



African Psycho

By Alain Mabanckou

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African Psycho By Alain Mabanckou

Its title recalls Bret Easton Ellis's infamous book, but while Ellis's narrator was a blank slate, *African Psycho*'s protagonist is a quivering mass of lies, neuroses, and relentless internal chatter. Gregoire Nakobomayo, a petty criminal, has decided to kill his girlfriend Germaine. He's planned the crime for some time, but still, the act of murder requires a bit of psychological and logistical preparation. Luckily, he has a mentor to call on, the far more accomplished serial killer Angoualima. The fact that Angoualima is *dead* doesn't prevent Gregoire from holding lengthy conversations with him. Little by little, Gregoire interweaves Angoualima's life and criminal exploits with his own. Continuing with the plan despite a string of botched attempts, Gregoire's final shot at offing Germaine leads to an abrupt unraveling. Lauded in France for its fresh and witty style, *African Psycho*'s inventive use of language surprises and relieves the reader by injecting humor into this disturbing subject.

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African Psycho By Alain Mabanckou Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #346289 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Soft Skull Press, Transition Books
- Published on: 2007-02-28
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.96" h x .43" w x 5.08" l,
- Binding: Paperback
- 176 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

A Congolese writer in his early 40s, Mabanckou teaches at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, and has won numerous French prizes for previous novels; he makes his U.S. debut with this slim, witty monologue of a would-be serial killer. Whereas Bret Easton Ellis's Patrick Bateman (from *American Psycho*) was a Wall Street golden boy notoriously matter-of-fact in relating his shocking crimes, Mabanckou's Gregoire Nakobomayo is an insecure, unattractive metal worker in Africa, a long-winded neurotic trying to talk himself into murdering his prostitute girlfriend, Germaine. For Gregoire, the act would finally make him a worthy successor to his idol, legendary serial killer Angoualima, whose grave he periodically visits, seeking inspiration. Emerging over the course of Gregoire's ramblings is a general hatred of society, a Travis Bickle-esque duty to clean the scum off the streets, and a more personal, plaintive desire: "to exist... to be somebody." For all his cruel intentions and narcissism, Gregoire, ala Humbert Humbert, is an amusing, sympathetic character; readers may find themselves, if not exactly rooting for him, at least anxious to see if he can follow through with his grisly task. The all-important conclusion, however, is an abrupt and disappointing fizzler. The result is a very compelling (and very well-translated) exercise in literary voice. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From [The New Yorker](#)

"No gesture is as simple as that of bringing someone's life to an end," the narrator declares at the start of this disturbing—and disturbingly funny—novel, the first to appear in English by Mabanckou, a French writer of Congolese descent. In an unnamed African country, the impoverished narrator prowls the streets of a blighted neighborhood called He-Who-Drinks-Water-Is-an-Idiot, owing to its abundance of saloons and "drunkenness contests." He fancies himself the heir of a notorious local serial killer, whose sadistic attacks on the rich and powerful he recounts in gruesome and loving detail, but he's too neurotic to actually commit murder, endlessly debating the pros and cons of knives and guns. Although the title invokes "American Psycho," the book owes more to Dostoyevsky and Camus, as the narrator broods and dithers, longing to "exist at last."

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Walter Goodwin:

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