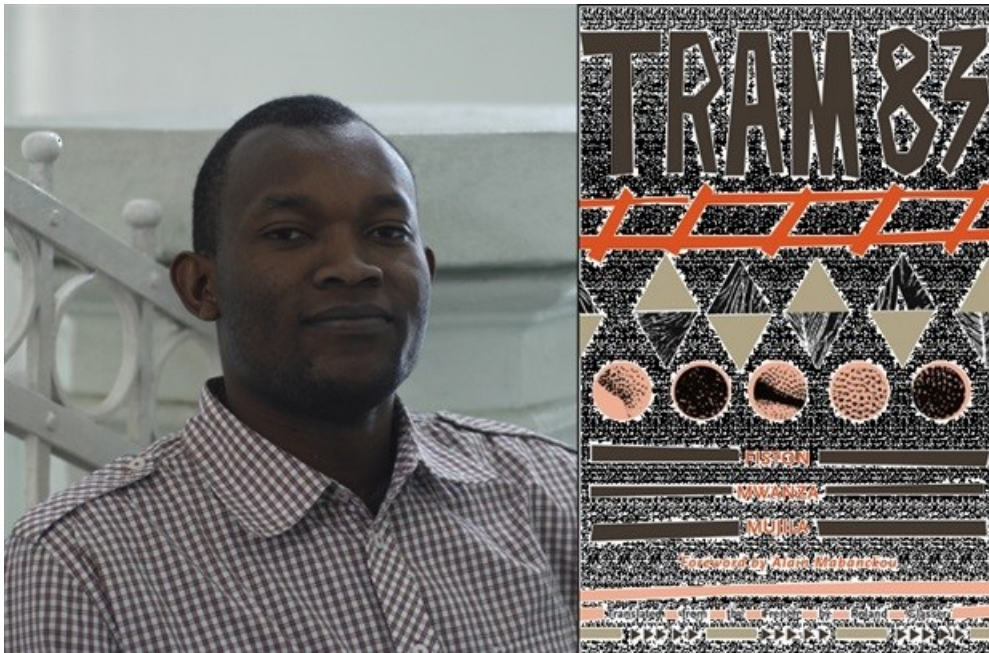


Fiston Mwanza Mujila announced winner of the 2015 Etisalat Prize for Literature

Poet and novelist Fiston Mwanza Mujila was on Saturday, 19 March 2016 announced as the winner of the 2015 Etisalat Prize for Literature (<http://Prize.Etisalat.com.ng>) for his first novel, *Tram 83*. Originally written in French, *Tram 83* was translated into English by Roland Glasser and published by Deep Vellum. 35-year-old Mujila is the first Francophone writer to win the prestigious Etisalat Prize, the first ever pan-African prize that celebrates debut fiction books by African authors.

Fiston Mujila was announced winner by the Chair of judges, Ato Quayson, at the award ceremony held at Intercontinental Lagos Hotel, which was broadcast live on Hip TV and viewed by over 30 million people across Africa. The event was also live-streamed on the internet.

Mujila was presented with a £15,000 cheque, an engraved Montblanc Meisterstück and an Iphone 6S. He will also have the opportunity to attend the Etisalat Fellowship, worth £13,000, at the prestigious University of East Anglia, United Kingdom, under the mentorship of Professor Giles Foden.



Born in Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of Congo, in 1981, Mujila studied Literature and Human Sciences at Lubumbashi University. He now lives in Graz, Austria and is pursuing a PhD in Romance Languages. He has won many accolades for his writing, including the Gold Medal at the 6th Jeux de la Francophonie in Beirut as well as the Best Text for Theater (State Theater, Mainz) in 2010. His writings are a response to the socio-political turbulence of post-independence Congo.

Tram 83 is the first novel by a DR Congo writer to be translated into English in over two decades. The novel centres around Lucien, an idealistic writer sucked into the dystopian world of his friend, Requiem, a gangster who reigns supreme in the outrageous, extravagant and glamorously debauched nightlife of a secessionist City-State. The *Tram 83* of the title is a nightclub that forms the heart of the crumbling city, in which Requiem and a cast of colourful characters feast.

The judging panel for the 2015 Etisalat Prize for Literature was chaired by Ato Quayson, Professor of English and inaugural Director of the Centre for Diaspora Studies at the University of Toronto. The panel also comprised writer and editor, Molara Wood; and Zukiswa Wanner, author of *Men of the South and London Cape Town Joburg*.

The distinguished Patrons of the Etisalat Prize are: noted writer Ama Ata Aidoo (Ghana); Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Dele Olojede (Nigeria); Former deputy editor of *Granta* magazine and former senior editor at Jonathan Cape, Random House, Ellah Allfrey, OBE (UK, Zimbabwe); writer and scholar, Kole Omotoso (Nigeria); Editor, writer, broadcaster and co-founder of Allison & Busby, Margaret Busby, OBE (UK/Ghana); and novelist, poet and playwright, Zakes Mda (South Africa).

At the award ceremony on 19 March, 2016 the Chief Executive Officer of Etisalat Nigeria Matthew Willsher, said, “We are delighted again to celebrate the richness and strength of African literature. Etisalat Prize for Literature bears out this year’s theme, ‘Representing the Diversity of African Voices’. Diversity is somehow wonderful in its own right, but its importance is not for its intangible beauty, it is that diversity is a huge source of innovation. Africa’s diversity is increasingly recognised as it brings new approaches to world literature while innovation is very important in the literary world.”

In line with its vision of promoting up and coming writers, Etisalat will sponsor a book tour to three African cities. The Etisalat Prize also aims to promote the publishing industry at large and will therefore purchase 1000 copies of shortlisted books for donation to schools, book clubs and libraries across Africa.

In attendance at the award ceremony were notable personalities including: The Deputy Governor of Lagos State and Commissioner of Education, Dr. Idiat Adebule (represented by her Permanent Secretary, Dr. Olusola Yinka Ayandele); Commissioner of Science and Technology of Lagos State, Femi Odubiyi; Hon. Femi Gbajabiamila, Majority Leader, Federal House of Representatives; Professors Femi Osofisan and Ahmed Yerima (playwrights); Prof. Remi Raji (poet), Dr. Frank Edozien; thespians Taiwo Ajai-Lycett, Genevieve Nnaji and Bimbo Akintola; and members of Etisalat Nigeria Board, Prof. Isabella Okagbue and Junaid Dikko. Performances were by singers K. Peace, Darey Art-Alade and Asa.

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