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Alain Mabanckou

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#591225 in Books Mabanckou Alain Dundy 2013-02-21 2013-02-21 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.50 x .37 x 5.50l, .50 #File Name: 0253007917168 pages Blue White Red | File size: 53.Mb

Alain Mabanckou : Blue White Red: A Novel (Global African Voices) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Blue White Red: A Novel (Global African Voices):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A wonderful novel and a compelling read By Mary S. "Paris is a big boy." This is a terrific novel, and my first encounter with author Alain Mabanckou from the Republic of Congo. It's the satisfying tale of Massala-Massala and others of his generation who put all their hopes in moving to Paris and living a swanky life that would be the envy of family and friends back home, only to find that you don't always get what you

bargain for. Mabanckou writes with a relatively spare style which is enhanced by his strong sense of story, wit, and keen observation. *Blue White Red* packs a lot into a short book. I really enjoyed it. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. AmazingBy alexander daryananiHeart wrenching. Very well written, must read for any and everyone who's migrated to a new country or considering it. Not all is what it seems 6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. "In the beginning was the name... Moki"By Friederike Knabe"I'll manage to get myself out of this". Thrown into some dark hole or cell of some kind, not knowing by whom, where and why, the first person narrator can no longer "distinguish between dream and reality..." Nightmarish wild thoughts tumble over each other in the captive's mind; shady figures appear like shadows before his eyes - is it Moki? - while he is desperately trying to hang on to hope and a resolution of his predicament. He muses that order in his thoughts, a chronology of events may lead him to a way out of this cul-de-sac of a situation: start at the beginning. Whether he will escape and, most importantly, how he ended up in these desperate circumstances in the first place becomes the primary story of this extraordinary novel by Franco-Congolese author Alain Mabanckou. Written between 1993 and 1995 and published in 1998 in France it won the Grand Prix littéraire d'Afrique Noire in 1999. "BLUE WHITE RED" stands at the beginning of a remarkable and multifaceted career of one of the most important African writers today. Born and raised in Pointe-Noire in the Republic of Congo, his novels have won several awards, among them the prestigious Prix Renaudot for *Mémoires de porc-épic* (Memoirs of a Porcupine) in 2006. For more than ten years Mabanckou has been living in the USA, teaching Francophone literature, currently at UCLA. BLUE WHITE RED (you realize the colours of France's flag) is presented from the perspective of Massala-Massala, a young Congolese man with a dream. A dream that many young Africans of his generation share: move to Paris, live the good life there, make a lot of money and come home regularly to bring presents to family and friends (and show off) ... and spread the dream to others. An infectious attraction to a world that appears easy and full of fun, where young men can afford the latest fashion in clothes, perfumes, hairstyles and in skin-lightening treatments. Those who return on regular visits home are called the "Parisians", and, while in their old neighbourhood, are followed by throngs of admirers. There is another group of emigrants, the "Peasants", those who work in the provinces in France, without any of the glamour or the features of a 'dandy'. Mabanckou's portrayal of the Parisians is tongue-in-cheek and somewhat mocking, of course. This is done extremely well, indirectly and subtly, given his hero is completely taken by the façade of his idol. This contrast between the naïve musings of the narrator and the reader's sense that things are probably not like they seem, makes for entertaining as well as thought provoking reading. Still, there are yet other aspects to the narration that keep the reader engaged. Massala-Massala's neighbour, Moki, is the local Parisian, who returns every year loaded with money and gifts, holding court in the 'house' (renovated, expanded palatially) next door. Our narrator follows him around, offering any assistance needed locally... he wants to be his shadow, even imitating his walk and gestures. As luck has it, Moki offers to help him to get to Paris and, after lengthy preparations, eventually, the young man enters the City of Light... The description of his experiences in Paris from the first moments onwards is filtered through the time lens of memory, enriched by personal musings about people and local settings: "Everything flows in the slowness of memory. The past is not just a worn-out shadow that walks behind us. It can be ahead of us, precede us, bifurcate, take another path and gets lost somewhere... I must remember." Then, quickly, he returns to the action of the day, keeping the reader's attention. We can easily imagine that life is not as he dreamed it. Mabanckou is an exquisite story teller who combines humour with satire, open sympathy for his hero's situation mixed with a good dose of self-criticism instilled into him. Massala-Massala recalls his father's cautionary advice, but, maybe, it is too late. Mabanckou combines his convincing depiction of people and scenarios with a deep understanding of and concern for the underlying socio-political tensions and challenges that have faced young people not only in his home country but across Africa in the early years of independence - and to some degree in many places still today. Mabanckou focuses in this and his later novels on the richness and diversity of Congolese society; his satire becomes more biting. Yet, this debut novel shows much of his style and substance in remarkable ways. He has become known not only as an imaginative story teller in the best African tradition; he enriches his writing with drawing on his astute observation of people and circumstances. Rather uniquely - and what makes reading his work in the original French and translating it so challenging - he is an innovator of language and idiom, mixing colloquialisms and images with traditional French (French-French). Both the note by the translator of BLUE WHITE RED, Alison Dundy, and the introductory essay by Dominic Thomas are of very helpful in this regard. Ms. Dundy's translation is excellent. Having read Mabanckou in French, I know the challenge. Even the name "Moki" was chosen for its underlying meaning in the local language... [Friederike Knabe]

This tale of wild adventure reveals the dashed hopes of Africans living between worlds. When Moki returns to his village from France wearing designer clothes and affecting all the manners of a Frenchman, Massala-Massala, who lives the life of a humble peanut farmer after giving up his studies, begins to dream of following in Moki's footsteps. Together, the two take wing for Paris, where Massala-Massala finds himself a part of an underworld of out-of-work undocumented immigrants. After a botched attempt to sell metro passes purchased with a stolen checkbook, he winds up in jail and is deported. *Blue White Red* is a novel of postcolonial Africa where young people born into poverty dream of making it big in the cities of their former colonial masters. Alain Mabanckou's searing commentary on the

lives of Africans in France is cut with the parody of African villagers who boast of a son in the country of Digol.

From Booklist Mabanckou's timely novel, originally published in French in 1998, offers a unique slant on the illegal-immigrant experience—that of young African men migrating to large cities in the countries that formerly ruled their lands, dreaming of making it big and returning home as wealthy and respected benefactors. *Massala-Massala* harbors that dream as he observes his neighbor Moki flying off to Paris every year, and returning looking robust and radiant (a far cry from the frail man he once was), while lavishly spreading his wealth among family and friends. Massala-Massala envies “the Parisian” and his rock-star status, and eventually gathers the funds for a passport and visa so he can accompany Moki on his next journey to Paris. There he is immediately confronted by Moki's lies about his life abroad, and is forced to become part of a destitute group of illegals who are all running scams for their leader, Prefet, Moki's mentor, himself in exile for 20 years. Mabanckou's provocative novel probes the many facets of the “migration adventure,” including the shame that accompanies migrants home when their foreign sojourn ends in failure. --Deborah Donovan *Blue White Red* stands at the beginning of the author's remarkable and multifaceted career as a novelist, essayist and poet...this debut novel shows much of his style and substance in remarkable ways...Dundy's translation is excellent. (Africa Book Club) Mabanckou's provocative novel probes the many facets of the 'migration adventure,' including the shame that accompanies migrants home when their foreign sojourn ends in failure. (Booklist) Alain Mabanckou can be defined as the 'clear guide' of a new generation of Congolese writers. (Infopagecongo) Alain Mabanckou counts as one of the most successful voices of young African literature in the French language. (Ulrich Schreiber Internationales literaturfestival berlin) Mabanckou dazzles with technical dexterity and emotional depth. Vulnerability beckons in this masterful story about a world we always knew was too good to be true, yet reminds us that new skies appear and new seasons begin. (Starred review) (Publishers Weekly) About the Author Alain Mabanckou is the author of several prize-winning novels, including *Mémoires de porc-épic* (Memoirs of a Porcupine). *Blue White Red* is winner of the Grand Prix Littéraire de l'Afrique Noire. He is Professor of French and Francophone Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. Alison Dundy lives in New York City and works as a librarian, archivist, and translator. She has also translated Sony Labou Tansi's *Life and a Half* (IUP, 2011).