

Blackass

A. Igoni Barrett

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Barrett's fresh and irreverent voice demands to be heard in this riotous and biting satire.

A. Igoni Barrett's stunning debut novel, *Blackass*, provokes laughter, tears, guilt, and rage as it plumbs the depths of racist and sexist attitudes.

In a clever marriage of two satirical masterpieces, Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis* and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Barrett's protagonist, Furo Wariboko, awakens to discover that he has been transformed into a white man. He must navigate the once-familiar landscapes of teeming Lagos seeing everything through the sea-green eyes of a red-haired man who is Caucasian in every respect—except for the gleaming blackness of his buttocks, his black family, and his Nigerian name. How can Furo fabricate a story that explains away these curious anomalies?

Unable to find work for several years after attending university, Furo believed that the only purpose of being unemployed was "to show him how easy it was for hope to shrivel." Yet, as "Frank Whyte," Furo discovers that the world is his oyster, and virtually any job can be his for the asking. So, forsaking family and friends, Furo ventures into a world that feasts on greed and self-indulgence, an upside-down world in which no one is who he or she appears to be, a world in which "we are all constructed narratives."

Barrett is adroit at describing life in complex Lagos, and he has a flair for creating distinctive yet credible characters: the beautiful, flamboyant, and generous Syreeta; the inscrutable writer, Igoni; Furo's father (a failed chicken farmer); and Furo's sister (@pweetychic_tk), who is intent upon solving her brother's mysterious disappearance.

Through sardonic humor that scorches even as it tickles, *Blackass* illuminates the uncomfortable contemporary message broadcast daily: "For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white."

Barrett's fresh and irreverent voice demands to be heard—not only via his creative first novel, *Blackass*, but, one hopes, again and again, as this exciting young author spins new tales to awaken the conscience through biting social commentary made palatable by humor.

NANCY WALKER (Spring 2016)

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