Racial Identity, Corporate Capitalism, and Institutional Discrimination in Mateo Askaripour's *Black Buck*
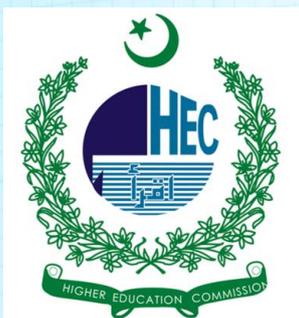
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Abstract

The intersection of race and corporate power remains a critical concern in contemporary social and literary discourse. Despite increasing attention to diversity and inclusion in corporate environments, structural racism continues to shape the experiences of racial minorities within professional spaces. Mateo Askaripour's novel *Black Buck* (2021) provides a powerful satirical critique of corporate culture by portraying the journey of Darren Vender, a young Black man navigating a predominantly white corporate environment. This article examines the representation of racial discrimination, identity crisis, and institutional power in the novel. Drawing on Critical Race Theory (CRT), the study analyzes how corporate institutions reproduce racial hierarchies while simultaneously commodifying diversity. Through qualitative textual analysis, the article explores themes of workplace racism, psychological transformation, cultural assimilation, and resistance. The findings suggest that *Black Buck* not only exposes the systemic nature of racism in corporate America but also critiques the neoliberal capitalist structures that exploit marginalized identities for economic gain. By situating the novel within broader scholarly debates on race, labor, and identity, this study contributes to contemporary discussions on African American literature and the politics of representation in twenty-first-century fiction.

Keywords: African American literature, corporate racism, Critical Race Theory, identity crisis, workplace discrimination, capitalism

1. Introduction

Racial inequality remains one of the most persistent social challenges in modern societies, particularly in the United States where historical systems of slavery, segregation, and discrimination have shaped contemporary institutional structures. Although legal reforms during the Civil Rights Movement sought to dismantle overt racial discrimination, systemic inequalities continue to affect access to economic opportunities, employment, and social mobility. The corporate sector, often perceived as a meritocratic environment, has increasingly come under scrutiny for perpetuating racial hierarchies through subtle yet pervasive mechanisms.

In recent decades, scholars and activists have highlighted the structural barriers faced by racial minorities in corporate workplaces. Despite diversity initiatives and inclusion programs, racial disparities remain evident in hiring practices, promotion opportunities, leadership representation, and workplace culture. Research suggests that minority employees frequently encounter microaggressions, tokenization, and implicit bias, which collectively contribute to unequal professional experiences (Wingfield, 2019).

Literature has long served as a powerful medium for exploring social inequalities and challenging dominant narratives. African American writers, in particular, have used fiction to expose the realities of racial oppression and to articulate alternative perspectives on identity and power. From the early works of W.E.B. Du Bois and Richard Wright to contemporary authors such as Ta-Nehisi Coates and Colson Whitehead, African American literature has consistently engaged with questions of race, identity, and social justice.

Mateo Askaripour's *Black Buck* (2021) represents a significant contribution to this tradition. Combining satire, social commentary, and narrative realism, the novel tells the story of Darren Vender, a young Black man who works at Starbucks before being recruited by a fast-growing technology startup called Sumwun. Initially viewing the opportunity as a pathway to financial success and social mobility, Darren soon realizes that the corporate environment is deeply shaped by racial stereotypes and institutional discrimination.

Through Darren's experiences, the novel explores the complex dynamics of race and capitalism in contemporary America. While the company publicly promotes diversity and innovation, its internal culture reinforces racial hierarchies and exploits Darren's identity for corporate gain. The narrative thus reveals the contradictions inherent in corporate diversity discourse and highlights the challenges faced by marginalized individuals seeking success within predominantly white institutions.

Problem Statement

Despite the progress achieved through civil rights movements and increasing awareness of workplace diversity, racial inequality continues to persist within modern corporate institutions. Contemporary corporate culture often promotes the ideals of meritocracy, equal opportunity, and diversity. However, numerous studies and literary

narratives suggest that these ideals frequently mask deeper structural inequalities embedded within organizational practices and workplace environments. Racial minorities, particularly African Americans, continue to face subtle forms of discrimination, stereotyping, and exclusion in professional settings that claim to operate on principles of fairness and inclusivity.

Although *Black Buck* has gained significant attention for its satirical portrayal of corporate America, scholarly analysis of the novel remains relatively limited. Most discussions of corporate racism have focused on sociological or organizational studies, leaving a gap in literary research that examines how contemporary fiction represents and critiques these institutional structures. Furthermore, there is a need to explore how narratives such as *Black Buck* engage with broader theoretical frameworks such as Critical Race Theory and racial capitalism.

The central problem addressed in this study is the lack of comprehensive literary analysis examining how contemporary fiction portrays systemic racism within corporate institutions and how such representations contribute to broader discussions of race, identity, and capitalism. By analyzing the narrative structure, character development, and thematic elements of *Black Buck*, this study seeks to explore how the novel exposes the contradictions of corporate diversity discourse and the psychological consequences of navigating racially stratified professional environments.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to multiple fields of academic inquiry, including African American literary studies, cultural studies, and critical examinations of corporate capitalism. By analyzing Mateo Askaripour's *Black Buck*, the study provides a deeper understanding of how contemporary literature reflects and critiques the social realities of racial inequality within professional institutions.

First, the study contributes to the field of African American literary criticism by examining a relatively recent and understudied novel that engages with modern forms of racial discrimination. While earlier African American literature often focused on themes such as slavery, segregation, and civil rights struggles, contemporary works increasingly address the challenges faced by racial minorities in professional and corporate environments. By exploring these themes in *Black Buck*, the study expands

the scope of scholarly discussions on African American literature and highlights the evolving nature of racial discourse in the twenty-first century.

Second, the research provides valuable insights into the representation of corporate culture in contemporary fiction. Corporate institutions play a central role in shaping modern social and economic life, yet literary analyses of corporate environments remain relatively limited compared to other social institutions. By examining the corporate startup culture depicted in *Black Buck*, the study sheds light on how literature portrays the pressures, expectations, and inequalities embedded within modern workplaces.

Third, the study contributes to broader discussions on systemic racism and institutional power. Through the lens of Critical Race Theory, the research highlights how racism operates not only through individual prejudice but also through structural mechanisms embedded within organizations and social systems. The analysis of Darren's experiences reveals how corporate institutions can simultaneously promote diversity while maintaining practices that reinforce racial hierarchies.

Another important contribution of this study is its exploration of the psychological and identity-related consequences of corporate culture. Darren's transformation throughout the narrative illustrates the emotional and psychological challenges faced by individuals who must navigate conflicting identities within racially stratified institutions. By analyzing this transformation, the study offers insights into the broader human impact of systemic discrimination and corporate pressure.

Furthermore, the research highlights the critique of neoliberal capitalism presented in the novel. Contemporary capitalist systems often prioritize profit, competition, and individual achievement, sometimes at the expense of social equality and ethical responsibility. Through satire and narrative irony, *Black Buck* exposes the contradictions within corporate diversity initiatives and reveals how diversity can be commodified as a branding tool rather than a genuine commitment to social justice. By examining these themes, the study contributes to ongoing academic debates on the relationship between capitalism, race, and social inequality.

The study also has practical significance for educators, scholars, and students of literature and cultural studies. The analysis provides a framework for understanding

how literary texts can be used to explore contemporary social issues such as workplace discrimination, identity formation, and institutional power. This perspective can enrich classroom discussions and encourage critical engagement with modern literary works.

Finally, the research underscores the broader importance of literature as a medium for social critique and reflection. Fictional narratives like *Black Buck* allow readers to engage with complex social issues in ways that academic or policy-oriented texts may not fully capture. By presenting the personal experiences of individuals navigating institutional systems of power, literature can foster empathy, awareness, and critical thinking about the structures that shape modern society.

In conclusion, this study is significant because it bridges the gap between literary analysis and social critique by examining how contemporary fiction reflects the realities of racial inequality within corporate environments. Through its analysis of *Black Buck*, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of the intersection between race, identity, and capitalism in the modern world.

Research Questions

The study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. How does the novel depict systemic racism within corporate institutions?
2. In what ways does the protagonist experience identity conflict and psychological transformation?
3. How does the narrative critique neoliberal capitalism and the commodification of diversity?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Race and African American Literary Tradition

African American literature has historically served as a platform for articulating the experiences of Black communities in racially stratified societies. Early works such as Frederick Douglass's autobiographical narratives exposed the brutality of slavery, while later writers including Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin explored the complexities of racial identity in modern America.

One of the most influential theoretical concepts in African American literary thought is W.E.B. Du Bois's notion of double consciousness, which describes the internal conflict experienced by Black individuals who must navigate both their own

cultural identity and the expectations imposed by a racially biased society (Du Bois, 1903). This concept continues to shape contemporary analyses of African American literature.

Modern writers have expanded this tradition by addressing new forms of racial inequality emerging in the post–civil rights era. Works by authors such as Toni Morrison, Paul Beatty, and Colson Whitehead explore themes of historical memory, institutional racism, and cultural identity.

Within this broader literary context, *Black Buck* represents a contemporary narrative that engages with the intersection of race and corporate capitalism.

2.2 Corporate Culture and Racial Inequality

Scholars have increasingly examined how corporate institutions reproduce social inequalities despite claims of meritocracy. Bonilla-Silva (2017) argues that modern racism often operates through "color-blind" ideologies that deny the existence of racial discrimination while maintaining systemic inequalities.

In the workplace, racial minorities frequently encounter structural barriers that limit their professional advancement. Wingfield (2019) notes that Black professionals often experience what she terms "racialized organizations," where workplace norms implicitly favor white employees and marginalize minority identities.

Research also highlights the role of microaggressions in shaping workplace experiences. These subtle forms of discrimination may include stereotypes, dismissive comments, or assumptions about competence. Although individually minor, such interactions accumulate over time and contribute to feelings of alienation among minority employees.

Corporate diversity initiatives, while intended to promote inclusivity, have also been criticized for prioritizing public image over meaningful change. Scholars argue that organizations often treat diversity as a branding strategy rather than addressing the structural causes of inequality.

2.3 Race, Capitalism, and Contemporary Fiction

The relationship between race and capitalism has become a prominent theme in contemporary literature. Scholars have argued that neoliberal economic systems often exploit racial differences for profit while simultaneously reproducing social hierarchies.

Satirical works such as Paul Beatty's *The Sellout* and Percival Everett's *Erasure* illustrate how humor and irony can be used to critique racial politics and cultural commodification. Similarly, *Black Buck* employs satire to expose the contradictions within corporate diversity discourse.

The novel's narrative structure—combining first-person storytelling with a guidebook-like tone—creates a unique perspective on the protagonist's journey. This approach allows the author to critique corporate culture while simultaneously portraying Darren's personal transformation.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Critical Race Theory (CRT), an interdisciplinary framework that examines how racism is embedded within legal, social, and economic systems.

CRT emerged in the 1970s through the work of legal scholars such as Derrick Bell and Kimberlé Crenshaw. The theory challenges the assumption that racism is merely a product of individual prejudice and instead emphasizes its structural nature.

Several key principles of CRT are particularly relevant to the analysis of *Black Buck*:

3.1 Institutional Racism

CRT emphasizes that racism operates through institutional structures rather than isolated acts of discrimination. Policies and practices that appear neutral may nevertheless produce unequal outcomes for different racial groups.

3.2 Microaggressions

Microaggressions refer to subtle forms of discrimination that communicate negative messages about marginalized identities. These interactions often occur in everyday settings, including workplaces.

3.3 Counter-Storytelling

CRT scholars highlight the importance of narratives that challenge dominant perspectives. Literary works can function as counter-stories that reveal the realities of systemic racism.

By applying these concepts, the present study seeks to uncover the structural dynamics underlying Darren's experiences within the corporate world.

4. Methodology

This research employs a qualitative textual analysis approach to examine the representation of race and corporate power in *Black Buck*.

The methodology involves close reading of key passages in the novel, focusing on narrative structure, character development, and thematic patterns.

The analysis is organized around three primary themes:

1. Corporate racism and workplace discrimination
2. Identity crisis and psychological transformation
3. Commodification of diversity and resistance

Secondary sources, including scholarly studies on race, corporate culture, and African American literature, are used to contextualize the analysis within broader academic debates.

5. Analysis and Discussion

5.1 Corporate Racism and Workplace Hierarchies

One of the central themes in *Black Buck* is the persistence of racial hierarchies within corporate institutions. Darren's recruitment by the startup company initially appears to symbolize a success story within the framework of American meritocracy. However, the workplace environment quickly reveals itself to be shaped by subtle and overt forms of racial discrimination.

The corporate culture at Sumwun emphasizes aggressive sales strategies and competitive performance metrics. Within this environment, Darren is encouraged to adopt behaviors that align with the company's hyper-capitalist ethos. However, his racial identity simultaneously becomes a source of scrutiny and stereotyping.

Colleagues often treat Darren as a novelty within the workplace, highlighting his racial difference through jokes and comments. Such interactions illustrate how corporate environments may perpetuate racial hierarchies while maintaining a façade of inclusivity.

5.2 Identity Transformation and Psychological Conflict

Darren's journey through the corporate world involves a profound transformation of his identity. At the beginning of the novel, he is portrayed as a modest and content individual who enjoys working at Starbucks and interacting with customers.

As he becomes immersed in the corporate environment, Darren begins to internalize the values and expectations of his new workplace. This process involves adopting a more aggressive persona and distancing himself from aspects of his previous identity.

The psychological tension created by this transformation reflects the concept of double consciousness described by Du Bois. Darren must constantly navigate the conflicting demands of his cultural identity and the expectations of a corporate culture dominated by whiteness.

5.3 Commodification of Diversity

Another key aspect of the novel is its critique of corporate diversity initiatives. While Sumwun publicly celebrates Darren as a symbol of inclusivity, the company's actions reveal a more cynical motivation.

Darren's presence is used to enhance the company's public image and appeal to investors. However, this symbolic representation does not translate into meaningful institutional change.

Through satire and irony, the novel exposes the contradictions within corporate diversity discourse. Diversity becomes a marketing strategy rather than a genuine commitment to equality.

5.4 Resistance and Empowerment

As the narrative progresses, Darren gradually becomes aware of the exploitative dynamics within the corporate system. This realization leads him to question the values that initially motivated his pursuit of success.

The novel ultimately portrays Darren's journey as one of empowerment and resistance. By recognizing the structural nature of the discrimination he faces, he begins to envision alternative pathways for success and community support.

This transformation reflects a broader critique of neoliberal capitalism and its emphasis on individual achievement at the expense of social justice.

6. Discussion

The analysis of *Black Buck* demonstrates how contemporary literature can illuminate the complex relationship between race and corporate power. By depicting Darren's experiences within the corporate world, the novel reveals the subtle mechanisms through which racial hierarchies are reproduced.

The narrative also highlights the psychological impact of systemic discrimination, illustrating how individuals must navigate conflicting identities in order to succeed within dominant institutions.

Furthermore, the novel critiques the commodification of diversity in corporate culture.

While organizations often promote diversity initiatives, these efforts may serve primarily as public relations strategies rather than genuine attempts to address structural inequality.

The novel portrays systemic racism within corporate institutions by illustrating how racial discrimination operates not only through explicit acts but also through subtle structural practices embedded within workplace culture. In the corporate environment of the company Sumwun, Darren Vender becomes one of the very few Black employees, which immediately positions him as an outsider within a predominantly white professional setting.

One of the central ways systemic racism is depicted in the narrative is through workplace stereotyping and humiliation. Darren frequently becomes the target of racial jokes and degrading behavior from his colleagues. A significant example highlighted in the thesis is the incident in which a white colleague pours white paint over Darren as a form of mockery. This act symbolizes the pressure placed on Black individuals to conform to white corporate norms while simultaneously being reminded of their racial difference. The incident demonstrates how racist behavior is normalized within the workplace and tolerated within the corporate structure.

Furthermore, Darren's role within the company reflects a broader pattern of racial tokenism. Although Sumwun publicly promotes itself as a progressive and inclusive organization, Darren's presence is largely symbolic. The company celebrates him as evidence of its diversity while failing to address the underlying discriminatory culture. This contradiction reveals the superficial nature of corporate diversity initiatives.

Systemic racism is also evident in the power dynamics within the organization. Darren's supervisors and colleagues maintain control over the workplace environment and decision-making processes, reinforcing racial hierarchies that privilege white employees. Darren must constantly prove his competence and work harder than his peers in order to gain recognition. This reflects real-world research on workplace inequality, which shows that minority employees often face greater scrutiny and higher performance expectations than their white counterparts.

The corporate culture at Sumwun also encourages aggressive sales tactics and competitive behavior that align with capitalist values. Darren is pressured to adopt

these behaviors in order to succeed, but the system simultaneously exploits his identity as a Black man. His racial background becomes both a source of marginalization and a tool used by the company to enhance its public image.

Overall, the novel portrays systemic racism as a structural feature of corporate institutions, rather than a series of isolated incidents. Through Darren's experiences, the narrative reveals how workplace norms, power relations, and corporate policies collectively maintain racial inequality while presenting an image of meritocracy.

The protagonist Darren Vender undergoes a significant identity conflict and psychological transformation throughout the narrative as he navigates the pressures of corporate life. At the beginning of the novel, Darren is portrayed as a modest and relatively content individual working at Starbucks. His life is simple, and he values personal relationships and community connections.

However, when Darren is recruited to work at Sumwun, his life begins to change dramatically. The corporate environment exposes him to a new world defined by ambition, competition, and financial success. In order to survive and excel in this environment, Darren begins to reshape his identity and adopt the aggressive attitudes expected by his employers.

This transformation creates a profound internal conflict between Darren's personal identity and his professional persona. He gradually distances himself from his previous life and from the people who once supported him. His focus shifts toward achieving corporate success and gaining approval from his white colleagues and supervisors.

The thesis highlights that Darren's transformation reflects the sociological concept of double consciousness, originally proposed by W.E.B. Du Bois. Darren must constantly view himself through two perspectives: his own cultural identity as a Black man and the expectations imposed by the white-dominated corporate culture. This dual awareness creates psychological tension as he struggles to reconcile these conflicting identities.

Another important aspect of Darren's transformation is the psychological toll of corporate competition. As he becomes more deeply involved in the sales culture at Sumwun, Darren adopts behaviors that he previously would have rejected. He embraces aggressive sales strategies, competitive ambition, and a fast-paced lifestyle

associated with corporate success. The thesis notes that Darren even becomes involved in activities such as partying and drug use, reflecting the pressures and excesses of corporate culture.

Despite achieving professional success, Darren begins to experience feelings of alienation and moral conflict. He realizes that the system in which he participates exploits both employees and clients. Additionally, his attempts to mentor others—such as his friend Brian—demonstrate that the corporate strategies he has learned can be harmful when applied outside the corporate environment.

Ultimately, Darren's psychological transformation leads to a moment of self-awareness. He recognizes that his pursuit of success has come at the cost of his authenticity and relationships. This realization marks a turning point in the narrative, as Darren begins to question the values and structures that shaped his corporate identity.

Thus, Darren's identity conflict reflects the broader struggle faced by many minority professionals who must navigate the tension between cultural identity and institutional expectations.

The narrative of *Black Buck* provides a strong critique of neoliberal capitalism by exposing how corporate institutions prioritize profit and growth while exploiting individuals and social identities. Neoliberal capitalism emphasizes competition, individual achievement, and market efficiency, often at the expense of social equality and ethical responsibility.

Within the novel, the company Sumwun represents the ideals of startup culture and entrepreneurial success. It promotes innovation, rapid growth, and aggressive sales strategies as the primary measures of success. Employees are encouraged to adopt a highly competitive mindset, where personal value is determined by financial performance.

However, the narrative reveals the darker side of this system. Employees are treated as tools for generating profit rather than as individuals with personal identities and ethical values. Darren's transformation into a successful salesperson demonstrates how the corporate system rewards aggressive behavior and discourages empathy or social responsibility.

A central element of the novel's critique involves the commodification of diversity.

While Sumwun publicly celebrates diversity and inclusion, these values function primarily as marketing strategies. Darren's presence in the company allows the organization to present itself as progressive and socially responsible, which enhances its reputation among investors and clients.

In reality, the company does little to address the structural inequalities within its workplace culture. Darren continues to experience discrimination and exclusion despite being showcased as a symbol of diversity. This contradiction highlights how corporate institutions often use diversity as a branding tool rather than a genuine commitment to social change.

The thesis emphasizes that this dynamic reflects broader patterns within neoliberal capitalism. In contemporary corporate culture, diversity initiatives are frequently implemented to improve public image and attract customers rather than to challenge systemic inequalities.

Furthermore, the narrative critiques the broader ideology of American meritocracy. Darren initially believes that hard work and talent will allow him to succeed within the corporate world. However, his experiences reveal that success is shaped by power relations, racial hierarchies, and institutional structures.

By the end of the novel, Darren recognizes the limitations of the corporate system and seeks alternative ways to create opportunities for others. His shift toward mentoring and empowering marginalized individuals represents a rejection of the purely profit-driven values of neoliberal capitalism.

Through satire, irony, and character development, the novel ultimately exposes the contradictions of corporate culture and questions the assumption that economic success automatically leads to social progress.

7. Conclusion

The analysis of Mateo Askaripour's *Black Buck* demonstrates that the novel functions as a powerful literary critique of racial inequality embedded within contemporary corporate culture. Through the experiences of the protagonist Darren Vender, the narrative exposes the complex relationship between race, identity, and capitalist institutions in modern American society. The study reveals that the novel not only narrates an individual story of professional success and personal transformation but also reflects broader social realities regarding systemic racism, identity conflict, and

the commodification of diversity within neoliberal corporate environments.

One of the central findings of this study is that *Black Buck* effectively portrays systemic racism as a structural feature of corporate institutions rather than a series of isolated incidents. The corporate environment of the startup company Sumwun represents a microcosm of broader social hierarchies in which racial minorities must navigate environments designed primarily around white cultural norms and expectations. Darren's experiences of humiliation, stereotyping, and marginalization highlight the persistence of racial inequalities in professional spaces that outwardly claim to promote diversity and inclusion. These dynamics demonstrate how racism continues to operate through subtle mechanisms such as workplace culture, power relations, and organizational practices that maintain unequal opportunities for marginalized individuals.

The novel also provides a significant exploration of identity conflict and psychological transformation. Darren's journey from a content Starbucks employee to an ambitious corporate salesman illustrates the pressures placed on individuals who seek success within highly competitive capitalist environments. In order to survive and thrive within the corporate system, Darren gradually adapts his personality, values, and behavior to align with the expectations of his workplace. This transformation reflects the psychological phenomenon described by W.E.B. Du Bois as double consciousness, in which individuals must constantly negotiate between their personal identity and the perceptions imposed upon them by a racially biased society.

As Darren becomes increasingly integrated into the corporate culture of Sumwun, he experiences both professional success and personal alienation. The aggressive sales culture and competitive ethos of the organization encourage behaviors that prioritize profit and personal advancement above ethical considerations and social relationships. Consequently, Darren's transformation involves distancing himself from aspects of his previous identity and community. This internal conflict illustrates the emotional and psychological cost associated with navigating racially stratified professional environments.

Another significant contribution of *Black Buck* lies in its critique of neoliberal capitalism and the commodification of diversity. The novel exposes how corporate institutions frequently adopt the language of diversity and inclusion as part of their

public identity while simultaneously maintaining structural inequalities within their organizations. Darren's role within the company serves as a symbolic representation of diversity that enhances the corporate image of Sumwun. However, this representation does not translate into genuine institutional change or equality within the workplace.

Through satire and narrative irony, the novel demonstrates that diversity initiatives can sometimes function as marketing strategies rather than genuine commitments to social justice. Darren's identity becomes a form of corporate capital that the organization uses to enhance its reputation among clients, investors, and the public. In this sense, the novel reveals how neoliberal capitalism commodifies cultural identity, transforming diversity into a resource that can be exploited for economic gain.

Furthermore, the narrative challenges the dominant ideology of meritocracy that often characterizes corporate culture. At the beginning of the novel, Darren believes that hard work, determination, and talent will allow him to achieve success within the corporate system. However, his experiences reveal that opportunities are shaped not only by individual effort but also by structural factors such as race, power relations, and institutional culture. This realization underscores the limitations of the meritocratic narrative that underpins many corporate institutions.

By portraying Darren's gradual awareness of these structural inequalities, *Black Buck* offers a broader critique of the social and economic systems that sustain them. The novel suggests that meaningful change requires not only individual success but also collective awareness and structural transformation. Darren's eventual recognition of the exploitative dynamics within the corporate world marks an important turning point in the narrative. Rather than simply pursuing personal advancement, he begins to question the values and practices that define the corporate system.

The study also demonstrates that *Black Buck* contributes to the evolving tradition of African American literature by addressing contemporary forms of racial inequality within professional environments. While earlier works in this literary tradition focused primarily on issues such as slavery, segregation, and civil rights, contemporary authors increasingly explore the relationship between race and

neoliberal capitalism. Askaripour's novel reflects this shift by examining how racial hierarchies persist within modern institutions that claim to operate according to principles of equality and merit.

Moreover, the novel's use of satire and humor plays an important role in conveying its social critique. By presenting serious issues such as racism and corporate exploitation through a satirical narrative style, the author encourages readers to critically reflect on the contradictions and absurdities of contemporary corporate culture. This approach allows the novel to engage with complex social issues while maintaining an accessible and engaging narrative structure.

The findings of this study highlight the importance of literature as a tool for understanding and critiquing social structures. Fictional narratives such as *Black Buck* provide valuable insights into the lived experiences of individuals navigating institutional systems of power and inequality. Through storytelling, literature can reveal aspects of social reality that may not be immediately visible in academic or political discourse.

In addition, the novel encourages readers to reconsider the relationship between economic success and social justice. The pursuit of financial prosperity within corporate institutions often requires individuals to conform to systems that perpetuate inequality. By depicting Darren's struggle to reconcile his personal identity with the demands of corporate culture, the novel raises important questions about the ethical implications of professional success in a capitalist society.

In conclusion, Mateo Askaripour's *Black Buck* offers a compelling exploration of race, identity, and corporate power in contemporary America. Through its depiction of systemic racism, identity conflict, and the commodification of diversity, the novel reveals the complex dynamics that shape the experiences of racial minorities within corporate institutions. The narrative challenges dominant narratives of meritocracy and progress by exposing the structural inequalities embedded within modern capitalist systems.

Ultimately, the novel suggests that addressing these inequalities requires not only individual awareness but also collective efforts to transform institutional structures. By highlighting the contradictions of corporate diversity discourse and the persistence of racial hierarchies, *Black Buck* contributes to ongoing discussions about

social justice, economic inequality, and the future of corporate culture. As such, the novel remains an important literary work that encourages critical reflection on the intersection of race and capitalism in the twenty-first century.

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