

About Fiston Mwanza Mujila

Fiston Mwanza Mujila was born in Lubumbashi (Democratic Republic of the Congo) and studied literature and humanities there. In 2007, he left the Congo and subsequently lived in Belgium, Germany, France, and, after being invited to Graz as the "Stadtschreiber" (writer-in-residence) in 2009/2010, in Austria. Fiston Mwanza Mujila is pursuing a PhD in Romance Studies at the University of Graz, where he teaches African literature. He writes poetry and short stories as well as for the theater. His texts have been staged in France, Congo, Germany and Austria. The play "Zur Zeit der Königinmutter" (2018) was performed at the Akademietheater (Vienna) and the Deutsches Theater Berlin.

In his texts, Fiston Mwanza Mujila reflects on the chaos, the civil wars, the decades of Mobutu's dictatorship that have (did) shape his homeland since its independence from Belgium in 1960. The author repeatedly circles around the themes of loneliness and exile; in the bilingual long poem "Le Fleuve dans le Ventre/ The River in the Belly," they structure the text as formative elements. Here, a first-person character tells of child soldiers, illness, disfigurement, and again and again of the Congo River, which stands for life and identity in their threatened state. The "I" carries this river "in its belly" in order to spew it out from time to time, just as it spews out the dirt of history and a spoiled meal," says Ilma Rakusa in the NZZ. About the Congo River, Fiston Mwanza Mujila himself says: "This watercourse inspired me so much that I felt obliged to dedicate a collection of poems to it [...] There is an ambiguity in this river [...]. For some, it symbolizes the greatness of Africa and could feed the whole continent. But it strikes, does nothing. When conflicts break out, it sets about carrying away the bodies."

Literary Awards (selection)

Dramatikerstipendium des Bundesministeriums für Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur, Wien, Austria, 2014

Literaturförderungsstipendium der Stadt Graz, Austria, 2014

Grand Prix SGDL du Premier Roman, France, 2014

French Voices Award, USA, 2015

PEN Translates award des english PEN, Großbritannien, 2015

Etisalat Prize for Literature, Africa. 2016

nominated for the Man Booker International Prize, 2016

Grands Prix des Associations Littéraires, Africa, 2016

Internationaler Literaturpreis/ Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Germany, 2017

Junge Akademie, Akademie der Künste, Germany, 2017

Peter-Rosegger-Literaturpreis, Austria, 2018

Prix Littéraires „Les Afriques“, 2021

Bibliography (selection):

Poèmes et rêvasseries, Lingua Editiones, 2008

Nach dem Sturm. Fiston Mwanza und Autoren aus den Justizanstalten Graz-Karlau und Garsten, Leykam Verlag, 2010

Craquelures, l'Arbre à paroles, 2011

Le Fleuve dans le Ventre / Der Fluß im Bauch, Edition Thanhäuser, 2013

Tram 83, Métailié, 2014

Et les moustiques sont des fruits à pépins/Te voir dressé sur tes deux pattes ne fait que mettre de l'huile au feu, Éditions Lansman, 2015

Soleil privé de mazout, l'Arbre à paroles, 2016

Zu der Zeit der Königinmutter, Fischer Theater, 2018

La Danse du Vilain, Métailié, 2020

Kasala pour mon kaku, l'Arbre à paroles, 2021

Short Biography

Fiston Mwanza Mujila is a poet, writer, and educator.

He was born in Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of Congo and lives in Graz, Austria since 2009.

His texts include poetry, prose and plays. For the stagings and readings, or rather performances, he likes to collaborate with musicians, turning them into a literary-musical experience.

In addition to his diverse writing activities, he teaches African literature at the University of Graz and acts as a curator for various projects.

The long poem *Le Fleuve dans le Ventre / The River in the Belly* (2014) refers to the Congo River, which with its ambiguity strongly inspires Fiston Mwanza Mujila's work and recurs at various points.

His literary breakthrough came with his first novel *Tram 83* (2014), which has been translated several times and for which he has received numerous awards. These include the Grand Prix du Premier Roman of the Société des Gens des Lettres and the International Literature Prize of the House of World Cultures, as well as a nomination for the Man Booker International Prize.

His second novel, *La Danse du Vilain*, was published in the original French in 2021.