

Araştırma Makalesi

**THE IMMUNITY FACTOR IN CHILDREN'S
LITERATURE**

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Abstract: Immunity, which describes the situation the body utilizes certain internal tools to protect it from outsider hazards, has been a topic that is iterated in various disciplines. Throughout its political use, immunity is debated on by the Italian philosopher Roberto Esposito in relation to situations where single individuals or groups of population are in a mutual relationship with the administrative body. However, the nature of this relationship and its mechanisms do not always work to the benefit of both sides; the ruling mechanism and its behaviours may be against the rights of the individual. On the contrary to the idea that individuals in this relationship are most often perceived as adults, children can also be affected from the indifference of the administrative mechanisms of the state. The aim of this study is to discuss the reflection of how children are facing the sometimes negatory effects of administrative immunisation through the works of Gudrun Pausewang, and Lois Lawry.

Key Words: Immunity, Child, Gudrun Pausewang, Lois Lawry, The Giver, The Last Children

ÇOCUK EDEBİYATINDA BAĞIŞIKLIK FAKTÖRÜ

Öz: Bedenin belli başlı kimi içsel araçları dışarıdan gelebilecek tehlikelere karşı kullanmasını tanımlayan bağışıklık kavramı, pek çok disiplinde kullanılan bir başlık olmuştur. Politik bağlamda kullanımında bağışıklık, tekil bireyler veya nüfus gruplarının birbirleriyle ve yönetim kütlesi ile olan karşılıklı ilişkisini açıklayan İtalyan felsefeci Roberto Esposito tarafından tartışılmıştır. Fakat bu ilişkinin doğası ve mekanizmaları her zaman iki tarafında yararına çalışmamaktadır; yönetim mekanizmaları ve bunların davranışları, bireylerin haklarına karşı çalışabilir. Bu ilişkideki bireylerin genellikle yetişkinler olarak algılandığı görüşüne karşın, çocuklar

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da devletin yönetim mekanizmalarının aldırışsızlığından mustarip olabilirler. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Gudrun Pausewang ve Lois Lowry'nin eserleri aracılığıyla çocukların yönetim bağımsızlığının kimi zaman negatif olabilen etkileri ile yüzleştiklerini tartışmaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bağımsızlık, Çocuk, Gudrun Pausewang, Lois Lowry, *Seçilmiş Kişi, Son Çocuklar*

Introduction

Comparative children's literature and the fields it has ties to have tended to be varied in the recent years. Bookstores and publishing houses began to adapt fictional works and nonfictional works for the pleasure of child readers and audience. Transforming such works into children's literature is mainly done through a simplification of the main text and occasionally adapting the narrative into graphic books.

In her canonical book *Comparative Children's Literature*, Emer O'Sullivan (2005) highlights the conflict in the creator, provide, and audience of children's literature by pointing to the fact that even though the title of the genre children's literature is an implication for children, the creator of the texts are usually adults. The flow from the creator to the child's provider for the literary works also happens mainly through adults because of the economic aspect. And lastly, as the audience, children come to the fore; however, the question of whether these texts are read only by children or they also apply to the general adult reader or not brings about another controversy. These texts also appeal to the adult readers and are criticised again by adults from a variety of approaches. Even though the protagonist tends to be a child in children's literature texts, one can never overlook the autonomy and subjectivity of the child in the narration.

Autonomy and subjectivity are two terms discussed in great length for examining the condition of child characters and concerns in children's literature texts. Although the dichotomous nature of the relationship between child reader, the writer of the text, and the intermediary who supplies the text are of concern, this situation has been changing in the recent years. It is imperative to give the examples of several awards that are given under the field of children's and young adult fiction since they are now mainly decided by the wishes and likes of the target audience. Thus, while the authorship of the adult and the adult intermediary who supplies the book are open to debate, these are replaced by children and young adult individuals. Today, children can create their own narratives and present them to their peers; even more interesting is that, today with the spread of social media platforms and digital venues of artistic expression, young adults create their own graphic books, novels, poetry,

and other forms of artistic expression and can grasp the chance of being published if they address the interest of their peers and other age groups. Alice Oseman, for instance, expressed her fiction first through a visual arts' digital venue, and after attracting the attention of her peers, she got published with her novel at the age of seventeen. She also received an award which is, although shortlisted by an institution, decided by the votes of young adults. In the same vein, Elizabeth Acevedo is another young adult who has published her novels and was granted another award for young adult writers. Just as Oseman is also an artist, Acevedo is also talented in other fields such as contributing to the arrangement of her novel to be transferred into an audiobook.

The aforementioned awards, some of which are Inky Awards (received by Oseman), Thomas Rivera Award, Odyssey Award, and Carnegie Medal (received by Acevedo), are awards all of which are given to the authors/works of children's or young adult fiction. These awards are among the examples of children and young adults assuming their autonomy in the selection of a literary work that appeals to them. The intermediaries between the child/young adult and the writer, who is also a young adult, are diminished, therefore indicating the appearance of a subjective and autonomous group in the society. These awards are particular in another way: they provide the chance of expressing the opinion through vote. Very similarly, voting is an indicator of expressing the political opinion, giving the individual the opportunity to establish his subjectivity and express his opinion. In the same vein, children and young adults choosing a literary work that they find interesting and expressing certain concerns of their generation reflects their subjectivity and autonomy. This situation means the child or the young adult is not a mere receiver of the literary work but also the creator of it. Therefore, the body of the child and the young adult is no longer a mere biological entity but also a political decision-making subject. As Esposito also states, "our time has been characterised more and more definitely by the breaking down of the borders between the political and biological."¹ The child and the young adult have the opportunity to become visible in the social and political stage through his choice. Once avoided and also prevented from being political, the child and the young adult are as autonomous and subjective as the adult, displaying their participation in the society.

¹ Roberto Esposito, "Postdemocracy and Biopolitics", *European Journal of Social Theory*, 22:3 (2019), p. 319.

1. Immunity

In biology, the cooperation of organs within a body is of essential value in terms of providing the unity of the body. The same analogy can be used in social sciences to describe the society which establishes a harmony between the individuals that form the society, therefore realising the essentials of biopolitical order. The fact that the governmentality mechanism – a term established by Michel Foucault to describe the political power of the state exercised on humans – providing welfare for individuals shows that the life of each individual is valued and in turn the existence of the state is provided with the continuity of this life. Governmentality notion is sustained. This mutual relationship between the individual and government reveals the immunity paradigm as proposed by Roberto Esposito.

The body of the individual is evaluated as an agent in biopolitics, whose health and other social-political involvements should be carefully observed and cared for. This is because the human body is an instrument in the sustainability of the state. The production of consumables and technology is still carried out through the human work. Thus, the sustainability of the body is significant. The analogy that individuals coming together and constructing a single state mechanism or a body can be considered as making a reference to the *Leviathan* published by Thomas Hobbes in 1651. While the body of Leviathan symbolizes the state body, the individuals that constitute it let the Leviathan exist by their own bodies joining the main body. However, this view highlights the fact that “the body is “the instrument of and terrain” of the immunatory paradigm, which then depends on the incorporation of the individual body in politics.”² The fact that Leviathan's appearance reflecting a sole ruler, who is thought to be the representative of the sovereignty, having consisted of thousands of individuals means that the individual is part of the governmentality with his body, yet also a material part of the whole because he is lacking a mental individuation. Roberto Esposito's biopolitics interpretation views the situation from an immunatory perspective: the individual, who is desubjectified and lets his body to be open to debate, accepts being a part of the sovereign. Yet according to Esposito, who discussed the immunatory paradigm in biopolitics, when the individual utilizes his body, he can confront the governing of the sovereign power and initiate an autoimmune act in the society.

² Catherine Mills, *Biopolitics*, Routledge, New York 2018, p. 91.

The body, on the contrary to being an organic mass that belongs to a person in the society, is also a constituent that has its own immunity system. Under the immunity dynamics of the state, while the body is subjected to the various disciplining mechanisms and tools of the state, it is regarded merely as an organic mass, therefore suggesting the probability of being produced:

“Organisms are made; they are constructs of a world-changing kind. The constructions of an organism's boundaries, the job of the discourses of immunology, are particularly potent mediators of the experiences of sickness and death for industrial and post-industrial people.”³

Donna Haraway, here, argues that even though individuals are regarded as being composed of organic matter, with the right subjectivity attributed to each, they can manipulate and change the present political setting. However, such a body is also the object of the governmentality mechanism as it provides the sustenance of the state body. With the industry came the production of goods, but also came the production of the working body that manages the mechanical system. So, the boundary proposed by the state to limit the working bodies to a life of work and biological existence is also executed by the state. Just as the commodities should be properly produced and used, so does the human body should be kept healthy in order to be utilized. For providing the immunity of the human body, the state establishes systems of health, keeping the necessary biological entity functioning. And at the same time the very same idea would impose the question: “If bodies are made and maintained, can they also be destroyed?” The answer to this question is revealed in the political system the individuals live in. If the state provides the individuals with a proper social setting as well, the governmentality mechanism can be considered to be respecting the value of subjectivity of its individuals, in return guarantees its own sustainability.

This system of governmentality supposedly only applies to the individuals who are adults; however, the child is also of significance since he is conventionally seen as the member of the generation that will continue the governmentality. Institutions of a state are organized according to the framework of which the child will supposedly take the shape. So, it can be assumed that children also seen as bodies that are produced and kept just

³ Donna Haraway, “The Biopolitics of Postmodern Bodies: Constitutions of Self in Immune System Discourse”, *Biopolitics: A Reader*, Ed. Timothy Campbell and Adam Sitze, Duke University Press, Durham and London 2013, p. 279.

as adults. In the same frame, the situation leads to the point of asking the question whether their bodies are kept and destroyed.

Haraway again highlights another concern discussed by Michel Foucault as the governmentality producing its own set of rules and discourse in the light of knowledge it produces. Thus, Haraway identifies “bodies as objects of knowledge are material-semiotic generative nodes.”⁴ Knowledge here is a privilege that is owned, produced, and conveyed to the individuals by the governmentality. Only with the knowledge shaped and distributed to the necessary institutions and individuals, can the rest of the community and individuals maintain their lives, because knowledge provides the necessary level of immunization. On the one hand, individuals become objects in the society since they are not directly the producers of such a wide-scale body of knowledge, and have to be on the receiving side of this communication. State distributes the knowledge systematically, from the centre to the institutions that act as nodes, eventually to the single individual. This act is a distribution of knowledge as a tool of immunity towards the outer agents. The individual, having received knowledge, becomes an active agent of this immunity. On the other hand, while the individual receives the knowledge as the passive receiver, he, at the same time, obtains a certain degree of subjectivity via the manipulation of knowledge, therefore he is able to strengthen his own immunity and become autonomous. Again, although this act seemingly is attributed to the adult individual, the child also becomes part of this mutual relationship with the state and acts as a sovereign individual.

Esposito states that in order to be immune then the individual should also possess a certain manner of sovereignty as it brings about subjectivity with itself. However, the sovereign notion here is not attributed to the ruling body or mechanism, it is directly related to the individual who is constituting the very community that the governing sovereign rules. So, sovereignty is also exercised by the common individual:

“Since the phenomenon of immunity is inscribed precisely at the point of intersection between law and biology, between medical and legal protection, it is clear that the politics that it gives rise to, in the form of action or reaction, must be in direct relationship with biological life.”⁵

As Esposito highlights, the concept of sovereignty, immunity, and community are closely related to each other. Their relationship being

⁴ Donna Haraway, *ibid.*, p. 280.

⁵ Roberto Esposito, *ibid.*, p. 85.

mutual among each other makes it complex and aporetic, but at the same time allows for the emergence and existence of the individual before the sovereign and its dispositifs. Just as Giorgio Agamben makes a morphologic and etymologic investigation of the community, Esposito contributes by stating "individual literally means this: to make indivisible, untied in oneself, by the same line that divides one from everyone else."⁶

2. Reflections of Immunity in Children's Literature

Contemporary children's literature works have begun to display child and young adult characters that possess a certain degree of subjectivity that traditional child characters rarely display. In a conventional social setting, the child is seen as a guarantee of immunity, a successor to the duty of bearing the knowledge and discipline of the governmentality; and the fact that they are raised according to certain paradigms which means that the governmentality can accomplish itself. However, recent examples of dystopic fiction features children that react to the immunization system of the totalitarian state, creating an irony as this character is the product of the very system the child is reacting against. In the autoimmune process, the child transforms into the antibody that develops a degree of immunity which the governmentality is trying to protect itself against

Gudrun Pausewang, who has produced a number of children's books which can be considered as dystopic. In *The Last Children*, the story of a German family which is trapped in a small German village called Schewenborn after the explosion of a nuclear bomb, through Roland, a 12-year-old boy. Upon examining the events in the book – depiction of Schewenborn before the nuclear explosion, the events during and after the explosion, and the state people are in – one can see the ideal setting for a child and how it transforms into a dangerous environment in terms of the biopolitics concept proposed by Foucault. As the narrator is Roland himself, one can observe the events through a child's eyes and body, and make a biopolitical reading through his body and psychology.

According to Roland's narration, Schewenborn is a utopic place before the nuclear explosion. "There were a lot of things we liked in Schewenborn: we could play hide and seek between the old wooden houses, their stairs and doors."⁷ This description shows that the town provided a utopic place as a setting for individuals in a utopic childhood. Upon examining the

⁶ Roberto Esposito and Timothy Campbell, "The Immunization Paradigm", *Diacritics*, 36:2 (2006), p.34.

⁷ Gudrun Pausewang, *Son Çocuklar*, Çev. Murat Batmankaya, Çizmeli Kedi, İstanbul 2016, p. 15.

developmental stages of a human, the childhood can be considered as the utopic phase for individuals who are raised in a good environment, their needs met, their emotional sides fulfilled, and obtain self-esteem. In a healthy biopolitical environment, when the state uses all its dispositifs – tools of control and welfare provider for individuals, to the necessary degree, the ones that would benefit from this situation are the future of the state as well as the citizens and their children. Among the dispositifs that make Schewenborn a utopic place are the security and health institutions that operate successfully. The health service provided by the state protects the development of individuals and children as necessary and in turn, the individual uses this healthy condition for the sustenance of the state. It shows that the adults who are protected by the state and its dispositifs no longer act as objects that receive service but also active and subjectified individuals who act agents of immunity towards outer dangers. Foucault generally uses binary oppositions in order to define the biopolitics concept: upon examining the individual/state binary opposition it can be seen that the state is transformed from a body of mechanisms that objectify the individual into a body that provides a mutual relationship with the individual and maintain its immunity. However much the state is willing to sustain itself, it should equally provide for the biological and psychological well-being of its citizens.

A biopolitical synthesis, in which the interests of both sides, namely the individual/state, can be seen in the utopic description of Schewenborn through Roland. The town is not only a utopic place for children who are enjoying their own utopic childhood but also for adults. “My mother and grandmother would go on walks in the evening. My mother was happy to see the incredible garden that surrounds the castle among the massive chestnut trees. My father enjoyed walking, that is why, he couldn't wait to see the big forest. He would also go fishing on the Malford Lake with my grandfather.”⁸ In the Schewenborn description seen through Roland's eyes, but from an adult's perspective, it can be seen that adults' welfare is a reflection of the state using its dispositifs that it obtains. The fact that the individual can maintain his daily life in a health and secure way is realized through the environment the state has formed and maintained its sustainability. The individual, as a subject, can have a family, raise children, and work for the sustenance of the state; and from the child's perspective, he will be raised as a supportive of the political system in the same utopic welfare and maintain its continuity. Therefore, it can be seen

⁸ Gudrun Pausewang, *ibid*, p. 15.

that children are subjects and active individuals in a biopolitical order, instead of objects left in the background.

While the Schewenborn description in the beginning of the book is so utopic and Roland's family structure and relations are equally utopic, their lives are left in a dystopia after the nuclear bomb that is dropped nearby their village as a result of certain political events. The political ambiguity and the risk of war can be understood from the dialogue between the parents even before the set on the holiday drive. When the mother asks "Should we stay at home until everything settles?", the father says "We would wait for a long time for the disagreement to pass. Whether or not we go on a holiday, the politicians will come to terms again."⁹ It can be understood from this dialogue that the state is in a political disagreement with another state or states. Although the individual feels that he can be safe thanks to the utopic description of villages, it is inevitable that he would experience danger from the first hand or indirectly in the case of a dispute between states. When we analyse the dialogue between the father and mother, we can see that the dispute between states is referred as a "disagreement". This situation, which is described as a disagreement in the political discourse, leads to issues such as mass killings, hunger, and homelessness in daily life. The state, which uses various dispositifs and mechanisms to provide the welfare of individuals, however, fails to use such dispositifs, and the society becomes the aim and victim of this deficient policy.

As a result of the nuclear bomb, Roland and his family take shelter in his grandparents' house in Schewenborn. The effects of the bomb, destroyed cities, homeless and starving people, and most importantly the lack of vital help the state fails to provide show a serious lack of biopolitical welfare. Individuals that try to survive in the absence of state dispositifs and institutions do not show the necessary interest in other individuals. Roland's family is in no state of helping other homeless and starving people because of the scarcity of food; the same situation was also apparent among children as well as adults. "Nobody wanted to give even one bite of the food necessary for themselves to these dirty creatures in burnt and ragged clothes."¹⁰ The fact that Roland's sisters, Judith who is three years older and Kerstin who is 4 years old, and other children witness these leads to them growing up early both mentally and physically as a result of the failed politics of the state.

⁹ Gudrun Pausewang, *ibid*, p. 14.

¹⁰ Gudrun Pausewang, *ibid*, p. 43.

Stranded in Schewenborn after the nuclear disaster, the family takes shelter in Roland's father's parents' and wait for the state or its institutions to help them. However, after a walk out of the village, they realize that several parts of Europe also experienced this and were destroyed. Since many people in the village died because of the radiation or are trying to survive the side effects of radiation, children who lost their families or nobody cares for formed groups and got ready for the approaching winter. The sense of abandonment in these children later develops into a massive rage against the generations who actually caused this situation and they become quite outspoken about it. For adults, the situation these children are in is a reflection of their unawareness of the political situation and failure of fulfilling their duty. Because while children thought that they were raised according to a certain cultural code and social structure and would be the guarantor of their civilization, both adults and children realize that they are losing their child and young adult population as a result of wrong politics. Roland's relationship with the two older girls who took refuge in the basement of the castle is reflected as weak since these girls take care of the younger children and babies who were orphaned and strictly refuse any adult help. This situation, which can be read as the immunity on the social level being affected from the radiation metaphorically and losing its power, is a sign of the connection between generations is cut down.

“There were a few beggar children who took refuge in the basement of the castle. The oldest of them was maybe fourteen years old, and the youngest was two or three. The two of the elder girls were their leader. [Roland] would sometimes sneak into the castle and watch them. When they stop and look at him, they would do this in anger.”¹¹

As it can be understood from Roland's narration, these children, with their parents dead and other people not caring for them, are left in a situation where there is not enough food or water, open to outer danger, and furthermore, affected from the radiation. While children's immune system supposedly develops during these years with the help of their families, now they are exposed to the dangers from outside. Therefore, because these children are already aware of the uninterest and unawareness towards themselves, the fact that they do not let any adult or children like Roland that still had their families come near is an act of immunization. This immunity act is not against the elements of danger that would penetrate their bodies; on the contrary, it would be against the adults who were

¹¹ Gudrun Pausewang, *ibid*, p. 117.

supposed to protect them and the rest of the community. The fact that immunity operates in such a dysfunctional way can be seen as a reaction against the non-existent form of governmentality. Here, if we were to remember Esposito's definition of immunity, he states that "immunity – or immunization – refers to the privileged particularity of a situation that is defined by being an exception to a common condition."¹² In the same vein, the behaviour of two girls as leaders of the group reflects their immunity act towards the outer world. Their sense of immunity is revealed as an act of self-protection since they think that the adults around them are the responsible ones of this situation and in order to protect themselves from more danger, they refuse the help of anyone who has a connection to the adults. Their subjectivity is thus revealed with this action.

In *The Giver*, a novel by Lois Lowry, the examples of immunity stemming from the adults and reflected on the children in order to protect and maintain their almost utopic social order can be seen through children, particularly babies, being cast away from the society as a result of the eugenics practice. As a practice in medical engineering, eugenics is based on either the removal of some undesired characteristic or physical properties through genes of unborn children. Thus, some hereditary diseases and medical condition that remained from older generations can be erased as well as allowing for a change in the physical appearance or characteristics of a child. The natural process lets the children to have varied characteristics based on the percentage they receive from their mothers and fathers, yet eugenic intervention manipulates the ratio of the percentages of the relevant genes and causes children, who are in compliance with the wishes of the parents and socio-political framework, to be born. The Giver introduced examples of such a process: children are born according to a strict regulation and set of procedures and unless they can keep up with the necessary growth standards or developmental stages, they are released from the community. The euphemism for 'exposing a baby to the unknown' is supplied with an act of distancing a foreign object from the body and accomplishing an immunity act. This decision can be seen as correct if it were and antibody agent having penetrated the body for infection; however, the fact that underdeveloped children being released from the society for the sake of creating a perfect society disrupts the utopic ideals of a perfect society.

Even though the eugenics process is an immunity policy that the governmentality developed in order to sustain itself and normalized it for

¹² Roberto Esposito, "Community, Immunity, Biopolitics", *Angelaki*, 18:3 (2013), p. 84.

the individuals that constitute the society, an outside eye can see that this process is the result of a social engineering structured through human hand that does not allow difference and diversity to exist. Nonetheless, in an order in which this procedure is normalized, the governmentality, which has the power to manipulate the perceptions of the individuals accordingly, can insist upon the rightfulness of this procedure. The protagonist of the book, Jonas describes the situation as such: "The release of the elderly was the celebration of a life lived beautifully and full; and the release of a new born always indicated that 'there was nothing else we could do.'"¹³

The fact that babies, who are the providers of the immune system to continue working in a society, are subjected to the release procedure without letting them reach the infancy indicates that the governmentality sees these providers of the immune system as extra material and chooses to get them out of the main body. Such a eugenics practice indicates that a society, where a utopic biopolitics is exercised, is in fact a place where a continuous and brutal practice is maintained. Releasing the elderly without any specific condition, disguising this as a celebration, and releasing them to an uninhabited geography without any provisions may give them a relatively short time to survive; however, this does not change the fact that these individuals become the victim of a misused immunatory practice. In a similar vein, babies who do not reach a certain weight, or develop the required mental and motor skills are robbed of the right to live. It can be seen that the 'encourage to live, support, and give opportunities to develop oneself' principle of biopolitics does not exist in this society and babies are decided 'to let die' through a eugenics practice. While Jonas, the protagonist of the book, has already realized this policy of death and distances himself from the society, Gabriel, whom he takes with himself when he escapes, is a baby who is decided to be released and a victim of this policy.

This society which lives in a biopolitical utopia that resembles the mythic Golden Age assumes that babies who do not show the necessary development will not have sufficient mental and physical capacity and rids of these individuals who may carry the potential to be individuals that will contribute to the immune system of the state. In this social organisation where each individual fulfils his duty and obeys the strict social norms, it can be seen that the individual is isolated and estranged: "what the community inaugurates now immunizes the individual from a communitarian form of living, there where the single individual is the

¹³ Lois Lowry, *The Giver*, Ember, New York 2011, p. 7.

impotent and undifferentiated subject.”¹⁴ This particular behaviour of the state is not only a step it takes to establish its immunity but also an encouragement to the individual to constitute his own immunity by isolating himself against the normative state. The reason why the immunization notion is this complex is because the policies of the state, regardless of it being a democratic or a totalitarian one, can be assessed from different points of view. Thus, it is difficult to determine the status of the child and the young adult in this complex environment. The roles attributed to the child and the young adult, though they remind of the conventional ones such as being the saviour and continuing the generation, have changed and transformed.

Jonas's father works in a Child Care Centre and is one of the individuals who decides which baby will be placed in a certain family unit, and which baby will be released. Although he decided to bring baby Gabriel home for extra care because he feels sorry for the underdeveloped child, it can be understood that the baby is actually showing physical progress but only a little behind the desired standards. In the novel, which employs Jonas's abandonment of his community as an act of immunization, the fact that the community releases baby that have a potential of contribution to several parts of the state into wilderness means that the state is voluntarily giving up its immunity. While the aspects that provide the sustenance of the biopolitical state are realized through dispozitifis such as health, punishment, clinic, and sexuality, the individual who could not show enough development should also be able to find a place in the social environment and his right to live should be realized through the 'let live, provide living' principle. Nevertheless, practices such as eugenics that select among the individuals distances the social and political environment from being biopolitical into a structure which is maintained through the 'led die' idea. Although releasing the elderly individuals to the Elsewhere is not strictly connected to the idea of the eugenics, the fact that babies are selected to be included in the community according to their physical and mental development points out to a dysfunctional immunatory mechanism.

Another aspect regarding the children in *The Giver* is that the babies who are born are not conceived through natural processes. The birthmothers receive the foetus in a laboratory environment and after giving birth to babies, they give the babies to care centres. Should the baby show the required development, then it can be given to family units – a decision also

¹⁴ Rosella Bonito Oliva and Timothy Campbell, "From the Immune Community to the Communitarian Immunity: On the Recent Reflections of Roberto Esposito", *Diacritics*, 36:2 (2006), p. 72.

made by The Committee of Elders. Lowry expresses the situation as “[Jonas’s family] union, which was approved by the Committee of Elders just as any family, was a successful unit that completed three years before applying for children.”¹⁵ As it can be seen from Lowry’s description that the smallest unit of the society, the family, is not allowed to provide its natural growth and develop its own immunity mechanism towards outside forces. When there are not any organic bonds between the parents and children, this situation affects the society: Jonas’s family can be evaluated as puppets who reside in the same accommodation and are under constant observation of The Elders so that they are made sure to act according to their rules. Thus, the subjectivity of all the citizens, both adults and children, are is open to debate since they are robbed of their private lives.

As it can be seen in traditional societies, when children grow up, they tend to take care of their parents; however, the socio-political governing body also prevents this cycle: all parents have to be taken to care centres – similar to the babies’ – and maintain their lives until their release. This also prevents the child from understanding and internalising the family structure. Children and young adults, who do not have a sense of belonging to their families, also raise children that are given to them just as did their parents, maintaining this cycle imposed by the governing committee. So, it can be seen that the community Jonas lives in has transformed into a community that produces individuals: produced and then released.

Conclusion

Socio-political dynamics allow for the technologic and cultural advancement and even encourage them; however, as much as the communities in *The Last Children* and *The Giver* are advanced, this development ultimately has an effect not only on adults but also children. In such situations where the individuality of the child is suppressed, then he also has the right to exercise his own immunity against the outer agents. Since the power of the ruling body is disseminated through several institutions or services to the individuals in a community, children also become the receivers. Thus, this becomes an opportunity for them to leave the conventional child archetype and assume a more autonomous existence.

Naturally, examples of the display of immunity by the child and young adult characters cannot be limited to only two novels; publishing industry has already discovered the potential of both the vastness of the audience and the creativity potential of children and young adults for the creation of

¹⁵ Lois Lowry, *ibid.*, p. 48.

texts. Suzanne Collins's trilogy *The Hunger Games* features many child characters that display a certain degree of immunity in a what looks like a sports competition, but a disguised establishment of sovereign power. James Dashner's *The Maze Runner* also features a group of children in an unknown environment trying to survive. Apart from the highly individualistic protagonists, it can be observed that adult characters are leaving the role of provider, commander, and caretaker, which are all assumed by child and young adult characters.

Contemporary children's and young adult fiction works feature such robust and individualistic protagonists. As the creator of these characters experiences the social and political order and outcomes of biopolitical governmentality, the likelihood of the audience reading a conventional child character decreases. Thus, the status of the child who is self-aware of his immunity against the outer agents will be reflected in literature in the same manner.

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