



## “Sameness” as A Form of Hegemony to Create Utopian Society in Lois Lowry’s *The Giver*

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### Abstract

Hegemony is defined as a condition under which a group establishes its supremacy not only by physical force but also through a consensual submission of the people who are dominated. This study aims to describe how “Sameness” is represented as a form of hegemony to create utopian society in *The Giver* and to describe the kinds of hegemony found in the novel. The methodology used in this study was descriptive-qualitative. By using sociological approach, this study analyzed the novel from the point of view of hegemony, a theory developed by Antonio Gramsci. There were two objects of the study, namely material object which was *The Giver* novel and formal object taken from the analysis of the novel using theory of hegemony. The results of this study show that system of “Sameness” is represented as a form of hegemony to create utopian society, seen from the episode of climate control which is created to avoid unpredictable weather, episode of family unit to control the populations of the community by regulating some procedures and rituals, episode of assignments by observing each of the citizens’ interest through volunteer hours and recreation time, episode of precision of language and attitude to keep good communication and behavior; episode of no individual choices, episode of artificial sense which limit the vision, audio, and feeling after the removal of memory, and episode of punishments for rule breakers. There are three kinds of hegemony found in the novel based on the level of domination and resistance, namely Integral hegemony which is seen from the full obedience of the citizens towards the authority of the Committee of Elders, Decadent hegemony which is depicted by the citizens’ disrespect and boredom towards the rules, and Minimal hegemony which happens due to the the resistance from the Receiver of Memory against the Committee of Elders despite the *transformismo*..

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## INTRODUCTION

Society consists of all the groups which the individuals within it are members. It is made up population, organization, time, place, and interest. They live together to create a group in which they can implement their function as a social human. They have to communicate each other in order to keep social relationship run well.

In order to make the social relationship run well, there should be rules and regulation to manage the society. It means that there are two part of society who have roles to rule and be ruled. The one who rule is called the ruling class. This class dominate the other social class by governing rules and regulation. The other part is subordinate class, which refers to the ruled class who should obey the rules.

When there is domination and subordination in society, it is related to the concept of hegemony, a theory developed by Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937). According to Gramsci (1999) in his book *The Prison Notebooks*, he defines hegemony as a condition under which a group establishes its supremacy not only by physical force but also through a consensual submission of the people who are dominated. This statement refers to the process of moral and intellectual leadership through which dominated or subordinate classes of post-1870 industrial Western European nations *consent* to their own domination by ruling classes, as opposed to being simply forced or coerced into accepting inferior positions.

It can be said that society accepts values, ideas, and images for the sake of social function, yet they ignore the domination by the dominant group which is wrapped within rules and roles in society. They think it as “common sense” to obey the rules in order to keep social stability, to follow the dominant group’s ideology.

Anderson in Maitra (2008: 455) adds that the characterization of hegemony is the ‘spontaneous’ consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group. In order to dominate a society, the ruling class uses force and consent to maintain its

control through the ideology that has been regarded as the society’s values.

Gramsci also states that politics and culture play important roles in which power is exercised and hegemony established by including the state and civil society as part of ‘integral state.’ According to Gramsci in Maitra (2008: 455), Integral State emerges as a form of political and social control which is exercised primarily through society’s superstructure. It proves that hegemony the use of institutions and culture also maintain the hegemony in society itself, but they prefer to (unconsciously) ignore it because they don’t think it as a problem, yet a solution to keep the conformity.

Conformity is one of utopian characterization. As stated by McLeod (2016), conformity is often used to indicate an agreement to the majority position, brought about either by a desire to ‘*fit in*’ or be liked (normative) or because of a desire to be correct (informational), or simply to conform to a social role (identification). When society has reached the state of conformity, they will create a utopian society. According to Ferns in Hanson (2009: 1), utopian society is seen as “something to be imposed on humanity in its own best interest”. They offer stability, security, freedom from hunger and endless toil, also war.

This condition is in line with the story in *The Giver*, a science-fiction novel written by Lois Lowry in 1993. It tells about the life of a futuristic society called as “community.” The Community consists of two parts, the Committee of Elders as the ruling class who lead the authority and the citizens as the ruled class who have to obey the rules. They lived under hegemony system named “Sameness” created by the ruling class to maintain a *utopian* world of their own, who live perfectly without complicated problems.

Therefore, the researcher conducts a study to explain the representation of “Sameness” as a form of hegemony to create a utopian society and the kinds of hegemony found in the novel by analyzing the novel using Gramsci’s theory of hegemony.

## METHODS

This research uses qualitative research design since the findings constitute description in terms of words, phrases, sentences, and utterances, not numbers or graphics. The approach used is sociology of literature because the analysis covers the society and its life. In addition, the researcher uses theory of hegemony which focuses on how "Sameness" is represented as a form of hegemony in their attempts to create utopian society and elaborate kinds of hegemony found in the novel by analyzing the opposite roles of the dominant class and the subordinate class through its rules and regulation and then dividing the levels of domination and subordination into three types of hegemony.

There are two types of data used; Primary data of this study are taken from *The Giver* novel by Lois Lowry which consist of two hundred and twenty four pages and is divided into twenty-three chapters, while the writer takes secondary data of this study from books, dictionaries, journals, essays, and articles.

The procedure of data collection includes reading the novel and some relevant references. Then, the researcher identifies the contents of the novel and other references which are related to the topic of the research by underlining and numbering. After that, the data are interpreted to answer the problem of the research. The last step is inventorying the data interpretation in the observation sheet which consists of number of data, citation, data location, the interpretation, and answer of the research problem number.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### **"Sameness" is Represented as a Form of Hegemony to Create Utopian Society in Lowry's *The Giver***

*The Giver* tells about a society who name themselves as 'the Community.' It consists of two classes, namely the Committee of Elders as the dominant class and the Citizens as the subordinate class. The community lives in a system called "Sameness."

The Giver shrugged. "Our people made that choice, the choice to go

to Sameness. Before my time, before the previous time, back and back and back" (Lowry, 1993: 124)

According to the excerpt, they have made the choice to go to "Sameness" since long time ago. It institutes a strict system of control, surveillance, and punishment. The purpose is to create a utopian society of their own. There are no differences and individuality admitted in this society because they should give priority to collective needs before personal matter.

### ***Climate Control***

Climate control is a term defined by the community about the manipulation of climate after they went to "Sameness".

"Climate Control. Snow made growing food difficult, limited the agricultural periods. And unpredictable weather made transportation almost impossible at times. It wasn't a practical thing, so it became obsolete when we went to Sameness" (Lowry, 1993: 110-111)

Based on this statement, the Committee of Elders creates 'climate control' to make weather predictable and make transportations practical. Unfortunately, the Committee of Elders decides to erase all things related to climate such as snow, sunshine, sunburn, and rain so that their lives could run well without having climate problem. It shows that climate control is one of the creations of the ruling class to maintain the state of "Sameness" and prove it as the representation of hegemony.

### ***Family Unit***

In *The Giver*, the existence of family is named 'family unit' which have to consist of four members, a pair of parents and two children. "Two children - one male, one female - to each family unit. It was written very clearly in the rules" (Lowry, 1993: 20)

According to this statement, if the citizens want to build a family unit, it should consist of two children, one male and one female, which is written very clearly in the Book of Rules.

They live in a place called 'dwelling', which is designed precisely the same for all citizens. They also should perform two rituals namely *the morning ritual Telling-of-Dream* and *the evening ritual Telling-of-Feeling* as part of the rules. "Usually, at the morning ritual when the family members told their dreams, Jonas didn't contribute much" (Lowry, 1993: 51)

From the excerpt above, it shows that the ritual is performed in the morning when the family unit gathers to have breakfast. They will tell their dreams one by one. Meanwhile, the other ritual is called the *evening ritual telling-of-feeling*. It is a ritual during the dinner time that each member should tell their feeling after doing their activities in the community.

"It was one of the rituals, the evening telling-of-feelings. Sometimes Jonas and his sister, Lily, argued over turns, over who would get to go first. Their parents, of course, were part of the ritual; they, too, told their feelings each evening. But like all parents-all adults-they didn't fight and wheedle for their turn" (Lowry, 1993: 15-16)

According to this statement, the evening telling-of-feelings is one of the rituals that should be performed by each member of a family unit. They will take turns telling their feelings and get customary comments from the other members like in the morning ritual.

The other rules such as *Matching of Spouses*, and *Application of Baby Proposal* are parts of ruling class' control to manage all aspects of life against the ruled class in the community. Therefore, family unit is concluded as part of hegemony represented by "Sameness" to create a utopian society.

### **Assignments**

Assignments are the jobs provided by the Committee of Elders to be fulfilled as the citizens' contribution to the community. The Committee choose the proper assignments for each Twelve so that they are chosen based on the observation.

"It was a secret selection, made by the leaders of the community, the Committee of Elders, who took the responsibility so seriously that there were never even any jokes made about Assignments" (Lowry, 1993: 28)

From the statement above, the Committee of Elders is the one who takes the responsibility to select the proper assignment for each Twelves. The observation is done through school, volunteer hours, and recreation hours they had spent so that the Committee of Elders know their interests from the records.

There are many assignments available in the community such as Nurturer, Judge, Fish Hatchery Attendant, Birthmother, Instructor, Assistant Director of Recreation, Caretaker of the Olds, Doctor, Engineer, Speaker, crew of Street Cleaners, Landscape Workers, and Food Delivery, as well as Substitute Laborer.

Besides, there's a special assignment called 'the Receiver of Memory'. He is selected by the Committee of Elders to do important job for the community. "In a firm, commanding voice she announced, "Jonas has been selected to be our next Receiver of Memory"" (Lowry, 1993: 82)

The Receiver of Memory is the most honored job in the community because he is the one who has the special capabilities that are not owned by common citizens. He is assigned to hold the whole memories of the world before "Sameness" and to give advice to the Committee of Elders.

Every assignment in the community has been calculated and thought so meticulously to adjust with the necessity of the citizens so that they could live practically without complicating trivial problems. They have to obey all of the requirements made as an act of obedience and loyalty to the community. Hence, the Assignments are seen as part of "Sameness" which maintains the hegemony in the community.

### **Precision of Language and Attitude**

Precision of language is important in the community to make social relationship function

smoothly. It is taught since childhood as part of learnings at school, indicating the children level of understanding in acquiring speech and communication. "But the reason for precision of language was to ensure that unintentional lies were never uttered" (Lowry, 1993: 95)

The statement above means that no citizens in the community ever lie because they are taught to speak precise speech. They will tell everything honestly without any attempts to lie.

Furthermore, precision of attitude is also an important aspect to have as the members of the community. If they break the rules, they will be chastised for not behaving properly.

"There was never any comfortable way to mention or discuss one's successes without breaking the rule against bragging, even if one didn't mean to. It was a minor rule, rather like rudeness, punishable only by gentle chastisement" (Lowry, 1993: 43)

According to the excerpt, bragging is categorized as rudeness because it breaks minor rule. Therefore, he should be given gentle chastisement for not showing precision of attitude.

It means that the Committee of Elders constitutes the citizens to have precise language and attitude within the community to keep the social relationship running well. It proves that precision of language and attitude are parts of "Sameness" which represent hegemony in their attempts of creating a utopian society.

### ***No Individual Choices***

"Sameness" makes everything should be similar or uniform, means that individual choice is repressed for the sake of collective necessity. "Well ..." Jonas had to stop and think it through. "If everything's the same, then there aren't any choices!" (Lowry 1993: 127)

The statement above shows that "Sameness" makes the choice unavailable for them so that they do not have right to choose something as an individual. Choices are made by the Committee of Elders because they are the ones who have the authority to control the

citizens. Once they make rules or decision, the citizens should obey it, and could not be rebutted. The reason is because individual choices do matter for their lives, such as wrong decision.

"Jonas chuckled. "Very frightening. I can't even imagine it. We really have to protect people from wrong choices"" (Lowry, 1993: 128) They are worried that choices will create differences which might lead to conflicts, so it will be a frightening life to have. The Committee of Elders thinks that it is safer to limit individual choices of the citizens, so that there will be no pain. It proves that "Sameness" takes control as the representation of hegemony in the community lives because the rules demand them to live that way.

### ***Artificial Sense***

After "Sameness", the Committee of Elders assigns genetic scientists to fix and to manipulate the citizens' memories so that it is adjusted to the state of "Sameness" which makes their senses limited.

"The life where nothing was ever unexpected. Or inconvenient. Or unusual. The life without color, pain, or past" (Lowry, 1993: 207)

The quotation above shows that "Sameness" makes their lives predictable and convenient because everything has been controlled and managed well. Any barrier would be removed for the sake of practicality. Therefore, memories of color, pain, and past are relinquished which limits the senses of vision, audio, thinking, and feeling.

"We relinquished color when we relinquished sunshine and did away with differences" (Lowry, 1993: 124) The statement explains when they decided to go to "Sameness," they wanted everything looks similar, so that they did away differences such as colors. They also limit the citizens' sense of audio by removing music.

"Music," The Giver said, smiling. "I began to hear something truly remarkable, and it is called music" (Lowry, 1993: 198) There is no

music in the community after “Sameness”, it can only be heard by the one who has the capacity to *hear beyond*.

Moreover, feelings are also manipulated that they are said to live in the world without feelings.

“But he knew that they could not understand why, without the memories. He felt such love for Asher and for Fiona. But they could not feel it back, without the memories” (Lowry, 1993: 171)

The statement proves that the citizens live in the world of no feelings after going to “Sameness.” It is due to the removal of memory which affects the way they perceive something.

It is done to avoid pain and problem that might disturb their lives. As a result, they live with artificial senses due to the removal of memories. It proves that power of “Sameness” acts as the representation of hegemony experienced in the community because they agree to be managed that way.

#### ***Punishments***

All of the citizens’ activities are observed and monitored by the Committee of Elders. If they violate it, they will be punished. The level of punishments is also varied based on the violation they make, either minor or major transgression.

“The punishment used for small children was a regulated system of smacks with the discipline wand: a thin, flexible weapon that stung painfully when it was wielded. The Childcare specialists were trained very carefully in the discipline methods: a quick smack across the hands for a bit of minor misbehavior; three sharper smacks on the bare legs for a second offense” (Lowry, 1993: 75-76)

Children who do minor misbehavior would be punished by the Childcare specialists using discipline wand. Meanwhile, the major transgression will result for a release.

“First, he had left the dwelling at night. A major transgression. Second, he had robbed the community of food: a very serious crime, even though what he had taken was leftovers, set out on the dwelling doorsteps for collection. Third, he had stolen his father’s bicycle” (Lowry, 1993: 207)

This statements indicate that the citizens are not allowed to leave the dwelling at night and stealing something within the community such as food and bicycle. If they violate it, they are simply released for the final decision because of doing many mistakes at the same time. It shows that the control of the Committee of Elders are so strong that everything in the community should be regulated strictly and firmly to uphold the system of “Sameness” which maintains the hegemony in their attempts of creating a utopian society.

#### ***Kinds of Hegemony Found in Lowry’s *The Giver****

The creation of “Sameness” is considered as something worth for them to keep living in perfect way. This consensus will maintain the hegemony because consent gets higher position than coercion. However, it differs based on the level of domination and subordination.

#### ***Integral Hegemony***

Integral hegemony can be seen in a society which shows the superpower ruling class rule the other society without having resistance from them. In *The Giver*, They allow and forbid the citizens by constituting strict rules which have to be obeyed. On the other, the ruled class thinks of it as a good way to live under “Sameness”. They do not assume it as a restraint so that they choose to be a subordinate class. “The Elders know Asher,” his mother said. “They’ll find exactly the right Assignment for him” (Lowry, 1993: 30)

The statement above shows that the Committee of Elders acts as if they know everything within the community, including deciding the assignment for each Twelve despite their own interests. Furthermore, the citizens believe in the Elders’ decision, that they agree with the selection result.

It can be inferred that integral hegemony is represented in the form of the 'collective will' from the ruled class although the ruling class governs full authority to control them under the system of "Sameness" so that their purpose to be a utopian society can be preserved.

#### ***Decadent Hegemony***

Decadent hegemony occurs when the dominant group performed an outmoded hegemony, no longer capable of representing the interest of everyone. It is in line with the condition within the community in *The Giver*. The ruling class uses absolute authority to control all aspects of the citizens' lives. This condition makes the citizens feel bored and disrespect by the rules and the ruling class themselves.

"There was talk about changing the rule and giving the bicycles at an earlier age. A committee was studying the idea. When something went to a committee for study, the people always joked about it. They said that the committee members would become Elders by the time the rule change was made" (Lowry, 1993: 26)

According to this excerpt, the citizens always joke when the Committee of Elders said that they were studying the idea of changing the rules, and they would become Elders by the time it was changed until the citizens forget that it had ever gone to them for study. It implies that the ruling class has to give some spaces to the ruled class to gain back its domination so that the ruled class keep obedient to them.

Hence, decadent hegemony in *The Giver* is shown by the act of disrespect from the ruled class toward the strict regulations which restrict them to have freedom.

#### ***Minimal Hegemony***

Minimal hegemony happens when the ruling class gets resistance from the ruled class continuously because the ruling class starts to lose its domination. In the novel, rules are very hard to change, but the transmission of memories

make it possible through the rebellion from the Receivers of Memory.

"That's true. And having you here with me over the past year has made me realize that things must change. For years I've felt that they should, but it seemed so hopeless" (Lowry, 1993: 194)

The statement above shows that they plan to fight against the Committee of Elders secretly. They think that the citizens should have the memories so that the Receivers of Memory are not been burdened anymore. The citizens should have experienced everything themselves so that their human sense can be back to normal, not the artificial ones after "Sameness."

To minimize the protest, the dominant group offers the subordinated group to cooperate with them; or it is known as *transformismo*, the practice of incorporating the leaders—cultural, political, social, economic—of potentially hostile groups into the élite network, resulting in the formation of broader ruling class.

The practice of *transformismo* has been conducted by the Committee of Elders to take back the domination against the citizens, from providing all of the facilities until incorporating the Receiver of Memory as the most honored person in the community. They ensure all citizens live in prosperity from food, education, safety, and medication. The Committee of Elders also uses the act of inducement toward the Receiver of Memory, such as providing different place to live, access for thousands of books and records of ceremony outside the regulation, and authority to ask for special facilities.

However, the determination to reveal the lies behind "Sameness" keep leading to rebellion. The rebellion causes the return of the memories back to the community to break down the truth behind the system of "Sameness" which dominate their lives for so long.

"The memories had fallen behind him now, escaping from his protection to return to the people of his community" (Lowry, 1993: 220)

Finally, his sacrifice to change the condition of "Sameness" by having a long journey with Gabriel comes true. The memories have returned to the community because he has crossed the border. It proves that rebellion may do good for the people to make something better. Jonas' sacrifice shows that changes are possible if someone strives for it.

It means that minimal hegemony does exist in *The Giver* through the resistance from the Receiver of Memory to change the state of "Sameness."

## CONCLUSION

According to the analysis in chapter 4, there are two conclusions answering the research questions raised. The first conclusion is that "Sameness" is represented as a form of hegemony to create utopian society found in *The Giver* due to the existence of coercion and consent. Coercion is exercised by the Committee of Elders as the ruling class by constituting strict rules and regulations as well as punishments, while consent is given by the citizens of the community as the ruled class due to their agreement towards the observation and surveillance contained in "Sameness." After going to "Sameness", they gain some positive changes in the community to make their life easier and more practical such as climate control, the existence of family unit, the division of assignment, and precision of language and attitude. On the other, there are bad sides experienced by the citizens after they went to "Sameness." For example is there are not individual choices due to the fact that they must give priority to the collective necessity. The community in *The Giver* cannot have access to color, music, and history. It aims to erase pain and differences that might lead to conflicts. They have to accept all the consequences above if they do not want to get punishments.

The second conclusion indicates that the hegemony represented in *The Giver* through the creation system of "Sameness" differs based on its level of domination and resistance. There are three types of hegemony namely integral hegemony, decadent hegemony, and minimal

hegemony. Integral hegemony is depicted through the obedience of the citizens towards the authority of the Committee of Elders. There is no resistance and conflicts happen so that the social relationship run well. Whereas, decadent hegemony happens when they feel bored by strict rules and regulations, and they need some spaces to have their needs fulfilled such as volunteer hours and holiday. However, the most dominant one is minimal hegemony, due to the resistance from the Receiver of Memory against the Committee of Elders by breaking the rules. In the end, the rebellion yields result that is memories can be released back to the community to change the state of "Sameness."

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