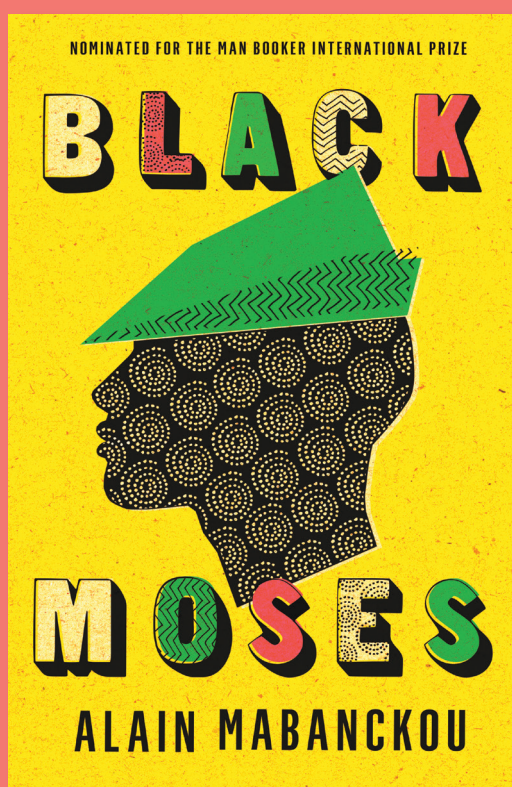


The
Man
Booker
International
Prize
2017



Reader's Guide



Other novels by Alain Mabanckou
Broken Glass (2009)
The Lights of Pointe-Noire (2015)

Black Moses Alain Mabanckou

Translated by Helen Stevenson

Serpent's Tail

www.themanbookerprize.com
#FinestFiction #MBI2017

THE
READING
AGENCY

M
Man

The
Booker
Prize
Foundation

About the author

Alain Mabanckou was born in 1966 in Congo. An award-winning novelist, poet and essayist, Mabanckou currently lives in Los Angeles, where he teaches literature at UCLA. His four previous novels *African Psycho*, *Broken Glass*, *Black Bazaar* and *Tomorrow I'll Be Twenty* – a fictionalised retelling of Mabanckou's childhood in Congo – are all published by Serpent's Tail, as is his memoir *The Lights of Pointe-Noire*, which won the 2016 French Voices Award. In 2015 Mabanckou was listed as a finalist for the Man Booker International Prize.

About the translator

Helen Stevenson is a piano teacher, writer and translator, and lives in Somerset. She has translated works by Marie Darrieussecq, Alice Ferney and Catherine Millet, as well as several books by Alain Mabanckou.

About the book

It's 1970, and in the People's Republic of Congo a Marxist-Leninist revolution is ushering in a new age. But over at the orphanage on the outskirts of Pointe-Noire where young Moses has grown up, the revolution has only strengthened the reign of terror of Dieudonné Ngoulmoumako, the institution's corrupt director. So Moses escapes to Pointe-Noire, where he finds a home with a larcenous band of Congolese Merry Men and among the Zairean prostitutes of the Trois-Cents quarter.

But the authorities won't leave Moses in peace, and intervene to chase both the Merry Men and the Trois-Cents girls out of town. All this injustice pushes poor Moses over the edge. Could he really be the Robin Hood of the Congo? Or is he just losing his marbles?

Discussion points

Mabanckou has always employed comedy to denounce serious problems like authoritarianism, corruption and fanaticism. How effectively do you think he does that in *Black Moses*?

Why do you think Mabanckou has chosen an orphan as his central character? Is Moses meant to be the ultimate outsider – or a Congolese everyman?

What does the novel tell us about ethnic divisions and suspicions towards immigrants within Congolese society? Can you think of comparable divisions and prejudices in your own community?

Is Moses really suffering from amnesia later in life, or is he just pretending? If the latter, why? What is he trying to protect himself from?

Themed reading

Charles Dickens *Oliver Twist*
Salman Rushdie *Midnight's Children*
Ken Kesey *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*