

The Function of Common Sense as a Hegemonic Instrument in Paul Beatty's Novel the Sellout

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate how deeply ingrained common sense can become as a hegemonic tool of the dominant group, normalizing and naturalizing ideas to the point where they feel like accepted and indisputable realities that can guide actions and thoughts, while also influencing social interactions and identity formation of subaltern groups. This study uses qualitative and descriptive analysis methodologies within the theoretical framework of Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony, it is centered on the novel *The Sellout* by African-American author Paul Beatty that focuses on the interactions and characters in the novel to see how common sense acts as a hegemonic tool that upholds the beliefs, values, and viewpoints of dominant groups. The researcher discovered around forty-two instances of the concept of "common sense" function in the novel *The Sellout*. However, the total may surpass this figure based on broader interpretations. The researcher picked nine cases that were most pertinent to the research aims of this article. This study found that the novel *The Sellout*, when analyzed using qualitative and descriptive methods in the context of Antonio Gramsci's approach, successfully captures the function in which common sense acts as a hegemonic tool for upholding the beliefs, values, and viewpoints of dominant groups and, as a result, can influence social dynamics and personal identities.

Keywords: Common sense, Hegemony, Individual identity, Paul Beatty - *The Sellout*

1. Introduction

This study integrates the theory of common sense with Antonio Gramsci's approach, which claims that dominant groups use common sense as a tool to construct and maintain their ideas, values, and perspectives in building and keeping the dominance of the prevailing group over the subaltern population. Literature is one historical recording technique that could be able to capture the culture that emerges in society. The history of common sense's capacity to stifle critical and competing viewpoints, resulting in injustice and unfairness in society, is frequently chronicled in literature. Among other literary works, African-American author Paul Beatty's book *The Sellout* addresses this topic. This novel

gives the idea that common sense comes naturally to oppressed communities while documenting the historical repercussions of its internalization and assimilation.

According to Gramsci (1971) explains that Hegemony is a mechanism for maintaining dominance. The dominant group's dominance can be achieved through two aspects: through the consensus and influence exerted by civil society as a result of common sense, and through the coercive power employed by political society through state apparatuses. These two aspects are interconnected and complementary, thus inseparable from the dominant group. In other words, Hegemony can be exercised not only through physical force but also through the active or passive consent of society, achieved through common sense—ideas accepted as "truth" without question. This shows how common sense is a hegemonic weapon used by dominant groups to mainstream concepts, beliefs, and points of view so that subaltern groups can accept them without having to challenge them. Novels are one type of literary writing that captures and represents the influence of common sense's legitimation function on social interaction and identity in society.

The *Sellout* has emerged as a focal point in significant scholarly discourse due to its author's astute critiques of race relations, identity, and societal institutions in America. Many researchers, such as Dal Checco (2019) and Biswas (2021), have thoroughly investigated its portrayal of African-American identity, urban space, segregation, and systematic racism. These investigations have helped to better understand the complicated ways in which critical theory and reality are perceived in society. This section evaluates many past research on *The Sellout* that provide useful insights into aspects that are relevant to this study.

Monia Dal Checco wrote a study entitled "A Farmer in the Ghetto: Space and African-American Identity in Paul Beatty's *The Sellout*" (2019). The aim of the study is to examine how the novel uses sarcasm, a destructive technique common in post-civil liberties art, to examine how African-American identity and urban area are treated. It criticizes the effects of segregation and gentrification in historically African-American communities while highlighting the ironic use of auto-segregation to inspire a sense of collective "African-Americanness." By examining social paradoxes in American society, including the significance of identity and communal membership, this study is similar to the researcher's. However, Dal Checco's study highlights space and urban geography as the main issue, whereas the researcher's study concentrates on the role that common sense plays in forming identity and naturalization. Khalid Usman and Samina Ashfaq's research, "Segregation in Postracial America: A Fanoian Critique of *The Sellout*" (2021), explores the paradoxes of segregation in so-called postracial America. It examines how the internalization of African-American theories sustains segregation by fostering a superiority mentality among Americans and an inferiority complex among African-Americans, using Frantz Fanon's framework. The study emphasizes how socioeconomic limitations continue to have an impact even after civil rights progress. By examining the ways in which social control mechanisms uphold racial hierarchies, this study supports the researcher's findings. This research, however, focuses more on psychological and societal paradoxes through Fanon's perspective, whereas the researcher's work examines common sense as a way to justify control.

Debajyoti Biswas authored "The Wretched of the Dickens: Deconstructing Race-Relations in Paul Beatty's *The Sellout*" (2021). Using the framework of Critical Race Theory, the study seeks to analyze social institutions, contending that they are hegemonic and sustain injustice under the pretense of legality. It links the events of the book to both current movements like #BlackLivesMatter and historical racial injustices. Both studies examine inequality and societal control; the researcher's investigation of how systemic norms impose social control is similar to Biswas's. Biswas stresses the structural and legal aspects of hegemony, whereas the researcher's work focuses on how common sense contributes to the normalization of inequality. Scott Astrada's study, "Home and Dwelling: Re-Examining Race and Identity through Octavia Butler's *Kindred* and Paul Beatty's *The Sellout*" (2017), investigates how individuals define their existence in a globalized world. It illustrates to scholars how race, identity, and history influence the protagonists' sense of physical and psychological belonging by drawing on Heidegger's idea of dwelling and Foucault's historical viewpoints. This study supports the researcher's investigation of how common sense influences behavior and identity, especially the relationship between identity creation and history. However, the researcher's emphasis on naturalization and cultural norms is different from Astrada's focus on existential and spatial belonging. Suman Lamsal's research, "Critique of Mainstream Racism in Paul Beatty's *The Sellout*" (2010), critiques American society's systemic racism as portrayed in the novel. It highlights the need for racial peace by utilizing ideas by DuBois, Gilroy, and Gates to explain to researchers how cultural narratives uphold prejudices and inequities against racial minorities.

With Lamsal addressing cultural narratives and the researcher concentrating on common sense functions, both the study and the researcher question social control mechanisms. The researcher examines how common sense justifies systemic disparities, whereas Lamsal focuses on narrative analysis and harmony advocacy. Keshab Prasad Joshi's research, "Subaltern Consciousness: Awakening of African-American Self in Paul Beatty's *The Sellout*" (2010), examines how the novel revives the painful history of slavery and segregation to resist modern oppression. In an effort to preserve African-American cultural history, the study emphasizes self-conscious protagonists who oppose racial injustice, police brutality, and identity loss. The researcher finds that Joshi's work addresses how societal structures impact behavior and identity. Joshi discusses the researcher's resistance tactics and historical awareness, whereas the researcher concentrates on common sense as a naturalizing technique.

This study offers a novel perspective by analyzing common sense in the novel *The Sellout* through Antonio Gramsci's theoretical framework as articulated in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. This study diverges from earlier research that utilized *The Sellout* as the subject by concentrating on a different aspect. Prior research predominantly examines racial identity, urban segregation, and socio-economic inequalities, however this study emphasizes the utilization of common sense to justify social control, construct identity, and normalize societal disparity

In order to thoroughly investigate the internal elements and socio-cultural phenomena revealed by the relationships between characters in African-American author Paul Beatty's book *The Sellout*, this study employs a qualitative method using descriptive

and analytical tools. Furthermore, secondary data will be connected to Antonio Gramsci's common sense theory approach. This study uses theme analysis tools to look for patterns and hidden meanings within the text. The purpose of this study is to give readers a deeper comprehension of the function that common sense serves in society.

2. Method

The methodology of this research employed a qualitative approach with descriptive and analytical techniques. The primary data comprised the novel *The Sellout*, which was thoroughly studied to discern implicit and explicit occurrences and interactions within the text and character dialogues. Additionally, this study utilized Antonio Gramsci's approach to common sense as the grand theory to strengthen the analysis of the primary data. Expert assessment was utilized to confirm the accuracy of the data and the findings of the analysis. Prior research predominantly examined racial identity, urban segregation, and socio-economic inequalities; however, this study emphasized the utilization of common sense to justify social control, construct identity, and normalize societal disparity.

3. Result and Discussion

This study identifies a total of 48 instances related to the functions of common sense in the novel *The Sellout*. From this dataset, nine instances were selected for detailed analysis, categorized into three main functions: common sense as social control, common sense as identity and behavior, and common sense as naturalization. In this chapter, the focus will be on how common sense is not only present as widely accepted views but also functions within a broader hegemonic context, reinforcing and shaping ideas, values, and points of view, and their impact on individual identity and social interaction.

3.1 Common Sense Functions as Social Control

Common sense can function as an idea that is embedded deeply in society and has an important role to be a social control mechanism that the aim is to direct an act and subaltern group idea. In that so, the dominant group can maintain its domination by strengthening the binding equivalent (like norms and rules) on the subaltern group without questioning them, the dominant group can continue to hold power. This ensures that the subaltern group conforms to the norms without fully realizing it, making common sense a hegemonic instrument for maintaining the dominant group's power structure.

The subaltern group can be forced by common sense to live up to the expectations that have been placed on them. In this instance, the American public in attendance at the trial judges the narrator in addition to the prosecutor. They all insist on the narrator's culpability, confirming that the narrator made a mistake. The narrator apologizes and complies with their requests in response. He experiences cognitive dissonance, which is a frequent sensation among African-American populations, without making an effort to justify himself further.

“I understand now that the only time black people don't feel guilty is when we've actually done something wrong, because that relieves us of the cognitive dissonance of being black and innocent.”. (*The Sellout*, p.16)

The notion that African-Americans are more likely to commit crimes is one of the negative stereotypes that African-American culture perceives to be present in common sense. Because of this discrepancy between their innocent identity and the social expectations that demand African Americans to be intrinsically guilty, when they conform to social norms, they are prone to feel guilty. On the other hand, when individuals engage in criminal behaviors that align with societal standards, they get relief due to the conformity of their behavior to those norms. Festinger (1968) explained that dissonance is a feeling of discomfort due to mental inconsistency, wherein two or more conflicting beliefs, values, or behaviors exist, ultimately pushing an individual to reduce the discomfort because the condition is psychologically unpleasant. Therefore, African Americans experience dissonance with common sense that perpetuates negative perceptions about them. Dissonance, or the unease that results from the contradiction between African Americans' behavior (which complies with social norms) and societal expectations (which violate social norms), drives African Americans to act in ways that conform to the associated stereotypes to ease this psychological unease. Within the context of the novel, African Americans are forced to live with cognitive dissonance because of the social common sense that has been ingrained in American society and dictates that they are likely to disobey the law. They can therefore be forced to live up to these unfavorable expectations by the bad preconceptions that have permeated society.

The ruling class uses common sense as a means of control over the choices, everyday responsibilities, and interests of the subaltern group. The way that Hominy interacts with the kids in his surroundings demonstrates this. Some kids now frequently come over to Hominy's house just to watch "The Little Rascals," a movie that he starred in when he was younger. The kids always have a lot of questions, especially when Hominy makes an appearance. On the other hand, under screening guidelines, the government assesses movies that might contain racist elements; as a result, the movies are edited to meet television broadcast standards. Young Hominy had previously acted in *The Little Rascals*, but scenes that featured Hominy were cut because they included racist overtones.

"I was in that scene! They edited me out! Spanky finds Aladdin's lamp, he rubs it and says, 'I wish Hominy was a monkey. I wish Hominy was a monkey!' And lo and motherfucking behold, I'm a motherfucking monkey." (The Sellout, p. 54)

Hominy becomes enraged when his scenes are removed because he feels that his existence is also being erased at the same time. Hominy replies that he is "I'm a motherfucking monkey," resolutely declaring his acceptance of the common sense that contains demeaning racist components. In doing so, he decides to "embrace" racism. This proves that Hominy would rather be acknowledged than remain unnoticed or invisible—even when viewed via a racist lens. Hegemony, according to Bajpai (2020) states that Hegemony is the dominance of the ruling class in controlling the interests, preferences, and ways of carrying out the daily tasks of other groups. In other words, the ruling class presents its interests and the means to achieve them in such a way that they appear as common sense. To put it another way, the ruling class communicates its goals and the strategies for achieving them in a fashion that makes sense. The subaltern group feels incapable of surviving because they are not carrying out their daily responsibilities when they grow accustomed to living according to the preferences set by the governing group and if they are unable to achieve the current common sense. Within the context of the novel, Hominy exemplifies how internalized common sense impacts his self-perception regarding his role in society when he

decides to embrace racism in order to stay known and sustain his life, as opposed to living freely but going unnoticed. This illustrates how common sense functions as a hegemonic instrument that has influenced day-to-day activities and even changed Hominy's self-perception and perception of his role in society.

The dominant group uses common sense as a control strategy to ensure that its beliefs are unquestionably recognized as true. This is demonstrated when the narrator stops Hominy from attempting suicide since it is based on the town of Dicken being erased. It is implied that if the town of Dicken is taken off the map, Hominy's existence will also be wiped off; that is, he won't be able to receive letters from people, suggesting that they have forgotten about Hominy. Hominy also selects Wednesday because, at a small, dum dum intellectual gathering in his town, the narrator's father stated that Wednesday was the day most slave rebellions occurred and that the following day they would be punished, implying that the narrator should punish Hominy by killing himself. The narrator declines, claiming that Hominy is not a slave and that he is not under his master's authority.

“Sometimes we just have to accept who we are and act accordingly. I’m a slave. That’s who I am. It’s the role I was born to play. A slave who just also happens to be an actor. But being black ain’t method acting.” (The Sellout, p. 59)

Hominy's answer on his identity shows that he understands that being black and subjected to slavery is a reality of his life rather than just a part he plays in a play. This is based on his early involvement in performance art, where the majority of his roles featured racist themes. Additionally, because he was the only African-American in the movie *The Little Rascals*, other actors made offensive and demeaning jokes in some of these scenes. The common sense-infused experiences he has had on a regular basis from childhood slowly make him realize that being black and being treated like a slave is a reality in his life, not merely a component of performance art. Wojczewski (2018) explains that hegemonic discourse becomes common sense and aligns with reality; thus, this conceptualization does not equate power with certain “material capabilities” but rather understands it as the ability to hegemonize discursive processes, thereby shaping meaning and identity (p. 4). This suggests that Hegemony involves more than just material dominance or control over natural or financial resources; it also involves the capacity to mold and manage common sense that is taken for granted by the general public without being questioned. In the context of the novel, his early encounters with racism cause him to absorb the deeply ingrained racist common sense that permeates society without realizing it. This shapes his moral behavior, which in turn shapes his opinions and sense of self.

Common sense articulated in daily life often looks too natural in that the existence is not realized. One day, Hominy is taken by the narrator to take the bus that Marapessa is driving, the person who cares about Hominy's happiness. Suddenly, a female walks up to them and says, "Happy birthday, Hominy." Hominy is perplexed and wants to know how the woman found out it was his birthday. The woman goes on to say that everyone is aware that today is Hominy's birthday thanks to a sizable placard that is posted on the bus.

“Did you get anything good for your birthday?” Hominy pointed to the blue-and-white cigarette-box-sized signs stickered under the windows that lined the front third of the bus. PRIORITY SEATING FOR SENIORS, DISABLED, AND WHITES.” (The Sellout, p. 96)

When the woman asks what gifts Hominy got, he proudly gestures to a banner that has racial sayings on it. Though legally released, Hominy yearns for the racist social framework of the past and longs for bigotry to return to his life. He has been literally set free. This is an expression of his total acceptance of his racial servitude, which he views as appropriate and even normal. He sees the sign as a standard and appropriate part of social order rather than as an insult. Treating white people as superior is the assumption that, despite its illogic or injustice, common sense has been internalized. Wullweber (2021) explains that hegemonic structures have been widely accepted and are part of what is regarded as common sense, which is also consistent with their everyday experiences, making those structures appear natural and extra-discursive (p. 14). This suggests that common sense is the outcome of a hegemonic process that has been expressed in a form that is firmly ingrained in everyday life and renders it commonplace, inborn, and unquestionable by society. Within the narrative, Hominy's contentment in acknowledging racism is a reflection of his conviction that, as a result of his racially charged past, he has internalized common sense and not only accepted but also understood racism as a component of who he is. This illustrates how common sense, which expresses itself in day-to-day activities until it seems natural, inadvertently shapes a person's identity.

3.2 Common Sense Functions as Identity And Behavior

Common sense can form an individual identity and influence social interaction. This is based on the society's views legitimization, and encourages them to act in order analogous as evolve and accept norms and habits spaciously. A person's identity becomes part of the overall social structure shaped by common sense, where their behavior and daily interactions can reflect the significant influence of expectations, even if only implicitly. This indicates that common sense can shape identity and influence social interactions by encouraging the subaltern group to adhere to norms and customs that align with uniformity.

As a behavioral guide, common sense gives daily life a certain texture. This is demonstrated in the book when, shortly before his father passes away, he begs the policeman who killed him to consider the narrator as someone unique. But rather than taking satisfaction in this, the narrator affirms that he is just a regular black guy, particularly when he finds a census form in his mailbox. The narrator decides to identify as a Californian and rejects the idea that his skin tone should be the foundation for categorizing his identity. Two months later, this sets off the arrival of a census worker, who is motivated by dissatisfaction after witnessing personally how the narrator identifies as black but deviates from social norms.

So I mumble Sorry and scribble my initials next to the box marked "Black, African-American, Negro, coward." (The Sellout, p.35)

When the narrator is asked to complete the census form again, he complies without protest, automatically altering his previous response to match the officer's expectations and modifying his identity under the prevalent common sense that classifies people with dark skin as African-American. Kate Crehan (2016) explains that the value of Gramsci's concept of common sense lies in its ability to offer a way of thinking about the texture of everyday life and the givenness of that life (p. 53). This illustrates how common sense is a reflection of how people accept daily life without question. It is experienced as a tangible external world and molds our subjectivity. Assuming that black people are African-American, common sense serves as a guide for behavior and thought in the novel's setting. Upon rejecting this title in favor of "Californian,"

the narrator is forced to conform to the prevalent common sense by the census officer, who begins to question his identity. This story demonstrates how common sense may control and shape a person's identity to fit in with social norms.

Additionally, common sense serves as a framework that forces social interactions to follow predetermined conventions. This happens on Hominy's birthday, which the neighborhood normally celebrates enthusiastically. When they came to see him, they would hurl food or other objects at his body and exclaim, "Yowza!" which is a word that conveys surprise, excitement, or enthusiasm. The narrator is the only one who shows up to celebrate Hominy's special day after Dicken is removed from the map.

When the narrator asks Hominy what kind of gift he would want to receive, he answers directly, saying that he just wants racism. Hominy views racism as a trifle, something he has always wanted, much like a birthday present every year. Hominy considers racism to be more desirable than anything else and an integral element of his life. The phrase above illustrates how deeply racism has been internalized in his worldview. He considers racism something natural and part of his routine, much like how others celebrate birthdays by throwing rotten tomatoes or flour. Gramsci explains that common sense is the belief about everything that exists, that it is "natural," that it must exist, that it cannot do otherwise but exist, and that no matter how bad someone's reform efforts may be, they will not stop life from proceeding, as traditional forces will continue to operate and indeed make life move forward (The Prison Notebooks, p. 367). Hominy's expectation of a "gift" of racism in the setting of the book demonstrates how profoundly common sense has influenced his perspective, leading him to believe that his existence would be incomplete or pointless without racism. This clarifies how common sense serves as a framework that permits social life to proceed under established norms, encouraging people to develop their identities and moral principles.

Common sense forms a natural structure without being questioned, this is proven by Hominy's reaction when a white woman gets on the bus, on the same day as Hominy's birthday.

His answer was always the same: 'I don't know. Just get me some racism and i'll be straight.' Then he'd look to see if I was hiding a rotten tomato or a sack of flour behind my back. Some boys come round here and smush 'matoes in yo face?' (The Sellout, p.99)

Hominy freely and spontaneously offers up his seat to a white woman, in keeping with the gift he got in the preceding quote. He is adamant that this is a natural and proper move. He feels that such an act is a legitimate display of respect, given to someone he perceives as more deserving based on their skin tone because common sense has become deeply embedded in his life view. This demonstrates that the motion conveys a deeper understanding of the subject's racial identity and social status rather than being only a physical gesture. Molden (2016) explains that subaltern groups accept the interests of dominant groups as the natural state of the world. In this way, Hegemony establishes a particular common sense as quasi-natural universality and delegitimizes alternative forms of reasoning. The creation of a strong common sense reality encompasses multiple layers of social groups, simultaneously weakening their ability to think critically (p. 2). This shows that Hegemony not only controls power directly but also through a tool of formation, namely common sense, which makes the dominant group's power structure appear natural and unquestioned. In the context of the novel, Hominy's thoughts and actions are

part of this common sense; giving up his seat to a white person is not a critically considered act, but a reflex deeply embedded in his consciousness, showing that common sense has been internalized as part of his identity, naturally influencing his interactions in social life.

3.3 Common Sense Serves as Naturalization

Common sense has the power to normalize and naturalize concepts that work by quietly creeping into daily life and creating the appearance that society's norms and standards are based on the needs, preferences, and activities of marginalized groups. This gives the impression that these concepts are true and uncontested. This demonstrates how common sense can serve to uphold the authority of prevailing groups and suppress critical thought, which may catalyze subaltern groups to begin resisting.

What common sense deems reasonable and true is up to it to decide. This is exemplified by a brief essay the narrator wrote when she was seven years old. It examined social preferences in bus seating arrangements and examined how people choose their companions based on a variety of characteristics, including age, class, body odor, and crowding. According to the study, black people—especially black men—are ranked last while White people are given priority. As he becomes older, the narrator verifies his research. People try to avoid sitting next to him on the bus, and when they do, they usually ask questions to make sure they won't be harmed in any way by the narrator. Moreover, several individuals choose to remain standing throughout the entire voyage, regardless of the challenges or discomfort it entails.

I could tell from the way they pulled her arms into the ground that the bags were getting heavy, that she was barely holding on to her groceries and dreams. Even though she was exhausted and growing more and more despondent with each bumpy rise and fall of the worn-out suspension, she preferred to stand rather than to sit next to me (The Sellout, p.89)

This phenomena demonstrates that, when it comes to encounters involving personal space, black men are positioned at the bottom of the informal social hierarchy. It implies, if subtly, that the widespread belief that black males are dangerous or unwanted has evolved into an unquestionable social norm. Smucker (2017) states that any content that occupies the form of common sense will ultimately gain its value based on normative strength, which appears natural (p. 115). This demonstrates how common sense may decide what is truthful, reasonable, and socially acceptable. In the context of the novel, the notion that African-American males are terrible will acquire social legitimacy if it is accepted as general knowledge. Because common sense shapes identity and social interactions in society and has created a skewed universal truth, it becomes harder and harder to challenge or alter.

All facets of society can agree that common sense should govern daily life. This is demonstrated when the attorney general queries what "Blackness" entails during a trial. As the Hampton team prepares to close the windows in response, Hampton, the narrator's attorney, begins to respond, saying, "Blackness is a state of mind." Next, the attorney references a hypothesis put out by the narrator's father, an African-American psychologist. He clarifies that there are various phases to being black.

"Here the black person exists in a state of preconsciousness. Just as many children would be afraid of the total darkness in which we now find ourselves immersed, the

Neophyte Negro is afraid of his own blackness. A blackness that feels inescapable, infinite, and less than.” (The Sellout, p.209)

A multi-stage theory of black identity development is presented in a convoluted debate about racial identity. Those who have not fully accepted or acknowledged their race make up the first stage. At this stage, people frequently feel trapped in the "darkness" that represents their black identity, which is marked by fear and humiliation. At this point, individuals frequently sacrifice their moral principles and sense of self-worth in an attempt to fit in with the common sense of a White-majority culture. The aforementioned comment serves as one illustration of how many African-American youth worry about growing up and becoming darker. Daldal (2014) essentially argues that Gramsci's conception of common sense is an ideological construct accepted by all segments of society, which is contradictory because it follows the "normal times" discourse. This demonstrates that common sense functions as a tool to control daily life during a period of stable society devoid of major social upheavals such as revolutions, wars, or abrupt social transformations, when social structures and ideological Hegemony continue to function normally and common sense grows and is accepted as the norm. This emphasizes how common sense in society influences many African-American people in their journey of accepting their racial identity within the framework of the novel. The kids' fear of getting darker is an expression of ingrained common sense, showing how important common sense is to the way their identities evolve.

4. Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal how common sense, which encompasses perspectives, ideas, and values associated with common sense, has been deeply internalized within both society and individuals, affecting the identity, social interactions, and self-perception of characters in Paul Beatty's novel *The Sellout*. According to this study, the function of common sense in the context of the novel, as well as through the lens of Gramsci, serves as a mechanism of Hegemony that regulates how individuals and society shape their worldview and navigate daily life. Common sense functions in a number of interrelated ways. First, it upholds deeply ingrained social norms that are absorbed by disadvantaged groups as well as dominant ones, like the African-Americans in the book. Additionally, it serves to maintain unfair social systems without opposition by restricting people's capacity to express identities that go against social norms and guiding social interactions, like in the case of African-American men being shunned in public areas. Moreover, individuals who feel compelled to conform to societal norms sometimes encounter cognitive dissonance when confronted with common sense.

The results of this study as a whole prove that common sense functions as a hegemonic tool capable of forcing subaltern groups to accept without them realizing it or they are also aware of it, but are unable to change, common sense that is detrimental and limits their freedom to express identities that are different from the norms, culture, and values that develop in society. In the context of the novel, common sense has a strong function and power that makes it difficult to change to the point of influencing and shaping the identities and social interactions among its characters.

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