

# Treasure Island and the Economy of Hegemonic Resistance<sup>1</sup>

Mona Hoorvash\*<sup>2</sup>  
Selma Rezvanjoo<sup>3</sup>

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## Abstract

This research looks at Robert Louise Stevenson's renowned adventure romance, *Treasure Island*, in the light of its representation of social class struggles and the function of hegemonic conditioning in those struggles. It draws upon Antonio Gramsci's theories of hegemony and culture, coercion and consensus, and his notion of the organic intellectual. The careful analysis of the novel demonstrates the author's critical attitude toward the dominant social system and his hope for an eventual breach in that system. The novel depicts the underlying hegemonic mind-frames that rule over social relationships from which very few characters can escape, and suggests that mass revolutions might not be successful in the toppling of the existing hegemony. Through the figure of Long John Silver, who is here compared to the organic intellectual of Gramsci's theories, the novel proposes a cunning method of resistance against hegemonic forces similar to the Gramscian notion of war of position that could free people from hegemonic subjugation and lead them to success.

**Keywords:** Gramsci, hegemony, Class Struggle, organic intellectual, Victorian Adventure Romance.

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<sup>2</sup> Assistant professor of English Literature, Alzahra University, (Corresponding author); [m.hoorvash@alzahra.ac.ir](mailto:m.hoorvash@alzahra.ac.ir)

<sup>3</sup> MA student of English Literature, Alzahra University; [s.rezvanjoo@student.alzahra.ac.ir](mailto:s.rezvanjoo@student.alzahra.ac.ir)

## Introduction

*Treasure Island* is one of the outstanding classics of adventure fiction and of literature for children and young adults. It was received very well in its time and has been republished as a classic over the years, with numerous adaptations as films, cartoons and television series. In spite of Stevenson's favoring of escape literature, such a widely acclaimed, read and reviewed book is bound to have an impact on its readers as an "instrument for raising serious issues" (Hunt, 1996, p. 333). The nature of these issues, however, is up to debate.

Published for the first time in 1883 as a complete book (it was published as *Treasure Island, or the Mutiny of the Hispaniola* in sequential installments in a children's magazine from 1881 to 1882), this Victorian novel was written around the time of Karl Marx's death. Critics have shown that the novel was influenced by the rising criticism of the age regarding class divisions and the social system (see Fletcher, 2007). Yet the novel seems to be quite forward looking, going beyond Marx's social criticism and being more in tune with the theories of a later Marxist thinker, Antonio Gramsci, who was born several years after its publication. It is interesting to note that Gramsci had read *Treasure Island* among other classics of children's literature, and had a "lifelong interest in literature for children of all ages" (Rosengarten, 2014, p. 81).

This paper seeks to analyze and interpret *Treasure Island* from a Marxist perspective with a specific focus on the concept of hegemony and dominant ideology based on Antonio Gramsci's theories. We study how the novel depicts the dominant class's reactions to backlashes from the lower classes, either by force or by infiltrating the mindset of the lower classes with culturally constructed ideological frameworks and value systems. In the previous readings, the novel has mistakenly been regarded as an ideological proponent of the dominant class, upholding middle-class Victorian values which ensure the stability of the *status quo*; but we show in this study that a careful and critical reading of the novel makes the author's criticism of the traditional class system clear by proposing a resistance method which resembles Gramsci's demand to challenge the authority through its hegemony.

Earlier studies of the novel tend not to care much about the social function of the novel. It is regarded as a novel of "action" (Cooper, 1967, p. 39), and looking for its underlying value system is just "as irrelevant as attempting to assign moral value to the baseball game" (Kiely, 1971, p. 380). Most of the Marxist readings of the novel seem to mainly propose that Stevenson has done nothing beyond merely representing the class consciousness of the Victorian society. There are, however a number of studies suggesting Stevenson's more ambiguous stance against capitalism. Naomi Wood (1998), in her influential article "Gold Standards and Silver Subversions", links the social value system with the notion of the binary opposition between gold and silver. Although her analysis points to "Stevenson's ironic critique of essentialist evaluative mode" (Wood, 1998, p. 61), its general conclusion leaves the pirates and most of the lower class characters in the silver zone.

Robert Irvine (2010) describes the manifestations of class division in *Treasure Island*, and asserts that Stevenson who was fully aware of the underlying class struggle between the characters, chose to depict it in a simplified manner through the eyes of a young teenager, Jim, whose young mind “understands the conflict in simple terms of right and wrong, unmediated by social categories such as class” though the adult reader can distinguish scenes “in which the social power of the gentleman over the lower classes is unambiguously displayed” (p. 28). Here again the novel’s analysis of the different methods of resistance is overlooked and the lower classes are left in the position allocated to them by the society.

Although there are not many Marxist readings of the novel that fully analyze the author’s critical position against the Victorian social values, recent post-colonial studies of Stevenson’s novels are pointing to his anti-imperialist attitudes (see Bogle Petterson, 2010; Thurmond, 2012), drawing more attention to the social consciousness of the novels. In a recent study, David G. Higgins (2015) demonstrates how Stevenson questions “the colonial ideal of the adventure novel”, presenting a picture that is “far from an idealized image of British manhood and territorial conquest” (p. 53). However, Higgins misses the hegemonic prevalence of the social values on the characters of the novel when he asserts that the Island is a “neutral stage” where “the boundaries which the laws and conventions of society ... assert over the characters” are removed (Higgins, 2015, p. 62), while the Island is in fact a deft microcosm of the society where power struggles and hegemony become more conspicuous in the minutes of the relationships among the characters.

As explained above, the contribution of the present study to the existing knowledge is that it demonstrates how Stevenson is critical of the social system of his time, how he is conscious of the ever-present role of culture and hegemony in shaping that system and reaffirming the authority of the *status quo*, and how he manifests a desire for change. We show that Stevenson’s novel examines the different methods the working classes can choose to react against the ruling class and, contrary to the dominant socialist beliefs of his time which followed Marx and his demand for a revolutionary uprising, Stevenson shrewdly doubts the probability of the success of an armed revolution since it cannot change people’s hegemonic mindset. This study demonstrates that the favored way of resistance in this novel is the method used by Long John Silver to challenge the dominant hegemony, which is in tune with Gramsci’s idea of war of position.

Therefore, this article’s significance lies in its refutation of some of the previous readings of the novel by proving that *Treasure Island* does more than merely observing and representing the social structure of Victorian England; it critically analyzes the possibilities of change and eventually proposes a way of resistance that can be used beyond the world of fiction and in the actual society. In proving this claim, we have used aspects of Gramsci’s theories that have not been applied to this novel before.

## An Overview of Antonio Gramsci's Theories

Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) is one of the significant thinkers and philosophical commentators of Marxism whose ideas are closely applicable in literary criticism. The major bulk of his ideas available to us are taken from his 33 notebooks written during his prison sentence under Mussolini's fascist regime, published under the title of *Prison Notebooks*.

Gramsci sees literature as a tool for the privileged class to impose, naturalize and imply its own values on subaltern level of society as “common sense” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 625). This is one reason for “the tremendous importance Gramsci attached to cultural analysis” (Buttigieg, 1982, p. 24). In his thought, the work of art and the critic are both in connection with history and not cut off from social relations and he goes so far as to maintain that “pure literature separate from culture is an illusion” (Buttigieg, 1982, p. 27–29). He criticizes the notion of art for art's sake which was vastly popular during his early years, and believes that even the aesthetic attitude cannot “prevent one from investigating the mass of feelings and the attitude towards life present in the work of art itself” (Gramsci, 2000, p. 398). Artists and works of art are affected and do affect the shape of the social superstructure. For instance, their representation of a society's class structure may either reinforce or challenge that structure.

Marxism always pays special attention to the fundamental struggle between the two classes of proletariat and bourgeoisie. The proletariat can be defined as the lower classes, the working classes or labor forces with limited or no ownership upon the means of production in the society, and the bourgeoisie as the higher, richer class with ownership over knowledge, expertise, money and in general the means of production. This latter class effectively rules the social arena, sets norms and defines values. And according to Antonio Gramsci, it also naturalizes the practices that directly or indirectly serve the goal of reinforcing and prolonging its reign, through shaping the mind of the society by creating “the uncritical and largely unconscious way of perceiving and understanding the world that has become ‘common’ in any given epoch” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 625). The ruling class gets to define social, cultural and moral values and to form ideologies because it holds the economic means to do so and because based on those ideologies the working class would submit to the norm of serving under the reign of the ruling class, or in Marxist terminology, the bourgeoisie. Defining the social, cultural and moral values of the society, the ruling class in many ways determines the order of the world and depicts it as a *normal* given. The poor will be poor and submissive and the rich will be wise and powerful. The upper class remains entitled to every benefit, and it all seems normal like a certain unchangeable fact.

Gramsci takes the previously developed concepts of hegemony and expands this idea in the form of cultural hegemony to describe the effects of the capitalist hold over societies (Gramsci, 1971, p. 448). Hegemony can be defined as a situation in which the cultural atmosphere of the society guarantees that “the interests of a single class dominate those of the subordinate classes” (Markowicz, 2011, p. 224). Gramsci prefers the term “hegemony” to “domination”,

since the latter “fails to acknowledge the active role of subordinate people in the operation of power” (Jones, 2006, p.41). Hegemony is achieved by reaching “consent”; it is not achieved by brute force or military action; it is not a “direct domination”; it is rather ensured by “political and cultural means” (Markowicz, 2011, p. 224). It includes “either one of the heads (consent) or both twin heads (coercion and consent) of Machiavelli’s Centaur: force (coercion) + consent or else force + hegemony (consent)” (Mayo, 2015, p.12). The key point with regards to hegemony is the working class’s “consent to the conditions” where the ruling class uses moral, religious and intellectual “persuasion” to gain the consent (Markowicz, 2011, p. 224). Gramsci believes that the legitimacy of the dominance of a social class in the eyes of the people is based on hegemony, which is not exactly a forced “political leadership”, but rather the construction of ideological leadership in the society based on “a complex set of practices designed to win the active and passive consent of key social actors in a particular historical bloc, while securing the compliance of others” (Howarth, 2015, p. 198).

Ideologies form during power struggles between different dominant or rising powers or “hegemonic groups”, and art’s “social function” is determined in such situation as the instrument of expression for one group or the other (Markowicz, 2011, p. 224). Intellectuals, artists and authors whose works are acceptable to the dominant frame of thought, indirectly shape the consciousness of the masses to form “spontaneous consent” among various strata of the society (Gramsci, 1971, pp.140-145) to accept the values of the ruling class as self-evident truths, and thus unconsciously act in favor of their own domination by that authority. Therefore, “the social function of intellectuals ... is to direct, organize and lead others” (Markowicz, 2011, p. 224). Such intellectuals play an important role in the creation of what Engels calls a “false consciousness” among the people (Eagleton, 1991, p. 89), achieved by constructing a hegemonic culture that naturalizes and institutionalizes the values in favor of the ruling class. The result of turning the false consciousness into the socially acclaimed common sense is the implementation of the belief that what the ruling class does is not only right and just but also beneficial to all levels of society including the working classes, and that supporting the bourgeois values and ideology and standing in its service would be to the benefit of all classes in the society.

However, Gramsci differentiates between two distinct kinds of intellectuals. The “traditional intellectual”, usually institutionally educated with an academic background, believes to be a free agent of the society, unaffected by ideological frame works, while in fact his or her intellectual contributions strengthens the ideology of the already dominant class (Gramsci, 2000, p. 301-307). The “organic intellectual”, on the other hand, usually comes from groups and classes in the society who are trying to rise into power (and in doing so are naturally resisting the already dominant group) and is backed up by technical specialization and experience of real life rather than academic “eloquence” (Gramsci, 2000, p. 321). The organic intellectuals are there to answer the “need to create the conditions most favorable to the expansion of their own class” (Gramsci, 2000, p.301). They seem to be responsible for the expression and formation of

new ideologies that ensure the good of their social class and challenge the previously dominant hegemonies.

Gramsci further divides the dominant institutions of the society into political and civil sectors, in which the political sector is obviously the state and the civil sector consists of all the institutions in the community that in any way help to promote the hegemonic ideology of the dominant with the use of media and educational institutions, although for the most part and in many cases these two sectors are the same entity and their functions are directed by the state in favor of one “historical bloc” (Gramsci, 2000, p. 224 & 424).

For these two sectors, Gramsci also recognizes two types of power relations within the community; that of “Dominio” or coercion and “Direzione” or consensus, in other words, “direct enforcement” and the “persuasion methods” (Ramos, 1982, Part II, para. 5). The working classes receive this message repeatedly that it is only natural and normal that they live under their current circumstances, since they have not been fortunate enough to access valuable education or money, and as a result they do not deserve to be in the position of power. This message also implies that it is only natural that the wealthy, educated upper-class, believed to be wise and morally correct, would have the right to rule and decide the right and wrong of every matter and take on the leadership of the less fortunate classes.

In a situation where economic means equal power, the dream of class mobilization builds the ultimate goal of the members of the classes of the subaltern. Yet class mobilization is recognized by the dominant as threatening, in the same way as the creation of new “organic ideologies” (Gramsci, 2000, p.199) among the various groups of society is regarded as threatening. Social climbers are deemed dangerous to the established order of things since they are capable of introducing the possibility of new orders, just like the organic intellectuals. This in turn causes anxiety in the upper classes (Gramsci, 2000) and leads them to resort to coercive action and violent force as well as reinforcement of hegemonic strategies. When cultural hegemony is working strongly, the dominant does not feel the need to use coercion because the lower classes themselves cooperate actively or passively in their own subordination, but when the hegemonic consensus gets weak due to the rise of new orders or ideologies, the balance of power has to be reestablished forcefully before going back to the consent making process. In other words, when the hegemony of the dominant is in danger, coercion is also on the table.

However, as mentioned before, Gramsci does not regard hegemony to be a one-way relationship. The dialectic nature of hegemony, the fact that it shapes and gets shaped, that it fluctuates by different ideologies at work in any society (and not the single dominant ideology) shows that the other, or the working class, can and does inevitably resist and affect the ideology of the dominant to change the hegemony.

Gramsci proposes the “war of maneuver” and the “war of position” as two strategies of resistance (Gramsci, 2000, pp. 225-230). The first is a direct strug-

gle which is quick in effect and works against those hegemonies that are already weakened, which is not specifically prescribed by Gramsci who warns against the dominant's coercive backlash to frustrate this way of resistance. The other strategy, which takes longer to show results but is more permanent in effects, is done from within the system, gradually, through cultural debates in order to change the ideological principles before launching an attack on the structure. This method which is called the war of position, according to Gramsci, is more suitable for situations where the state hegemony is much stronger than that of the opposing forces (Egan, 2014). This is a "figurative revolutionary war" in which "Gramsci elevated intellectuals to the front and center" (Mittropoulos, 2016, para. 13). One can conclude that the organic intellectual can play an active role in this method of resistance, by engaging in dialectic debates to pose the new, arising ideology of its own stratum or social class against that of the dominant class, hollowing the latter from within, revealing its contradictions and attacking its vulnerable spots. Thus the organic intellectual challenges and resists the validity of the dominant hegemony to be a proponent of change. *That*, interestingly, is the process we face in Stevenson's *Treasure Island*.

### **Class Consciousness and Hegemony in *Treasure Island***

A close reading of *Treasure Island* suggests the theme of class opposition: bourgeoisie versus working class. The main part of the novel occurs aboard *Hispaniola* or on the Island. This relatively isolated setting acts as a microcosm of the whole society. The characters of the novel fall into two different parties which more or less correspond with the social classes. The members of the upper and middle classes setting sail in search of a lost treasure on one side, and the rebellious lower class pirates on the other side enact the clash between the two classes in the actual society.

The first group, the gentry, includes three important characters, each a "gen'lman born" (Stevenson, 1883, p. 111), who are clearly class conscious, both in their behavior and their aspirations. They know their position and its prerogatives and look at the commoners from a superior point of view. Wood associates "gentlemen born" with the "inherent quality, [of] one having little to do with the fluctuations of chance," thus connecting them with "gold" (Wood, 1998, p. 65). The assurance this "inherent" superiority gives them is the key factor that entitles them to the treasure which, in fact, is not theirs. Interestingly, not even the pirates make any objection to the gentry's right of ownership; it is accepted by everyone.

The members of the second category, the commoners, are country men, servants, seamen and pirates in this novel. Because of their social standing, when confronted by a member of the upper class, these people assume a humble and inferior role. They know that they are considered inferior and, as a result, they come to regard themselves as inferior, too. For instance, the narrator tells us that the wild, rough and rebellious pirates look "more like charity-school children than blood guilty mutineers and pirates" during the doctor's

visit to them on the island (Stevenson, 2009, p. 213). They are not so bold when face to face with a gentleman born.

The most important members of the first group, Squire Trelawney, Dr. Livesey, and Captain Smollett, represent the dominant classes of the society and with their wealth and education get to dominate the microcosm of the novel both culturally and legally. One visible sign of their cultural dominance is their distinguished, genteel code of conduct and their disdain for lower classes who do not observe this culturally reinforced code, the etiquette which is made to connote certain values such as moral uprightness and trustworthiness. A gentleman born is not regarded by the society only as a gentleman in behavior, but also as superior in human values.

An example of Stevenson's consciousness of this situation is presented to us early in the novel, when Dr. Livesey meets Billy Bones, the pirate in possession of the treasure map. Jim Hawkins, the young teenage narrator who is from the working class, is mesmerized as he describes the eye-catching contrast between the tidy, well-groomed doctor and the dirty and shabby drunk pirate (Stevenson, 1883), and confesses that the doctor is looked upon as a superior being both by the "coltish country folk" and by Jim, himself, who tries in vain to prove that he has a higher and better awareness than the country folk he keeps in disdain (Stevenson, 1883, p. 13). By trying to be associated with the source of power and education (the doctor), he enacts the hegemonic belief in the inferiority and undesirability of the lower-class country people.

The economically dominant group also holds the control of the legal power in the novel as well as the society. Dr. Livesey gets to intimidate the otherwise very intimidating Billy Bones by declaring that he is not only the doctor in the area but also the local magistrate (Stevenson, 1883), exerting his legal dominance in a manner that belittles Bones before others: "The doctor never so much as moved. He spoke to him, as before, over his shoulder and in the same tone of voice" (Stevenson, 1883, p.15).

In keeping with Antonio Gramsci's theories, in *Treasure Island* there are tell-tale signs of the existence of a strong "hegemony" or what he labels as "cultural hegemony" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 448), where the dominant class defines and benefits from the cultural values. These values and norms, created and promoted by the dominant and its agencies, are so repeatedly drilled into the thought frame of the society that they have taken the shape of common sense, as explained before, so *naturalized* that they are hardly ever openly questioned, or even noticed as unnatural. "It is not" as Marx puts it, "the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness" (as cited in Webster, 1993, p. 58), which is clearly the case in the novel.

The financial and social standing of characters of *Treasure Island* decides whether their actions are right or wrong. Wood reads the novel as "a romance about money, an excursion that, in its search for treasure, also defines the value of persons in monetary terms" (Wood, 1998, p. 61). From Gramsci's point of

view, it is not only the value of men, but the value of their actions that is decided by “hegemony”. Thus, the legitimacy of the treasure hunt for the gentry and the illegitimacy of the pirate’s claim on the treasure (though, to begin with, the treasure belonged to a dead pirate, the legendary Captain Flint, and the pirates of the novel were his crew) is decided by the difference in the social status of their respective classes in the Victorian society (Higgins, 2015, p.61). In the world of the novel it is the gentlemen who stand at the righteous side of the equation of power.

When Jim takes possession of the treasure map and brings it to Dr. Livesey and Squire Trelawney, the gentlemen feel pretty much entitled to that treasure and decide to take the journey in search of it, while the pirates are blamed for their greed and viewed as worthless outlaws fighting teeth and nail to get to the treasure. What is depicted legally and morally right for one group is deemed wrong and unlawful for the other. This distinction that is considered so natural that nobody questions it (not even the pirates!) is the result of a prevailing ideology. This ideology keeps telling the society that what a gentleman does is moral and what a pirate (a member of the lower class, subversive to the authorities) does is not. This is the kind of Gramscian “common sense” that everybody agrees on.

In fact, the mere knowledge that these gentlemen decide to discover the treasure seems like a relief to the citizens (Jim’s mother and others, including the potential reader). It promises the treasure would fall into *good* hands who would put an end to the chaos the pirates have created in search of the treasure. The gentry should seek and obtain the treasure to maintain peace. It is implied that the doctor with his education and legal authority, the Squire with his connection to the nobility and his experience of travelling around the world, together with Captain Smollett, know better how to handle that fortune, and it is better for the society to have *them* possess the treasure.

## **Jim and the False Consciousness**

Stevenson claims that he started writing this novel for the entertainment of his stepson, Lloyd Osbourne (Japp, 1996). Thus, he appropriately chooses a teenage narrator, Jim, as a relatable character for the young adult reader. Jim is an innocent simple boy when he is at home, working in his family-owned inn, serving the society and earning a humble and respectable living beside his mother. But the appearance of Billy Bones, a strange guest at the inn who turns out to be a pirate, changes his life. After the pirate’s death, Jim is the one who finds the map to the treasure, but he does not even look at it before he presents it to Dr. Livesey and Squire Trelawney, who decide to embark on a journey to find it. They decide (charitably) to take Jim along as a cabin boy.

And that is how Stevenson sets Jim out on a series of adventures that give him the chance to rise to occasion many times, show his bravery and gain experience, with the final reward of wealth, maturity and wisdom. Although, his experience is mainly focused on good service to the dominant class and proper

conduct toward them; he practically saves their lives several times. Because of his efficient and loyal service, he is eventually granted not only wealth by the dominant, but also “father figures” from among the upper classes (Cremer, 2016, p. 5) to secure him a symbolic gentlemanly position, thus legitimizing his social climbing, less through the winning of the treasure as an adventurous young soul than through the sanction and sponsorship of the ruling class.

This is also true of the other lower class characters who are affiliated with the gentry: their servants and workers. The only acknowledgment or glory they can gain seems to come from the dominant class, in reward for their loyal services. Characters like Redruth, Joyce and Hunter are in honest service of the dominant group. Redruth, for example, fights to death to save the lives of his masters and in return, when he is shot dead, he gets a respectful burial wrapped under a Union Jack flag; symbolizing salvation for the man who serves the dominant truthfully (Stevenson, 1883). The Union Jack is repeatedly used to remind the reader of the connection of the gentry to a country of nobility and also to give an official air and imply having strong nationalistic roots. How could a 19<sup>th</sup> century young and proud English reader not side with the gentry in the book and consent to their honesty and honor?

The novel clearly depicts the dominance of what Engels calls false consciousness; here the false consciousness is the belief that being at the service of the dominant is the way to prosperity or at least safety and survival. This idea is present in many stages of the story, implying the importance of the willfully subservient connection to the ruling class.

One might question the ideological attitude of Stevenson’s work, accusing him of propagating the hegemony of the dominant. This, however, is not the case when we consider the other side of the social equilibrium in the novel, the pirates, especially Long John Silver and the role he plays in the class struggle.

## The Pirates and the Crisis of Authority

The pirates of *Treasure Island* seem to be Stevenson’s method for analyzing the power struggle underneath the surface of a society which pretends to be unified under one hegemony, with its different classes living peacefully each in their socially assigned place. Acting as antagonists to the gentry’s treasure hunt, the pirates portray the anxiety of the dominant class regarding social climbers. The pirates understandably look for a better way of life and by seeking the treasure they try to gain the economic power necessary for that purpose. What they are aiming at is what Jim acquires in the end of the novel, the life of a gentleman through social mobilization. However, unlike Jim, they are not willing to get there by serving the dominant. Ironically, they even refer to themselves as “Gentlemen of fortune” (Stevenson, 1883, p.78). This aspiration of the lower class to reach the status of the “gentleman” on its own and without the consent and supervision of its superiors (i.e. the upper class) creates an anxiety in the dominant class that sees its authority reduced and fears the “other” stepping over its boundaries. This threatens the hegemonic belief that the only way to suc-

cess is through the service of the upper classes, which is crucial to their dominance.

As explained above, the mechanisms of establishing control over the classes of the society according to Gramsci are those of “Dominio” or coercion and “Direzione” or consensus, in other words, the direct enforcement of the will and ideas of the dominant as well as the persuasion of the masses to accept and regard the hegemonic ideology as natural and right (Ramos, 1982, part II, para. 5). When hegemony is well-established and strong enough to hold its grounds, the dominant class tries to create “Direzione” (Gramsci, 2000, p. 249), to obtain the consent of the masses to accept the *status quo* as an order beneficial to all. As we see in the beginning chapters of the novel, life in England sounds peaceful, the classes know their respective places and values, the gentry are respected for being the gentry, and the working classes, having peacefully accepted the current social order as the natural way things should go, are busy serving the society obediently. But with the appearance of Billy Bones, and consequently other pirates, a crisis takes shape which later culminates in their act of revolution, the mutiny.

This can be similar to what Gramsci calls the “crisis of authority”: when groups in the society challenge the accepted hegemony or propose a different ideology, the balance of power is disturbed (Gramsci, 1999, p. 451). But Gramsci believes that the disturbance is often short-lived since the rest of the society which is affected by the new perspective “are not all capable of orienting themselves equally swiftly, or of reorganizing with the same rhythm” (p. 451) as the endangered dominant class does. The ruling class often makes the best of this opportunity to regain authority:

The traditional ruling class, which has numerous trained cadres, changes men and programmes and, with greater speed than is achieved by the subordinate classes, reabsorbs the control that was slipping from its grasp. Perhaps it may make sacrifices, and expose itself to an uncertain future by demagogic promises; but it retains power, reinforces it for the time being, and uses it to crush its adversary and disperse his leading cadres, who cannot be very numerous or highly trained. (p. 451)

Early in the novel, the dominant group reacts against the threat of the appearance of the pirates by using force, killing and arresting the pirates, confiscating the treasure map and eliminating the threat. Once they are in possession of the treasure map, the order is restored at least temporarily.

The class struggle visible in different stages of the narrative results in many instances in resorting to coercion or consensus methods on the part of the dominant class to keep the balance of power in their favor. Once *Hispaniola* sets sails, the situation seems to be in favor of the gentry. Unaware that the pirates are organized against them (they have thrown one man overboard and are planning a mutiny), the dominant is attempting at gaining the consent of the crew by providing enough food, apples and all they need for a peaceful journey. Once the fear of mutiny arises, however, the members of the gentry get their guns out again to protect their authority and save their position. The gentry,

fighting under the symbolic authority of the Union Jack, kill almost twice as many as the pirates, yet they maintain the position of the rightful who is wronged. The fluctuation of power-balance happens several times in the story, shifting the power to either side at intervals. In the end, it is the hegemony that decides the outcome of the struggle and not the force; the eventual defeat of the pirates is more due to their own acceptance of their inferiority and inadequacy than the military excellence of the gentry.

The pirates of *Treasure Island* are typically portrayed with severely self-destructive behaviors, individually (being always drunk on rum) and as a group (fighting deadly fights among themselves). They also suffer from lack of hygiene (social etiquette) and intelligence (embodying the contradiction of being violent and blood-thirsty and at the same time gullible and simple minded). They lack the knowledge and discipline necessary for uniting their powers against the higher classes, and even when they are successful in their piracies, they act as the society expects of a pirate, wasting their money and losing the chance to change their social status: “When a cruise is done, why, it’s hundreds of pounds instead of hundreds of farthings in their pockets. Now, the most goes for rum and a good fling, and to sea again in their shirts” (Stevenson, 1883, p. 78). Unconsciously accepting the stereotypical image of the pirate created by the hegemony of the society as their only choice, they behave in accordance with the expectation of the dominant, guaranteeing their own defeat and eventual subordination.

Ironically, the smaller society of the pirates copies the structure and hierarchy of the bigger society. In their own community, some members of the society are capable of affecting the others (creating a hegemony) and therefore, manage to make their way to the top of the chain of power (Silver); some are convinced or given the false consciousness to act as the working muscles at the service of the leader and gain their fair share of the loot (Hands); there are codes of conduct among the pirates (Black spot) and a competition to be the dominant when Silver is challenged by other pirates and is overthrown by Morgan (Stevenson, 1883).

Both within the community of the pirates and in the relationship between the pirates and the gentry, consent is often created because the subordinate groups need safety or a tolerable life (economically and socially) and are culturally conditioned to believe the upper class to be the provider of these needs, accept things as they are. But whenever the hegemony is deemed weak and at peril, it is attacked by one struggling group or another, with the hope of gaining the dominance, in which case the dominant group fights back by means of force as well as persuasion, keep their domination and restore order.

## Long John Silver and the War of Position

The uniqueness of Stevenson’s class-conscious novel is probably in the characterization of the unconventionally brilliant pirate, Long John Silver. Silver stands out among the pirates because he seems to violate the dominance of he-

gemony at every move without falling victim to it, and consequently, he is the only pirate who has a chance at building the “good life” of a gentleman.

Silver defies the stereotypical image of the pirate. He is clean, clever and cunning, and instead of being gullible, he is capable of deceiving the gentry. It is mentioned that he is educated and has received “good schooling” and, when inclined to do so, knows how to speak “bookish” (Stevenson, 1883, p.73) which enables him to gain the trust of the upper classes and the respect of the lower classes (as in the tavern incident when Jim suspects him at first, but soon regains his trust). Playing with hegemonic mindsets, knowing how to beat the gentry at its own game, Silver is the only pirate who can pose a long-lasting threat to hegemony and change the order of things in favor of his own class. He knows that his un-pirate-like manners (which deceives people in spite of his openly pirate-like appearance complete with the wooden leg and the parrot), his smooth-talking and his charisma can deceive the society that expects the pirates to behave in a certain way; and that is when hegemony is turned against itself.

What is more, Silver is not a blind subject of hegemonic mind frames. While most pirates vanish from the face of the power struggle due to their stereotypically-shaped self-destructive habits, Silver remains sane and alert to watch out for every possible opportunity for success. He has much more discipline in his behavior, can control his immediate impulses, does not waste money and has a clear plan for rising from his low birth up into gentility. He is learned enough to know acting out the pirate cliché will not get him anywhere.

When Long John Silver describes his plans for his share of the treasure, it is clear that he means to “set up a gentleman in earnest” (Stevenson, 1883, p.78), planning to be seen “in parlyment and riding [his] coach” (Stevenson, 1883, p.82). He reprimands the pirates for wasting their money when they get some. His notion of saving money by putting “it all away, some here, some there and none too much anywheres...” (Stevenson, 1883, p.78) shows that he understands the calculated economic practice of building an investment portfolio customary among the wealthy classes, which gives them the chance to gain more money and become even more powerful by reducing the risk of loss or failure to a minimum.

There is a certain stealthy-ness and ambiguity in Long John Silver’s actions and words. He understands the mechanisms of hegemony and having failed in violent confrontation with it, he learns quickly to fight it in a much more subtle way. Critics have regarded him as the “prototype for Jekyll/Hyde, appearing alternately pleasant and likeable, then menacing and ruthless” (Abi-Ezzi, 2000, p. 80), his dark side—the Hyde side—representing “England invading England now – the dark and hidden Shadow of its underworld” (Thurmond, 2012, p. 36). Unlike Hyde, though, Silver’s double-faced-ness is conscious and intentional. He knows he is not able to beat the dominant class by opposing them; so he resolves on beating them by joining them. He can attack the system from within, challenging hegemony and introducing a new mode of thought by thinking and acting outside the box.

The concept of “resistance” in the novel complies with Gramsci’s theories. Gramsci does not believe in instant revolution as the most viable way for the subaltern to uproot the hegemony (as the eventual failure of the pirates’ mutiny exemplifies in the novel). His views can be traced in the novel with the help of the two different methods of resistance, “war of maneuver” and “war of position” (Egan, 2014, p. 2).

War of maneuver is the quick attack by means of force, instances of which keep happening throughout the novel from the moment the mutiny starts. The pirates strike back at several occasions, whenever they see the hegemony of the dominant is too weak to defend its integrity. One instance is aboard the *Hispaniola*, when hegemony is weakened by the arguments and the obvious dissatisfaction between Captain Smollett and Squire Trelawney. This is when the mutiny begins. Once the Captain and the Squire put their differences aside, the dominant class gains the upper hand again and resorts to the use of force to create subordination by means of coercion or to destroy the adversary for good. Among the pirates, the same dynamic occurs when Silver is deemed by the other pirates as an unsuitable leader and is handed the black spot.

Long John Silver, however, resorts to a different strategy. He plans to move up socially and learns soon enough that he cannot win by force. Therefore, his strategy all through the novel is that of the war of position, the strategy of striking back against the dominant by challenging hegemony. This method takes longer to come to fruition. It is done by infiltrating the system gradually and creating debates and doubts to weaken the ideological principles before setting up an attack on the structure. This, according to Gramsci, is more suitable for situations where the state hegemony is much stronger than that of its opposing forces (Egan, 2014).

The story implies that Silver assembles his men as soon as he finds out that the map to Flint’s treasure is in the hands of the gentry, and infiltrates the system by posing as a cook and persuading Squire Trelawney to hire the crew from among his men, all the time acting in accordance with the norms of the dominant, waiting patiently for a suitable time to strike back and inviting his men to be patient, too.

He is not even in favor of the pirates’ revolts and believes they have to go on pretending to be submissive servants right until the treasure is discovered. Later, when the mutiny happens and his true identity is revealed, he tries to talk his way back to success by proposing truce to the gentry. He prefers to keep on his course by means of negotiation. This method proves successful and he is the only one of the pirates that actually survives the hegemony of the dominant and gets to steal a good share of the treasure in the end.

Silver does not yield to the terms of the dominant although he does not confront it directly either. His intelligence and his familiarity with the ways and methods of the dominant grant him survival and success. The complexity of his character and his success in standing against the dominant are perhaps reasons that have made this character very popular among the readers of the novel and

have secured him a permanent place on the book covers of the novel all over the world. He has become an iconic figure representing unruliness, cunning and charisma who can find a path to success while maintaining his freedom and individuality.

Silver's role in the novel resembles that of the Gramscian "organic intellectual" in the society: rising from the new struggling social class, the pirates, as the "organizer of masses" and of the "confidence" of the sponsors of the treasure hunt (Gramsci, 2000, p. 302), he is the only pirate who can argue with the dominant hegemony and by challenging the false consciousness rooted in the ideology of the ruling class, proposes a new ideology in favor of his own class, actualized through his eventual prosperity.

## Conclusion

*Treasure Island* is a microcosmic picture of class struggle in the society, in which the subaltern and the dominant groups are engaged in constant clashes over their respective goals, that of changing the social order for one side and of maintaining the *status quo* for the other side of the opposition. These two sides of the conflict each has their own mechanisms: the ruling class can use coercive action when necessary, but benefits more abundantly from creating consensus among the lower classes by means of culturally reinforced ideological systems that ensure their dominance, and the subaltern resists the power of the dominant by engaging in the war of maneuver, openly confronting the dominant class, or the war of position, playing games with the dominant hegemony to challenge it from within by means of debates.

What is interesting is that in the novel, just like the real world, the dominant class mostly remains in power because its hegemonic roots are too strong to be overthrown, armed struggles are largely futile, and only exceptional characters, like Silver, can manage to escape the chains of hegemony, who like the organic intellectual of Gramsci's theories rises naturally from his social context to propose new ways of thought and behavior, and be unaffected by the stereotypes.

It is through the figure of Silver that Stevenson suggests the proper method of resisting the dominant class when hegemony prevents the lower class subjects from thinking freely and acting to their own benefit. The success of his war of position undermines the ideology of the *status quo* which promises that prosperity lies only in the service of the dominant, and proposes a new possibility, that of the lower-class man reaching prosperity through his own thinking and action, to resist the ruling class not with violent confrontation, but with intellectual challenges that empty the hegemony of the dominant from within. And this, according to Gramsci, is the beginning of the shaping of a new ideology, leading to a new hegemony that can secure the new orders of society in favor of the working class.

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