



FILHOS DE IMPÉRIO E PÓS-MEMÓRIAS EUROPEIAS
CHILDREN OF EMPIRES AND EUROPEAN POSTMEMORIES
ENFANTS D'EMPIRES ET POSTMÉMOIRES EUROPÉENNES

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Joëlle Sambé | 2019 | Lyse Ishimwe

MUSALA, WORK

Joëlle Sambé

It's that you have to walk on nails and grin, teeth in wind: to your troop of colleagues around the coffee machine (pause)

Three times per day. Three times.

Even if it's already the final straw, even if it's the same colleagues and you've already crossed them in the lift, in the corridor, on the 3rd floor, in meetings and sometimes - unlucky - coming out of the loo.

Even if you do not want to,

That you no longer want to.

And you don't believe in all this permanent Teambuilding.

Because it's too much and you don't give a toss about the random chat. Looking sharp - perfect (1) for the boss.

Or about this faraway socialist family whose stench of betrayal sullies our ideals. Make yourself, with all the others, into a mass of militant workers. Neurotics. Gentrified.

You've got to walk down the white stripes that cross the Open Space of shuttered hives glistening in the sun: elbowing to keep your place, emphasizing your success to excess. The law of the jungle is the strongest survive. A colourful PowerPoint? Me! A finely-honed introduction? Me again! The game is being the best. You've got to be the most well-informed of modern slaves, the most intelligent of course, and the most in thrall but above all, the proudest of it!

Sala musala they say! Work, pull your finger out.

You've got to follow the white lines.

Those who twist like tornadoes on your £50 note to land glittering in your proletarian nostrils.

Nurse your ambition and make room for Lethe.

To forget. Forget the orders, abstentions, contradictory instructions, lost battles. The shambles, the chaos, the lowliness, the vulnerability, the misery, the drought, the confusion, the injustice and The Man. Staff, deadlines, budgets, emails, spam, staplers and post-its, tweets and buzz. The fake politeness, the 'oohs' and 'aahs'. The red curves, the blue curves, rising, falling. Pats on the back, bonuses, end of the year, good wishes, smiles, grudges, hypocrisies, folders, badges, meetings, the nights, the days.

The cold, the metro, the bus, the bikes, hi-vis, the 'alrights?', the 'mmms!'. The pain.

The pain.

The pain

To forget the pain, the sense of being pointless, a useless little almost-revolting nobody.

(1) Note the double meaning of 'perfecto': as a reference to a 'Perfecto' style of leather biking jacket and as a sarcastic play on 'perfect.'

Translated by [Alexandra Reza](#)

[Joëlle Sambi](#) was born in Belgium and grew up partly in Kinshasa (Congo). She currently lives in Brussels. She is a writer and slammer, alongside her activism in a feminist movement. She is an award-winning author of fiction with *Le Monde est gueule de chèvre* (novel, 2007) and *Je ne sais pas rêver* (short-stories, 2002). Joëlle Sambi questions situations of powerlessness in social matters and raises questions about identity, belonging and the mainstream, themes she has developed particularly in her slam poetry and with the group Congo Eza!