



## **Bellamy's Rage and Beer's Conscience: Pirate Methodologies and the Contemporary University**

By James Arvanitakis, Martin Fredriksson & Sonja Schillings

### **Abstract**

Over the last decade piracy has emerged as a growing field of research covering a wide range of different phenomena, from fashion counterfeits and media piracy, through to 17<sup>th</sup> century buccaneers and present-day pirates off the coast of Somalia. In many cases piracy can be a metaphor or an analytical perspective to understand conflicts and social change. This article relates this fascination with piracy as a practice and a metaphor to academia and asks what a pirate methodology of knowledge production could be: how, in other words, researchers and educators can be understood as 'pirates' to the corporate university. Drawing on the history of maritime piracy as well as on a discussion on contemporary pirate libraries that disrupt proprietary publishing, the article explores the possibility of a pirate methodology as a way of acting as a researcher and relating to existing norms of knowledge production. The methodology of piratical scholarship involves exploiting the grey zones and loopholes of contemporary academia. It is a tactical intervention that exploits short term opportunities that arise in the machinery of academia to the strategic end of turning a limiting structure into an enabling field of opportunities. We hope that such a concept of pirate methodologies may help us reflect on how sustainable and constructive approaches to knowledge production emerge in the context of a critique of the corporate university.

**Keywords:** Piracy, knowledge production, university politics, knowledge politics, publishing.

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## Introduction: A Pirate Methodology

Over the last decade, piracy has emerged as a growing field of research covering a range of different phenomena: from 17<sup>th</sup> century buccaneers through to present day pirates off the coast of Somalia, to fashion counterfeits and illegal downloads of the world's most popular movies and television shows. This scholarly interest has partly been a response to the public attention on media piracy in the early part of this century when file-sharing networks such as Napster and The Pirate Bay caused outrage within the media industry, but has now grown into an emerging research field transgressing a narrower media focus (see e.g. de Sutter 2011, Fredriksson & Arvanitakis 2014; Arvanitakis & Fredriksson 2017, Puzar 2010).

Piracy is not a new term but has been used as a metaphor for unauthorized book publishing since the 17<sup>th</sup> century and was conventionalized as such in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Johns 2009, Eilenberg 1989). It was thus a handy and readymade trope in the copyright wars of the 1990s and early 2000s when the copyright industries drew heavily on the pirate metaphor to brand the hometapers, file-sharers and counterfeiters as thieves and outlaws. The strategy backfired as the word 'pirate' was embraced and coopted by the file-sharers, giving rise to a pirate 'movement' that drew heavily on the mythology and iconography of golden age piracy and characterizations of pirates in pop culture. Previous popular representations of the pirate in literature, stemming from the nineteenth Century, identified pirates as the exploiter of political, legal, and bureaucratic loopholes (Schillings 2017, 139-140). Today, this pop cultural usage has extended to a more general idea of pirates as subversive, anarchist and egalitarian actors who challenge the prevailing hierarchies of colonial empires and otherwise oppressive bureaucratic structures.

Academia has responded in various ways to this abundance of conflicting pirate representations. Some researchers condemn all acts of piracy while others see subversive potential in certain forms of piracy. In some cases, such as in our own work, piracy has emerged as a metaphor, or even as a method, to help us understand complex societal changes by acknowledging the fact that most acts and actors occupy grey zones—between legal and illegal; public and private; open and closed; good and bad (Fredriksson & Arvanitakis 2014; Arvanitakis & Fredriksson 2017; Schillings 2017).

In this article, we apply that perspective to ourselves and ask whether the approach of *piracy as a method* can help us understand our own position in academia. Recent scholarship, particularly in the humanities, has repeatedly stressed that the researchers' perspective inevitably informs their methodology and research emphases. Therefore, it is of particular importance that we disentangle some of the complexities inherent in academic perspectives. This is not the least important to our own work since we have been studying piracy and thus inevitably interacted with the conversations on piracy that abound today as the issue has been increasingly mediatized since the 1990s.

In our minds, *Piracy as a method*, could help us formulate a more nuanced understanding of the loophole-exploiting individualist scholar (rogue, but stoutly capitalist) who bounces from institution to institution, always on the hunt for third-party funding and short-termed employment. Another potential consequence of this method is the proliferation of more specific conversations on our own access to, and production of, available knowledge which ultimately occasions us to reflect on visions of a free academic exchange. The focus on piracy, thus enables the interrogation of the complex phenomena which are implicitly framed by stark distinctions between right and wrong, oppressive and oppressed, perpetrator and victim. The reference to piracy allows us to see many sides of a conflict in a way that does not deem them equivalent in terms of power, resources, or objective; rather, it allows a multifaceted approach that takes into view the many contradictory layers of conflict, oppression, aggression, and opportunity.

The pirate perspective thus embraces the simultaneity of the object of study: the fact that an act can be many things at the same time, and that how you chose to define it can lead to seemingly irreconcilable conflicts. We see this in the polarized debates over media piracy, where the copyright industry and the file sharing ideologists cannot understand each other simply because they define the contested objects differently. The former assumes that copyright protected works are property that is being stolen by the pirates, and for the latter, file sharing is an act of communication that is being disrupted and censored by the purveyors of property rights. In both cases, the consequences seem intolerable.

We even see this simultaneity in Somali piracy which is perceived as both a violation of international law and an enforcement of local customary rights. It is indeed much more difficult to romanticize contemporary maritime piracy – where armed forces are fighting actual maritime robbers off the coast of Somalia and in the South China Sea—as it involves violence and is often accused of having ties to terrorism. However, at closer consideration Somali piracy may also have emanated out of moral and legal grey zones. The acts condemned as piracy are not only heterogeneous in the sense that they involve a range of different strategies and objectives. According to local customary laws—the Xeer law prevalent in many Somali communities—they can also be considered legitimate means of compensation for damages and losses that those communities suffer from overfishing and the pollution caused by European and Asian fishing fleets and the global shipping industry as a whole (Gilmer 2017).

As this article will demonstrate, we also see this ambiguity illustrated in our own roles as academics. In the following article we will discuss how the pirate and the professional academic simultaneously depend on, and at the same time potentially oppose, a given structural distribution of resources—be it material wealth as in the case of colonial logistics, or knowledge as in academia—and how

this dependence and opposition challenges our way of understanding ourselves and the academy. We will begin with discussing everyday life in an academia that increasingly relies on precarious working conditions and a mobile workforce. Then we will address the (social) mediatization of academia and the blurred, but still strict, distinction between proprietary publishing, Open Access and piracy. Finally, we will return to the history of maritime piracy to ask if a pirate methodology could help us understand, and maybe also change, our own role within academia.

### **The Pirate and the Academic—Mobility and Precarity**

Geographic mobility is a suitable point of departure for the discussion of how and where the image of the pirate and the situation of the contemporary academic researcher intersect. Alexandra Ganser has described how the authorities of a colonial Europe resented piracy because it represented an unsanctioned and uncontrollable form of mobility, not only spatially but also socially, since the pirates rejected the social order of the navy and established their own social hierarchy (Ganser 2017). Piracy thus actualizes the question of what constitutes authorized and unauthorized, as well as privileged and unprivileged, forms of mobility.

Connecting to piracy's inherent claim to illegitimate mobility might, at first glance, be seen to create an enabling space within an otherwise often rigid academic structure. In other words, piracy emerges as a way to circumvent the interests of states, markets, and other 'interested' power players. In an academic context, this can be seen as analogous to the desire to do research that is based on the researcher's choice to explore questions with potentially uncomfortable answers for academic institutions. This view on intellectual mobility as a struggle to move beyond established routes of thought and to challenge hegemonic perspectives is sometimes associated with activist scholarship, including research on copyright that is 'pro-piracy'.

The relationship between intellectual and spatial mobility can, however, be ambiguous as the latter does not necessarily promote the former. The capacity to use and enjoy spatial mobility is entirely dependent on whether one's working conditions veer towards the privileged or the precarious. For those of us who enjoy a fairly secure employment and a certain amount of freedom, mobility is mostly an opportunity. For those of us who lack those privileges and safety nets, mobility can be an externally enforced requirement. Since this precarious stage is something that most newly graduated PhDs are likely to experience on their way towards a more secure and privileged position—which may not ever come—we will focus our discussion on the precarious rather than on the privileged academic.

Neither does spatial mobility necessarily contribute to greater intellectual mobility as precarious mobility and the dependencies it involves, limits the individual's capacity to express oppositional opinions.

Academic mobility is most often not part of a utopian lifestyle; it is part of a precarious job description (c.f. Hall 2016). The majority of contemporary researchers are not, in fact, perpetually mobile for reasons of research integrity. They are made mobile by un-tenured positions, transitional grants, and the increasing reluctance of universities to make long-standing commitments to researchers. Heated, principled, sophisticated and consequential conversations about the nature of research within universities do not even have a chance to arise when universities refuse to commit to researchers in the first place, and thus implicitly refuse to consider researchers' visions of scholarship as consequential to the institutional profile. Often, the emphasis on research mobility as a condition of contemporary research prevents the systematic inclusion of research perspectives into even the short-term institutional memory of a university or even faculty.

As the (often junior) researchers who are forced to be mobile by the general structural demands of the university know, mobility does not automatically result in a sophistication of perspective. Serious debates on academic vision which might indeed result in normative disagreement with universities and an individual commitment to mobility often do not even arise in the first place *because* of contemporary conditions of researcher mobility.

If this is the starting premise, especially for young academic researchers, the proper parallel offered by the much-allegorized Golden Age of Piracy (1690-1730) is not the idea of class struggle as it is portrayed, for example, in the work of Marcus Rediker (2001, 2004). The academic world today is not well-described in the language of a divide between monolithic institutions and their representatives who are collectively devoted to a rigid continuity of thought and perspective on the one hand, and the rebellion of methodologically innovative, surprising and subversive individualist perspectives on the other. The situation of the precarious academic is better described by the problem of sailors as precarious workers who operate in a system geared toward their exploitation whichever choice they make. Researchers are needed as a workforce that produces knowledge, but everything is done to minimize the ability of individual contributions to directly impact the institutions from which such contributions emerge.

## **The Mediatized Academic and the Politics of Publishing**

The structural origins of this situation may be traced to the legacy of the Cold War, when the university emerged as a model institution for transnationally bound knowledge 'gathering' in the name of national interests. The Manhattan

Project in particular can be described as a foundational project in this respect, as the parameters of scholarly success in this context relied on vivid knowledge exchange in conversations between international scholars on the one hand, and a rigid policing and structuring of the resulting scholarly work on the other. This model of international exchange in the name of national interest extends to the humanities insofar as interpretation itself became a central political concern in the context of the Cold War, and thus subtly reinforced the notion that knowledge is power and connected to privilege (Horn 2013). This paradox of sharing the thought process, but not the conclusions, of scholarly work is relevant to contemporary questions associated with piracy, not least because the question of copyright emerges as a central political concern that helps detach international academic collaboration from the far more restricted exchange of scholarly works (Dennis 2016: 56).

It is therefore not surprising that digital regimes of academic knowledge production and circulation are theoretically accessible to all but in fact rely on the funds and cooperative structures of an individual university library system. These are precisely the contexts of academic research that are consistently the target of 'pirated' knowledge production and circulation and these interventions are subject to normative debate precisely because they call attention to a split between open knowledge production and restricted access to the results. Here, the products of academic labour are appropriated by commercial publishing houses and sold back to the university libraries at hefty subscription fees. These tend to operate at exceptionally good profit margins, and as Sean Johnson Andrews and Jaafar Aksikas have shown in an article in *Cultural Studies*, they are often run by large transnational companies that might in some cases own academic publishing companies (such as Taylor & Francis which published *Cultural Studies*) alongside other businesses, including military subcontractors (Aksikas & Johnson 2014). This commercial publishing industry, spearheaded by large corporations like Elsevier and Taylor & Francis, also emerged with the expansion and internationalisation of academia partly driven by the mobilisation of research during the Cold War. It was further consolidated from the 1960s and onwards as large publishing houses merged and continuously acquired scholarly journals that had sometimes existed for decades on a non-profit basis (Fife et al 2017).

The 'public databases' of organisations such as Research Gate and Academia.edu are also privately owned, thus further exacerbating the understanding of scholarly works as a form of currency—an understanding of academic exchange (sic!) that corporate actors have not themselves invented but adopted from the Cold War state. When a layer of social media is added to this, we get a socio-technological environment that prioritizes the entrepreneurial self as an 'ideal' type of researcher. As Gary Hall argues in the podcast on *Mediatization+Publication*

published in this issue: “We’ve shifted into an era where we can’t just publish anymore, we’re supposed to be micro entrepreneurs of ourselves” (Lind 2017).

The shift from a Gutenberg galaxy to a Zuckerberg galaxy creates expectations to complement publishing with social media networking. This applies to all levels of academia, but it does not apply indiscriminately: as Swist and Magee point out in their contribution to this issue of *Culture Unbound* (Swist & Magee 2017) the precarity among certain parts of the academic workforce makes them particularly dependent on the kind of metrics and recognition that such inter-academic social media platforms offer. These platforms become even more important with academics’ increased and (often) enforced mobility which not only increases the importance of a well curated digital portfolio, but also makes it hard to use university websites for that purpose when academics move between different universities every second year. This creates a growing need for services that “offer a self-representation that is independent of current employment” (Hammarfelt et al 2016). At the same time, these platforms also function as what Hammarfelt et al. (2016), drawing on Jose van Dijk, describe as “inscriptions of normative professional behavior”. While the platforms instruct the users how to act self-entrepreneurs in a neoliberal academic market, they also measure how well they live up to this by providing metrics and statistics that create a gamification of academic life (Hammarfelt et al 2016).

At the same time, these websites are not only social media platforms but also alternative text depositories that integrate publishing with social networking functions. Some databases, such as Academia.edu, ResearchGate or Social Science Research Network (SSRN) offer a form of parallel publishing, or pre-print, services where academics can make texts, originally published in closed format in proprietary journals, available for non-paying customers. As such, these databases can be described as a kind of hybrid publishing space in a sphere of academic publishing that Swist and Magee (2017) describe as a semi-commons: a form of resource management where private and common ownership interact to create a more efficient use of the resources. In this context the academic networking platforms become a hybrid not only between social media and publishing, but also between proprietary and Open Access publishing which distributes the articles more widely than a strictly proprietary publishing system.

The necessity to create parallel distribution channels where academics can share articles they have published in proprietary journals with a wider audience, shows how proprietary publishing is actually detrimental to the interests of the academics whose careers depend on being read and cited as widely as possible. Here, the publishers and academics work according to different value systems: In order to turn the text into a commodity with an economic value, the publisher limits its circulation, which in turn limits the value it has for the academic as a

source of citations and public acknowledgement. Databases like Academia.edu and SSRN are grey zones that allow these two systems to co-exist: they provide academics with a tool to spread their work, without challenging the proprietary publishing model—although some of the texts they distribute might not be compliant with copyright law.

The fact is that these text depositories could be said to provide the publishing system with a flexibility that enables its continuous existence, thus making proprietary publishing compatible with the growing demand on Open Access publishing from large funding institutions. Therefore, it is significant that the academic publishing conglomerate Elsevier, in May 2016, bought the previously independent pre-print text depository SSRN (Van Noorden 2016; Masnick 2016). It is likely that we will see similar acquisitions in the near future as most academic publishing houses are likely to want their own alternative text depository. Although SSRN has been accused of imposing a stricter copyright regime after it was bought by Elsevier, they nevertheless emphasize that the new ownership conditions will not significantly affect their Open Access policy (Masnick 2016). This certainly makes sense since an enclosure of SSRN would counteract Elsevier's attempt to move into the Open Access segment: a more likely scenario would be if SSRN discretely promotes the spread of articles from Elsevier journals over those published by other companies.

Although their agendas might diverge, the interests of publisher and academic can coexist. It is more worrisome when this negotiation leaves the public altogether, i.e. the potential readers who do not have access to university library resources, cannot navigate confidently in inter-academic social networks. The fact that academics need to rely on alternative publishing platforms when they publish with proprietary journals indicates that commercial scientific publishing does not really contribute to the spread of knowledge and science but, in practice, limits it. This even constitutes a part of its business model, based as it is on paywalls that lock the texts away from the vast majority of readers. Like all other copyright based business models, academic publishing thrives on constructing an artificial scarcity of knowledge.

Works from this academic enclosure are consistently leaked and made accessible through piratical shadow libraries where large groups of users contribute by digitizing and uploading books, mostly in violation of copyright law. In some cases, particularly among the first generation of pirate libraries, the initial collection was made by university employees who had access to libraries as well as to computers. Over time, some of the larger shadow libraries have developed as different smaller text archives have merged into huge digital collections (Bodó, 2015).



While the digitization of conventional libraries is hampered by the publishers' restrictive policies on e-book licensing—which has sometimes created open conflicts between libraries and publishing organizations (Fredriksson 2015)—the shadow libraries are not subject to such legal, economic or administrative impediments. As Balasz Bodó puts it, “pirate libraries are the product of readers (and sometimes authors), academics and laypeople, all sharing a deep passion for the book, operating in a zone where there is little to no obstacle to the “ideal” library” (Bodó 2015: 75). Or as a pirate activist explained when he motivated his decision to scan and post thousands of books on The Pirate Bay:

I was thinking to myself. These books.... The whole purpose of the university back in the days was to send your kids off to it because that's where they had the libraries, the education, the expertise. That is no longer the case [...] everybody should have access to the education and the knowledge of all those books [...] it's a humanitarian effort to get that out there (quoted in Fredriksson 2015).

As Bodó (2015) points out, pirate libraries are underpinned by the idea that books in a digital age no longer need to be a scarce resource. Although the social network platforms and the pirate sites both make texts publicly and freely available, they do so according to different logics. On the social network platforms, the texts are circulated freely, but they remain tightly connected to the authorial persona since the very reason for disseminating the text is to promote the authors' status as an entrepreneurial subject in a neoliberal academia. Conversely, on the pirate sites, the texts stand on their own. Although the texts are certainly attributed to certain authors, the authorial persona is not the hub around which they are categorised and presented. Here, the reason to circulate the texts is not to promote their authors but to serve the readers.

These pirate libraries are often guided by an ideology calling for the public access to academic knowledge (Bodó 2015). In his “Guerilla Open Access Manifesto” the digital rights activist Aaron Swartz argues that it is not only the right but also the responsibility of all academics to ensure Open Access to their work. The proclamation thus includes a moral argument that all who have access to the knowledge produced within academia should help spread this knowledge. As Swartz writes,

those with access to these resources—students, librarians, scientists—you have been given a privilege. You get to feed at this banquet of knowledge while the rest of the world is locked out. But you need not—indeed, morally, you cannot—keep this privilege for yourselves. You have a duty to share it with the world. [...] There is no justice in following unjust laws (Swartz 2008).

However, as evidenced by the fate of Aaron Swartz who committed suicide in 2013, opposing these industries can in some cases have fatal consequences (Naughton 2015).<sup>1</sup> The fact that the European Union as well as many national research councils now require that the research they fund will be made available through Open Access forums lends post mortem restitution to Aaron Swartz, as it shows how the Open Access ethos is finding its way into public policies.

### **The Paths of Bellamy and Beer: Methods of Resistance or Persistence**

In order to embed these well-known critiques in a conversation on piracy one may recall, for example, the famous 'Free Prince Speech' attributed to pirate captain Samuel Bellamy who attempts to recruit a Captain Beer, the captain of a ship just captured:

I can't pass by in Silence, Captain Bellamy's Speech to Captain Beer. "D—n my Bl—d," says he, "I am sorry they won't let you have your Sloop again, for I scorn to do any one a Mischief, when it is not for my Advantage; damn the Sloop, we must sink her, and she might be of Use to you. Tho', damn ye, you are a sneaking Puppy, and so are all those who will submit to be governed by 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 Numskuls. They vilify us, the Scoundrels do, when there is only this Difference, they rob the Poor under the Cover of Law, forsooth, and we plunder the Rich under the Protection of our own Courage; had you not better make One of us, than sneak after the A—s of those Villains for Employment?" Captain Beer told him, that his Conscience would not allow him to break thro' the Laws of God and Man. "You are a devilish Conscience [conscientious] Rascal, d—n ye," reply'd Bellamy, "I am a free Prince, and I have as much Authority to make War on the whole World, as he who has a hundred Sail of Ships at Sea, and an Army of 100,000 Men in the Field; and this my Conscience tells me; but there is no arguing with such sniveling Puppies, who allow Superiors to kick them about Deck at Pleasure; and pin their Faith upon a Pimp of a Parson; a Squab, who neither practices nor believes what he puts upon the chuckle-headed Fools he preaches to" (Johnson 1999, 587; emphasis in original removed; quotation marks added).

When the attempt at recruitment is refused with reference to Beer's conscience, the Bellamy of this (heavily fictionalized) anecdote vehemently attacks not the normative foundations of Beer's position of conscience, but the naiveté of a position that the so-called 'honest trade' is in any way about honesty rather than about stabilizing and expanding prevailing structures of privilege. The trading companies, Bellamy suggests, are just as piratical as his own ship company is, and the only remaining question for any sailor or captain is: who is going to give me the more attractive deal for the work that I do, since I'm going to do it anyway, and since neither side is going to commit to me in the long run?

Beer, in contrast, asks and answers a different question. He doesn't care much about the conditions of his own precarious, but comparatively stable and secure, position in the 'honest trade.' He asks a different, yet no less relevant, question: where is the limit to this kind of critique? To this he answers:

*It is here, where I am asked to leave the institutional framework of the honest trade and become only and exclusively its critic, its enemy, its nemesis—at the price of perpetuating exactly those aspects of the system, and only them, which I try so hard to counterbalance from within when I refer to my conscience in the first place. My conscience will be the only thing that will be permanently sacrificed by such a cross-over into piracy—but not my structural reliance on the fact that a trade system exists. Once I help run it, once I help attack it: What, indeed, is the difference between those two evils?*

This story highlights two key points. First, defiance of a distributive order does not necessarily go hand in hand with the formulation of alternative visions (of trade or, in our own case, of knowledge production); secondly, that there is a much better chance of substantive systemic change from within, but only when equipped with insights from without. The confrontation of Bellamy and Beer does not give us exemplary characters who pursue this path to substantive systemic change. Instead, the exchange of two far more limited perspectives illustrates why precisely such a conversation may spark substantive reform.

Even though critical insights may influence individual decisions in profound ways (as in the case of Bellamy's decision to become a pirate, and Beer's decision not to become one) the story shows that both of these individual decisions are not foundational but reactive. The precarious social and institutional position of the academic is addressed in Bellamy's position, and emerges very clearly as a question of distributive justice within a system that views knowledge instrumentally—an instrument used to generate profit and to consolidate structural privilege and power. The academic does want a piece of the cake; he or she wants money,

resources and job security. This material dimension of research cannot be neglected, and Bellamy's brazen and extensive thematization of material wants and needs prevents us from glossing over this aspect of doing research.

At the same time, Beer's refusal to become a pirate draws attention to the normative side of research which goes beyond Bellamy's purely materialistic descriptions. Especially in the case of knowledge production, it is surely a hallmark of any scholar's self-understanding that the ends of their own research are not exhaustively described in terms of flexible tactical savviness. That scholarly research serves a higher, more general purpose is, indeed, what the scholarly consciousness tends to dictate. Nevertheless, Beer's relative speechlessness in the face of Bellamy's mockery indicates that such a perspective is ill-served by not considering the fact that high ideals are pursued in a system of trade/knowledge production that is designed to be unequal and to marginalize especially those mobile participants on whom it most depends. As Beer's example shows, normative visions which address this question can be preserved even in a systematically exploitative system, but they remain empty platitudes if they do not engage with the material conditions that empower certain sailors/scholars but not others (usually those who see these conditions most clearly).

It is ultimately this insight—in the very telling of the story—that is of interest to this article. Bellamy's analysis of the situation is compelling, but the question is raised whether the conclusions he draws are actually a normative rather than a tactical response: and we would argue 'no'. Beer's analysis of the situation is limited and far more superficial than Bellamy's, but his general insistence on norms and ideals seems better equipped for long-term change and reform.

It must be emphasized once more that the characters themselves, Beer and Bellamy, do not, in fact, communicate with each other. When their positions on piracy and trade are constructed as alternatives that exclude each other, when these questions are raised merely as ammunition in a confrontation, neither is capable of describing the situation or potential solutions satisfactorily. Yet the reader *is* capable of bringing them together because he or she is confronted with these positions as two sides of the same coin. As professional readers, contemporary academics may be particularly equipped to draw conclusions that systematize the provocation of this scene.

The story ultimately encapsulates the two dimensions in which piracy can be useful for the researcher. First, the tension between the pirate and the honest sailor emerges as an uncomfortably apt analogy for the description of contemporary research conditions; but on this basis, it also emerges as a reminder that, in order to exchange knowledge and to bring the results of scholarly thought together, the political benefits and limits of such perspectives have to be considered as part of that knowledge. Bellamy cannot think extensively about the possibilities opened

up by his critique because his critique serves to legitimate the conditions of his entire situation as an outlaw—his energy is needed to maintain his situation in the first place. Beer, on the other hand, cannot think too hard about the facts of his own position (i.e. that the system 'is exploitative of sailors like himself) because, simply put, Bellamy is right about it; but Beer, by not thinking about the problematic aspects of his honesty, is freed to think about the possibilities that emerge from his own situation in order to make it better.

Mobile career trajectories that are always partly outside and partly inside the institution of the university cannot afford either strategic blind spot: to lose sight either of the ideals that a system of privilege claims to answer to, or to the ways in which this particular systemic answer is exploitative or even abusive. This is also reflected in the study of piracy—or its systematized use as an allegory—that can help address and structure questions in which a difference in perspective (rather than, say, straightforward access to information) is the key obstacle to communicating effectively about global phenomena, dynamics and questions. Issues of copyright are a classic example here; but the expanded use of piracy as an allegory allows a broader use of the concept that does not require the signal use of terms such as 'copyright *piracy*.' There is much piracy that is not called piracy; as with any effective methodological toolbox, the kinship to piratical dilemmas and the accordant paradoxical provocations can be revealed by systematizing this toolbox.

The systematic study of pirate provocations, in this sense, emerges primarily as a meta-interdisciplinary enterprise. This is an interdisciplinarity that does not primarily bring together different text forms, historical trajectories and critical methodologies. Rather, it constitutes a critical *perspective on perspectives* most centrally interested in the study of seemingly incompatible and mutually hostile perspectives. The core question of piracy, according to Schillings (2011), is: *Why do we not understand each other even though we speak of the same phenomenon? What occasions this inability that is often also an unwillingness to engage? Why are we so unwilling—when and why do we resort to our conscience when we actually discuss aspects of knowledge? How and why are we so invested in perspectives? Can we, and should we, resist the conditions of our uneasy indebtedness to groups and institutions? Do we have the resources, the time, the standing for it—where can we renegotiate, and to which end should we renegotiate?*

### **Setting Sails for a Pirate Academia: A Conclusion**

The contemporary university institution envisions the bringing together of multiple knowledges, and seeks to foster an intellectual exchange that is in fact an open system of sharing. As long as the university remains at least nominally

devoted to such a vision (a vision that a scholarly Beer may refer to), the vision can be accessed to inspire reform and betterment from within. Ultimately, this possibility can be considered the underlying moral of the story of Bellamy and Beer, published as it was in Great Britain in the early eighteenth century when both maritime piracy and the quasi-sovereignty of trading companies in colonized territories were under severe political attack.

In times of geopolitical transformation, global uncertainty, and the ‘postfactual’ return of interpretation as a central tool of political tactics, the interdisciplinary generation of knowledge in particular can only benefit from including an awareness of the interested, biased, and deeply political foundations on which the university itself rests. Especially with regard to junior researchers who perpetually slip into and out of university systems, the precariousness of global life must impact an awareness of the precariousness of globalist institutional knowledge production.

Bellamy’s rage and Beer’s conscience, powerful structural criticism and an awareness of the intellectual possibilities of structural integration, deserve in-depth consideration. The pirate methodology we suggest would consist in the refusal to favor the arguments of either side, and in making them communicable as complementary rather than (only) conflicting perspectives on shared phenomena. These ‘perspectives’, brought together by the pirate methodology, are neither well-described as ‘academic positions on a specific problem’ nor as ‘normative positions on the world’. They are both, and more. The pirate is such an enduring figure because his or her ‘origin’ as a pirate is always a result of a fundamental decision regarding the question: What am I going to do with my life and my labor? The story of the pirate is so dramatic because he or she has decided to go, essentially, all critic. In contrast, the honest sailor Beer is uncritically constructive, a bureaucrat utterly fascinated by questions of degree.

Essentially, the vision of the pirate methodology is to enable a more genuine form of the much-belabored term ‘constructive criticism’. This requires an acknowledgement of, and closer engagement with, the simultaneity of social existence that is central to piratical debates, from Bellamy and Beer, through the Copyright Wars, to the enforcement of Xeer law off the coast of Somalia. As we have discussed in this article, that simultaneity does not only apply to our objects of research, but also to our roles as academics, which can rarely be pinpointed in one fixed position. This is not to say that we need to respond to the entrepreneurial self with an even greater abundance of masks, as Winfried Fluck points out, there is a certain bitter irony in responding to neoliberal demands with an effort to manage an even greater number of flexible, situation-appropriate faces (Fluck 2011). The point is rather to keep it all in the open, at the same time, and to allow the contradiction to stand.

However, our possibilities to act are also affected by the institutions we create and inhabit, and we should end this article by looking not to the individual but to the university. The place for this kind of constructive criticism – grounded in heterogeneity of perspectives and positions – remains the globalist, interdisciplinary university; a university that dares to unleash the Bellamy in their researchers, and to draw institutional consequences by remaining indebted to, and invested in, the equally uncomfortable lines in the sand drawn by Beer. It is also a university that, like pirate methodology, can take multiple positions simultaneously.

**James Arvanitakis** is the Dean of the Graduate Research School at Western Sydney University. A lecturer in the Humanities and a member of the University's Institute for Cultural and Society. His research areas include piracy, citizenship, future of universities and hope. He blogs at [www.jamesarvanitakis.net](http://www.jamesarvanitakis.net). E-mail: [J.Arvanitakis@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:J.Arvanitakis@westernsydney.edu.au)

**Martin Fredriksson** is associate professor at the Department of Culture Studies (Tema Q), Linköping University. He has worked extensively with issues concerning the theory and history of piracy, commons, property rights and the history of copyright. He has been visiting fellow at MIT, Western Sydney University and Amsterdam University and is currently finalising a project on the commodification of commons. E-mail: [martin.fredriksson@liu.se](mailto:martin.fredriksson@liu.se)

**Sonja Schillings** is an assistant professor at Justus-Liebig-University Giessen, Germany. Her work focuses on transnational American Studies at the intersections of law and literature as well as law and philosophy. Her book *Enemies of all Humankind: Fictions of Legitimate Violence* was published with the University Press of New England in 2017. E-mail: [Sonja.Schillings@gcsc.uni-giessen.de](mailto:Sonja.Schillings@gcsc.uni-giessen.de).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> In January 2011 Aaron Schwarz was arrested for downloading numerous articles from JSTOR from a computer he had hidden in a closet at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He was accused under federal law for crimes that could potentially give up to 35 years in jail. The prosecution was not primarily not instigated by JSTOR but by FBI who allegedly wanted to make an example of him. After two years of court processes he took his own life in January 2013.

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