

Jamaican author Marlon James wins Man Booker Prize

Jamaican author Marlon James has won the Man Booker Prize for his novel loosely based on the attempted murder of Bob Marley.

The 680-page epic, *A Brief History of Seven Killings*, has been dubbed the great Jamaican novel by critics and covers social upheaval and political violence on the Caribbean island. James, an English professor who lives in the US, is the first Jamaican to be honoured with the prestigious £50,000 literary prize. Collecting the accolade, presented by the Duchess of Cornwall, he said: "The Booker is the kind of thing that shapes your writing and shapes your thinking. "It's so surreal. I keep thinking I'm going to wake up or fall into a whole barrage of tears but I'm going to keep it together."

James also joked: "I'm not an easy writer to like." Michael Wood, chair of the judges, said the novel was "extraordinary" but controversial. "It's very violent, full of swearing," he said, adding: "It's also full of surprises." In his acceptance speech, the 44-year-old said: "You know, ten years ago, in fact almost exactly ten years ago, I'd given up on writing. "I'd written a novel and then deleted it. I destroyed it. It was a novel that was actually rejected around 70 times and I figured I was clearly not meant to write books. "It was not until a writer came to Jamaica, her name was Kaylie Jones - her father wrote *From Here to Eternity* - and she insisted I show her this manuscript. And can I tell you, Norton undelete does not work if you deleted a file over four years ago. "I remember going through so much lengths to find this novel. I found it on an old laptop in Outlook Express - and that should tell you how old it was - and there it was. She published the novel and I'm eternally grateful to her." James' debut novel was *The Book of Night Women*, also set in Jamaica, which follows Lilith, a young woman born into slavery who challenges the boundaries of what is expected of her.