Reflections on the “Ownership Society” in Recent Black Fiction

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Abstract

This study contends that Walter Mosley's Easy Rawlins novels (1990–present) and Michael Thomas's novel Man Gone Down (2007) build on the anticapitalist critique that is an enduring feature of the Black literary tradition by addressing the recent promotion in mainstream national culture of financial thinking as a mode of entry into the bourgeoisie for African Americans. As this study demonstrates, Mosley's and Thomas's novels invite serious attention to how characters’ lives are inevitably inhabited by the rhetoric and ideology of ownership. The Rawlins novels, which take place in Los Angeles between 1948 and the late 1960s, purposely link forms of economic subjection that are particular to the post–Civil Rights era to earlier phases of Black cultural and political-economic history. Man Gone Down is one of only a few recent African American novels to directly examine how the cultures created by deregulation and consumer finance are transforming Black identity in the contemporary United States. These writers introduce characters whose development as individuals and whose investment in the Black community are inseparable from their statuses as owners, creditors, wage earners, and debtors who willingly acquiesce to certain limitations on their freedom imposed by financial capitalism even as they repeatedly discover the damage that capitalism continues to cause to their lives and to the well-being of the Black community. In emphasizing the actual, albeit limited, freedoms of the contemporary Black middle class, as well as the discourse of classic liberal political economy as a mode of subjection and empowerment, Mosley's and Thomas's novels provide a useful supplement to scholarship that focuses on how Black writers have allegorized the oppressive history of capitalism and its role in the racialization and subordination of the Black population.
Hated in the Nation is Black Mirror’s excursion into public shame: it takes a series of targets who have brought disapprobation upon themselves. One is a columnist who slates a disabled person; another, an X Factor style judge who scorns a nine-year-old; a protestor who pretends to urinate on a war memorial; a politician so closely modelled on George Osborne that it made me feel nostalgic for a pre-Brexit age, when he was the summit of Tory obnoxiousness. Naturally, he begins to experience subtle moments of dread: a painting of the mansion on the wall suddenly has a light showing in an upstairs window, then a figure. A spider runs across the floor, and Cooper recoils. The system is probing his fears. Cinema undoubtedly is reflective of the society itself. What we see or do in reality is more often than not what we see on silver screen. It’s not rare that we encounter incidents in our daily lives that are in most ways very similar to the ones that we witness in movies. Cinema ultimately presents the man in society with all its virtues and vices. Something’s in society and life are too complex for oral transmission, so cinema makers make fiction out of them to make them universal. The Indian cinema has come off age with movies like Black. But the unfortunate part is such movies are rare. The bulk of the films dished out to audience are based on the so-called formula- a mixture of heroics, melodrama, violence, nudity, music and catchy dialogues. Absentee ownership and business enterprise in recent times: the case of America. Item Preview, remove-circle. Absentee ownership and business enterprise in recent times: the case of America by Thorstein Veblen.