

## Hegemony and Organic Intellectuals Figures in Rio Johan's Post-Apocalyptic Novel *Buanglah Hajat Pada Tempatnya*

Natanael Ricky Putra<sup>1\*</sup>, Djoko Saryono<sup>2</sup>, Karkono<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Master of Indonesian Language Education, Faculty of Letters, State University  
of Malang, Indonesia

Corresponding author: [natanael.ricky.2402118@students.um.ac.id](mailto:natanael.ricky.2402118@students.um.ac.id)

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the workings of hegemony in Rio Johan's post-apocalyptic novel *Buanglah Hajat pada Tempatnya* (*Dispose of Waste in Its Proper Place*). Guided by Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony and the conventions of post-apocalyptic literature, the research asks how power is negotiated and sustained in a dystopian society. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the study highlights the role of organic intellectuals, represented by Pak Tua (the Old Man) and Si Bocah (the Boy), in transmitting ideology to a community of survivors. The findings reveal that hegemony in this narrative emerges through everyday practices surrounding a single functional toilet and oral traditions within a waiting line. While the research contributes a new perspective by linking hegemony to post-apocalyptic settings—an underexplored area—its scope is limited to the analysis of a single text or novel.

**Keywords:** Hegemony, Gramsci, Organic Intellectual, BHPT, Post-Apocalyptic.

### INTRODUCTION

Post-apocalyptic literature has become a significant field of study for its capacity to explore survival, social reconstruction, and the emergence of new power structures (Mandey, 2020). The post-apocalyptic genre typically takes place in the wake of a catastrophic disaster that has decimated much of humanity. A key characteristic of these narratives is their emphasis on the survivors' struggle to persevere in a harsh new reality. They often portray efforts to reconstruct a communal existence amidst severe shortages of

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resources and rampant violence (Putra & Dermawan, 2023). Recurring themes include limited access to essential needs, adaptation to a drastically changed environment, and the resurgence of technology in primitive or modified forms (Sar, 2023). Importantly, the genre is marked by the emergence of new, frequently oppressive or dystopian power structures (Hicks, 2017; Ateşli, 2023). With these settings and dynamics, post-apocalyptic literature acts as a vital medium for reflecting on contemporary issues, ranging from environmental change and social inequality to the workings of authoritarianism. By analyzing hegemonic practices and the role of organic intellectuals in this novel, the present study offers a contribution to both Indonesian literary criticism and broader discussions of power in post-apocalyptic narratives.

One of the leading authors in Indonesia's post-apocalyptic genre is Rio Johan, recognized for his experimental body of work that is infused with surreal and absurdist elements, showcasing a daring departure from traditional literary conventions. His 2020 novel, *Buanglah Hajat pada Tempatnya* (Dispose of Waste in Its Proper Place), presents a strikingly provocative vision of a post-apocalyptic world. The story revolves around a community of survivors whose survival hinges on the last operational toilet, located within a massive metallic dome. This dome serves as humanity's final sanctuary on a devastated and polluted Earth. The line leading to the toilet becomes the main venue for social interaction and storytelling, largely facilitated by a witty oral narrator known as Pak Tua (The Old Man) (Johan, 2020). The novel thus offers an ideal framework for examining how hegemony is established and internalized within conditions of scarcity and dependence. Accordingly, this study seeks to investigate how hegemonic power is produced and sustained through the figures of organic intellectuals in Johan's dystopian narrative.

The examination of hegemony in literary works is essential, as it facilitates a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of power in human life. Based on Gramsci's (1987) concepts, hegemony functions not only through direct domination or coercion but more effectively through the creation of consensus, the internalization of a shared consciousness (common sense), and moral and intellectual leadership. In the Indonesian context, such dynamics are visible in the persistence of hierarchical relationships and the normalization of obedience to authority, often justified through moral or communal values (Kurniawan, 2012; Harjito, 2014). Within this framework, Rio Johan's *Buanglah Hajat pada Tempatnya* illustrates how hegemony can endure even after societal collapse, such as control over basic resources, like the sole functioning toilet, parallels the concentration of power in the hands of a few, while oral storytelling acts as a means of reproducing ideological consent among the survivors. This linkage underscores the continuing relevance of Gramscian theory to understanding power structures in both Indonesian society and its literary representations.

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Based on the explanation above, waste disposal perspective provides a radical framework for analyzing the material foundations that can support the establishment of social-world order and power dynamics. While Gramsci primarily highlighted the significance of superstructures such as culture and ideology in the creation of hegemony, he consistently maintained that its foundations are deeply connected to the economic base and production relations (Achmad & Rengganis, 2023; Yunitasari et al., 2022). In *BHPT*, the last functioning toilet symbolizes this economic base—control over a vital resource that determines survival. The dominance exercised through this control generates ideological consent among the survivors, as dependence on the resource reinforces obedience and legitimizes the authority of those in power. Thus, the novel vividly illustrates Gramsci's interplay between the material base and the ideological superstructure, showing how economic control translates into cultural hegemony.

Within the Gramscian framework, the notion of hegemony refers to a form of moral and intellectual leadership exerted by a dominant group over other subordinate groups (Khusniyah & Hakim, 2025; Faruk, 2010; (Ardianto, 2020; Fahmi & Rahmawati, 2020). This leadership operates most effectively within civil society through institutions, values, and everyday practices that make domination appear natural and acceptable (Hanifah et al., 2024; Susanti, 2023; Hadiyanto, 2020). In *BHPT*, this process is vividly dramatized through the queue for the toilet, which functions as a microcosm of civil society. The line is not maintained by force but by shared belief in the necessity and fairness of the system. Pak Tua's oral storytelling reinforces this consensus, shaping the community's moral outlook and legitimizing the hierarchy that controls access to the toilet. In this way, the novel concretely enacts Gramsci's notion of hegemony: ideological leadership is sustained not through coercion, but through consent reproduced in the rituals of everyday survival.

Within this social setting, a character like Pak Tua (The Old Man) assumes a crucial role. The narratives he shares means spreading common sense like a worldview shaped by everyday experiences that is often not entirely rational. This process is referred to as the inculcation of ideology (Hatta & La Ino, 2021; Kusumayanti et al., 2022). Through his daily storytelling to the other survivors, he transforms ordinary experiences, such as queuing for the toilet or discussing waste disposal, into moral lessons about obedience and order. These narratives naturalize the idea that maintaining discipline in toilet use is essential for survival, thus legitimizing the rulers' control over access to sanitation. In this sense, Pak Tua's stories exemplify the *inculcation of ideology*: they shape what Gramsci calls *common sense*—a taken-for-granted belief system that aligns with dominant interests. Yet, as Gramsci (1987) notes, within this *common sense* lies the potential for *buon senso* or “critical good sense,” which may later inspire questioning of the established order.

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Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony outlines an intricate interplay between dominant and subordinate groups shaped by ideology, social conflict, negotiation, and cultural production (Harjito, 2014; Kurniawan, 2012; Rizkia & Maria, 2024; Safira et al., 2024). Within this dynamic, art and literature function as ideological instruments that can either reinforce or resist dominant values (Latifah & Putra, 2020; Khasanah, 2020). This study, however, focuses particularly on the mechanism of consensus-building through the role of *organic intellectuals*.

Building on Gramsci's idea of consensus between dominant and subordinate groups, *organic intellectuals* function as mediators who construct and circulate ideology within specific social contexts. Their main function is to formulate, develop, and disseminate the ideology of the dominant group to the wider public, aiming to establish it as a broadly accepted framework of thought or, alternatively, to dismantle it (Gramsci, 1987; Kurniawan, 2012). The concept of the organic intellectual is inherently connected to the social class they represent within the power structure (Yahya, 2019; Harjito, 2014). In this capacity, organic intellectuals play a vital role in the dynamics between dominant and subordinate classes.

There are eight prior studies that also explore hegemony in literary works and media. Research conducted by Jha & Christiansen (2025); Wilson (2021); Gökçek (2020); Brunello (2022); Karkono et al. (2020); Yunitasari et al. (2022); Dani & Suseno (2023); and Fitriansyah (2021) discusses the construction of hegemony in literature and media through the lens of Gramscian theory. Among them, Yunitasari et al. (2022) analyze how rituals in *Danuk* foster cultural consensus across classes. Dani and Suseno (2023) explore ideological manipulation in *Kubah*. Fitriansyah (2021) reveals class domination through bureaucratic and capitalist systems in *Senja di Jakarta*. These studies consistently emphasize how ideology operates through everyday practices, persuasion, and media. However, they focus on realist narratives rooted in specific socio-political settings. In contrast, the present study investigates hegemony and organic intellectuals within a *post-apocalyptic* framework—an underexplored context in Indonesian literature—where survival, scarcity, and oral storytelling reshape the mechanisms of power and consent.

Based on the review of previous research, this study presents a novel element. The originality and state of the art of this research lies in its subject matter, which has not been previously explored across various types of studies. Specifically, it examines how organic intellectuals operate as agents of hegemony in BHPT, mediating between the dominant and subordinate groups within the remnants of human society. Accordingly, this study aims to reveal the mechanisms of ideological domination and resistance that emerge in a post-apocalyptic context. The discussion proceeds by first outlining the theoretical foundation, followed by textual analysis, and concluding with the implications of hegemony for understanding contemporary socio-political realities through Indonesian fiction.

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## METHOD

This research adopts a qualitative approach with a library research design, enabling a thorough examination of the representation of hegemonic practices in the post-apocalyptic world portrayed in the novel *Buanglah Hajat pada Tempatnya* (Dispose of Waste in Its Proper Place). The study employs Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony, specifically focusing on the dissemination of ideology through organic intellectuals. The analysis centers on the survivor characters within the post-apocalyptic context, as well as several dominant figures who actively engage in hegemonic practices over these survivors, with the objective of revealing the mechanisms of ideological hegemony.

The data for this study was gathered using a "reading and note-taking" technique. This process commenced with a thorough reading of the entire text, followed by the identification of pertinent quotations, such as power relations, ideological transmission, or acts of persuasion among characters, and the categorization of dialogues that illustrate hegemonic practices. A purposive sampling technique was utilized to select quotations that are relevant to the strategies employed by the dominant group to assert hegemony over the survivors, who are positioned as organic intellectuals in line with Gramsci's perspective.

Once the data was collected, analysis was performed following the stages outlined by Miles et al., (2014). These stages consist of (1) data collection in the form of quotations from the novel, (2) data reduction by eliminating portions that are irrelevant or do not align with the research focus, (3) data presentation by organizing the findings into tables and descriptions related to hegemonic practices and organic intellectuals, and (4) drawing conclusions to elucidate the hegemonic practices enacted by dominant characters as organic intellectuals, in accordance with Gramsci's concepts. This approach ensures that the analysis is systematic and produces thorough findings.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The practices of hegemony and the role of the dominant group as organic intellectuals in the post-apocalyptic setting are essential components of this study. The hegemonic practices, which focus on control over the toilet as a hegemonic tool, function alongside characters who serve as organic intellectuals. In Rio Johan's novel *BHPT*, the interests of Person #1, the dominant ruler, are achieved through consensus, with the assistance of Pak Tua (The Old Man) and Si Bocah (The Boy), who act as organic intellectuals. Consequently, the results of the classification can be observed in the following table.

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Table 1:  
*Classification of Hegemony Practices*

Aspects	Description
Toilets as Apparatuses of Hegemony	In a post-apocalyptic world, toilets become the center of social life, a symbol of power, and a tool of human control. Person #1 is referred to as the “ruler”, who regulates everything, including toilets, through consensus. Toilet queues create order and voluntary submission.
The Old Man as an Organic Intellectual	The Old Man uses allegorical stories to keep the main character, who is holding in his bowel movements, in line. The Old Man serves to calm unrest, create a narrative, and protect the system from rebellion from the perspective of the dominant class.
The Boy as an Organic Intellectual	The boy persuades the humanoid Xavi to help with his “gargantua ark” project, hoping to enable him to travel to another planet. He uses the allure of storytelling, language games, and imagination to sway Xavi to fulfill his interests. Xavi is a victim of symbolic hegemony.

These three elements—the toilet, Pak Tua (The Old Man), and Si Bocah (The Boy)—work together in a structural and symbolic partnership to uphold the power of Person #1, albeit without explicit direct control. Pak Tua and Si Bocah embody organic intellectuals in the Gramscian sense, as they disseminate discourse, uphold ideological stability, and mitigate resistance from the subaltern, all while serving the interests of the dominant group and their own personal agendas. Conversely, subordinate characters like Xavi and the main protagonist—the listening man—become the recipients of an ideology that is softened through storytelling, humor, and characteristic post-apocalyptic initiatives, such as the technology-driven Gargantua ark.

### **Mastery of Space and Basic Needs: Toilets as Apparatuses of Hegemony**

According to Table 1, the toilet functions as a hegemonic apparatus, reflecting the society’s consent to place it at the center of daily life. In the novel, it embodies the power conceptualized by Person #1 and exemplifies Gramsci’s notion of *common sense*—the internalization of a collective consciousness (Harjito, 2014). The following analysis explores how this internalized belief system operates through the toilet, revealing how power can infiltrate even the most mundane spaces.

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#### Excerpt 1

Siapa si #1 ini? Katakan saja, dia seorang yang punya pengaruh dan kuasa, seorang yang mengatur dunia pasca-apokaliptik ini. Katakan saja: menteri urusan sanitasi. Entah bagaimana ceritanya, perang dan malapetaka nuklir sekitar sepuluh abad silam cuma menyisakan satu bidang kecil bebas paparan radioaktif yang berhasil dinetralkan dengan kubah metalik sebagai tempat hunian dan cuma ada satu kakus yang masih utuh dan difungsikan (Johan, 2020:2-3).

#### Translation

#1 is a figure of immense influence and authority, the architect of order in this post-apocalyptic world. He can be referred to as the Minister of Sanitation. Somehow, after the war and nuclear catastrophe roughly ten centuries ago, only one small area remained free of radioactive contamination. This zone was successfully neutralized and sealed under a metallic dome, which now serves as humanity's sole habitat. Within this refuge, only one toilet remains fully intact and operational, becoming the most vital resource in this new world. His control over this facility is the absolute foundation of his power (Johan, 2020:2-3).

Excerpt 1 outlines the state of the post-apocalyptic world or an extreme scenario where the collapse of civilization due to war and nuclear disaster has resulted in drastically limited living conditions, both in terms of space and amenities. The only safe area is a metallic dome that has become the focal point of existence for the remaining human population. Within this dome, there is only one operational toilet left. Consequently, this toilet becomes a crucial object and the most vital resource. Known as the *One Supreme Toilet*, it transcends its role as a mere sanitation facility and transforms into a symbol of central power and social control. This development leads to the establishment of a new, hierarchical, and centralized social structure.

The presence of this one single toilet establishes a new power structure, as it pertains to the most basic biological necessity: waste disposal. According to Gramsci's theory (1987), this scenario represents a space that can be leveraged for the establishment of hegemony. When Person #1 arises and governs access to the toilet, control over this material need directly translates into control over individuals and social dynamics. In other words, the toilet has evolved into a hegemonic apparatus, a mechanism of power that functions subtly, not through force, but through regulations, waiting lines, and symbols of order.

#### Excerpt 2

Singkat cerita, sebagaimana yang sering terjadi di dunia pasca-apokaliptik, seseorang muncul sebagai pembuat aturan di tengah hiruk-pikuk. Dalam waktu singkat, melalui karismanya dan kepiawaiannya berorasi, dengan gampangnyanya mendapatkan dukungan banyak orang dan dengan gampangnyanya juga dia pun mengambil alih kuasa atas kakus-maha-esa (Johan, 2020:3).

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#### Translation

In short, as often happens in post-apocalyptic worlds, an individual emerged from the chaos to become the rule-maker. In a short time, through his charisma and oratory skill, he easily gained the support of the masses and just as easily seized control of the One Supreme Toilet (Johan, 2020:3).

Excerpt 2 clearly illustrates the mechanism of hegemonic consensus in the context of the novel *BHPT*. Person #1 does not take control of the toilet through violence or physical force. Instead, he relies on personal charm and compelling speaking skills. Charisma and oratory become the primary tools for creating a social agreement that seems voluntary what is termed consensus. Within Gramsci's theoretical framework, this type of power exemplifies persuasive hegemony, as opposed to a repressive one (Gramsci, 1987; Harjito, 2014). This indicates that order is established through acceptance rather than through conquest.

Person #1, satirically dubbed the *Minister of Sanitation*, emerges as a hegemonic figure who quickly consolidates his power. He gains the community's support not through intimidation but through consensus shaped by his ability to influence public opinion. His control over the sole toilet is viewed by society as legitimate and natural. This perception creates what is referred to as common sense, the internalization of a collective consciousness. Common sense signifies a social awareness that seems inherent but is actually constructed through ideological processes (Harjito, 2014).

#### Excerpt 3

Dia mencoba menebak-nebak, mengira-ngira, ada 70 orang barangkali, atau 60, atau 50, atau malah baru 15 orang yang keluar? Tidak mungkin rasanya cuma 15 orang, sebab satu orang cuma boleh menggunakan toilet paling banyak lima menit untuk berak dan cebok, kecuali #1 tentu saja, dia boleh mengejan selama-lamanya (Johan, 2020: 171-172).

#### Translation

He tried to guess, to estimate—perhaps there were 70 people, or 60, or 50, or maybe only 15 had left? It seemed impossible that only 15 people remained, given that each person was allowed to use the toilet for a maximum of five minutes to defecate and clean themselves—except for Person #1, of course, who was permitted to strain indefinitely (Johan, 2020:171-172).

Excerpt 3 offers concrete evidence regarding toilet usage: the five-minute time limit per individual has been embraced as a social norm. Despite the dire conditions of the post-apocalyptic environment, the citizens in line adhere to this rule without question—even when it is uncertain how many individuals have already used the toilet. This compliance indicates that the rule has been internalized not as coercion, but as a rational form of order. This situation

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aligns with Gramsci's notion of common sense (1987), a worldview that is perceived as natural, yet is influenced by the ideological frameworks of the dominant class. Even in the face of clear injustice, such as Person #1 exclusive right to "strain indefinitely," the community does not resist. This inequality has been symbolically and culturally legitimized, making it appear as a natural part of the social fabric rather than an act of oppression.

### **The Old Man (Pak Tua) as an Organic Intellectual**

According to the classification in Table 1, the character Pak Tua (The Old Man) is categorized as an organic intellectual, signifying that he embodies the dominant class and works to suppress any potential rebellion among the subordinate class concerning access to the toilet. In the novel, Pak Tua appears in every chapter, sharing various allegorical tales whose meanings often remain ambiguous even to the main character. However, through these stories, he subtly influences the consciousness of the survivors, presenting scenarios that reinforce the existing power structure, including the revelation that he is, in fact, a secret agent for the dominant class. To support this classification, the following analysis will examine Pak Tua's role as an organic intellectual in sustaining hegemonic practices.

#### Excerpt 4

"Begini," tahu-tahu saja laki-laki tua #326 sudah menyodorkan kepalanya, "biar saya tuturkan satu cerita kepada kalian, anak-anak muda." (Johan, 2020:6).

#### Translation

"Very well," suddenly the old man #326 thrust his head forward, "let me tell you all a story, young ones." (Johan, 2020:6).

In the post-apocalyptic setting of the novel *BHPT*, Pak Tua (The Old Man) presents himself as an oral narrator who appears modest but plays a crucial role in upholding the current social system. At first glance, he seems to be just a storyteller who greets and entertains, as illustrated in Excerpt 4. However, when analyzed through a Gramscian perspective, Pak Tua can be identified as an organic intellectual of the dominant class, an individual who is actively involved in disseminating and refining the ideology of power through the art of storytelling.

#### Excerpt 5

"Ah ya, anak muda, saya paham. Saya tidak akan membantah, memang saya akui nada cerita yang satu ini kelewatan karikatural dan komikal dibanding dua sebelumnya, kekanak-kanakan juga, iya betul; tapi apa boleh buat cerita ini saya reka-reka dari berbagai macam dongengan karikatural dan komikal sewaktu saya kecil dulu, saya sesuaikan di sana-sini, dan saya lebih-lebihkan sedikit saya akui semua itu. Lagipula, Nak, andaikata toilet-maha-esa pasca

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apokaliptik kita ini dituliskan dan dibaca oleh orang-orang dari buana.” (Johan, 2020:79).

Translation

“Very well,” suddenly the old man #326 thrust his head forward, “let me tell you all a story, young ones.” (Johan, 2020:6). “Ah yes, young man, I understand. I won’t argue, I admit the tone of this story is a bit too cartoonish and comical compared to the previous two, and it’s also childish, yes, that’s true; but what can I do? I made this story up from various cartoonish and comical tales from my childhood, I adjusted it here and there, and I exaggerated a bit—I admit it all. Besides, my dear, if only our post-apocalyptic omnipotent toilet were written down and read by people from all over the world.” (Johan, 2020:79).

Pak Tua does not merely tell stories. He orchestrates how reality is imagined and accepted by his audiences. In Excerpt 5, Pak Tua admits that his tales are caricatured, comical, even childish, and are reconstructed from childhood fables he has adapted. This admission precisely reveals his ability to craft ideological narratives that appear light and entertaining yet serve a profound hegemonic function: diverting discontent, filling queuing time, and suppressing potential resistance. By embedding stories within the toilet queue, Pak Tua shapes a collective consciousness (common sense) that accepts limitations and imposed order as natural and legitimate parts of life.

Beyond being merely a storyteller, Pak Tua functions as an architect of micro-discourse that reflects the interests of a broader power structure—the regime of the *One Supreme Toilet* overseen by Person #1. His narratives act as tools to discipline both bodies and minds, ensuring that the subjugated remain compliant and entertained, even in the face of symbolic oppression. Although Pak Tua does not wield direct power, he plays a vital role in upholding the legitimacy of authority through cultural and linguistic influence. His actions illustrate the everyday practice of the dominant class’s organic intellectual activity.

Excerpt 6

“Heleh, heleh! Kau mau coba-coba mengibuli kami lagi dengan ceritamu, Pak Tua?”

“Boleh dibilang begitu; tapi alih-alih sebagai kibil-mengibil, lebih seru rasanya kalau engkau sebut sebagai tantangan. Ya, sebut saja saya menantangmu untuk bercerita ‘menurutku’ versimu mengenai perempuan yang berdiri di luar antrean itu. Nanti kita bisa temukan versi siapa yang lebih masuk akal.” (Johan, 2020:161).

Translation

“Heleh, heleh! Are you trying to fool us again with your stories, Old Man?”  
“You could say that; but rather than mere trickery, it’s more exciting if you call it a challenge. Yes, let’s say I’m challenging you to tell your version of the story about the woman standing outside this queue. Later, we can decide

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whose version makes more sense.” (Johan, 2020:161).

In Excerpt 6 above, the conversation between Pak Tua and the main character reveals that the stories he tells are not always accepted uncritically—they are met with suspicion and disbelief by the main character, the listening man, who dismisses Pak Tua’s narratives as *kibul-mengibul* (trickery/deception). Interestingly, rather than denying or defending the truth of his tales, Pak Tua deflects the accusation by reframing it as a *challenge* to imagine alternative versions of the story. Here, it becomes evident that Pak Tua does not impose his narrative authority absolutely but instead opens a space for negotiation that remains under the overarching control of his storytelling framework. This strategy allows him to maintain ideological influence while giving the illusion of agency to his audiences, further reinforcing his role as an organic intellectual who shapes consensus through persuasive engagement rather than overt coercion.

The strategy employed by Pak Tua reflects the subtle and smooth workings of hegemony. This means power operates not through coercion, but by shaping discursive frameworks that keep subordinates playing within a predetermined arena. When Pak Tua challenges the main character to create his own version of the story, he appears to grant a space of freedom. In reality, however, he is reinforcing his position as the central authority of narrative and interpretation. This is because any version of the story ultimately derives from the narrative structure predefined by Pak Tua himself.

#### Excerpt 7

Tokoh kita pun menyusun masing-masing kemungkinan pak tua pencerita dan pemuda yang turut menyimak bersamanya, dan beginilah skenario yang didapatkannya. Baik Pak Tua dan pemuda penyimak sama-sama agen rahasia dan mereka mencurigainya sebagai anggota Kelompok Perlawanan. Namun, sikap dan ucapan Pak Tua juga tak menunjukkan pro toilet, tetapi siapa tahu ..., siapa tahu! (Johan, 2020: 377-378).

#### Translation

Our protagonist then pieced together the possibilities—both the storytelling Pak Tua and the young man listening alongside him—and here is the scenario he conceived: Both Pak Tua and the young listener are secret agents, and they suspect him of being a member of the Resistance Group. Yet, Pak Tua’s attitude and words show no explicit allegiance to the toilet regime either... But who knows—who knows! (Johan, 2020: 377-378).

The ambiguity surrounding Pak Tua’s identity functions as a strategic narrative device that sustains the hegemonic order in data 7. By keeping his motives unclear, the story cultivates an atmosphere of suspicion that prevents the formation of collective trust among the survivors. The main character’s uncertainty—whether Pak Tua is an agent of the regime or a covert rebel—redirects energy that might otherwise fuel organized resistance into individual

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doubt and introspection. Thus, ambiguity operates as a psychological mechanism of control. It fragments solidarity and keeps potential resistance unfocused, ensuring that power persists not through open coercion, but through the erosion of mutual confidence. Yet, despite this ambiguity, Pak Tua's manner of storytelling and responding to situations never directly challenges the existing power structure. Instead, he cultivates an atmosphere of suspense, keeping the community preoccupied with theories and speculation while ensuring they remain compliant within the queue. This strategy effectively sustains the status quo by diverting attention from systemic oppression to narrative intrigue, reinforcing his role as an organic intellectual who maintains hegemony through cultural manipulation rather than overt force.

As an organic intellectual, Pak Tua does not deliver discourse in an authoritarian manner. He embeds narratives in casual conversations and stories that seem relaxed, rich with allegory and humor. For example, in one scene, Pak Tua tells the survivors about something that represents toilet functional. Yet his influence is profoundly effective because it creates a framework of thought that envelops his listeners. This approach reflects the classic characteristic of an organic intellectual in a hegemonic society: they do not appear as rulers but as guardians of order from within (Harjito, 2014; Jha & Christiansen, 2025). The uncertainty of subordinate characters, including the main protagonist, regarding Pak Tua's position also becomes part of the hegemonic strategy. By maintaining ambiguity, he prevents fixed opposition and keeps the subaltern engaged in speculative interpretation rather than collective action. This reinforces the ideological control of the dominant class while masking its coercive nature under a veil of narrative play and perceived autonomy.

Thus, both Data 6 and Data 7 further solidify Pak Tua's role as an organic intellectual of the dominant class, operating through storytelling, discursive challenges, and interpretive games to soothe societal anxieties during the queue wait. Pak Tua also works to divert potential resistance against the hegemonic toilet system. From this, it is evident that Pak Tua is a cultural actor who refines domination and transforms order into a symbolic playground that appears free but is, in reality, tightly controlled. His approach epitomizes Gramscian hegemony which is consensus manufactured through cultural persuasion rather than force, ensuring compliance while masking power beneath layers of narrative and perceived agency.

### **The Boy (Si Bocah) as an Organic Intellectual**

Based on the classification in Table 1, the character Si Bocah (The Boy), a friend of Xavi the Humanoid, functions as an *organic intellectual*. Si Bocah's personal mission is to construct the Gargantua Ark—a vessel intended to migrate to another *bentala* (realm or earth) that promises greater freedom and security for the dominant class. Upon meeting Xavi, a humanoid who longs

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to experience human sensations such as excretion, Si Bocah seizes the opportunity to implant his ideology subtly. Through empathy and seemingly genuine friendship, he manipulates Xavi's innocence, presenting the Ark as a symbol of hope and liberation while concealing its classist purpose. This interaction exemplifies how emotional persuasion and aspirational narratives become tools of hegemony. Accordingly, this sub-section explores how Si Bocah's use of affective manipulation and idealized promises manufactures consent and reinforces the existing power hierarchy.

Excerpt 8

"Hmmm, memang kadang-kadang orangtua tidak tahu perasaan anak-anak. Kok bisa-bisanya ada orang tua yang tidak memperbolehkan anaknya bertahi?"  
"Betul kan? Betul sekali kan? Kok bisa-bisanya papaku bilang aku tidak bisa bertahi!"  
"Kadang-kadang di dunia yang sudah kejam ini masih saja ada orangtua yang kejam dengan anaknya," ujar kawannya sambil berkacak pinggang dan menggeleng-geleng kepala (Johan, 2020: 68).

Translation

"Hmmm, sometimes parents really don't understand their children's feelings. How could there be parents who forbid their child from *excretion*?"  
"Right? Absolutely right! How could my dad say I can't *excretion*?"  
"Sometimes, in this already cruel world, there are still parents who are cruel to their children," his friend remarked, hands on hips and shaking his head (Johan, 2020:68).

Excerpt 8 describes the character Xavi emotionally expressing his complaint about being forbidden to *excretion* by an authority figure (his father). As a humanoid, he appears as subordinate, both biologically and socially. On the other hand, humanoids (robots in human form) inherently lack an excretory system. Meanwhile, Si Bocah positions himself as an empathetic friend. However, when read critically, his response does not offer real solutions but merely reflects Xavi's complaints to reinforce dissatisfaction. This is the initial step in forming manipulative sympathy used by organic intellectuals within a hegemonic framework which is building closeness so that subordinates feel understood, then being directed toward a larger agenda.

Excerpt 9

Sang kawan baru kemudian mengajak humanoid Xavi untuk ikut bersamanya, dan berangkatlah mereka menuju rimba gedung-gedung tua, melewati kilang-kilang dan bengkel-bengkel kumuh, jebor yang sudah jebol di sana-sini, atelir yang sudah tak punya bentuk. "Aku dan saudara-saudaraku dan teman saudara-saudaraku sedang membangun satu bahtera gargantua."  
"Apa itu bahtera gargantua?" tanya humanoid Xavi.  
"Bahtera itu semacam kapal terbang," jawab kawannya.

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“Mau ke mana kamu dan saudara-saudaramu?” tanya humanoid Xavi.  
“Ke bentala lain yang lebih segar,” jawab Si Bocah (Johan, 2020:69).

#### Translation

Then the new friend invited the humanoid Xavi to join him, and they set off through a jungle of old buildings, past rundown refineries and workshops, through crumbling sewers and shapeless ateliers.

“My siblings, their friends, and I are building a Gargantua ark.”

“What is a Gargantua ark?” asked the humanoid Xavi.

“The ark is a kind of flying ship,” his friend replied.

“Where are you and your siblings going?” asked the humanoid Xavi.

“To another, fresher bentala (realm/earth),” answered Si Bocah (Johan, 2020:69).

After establishing an emotional connection, Excerpt 9 shows Si Bocah steering the conversation toward a grand project which is the construction of the Gargantua Ark. Si Bocah positions himself as part of a group with a future vision to leave the old world behind for a new *bentala* (realm). This is a classic hegemonic technique focused on making subordinates feel that change is underway and that they can play a role in it. However, in this context, the Gargantua Ark is a symbolic project which is vague and seemingly fantastical yet persuasive enough to instill hope in Xavi. Si Bocah begins to reveal his role as an intellectual of the dominant class, exploiting the subordinate Xavi to advance this project for his own interests. By framing personal ambitions as collective liberation, he embodies Gramsci’s concept of hegemony. He manufacturing consent through aspirational narratives that mask underlying power agendas.

#### Excerpt 10

“Tapi nanti di bentala baru ini orang bisa bebas bertahi kan?”

“Iyalah. Di bentala baru nanti kau bisa langsung berjongkok di pinggir sungai dan berak semaumu,” kawannya geleng-geleng kepala.

Setelah kawannya berkali-kali meyakinkannya bahwa betapapun juga bentala baru itu lebih hebat dan lebih seru, humanoid Xavi pun memutuskan ikut bersama mereka. Bersama kawannya, bocah humanoid membantu mengumpulkan sisa bahan-bahan.” (Johan, 2020:73).

#### Translation

“But in this new *bentala*, people will be free to *excretion*, right?”

“Of course. In the new *bentala*, you can just squat by the river and poop as much as you want,” his friend replied, shaking his head.

After his friend repeatedly assured him that the new *bentala* would be far more magnificent and exciting, the humanoid Xavi finally decided to join them. Together with his friend, the humanoid boy helped gather leftover materials.” (Johan, 2020:73).

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Excerpt 10 illustrates Si Bocah's effective implementation of subtle hegemony. He is not only makes Xavi feel acknowledged but also turns Xavi's grievances into support for his own initiative. Si Bocah offers a promise or consensus which is the freedom to excretion in the new bentala. This becomes a deeply personal aspiration for Xavi, as excretion symbolizes his ultimate desire. In the end, Xavi dedicates his labor to a goal that is not genuinely his own. This behavior exemplifies the tangible role of an organic intellectual of the dominant class which is presenting a hopeful vision that encourages subordinates to work for "higher interests" while failing to truly liberate the lower class. Si Bocah's manipulation reflects Gramsci's notion of hegemony, where power is sustained not through coercion but by shaping desires and consent, ensuring that subaltern groups willingly continue their own subjugation.

In essence, both Pak Tua and Si Bocah serve as organic intellectuals, but their methods and scopes differ. Pak Tua operates on a broader cultural and symbolic level, maintaining order in the toilet queue through narratives told to those waiting. His storytelling technique aims to keep subordinates calm and prevent rebellion, effectively using stories as a tool to sustain the system. In contrast, Si Bocah acts more personally and cunningly. He exploits his close relationship with Xavi and Xavi's dissatisfaction to recruit him for the ambiguous ark project. Though seemingly promising change, this project ultimately reinforces the unjust system, including its strict toilet rules.

The key of the difference lies in their approaches. Pak Tua influences the masses through collective storytelling, while Si Bocah manipulates individuals through personal relationships and persuasion. Although neither directly defends Person #1, both contribute to maintaining the system. Pak Tua through narratives and Si Bocah through actions.

While this study shares similarities with other research on Gramscian hegemony theory, particularly in its focus on how ideology is internalized and sustained through cultural narratives and interpersonal relations, it diverges significantly in scope and emphasis from prior works (Yunitasari et al., 2022; Dani & Suseno, 2023; Fitriansyah, 2021). The findings focus on the application of hegemony through characters like Pak Tua and Si Bocah as organic intellectuals, aligning with studies by Wilson (2021) and Jha & Christiansen (2025). Here, hegemony is not exercised directly by the Person #1, but is delegated to ideological actors or agents. This creates a distinct gap from previous research centered on religious hegemony, solidarity elements, or hegemony embodied by a single figure.

## CONCLUSION

In the novel *Buanglah Hajat pada Tempatnya*, power does not appear in the form of direct coercion, but instead manifests subtly through mechanisms of hegemony. Hegemony, in Gramsci's sense, operates through the formation of collective consciousness, accepted habits, and narratives that appear logical

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in everyday life. Characters like the Old Man (Pak Tua) and the Boy (Si Bocah) become important agents in this process. They do not hold formal power but successfully influence the way people think and act. The Old Man spreads stories that soothe and normalize queuing, while the Boy leverages personal closeness to persuade subordinates like Xavi to participate in unprofitable projects. This research offers novelty in its approach and subject of study. Studies of hegemony in Indonesian literature are generally conducted on realist works with concrete socio-political settings, whereas this research applies Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony to a post-apocalyptic novel using a symbolic-cultural approach. Furthermore, the novelty is also evident in the analysis of two minor characters, namely the Old Man (Pak Tua) and the Boy (Si Bocah), who are examined as organic intellectuals of the dominant class, an aspect rarely explored in previous studies. Additionally, the ending of the novel *Buanglah Hajat pada Tempatnya (BHPT)* is speculative, conspiratorial, and open to multiple interpretations based on the main character's account, making this research highly dependent on precise and accurate critical reading.

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**Natanael Ricky Putra:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Writing-original draft. **Djoko Saryono:** Data curation, Writing-review editing. **Karkono:** Investigation, Supervision, Validation.

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