

Blackass Study Guide

Blackass by A. Igoni Barrett

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Plot Summary

The following version of this book was used to create this study guide: Barrett, A. Igoni. Blackass. Graywolf Press, 2015.

Furo Wariboko wakes up on the morning of a job interview and discovers that he has transformed into a white man. As he is adjusting to his new appearance, he walks towards his interview location, Haba! Nigeria Ltd. He meets Arinze, who offers Furo a much more lucrative job than he was expecting. After accepting the job offer, Furo wanders the streets, homeless, until he meets Igoni and Syreeta at a mall. Once Igoni leaves, Syreeta offers Furo a massage at her house. Following their arrival at the apartment, Syreeta gives Furo the massage and Furo asks her if he can stay with her until his job starts. She agrees, and shortly afterwards she notices his black buttocks, which causes her to laugh at Furo. Throughout these events, Furo constantly struggles because he misses his family, and he is trying to adapt to his new lifestyle.

The novel now shifts to Igoni's perspective. His interest in Furo led him to find information about him online. He discovers Tekena, Furo's sister, on Twitter and asks her to meet him. Igoni then claims that he has also undergone a transformation, and the perspective of the novel shifts back to Furo.

Syreeta helps Furo acquire a new passport, and when Furo and Syreeta reunite at herhouse, they have sex for the first time. The next day, Syreeta introduces Furo to her friends, who are all married to white men with children. A couple of days pass, until Bola enters Syreeta's apartment while Furo hides in his room. He gives Syreeta her allowance, then takes her out. Furo believes Syreeta is offering Bola sexual favours in exchange for money.

When Syreeta returns the following day, she takes Furo out to buy clothes. When they return, Furo reflects on his identity for a few days before concluding that he will change his name to Frank Whyte to suit his new appearance, and prepare for his first day of work, which begins the next day.

The perspective shifts back to Igoni, who has transformed into a woman and now refers to herself as Morpheus. She reflects on her transformation, and on her meeting with Tekena, and realizes that she wants to talk to Furo again.

It is now Furo's first day as a marketing executive for Haba!. He makes a good impression, and he is introduced to the rest of the staff. Furo soon makes a name for himself. Competing companies keep offering Furo better paying jobs, but Furo stays loyal to Arinze, even though he believes that he deserves better. Furo eventually develops a romantic bond with Tosin, the receptionist, but it does not develop into anything more than mutual attraction. Arinze takes Furo to Abuja because he wants Furo's help completing a large deal with Yuguda's company. Once the deal is finished, Yuguda discreetly offers Furo a much better job in Abuja. Furo accepts, knowing that the job will help him get away from his old life forever.



When he returns to Lagos, Furo is making sure his affairs are in order before his departure. He tries to kiss Tosin, who rejects him and calls him selfish. Furo then goes to Syreeta's house to tell her that he is leaving. Syreeta then tells Furo that she is pregnant with his child, so Furo lies to her, saying that he wants to marry her so she can move to Abuja with him. She accepts, and Furo leaves without saying goodbye.

Igoni reunites with Furo, and they spend the night talking about their transformations. When Igoni realizes how selfish Furo had become, he calls Furo's family and gives them Furo's location. The novel ends just before Furo answers the door as his mother arrives.



Page 1 - 46

Summary

The omniscient narrator tells the story of Furo Wariboko's first day as a white man on pages 1 - 46. At the beginning of the novel, Furo woke up on the morning of a job interview, and immediately noticed that his skin color had changed. Furo used to be a poor, black, Nigerian man. He never had any success with jobs, and lived with his parents until age 33. While trying to make sense of his transformation from a black Nigerian man into a white man with red hair, his mother knocked on his bedroom door to check on him. Furo managed to avoid exposure, and plotted his escape from the house. He had no money, and he could not ask his family for any without the risk of being seen. Furo snuck out of his house only to realize that he had forgotten his phone, but decided that it was too late to go back, so he kept going.

Furo walked through Lagos's outskirts towards his interview in the mid-morning heat. Pedestrians all around him whispered under their breath, staring incessantly and yelling at him. The population of outer Lagos had "never held a conversation " with a white person (or 'oyibo') before" (10). Scenes of dereliction surrounded Furo's journey: roads full of "market litter," "rusted pushcarts," and "bold stench" (10). The dereliction combined with the noise, unwanted attention, and stress from being late for a job interview left Furo in a rough state of mind, as he realized that the walk to his destination was going to take a lot longer than he thought. Troubled, he stopped a young lady, who and asked her what time it was. A dialogue ensued in which Ekemini, the woman, driven by curiosity, asked Furo why he sounded Nigerian despite his appearance, and what he was doing on the outskirts of Lagos. She offered to help Furo find transportation, but when Furo said he had no money, Ekemini's disposition towards him changed. She "drew away from him" (13) and became suspicious. Furo then made up a lie about being robbed, so Ekemini eventually gave him some money so that he could hire a taxi to his destination. Furo took her phone number so he could find her and pay her back.

Furo arrived at his destination, Haba! Nigeria Ltd., a marketing company. He was disheartened when he saw a long line of people with briefcases queueing up, waiting for a job interview. As soon as Furo joined the queue, the rest of the applicants started talking about him. Suddenly, a man approached Furo in a friendly but aggressive manner. He was trying to make conversation with Furo, but Furo read his advances as confrontational. The man told Furo that Furo had to go talk to an administrator and put his name down in order to join the line of applicants. Furo did as he suggested, and spoke to the woman at the reception desk. She greeted Furo with a friendly tone, and led him past the line-up and straight to the interview office with urgency as soon as she heard his name. Inside the office, Furo met Obata, a fat, rude, unhygienic man powering through a messy lunch. He adopted a confrontational attitude towards Furo, interrogating him about his origins, specifically the discrepancy between his name, his skin color, and his accent. Furo became extremely nervous, unsure what to say, and he



was saved by a man named Arinze who walked through the door. Obata stood to attention at his entrance. Arinze took Furo's resumé and said he wanted to take over the interview. He led Furo to his office.

"French windows," a "woodlands aroma," and a "shellacked bookcase" (25) were just some of the pristine features of Arinze's office. After asking Furo three questions, one of which being whether or not he liked to read (to which Furo answered no), Arinze offered him a marketing executive position for over double the salary Furo was expecting. Furo accepted, and was bursting with excitement when he left the building after being told he would start work in a few weeks.

Furo then wandered the streets looking for food and shelter for the night. After the adrenaline rush from the success of his job interview subsided, Furo realized he had not eaten anything all day. He found a soup kitchen and went inside. A laborer was the only other customer, and a middle-aged lady in charge of the kitchen questioned Furo's presence there. She was surprised to see a white man in a place like this. She eventually took his order and when she put the food on Furo's plate, she gave him an extra piece of meat. The laborer sitting at the next table did not like this gesture, since the lady had been rude to him before, so a loud argument between the laborer and the food seller ensued. Furo tried to diffuse the situation by offering to pay for the laborer's meal, but the food seller did not accept his offer. The argument spilled out onto the street outside the kitchen and Furo made his escape. He did not want to be the center of attention.

Furo wandered the streets looking for shelter. Furo settled on staying in the master bedroom of a run-down, abandoned building. It was dark outside, and Furo started to reflect about his family. He was plagued with guilt that he abandoned them, he was upset that he could not go back to them. The narrator then describes Furo's family members. His mother was hard working and devoted to her children's success. His father was not helpful in raising Furo and his sister; he preferred watching T.V. with a beer in his hand. He failed at a business venture which involved raising a chicken farm, because he was scammed by a machine manufacturer. Furo's sister was dedicated to everything she did. The narrator highlights the fact that Furo tried hard to succeed at everything he did but he did not have the ability to excel after high school, which upset his mother. The section ends with Furo deciding that it would be best not to return to his family.

Analysis

Barrett alludes to Kafka's *Metamorphosis* in order to enforce satirical and comedic undertones in this novel. In *Metamorphosis*, the protagonist wakes up to find that he has transformed into a vile creature, and the novel follows his life as he tries to adapt to the change. *Blackass* follows the same structure, but the protagonist merely changes his race. This allusion could be a comedic device in that it draws a hyperbolic parallel between being white and being a monstrous creature. One of the main themes in *Blackass* is racial injustice, and comedic undertones are frequently used. Therefore, the allusion to

Metamorphosis can be considered a comedic device which is used to enforce the satirical nature of the novel.

The third-person narration is tethered to Furo such that the narrator describes Furo's perception of events rather than an objective overview of the story. Barrett does this because he wants the reader to develop a deeper understanding of Furo than any other character. Understanding Furo's perception of events is important to the novel, since it allows Barrett to elaborate further on the main themes of the novel, namely identity and racial injustice. For example, when Furo reflects on his first day as a white man, he wishes he could wash away his whiteness (39-40). This description of Furo's thoughts shows how he struggles with his identity. Since Furo has two identities (pre and post-transformation), focusing the narration on his perspective gives Barrett the ability to enforce the theme of identity.

Throughout this section, A. Igoni Barrett represents racial inequality through imagery which evokes feelings of either dirtiness or cleanliness. As soon as he transform into a white man, people help him get to where he needs to go, and give him opportunities he would never otherwise achieve. Barrett uses imagery that evokes a hectic and dirty atmosphere every time Furo experiences an event that used to be typical in his life pre-transformation. In contrast, when things are going Furo's way because of his new skin color, Barrett's imagery reflects tranquility and cleanliness. For example, when Furo is walking through the streets of outer Lagos his face is "browed with grime" (11) and people are staring at him with "festering intensity" (8). Further examples of dirty imagery appear in Obata's interview office. In the office, Furo's hands are "moist with heat" (21) and there is a "green moth" (21) circling overhead, while Obata is wiping a "mess of beans" (21) from his mouth. The clean and tranquil imagery makes its debut when Barrett describes Arinze's office before Furo gets offered the job. Arinze's office has "soft leather chairs" (24), paintings, and "white walls" (25). The "burst of daylight" coming in from the "open French windows" provides a welcome change from the "stuffiness" (24) of the other office. Barrett goes back to using dirty imagery when Furo finds shelter in the abandoned building on page 36, and the clean imagery returns later in the book, when Furo goes to the affluent 'white' neighborhood of Lagos. The imagery evokes feelings of discomfort and disgust in the reader. Barrett uses clean imagery whenever Furo's newfound whiteness puts him in a position of privilege which he never would have achieved otherwise. At the most transparent level, Barrett is suggesting that in Lagos, black people have to live in dereliction, while white people have endless opportunity. In this way, Barrett's novel reads as a parable, raising awareness about racial injustice in general.

Barrett uses the interactions between Furo and minor characters to highlight the way in which economic and racial privilege functions, with focus on gender differences. Every time Furo encounters a woman as a white man, he is treated with extra care; the women he meets are always willing to do everything they can to help him. However, every male he encounters in this section, with the exception of Arinze, approaches Furo with a degree of aggression or disdain. This could be because Barrett wants to further enforce the theme of racial injustice with the claim that whiteness is associated with wealth, and only people who believe they stand to gain something from a white person



are helpful towards him. In an underprivileged area like outer Lagos in this novel, women are more likely to have something to gain from a white man. Arinze is helpful towards Furo because he sees Furo as a possible fountain of wealth, because he realizes that a white man in Lagos has the credibility to attract success. In contrast, other key male characters in this section do not treat Furo with respect, because they either do not trust him, or they are bitter. Obata claims that “This man is lying” (23), and maintains an aggressive disposition towards Furo throughout their discourse. Furthermore, the laborer in the soup kitchen is embittered by Furo’s presence, since he constantly tries to diminish the food seller’s excitement at seeing a white man. In terms of the key female characters in this section, the disposition towards Furo is much more friendly. Ekemini, the receptionist at Haba!, and the food seller do everything they can to help Furo. There is evidence for the claim that they are helpful because of his assumed wealth during Furo’s dialogue with Ekemini. As soon as Furo said he had no money, Ekemini “drew away from him” (13), until he made up a lie about being robbed. Through narrating Furo’s interactions with males and females, Barrett shows that Furo is treated differently because of his race and perceived wealth. The wealth associated with being white demonstrates the difference between the responses of people belonging to different genders in this section.

Discussion Question 1

Barrett suggests that racial privilege has benefits and drawbacks. Based on Furo’s experiences in this section (Pages 1-46), does the novel claim that the benefits outweigh the costs? Explain your answer.

Discussion Question 2

What does Furo’s family represent at this point (Pages 1-46) in the novel?

Discussion Question 3

Barrett uses the interplay between clean and dirty imagery to represent racial injustice. Are there any other reasons Barrett used this particular interplay of imagery?

Vocabulary

unruffled, gawping, festering, sojourning, cambric, accommodation, forestall, aloft, whitewashed, gable, lynching, spittle, animosity, noxious, abrupt, speculative, plethora, whirligig, reeled, anguished, monopoly, executive, bemused, disoriented, terrarium, assail, conviction, composure



Page 46 - 120

Summary

Pages 46 – 61 describes Furo’s journey from the abandoned hotel in which he spent his first night as a white man to The Palms mall, where he met Igoni and Syreeta. When Furo woke up, the first thing he did was check if he was still white. After realizing that he was, hunger set in, so Furo made his way outside. Pedestrians stared at him with “open amusement” (47) as he washed his face and wandered aimlessly through the streets. Feeling the sun’s glare more potently than ever due to his pale complexion, Furo walked through Lagos until he reached a bus station in Maryland Junction. He decided to make his way towards Lekki, the affluent part of Lagos, because he hoped to escape the stares of the working class Nigerians. The air conditioning and distance from his family were the main reasons for his decision to go to Lekki. He took many buses to get there, and stopped at the polluted waterfront for lunch. The further away he got from outer Lagos, the less attention he received from passers-by. The waterfront was full of “road-kill carcasses” and chemical “stench” (49), so Furo continued his journey as quickly as he could.

When Furo arrived at The Palms, he saw the first other white person since his transformation. Because of the stares and hostility he sensed in outer Lagos, he was worried that the white woman would draw negative attention to him, but instead she ignored him and walked past. In the mall, Furo saw crowds of foreigners, none of whom drew attention to him. They were all “laughing, chattering” (50) and enjoying themselves. After ignoring a proposition from a prostitute, Furo approached a café. He had almost no money, so he sat with a man, who is later revealed to be Igoni, to start a conversation. Furo wanted to ask him for some money to buy food. Igoni showed interest in Furo because of the contrast between his name and his race, so he invited Furo to a restaurant to have lunch.

Igoni told Furo that he was a writer, and Furo said he just got a job as a book salesman. As Furo and Igoni got to know each other, Syreeta entered the restaurant and sat down at a table next to them. Furo ordered a milkshake which Igoni paid for, and he asked Igoni if he could stay at his apartment. Igoni refused, then said that he had to leave. Syreeta then sat in Igoni’s seat and started talking to Furo. When she noticed Furo rubbing his neck, she offered to give him a massage at her apartment. At Furo’s first objections, Syreeta became assertive, telling him to “Shush” (61). Furo eventually accepted the offer.

Pages 61 -74 detail Furo’s journey from The Palms to Syreeta’s house, and the events that transpired at Syreeta’s house. When Syreeta started driving Furo to her house, Furo started to feel more and more comfortable because of the engine “purr” and the “streams of air from the vents” (61). Syreeta stopped at a hotel and took Furo in. Furo then told her that he needed to urinate, so Syreeta directed him to the nearest washroom after looking at his strained facial expression.



Syreeta took Furo to a bar where she was friendly with the bartender. She asked the bartender to take a photograph of Her with Furo. After the picture, Furo and Syreeta got back in her car. For the rest of the drive, Syreeta's phone kept ringing, this frustrated her until they arrived at her house. Syreeta finally answered her phone, and started arguing with her boyfriend, who had called her. She tried to make him jealous with the picture of her and Furo. She told Furo to take a shower before his massage. As Furo disrobed, he observed his surroundings and noticed that the furniture was mismatched. From this, he concluded that they must be gifts from many male partners. Syreeta joined Furo in the washroom as he bathed. When he was finished, he got into bed with Syreeta and she gave him a massage. During the massage, Furo started crying before he fell asleep with Syreeta beside him.

The next day, Syreeta woke Furo up. Furo asked Syreeta about her boyfriend, and Syreeta said it was none of his business. Furo then asked if anyone was using her spare room to preface his request to live with her until his job started. Syreeta said that all she knew about him was that he was Nigerian and white, and that he could stay with her. The narrator then describes Furo's reflection on the conversation that just happened. Furo realized that all of his fortune with Syreeta was because of his newfound whiteness. After dictating some ground rules to Furo, Syreeta noticed that Furo's buttocks was black, so she wailed with laughter. When Furo noticed what she was laughing at, he was speechless.

Pages 77 – 94 describe Igoni's thought process after his meeting with Furo. The narrative point of view shifts to first-person, and Igoni becomes the narrator. Igoni describes how he felt about Furo after their conversation at The Palms. Igoni immediately became interested in Furo after their interaction. The fact that Furo was white, but he had a Nigerian name, and the fact that Furo asked Igoni if he could stay with Igoni after just a few minutes of conversation caused Igoni to do some research on Furo. He resorted to browsing Twitter, where he found Furo's sister, Tekena, posting about Furo's disappearance. Igoni was puzzled by Tekena's online identity. Tekena would occasionally post about Furo's disappearance, but the next minute, she was "collecting followers and trading jokes" (81). On page 83, Igoni claims that he underwent a transformation of his own. At this point in the novel, this could be a metaphorical transformation, but it is later revealed that he transforms into a woman. Igoni philosophized about his transformation, and concluded that "we are all constructed narratives" (83).

After observing Tekena's Twitter account, Igoni decided to contact her. He managed to instigate a rapport with Tekena, and took her out to The Palms to eat ice cream and talk about Furo. The section narrated by Igoni ends on page 94, where Igoni met Tekena and told her to call him Morpheus.

Pages 95 – 108 describe the events that transpire when Syreeta helps Furo get a passport for work, and Furo's journey back to Syreeta's house. Furo told Syreeta that he needed a passport for work. She gave him a phone, and all of the money he needed to get the passport. Syreeta had a connection at a passport office, so she drove Furo to the office and told him to meet up with her connection, who Furo only knew as Passport



Man. Syreeta told Furo to meet Passport Man under a flagpole outside of the passport office, so Furo did as he was told. When Passport man saw Furo, he showed no emotion and told Furo to follow him. Passport Man directed Furo towards a room where a man was sitting. Furo sat down and the man asked him a series of questions. Growing impatient with the questions, Furo told the man that he wanted to fill out the form himself. The man rejected this, saying that Furo should do as he is told because the passport information needs to be perfect. Furo then resorted back to obeying instructions. When Furo's questioning was finished, the man introduced himself as Passport Deji after convincing Furo to give him a tip. Passport Deji told Furo to call him if he ever needed anything.

Furo returned to the flagpole where Passport Man was waiting. He directed Furo to an office block, where Passport Man spoke to a woman conducting interviews, and bribed her. When he finished talking to her, the woman told Furo to sit down, and she asked him a series of questions. She had a suspicious attitude towards Furo, claiming that she did not believe he spoke Kalabari (102). Nevertheless, the interview went smoothly, and Passport Man told Furo to return on Monday to get his passport.

Upon leaving the passport office, Furo had to find a taxi to get back to Syreeta's house. Furo saw the Lagos taxi drivers as "vultures, hyenas" (103), because they refused to lower their exaggerated prices for him. The narrator then describes Furo's frustrated thoughts directed at Lagos. Furo concluded that there was no place for compassion in Lagos. Immediately following this train of thought, a "smiling lady" (104) appeared and helped Furo find a taxi. She told Furo to hide so that the drivers would not see them together. She soon flagged a taxi down and called Furo over.

During the drive, the taxi driver was embittered because he was tricked. The driver tried to make small talk with Furo, and asked Furo why he tricked him shortly afterwards. Furo said that he did not trick him, and the taxi driver saw this as sneaky. After concluding that Furo was sneaky and funny, he employed a more friendly disposition. The driver did not seem surprised that Furo sounded Nigerian despite his white skin. Once they arrived at Syreeta's house, Furo realized that the apartment was empty, so he sent Syreeta a message to ask where she was. She said that she was with her friends, and she would only come back at the end of the weekend, so Furo had the apartment to himself.

Pages 108 – 120 describe Furo's experience staying at Syreeta's house by himself for the whole weekend. The first thing Furo did was sit down and watch television. Syreeta called him to ask how the passport process went, and when Furo told her it went well, she said that they needed to go out and celebrate. Furo agreed and Syreeta hung up.

Furo remembered when Syreeta saw his black buttocks, and he started to reflect on his identity. On page 111, he described his buttocks as a "blemish" (111). Feeling dejected after his self-reflection, Furo continued watching television all day. The next day, Furo decided to call his old cellphone. After the first ring, his mother answered. Furo struggled to stay silent after his mother's "hopeful hello" (112), then he hung up.



On Sunday, a few hours before Syreeta returned, a huge rainstorm started. Furo closed all of the windows to prevent flooding the house. When Syreeta arrived, Furo was excited to greet her, but she was disgruntled and went straight into her room. Disappointed, Furo got into his bed. Shortly afterwards, Syreeta entered his room and apologized because they could no longer go out due to the rain. After a short conversation, Furo joins Syreeta in her bed. A flirty conversation ensued, in which Syreeta asked Furo to grow out his red hair. The sexual tension escalates, and Furo and Syreeta ended up having unprotected sex.

The following morning, Syreeta asked Furo to shower with her, but Furo rejected her request because he did not want her to see his buttocks again. He believed his black buttocks was a “weight” (118) trapping him in his old life. Syreeta then told Furo that they were going to meet her friends after Furo picked up his passport. When Syreeta went to the washroom, Furo realized that he could use her whitening cream to brighten the skin of his buttocks, so he applied some discreetly.

Analysis

Barrett uses Syreeta’s relationship with Furo as an analogy for Furo’s relationship with his mother in order to add more depth to Furo’s personality, highlighting his dependence on his mother. In the previous section, the narrator says that Furo wished he could “go to his mother” (39) for comfort after such a stressful day. This establishes Furo’s dependence on his mother. Syreeta has many maternal interactions with Furo which exemplify Furo’s desire to be with a maternal figure. For example, Furo tells Syreeta that he needs to urinate when they get to the hotel, and she tells him to hold it until they get upstairs. When she sees his desperate expression, she tells him to go, so Furo “trotted” to the washroom (62). This is comparable to a scene between a mother and her young child who needs the bathroom. Other examples of the maternal relationship between Syreeta and Furo is when he starts crying while she massages him, and when she lays out the rules of the house to him with imperatives such as “you’ll wash your own plates” and “you won’t drop rubbish on my floor” (73). In addition, Syreeta provides Furo with food, shelter, and money throughout the entire novel. Furo’s strong interest in Syreeta coupled with the maternal nature of their relationship shows that Furo is dependent on his mother. Barrett uses this analogy to further express how difficult the transformation is for Furo, which evokes a sympathetic reaction from the reader.

The narrative point of view shifts from a third-person account of Furo’s life into a first-person account of Igoni’s thoughts in order to explore the theme of identity. Igoni’s section talks about transformation, and concludes with a claim that “we are all constructed narratives” (83). On the same page, he refers to the fact that “no human has ever directly seen their own face” (83). Barrett is using Igoni as an analytical voice to put forward his view that identity is complex, since it has many layers, and one can never be certain of even their own identity.

On page 99, Barrett depicts a scene in which Furo shows some real independence for the first time in the novel in order to develop the plot and evolve the character of Furo.



Until this point in the novel, Furo has unquestioningly done what he is told. In this scene, Passport Deji is asking Furo questions, and Furo loses his patience “I can read, let me fill the form myself” (99). Since he transformed into a white man, Furo has hustled aimlessly through Lagos, the only directional guidance he has is given to him by other people, so he obeys them. In this scene, he breaks out for the first time and makes a decision of his own. This is a plot development because as the novel progresses, Furo becomes more and more independent, to the point where he starts acting without regard to anyone else’s needs.

Building on the independence shown by Furo at the passport office, Barrett uses the scene in which Syreeta and Furo have sex to develop the momentum of Furo’s increasing independence. Until the point at which Furo and Syreeta have sex, Furo had been obeying everything she says without question. However, before they start, Furo convinces Syreeta to have sex without using a condom. This is the first instance whereby Furo does not blindly do as Syreeta asks. Furthermore, Furo’s decisiveness in this situation is much more important than the one in which he tells Passport Deji that he wants to fill out the form himself. This is because the consequences of unprotected sex are much greater than those of filling out a form. Moreover, Furo actually succeeds in convincing Syreeta to have unprotected sex, but Passport Deji rejected Furo’s demand to fill out the form himself. The unprotected sex scene directly following the passport form scene shows that Furo is becoming increasingly independent, so Barrett uses these two scenes in conjunction to develop Furo’s character further.

Barrett uses metaphorical language in order to further his satirical and comedic goals in this section. When Furo passes smoothly through the passport acquisition process, the narrator describes the process as if it is a digestive system, with phrases like “in through the mouth and straight out the anus,” and “he was no more than a bite of food for a subverted system” (103). Barrett intends to draw a parallel between government and feces for the sake of comedy and satire. The association between disgusting imagery and governmental processes is portrayed here as being analogous.

Another way in which Barrett furthers his comedic goal is through hyperbole and irony. When Furo is struggling to find a taxi after the passport scene, the narrator describes Furo’s thoughts as he goes into a hyperbolic rant about Lagos. He describes Lagos as a “constant struggle against empathy,” and says that in Lagos, “Compassion was a fatal fracturing in hearts bunkered against the city’s hardness” (104). These intense phrases were sparked merely by Furo’s inability to find a taxi. The very next sentence following Furo’s rant about the city’s lack of compassion is, “A smiling lady came to his aid” (104). Barrett uses the irony of a helpful lady appearing after Furo’s inner despair about the lack of compassion in Lagos to bolster the comedic atmosphere of the novel.

Barrett uses the behavior of taxi drivers towards Furo as a way of highlighting the attitude of the general population towards white people in Lagos. When Furo is looking for a taxi after he leaves the passport office, the drivers ignore him because they are “unwilling to reduce their inflated prices” (104). Barrett’s description of the taxi drivers’ attitudes towards Furo serve to establish Furo’s role in the environment. The taxi drivers merely see a white man as someone with a “dollar sign branded on to his forehead”



(104). However, when Furo eventually does get a taxi, the driver quickly warms up to him. Barrett is highlighting the notion that people get judged instantly based on their appearance, and it is only possible to see someone's real identity once one looks past what they see at face-value. This is a recurring theme throughout the novel. In later sections, Barrett uses taxi drivers to show how attitudes towards Furo evolve depending on his environment.

Barrett uses Furo's disposition towards his black buttocks as a way of expressing how desperately Furo wants to go back to his old life. Furo is ashamed of his black buttocks. The narrator refers to it as a "blemish" (111) in Furo's eyes. In addition, on pages 119-120, Furo refuses to shower with Syreeta, and discreetly applies whitening cream to his buttocks. This shows that Furo is starting to realize the benefits that his newfound whiteness is providing him with. As a result, Furo starts to distance himself from his old life. This is an instance of Barrett's use of the theme of identity. Through describing Furo's shame at any reminder of his old life, Barrett demonstrates the recurring notion that identity is adaptable.

The use of clean and dirty imagery as a way of highlighting racial inequality returns in this section. On pages 46-61, when Furo is travelling from the abandoned building to the mall, the imagery becomes less and less dirty as Furo travels. When Furo is at the waterfront, he sees "road-kill carcasses" and there is a chemical "stench" (49), but when Furo arrives at the mall, the narrator describes clean and comfortable scenes, for example, Furo notices "happy people seated around him" (52). In the mall, there are "several oyibo people" (50), so the majority of the mall population is not black. In contrast, back in outer Lagos, the population is solely working class black people. The direct correlation between the increasing population of white people and the increasing use of clean imagery draws attention to the theme of racial injustice.

Discussion Question 1

How does the shifting narrative point of view add depth to the novel?

Discussion Question 2

Identity and independence are recurring themes throughout this section (Pages 46-120). Is there a connection between the two themes? If so, what purpose does this connection serve?

Discussion Question 3

What does Syreeta represent at this point in the novel?



Vocabulary

unrelenting, sluggish, overbearing, smarting, abundant, facade, relished, cloyed, lulled, accosted, pungent, halogen, succession, whitewash, vermilion, unsmirched, chintz, disembodied, apparent, gratitude, vanity, whirled, homophobic, fragments, skepticism, persona, contrived, schizophrenic, portents, subliminal, intervene, persona, mettle, idiom



Page 120 - 170

Summary

Pages 120 – 132 describes the events that transpire while Furo and Syreeta travel from the passport office to Syreeta's friend's residence. At the start of this section, Syreeta drove Furo to the passport office to pick up his passport, and then waited for him to return. When Furo got back into the car, Syreeta looked at his passport, which caused her to ask Furo why his name was Nigerian even though he was white. Furo had been preparing a fake backstory throughout the previous weekend, so on page 121, Furo quickly summarized his backstory. Syreeta responded by saying that she "didn't know it was possible for black people to adopt white people" (122). Next, Syreeta drove Furo to The Palms mall and they had lunch at the same café where they met for the first time.

Back on the road, their destination was Victoria Garden City, an affluent neighborhood in Lagos. On the way to Victoria Garden City, Syreeta kept dancing and laughing with the music playing on the car radio. This led Furo into a train of thought which brought him to the conclusion that the radio was the cheapest possible form of entertainment in Lagos, so no matter what social class one was in, the radio was something that they all had in common. Shortly afterwards, Furo "found himself hating" (123) the music because of Syreeta's over-infatuation with it.

Syreeta and Furo reached a gridlock because there was construction on the highway in front of them. Some roadside workers opened a space in a barrier, and illegally charged people to get through and avoid the traffic. Furo said he did not like the idea of going through the illegal toll, but Syreeta ignored him. As soon as she paid the fee, a traffic warden jumped on the windshield and tried to make Syreeta stop her car. An argument ensued in which the traffic warden shoved his hands through the open window and tried to gain control of the steering wheel, all the while he demanded that Syreeta give him the car key. Syreeta responded to his attempts with composure. She laughed at him, was sarcastic with him, and cursed at him. When Furo tried to interject, she said no, so Furo quietly leaned away and minded his own business. Eventually, the warden told Syreeta to let him board the car and take her to LASTMA, the road authority office. Furo was about to warn Syreeta that this could mean she would lose her car, but Syreeta told Furo to get out of the car, and she reassured him that there was nothing to worry about.

Furo walked to the gate of Victoria Garden City, and a Nigerian security guard came up to him and asked if he needed anything. When Furo refused, the guard insisted and offered him a chair to sit on. A Nigerian man tried to get through the gate while the guard was talking to Furo, so the guard turned to the man and viciously told him to step back. The Nigerian man was being polite, and said that someone was expecting him inside, but the guard shouted at him, telling him to get back. The guard then turned back to Furo and insisted on bringing Furo a chair. Furo refused, and waited on a hill until Syreeta arrived. Furo got into her car, and they made their way through to Syreeta's friend's house. Furo did not ask how Syreeta disposed of the traffic warden, in the fear



that she did it through shady means. As they drove through Victoria Garden City, Furo observed the “monotony of affluence” (132), which included huge mansions, horses, and clean, quiet streets. Soon, Syreeta and Furo arrived at the house.

Pages 133 – 140 documents the time Furo and Syreeta spend at Syreeta’s friend’s house. Furo and Syreeta were welcomed by a housemaid who recognized Syreeta. When the housemaid saw Furo, she changed her body language to show respect, and guided them into the lounge. The mansion was covered in “golden light” (133) and had very sophisticated furniture. There were “half white” (133) children running around the house. Syreeta heard Baby, the house’s owner, call her name, and the group of friends approached Syreeta and Furo to greet them. Baby introduced herself to Furo, and gave him an “appraising gaze” (133). Syreeta started to boast about Furo’s foreign nature. With every description of Furo which Syreeta provided, her friends showed signs of approval. The narrator explains the fact that this group of women got through university by manipulating people, and they abandoned their jobs to use their skills of manipulation to get what they wanted. They were all married to foreign white men. According to the narrator, Furo used to resent this type of manipulative person because he always worked hard to no avail, and they got by easily, but Furo admitted that his “view of them had softened” (137).

After getting to know Furo and playing with their children, the group of friends started talking about ex-boyfriends, and their “affected accents” (138) kept slipping up. Eventually, they reverted back to their “pidgin” (138) dialect when they got caught up in the conversation. After talking about the incident with the traffic warden, Syreeta and Furo left Victoria Garden City.

Pages 140 -148 details events at Syreeta’s house in the few days following the get together at Victoria Garden City.

Furo woke up to Syreeta making him breakfast on the day after their encounter with Baby. Syreeta said that she had to go out for the day, but Furo asked her to stay because he missed his mother. Syreeta consoled Furo, then she told him that she had to leave. After strong reluctance from Syreeta, Furo finally managed to convince her to stay for a while, then they slept together.

The next day, Furo and Syreeta awoke to a loud knock on the door. Syreeta told Furo to hide in his bedroom, then she opened the door. Bola entered, and asked Syreeta where she had been the day before. Furo noticed his “rich baritone” (144), and eventually deduced that Bola was providing Syreeta money in exchange for sexual favors. Furo noticed that Syreeta was submissive with Bola, since she did everything Bola asked. Syreeta convinced Bola to take her out, and Furo was left alone. For a moment, Furo felt guilty that he was having sex with Bola’s lover, but the remorse faded when he realized that Bola must also be an adulterer. As Furo walked around the empty house, he smelled Bola’s scent, which radiated everywhere.

Later, Syreeta called and asked Furo to cook, so he obeyed her. After cooking and deciding to watch television, he noticed that his buttocks was hurting, so he went to the



mirror to look at it. He found an open sore which was there because of the whitening cream, but he decided to keep whitening his buttocks regardless. The next day, Syreeta walked in and told Furo to get ready because she was taking him out.

Pages 149 – 158 describe the events of Furo and Syreeta's day out, and the events that transpire when Furo returns to Syreeta's house. Syreeta took Furo to Alpha Beach, an affluent area of Lagos. She introduced Furo to Yelloman, the owner of a clothes shop. He was burly and tall, and at first he was averted to Furo because Furo was white. However, when Furo started speaking in the Nigerian dialect, Yelloman became friendly. When Furo was finished buying new clothes, Syreeta thanked Furo for being himself and for being nice to Yelloman, then they drove home.

Furo was alone in the apartment again the following weekend, and he was spending time on the couch when he looked at the newspaper. He was alarmed when he saw a missing person notice about him, so he ripped out the page it was on and flushed it down the toilet. Furo's first day of work was next Monday, so he decided that he had to change his name. He became Frank Whyte.

Pages 161 – 170 shifts to first person point of view from Igoni's perspective. At this point, Igoni had transformed into a girl and he was about to meet Tekena. Igoni wanted Tekena to like him so that she could get as much information as possible on Furo. Tekena and Igoni got ice cream at The Palms, where Igoni asked Tekena about Furo. Igoni did not mention the fact that he had met Furo. Nor did he reveal Furo's transformation to Tekena.

After having ice cream, Tekena and Igoni decided to watch a movie. While they were in line to buy tickets, a "vulgar man" (164) tried to hit on them. Igoni was disgusted by this, and after Tekena pretended they were lesbians to make the vulgar man leave, Igoni reflected on the situation, saying that his new identity (being a woman) made him realize how crude men were in their approaches towards women.

After the movie, Igoni convinced Tekena to let him come over to her house. When Igoni arrived, he met Monima Wariboko, Furo's father. Igoni described him as a man who was "thoroughly broken" (166). Despite this, he saw Furo's father as a good man. When Igoni met Doris Esosa Wariboko, Furo's mother, he was surprised because he did not expect her to appear so soft. Igoni expected to see a strong maternal figure. Igoni asked Furo's mother about her hair, and as they looked at each other's hair, Igoni struggled to resist the urge to tell her that he knew where Furo was. After looking at Furo's room and discovering that Furo's mother cleaned it every day hoping for Furo's return, Igoni realized that he had to talk to Furo.

Analysis

Barrett uses Syreeta's assumption that black people cannot adopt white people as a tool to suggest that the people of Nigeria have an inherent belief that they are inferior to white people. Furo's fake backstory on page 122 includes the fact that he was adopted



by black parents. Syreeta's response is that she did not know black people could adopt white people. Throughout the novel, Barrett portrays Syreeta as an intelligent, manipulative individual who knows how to get what she wants, so she has a more robust understanding of people than the common Nigerian does. This suggests that the assumption that black people cannot adopt white people is intrinsic to Nigerian citizens. If an individual as intelligent and as understanding of relations between people as Syreeta is holds that assumption, then it is conceivable that most of the Nigerian population also hold this belief. Barrett uses this to express the theme of racial injustice, since it is a claim about how black people see themselves as inferior to white people.

Barrett uses Furo's attitude towards music as a way of representing Furo's status as an outcast in Nigeria. On page 122, the narrator describes Furo's belief that the radio is the only thing that everyone in Lagos has in common, regardless of social or economic class. This implies that the radio is a line of connection between everyone in a typically divisive system. Shortly after this inner monologue, Furo "found himself hating" (123) the popular music Syreeta was playing. Barrett shows that Furo understands the camaraderie associated with radio, but despite this, Furo hates the music coming out of the radio. Furo's disdain for the universally loved radio represents his feeling of disconnection from the rest of Lagos. This ties in to the theme of identity, because it shows that at this point, Furo still does not know his place in society, which is an important aspect of determining one's identity.

Barrett further develops his use of clean versus dirty imagery in this section. At first, Barrett used this method primarily to portray the theme of racial injustice. However, in this section, Barrett uses clean versus imagery to represent personality and wealth. An example of this imagery being used to represent character is when Syreeta and Furo encounter the traffic warden on page 126. The warden is perched at an illegal toll passage on the highway, waiting to stop anyone who goes through, so he is seen by Furo and Syreeta as suspicious and dishonest. The narrator describes the traffic warden and his actions with words and phrases like "yellow of spoiled milk" (125) and "soiling" (126). This imagery connotes disgust and filth, which is coherent with how the traffic warden is portrayed.

An example of Barrett using clean versus dirty imagery to represent wealth or lack thereof is on page 133, when Furo and Syreeta go to Victoria Garden City. Barrett describes "sleek vehicles" (132), "scents of flowers" (132), and "golden light" (133). The stark contrast from the dirty imagery used around Lagos represents wealth, because the adjectives with positive connotations, like "golden" and "sleek," also connote wealth and value. Barrett does this to introduce the theme of wealth, which recurs throughout the novel because it is an important marker of Furo's character development. The more time Furo spends as a white man, the more prevalent the clean imagery becomes, so Furo's increasing wealth and success is represented by this clean imagery.

In this section, Barrett describes yet another scene which enforces the maternal nature of Furo and Syreeta's relationship. On page 127, when Syreeta is arguing with the traffic warden, Furo tries to diffuse the situation. However, when Furo tries to interject, Syreeta "shushes" him "with a curt 'No'" (127). This exchange is comparable to an exchange



that a mother would have with her child during a car journey when the child is being too disruptive. Barrett includes this scene to develop the relationship between Furo and Syreeta, showing that Syreeta is still in charge. The fact that Furo instantly “settled back in his seat” (127) supports the claim that Furo still feels subservient to Syreeta.

Barrett displays white privilege in order to enforce the theme of racial injustice in this section. On page 130, when Furo is waiting for Syreeta at the gates of Victoria Garden City, the black security guard treats Furo with the most care possible because Furo is white. In contrast, When a black man appears and says that someone inside is expecting him, the security guard admonishes the man and tells him to step back. The fact that Furo did not know the name of anyone he was going to meet but the random black man did, and the security guard still gave preferential treatment, shows that there is an inherent white privilege present in Lagos. Furthermore, this scene supports the analysis that the Nigerian citizens have an inherent sense that they are inferior to white people, because the security guard would sooner come to the aid of a white person than accommodate for one of his compatriots.

Barrett further develops Furo’s character and Furo’s relationship with Syreeta when he describes the scene in which Bola is introduced. On page 145, while hiding in his room, Furo realizes that Bola is providing for Syreeta, so he is Furo’s “father figure” (145). As well as further enforcing the maternal relationship with Syreeta, this revelation confirms Furo’s suspicion that he was sharing Syreeta with another lover. Furthermore, on page 147, there are many references to Bola’s overpowering scent, which marks Bola’s territory in Furo’s home. Barrett uses the effect of Bola’s smell of Furo in order to highlight Furo’s subordinate role in Syreeta’s life.

Barrett uses Furo’s whitening cream as a symbol representing Furo’s desperation to distance himself from his old life. On page 148, Furo notices an open sore from the whitening cream on his buttocks. Despite the painful sore, Furo deduces that he should keep using the cream until his buttocks is “as white as the rest of him” (148). The fact that Furo is so determined to make his buttocks match the rest of him reflects Furo’s desperation to rid himself of all evidence of his blackness.

Another scene in this section which enforces Furo’s desperation to distance himself from his old life is when he finds a missing person notice in the newspaper on page 155. As soon as Furo sees a notice declaring him missing in the newspaper, he disposes of the notice without hesitation. The narrator does not mention Furo feeling any remorse for causing his family pain. Instead, Furo’s only concern is if Arinze or Syreeta sees the notice, exposing Furo. This shows that Furo places more precedence on maintaining his identity as a white man than caring about how his family is feeling.

Since this novel is a satire, Barrett has socio-political which he wants to imply throughout the narrative. One example of a major social message that Barrett tries to get across is the notion of culture as it relates to camaraderie. The interactions between Yelloman and Furo highlight this notion. On page 151, before Yelloman and Furo have any dialogue together, Yelloman shows signs of “misgiving” (151) and angry disposition towards Furo as a first impression. However, once Furo starts to speak in the same



dialect as him, Yelloman gives Furo a “big-brother hug” (152) in “exultation” (152). With this scene, Barrett suggests that people will act on their first impressions of others based primarily on appearance, but once one gets to know the other, the slightest cultural similarity can create a strong bond. Even though this scene involves Furo, it can be seen as a break from the narrative in order to present an analogy for how Barrett views society.

Barrett uses the point of view shift into Igoni’s first person in this section partly in order to take a step back from the narrative and establish Barrett’s socio-political beliefs. In terms of establishing Barrett’s socio-political beliefs, on page 165, Igoni has a monologue about gender. Since Igoni transforms into a woman, he sees everything in life from a female perspective. In his monologue, Igoni concludes that “appearances would always be a point of conflict” (166). He also concludes that he never expected all of the “uninvited sexual attention” (165). These conclusions represent Barrett’s worldview because Igoni is his fictional representation. As a whole, the first person section develops the theme of identity, since Barrett uses it to analyze the notion of judgement based on appearances, and to make the claim that one’s identity affects how one is treated in life. Moreover, the monologue introduces the theme of gender injustice, not just racial injustice (which has been prevalent throughout the novel).

Another reason Barrett uses the point of view shift is to develop the plot. Igoni ends up being fundamental to the plot in later sections, but in this section he visits Furo’s home and meets his family. After seeing the sadness in Furo’s mother’s face, Igoni realizes that he must talk to Furo. This plot development eventually leads to Igoni’s desire to reunite Furo with his parents.

Discussion Question 1

In this section (Page 120 - 170), does Barrett place more importance on developing the theme of racial injustice, or the theme of identity? Explain your answer.

Discussion Question 2

What does Bola represent at this point (Page 120 - 170) in the novel?

Discussion Question 3

How does Barrett use imagery to represent wealth in this section (Page 120 - 170)?

Vocabulary

croon, hawkers, disgorge, mirthless, malachite, wrest, ingratiating, curt, impounded, harmonized, whirr, rhinestone, glinting, monotony, affluence, cognac, appraising, presiding, chauffeured, umbilical, insufferable, lisped, vernacular, reversion, gist,



glitterati, juncture, petered, pall, squelching, depleted, stentorian, engulfed,
conspicuous, candour, reluctance, misgiving, tempered, incensed, exultation,
reprimanding, desultorily, nostalgia, pragmatism



Page 171 - 213

Summary

Pages 171 – 179 documents Furo’s introduction to the rest of the employees on his first day of work at Haba!. Syreeta cooked breakfast for Furo in the morning, which made Furo think that Syreeta had become “flatteringly domestic” (173). Syreeta told Furo that they should hurry to avoid the morning traffic, so Syreeta and Furo began the drive to Haba!. On the way there, Furo had a conversation with Syreeta, in which Syreeta said that Furo is worth much more than he is being paid because of his “oyibo-ness” (174). Syreeta then assured Furo that a better opportunity would come. When Syreeta dropped Furo off, Furo felt like a “child on his first day of school” (174), because he did not want to leave Syreeta’s comfort.

When Furo mustered up the courage to enter the building, he was reunited with Arinze, who introduced him to the other employees. Zainab was the senior sales manager, and she was pregnant and wore a hijab. Iquo was a “plump, stylish” (175) saleswoman who just got hired. She said that she recognized Furo from when he was at the interview. Iquo was desperate to impress Arinze, so she rushed to open the door for him when Furo and Arinze left Iquo’s office. Tetsola was the head of the I.T. department, and he did not speak at all when Furo was introduced to him. Arinze then introduced Furo to Tosin Amao, Arinze’s personal assistant, head of H.R., and co-founder of the company. Tosin also recognized Furo, because she was the one who took Furo to Obata’s office on the day of Furo’s interview. Arinze told Tosin that Furo was going to be referred to as Frank Whyte from now on. Next, Arinze took Furo to Obata’s office. Obata worked as another head of H.R., and he greeted Furo “like an old enemy” (179). Since Furo changed his name, Arinze told Furo to get a new passport in the next three months to make his file official.

Pages 179 -185 documents Furo’s first moments in his new office. Arinze led Furo to his new office, which had a “pinewood shelf,” remote controlled air conditioning and “austere” white walls (179). Tetsola entered and gave Furo his new laptop, along with Furo’s email account information. When Furo was alone, he opened his laptop and looked through his old social media accounts. Furo looked through his old email address and found hundreds of desperate emails from his mother. After a brief moment of “struggle” (180) resisting the urge to read the emails, Furo deleted his old account along with the rest of his old social media accounts.

While Furo customized his new email account, he heard a knock on the door, and recognized the person who opened it. It was the man who approached Furo rudely on the day of his interview when Furo entered the queue of people. His name was Victor Ikhide, but everyone called him Headstrong. Headstrong came into Furo’s office to tell him that he was assigned as Furo’s driver. Furo then asked Headstrong which car belonged to him, so Headstrong pointed out the “First Lady “(184), much to Furo’s disappointment, since the First Lady was named so because it was seen as a car for



women. After a short dialogue, Headstrong refers to Furo as “oyibo” (185), to which Furo says “Don’t call me oyibo” (185).

Pages 185 -190 details the remainder of Furo’s first day as a marketing executive for Haba!. After Furo’s dialogue with Headstrong, Furo was alone in his office. He wandered around his office aimlessly for hours until Tosin invited him out to have lunch with her. Furo declined, and observed Tosin’s figure as she walked out of his office.

At the end of the work day, Arinze told Furo that the car should be parked at Furo’s house, otherwise Headstrong would use it to make extra money. Arinze also told Furo that he had found a new client for Furo, and he would give Furo the details the next morning. After hearing this message, Furo left the building and entered his car with Headstrong, so they made their way towards Syreeta’s house. During this journey, Furo’s annoyance grew as Headstrong kept spitting out saliva as he talked excessively. Eventually, Furo could not resist telling Headstrong to “shut up” (189), and he threatened to report Headstrong to Arinze. After this threat, Headstrong stayed silent. When Furo got home, he was too tired to recount the day’s events to Syreeta, so Furo and Syreeta had sex and slept.

Pages 190 – 200 describe Furo’s first job as a Haba! employee. Arinze gave Furo a box full of books and Furo’s company I.D. card, and gave him a file containing information on the client. Headstrong drove Furo to his destination in silence. Furo’s client, known as TASERS, was located on the top floor of a tall building, and the elevator was broken. Headstrong carried the box of books while Furo struggled to climb the stairs.

When Furo arrived at TASERS, he told the receptionist that he was there to see Mr. Umkoro, the C.E.O. of TASERS. The receptionist told Furo that Arinze had spoken to Umkoro many times, then she took the box of books and said that she would bring it in during the meeting. These two facts took Furo by surprised, because Furo was going to base his entire strategy on starting the conversation using the books as a prop. Furthermore, Arinze had not told Furo that he had tried and failed to sell the books to Umkoro himself. In addition, Furo realized that he had forgotten the memos that contained all of the information on the books inside his car. When the meeting between Furo and Umkoro started, Furo could already tell that he was not going to succeed in selling the books based on Umkoro’s “sinister” (195) face. Nevertheless, Umkoro told Furo that he wanted to continue the meeting. As soon as Furo continued with his sales pitch, Umkoro interrupted him and offered Furo a job with almost triple the salary of Furo’s current job. Umkoro’s reasoning was that Furo’s whiteness would make him great at advertising. Furo refused because he did not want to work under Umkoro’s pressure (197). After Furo refused, Umkoro told Furo to leave.

When Furo returned to the reception desk, a group of women who work for TASERS noticed the books inside the box. After asking Furo about a couple of the books, Furo gave them a sales pitch that led to each of the women ordering a few copies of some books.



Pages 200 – 213 describes the events of Furo's next few days of work. Furo returned to Haba! and told Arinze everything that happened. Arinze was impressed that Furo managed to sell some books. When Furo told Arinze that Umkoro tried to hire Furo, Arinze said that Umkoro was "supposed to be a friend" (200).

When Furo left Arinze's office, he encountered Tosin. She invited Furo out for lunch, and when Furo agreed, Tosin gave him her old laptop bag. They went to a fast food restaurant and spoke about their coworkers. During the lunch date, Furo asked Tosin if she knew of any "bukas" (202) nearby (note; a 'buka' is a kind of soup kitchen like the one Furo went to at the beginning of the novel). Tosin said that she did know of some, but she did not mention them to Furo because she did not know if he liked that kind of food.

The next day, Tosin and Furo went to a buka for lunch. It happened to be the same buka that Furo went to at the beginning of the novel (when the fight broke out between the food seller and the laborer). Tosin was friendly with the food seller, whose name was Mercy. Furo tried to pay Mercy back for his previous meal because he did not get the chance to pay before the fight broke out, but Mercy declined his money. During lunch, Furo and Tosin admitted they liked each other.

The following day, when Furo arrived at Haba!, he noticed an argument happening between Obata, the gatekeeper (Mallam Ahmed), and a man in a wheelchair. The argument happened because the man in the wheelchair, named Solo, was hired by Arinze to sell books because Arinze believed that Solo being handicapped would increase the sympathy of passers-by, so Solo would sell more books. However, Obata had stopped Solo before Solo had managed to enter the building, and Obata had threatened to call the police. Furo interrupted the argument and asked what was happening, using pidgin (a dialect used by working class people in Nigeria). Solo was impressed that Furo spoke pidgin. Obata was angered by Furo's interjection, and a huge argument between the two ensued. Obata started to insult Furo by using his old name, so Furo threatened to report him to Arinze. Furo told Mallam Ahmed to tell Arinze what happened, and Obata became fearful. He pleaded with Furo, until Furo let Obata off with a warning. After this heated exchange, Solo praised Furo, calling him oyibo and saying that he "be correct guy" (208). Furo corrected Solo, saying that his name was Frank, then Furo entered the office building.

Furo walked into Arinze's office as Tosin was leaving. Furo and Tosin exchanged smiles, then Furo spoke to Arinze. Furo told Arinze that Solo was waiting for him downstairs, so Arinze had hired a fleet of the handicapped book sellers, so he was worried because only one of them had returned. Arinze postponed his meeting with Furo to attend to Solo, so Furo left Arinze's office. Obata sent Mallam Ahmed to search for the rest of them, and Mallam Ahmed discovered that the police had seized all of the books and had shut down the entire operation. When Furo returned to Arinze's office, Arinze was standing at the balcony, and he appeared dejected. Arinze expressed his disappointment at the failure of the handicapped vendor scheme. Arinze then shifted into a more positive attitude and told Furo that they were going to travel to Abuja



together to try to close an enormous deal with Alhali Jubril Yuguda, one of Haba!'s most wealthy clients.

After his meeting with Arinze, Furo had lunch at the buka with Tosin and Iquo, and when he returned, he encountered Kayode, the other driver for Haba!. Furo asked Kayode where Headstrong was, and told Kayode to send Headstrong to him when Kayode next saw him.

Analysis

Barrett uses descriptive language to develop Furo's character. On page 173, Barrett introduces the first instance of Furo's superiority complex. Throughout the novel, Furo's life has been improving substantially. At this point, Furo is about to start his first day of work, and Syreeta is cooking breakfast for him. The narrator states that Furo thinks of Syreeta as "flatteringly domestic" (173). The use of the word "flattering" suggests that Furo thinks that Syreeta is being domestic because she admires Furo. This is the first instance in the novel where Furo sees himself as superior to someone else.

Despite Furo's perception that Syreeta is being domestic because she finds him superior to her, Barrett develops Syreeta's relationship with Furo by reinforcing her maternal relationship with Furo. He does this with a recurring analogy of a child on his first day of school. On page 173, Syreeta tells Furo to hurry up so they can leave early so he would not be late for work, "just like his mother" (173). On page 174, in the car on the way to Haba!, Syreeta tells Furo that she thinks he deserves better than this job, and she assures him that he can do better. When Syreeta leaves Furo, Furo admits that he feels like a "cosseted child on the first-ever day of school" (175) because he just wants to return to the comfort of Syreeta's car. Finally, when Furo returns from work, he has the urge to tell Syreeta about everything that happened, as if to impress her. All of these examples are comparable to the interactions between a mother and her child on the child's first day of school. Barrett uses this analogy to enforce Syreeta's maternal relationship with Furo, and to express the fact that Furo still depends on her to some extent, since he wants to return to her comfort after she drops him off.

Barrett uses descriptive imagery in this section to express the theme of identity. When Furo enters his new office for the first time, his office is described with adjectives that connote wealth and cleanliness, such as "austere," "wood-laminate," "pinewood," and "venetian" (179). Previously in the novel, all of the places Furo belonged to in some way had some aspect of his old life. For example, at Syreeta's house, Furo had one filthy set of clothing. However, in Furo's new office, the narrator only describes new, clean objects. Based on Barrett's inclination to use clean versus dirty imagery throughout the novel, this highlights the notion that Furo is moving further and further away from his old life. Furo's life has started to become surrounded by clean imagery, as opposed to the start of the novel, in which Furo's environment was always dirty.

To further enforce this theme of identity, Barrett describes a scene in which Furo deletes his old email account along with all of his other social media accounts with almost no



hesitation. Earlier in the novel, when Furo called his old phone and his mother answered, Furo struggled with horrible psychological and emotional pain to resist speaking to her. However, when Furo checked his accounts and saw hundreds of emails from his mother on page 180, he struggled very little to ignore the emails and delete his account completely. This expresses the theme of identity because it shows how much more distant Furo has become from his old life. It also expresses the theme of independence because Furo is making decisions without being tethered to the concerns of his family. Another possible analysis of Furo's increasing ease to avoid his old life is that Syreeta is the new maternal figure in his life, so he finds it less difficult to avoid his family because he no longer relies on his mother's care.

Barrett uses Furo's attitude towards the company car assigned to him in order to reflect a message about injustice. On page 184, Furo expresses disappointment at the fact that his car is seen as a women's car. Barrett intends to express the idea that people will always possess discriminatory judgements. Because of Furo's transformation, one would expect him to gain better insight on the issues that different groups of people have to deal with, so he should be less discriminatory given his circumstances. However, the fact that Furo is disappointed merely because his car is associated with women shows that Furo still sees women as inferior. This suggests that discrimination is inherent, and it is near impossible to change your predispositions towards groups of people.

Barrett uses imperatives to further develop Furo's character. Furo tells Headstrong "don't call me oyibo" (185), and he later tells Headstrong to "shut up" (189) because Headstrong was talking too much. Both of these interactions with headstrong enforce Furo's superiority complex. Furthermore, they show that Furo is gaining confidence. In both cases of the imperative use, Headstrong obeys Furo, and later on page 191, Headstrong still remains silent when he drives Furo around. This shows that Furo's confidence and independence is paying off. When Furo first started to attempt taking control in his life, he always failed. Now he is succeeding, so Furo's character is developing into a more independent one. In addition, since Headstrong is Furo's subordinate, Furo feels proud that he scolded Headstrong. When Furo returns from work, the narrator describes the fact that Furo wanted to brag to Syreeta about his "masterful handling of the driver's impertinence" (190). This scene develops the notion that Furo's superiority complex is becoming a larger part of his personality.

Barrett develops Furo's character even further and highlights racial injustice in the scene whereby Furo is offered a job by Umkoro. Umkoro says that "you white men like to do business with your kind" (196) as a justification for his job offer. This highlights the theme of racial injustice because the only reason Furo got the job offer is because of his skin color. Furo ends up refusing the job because he does not want to feel the "pressure" (197) of working under Umkoro. The fact that Furo rejected the job for selfish reasons, instead of loyalty to Arinze, shows that Furo's selfishness is increasing.

On page 202, Furo and Tosin discuss bukas, and Tosin tells Furo that she was reluctant to mention them to him. Since bukas are associated with Nigerian working class, this interaction enforces the idea that white people are not welcome in the working class



Nigerian community. This idea was already introduced by the fight between the food seller and the laborer earlier in the novel, so Barrett refers to this idea again in this section to enforce the claim. Furthermore, this idea plays into the theme of racial injustice, but from a different perspective. The majority of the racial injustice theme in this novel is centered around white privilege, but in this case, the injustice makes white people the victim, since they are excluded from a community. Barrett does this to express the idea that racial injustice can occur in any scenario.

Barrett uses Arinze's character as a symbol representing loyalty and trust. When Arinze introduces Furo to Tosin, he proudly states that Tosin had worked with him "from the very beginning" (177). This shows that Arinze has respect for people who stay loyal to one company. Furthermore, when Furo tells Arinze that Umkoro tried to hire him, Furo is disappointed because Umkoro is "supposed to be a friend" (200). The fact that Arinze was so disappointed at Umkoro's betrayal shows that he values being able to trust his friends. In addition, on page 212, the narrator describes Arinze's disappointment at the failure of his special vendor initiative in such a way that shows Arinze at his most dejected. He was upset because he put his trust in the group of handicapped vendors, but they did not manage to do their job. Arinze represents the theme of loyalty, because Barrett uses Arinze's scenes in the novel to show how he responds to lack of loyalty.

Barrett uses the confrontation between Obata and Furo on pages 204 – 208 to further develop Furo's character, establish Furo's relationship with Obata, and highlight the theme of independence. The confrontation involves a power struggle between Furo and Obata in which both parties are giving Mallam Ahmed contradictory orders. Furo tells Mallam Ahmed to report to Arinze about Obata's insults, while Obata tries to tell Mallam Ahmed to stay. Eventually, Obata gives in and pleads with Furo for forgiveness because he does not want to get in trouble. Throughout the entire exchange, Furo does not raise his voice, he is the "poster image of cordiality" (207). This shows that Furo has become much more confident as the novel has progressed. Furthermore, this scene enforces the theme of independence because Furo is now handling stressful scenarios without any aid. Earlier in the novel, Furo relied on Syreeta to handle problems, but in this section Furo has become confident enough to be independent and handle his own issues.

After the confrontation, Solo praises Furo for dealing with Obata. However, when Solo calls Furo "oyibo" (208), Furo tells him not to, and says his name is Frank. This is another instance of Furo using imperatives to assert his superiority. Furthermore, since Solo was on Furo's side during the argument, Furo typically would have ignored Solo when he called him "oyibo." This shows that Furo is so attached to his new identity that he will defend it as vehemently as he can.

Discussion Question 1

What is the relevance of Solo taking Furo's side in the argument after Solo realized that Furo speaks pidgin?



Discussion Question 2

What does Obata represent at this point (Page 171 - 213) in the novel?

Discussion Question 3

Describe the progression of Furo's independence from the beginning of the novel until this section (Page 171 - 213).

Vocabulary

looming, tramped, acquainting, fabrication, astonishment, venetian, austere, anonymity, resentment, bovine, partitioned, eunuch, influx, churlish, superabundance, lubrication, blunder, auditorium, scarcity, malice, belligerence, impertinence, skepticism, neglect, squander, abashed, kenned, curdle, coaxing, alighted, vexation, cordiality, dissemblance, depose



Page 214 - 262

Summary

Pages 214 – 222 describes events involving Furo, Headstrong and Tosin. Furo was in his office researching Yuguda before his trip to Abuja when Tosin entered. She asked Furo which name she should book his flight under, so Furo asked her to wait until Monday because he needed to see if he could get a passport with his new name on it. After Tosin agreed and left his office, Furo called Passport Deji and asked if it was possible to get a new passport. Passport Deji said that it would only be possible to do so in Abuja because Furo's name was already in the system in Lagos.

When the work day ended, Furo was about to leave his office before Zainab came in and asked him to take some boxes of books to a client on his way home. Furo agreed, and they started making small talk about language. Zainab was surprised that Furo did not speak Yoruba, so she said that she would teach Furo and she would give him a Yoruba name. Even though Zainab was in pain because of her pregnancy and she was just trying to joke with him, Furo still felt "irritation" (217) at her suggestion to give him a new name.

Furo left his office and headed to his car. When Headstrong was ready to drive them home, Tosin ran towards them and asked for a ride. Furo agreed, so Tosin entered the car. Throughout the journey, Furo, Tosin, and Headstrong made friendly conversation. Tosin eventually asked Furo how he dealt with all of the stares when he was in the city, and Furo said he was used to it. Tosin responded by saying she was "ashamed" (220) of how white people are treated by Nigerians. Headstrong disagreed, and said that white people are treated like "superstars" (220). Headstrong then said that white people "are better people" (221) than black people. Building on this, Headstrong told Tosin and Furo about his dream to move to Poland, where his brother lives. Tosin and Headstrong then shared a moment in which they made fun of Furo's temper, comparing him to a "real Nigerian" (222). Eventually, Headstrong asked Furo where he was from, so Furo told him that he was American.

Pages 223 – 233 describe the delivery of Zainab's books and the events following Furo's return to Syreeta's apartment. Furo arrived at the destination of the book delivery, which was a bar. Furo told the bartender he had the delivery ready for Kasumo. The barmaid said he was busy, so Furo waited at the bar after telling Headstrong to bring Tosin out from the car. Shortly after Tosin sat at the bar with Furo, Furo gave Headstrong some money to get food elsewhere, so Tosin and Furo were left alone at the bar. Tosin told Furo that there was a woman coming their way, so Furo turned to look at her. Furo did not recognize the woman, but she said that they had met before. The woman revealed herself to be Igoni. When she said "you're Furo" (225), Furo struggled to contain his anger at her using his old name. Igoni gave Furo her number, and then she left. Furo told Tosin that he made up the name "Furo" to avoid "bold" women like Igoni (227).



Kasumo, who was drunk at this point, finally arrived to accept the box of books. As he walked Tosin and Furo to the car, he pulled Furo aside and offered him a job, because white people “believed anything they were sold by one of their own” (228). Furo rejected his offer, then he got into the car and told Headstrong to drive away.

Furo then told Headstrong to brave the traffic and take Tosin all the way to her sister’s house. Once they arrived, Furo walked Tosin to the door and told her that she could book the flight under the name Furo Wariboko. Tosin then asked Furo if he wanted to come up to the apartment with her. Furo refused, because he did not want to “strategise” (229) so much to make it happen. He would have had to tell Syreeta he was not going to come home that night, and he would have had to find a way to leave the car at Syreeta’s house because the company policy did not allow him to leave the car with Headstrong. Therefore, Furo left Tosin at her house and headed back to Syreeta’s house. When he arrived, Syreeta was not there, so he called her. Syreeta answered, but there was music in the background because she was at a nightclub. Furo jealously asked if she was with Bola, and Syreeta said that she was with her friends after teasing him for being jealous. She called him “Furo,” which caused him to yell at her (231). Furo surprised himself with how quickly he lashed out, so he apologized and hung up after Syreeta invited him to watch a movie with her the following day.

The next day, throughout Syreeta and Furo’s journey to and from the movie, Furo had been ignoring a torrent of phone calls and text messages. When Syreeta stopped to get tampons from a pharmacy on the way home, Furo checked his messages, and they revealed that someone knew who he really was, and that person was going to reveal the “truth” to everyone soon (233). Furo desperately tried to call the number back, but there was no answer, so Furo concluded that there would be “no rest” until he “cut off all ties with his former life” (233).

Pages 234 – 255 details the events that transpired on Furo’s journey to and from Abuja. Headstrong dropped Arinze and Furo off at the airport. Arinze and Furo went through different check-in counters to avoid the risk of both of them missing the flight. Eventually, they managed to get on the plane, and Furo’s seat was next to a Nigerian woman with a mixed-race baby. The baby looked at Furo and said “Dah-dah” (235) which took Furo by surprise.

When Furo and Arinze arrived in Abuja, they took a taxi to their hotel. As they drove, the taxi driver engaged Arinze and Furo in polite conversation. When they arrived, Furo and Arinze had lunch at the hotel restaurant after dropping off their bags. Furo spilled food on his tie, so he ran up to wash off the stain before getting back in the car with Arinze to go to Yuguda’s residence. When they arrived, Furo noticed that it looked like a “wartime castle” on the outside, but like a “summer palace” on the inside (237).

When Furo and Arinze were introduced to Yuguda, the meeting started instantly. Yuguda asked Furo for a list of books they were selling, and when Furo read them out, Yuguda asked why there were no Nigerian books on the list. Arinze said they did not match up to Haba!’s standards, so Yuguda agreed to close the deal. When the meeting was over, Yuguda asked Furo for Furo’s business card. Furo and Arinze returned to the



hotel after Furo gave Yuguda his card, and they went to the bar to celebrate. After the celebrations, Arinze left Furo alone with his thoughts. Furo realized that he felt more free than ever because he was far away from Syreeta, but he had no money so he could not enjoy the “freedom Abuja had to offer” (240).

After Furo went to sleep, he was woken up in the middle of the night by a phone call from Yuguda. Yuguda told Furo to meet him straight away at the Piano Bar at the Hilton. Furo was sure that all of the taxis would charge inflated prices as they did in Lagos, but the first one he flagged down offered a surprisingly low fee. When Furo arrived at the Hilton, he saw Yuguda wearing jeans and a t-shirt. As soon as Furo sat down, Yuguda offered him a job, because he needed someone who could “command respect and inspire fear” (243). Furo accepted the job offer because it was the “final break” (246) from his old life, and it gave him a chance of independence.

When Furo and Arinze returned to Lagos, Kayode picked them up. When Furo asked where Headstrong was, Kayode said that he left for Poland. Furo was impressed that Headstrong actually followed up on his dreams, but Arinze was upset that Headstrong did not even say goodbye. Furo arrived at Haba!, and told Tosin to meet him in his office. As he walked to his office, he saw Obata and Iquo talking. Furo confronted Obata because he was sure that Obata was the one who sent him the messages. When Furo entered his office, he noticed that it felt “drab” and “lifeless,” and he felt no nostalgia or regret as he cleared out his things (249). When Tosin entered Furo’s office, Furo tried to kiss her, but she kept rejecting his advances. Furo was taken aback by her rejection, so it further enhanced his desire to kiss her (250). When he asked her what was wrong, she told him that he was selfish, and only expects to get what he wants.

After the exchange with Tosin, Furo left Haba! for the last time and returned to Syreeta’s house. He told her the news of his job in Abuja, so Syreeta feebly tried to congratulate him. However, Syreeta then told Furo that she was pregnant with his baby, and she wanted to keep it. Furo saw this as a trap. He believed that Syreeta only took care of him so she could have his baby and show it off to her friends. Furo realized that the baby would be black, so he did not want to let Syreeta have the baby. However, he came up with a plan. Furo told Syreeta that he wanted to marry her and live with her in Abuja after some time saving up money by himself. Syreeta agreed, and they had sex before going to sleep. The next day, Furo copied Yuguda’s number into a notepad and left the valuables Syreeta gave him on his bed. He left a note saying that he would pay Syreeta back for everything, then he left.

Pages 259 – 262 shift to Igoni’s first person perspective, and they describe Igoni’s final encounter with Furo. Igoni received a call from Furo in which Furo told Igoni that he was leaving Lagos, so he wanted to stay with her for the rest of his time in Lagos. Igoni agreed and gave Furo her address. When Furo arrived, they kissed and discussed the nature of their transformations. They kept kissing and Furo persisted with sexual advances. Furo told Igoni about all of the things he had done to various people throughout his time as a white man. Igoni realized that Furo was a hurtful person. Eventually, Furo placed his hand under Igoni’s skirt, and found out that she still had a penis. Because of Furo’s shocked reaction, Igoni realized that Furo had not learned the



lesson of accepting differences which should have come about through the transformation, so she called Furo's sister. When Igoni told Furo that she had visited Furo's family, and that they were on their way to Igoni's house, Furo said nothing, but he waited until they arrived. The novel ends with Furo's mother knocking on the door and asking if he is inside.

Analysis

Barrett uses Furo's interaction with Zainab in this section to represent Furo's view on his identity. On page 217, Zainab jokingly suggests giving Furo a Yoruba name. Furo then struggles to repress the "irritation" (217) he feels at the suggestion of renaming him. This shows that Furo is defensive about his new identity. This is a development in Furo's character, because at the start of the novel, Furo would regularly check his skin to see if he was still white. However, in this section, Furo does everything he can to defend his white skin.

Barrett uses Tosin as a symbol of morality in this novel. This is clear through plentiful evidence in this section. For example, on page 220, Tosin tells Furo that she is ashamed of how white people are treated by Nigerians. Despite the common knowledge that white people are privileged in Nigeria, Tosin still pities them because they get stared at incessantly when they are on the streets. This shows that Tosin values how people are treated more than how successful they are. Another example of Tosin as a symbol of morality is on page 250, when she rejects Furo's sexual advances. She is the only character in the novel who does not help Furo get what he wants at all costs, because Tosin does not succumb to the assumption that white people are more privileged than anyone else. This example enforces Tosin's status as a moral symbol because she is impartial to any extraneous factors in making her decision. Her decision is purely based on her notion of right and wrong. In this way, Tosin's morality acts as a counterbalance to the theme of racial injustice which is so prevalent throughout the novel. Barrett's interplay between Tosin's morality and racial injustice helps invoke a critical response from the reader, because his intention with this satirical novel is to provoke discussion about these issues.

In contrast to Tosin's morality, Barrett uses Headstrong as a symbol representing the worldview of the general population of Lagos, which is that white people are superior. On page 221, when Headstrong is driving with Tosin and Furo, Headstrong says that white people "are better people" (221) because "they treat everybody in their country with respect" (220). Barrett uses Headstrong's worldview to enforce the notion that racial injustice is something inherent.

In the same scene, Tosin and Headstrong start to make fun of Furo because of his short temper. This dialogue serves two purposes. First, it develops the plot because it shows that other people are starting to recognize Furo's confidence. Furo gets angry when things do not go his way (e.g., when he yelled at Headstrong for talking too much), so he is gaining a reputation as someone who gets what he wants. This is important for the plot because it leads to Yuguda offering Furo the job in Abuja, since he sees Furo as



someone who can instill fear in people. The second purpose that this dialogue serves is to develop Furo's character. It overtly shows what Furo's outward personality is. Furthermore, the fact that Tosin and Headstrong are making fun of Furo's temper shows that even though they recognize his attitude, they still do not take him seriously.

Barrett develops Furo's character even further when Tosin tries to invite Furo into her apartment. Throughout this section, Furo and Tosin show increasing attraction towards each other, but when Furo gets the chance to go to her apartment, he refuses purely because he had to "strategize" so much if he wants to make it happen (229). This shows that Furo's personality is becoming more selfish the more successful he becomes.

Barrett highlights the dissolution of Furo's maternal relationship with Syreeta using the dialogue between the two characters on pages 230-231. Furo calls Syreeta while she is at a nightclub, and Furo asks her if she is with Bola. Syreeta refuses, and then says "come on, Furo" (231). Upon hearing his old name, Furo lashes out and yells at Syreeta. This suggests a role reversal in their relationship. This is the first instance in which Furo reprimands Syreeta, taking control and showing confidence. Therefore, Barrett uses the dialogue to show Furo's breakaway from his subordinate relationship with Syreeta.

Barrett uses the scene in which a mixed-race baby thinks Furo is his "Dah-dah" (235) to highlight the reoccurring message that he is trying to get across, which is that judging based on appearance is inherent. The mixed-race baby thinks Furo is his dad just because he is white. The narrator then remarks that even a baby thinks that "one slight difference constitutes an individual" (235). The fact that a baby made the mistake of judging someone purely based on appearances highlights the inherent nature of this mistaken belief. This shows that Barrett is using this scene to put forward the claim about his worldview that people's tendency to judge based on appearances is inherent.

Barrett uses taxi drivers in this section to represent changing attitudes towards Furo, and white people in general, in different settings. On page 236, Furo enters a taxi with Arinze in Abuja. In Lagos, every taxi driver Furo encountered either tried to inflate their price, or they asked about his whiteness. In contrast, the taxi driver in Abuja never remarks on Furo's ethnicity at all, and just makes small talk. This is enforced on page 242, when another taxi driver in Abuja charges Furo a much lower fee than Furo was expecting. Barrett is using the taxi drivers as symbols which identify the different attitudes towards white people in different areas of Nigeria.

Barrett continues using clean versus dirty imagery in this section for a number of reasons. Firstly, Barrett uses the imagery to show Furo's inability to escape his old life despite all of his efforts. On page 237, Furo spills food on his tie during lunch with Arinze in Abuja. This is consistent with the dirty imagery associated with characters in Lagos who represent the Nigerian working class, such as Obata with the beans on his chest when he first appears in the novel, and the traffic warden with the dirt smeared on his shirt from Syreeta's windshield. Since Abuja is associated with wealth in this novel, Furo's dirty tie suggests that Furo is associated with the working class while he is in



Abuja. This shows that Furo still has ties to his old life, no matter how hard he tries to avoid it.

Another reason Barrett uses the clean versus dirty imagery is to represent the theme of wealth. The narrator describes Yuguda's house with adjectives like "landscaped," "splendor," and "shimmering" (237). This description appears before the introduction of Yuguda himself in order to give the reader some insight on his personality. The clean imagery gives the reader the impression that Yuguda is successful.

Barrett's description of Yuguda's house does more than preempt the reader with an impression of Yuguda's wealth; it also represents other characteristics of his personality. The interior represents wealth, but the exterior of his house is described as having the appearance of a "wartime castle" (237). This gives the reader the impression that Yuguda is a confrontational, cutthroat businessman.

Barrett presents the theme of wealth on page 240. Furo is thinking about all of the things Abuja has to offer, and without Syreeta, Furo feels complete freedom. However, Furo realizes that he has no money left, so he concludes that he cannot "afford the freedom Abuja offered" (240). Barrett uses this scene to express the claim that wealth is necessary for happiness in Nigeria.

The meeting between Furo and Yuguda on pages 243-246 is relevant for a number of reasons. For example, Barrett uses a biblical metaphor on page 244 to show that Furo sees Yuguda as a savior. Yuguda is described as wearing jeans and a t-shirt on page 243, which connotes the clothes of a common man. Moreover, some of the metaphorical language includes "Yuguda preaching salvation," and "sacramental reverence" (244). Furo sees Yuguda as a savior, since he is offering Furo a job which will take Furo away from his old life.

Another reason the meeting between Furo and Yuguda is relevant is the reason why Yuguda offered Furo a job. On page 244, Yuguda says that he values Furo's Nigerian personality as well as his white skin. Yuguda is the first person to offer Furo a job not only because of his whiteness, but also because of some feature of his old life.

The final reason this meeting is relevant is because it shows the reader what Furo wants the most in life at this point. On page 245, when Furo accepts the job, he accepts for the sake of a "final break" from his old life and for "a chance at independence" (245). Since the job being offered is such a life changing decision, the reasons for Furo accepting it must be what he values most. Therefore, this scene shows that Furo values escaping his old life and independence above all else.

Barrett uses the conversation between Syreeta and Furo after Furo accepts the job on pages 251 – 255 to highlight the pinnacle of Furo's ascent to complete selfishness. After Syreeta tells Furo that she is pregnant with his child, Furo sees the baby merely as a dilemma that keeps him tethered to his old life, because he thinks the baby will be black.



On page 256, Barrett shifts the perspective to Igoni's first person once again. This time, Barrett does this to provide the reader with an outside perspective of Furo's character development. Throughout Furo's escalation of selfishness, the narration has been following Furo's thoughts. When the perspective shifts to someone else, it helps the reader see an overview of Furo's transformation.

In the final scene of the novel, Igoni calls Furo's family, and tells Furo that they are on their way to Igoni's house. Barrett uses irony in this scene to conclude the narrative. Furo spent the entire novel desperately trying to avoid his old life, but at the very end, with the knowledge that his family is on their way, he gives his old life a "second chance" (262). In addition to the irony, this scene shows that Furo never actually stopped being dependent on his mother. The final line of the novel is Furo's mother telling him to "come open the door" (262). The use of the imperative in addition to Furo's desire to return to his old life shows that Furo still has maternal dependence.

Discussion Question 1

What is the significance of the novel ending before Furo answers the door to meet his family?

Discussion Question 2

What does Yuguda represent in this novel?

Discussion Question 3

Describe how the usage of clean versus dirty imagery changed throughout the novel.

Vocabulary

bungling, ambled, derision, clairvoyance, affront, insinuate, brutalist, swathes, splendor, dawdle, equilibrium, vestige, frontier, pioneer, quandary, recessed, curvaceous, chanteuse, misapprehension, rapt, assent, solemn, sacramental, reverence, perpetual, scattershot, schemes, twinges, enmity, putrid, insouciant, conjecture, sojourn, brooked, nostalgia, ramparts, besiege



Characters

Furo Wariboko

Furo Wariboko is the protagonist of the novel. He is an employee at Haba! Nigeria Ltd., a marketing company specializing in business books, located in Lagos, Nigeria. He lives with Syreeta, his lover and caregiver. By the end of the novel, Furo leaves Haba! to work in Abuja for an enormous salary increase, but not before getting ready to confront his family after 25 days of disappearance.

Until the age of 33, Furo was a black Nigerian man, struggling to get by in outer Lagos. He transforms into a white man with red hair and green eyes, and a world of possibilities opens up for him. The novel describes Furo's experiences during the first 25 days of his newfound whiteness. In the beginning, Furo is confused, nervous, and broke. He has been dependent on his mother for his entire life, so when he is forced to abandon his family, he is alone. As soon as people start seeing the value of a white man in Lagos, and start making his life significantly easier, Furo becomes confident, perhaps excessively so. He enjoys getting his way after a life of misfortune, so he does not always know how to handle his newfound success. He was once subversive and reliant on others, pleading with them to help him survive. Now, Furo is wealthy; he has subordinates at work, he gets a kick out of bossing people around, and he is living with a beautiful woman. He is somewhat power drunk, and feels puzzled when he does not get his way. This brings toxicity into all of his relationships, until he is forced to cut ties with everyone he loves, and those he has helped out. Furo is disgusted at the thought of his old life, so he does everything he can to erase it altogether, including changing his name into Frank Whyte.

At first glance, Furo is polite, generous, and quiet. As soon as he develops a somewhat strong relationship with someone, his undesirable characteristics start to show through. He gets enraged when anyone tries to mention his previous life. His obsession to complete the transformation into a white man makes him short tempered. After almost a month of getting anything he wants, he gets frustrated if he is turned down by a woman. After learning what it is like to have subordinates, he lashes out at them if they ever diverge from his interests. However, in most cases, his consciousness shines through in the end. At the very least, he has moments of reflection in which he feels guilty for something he has just done, but for the most part he is predominantly self-interested, and will do whatever it takes to leave his old life behind. The only part of him that remains black is his buttocks. To Furo, his black buttocks is a blemish. It only reminds him of his old life, and is the source of most of his insecurity.

Syreeta

Syreeta is a beautiful, brown-skinned woman who lives in Oniro estate; a wealthy district of Lagos. She has a small, abundantly furnished house, and she does not hide



her wealth. She goes clubbing with her aristocratic friends every weekend, and she lets Furo stay with her because she wants to impress her friends with her new white lover. She provides Furo with everything he needs; clothes, sex, food, shelter, etc. She is indebted to Bola, who sees her every Tuesday to take her to his apartment for undisclosed reasons, and to give her her allowance.

Syreeta's most striking feature is her assertiveness. She knows what she wants, and how to get it. This is part of the reason why she takes Furo under her wing. Furo is vulnerable and helpless at first. Syreeta has complete control over him until he gets comfortable with her. At the start of their relationship, Furo feels for Syreeta in the same way that he feels for his mother; he sees her as someone he can depend on to support him.

Despite her wealth and outgoing persona, Syreeta is an enigma. Nobody who knows her can successfully deduce what her motives are. Furo, in particular, struggles with the question of why she has helped him so much throughout the entire novel. Her motives become clear when she declares her pregnancy to Furo at the end of the novel.

She had almost everything she needed in life until she met Furo. She is wealthy, she has a group of rich friends, and she always has a good time. Having a baby with a white man would complete her journey to aristocracy by Lagos's standards. However, it is arguable that she is just looking for an escape from Bola. She shows no surface issues with returning Bola's monetary support with sexual favors, but her enigmatic personality could make it such that she never voices her concerns outright. Syreeta would surely prefer a life with a wealthy, white Nigerian man over one in which she has an obligation to spend one day per week with and whom gives her a regular allowance. Syreeta is headstrong and independent, so it is certainly plausible that she does not want to spend the rest of her life relying on a man like Bola.

Igoni

Igoni is the only other character in this novel who undergoes a transformation, and some sections of the novel are written from his perspective in first person. He is a fictionalized version of the author, A. Igoni Barrett. He is a writer who draws his inspiration from observing strangers on social media websites like Twitter. He places importance on finding one's identity, so he does not show any sign of shock when he transforms into a woman.

Straight after his first encounter with Furo, Igoni researches him. He is the only other person who knows about Furo's transformation. He is curious and does everything he can to get more information upon which he can build his story. By the time he reaches out to Furo's sister, he is already a woman, but his personality does not change much. Igoni is an important character because at the end of the novel, he reunites Furo with his family, and he discusses the nature of the transformations with Furo. Igoni comes to the conclusion that the transformations represent how drastically attitudes towards one another can change purely based on appearance. As a male, Igoni is laid back, spends



his time at cafes, and writes books. As a female, every time he goes out he gets harassed by men, thus he is in a constant state of anxiety and discomfort whenever he goes out in public.

Ayo Abu Arinze

Ayo Abu Arinze is the C.E.O of Haba! Nigeria Ltd. He organizes the entire company with the help of his assistant, Tosin. Approaching business with a stoic mentality, Arinze sees Furo's potential as a marketing executive, so he hires him. Arinze knows that having a white man working for him will do wonders for the company.

Arinze always comes across as a man with good intentions. He is the first person to give Furo any significant chance at success. Furo likes Arinze, and Arinze respects Furo because he lives up to the standard that Arinze sets for him. Arinze is embittered by the lack of reliable employees he has found so far in Nigeria. He gets frustrated when people let him down. This is because Arinze likes everything to run smoothly. He has a confident demeanor, and he knows how to handle stressful situations well. In some ways, he is like a father figure to Furo. He motivates Furo to work, and Furo looks up to him as a benchmark for how he should act in the professional world.

There is not much detail about Arinze's life outside of Haba!, so he maintains some of the same enigmatic character as Syreeta. Furo seems to resonate most with these characters who have some mysterious element about them. Another prominent feature pertaining to Arinze is that he is loyal. He started Haba! years ago with Tosin, and he never strayed from his goal of building and sustaining the company. He has kept the same base of staff since the inception of Haba!, even when they have occasionally let him down. Headstrong, the driver, leaves for Poland near the end of the novel, and this is the event that saddens Arinze the most. One of his original employees leaves without saying goodbye, and he takes this as a betrayal. In addition, he respects Furo for rejecting job offers with higher salaries from competitors. This shows just how much Arinze values loyalty.

Headstrong

Victor Ikhide, who is predominantly referred to as Headstrong throughout the novel, has a personality that matches his nickname. His first appearance in the novel portrays him as someone who does not care much for personal boundaries. He is boisterous, aggressive, and often comes across as rude. However, his intentions are never bad. He is a loyal driver for Haba! Nigeria Ltd., and he has a lifelong dream of traveling to Europe.

Headstrong is Furo's driver. In addition, he considers himself to be Furo's friend. When Furo reprimands him for talking too much, Headstrong feels hurt. When Furo and Headstrong eventually reconcile, they have an amicable discourse. Headstrong is an important character because he is the first one upon whom Furo exercises his power.



When Furo scolds Headstrong for talking too much, it is the first instance in which Furo's selfishness and arrogance arises.

Tosin

Tosin is one of the original employees of Haba! Nigeria Ltd. She was present when Arinze started the company, and she now keeps track of its day-to-day operations. She is beautiful, approachable, and friendly. Tosin and Furo develop romantic interest in each other shortly after Furo begins working at Haba!. Tosin's significance reaches its peak when Furo tries to kiss her after he accepts the job offer from Yuguda. Furo expects her to accept his kiss, but Tosin rejects Furo and scolds him for only thinking about himself. This is crucial to the novel because it provides Furo with the realization that his moral values have worsened ever since he became white.

Obata

Obata works under Arinze at Haba! Nigeria Ltd. He is rude, unhygienic, and dishonest. When Obata first meets Furo, he treats him badly. In general, Obata is portrayed as one of Furo's main antagonists; he represents Furo's issues which could not be resolved by his newfound whiteness. Instead of treating Furo as a superior because he is white, like most other characters in the novel do, Obata distrusts Furo; he is embittered by Furo's easy ascent to success, so he tries to undermine Furo as much as he can.

Yuguda

Yuguda is the C.E.O. of a large company based in Abuja. He is confident and wealthy. Near the end of the novel, a deal between Yuguda, Furo, and Arinze takes place. Yuguda does not appear often in the novel, but he is important because he convinces Furo to leave Haba! to join his company. Prior to Yuguda's offer, Furo had rejected many other job offers which were going to make him much more wealthy than he was with Haba!. This shows that Furo had some strong sense of loyalty. Yuguda is important because he manages to diminish Furo's sense of loyalty and take him away from Arinze, the man who gave Furo everything.

Bola

Tall and burly, Bola has a strong presence; Bola leaves his mark wherever he goes, particularly through his masculine scent. He has a transactional relationship with Syreeta. Every Tuesday, he gives Syreeta an allowance in exchange for sexual favors. Bola never meets Furo, but he has a profound effect on him. Shortly after Furo and Syreeta first have sex, Bola charges into the apartment and takes her away for the night. From this event, Furo deduces Bola's relationship with Syreeta. As a result, Furo sees Bola as a colossal masculine figure that overshadows him. Furo feels Bola's

presence through his scent, which is present throughout Syreeta's entire apartment. Thus, Bola enforces Furo's inferiority complex.

Baby and her Friends

Baby and her group of friends are affluent young Nigerian women residing in Victoria Garden City. Every member of this group has a white husband, and a couple of them, including Baby, have children. They are portrayed as superficial, since they place great importance on having some degree of a relationship with white culture. They value this to such a degree that some members of the group even use fake accents when they speak to sound more foreign. They believe that being immersed in white culture heightens their image in society. Syreeta is a member of this group, so she brings Furo to them with the goal of showing off that she has a relationship with a white man.



Symbols and Symbolism

Furo's Black Buttocks

When Furo transforms into a white man, the only thing which remains black is his buttocks, symbolizing Furo's inability to escape his old life entirely. Throughout the novel, Furo struggles with identity. He comes to the conclusion that he should change his identity completely, so he cuts ties with his family, changes his name, and eventually wants to move out. However, at every attempt, Furo is presented with a difficulty; something that tethers him to his old life. His black buttocks represents these difficulties, because it is the source of most of his insecurity; it is the only visible remnant of his old life.

Syreeta

Syreeta Symbolizes Furo's dependence on a maternal figure. She provides him with food, shelter, and emotional comfort, much like his mother did before he transformed. There is recurring evidence that Furo has strong maternal dependence throughout the novel. When reflecting on his experiences as a white man, he frequently wishes that his mother could comfort him. When he meets Syreeta, she provides that motherly comfort.

Skin Whitening Cream

The whitening cream that Furo uses on his buttocks symbolizes Furo's desperation to escape his old life. He uses it relentlessly, even though it creates painful sores on his buttocks. Furo is willing to suffer through immense physical pain to cover up the blackness he has left.

Furo's Cellphone

The cellphone that Furo forgot at his home on the day he left his family symbolizes Furo's implicit desire to return to his family. Furo wishes he could contact his mother, and he knows that his phone is on his bed at home. His phone is the last line of potential connection between Furo and his family. Furo can reassure himself with the knowledge that he has left his phone in his old room.

Taxi Drivers

The numerous taxi drivers in Lagos represent general attitudes towards white people across Lagos and Abuja. Whenever Furo tries to get a taxi, or interacts with a driver, the driver presents his opinion regarding Furo's whiteness, and the opinions vary depending



on which region of Lagos Furo is in. Thus, The taxi drivers serve the function of making the everyday Nigerian's opinion regarding white people overt.

New Clothes

The new clothes that Syreeta buys for Furo symbolize appearance as a means of life improvement. One recurring theme in the novel is the idea that appearance can drastically change how people interact with you. In Furo's case, turning white predominantly improved life. The new clothes are a symbol that captures the direct correlation between a good appearance and a good life.

Tosin's Laptop Bag

The laptop bag that Tosin gives Furo symbolizes Furo's transition from dependence on others into self-reliance. Before Furo leaves Lagos, his last act at Haba! is returning Tosin's laptop bag. This action was unnecessary, but Furo did it because he did not want to rely on anyone anymore. He wants to start anew and become independent.

Bola's Scent

Bola's musky scent symbolizes Furo's feelings of inferiority. Furo sees Bola's scent as one that marks his territory in Syreeta's apartment; a reminder that Syreeta belongs to Bola, not Furo.

Twitter

Twitter symbolizes the idea that one's true identity is hard to establish. When Igoni is looking through Tekena's tweets, he observes that she displays many different personalities. In addition, When Tekena meets Igoni, she is surprised that Igoni is a woman. Twitter serves as a representation of the difficulty involved in delving through the different layers of identity each person has.

Transformation

Furo and Igoni both undergo transformations - one is racial and the other is sexual - which symbolize the importance of acknowledging the perspectives of others. Both Furo and Igoni experience life in dramatically different ways because of their transformations, and they both realize that this is important because it provides them with insight into different ways of life.



Settings

Lagos, Nigeria, Present Day

Lagos is this novel's primary setting. The city has many districts of varying affluence, but most of the city is packed with working class Nigerians trying to get by. The working class areas are filled with traffic, commotion, and garbage on the streets, whereas the affluent areas are filled with wealthy foreigners and clean air. The city of Lagos represents Furo's development from a poor Nigerian man into a wealthy white man.

Syreeta's Apartment, Lagos, Present Day

Syreeta's apartment is the setting where Furo resides throughout this novel. Furo has his own room, but he often shares a bed with Syreeta. On the weekends, Furo has the house to himself, so he spends his time watching T.V. Syreeta's house has mismatching pieces of high end furniture, which suggests that she earns them as gifts from various men. Syreeta's apartment highlights the notion that Furo is just another prize to be obtained, just like the furniture within it.

Haba! Nigeria Ltd. Office Building, Lagos, Present Day

The Haba! office building is where Furo spends the later sections of the novel. Furo works at the office building with important characters like Arinze, Tosin, Obata, and Headstrong. This setting is important because it provides the space for Furo's character to develop throughout the novel, since Furo becomes more independent, confident, and selfish after his interactions with many of the characters within the office building.

Abuja, Nigeria, Present Day

Abuja is another city in Nigeria. It has a much more sophisticated infrastructure than Lagos, since it was built up by and for affluent people. However, it is surrounded by slums with worse conditions than Lagos. Abuja represents Furo's desire to escape his old life. Furo has ties to Lagos because of his reliance on Syreeta, and his employment with Haba!. Therefore, when Furo has the opportunity to get a well-paying job in Abuja, he takes it in a heartbeat, since it means that he can cut all ties from his old life.

The Palms Mall, Lagos, Present Day

The Palms mall is a hub for foreign and affluent people to enjoy their days shopping, eating, or watching movies. This setting is important for plot development because it is the first place where Furo sees other white people after his transformation, and he receives no unwanted stares because of his color. Furthermore, Furo meets Syreeta

and Igoni, two of the most important characters in the novel, at The Palms, and Igoni spends time with Furo's sister, Tekena, to learn more about Furo at this setting.



Themes and Motifs

Racial Injustice

Barrett uses satire to express the recurring theme of racial injustice in order to express his worldview, which claims that people place too much importance on race as a factor when making judgements about others, and these judgements lead to unfair privileges being given to some races over others. An example of Barrett's satirical method in use is the scene in which a mixed-race baby with a black mother mistakes Furo for his father. The comedic nature of this scene is exemplified by the absurdity of a child thinking a stranger is his father. However, Barrett uses this light approach to provoke thought in the reader. At face value, the scene is funny, but the line in which the narrator says that even a baby makes the mistake of thinking that "one slight difference constitutes an individual" (235), Barrett brings his worldview to light. He expresses his belief that superficial judgements based on skin color are inherent.

Barrett also uses the theme of racial injustice to express a message that no race is safe from racial injustice, even a seemingly privileged race. Every time Furo gains some success in the novel, it is because of his whiteness. For example, Arinze gives Furo an executive marketing job even though he is aware that Furo does not read. Arinze only gives Furo the job because people consider white people trustworthy in Nigeria. Not only is this an example of Furo's whiteness giving him success, it also shows the reader the general attitude towards white people in the workplace in Nigeria.

Another example of Furo's whiteness giving him success is the general trajectory of Furo's life since his transformation. At 33 years of age, Furo was unsuccessful, but within 20 days of turning white, Furo got a girlfriend, a wealthy job, and independence. This shows that Barrett is using the theme of racial injustice to show how prevalent white privilege is in Nigeria.

However, Barrett also describes many situations in which Furo is discriminated against because of his whiteness. For example, the scene in which the laborer is embittered by Furo's presence because of Furo's whiteness shows that white people are not welcome in areas which are typically associated with the working class of Nigeria. Furthermore, Obata's general distrust of Furo throughout the novel shows that the Nigerian people are aware of the privilege given to white men. Obata's distrust leads him to feel threatened by Furo, so he tries to undermine Furo at every opportunity. Barrett uses these examples to show that racial injustice even presents itself to people who belong to a race that is widely understood to be more privileged than the rest.

Identity

Barrett uses the theme of identity to express his worldview, which is that a person's identity has so many layers that it is even difficult for individuals to know how to identify



themselves. Barrett uses the sections narrated from Igoni's first person perspective to express this view. For example, in the final section of the book, Igoni tells the reader that she has called Furo's family to tell them where he is, and instead of running away, Furo stays and waits for them. This shows that even though Furo spends the entire duration of the novel trying to escape his old life, he gives his new life up just for the chance of seeing his family again. This is evidence of the theme of identity at work, since Furo was so certain about how he wanted to accept his new identity for so long, but one minor event influenced by Igoni causes Furo to completely change his mind about his identity. This reflects Barrett's worldview, since it suggests that even though Furo thought he was certain about his identity, his mind changed without hesitation.

Barrett's thoughts on identity are also highlighted by Igoni's transformation. Since Igoni is the fictional representation of Barrett himself, Barrett uses the character to identify with Furo's storyline and provide an analysis based on his own beliefs. Therefore, when Igoni transforms, Barrett gives the reader an unfiltered account of his beliefs regarding identity, where he claims that "we are all constructed narratives" (83). Here, Barrett alludes to narratives to suggest that we are like narratives in the sense that there are changes as time goes on, so one's identity may not be what one expects over time.

In addition to using identity to express his worldview, Barrett uses identity as a basis for Furo's insecurity. Barrett uses symbols such as the skin-whitening cream to enforce this claim. Furo's buttocks remains black even though the rest of him is white, so Furo uses the cream to make his buttocks as white as the rest of him. Furo is so desperate to eliminate all traces of his old life that he wants to continue using it even when the cream causes a sore to open on his buttocks. Barrett uses this to show that Furo is insecure about his identity, since he is willing to continue something which causes him pain just for the sake of being as white as possible.

Independence

Barrett uses the theme of independence to establish the nature of Furo's relationship with Syreeta, and to develop the plot. Independence develops the plot because becoming completely independent is one of the main reasons Furo accepts Yuguda's job offer. Furthermore, independence, or lack thereof, defines Furo's relationship with Syreeta.

In terms of using independence to develop the plot, a critical moment in the plot is when Furo accepts Yuguda's job offer in Abuja. Throughout the novel, Furo does what everyone else tells him to do, and he lives under Syreeta's roof, so he is reliant on a lot of people to help him get by. Thus, when Yuguda offers Furo a chance to move away from Lagos and have a "chance at independence" (245), Furo accepts because Furo values independence more than almost anything else.

Independence also defines Furo's relationship with Syreeta. From the first time they meet until the final section of the novel, Syreeta has a dominant status in her relationship with Furo. Many of their interactions are comparable to the way a mother



treats her child. For example, their first meeting is characterized by Syreeta using imperatives and telling Furo where to go and what to do, including telling him he can go to the bathroom. In addition, Syreeta provides shelter and comfort for Furo, and drops him off for his first day of work. This shows that Furo has no independence in his relationship with Syreeta.

Barrett uses independence to establish the nature of Furo's relationship with Syreeta because it adds to Furo's building insecurities. Furo struggles with his black buttocks, financial pressures, and racial pressures. The added stress of not being able to make his own decisions and be more independent in general is a significant cause of Furo's stress throughout the novel. However, the theme of independence has a similar trajectory to that of identity by the end of the novel. Furo spends the entire novel with the insecure desire to be more independent, but given the chance to see his family again, Furo drops his chance of independence to see his family. In the first section of the novel, Furo reflects on his family and thinks about how dependent he is on them, so the fact that he waits for his family instead of running away shows that Furo is sacrificing the independence he worked so hard to achieve throughout the novel.

Wealth

Barrett uses wealth to enforce his satirical goals, and he uses it to draw parallels to racial injustice in order to present a political message about racism. The imagery Barrett uses connotes wealth and racial privilege, so parallels can be drawn between the two themes. For example, when describing Furo's new office, he uses clean imagery. The clean imagery is consistently used whenever Furo is in a scenario which is made possible because of white privilege. In addition, the clean imagery is used whenever describing wealth. For example, when Barrett describes Yuguda's estate, he uses adjectives like "splendor," and describes the interior as a "summer palace" (237).

Similarly, Barrett uses related dirty and hectic imagery in scenes of poverty and in scenes pertaining to the everyday Nigerian's life. For example, at the start of the novel, the narrator describes the scenes of a morning commute for the everyday Nigerian person, and he uses imagery that invokes stress and disgust in the reader. Similar imagery is used when the narrator describes the homeless people near the lake shore when Furo is commuting to The Palms mall. The fact that Barrett uses similar imagery to represent the themes of wealth and racial injustice shows that Barrett wants to connect the two themes. He does this to express the notion that wealth is tied to certain races while poverty is associated with others.

In line with methods of satirical fiction, Barrett shows that wealth seems like the best way to measure success, but it can be detrimental to one's personality. The main example this is the fact that Furo bases all of his decisions on his desire to be more wealthy throughout the novel, but as he gets more wealthy, he also becomes more selfish and starts to hurt the people around him. This shows that Barrett is representing wealth as something that is appealing on the surface, but is inherently damaging.



Furthermore, Barrett describes instances in which people interacting with Furo immediately change their disposition towards him based purely on how wealthy they perceive him to be. For example, at the start of the novel, Ekemini approaches Furo when he needs help, and she starts talking to him in a friendly manner. However, as soon as Furo tells her that he has no money, she pulls away from him with suspicion. This scene shows that Ekemini only helps Furo because she sees that he is white, so she assumes that he is wealthy. When she learns that Furo is not wealthy, her impulsive reaction is to treat Furo like any other Nigerian man in outer Lagos who is struggling to get by. Barrett uses this scene to present the message that people are not truly kind, because they are only willing to help people if there is some wealth or high social class associated with them.

Loyalty

Barrett represents loyalty primarily through Arinze's character, but loyalty also serves the purpose of providing the reader with insight about certain characters in the novel, namely Furo. Arinze represents loyalty because he respects characters he can trust, and Arinze is only disappointed in the novel when someone breaches his trust. For example, when Headstrong leaves without saying goodbye, Arinze is upset because Headstrong did not inform him before he left. In addition, when Arinze introduces Furo to Tosin, he proudly informs Furo that Tosin has been working with him since the start of the company. The fact that Arinze tells Furo this fact about Tosin before anything else shows the importance that Arinze places on loyalty.

Barrett also uses loyalty to give the reader insight about Furo's declining personality. When Furo starts his job with Haba!, he receives many counter offers, which involve much higher salaries, and Furo always rejects them in order to stay with Haba!. One would expect that Furo rejects these offers because he feels some kind of loyalty towards Haba!. However, Furo's reasons for rejecting the offers are always selfish. For example, when Umkoro offers Furo a job, Furo rejects it because he does not want to work under Umkoro's pressure. This shows that Barrett uses loyalty as a way of measuring the goodness of one's personality. When Furo first got the job with Haba!, he was full of gratitude towards Arinze. However, now that Furo has success, he only cares about himself and his loyalty has gone. Thus, Furo's lack of loyalty highlights the decline in his personality.

In addition, the fact that Furo's relationship with Syreeta is severely lacking in loyalty throughout the novel foreshadows Furo's decision to betray Syreeta and abandon her. From the first day they meet, Furo is suspicious of Syreeta's wealth, so he assumes that she exchanges sexual favors for money to afford superficial goods. This is confirmed when Furo meets Bola, who spends time with Syreeta every week. Furthermore, Furo is attracted to Tosin, even though she is Syreeta's lover. This shows that there is no strong basis of loyalty in Furo and Syreeta's relationship. This highlights flaws in Syreeta and Furo's personalities, since Barrett uses loyalty to measure the goodness of a character. Moreover, the lack of loyalty foreshadows Furo's abandonment of Syreeta because it shows that Furo never felt attached to Syreeta in the first place.



Styles

Point of View

The author predominantly uses third person perspective with an omniscient narrator throughout the novel, but he occasionally switches to Igoni's first person perspective. The third person narrator focuses on Furo's story. The narrator describes plot developments and Furo's thoughts. The majority of the novel is in this third person narration, but there are short excerpts that are written in first person from Igoni's perspective. Since Igoni is a fictional representation of the author, A. Igoni Barrett, the narration from Igoni's point of view serves to provide analysis of the events raised by Furo's experiences. Furthermore, it gives the reader a view of Furo from the perspective of a character who has interacted with him in order to give the reader insight about Furo's personality.

Language and Meaning

Throughout the novel, Barrett uses clean versus dirty imagery to represent the difference between wealth and poverty, and to represent racial injustice. Barrett does this in order to show development in Furo's character throughout the novel. At the start of the novel, Furo is surrounded by scenes of dereliction on the streets of outer Lagos. However, as Furo becomes more successful because of his whiteness, Barrett uses imagery that connotes cleanliness, peace, and affluence.

In addition, during the third person narration, the narrator uses a lot of Nigerian slang, such as "oyibo," "buka," and "oga" throughout the novel. Barrett does this in order to immerse the reader further into the narrative. Many of the issues raised in this novel are socio-political, and involve questions about racism and classism, so using colloquial Nigerian language in the narration makes the reader feel more immersed in Nigerian society. This makes the reader feel more involved in the issues which the narrative presents.

Structure

The novel is not split into chapters. The only section breaks occur when the perspective shifts to Igoni's first person. The first section describes Furo's first day as a white man. It has an atmosphere of confusion and stress, because Furo is trying to adapt to this enormous change in his life. The perspective shifts to Igoni's first person after Furo goes home with Syreeta. Igoni's first section serves to develop the plot, because Igoni researches Furo and reaches out to his sister. When the perspective shifts back to Furo in the next section, Furo is more accustomed to his new skin color, but he is still largely subservient to everyone he meets, because he still has no direction in his life.



The next first person section from Igoni's perspective is used to describe Barrett's worldview. Igoni, a fictionalization of Barrett, philosophizes about the consequences of transformations and what they mean for identity. The next section about Furo's life shows Furo in a different light. Furo takes a liking to his whiteness, so he now has some direction. Furo's decisions are based on his desire to maintain his white identity, and eradicate his old identity. The novel then shifts back to Igoni's first person perspective in order to develop the plot even further. It describes scenes in which Igoni meets the rest of Furo's family.

The final third person section shows that Furo has become completely selfish because of his desire to maintain his new identity. The final first person section ends the novel with a meeting between Igoni and Furo, which ends in Furo wanting to meet his family again.



Quotes

Outside, a bird chirruped short piercing cries, like mocking laughter.
-- Narrator (Page 1 - 46 paragraph 2)

Importance: This quote occurs immediately after Furo realizes he has become a white man. It is important because it sets the stage for the rest of the novel. The simile represents humiliation that Furo feels about his transformation. Furo's insecurity about identity is a recurring theme in the novel, so this quote engrains the idea of insecurity about identity in the reader at the beginning of the novel.

I can take care of myself.
-- Furo Wariboko (Page 1 - 46 paragraph 6)

Importance: This quote shows the first instance of Furo's desire to be independent. Furo's mother kept asking Furo if he needed a ride to his job interview. Furo's claim that he could take care of himself shows that Furo has some insecurity about his dependence. This plants the seed for Furo's decision to accept Yuguda's job offer, because one of the main reason Furo accepts the offer is so that he has a chance at independence.

Come on, you - a white Nigerian?
-- Obata (Page 1 - 46 paragraph 2)

Importance: This quote helps set the stage of the novel. Obata is the first character to show suspicion at Furo's ethnicity. It helps show the reader that in Nigeria, a person with white skin and a Nigerian upbringing is unheard of. This highlights the theme of racial injustice because it shows that there is a huge divergence between white and black culture in Nigeria. When those cultures intertwine in some way, it is a cause for suspicion.

Abeg, no vex, but you be albino?
-- Food Seller (Page 1 - 46 paragraph 4)

Importance: This quote serves a similar purpose to the previous one. It shows the incredulity felt by the Nigerian working class population after witnessing a white person entering a working class environment. Furthermore, the use of Nigerian colloquialisms like "abeg" immerses the reader in the atmosphere of the novel. The colloquial Nigerian dialect is associated with the working class in this novel, so seeing this dialogue shows the reader that Furo is in an environment that is usually absent white people.

Go on, the loo is that way.
-- Syreeta (Page 46 - 120 paragraph 3)

Importance: This quote introduces the maternal relationship Furo has with Syreeta. This relationship is important because it recurs throughout the novel, and it enforces



Furo's insecurity about being independent. In this scene, Furo tells Syreeta that he desperately needs to use the bathroom, so Syreeta tells him to go. This is comparable to a mother telling her child to use the bathroom. Since this dialogue occurs shortly after Furo meets Syreeta, it sets the maternal tone for the rest of their relationship throughout the novel.

He would stand on his head if she told him to.
-- Narrator (Page 46 - 120 paragraph 3)

Importance: Building on the previous quote, this one shows how much Furo relies on Syreeta. She has provided Furo with shelter, food, comfort, and transportation. Because of all this, Furo is grateful, so he would happily do anything she tells him to. Barrett uses this quote to describe how Furo's relationship with Syreeta is progressing.

In the zeal to one-up each other, their affected accents skidded and crashed.
-- Narrator (Page 120 - 170 paragraph 2)

Importance: This quote serves as a social commentary. This novel is a satire, so Barrett manages to highlight some socio-political messages throughout the narrative. This quote in particular shows that the way aristocratic Nigerian women try to impress each other is by putting on fake foreign accents. This shows that wealth and success is associated with being foreign, and being white in particular.

Don't go, not yet.
-- Furo Wariboko (Page 120 - 170 paragraph 2)

Importance: This quote further develops Furo's relationship with Syreeta. Up until this point, Furo had been obeying everything Syreeta was telling him to do because of his gratitude towards her. However, at this point in the novel, Furo's success is increasing, so Furo is becoming more confident. This quote highlights Furo's desire to break away from the maternal relationship he has with Syreeta, because it shows him using imperatives and giving Syreeta instructions for the first time.

But Whyte was not Wariboko.
-- Narrator (Page 171 - 213 paragraph 3)

Importance: This quote reflects Furo's desire to evade his old life. Furo decides to change his name to Frank Whyte, because the name Furo Wariboko was associated with his old life. The success that Furo's new life has given him has made Furo want to forget everything about his life before the transformation. This quote represents the fact that Furo truly believes that he is no longer Furo Wariboko, and Frank Whyte is his only identity.

Don't call me oyibo.
-- Furo Wariboko (chapter 2 paragraph Page 170 - 213)

Importance: This quote highlights the fact that Furo is becoming more confident, largely



due to his position of power at Haba!. Furo has this line on his first day of work, and it is directed at Headstrong, Furo's driver. As soon as Furo realizes he has a position of power, he starts to gain confidence and give orders to the people around him.

Even a baby, when surrounded by people of identical skin colour, is prone to the error that a slight difference constitutes an individual.

-- Narrator (Page 213 - 262 paragraph 4)

Importance: This quote serves to reflect Barrett's own worldview. A recurring message that Barrett tries to get across is the claim that people inherently make large character judgements purely based on appearance. This quote epitomizes Barrett's message, because even a baby makes the mistake of judging based on appearance. A baby has not had time to be conditioned by its environment, so its actions must be due to innate convictions. Therefore, judging people based on their appearances is inherent.

For a man accustomed to getting his way, a woman's refusal is a flapping flag on the ramparts of a besieged fortress.

-- Narrator (Page 213 - 262 paragraph 2)

Importance: This quote epitomizes the decline of Furo's personality by the end of the novel. Furo had just come back from Abuja, where he accepted a lucrative job offer from Yuguda, and he tried and failed to kiss Tosin. The quote shows that by this point in the novel, Furo had been so successful because of his new identity that he has become selfish, and he cannot stand the idea of something not going his way. Barrett uses this to suggest that wealth and success seem great on the surface, but they can easily cause one's personality to decline without the individual even realizing it.