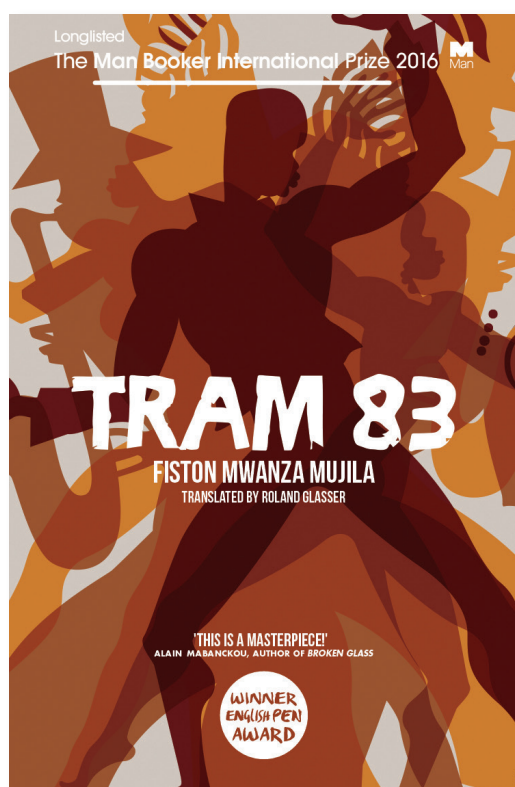


Reader's Guide



Tram 83
is Fiston Mwanza Mujila's first novel

Tram 83 Fiston Mwanza Mujila

Translated by Roland Glasser

Jacaranda Books Art Music Ltd

www.themanbookerprize.com

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About the author

Born in Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of Congo in 1981, Fiston Mwanza Mujila lives in Graz, Austria. He regularly participates in literary activities. His writing has been awarded with numerous prizes, among which are the Golden Medal in the sixth Games of the Francophony in Beirut, as well as the Best Text for Theater (Preis für das beste Stück, State Theater, Mainz). He writes his short stories, novels, poems and essays in French, his mother tongue, and in German, his adopted language. As a child he dreamed of becoming a saxophonist playing jazz. 'But there was no saxophone, so the jazz rhythm is now added to my poems. I write like a jazz musician.' He writes about the chaos, the civil wars, the 32-year dictatorship of Mobutu Sese Seko, which have been undermining his home country since its independence in 1960 from Belgium. *Tram 83* is his first novel.

About the translator

Roland Glasser studied theatre, cinema and art history in the UK and France, and has published over 25 translations from French (fiction, art, travel, and trade non-fiction). His co-translation, with Louise Rogers Lalaurie, of Anne Cuneo's historical novel *Tregian's Ground* was published by And Other Stories in Spring 2015, and his translation of Fiston Mwanza Mujila's *Tram 83* appeared in September 2015, courtesy of Deep Vellum (Dallas), Jacaranda (London), and Scribe (Melbourne). He is a French Voices and PEN Translates Award winner, and serves on the committee of the UK Translators Association. Having lived in Paris for many years, he is currently based in London.

About the book

In a war-torn African city-state tourists of all languages and nationalities converge with students, ex-pats and locals. They have only one desire: to make a fortune by exploiting the mineral wealth of the country, both mineral and human. As soon as night falls, they go out to get drunk, dance, eat and abandon themselves in Tram 83, the only night-club of the city, the den of all iniquities.

Lucien, a professional writer, fleeing the exactions and the censorship, of the Back-Country, finds refuge in the city thanks to Requiem, a friend. Requiem lives mainly on theft and on swindle while Lucien only thinks of writing and living honestly. Around them gravitate gangsters and young girls, retired or runaway men, profit-seeking tourists and federal agents of a non-existent State.

Tram 83 plunges the reader into the atmosphere of a gold rush as cynical as it is comic and colourfully exotic. It's an observation of human relationships in a world that has become a global village, an African-rhapsody novel hammered by rhythms of jazz.

Discussion points

What are the key moments of exile and escape for the protagonists?

The railroad line could be seen as a forced incursion of the rural world into the modern one. What else do you think the railroad represents?

What do you think of the role of the writer in a country ravaged by civil war?

Themed reading

Gabriel García Márquez *One Hundred Years of Solitude*

Chinua Achebe *Things Fall Apart*

Günter Grass *The Tin Drum*

Useful links

<http://www.thewhitereview.org/interviews/interview-with-fiston-mwanza-mujila/>

<http://www.asymptotejournal.com/criticism/fiston-mwanza-mujila-tram-83/>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHQTdXd__Ks