



CORPORATE HEGEMONIC CAPITALISM AND CAYCE'S RESISTANCE IN WILLIAM GIBSON'S *PATTERN RECOGNITION*

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ABSTRACT

In this digital era, a person getting manipulated by digital media is unpredictable until to a certain degree that makes one's life questionable. The corporate companies make use of this addictive attitude of people to market everything that seeks attention from the public without considering things as art but as commodity. This profit making outlook makes the capitalists to exert their power and grab the potential of the workers for their own beneficiaries. Thus the corporate hegemony operates through digital media which serves as a driving force. In William Gibson's *Pattern Recognition* novel, the growing attention of the people towards digital footages kindle the profit-driven interest of corporate companies. Through Antonio Gramsci's theory of Hegemony, the paper tries to showcase how cultural hegemony works in the modern society and resolves to find out how the character, Cayce Pollard being a utilizer of digital platform as well as a person who works in multinational company manages to show her resistance against power structure by challenging corporate's influence.

KEYWORDS : Cultural hegemony, Organic Intellectual, Resistance, Ethical Autonomy, Counter-Hegemony.

INTRODUCTION

In this present situation, people's engagement with each other is shifted by digital media. It manipulates the people through branding, advertisements and as a result people are attracted and addicted towards the digital space. This marketing strategy happens not through force rather through consent. On considering the novel, *Pattern Recognition*, the author tries to showcase the emerging scenario of digital world in which people are under the hold of surveillance and power. The power which is operated by the multinational companies control the people's cultural and ideological beliefs. Consequently, people get to involve themselves under the influential trap without their knowledge. This aspect can be understood by Gramsci's concept in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*:

The supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as "domination" and as "intellectual and moral leadership". A social group dominates antagonistic groups, which it tends to "liquidate", or to subjugate perhaps even by armed force; it leads kindred and allied groups. A social group can, and indeed must, already exercise "leadership" before winning governmental power (this indeed is one of the principal conditions for the winning of such power); it subsequently becomes dominant when it exercises power, but even if it holds it firmly in its grasp, it must continue to "lead" as well. (Gramsci 212)

In the novel, the corporate company, Blue Ant holds power by inspiring and persuading the people through branding and advertisements and not through direct force. Hence the concept of cultural hegemony starts to operate here.

Antonio Gramsci's idea of hegemony explains how a prominent social group maintains dominance not just by means of coercion, but by shaping public perception to make their views seem natural and universally beneficial. This process, known as ideological leadership, leads people to accept the existing power structure as common sense, even when it contradicts their own interests. It operates through both state institutions, such as law enforcement and courts, and civil society, where schools, media, religious organizations, and cultural spaces subtly reinforce dominant ideologies. The ruling class maintains inequality and commit injustice by presenting its perspective as the only valid or natural one. As a result, people unknowingly support the

system, believing it to be an undeniable truth rather than something shaped by those in power.

Internalization Of Dominant Values

Blue Ant, the multinational advertising agency is led by Hubertus Bigend. The central character in the novel, Cayce works as a cool hunter (a cultural trend analyst). She predicts market trends for businesses and has a strange intolerance to branding and logos. "She is only there to serve as a very specialized piece of human litmus paper." (Gibson 13).

She is jobbed by Bigend to find the emerging trends in the advertising sector before it becomes widely known to the world. This cultural forecasting of Cayce helps Bigend to manipulate the consumer behaviour gradually without coercion rather through consent. So Cayce has been operated by Bigend as a surveillance capitalist without her knowledge. Bigend makes use of her allergy to logos and brands as his marketing strategy. This reflects on how the corporate sectors function by entering the world of workers as well as public unknowingly.

Similarly the mysterious footage that seems to revolve in online forum in the novel is the second tool for Bigend. When mysterious footage #135 starts to gain more views it kindles Bigend's motive to commodify it to gain profit. He seeks to find the creator of the footage which has been hidden. In order to perceive the maker of the video clips, Bigend uses Cayce's sensitivity to spark her interest. This has slowly moved Cayce from surveillance capitalist towards espionage activities like tracking digital clues, using secret contacts - such as communicating with Parkaboy, decoding technical details embedded in the videos with the aid of Taki - a Japanese footage analyst and also travelling internationally to London, Tokyo and Moscow to make contacts with people to gather information about the footage and its origin.

Cayce has shifted her character from a legal operator into an illegal spy through the hegemonic loop operated by the corporate sector using the driving tool of digital media. The media and corporate power have formed Cayce's world into conflicting signals about truth and value by shaping the real identity of Cayce into manufactured identity. This proves Gramsci's statement that "Common sense is a chaotic aggregate of disparate conceptions..." (Gramsci 773), a collection of ideas that people accept without questioning.

Emergence Of Organic Intellectuals

Hegemony is never stable or absolute. It is constantly opposed and resisted by other cultures and the modes of awareness that reflect the necessities and ambitions of the oppressed groups and classes. Organic Intellectuals are crucial in this situation. They never detach themselves from existing social or political system. Organic intellectuals are those who arise and operate from a specific social group within the system to advance their interests. Gramsci views them to be the vital source in the struggle for hegemony by reshaping the existing cultural and ideological norms, values, and beliefs not through sudden revolution but through gradual shifting of public consciousness by advocating grassroot activism and framing new ideologies through social narratives.

Cayce from *Pattern Recognition* novel could be viewed as an organic intellectual. She remains under the system of Capitalist society and is prone to work under the corporate sector through cultural normalization. Her sensitivity to branding and literally allergic to logos has made her a valuable asset to marketing firms. This hypersensitivity of Cayce to branding and logos serves the corporate company to detect the cultural patterns on whether a brand's logo design aligns with consumer expectation or not. Simultaneously, this psychological aversion of Cayce to these symbols can also be regarded as her opposition towards the capitalist culture. Her simple outfit, devoid of any brand, represents the challenges she faces with corporate capitalism. Through these things she has shown resistance towards these cultural hegemony from the beginning in a subtle manner. Gradually on knowing the motive of Bigend of commercialising everything to achieve profit, Cayce involves deeply in resisting his motto. She resolves to locate the maker but conceals her proceedings with Bigend. This can be considered as a resistance not by escape, but by engagement.

Cayce has achieved success in her goal of finding the maker of the online video clips but she withholds it from Bigend. She also cautions about the marketing attitude of the corporate sector to Nora Volkova and Stella Volkova (makers of footage clips). Cayce knows that definitely Bigend would find the makers and it happens so. However, she neglects to expose what she has absorbed from the creators of the video clips about how they are produced and shared with the public. Cayce reveals through her words, "Yes, but I've decided that I won't tell him I found you. I won't tell him who you are or where you are, or who Nora is, or anything else I've learned here. I won't be working for him, now. But others will, they'll find you and you have to be ready." (Gibson 307).

She views the online video footage as an art. So she wants to preserve the authenticity of the art from being commercialised. At this point, she is completely against capitalist view. Though she is under corporate sector she repels Bigend's view. Thus Cayce emerges into organic intellectual and shows her counter-hegemony through her action.

CONCLUSION

The multinational companies desire to subjugate the workers and general public through the digital media as a tool. It happens according to their wish because of the people's fascination and obsession towards advertisements or with digital platforms. In this commercialised world, it seems hard and difficult to completely neglect these commodification at the whole. Rather when these corporate companies yearn to monetise power on people to hold their behaviours and patterns, there arises the problem. Some are under the control unconsciously and some show their repulsion towards it. This negligence attitude is very much needed to revolt against the corporate capitalism. One such individual is Cayce, who has emerged from the influence of the multinational company to retain one's own dignity and autonomy. She also considers art

as a person's innovation. When art becomes a marketing tool, it becomes a tool for corporate intrusion, by losing its power to move freely and speak honestly. She wants to project her resistance by reflecting that art can flourish without being advertised. This is what Gramsci calls as the outset of organic intellectuals. Cayce has released herself from manipulation and resisted conformity to retain her personal values.

The human beings should come out of the corporate's illusion. One need not to step out of this corporate sector completely to show their counter-hegemony. Instead one must become aware of the power exercised over them by questioning the corporate's values and refusing to absorb it blindly. Cayce functions as a representative for this revolution. This awareness can present a social message to the society that everything on earth cannot be marketed. Digital platform should also be perceived as a place for exposing the creativity and not strictly as a space for commercialisation. The paper highlights on the emergence of fluidity of power structures in the digital era.

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