings,” which they learned from the Carib Indians. Both the wooden grating and the place where the curing was done were called by the Carib name of boucan.1 The appellation, “boucaniers,” remained with these hunters as they evolved into sea pirates at war with the Spanish. The buccaneer settlement, however, was not war-like in its origins. The Spaniards, who tolerated no non-Spanish settlements in the Americas, attempted to remove the buccaneers from the region by “systematically destroying the wild herds on which they lived.”2 The Spanish had declared war on these men, and the buccaneers retaliated by, at first, committing acts of piracy against Spanish coastal vessels, and eventually, as Exquemelin documents, by committing war-like raids on the fortified mainland Spanish towns of Maracaibo, Porto Bello, and Panama, among others. The following journal entry from the missionary, Abbé du Tertre, who writes in 1630,

1 From Jack Beeching’s Introduction to The Buccaneers of America, 9.

2 Ibid.

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provides the earliest known observation of the buccaneers, and it elucidates the
composite nature of their identity:

They were at this time an unorganized rabble of men from all
countries, rendered expert and active by the necessity of their
exercise which was to go in chase of cattle to obtain their hides,
and from the beginning chased themselves by the Spaniards who
never gave them any quarter. As they would never suffer any
chiefs, they passed for undisciplined men, for the greater part
had sought refuge in these places and were reduced to this way
of life to avoid the punishments due for the crimes which they
had committed in Europe, and which could be proved against
many of them.3

Before the end of the first quarter of the seventeenth
century the Spaniards had abandoned the whole of the north and
west of Española, and the dense tropical forests and thickets had
sunk back to their primeval desolation. The aboriginal
inhabitants had perished or been absorbed into the stock of
Spanish half-breeds and their negro slaves. The only closely
settled regions in the island lay in the plains of the south-east
behind the city of Santo Domingo, but there were a few
scattered cattle-ranches stretching back to the northern woods,
and these afforded a link with the illicit Dutch traders who
frequented various harbours on the coast. Those ports were
often visited by corsairs for the purpose of watering, victualling
and refitting their ships. Many stragglers from their crews
remained behind on shore when they departed, and they were
joined by refugees from wrecked vessels, by fugitive negro slave,
cimarrones or ‘maroons’ who had escaped from the Spanish
settlements, and by men who as punishment had been
‘marooned’, that is, had been thrust ashore from the ships to
fend for themselves on the desolate coast among the maroons. .
. . So there came into being a wild and lawless company of
dwellers in the woods who played an important part in West
Indian history for a century or more.4

3 Quoted in Arther Percival Newton’s The European Nations in the West Indies

As du Tertre acknowledges, buccaneer settlements provided a kind of solace for any number of exiles. Undoubtedly, the community was composed of myriad skin colors, languages, and customs. The term maroon in the buccaneer lexicon is defined as the stranding of undesirable crew members or prisoners in remote areas to fend for themselves. Marooning was an alternative to capital punishment, but the end result was usually the same. The term also provides a provocative nexus between the buccaneer and the fugitive slave. Both groups, against their will, are literally marooned in the West Indies, ripped from their homelands, and shackled into slavery. However, in their simultaneous resistance to the European imperial project, both groups in a sense turn pirate—turn against the master—and carve out a position of agency for themselves in their collective bands.

As the buccaneers' war with Spain evolved, the British, also at war with Spain, commissioned the buccaneer to further its own claim on the West Indies. Great Britain provided ships and supplies, and commissioned the buccaneers, as privateers, to attack Spanish shipping and settlements in the name of the King of England. Britain used the buccaneers' war against the Spanish to their own advantage, and they were quick to divorce the Caribbean pirates once the job was accomplished. Jack Beeching elucidates this point in his introduction to Exquemelin's book:

The Buccaneers were still on their way to containing Spanish attacks on their settlement, and might even, as more runaways joined them, have evolved in time a new, free-enterprise, multi-national little America republic, a century before the Declaration of Independence. But they fought too well; they were too valuable at sea and on land as auxiliaries in time of war. Step by step, the buccaneers
were induced to quit their perilously unbridled life of hunting and piracy, for the advantages of a well defended harbour under some European flag, where they could readily sell off their plunder, and spend the cash proceeds in spectacular debauch. It paid handsomely to patronize the buccaneers, and so, from the middle of the seventeenth century onwards, their ships often went cruising nominally as English and French privateers.\footnote{Exquemelin, 11.}

\footnote{Exquemelin, 11.}
Appendix C: West Indian Maroons

The maroon is a slave turned rebel. Runaway slave communities varied from tiny bands that existed for relatively short periods of time to "powerful states encompassing thousands of members and surviving for generations or even centuries." Maroon bands formed communities in remote areas. "Successful maroon communities learned quickly to turn the harshness of their immediate surroundings to their own advantage for purposes of concealment and defense. Paths leading to the villages were carefully disguised, and much use was made of false trails replete with dangerous booby traps." Maroons developed the skills of warfare for survival. They had an advantage over their European foes in that they became masters themselves of the tactics of guerrilla warfare. Europeans where only familiar with the strategy of fighting on the open battlefield, but maroons "took maximum advantage of local environments, striking and withdrawing with great rapidity, making extensive use of ambushes to catch their adversaries in crossfire, fighting only when and where they chose."

Punishments for marronage were severe, and as Price argues, "Within the first decade of most colonies' existence, the most brutal punishments had already been reserved for recaptured runaways, and in many cases these were quickly written into

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2 Ibid, 6.

3 Ibid, 7.
In early eighteenth-century Surinam, for example, punishment for the first offense upon being captured was the removal of the Achilles tendon, and for the second offense, amputation of the right leg. A depiction of this treatment is found in Voltaire’s *Candide*. When Candide visits Surinam, he speaks with a slave who tells him, “Those of us who work in the factories and happen to catch a finger in the grindstone have a hand chopped off; if we try to escape, they cut off one leg. Both accidents happened to me. That’s the price of your eating sugar in Europe.” Aphra Behn’s *Oroonoko* also depicts the extreme violence toward the rebel slave. When Oroonoko meets his executioner, he is hacked apart, limb by limb.  

Jamaica, which was the most well known port of call for the buccaneers, was also one of the major locations of rampant slave rebellion. During the more than 180 years of its existence as a slave society, “hardly a decade went by without a serious large-scale revolt threatening the entire system.” The British captured Jamaica in 1655 during Cromwell’s efforts to overtake Spanish possessions in the West Indies. England’s intentions were to populate its largest West Indian island with white settlers, but because of the inhospitable climate, slave uprisings, the famous earthquake of 1692, and malaria (and other fevers endemic to the island) efforts to populate Jamaica with white settlers were not successful. As Orlando Patterson notes: “Between 1655 and 1661 over

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7 Patterson, 247.
twelve thousand persons arrived in the island, yet hardly thirty-six hundred remained in 1662. In 1696 the white population was down to less than two-thousand, and although this figure slowly increased in absolute terms during the eighteenth century, the ratio of whites to Negro slaves was to decline constantly, rarely exceeding 10 percent of the total population. British planters were unwilling to tolerate the conditions in these colonies, and although they had huge land holdings and derived great wealth from their productivity, they did not desire to live there.

Maroon bands in the region were not simply on the defensive as fugitives running from the tyranny of the slaveocracy; the maroons, in a manner of speaking, turned pirate, went on the offensive, and attacked plantations in order to impede the encroachment of white expansion. Patterson documents that in 1722.

Since all available lands on the fertile southern coastal plains were taken up, the planters began to open the area around the northeast coast. These new estates cut off the communications of the Windward rebels from the coast, making the procurement of vital necessities even more difficult. To prevent further white expansion, the new settlements were systematically plundered, "murders were daily committed, plantations burnt and deserted, every person settled near the mountains in dread both of the Rebels and mutinies in their own Plantations."

In the early nineteenth-century history, *An Historical Survey of the Island of Saint Domingo Together with an Account of the Maroon Negroes in the Island of Jamaica*

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8 Patterson, 248.

9 Patterson, 260.
and a History of the War in the West Indies, in 1793 and 1794, Bryan Edwards' descriptions of the "savage man['s]" attack on British plantations are predictably racist, stigmatizing the rebel slave through such metaphors as, for example, "famished tygers thirsting for human blood." But Edwards' descriptions of maroon warfare also sound like descriptions of sea pirates who relied more on terror than on brute strength, who were familiar with and navigated inlets, river systems, keys, and harbors, in search of their prey, and who often hid from their victims in order to mount surprise attacks:

By night [the maroons] seized the favorable opportunity that darkness gave them, of stealing into the settlements, where they set fire to the cane-fields and out-houses, killed all the cattle they could find, and carried the slaves into captivity. By this dastardly method of conducting the war, they did infinite mischief to the whites, without much exposing their own persons to danger, for they always cautiously avoided fighting, except with a number so disproportionally inferior to themselves, as to afford them a pretty sure expectation of victory. They knew every secret avenue of the country; so that they could either conceal themselves from pursuit, or shift their ravages from place to place, as circumstances required. Such were the many disadvantages under which the English had to deal with those desultory foes; who were not reducible by any regular plan of attack; who possessed no plunder to allure or reward the assailants; nor had any thing to lose, except life, and a wild and savage freedom.

\[10\] Bryan Edwards, Esq., An Historical Survey of the Island of Saint Domingo Together with an Account of the Maroon Negroes in the Island of Jamaica; and a History of the War in the West Indies, in 1793 and 1794 (London: John Stockdale, Picadilly, 1801).

\[11\] Ibid, 308.
In 1739 the end of the Maroon war came about through an act of negotiation by the English. The chief of the Maroons during this period, Cudjoe, accepted a fifteen point peace treaty that granted freedom to the maroons and the ownership of lands in the vicinity of their settlements, which amounted to fifteen hundred acres where they could hunt and farm as they wished. The rub, however, was that the maroons were now employed by their former enemy; included in the treaty was a law which mandated that the maroons assist the Europeans in fighting all external and internal enemies of the state, which included assisting in the tracking down and capture of runaways who sought to escape from enslavement on the plantations. Patterson describes the sentiment of many of Cudjoe’s followers as “extremely embittered by what they could only interpret as a completely unnecessary sellout. In the act of ratifying his own freedom, Cudjoe had sealed the fate of future freedom-fighters, for with the Maroons on the side of the whites, no slave could hope to escape the tyranny of his master, either by running away or by rebellion.”

12 Patterson, 272–73.
Appendix D: Pirates of Color

Historically, people of color did serve on board pirate ships, but their agency, their ability to maneuver as free men in the pirate communities, is still in question. David Cordingly, in *Under the Black Flag*, records that in 1721 the company of men who served on board Bartholomew Roberts's ships consisted of 180 white men and 48 French Creole blacks, and his companion ship was sailed by 100 white men and 40 French black men. However, Cordingly argues against the possibility that pirate ships provided a location of freedom for any but the white European:

It has been suggested that the democratic nature of pirates, and their defiance of the usual customs of the day, led them to welcome the blacks as equal partners on board. It is also said that runaway slaves from the plantations joined pirate ships because they would find refuge on board, and also to achieve their freedom. This is a romantic idea but it is not borne out by the facts. The pirates shared the same prejudices as other white men in the Western world. They regarded black slaves as commodities to be bought and sold, and they used them as slaves on board their ships for the hard and menial jobs.

Richard Price, in his introduction to *Maroon Societies*, opposes Cordingly arguing that “for three centuries, beginning in the early 1500s, there were maroons who fought alongside pirates in their naval battles, guided them in their raids on major cities, and participated with them in widespread, illicit, international trade” (14). Price’s primary


2 Ibid, 16.
example of a black pirate is the historical figure, Diego Grillo, a Cuban mulatto runaway slave who not only joined the ranks of the buccaneers, but who climbed to the position of captain. But as Price provocatively documents, "We know that some maroons rose high in the pirate ranks; for example, the Cuban runaway Diego Grillo became Capitán Diegguillo, serving as an officer under the notorious Dutchman Cornelis Jol." With commissions from the English government in Jamaica, Grillo pirated as a buccaneer against the Spanish in the West Indies. He is mentioned in England's *Calendar of State Papers* for the West Indies and referred to as "Capt. Diego."

In 1670 there was a shift in power in Jamaica—the new lieutenant-governor, Sir Thomas Lynch, took over for Sir Thomas Modyford who had been highly aggressive in his methods of dealing with the dominating presence of the Spanish in the West Indies. It had been Modyford's idea to use the buccaneers as privateers, giving them commissions to attack Spanish ships and towns. But when Lynch took over, he immediately observed articles that were drawn up between England and Spain, and revoked the commissions that had previously been issued by Modyford. C. H. Haring in his *The Buccaneers in the West Indies in the XVII Century* reports that

Lynch immediately set about to secure the good-will of his Spanish neighbours and to win back the privateers to more peaceful pursuits. . . . On the 15th August the proclamation of pardon of privateers was issued at Port Royal . . . However, although the governor wrote home . . . that the privateers were

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3 Price, 14.

4 *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies, 1669–1674* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1889), 638.
entirely surpressed, he soon found that the task was by no means a simple one. Two buccaneers with a commission from Modyford, an Englishman named Thurston and a mulatto named Diego, flouted his offer of pardon, continued to prey upon Spanish shipping, and carried their prizes to Tortuga.  

Haring also notes that Diego “defeated successfully in the Bahama Channel three armed ships sent out to take him, and in all of them he massacred without exception the Spaniards of European birth. He was captured in 1673 and suffered the fate he meted out to his victims.”

In addition to Grillo, a mulatto pirate captain named Black Robin, who commanded the sloop Philadelphia, is mentioned in Defoe’s A General History. Defoe writes that “Worley and his Crew, in going down the River, met with a Sloop of Philadelphia, belonging to a Mulatto, whom they called Black Robin; they quitted their Boat for this Sloop, taking one of Black Robin’s Men along with them, as they had also done from Georg Grant, besides two Negroes, which increased the company one third.”

The West Indies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries proved to be such a volatile environment that the African, the Carib Indian, and the European might be discovered fighting side by side.

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6 Ibid.

7 Defoe, A General History of the Pyrates, 298.
Vita

Robert Dryden was born and raised in Westchester County, New York. During the summers of his 16th and 18th years, he developed a passion for travel and journeyed extensively throughout the western United States. In 1981 he entered a bachelor's program at Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts, where he concentrated in creative writing and literary criticism. After his second year of undergraduate education, Robert chose to venture outside of the academic circle; with a journal in hand, he once again hunted for adventures in the western United States. He experienced further adventures working as a taxi driver in suburban New York, he spent six months traveling in Europe, and he completed his tour away from college by working for a summer as a camp counselor in New England. He eventually shaped his numerous journal entries into his senior college project, a book of poems, short stories, and a play entitled, *Suburban Monsters*. He graduated from Hampshire College in 1986.

Between 1986 and 1988 Robert worked in Manhattan for Random House/Knopf Books for Young Readers. Although the world of publishing proved an excellent education (and he got to meet Dr. Seuss!), Robert finally decided that the desk-job realm was not his calling. He returned to Massachusetts in 1989 and spent the next two years working as a residential counselor with mentally handicapped adults. This experience affirmed for Robert that he wanted to become a teacher. But in what capacity?

In 1990, Robert visited New Orleans for the Jazz and Heritage Festival; he would end up spending the next nine years of his life in the state of Louisiana. He worked for
the next four years as an interior landscaper by day and as a master’s degree candidate in English (for the latter three of those four years) at the University of New Orleans by night. He achieved his master of arts degree in 1994 after writing his thesis on Herman Melville’s *Billy Budd, Sailor*. During his stay at UNO, he was nominated for the UNO Alumni Association Graduate Student Award for 1993–94, and he passed his master’s oral examination with distinction. These academic successes inspired Robert to pursue English literary studies further.

Robert entered the doctoral program at Louisiana State University in 1994. The seafaring stories of Melville and Conrad had made such an impact on him that Robert decided to focus his academic energies on the literature of travel, adventure, and discovery; these literary genres eventually led him to focus primarily on the figure of the pirate. Robert began his tenure at LSU as a Teaching Assistant. From the first moment that he entered the classroom, Robert knew, with no reservations, that he had found his calling in life. From 1994 to 1997 he taught classes in expository and argumentative writing, and then in the summer of 1998 he taught a literature course that he called “Cutthroats or Revolutionaries? Discovering the Pirate in Literature”; he based the content of the course on his dissertation research. In 1997 the publishing bug bit Robert again, and he began work as an editor for *The Eighteenth-Century: A Current Bibliography*, an LSU publication overseen by professor Jim Springer Borck. Robert acted as Assistant General Editor for the n.s. 17 volume of the *Bibliography*, and Associate General Editor for n.s. 18. In 1998 Robert had the good fortune to be the recipient of a Louisiana State University Dissertation Fellowship, an award granted to
nine doctoral candidates university-wide per year. The fellowship enabled Robert to complete the majority of work on his dissertation.

Robert successfully defended his dissertation in February, 2000, and he received the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in May, 2000. He currently lives in Chicago, Illinois, and he teaches literature and composition at a small private college.
DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

Candidate: Robert G. Dryden

Major Field: English

Title of Dissertation: Successful Pirates and Capitalist Fantasies: Charting Fictional Representations of Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century English Fortune Hunters

Approved:

(co-chair) Major Professor and Chairman
(co-chair)

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signatures]

Date of Examination: 2/10/2000