

Word Work:

Modernity: The status quo, the code of law, a space consisting of Boundaries which determine the behavior of the people within. See Meta.

Agency: The ability to make choices, the capacity to act, Agency is the capacity to make choices, which can impart Power due to control over a situation

Ignorance: The lack of knowledge, information, or awareness, characteristic of a high degree of Naiveté

Meta: From Greek, after or beyond. In this case, the Meta is the Modernity. It is the overarching collection of strategies and tactics commonly used to succeed in a modernity. Contrast with Anti-Meta.

Anti-Meta: In this case, the ability to use tactics and strategies which directly counter strategies of the Meta, also called 'Playing the Meta'. Works against, not with the Meta

Power: The ability to influence or control behavior, authority. Specifically in this case, power is the ability to make situations, actions, and encounters benefit the wielder of power more than those beholden to it. Correlates with Agency; the one in power has Agency, while those under the influence of power do not.

Unpredictability: Something difficult or impossible to foretell or foresee. Can be derived from cunning or ignorance, as one cannot predict the actions of one who does not know their own limits.

Naiveté: A lack of experience, wisdom, or judgment. A combination of Ignorance and Naiveté makes for a dangerous, unpredictable foe. Can often lead to not knowing one's own limits or the limitations of other things, causing one to do what was thought impossible

Boundaries: A line that marks the limits of an area; a dividing line. Indicates where one thing starts and another begins. Can be used socially, indicating accepted behavior, in the case of modernities.

Transcend: Be or go beyond the range or limits of (something abstract, typically a conceptual field or division). To free oneself, to break out, to cross a line.

Ignorance is Powerⁱ

There is the idea out there which states that if one wants power, one must be knowledgeable about the constraints, loopholes, and inner workings of the space they inhabit. The phrase 'Knowledge is power' illustrates this thought. In many ways, people who think that idea are right, and the phrase will often hold true. However, there is the rare case when the utter ignorance of a situation grants one much more power than any knowledgeable inhabitant of the modernity in question. This paper will explore how this observation applies in the case of Treasure Islandⁱⁱ, specifically in the power dynamic between Long John Silver and Jim Hawkins, the knowledgeable inhabitant of many modernities, and the naïve young man who somehow saves the day, respectively. Firstly Long John Silver's brand of power will be explored, outlining his fluidity in swapping between modernities, and the expert analytic and cunning abilities he beholds. Secondly, Jim Hawkins will be analyzed for how his ignorance of the modernities around him allows him to transcend the boundaries between the British and Pirate codes, doing things no man from either camp would normally do. Thirdly, and also lastly, the transfer of power between Long John Silver and Jim Hawkins will be inspected in order to truly see the effect, contrast, and conflict between the two brands of power wielded by the subjects in question. Doing this will show the true power dynamic present in the book, and shows how Ignorance is not only bliss, but power as well.

Long John Silver's power comes from the mastery of traditional manipulation of the boundaries between modernities. In Treasure Island, he leverages both of the conflicting modernities of the HISPANOLA's crew. Through interacting with the British modernity, consisting of the Doctor, Squire, and Captain, as well as initially Jim Hawkins, Silver is able to earn their trust and become a member of the crew." I was standing on the dock, when, by the merest accident, I fell in talk with him. I found he was an old sailor, kept a public-house, knew all the seafaring men in Bristol, had lost his health ashore, and wanted a good berth as cook to get to sea again. He had hobbled down there that morning, he said, to get a smell of the salt. I was monstrously touched--so would you have been--and, out of pure pity, I engaged him on the spot to be ship's cook. Long John Silver, he is called, and has lost a leg; but that I regarded as a recommendation, since he lost it in his country's service, under the immortal Hawke."ⁱⁱⁱ Silver is using his knowledge of the British modernity, the pity given to him as a crippled man to get himself on the ship, where he can then leverage the modernity of the pirates to become captain of the mutineers. His great knowledge about what people expect, and knowing people's motivations and opinions, allows Silver to craftily weave to his audience what they want to hear, manipulating them using the ideals of their respective modernities. The best example can be seen in the passage "'Silver, sir,' returned the captain; 'he's as anxious as you and I to smother things up. This is a tiff; he'd soon talk 'em out of it if he had the chance, and what I propose to do is to give him the chance.'"^{iv}, where the captain explains his leveraging abilities, or perhaps after Silver gets the black Spot, but upon revealing the map, is re-welcomed into the fold "'Silver!' they cried. 'Barbecue forever! Barbecue for cap'n!'"^v. In both cases, Silver, looking out for the mutineer's mission in the first passage and purely himself in the second, is able to calm angry pirates using their own ideals and desires, protecting his own interests in the meanwhile. Silver, thus, with a foot in both camps, is able to control for himself specific outcomes, allowing him to maximize his personal gains while minimizing risk and costs associated with being in any one camp solely. It is this flexibility and fluidity which grants Silver the power, as being able to predict and fix outcomes of any situation allows one a great deal of power, as everything can be made to go the right way.

Jim Hawkins, in stark contrast to Silver, gains power in a decidedly different manner. Instead of prediction, careful calculation, and modernity manipulation, Jim unknowingly uses his ignorance and agency as his greatest source of power. Stepping back, in any modernity, there are clear lines which separate one modernity from another, and a set of rules and customs inherent to a particular modernity

which guide the actions of its members. In the case of Jim Hawkins, his naiveté is his greatest asset. He does not truly know where the boundaries of the British modernity reside, and thus is free to step over those lines unwittingly, and this is key, unpredictably. In essence, Jim has unknowingly created his own momentary modernity consisting of only one person: himself. His modernity is governed by his own personal rules of conduct, and while they may be similar to the typical British modernity, the rules and guidelines are distinctly his own. Take when he first jumped ashore: "It occurred to me at once to go ashore. In a jiffy I had slipped over the side and curled up in the fore-sheets of the nearest boat, and almost at the same moment she shoved off."^{vi} In hindsight, he took it at both a mistake and a saving grace. It was his impulsivity and brashness which allowed him to store away in the landing party, something proper gentlemen of the British modernity would never do. The Doctor, Squire, and Captain all approach their predicament in a predictable and straight forward manner, never even for a second considering going ashore. But Jim Hawkins' unpredictable agency contained within his personal modernity allows him to make choices inconceivable to the traditional Pirate and British Modernities, and thus giving Jim power over them.

The transfer of power between Jim and Silver happens slow at first, but then readily become apparent as Jim's separate modernity begins to be defined. As stated earlier, Silver's advantage is his mastery of two modernities, and primarily, of predicting the behavior of the men in those modernities. As Jim was originally of the British modernity, Silver was able to use his cunning to befriend Jim, much like the other British modernity members. This all changed when Jim was in the apple barrel, an occurrence resulting from Jim's agency and youth, which allowed him to sleep in the barrel, something no one else would do. It was in this moment his unpredictability began, and the power transfer between Silver and Jim truly started. Before the barrel, Silver had the expedition in a bag. He had the British fooled, and the mutineers all on his side. The plan was simple and efficient, and likely would have gone on with minimal hitches. But hitches there were. As soon as Jim overheard Silver's conversation, the power and agency in leveraging the situation began to transfer to him, as he could now react to Silver's plan, and Silver could not predict what was coming. The second big transfer of power was Jim's split decision to stow away on the boat, taking Silver by surprise. This decision led to the discovery of Ben Gunn, which eventually led to the beaching of the *HISPANOLA* and knowledge of the treasure's location. Because Jim was unpredictable, he was able to foil Silver's plans. The power transferred to Jim, because of his unpredictable actions. Silver was forced into a reactionary position, instead of initiating actions himself. In essence, Silver lost his most valuable tool: the ability to make predictions of people's actions based on their membership in a specific modernity. Jim's new modernity, one unfamiliar and foreign to Silver, allowed him to nullify any power Silver had, and in turn, gain power for himself. Silver played the Meta, but Silver played the Anti-Meta.^{vii}

Power is gained from the ability to act, and make people react to those actions. It could come from an innate knowledge of a space or modernity, like in the case of Long John Silver, allowing one to predict the actions of others and plan accordingly, the traditional 'Knowledge is power'. Power could also come from rendering that knowledge useless, and forcing reactionary actions, always staying one step ahead, being unpredictable. In this case, Jim was unpredictable because he didn't know what being predictable was. His ignorance, his naiveté, allowed him to transcend the boundaries of restrictive modernities, and forge his own path, and in doing so, was able to overcome the cunning and modernity mastery of Silver. In this case, ignorance was power. Jim didn't know enough to know what couldn't be done.^{viii}

End Notes

ⁱ If you are interested in where I got the main idea for this paper, see:

<http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/AchievementsInIgnorance>

ⁱⁱ I would like to note that I read a free online copy of this book, so my citations will be using chapters, because there are no page numbers.

ⁱⁱⁱ Chapter 7, "I Go to Bristol" Treasure Island

^{iv} Chapter 13, "How My Shore Adventure Began" Treasure Island

^v Chapter 29, "The Black Spot Again" Treasure Island

^{vi} Chapter 13, "How My Shore Adventure Began" Treasure Island

^{vii} I wanted to go into this concept more, but ran out of space. I took the term 'Meta' from the medium of Competitive Videogames. In games, the Meta, or Metagame is the idea of the 'good strategies' or the most common strategies that are competitive and don't flat out suck. The term is the Metagame because it recognizes things like usage statistics for specific units or characters, or matchups against other characters or what abilities are currently most useful, all of which are not included in the 'vanilla' game. The concept of Anti-Meta is choosing the strategies or units that best counter the most popular and common strategies. An example of this in real life would be to attack a platoon of horsemen with pike men, whom are very effective against mounted combatants but less so if the enemy were foot soldiers. In the specific Treasure Island case, Jim is Anti-Meta because his unpredictability prevents the effective usage of Silver's ability to play both Modernities, as he can not anticipate Jim's actions, and thus cannot create adequate counters or preemptive strikes.

^{viii} I really hope I did this assignment correctly, and that right now I am doing the correct thing with end notes. I am definitely not used to this kind of class, so I hope I have not screwed up this assignment, although I feel I am not the only one in my position. Really, to improve my understanding, I feel there are a few important points I will ask. Firstly, would it be possible to have a clear handout or something describing these papers? We talked a bit in class about what this paper should contain, but it would be really nice to have a place to reference. Secondly, the ambiguity is hard. I know the class is a disruption and that kind of thing, but concreteness would be nice. Also, a list of presentation dates would be nice, as I forget when mine is. Lastly, speaking of presentations, are there posted guidelines of what to present? Do we turn something in? I don't remember hearing anything about that. Thank you for your time, and I hope this paper is somehow good, and not going off in some random direction.