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Female slam poets of francophone Africa: spirited words for social change

Mirjam de Bruijn and Loes Oudenhuijsen

Prelude

If I write, it is to say: Hey, there is a problem. Because people are often not even aware that there is this problem!¹

Slam poetry is a relatively new art form in Africa, as is research on slam poetry in francophone Africa. Slam poetry is often defined as competitive urban poetry and has its place in urban popular culture. From its beginnings, slam has been practised by both women and men, unlike the general hip-hop scene, where men dominate and in which misogynous texts are common (Charry 2012; Clark 2012). The poetry, like any other form of art, addresses numerous themes. The *slameuses* (female slam poets) we have been following since 2016 relate personal experiences of growing up in their home countries, with particular emphasis on social and political dynamics. These women are part of the emerging youth culture in West and Central Africa, where youth – who make up more than 50 per cent of the population – are gaining a voice. Urban art forms, such as hip-hop culture, have played an important role in these emerging youth movements (Clark and Koster 2014). Slam poetry is not always about societal engagement or protest, but in West and Central Africa such societal engagement appears to be very important for slam poets.

In this article, we explore female slam poets as pioneers in the search for a voice in public debates. We are interested in seeing how they engage with ‘emerging consciousness’ and with ‘further[ing] the cause of the people by opening their eyes to their objective situation in society’ (Barber 1987: 7). We are also curious to understand whether and how the women create such consciousness through their texts and performances. We attempt to answer these questions through the work of two young *slameuses*: Djemi Djiraibe from Chad and Mariusca Moukengue from

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¹*Si j'écris c'est pour dire: hé, il y a un problème. Parce que souvent il y a des gens qui ne savent même pas qu'il y a ce problème* (Cameroonian slam poet Lydol interviewed by Sjoerd Sijsma and Mirjam de Bruijn at the first edition of the *Coupe d'Afrique de Slam Poésie* (CASP), N'Djamena, November 2018).

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Congo-Brazzaville. They are inspired by their elder sisters Amee, Lydol and Malika, who represent the first generation of *slameuses* in francophone Africa. Djemi and Mariusca are both relatively new to the slam scene, active since 2016 and 2018 respectively. We situate their work and art in the growing slam scene in francophone Africa and discuss it in relation to their personal trajectories and life choices. Their texts not only provide important insights into the role of young women in the growing slam network, but also reveal the debates in urban African societies that these texts engender about the inequalities women encounter and their wish for change.

A note on ‘field’ and method

We were introduced to the world of slam poetry in francophone Africa by Didier Lalaye, aka Croquemort, a Chadian slam artist and organizer of slam poetry events, with whom we collaborated in a research project (De Bruijn and Lalaye 2016; De Bruijn 2017). He is one of the initiators of the slam movement, which was launched from his festival *N’Djam s’enflamme en slam* in N’Djamena, Chad. Since 2016, we have collaborated in the mounting of these slam festivals through our organization Voice4Thought.² It was at these festivals that we met the women presented in this article. The most recent festival in N’Djamena, in November 2019, was devoted to women in slam and was entitled *Slam et Eve: le slam au féminin*. During this festival, the idea was born for a book on women in this rapidly developing artistic genre in Africa. From the start of this writing project we have had the full collaboration of the artists, who allowed us into their worlds and who became co-writers of this slam ethnography and biography. Our exchanges with these women have continued via WhatsApp and email since our last physical meetings in November 2019.

The festivals and the organization around slam can be seen as one of the worlds in which these slam poets live and work; hence, it is an important field site for the ethnography of slam. We were able to grasp this world especially during the *Coupe d’Afrique de Slam Poetry* (CASP) in November 2018 in N’Djamena and during the *Slam et Eve* festival in November 2019. Our engagement with slam also takes place in the virtual world, as social media have been important outlets for slam poets to share their work beyond annual festivals and to stay connected with other slam poets and international audiences. Furthermore, the field of such ethnography consists of the urban setting where these women live and work. We were introduced to these life worlds when we met the slam poets we present in this article in their respective environments: urban Chad, urban Côte d’Ivoire and urban Cameroon. The environment that we do not know from experience is urban Congo-Brazzaville. These urban spaces have their own cultural, historical and political contexts; however, parallels can be drawn between the growing role of slam poetry and urban culture festivals, and we see a specific relationship with the francophone African network in which the art of slam is developing. This orientation is not unique to slam poetry, as francophone

²Voice4Thought provides a platform for critical reflection on the nexus of arts, academia and activism. See <<https://voice4thought.org/>>.

and anglophone ‘zones of culture’ (Newell 2006: 21) remain rather distinct in postcolonial Africa.

French is the working language for these women, and they are oriented to the francophone world. The financial and logistic support and initiatives of the *Instituts Français* in the different countries, as well as coverage and awards organized by the French international radio station RFI, partly shape and maintain this orientation. This does not exclude the fact that the artists also perform in other languages, but French remains dominant. Slam is a textual art, though not only textual. The performance of poems is central to the art, and different forms of performance are debated and tried out in the slam scene. Performances vary from presentations of poems a cappella to poems embedded in dance and music. Increasingly, slam poets also produce video clips that they publish on social media. For this reason, a publication about slam cannot be in written words only; this article is therefore accompanied by some visual material, which was produced by Denis Gueipeur and Annour Halal, both young Chadian photographers and filmmakers, Mette van Dijk, a Dutch art student, and Sjoerd Sijsma, a Dutch cineaste and colleague in Voice4Thought. The material was produced during the CASP and *Slam et Eve* festivals. Mette van Dijk and Sjoerd Sijsma made the selections of the film material that we present with this article.

Our approach in this research on the world of slam combines an ethnographic and descriptive method with a method that can be described as ‘biographies in context’ (see De Bruijn 2017), where we try to understand the itineraries of the young women in relation to their personal experiences and the environments in which they live and grew up. A biography is a way to link lives to social processes that can stand both for the specific individual and for the world in which he or she lives (Apitzsch and Siouti 2007). The sketches of Djemi and Mariusca’s biographies, their experiences and the way in which slam has become their art form therefore reveal more than just these personal lives; they also represent lines of social development of youth in urban Africa. We will situate the *slameuses* in their specific personal histories and in the francophone Africa slam network that has also become their world.

Slam poetry: an emerging literary genre in West and Central Africa

Slam poetry is art in motion. Slam poets deliver their texts in live performances, and the rapid growth of international slam poetry festivals in Africa in the last decade has added to the mobility of the art. More figuratively, their words move people, providing inspiration and persuasion. Slam poetry first emerged in the 1980s in Chicago in the USA. Since its inception, it has provided opportunities for marginalized communities, especially young people, to organize slam poetry events and express their ideas and feelings of exclusion (Muhammad and Gonzalez 2016; Sorensen 2016). The genre is characterized by its freedom, both in its textual and performance qualities.

A number of elements characterize slam poetry and distinguish it from other, related art forms such as hip-hop and rap. Slam is characterized by its poetry, performance, elements of competition, audience interaction and sense of community. Interaction with and the effect on the audience at a slam performance are fundamental to the art. Slam competitions have a few basic rules, which include that a performance should last three minutes (with a maximum of ten additional

seconds) and that the work performed be the artist's own (Smith and Kraynak 2009). However, as slam poets perform outside this competition format during concerts, festivals and on television shows, they are free to exceed this three-minute limit. Writing and performance do not follow clear scripts, but most slam poets write their texts before they perform them, whether the writing be on paper or in their heads. It is also not uncommon for texts to be adjusted over time, or as they are performed for different audiences, or when new ideas and ways to express these ideas have emerged for the artist (for this process, see one of Amee's texts, *Mutilée*, in Oudenhuijsen 2021). However, with the development of the genre and with the availability of new technologies, slam poets increasingly record their texts in studios and some even produce video clips. This tends to give a more definitive form to their texts.

Slam poetry originally takes the form of a competition, but a slam event is also a place where the texts that the poets present are part of a public debate: 'slam poetry can be a purposeful genre for youth to interrogate the social times and violence in the world' (Muhammad and Gonzalez 2016: 443). Slam poets respond to and draw attention to social injustices, as well as being agents for self-empowerment and self-determination (Somers-Willett 2009). At the same time, these authors see slam poetry as identity poetry: key to slam performances is the personal experience that mediates the issues addressed (*ibid.*; Muhammad and Gonzalez 2016; Bishop 2019).

Slam poetry is relatively new to francophone Africa. It emerged in the first decade of this century and is developing rapidly. However, slam also builds on long histories of oral art forms. Africa is often portrayed as the continent where oral literature is the dominant genre (Finnegan 2012), but many parts of the continent also know centuries-old traditions of Islamic literacy, both in Arabic and in African languages written using Arabic script (Nobili and Brigaglia 2017). Furthermore, oral and written texts have a history of relationality, with texts that are written explicitly for oral performances (see Raia 2020 on such poetry on the Swahili coast). The importance of *griots* (praise singers, musicians and transmitters of collective memory) in West Africa has provided fertile ground for the development of slam poetry in the region. When we asked Mariusca where she situated slam poetry, she referred to *griots* in addition to other lyrical and textual genres:

Slam is a crossroads art. In Africa, it comes from the language of the *griots*. It also has its roots in classical poetry. This art of speech is intended to urbanize, to dust off the classical poetry that is buried in books.³

In the festivals we participated in, women took a prominent role. Slam poetry is not the only oral art form where this is the case: African narratives, praise songs and oral traditions are often performed by women. For example, Hausa women have long been storytellers in northern Nigeria (Aliyu 1997); Tamacheq

³ 'Le slam est un art carrefour. En Afrique, il vient du langage des griots. Aussi, il tire également ses sources de la poésie classique. Cet art de la parole, a vocation à urbaniser, à dépoussiérer la poésie classique enfouie dans les livres' (WhatsApp exchange between Mirjam and Mariusca, 17 October 2020).

women in the Sahara are guardians of poetry in their society (Rasmussen 2003); and in the contemporary music scenes, women are no longer an exception. Djemi and Mariusca described the nature of slam poetry as follows:

Mariusca: In Africa, slam is much more than an art. It's a state of mind, a movement of thought that conveys and defends universal values: freedom, peace, equality, democracy.⁴

Djemi: Here in Chad, slam is in a literary field of demand! This can be explained by the committed nature of the first recorded slam and other social events! Slam in Chad is part of committed literature; it's a committed art. The slam movement came about in the years 2005–2006–2007 if we refer to the first recorded slam. We don't know when it was born exactly!⁵

In West and Central Africa, slam poetry is a form of popular art that has predominantly been taken up by the youth. It gives a voice to people who remain unheard in many more formally organized spaces of expression. It works bottom-up, with people organizing slam evenings in the streets, in bars, and in community centres. Today, such informal, low-key slam poetry events exist side by side with international festivals and international media coverage by RFI and the BBC. This international character of the art is also present in the sources of inspiration of the young artists. Djemi and Mariusca both referred to Croquemort as an example, as have the other *slameuses* whom we interviewed. They also draw inspiration from French slam poets, among whom the most frequently mentioned is Grand Corps Malade.

Why slam poetry is on the rise in these parts of Africa is difficult to pinpoint. As Djemi says, it is not fully clear when the slam genre as we observe it now took off in francophone Africa. She refers to the first slams recorded in Chad around 2005–07, which were recordings of Croquemort, who released his first single in 2006. We entered the slam poetry scene in March 2014. This is when Mirjam met Didier Lalaye, aka Croquemort, in N'Djamena. At that time he was preparing the second edition of his festival *N'Djam s'enflamme en slam*. It was around the same time that Aziz Siten'k, a Malian slam poet, started his slam and humour festival in Mali. A few years later, slam poets in Niger, Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire had all started organizing slam events.

This is also the period that saw the advancement of mobile telephones and social media in West and Central Africa, and these technologies have been very important for the emergence of a community of slam poets in the region. The artists exchange their work on social media and in a variety of WhatsApp groups, and they disseminate their texts in the form of short clips on Facebook

⁴Mariusca: 'En Afrique, le slam est bien plus qu'un art. C'est un état d'esprit, un mouvement de pensée qui véhicule et défend des valeurs universelles: liberté, paix, égalité, démocratie' (WhatsApp exchange between Mirjam and Mariusca, 17 October 2020).

⁵Djemi: 'Chez nous au Tchad, le slam est dans un champ littéraire de revendication! Cela s'explique par la nature engagée par rapport aux faits de société des premiers slam enregistrés et autres! Le slam au Tchad s'inscrit dans la littérature engagée, c'est un art engagé! Le mouvement slam est arrivé vers les années 2005–2006–2007 si on se réfère aux premiers slam enregistrés. Exactement, on ne sait pas quand il est né!' (WhatsApp exchange between Mirjam and Djemi, 18 October 2020).

and WhatsApp. This has certainly enlarged the visibility of the art and the possibility for the organization and creation of the slam scene as a network of young people who inspire each other. Such developments have also expanded access to international funding, which in turn has facilitated the rapid development of festivals in the region.

Slam pioneers⁶

One of the first female slam poets in francophone Africa was Amee, from Côte d'Ivoire, who, since 2010, has become known in West Africa and to a limited extent in Europe, being invited to festivals in Belgium and the Netherlands. A legal expert by training and a communications expert by profession, she has come to gradually devote more time to slam poetry over the years. Similar to other accomplished slam poets, such as Lydol from Cameroon and Malika from Burkina Faso, she told us that, for her, the writing was her outlet, and slam performances helped her to voice her ideas in front of an audience.

Lydol, Malika and Amee seem to share a similar trajectory. They come from relatively well-off families. Today, they all have good jobs, and this financial independence enables them to invest time in their art. All three are unmarried, between twenty-six and thirty-five years old at the time of writing. They are on good terms with their parents, who support their engagement with their art. A good education was a priority for their parents; as long as they performed well at school and later at university, they were not discouraged from engaging with slam poetry. Slam poetry's positioning in between urban cultures and intellectual, literary genres has enabled women to enter the scene often without too much objection from parents and family members. In these poets' stories and memories, their parents discovered the world of slam poetry as the women developed their art. As *slameuses*, they found a balance between being public women voicing opinions and the mores of their families and cultures.

The texts the *slameuses* produce often relate to the position of women in their societies, and they contain messages for other girls and women who may not have the same ability to voice their discontent.⁷ All three women are active in social projects that consider the education of girls through slam, through which they hope to give this same opportunity to other girls and women to voice their opinions. Their texts and social projects reveal a clear engagement with the emancipation of women.

We asked the poets to send us examples of their texts. All of the texts reveal a mastery of stylistic devices such as puns, repetitions and slogans that amplify their messages. Malika sent us her text '*Allez leur dire*',⁸ in which she describes the bravery women need to choose to become an artist. She explains the hard

⁶We made a video, '*Les femmes s'enflamment en slam*', of women's performances during the CASP in which Amee and Lydol are portrayed. See <<https://voice4thought.org/celebrating-the-powerful-voices-of-women-in-slam/>>.

⁷Five female slam poets, among them Amee, Lydol and Fatine, explain their relation to slam in a short documentary produced by Voice4Thought as a representation of the first edition of the CASP in November 2018. See <<https://voice4thought.org/celebrating-the-powerful-voices-of-women-in-slam/>>.

⁸Malika's '*Allez leur dire*' is included in the annex to this article.

work required, as well as a certain defiance of societal expectations against a woman becoming an artist (or whatever other dream she may have):

*Allez leur dire, que la route est longue,
mais Inshallah un jour on pourra toucher les cieux⁹*

Amee sent us her text '*Adam et Eve*',¹⁰ in which she takes a stance against the use of the biblical reference to Adam and Eve that is often used to show women's inferiority:

*Nous nous sommes laissées intimider par leur apparente vigueur
Nous les avons laissé parler sans jamais leur en tenir rigueur¹¹*

This text reminds us of what she exclaims during one of our interviews: 'Art makes us a little rebellious. We have guts ... by facing the look of others, so we are not afraid.'¹² The rebellion of these three women has transformed them into stars on stage. And although they are questioning the boundaries of how a decent woman is supposed to behave, they have been able to do this in such a way that the larger public accepts and embraces them. Their texts definitely speak from a personal background and experience, but they also send a broader message to the outside world. And with these texts they speak to an emerging discourse of urban women who are increasingly standing up for their rights.

Mariusca and Djemi are part of the network of these young urban women. Both mention Amee, Malika and Lydol as inspirations for their art, despite having grown up with different, and in many ways more challenging, backgrounds.

Slam et Eve: learning and networking

When we began to interact with the slam scene in 2014, female slam poets were still a minority. This has changed over the years. The fact that the 2019 edition of the yearly *N'Djam s'enflamme en slam* festival was devoted to female slam poets reveals the ascent of women in the slam scene. Fewer funds were gathered than in previous years, so the festival was a small one, but the smaller scale created a close-knit environment in which we were integrated as organizers and as writers of these women's slam stories. It gave us greater insight into the working of the slam movement and the role of women within it.

Some of the women had not met before, at least not face to face. They knew each other well, however, through the multiple Facebook exchanges they had been having over the years. Amee, the most experienced *slameuse* present at the festival, said that, although she had never met most of these women in person, she felt strongly that she knew them well. This greatly enhanced the integration

⁹Go tell them that the road is long, but, God willing, one day we can touch the skies.'

¹⁰Amee's '*Adam et Eve*' is included in the annex to this article.

¹¹'We let ourselves be intimidated by their apparently great force; we just have to let them talk, without taking them too seriously.'

¹²'*L'art nous rend un peu rébelle. On donne du cran ... déjà, on affronte le regard des gens, donc on n'a pas peur*' (interview with Amee, November 2018).

during the week of the festival. In between festival activities, the women spent a lot of time together in their hotel rooms, and it was during such moments that they shared experiences and advice with regard to challenges they shared relating to their engagement in slam.

We organized a focus group discussion with the aim to come up with some key themes that we could highlight in the above-mentioned book about female slam poets. This discussion quickly turned into a very personal, emotional and intimate sharing of experiences with sexual violence. It was extraordinary to see how the women willingly shared their stories, especially considering the fact that this was their first time together. The festival turned out to be a bonding event that would continue after the festival in the various WhatsApp groups of which the women are part: with other female slam poets; with their male compatriots; and in both French and English, despite linguistic challenges. They are also active on their Facebook and Instagram pages, where they share new texts, performances and projects. Other women who could not make it to the festival were present via these media, so the festival was mediatized far beyond N'Djamena.

Women are increasingly visible and present in slam poetry in francophone Africa, and the emergence of particular women's slam events has facilitated the creation of a network of female slam poets. However, female slam poets also participate in other, overlapping networks with other (male) poets. The men's work is much less concerned with gender (in)equalities, but often it is just as interested in social critique as the women's slam poetry. A slam poet such as Croquemort from Chad is known for his outspoken political critique, commenting extensively on the injustices and neglect that Chadians experience as a result of a succession of repressive regimes.

Slamtherapy¹³

Slam et Eve marked an important development in the slam movement in francophone Africa. First, it showed that women today are an indispensable part of the scene. Second, with the appearance of a larger number of women, the approach to slam and gender issues has diversified. In a way, it seems as if the women who entered the scene a couple of years after the pioneers – Lydol, Amee and Malika – have taken up the message of these three women in reflecting on their positions in society. For many of the more recently arrived women on the slam scene, slam seems to be a way of 'transforming my pain into words'.¹⁴ These are the words of Fatine Moubait, a Moroccan slam poet and the Moroccan ambassador of slam for the CASP. For her, slam poetry has been a way to free herself psychologically from the pain she endures from her continuous struggle with cancer. Lydol similarly emphasizes the therapeutic working of slam poetry: she named her first album *Slamthérapie*. For these women, slam is the medium through which they translate their everyday experiences of living as a woman in their respective societies.

¹³After Lydol's eponymous text *Slamthérapie*. See <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r1MQQeskfZI>>.

¹⁴'transformer mes maux en mots' (interview with Fatine Moubait, November 2018).

Mariusca¹⁵

Mariusca Moukengue is a twenty-six-year-old slam poet from Congo-Brazzaville. When we spoke to her in November 2019 in N'Djamena, she described herself as a timid, introverted girl who quickly matured due to her parents' divorce when she was eleven years old. Her discovery of slam led to a release of the heavy burden she felt from looking after her younger siblings and managing family tensions resulting from the divorce. The second civil war fought in Congo-Brazzaville, between June 1997 and December 1999 (a first civil war was fought in 1993–94), had also had an impact on Mariusca, who had been separated from her parents at a very young age when a paternal aunt had come to fetch her to flee the war.

Before encountering the art of slam poetry in 2015, she had tried theatre, but she had felt too constrained by the rules that theatre prescribed for her expression. Slam poetry, on the other hand, has helped her to 'transcend not only my family situation, my social situation ... but in addition, slam has really given me a place in this life. Slam has made me feel human.'¹⁶

Today, Mariusca has developed into an engaged *slameuse* in her society, as becomes clear through her social projects, for which she is able to find funding. Her most recent project is *Slamunité*, where she works with young children on their ability to shape and voice their ideas through slam.¹⁷

Mariusca's text '*Espoir*' (Hope), which we present below, was written in the light of these personal experiences. The end of the text hints at this: although 'slam' is a very common way to end one's slam performance, Mariusca ends her text with '*Merci slam*' (Thank you, slam), indicating that slam for her is the hope that she describes in the text. When we interviewed Mariusca in November 2019 during *Slam et Eve*, she presented herself as a '*slamheureuse*' rather than as a '*slameuse*', 'because slam made me happy – it gave me a life to my life'.¹⁸

So when she starts her text with a list of endings and emptiness, after which she describes what hope does in this context, it is not a coincidence that she mentions the 'sparrow [that] loses its feathers'.¹⁹ In our interview, she described herself as this 'bird lost in nature, not knowing in which tree to choose to spend the night'.²⁰ Having experienced both war and her parents' divorce at a young age, her childhood had been far from carefree. For a long time she felt uprooted, and she explains that she plunged into depression. As a teenager she became very unsociable and created her own inner world. In this world, she wrote texts and poems, strictly personal: 'I wrote as therapy, because it was the only way to

¹⁵See Mette van Dijk's short video at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihqn5Gp2DO4>>.

¹⁶'*transcender non seulement ma situation familiale, ma situation sociale ... mais aussi, le slam vraiment m'a donné une place dans la vie. Le slam m'a fait sentir humaine*' (interview with Mariusca, 7 November 2019).

¹⁷*Slamunité*, 23 October 2020. See <<https://voice4thought.org/fr/slamunite/>>.

¹⁸'*parce que le slam m'a rendu heureuse, m'a donné une vie à ma vie*' (interview with Mariusca, 7 November 2019).

¹⁹'*moineau ... perd ses plumes*' (from the poem '*Espoir*').

²⁰'*oiseau perdu dans la nature, ne sachant pas sur quel arbre atterrir pour passer la nuit*' (interview with Mariusca, 7 November 2019).

free myself. I was really afraid of people, of others ... I sought refuge in my writing.’²¹

This was before she discovered slam poetry in 2015. She attended a live event and was deeply moved by the performance of an artist named Prodigé Eveil. She approached him after his appearance, and he explained to her that he had performed slam poetry. She asked him: ‘Can you teach me to be free like you?’²² He suggested she send him her texts. He noticed the poignancy in her texts, and he encouraged her to try to perform one of her texts on stage. She hesitated for a while, afraid of people’s response. She first performed on stage in 2016 at the *Institut Français* in Brazzaville. After the discovery of slam poetry for her as a form of personal liberation, Mariusca also became aware of the international scene that goes with it, and her talent was discovered by other slam poets. She started performing at festivals in West and Central Africa, and her project *Slamunité* was received with enthusiasm and international and national funding. Mariusca has stopped pursuing her academic studies (for the moment) and now lives for her art and activism.

To Mariusca, slam has always represented hope: the hope to move people with her words and her emotions – and to personally be moved, freed from her own sorrows. In addition to allowing her to express her feelings and ideas, slam poetry has allowed Mariusca ‘to accept myself as a woman, as an individual. And furthermore, to heal my pain, my problems, my fears, my phobias, and my dreams as well.’²³ Slam poetry has been a healing practice. The text ‘*Espoir*’ that she shared captures this feeling.

Djemi

Djemi Djiraibe was twenty-one years old when we met her in N’Djamena during *Slam et Eve* in 2019.²⁴ Her name appeared in the Facebook posts of slam groups and at different festivals in the region. She is presented as a rising slam star. We also met her in 2018 during the CASP, where some of our friends were already talking about her. On stage she appears strong, furious at times. Off stage she is shy, very gentle and silent. Djemi’s posture and gestures show that she has lived through pain and suffering. In the interviews we had with her, these sorrows came clearly to the fore. They echo the life of a young woman in a society where she feels imprisoned, and her relationships with the adult carers in her life can be called problematic.

Her parents, who both live in N’Djamena, divorced when Djemi was very young. Her mother was unable to take care of her and her father was apparently not interested. Djemi was fostered out to her aunt, a sister of her mother who lives

²¹ ‘J’écrivais par thérapie, parce que c’était l’unique manière de me libérer. J’avais très peur des gens, peur des autres ... Je me réfugiais dans mes écrits’ (interview with Mariusca, 7 November 2019).

²² ‘Est-ce que tu peux m’apprendre à être libre comme toi?’ (*ibid.*).

²³ ‘M’accepter moi-même en tant que femme, en tant qu’individu. Mais encore, de guérir mes maux, mes problèmes, mes angoisses, mes phobies, et mes rêves aussi’ (*ibid.*).

²⁴ For her performance during the festival, see <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jpKeWyb0Cnk>>.

in Burkina Faso with her husband. She remembers this period with mixed feelings. Her foster father gave her a lot of books to read, and through them she discovered a love of language and started writing herself. She does not say much about her foster mother, but she talks about her with affection. However, a violent event disturbed this idyll of a loving home with caring foster parents.

In her text '*Rats-content-et-racontez*', Djemi refers to a girl confronted with sexual harassment. The text, which relates a very personal story, transcends her own identity: 'When I write, I put myself in someone else's shoes. I never write about myself.'²⁵ Violence, sexual or otherwise, is unfortunately rather frequent against women in Chad. The increasing attention to violence against women is furthered by women such as Djemi, who decide to write about women's experiences of violence. In our interview with her in November 2019, she referred to the fact that people (adults, carers) see and perhaps talk about violence inflicted on women and children behind one's back, but they never talk about it to the girls themselves or reach out to help. 'In Ouaga ... they found out. They said nothing. Every day you hear about such cases.'²⁶

It was only in 2005, when she was nine years old, that she discovered that her real mother was the 'aunt' who visited them every summer. A period of unease and searching started. She became a recalcitrant young adolescent when her foster parents prevented her from going on a trip to N'Djamena to meet her biological father. This led to a rift between her and her foster father. In 2010, she finally went back to N'Djamena. Her return was primarily to get to know her father, but 'my father has done everything to deceive me at every moment ... I have never called him dad.'²⁷

While studying in Yaoundé a couple of years later, she encountered the slam poetry scene, although she hesitated over joining fully. She knew that an engagement with the world of the arts would not be accepted by her biological parents, and she personally did not feel attracted to urban poetry. This changed with her participation in the CASP in 2018 with some fringe performances during late-night concerts in the bars of N'Djamena: 'After this it all went very fast ... stage, stage, stage.'²⁸ Today, writing texts has become her profession, and she combines work for a number of communications enterprises with her poetry and slam performances. She currently (December 2020) works for a communications enterprise that collaborates with a number of NGOs in the country. Her most recent job was to write poetry texts in the context of the Global 16 Days Campaign against gender-based violence.²⁹ She was asked to work with the initiative after the Chadian NGO Voix de la Femme had seen her perform during the *fête de la musique*, an international music festival in June 2020 in N'Djamena. Performing slam poetry gives her an outlet for her drive to write, to liberate her thoughts. The artistic milieu, which was seen by her parents as the realm of bohemians and vagabonds, has now become her spiritual home.

²⁵'*Quand j'écris, je me mets à la place de quelqu'un. J'écris jamais me concernant*' (WhatsApp conversation between Djemi and Loes, 28 November 2020).

²⁶'*A Ouaga ... Ils ont découvert. Ils n'ont rien dit. Tous les jours tu entends des cas comme ça*' (interview with Djemi, 9 November 2019).

²⁷'*mon père a tout fait pour me décevoir à tout moment ... je l'ai jamais appelé papa*' (*ibid.*).

²⁸'*Après c'est passé vite ... invitations, scène, scène, scène*' (*ibid.*).

²⁹See <<https://16dayscampaign.org/>>.

In her text ‘*Rats-content-et racontez*’, Djemi describes a woman who has experienced deep lows and some highs, a woman who, despite all the norms of society, tries to stand up for herself. This woman is not respected, not even considered worthy, but she fights back. And, despite the difficulties, especially the sexual assaults and experiences of violence, she finds her way. The text criticizes those who judge too easily (*les rats*) and who (*content*: are happy to) talk behind people’s backs.

Afterword and reflection

The *slameuses* have many exchanges with each other, and they draw inspiration, motivation and encouragement from one another. Festivals such as *N’Djam s’enflamme en slam* and the CASP have provided very important moments of connection and exchange between slam poets from different countries. However, their connection goes beyond such physical meetings: for many, long before they first met their fellow slam artists, when they shared the stage at such festivals, they had been following each other on social media. Many had already exchanged messages extensively with one another, and they continue to do so as they envision projects and productions together. Their close relationships are built on these years of exchange on social media, and they very quickly feel at ease with and able to trust each other. This allows for very deep and emotional conversations, as on the night when we organized the focus group discussion with the *slameuses* during *Slam et Eve*. In addition, the follow-up after the festival and the many exchanges that we have seen since on Facebook and WhatsApp show that these women have developed a shared language, one that may not be deliberately activist but that does address issues that are not yet publicly debated in their societies.

Many *slameuses* now use their art to develop projects and programmes with youth to teach them about the transformative capacity of slam poetry. Projects such as Mariusca’s *Slamunité* teach youth to give words to their experiences and to share these with an audience. *Slamunité* promotes the art of slam poetry as a form of therapy.³⁰ Not all women who start to perform slam become known slam poets. Among the women we interviewed for this project, some have already left the scene and no longer perform on stage. But they all agreed that the use of words and being part of a collective with other slam poets helped them establish an identity and defend their choices in life. This liberating spirit is found in their texts, and it potentially has the power to change not only the poets themselves but society at large.

In conclusion, we return to the question that we put forward in the introduction to this article: whether and how *slameuses* contribute to an ‘emerging consciousness’ in their societies. At this stage of our research, we can only partly answer this question, and we can do so only on the basis of our interaction with the *slameuses*, as we did not interview the public. It is clear that, for the women we interviewed, being part of the slam scene and networks has helped them express and develop their thoughts, which, over the years, have grown into their own emerging consciousness of gendered inequalities in their social environments. Their texts,

³⁰ ‘*l’art comme thérapie*’ (Mariusca, *Slamunité*, <<https://voice4thought.org/fr/slamunité/>>).

combined with their performances and social projects, aim to open up that consciousness to other women and girls in their societies. And this consciousness is probably primarily of their own inner strength and the possibility they have to take their lives into their own hands.

Supplementary materials

Supplementary materials are available with this article at <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0001972021000565>>.

During the CASP 2018 we met many *slameuses*. Impressions of their performances during the CASP and excerpts of interviews are the basis of a short documentary, '*Les femmes s'enflamment en slam*'. The documentary is available online with this article at <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0001972021000565>> and at <<https://voice4thought.org/celebrating-the-powerful-voices-of-women-in-slam/>>. The video was produced by Sjoerd Sijsma.

Mette van Dijk compiled a short video of Mariusca and her appearance at the *Slam et Eve* festival in 2019. The video is available online with this article at <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0001972021000565>> and at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihqn5Gp2DO4>>.

An impression of Djemi la Slameuse's performance during *Slam et Eve* 2019 was published by Sao Magazine TV in Chad at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jpKeWyb0Cnk>>.

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Abstract

Slam poets in Africa are part of an emerging social movement. In this article, the focus is on women in this upcoming slam movement in francophone Africa. For these women, slam has meant a change in their lives as they have found words to describe difficult experiences that were previously shrouded in silence. Their words, performances and engaged actions are developing into a body of popular knowledge that questions the status quo and relates to the 'emerging consciousness' in many African urban societies of unequal, often gendered, power relations. The women who engage in slam have thus become a voice for the emancipation of women in general.

Résumé

En Afrique, les poètes de slam font partie d'un mouvement social émergent. Cet article s'intéresse aux femmes de ce mouvement slam en plein essor en Afrique francophone. Le slam a signifié un changement dans la vie de ces femmes qui ont trouvé, avec lui, des mots pour décrire des expériences difficiles jusqu'alors enveloppées dans le silence. Les mots, les représentations et les actions engagées de ces femmes se constituent en un corpus de connaissances populaires qui remet en cause le statu quo et se rapporte à la « conscience émergente » dans de nombreuses sociétés urbaines africaines aux relations de pouvoir inégales et souvent genrées. Les femmes qui s'adonnent au slam sont ainsi devenues une voix de l'émancipation des femmes en général.

Annex: Slam texts

'Espoir' by Mariusca Moukengue

Telle la dernière feuille qui s'accroche à l'arbre jusqu'à la prochaine saison
 Tels les derniers rayons de lumières avant le crépuscule
 Telle une oasis en plein désert
 La dernière plume
 Quand le moineau perd ses plumes
 L'infime fille sur laquelle tout se joue
 La carte qui déjoue la routine
 L'acte qui bouleverse
 Transperce et perce les mystères du fatale
 Il est la voix qui parle au cœur quand la raison perd la raison
 Il y a une grande partie de la science que la conscience ignore encore et
 Tout est en perpétuelle mouvance
 Il est cette contradiction qui te rend différent
 Te place au rang de ceux qui brisent les fatales les préétablies
 Il est ce sens qui te fait voir un fœtus dans un ventre stérile
 Une opportunité dans la misère
 Une fortune au creux d'un mystère
 Une lueur de sagesse dans la caboche du stupide
 Un verre de vin sur la table d'une cabane sèche
 Le sens qui donne un sens aux rêves insensés
 Lui qui dit que l'audace reste la seule chose qui touche vraiment le ciel
 La force d'attraction qui attire nos rêves vers le jour
 La porte de secours dans le regard d'un étranger
 L'entente avant l'enterrement de la hache de guerre
 L'échec comme puzzle de la rage de réussir
 Il est cette courbe que tu visualises dans l'invisible
 Cette potion que tu te fais avec passion sans ingrédients
 Ce lien que tu tisses entre ta démarche et ton quotidien
 Ce pont que tu te crées entre l'impossible et l'intrépide
 Parce que le plus important c'est l'avènement de nos objectifs
 Il est ce qui te reste quand tu as tout perdu
 Tout enduré mais aussi tout éprouvé
 La preuve que la source qui t'abreuve ne dépend ni des terriens ni de rien
 Ton compagnon le plus proche quand tes proches s'éloignent de toi parce que
 Tu n'as plus un sou
 Que ton estime ne vaut plus un centime
 Il est cette force qui te préserve de la déprime
 Ta passivité réprime
 Pour primer l'inconcevable
 Faire rimer aspiration et espérance car
 Les seuls limites qui nous limitent sont celles que l'on se fixe
 Puisque personne n'est trop petit pour faire de grandes choses
 Aucune petite chose n'est assez infime pour déclencher les grands exploits alors lui
 Lui on l'appelle « ESPOIR »
 Merci SLAM

‘Hope’ by Mariusca Moukengue

Like the last leaf that clings to the tree until the next season
Like the last rays of light before dusk
Like an oasis in the middle of the desert
The last feather
When the sparrow loses its feathers
The tiny girl that everyone’s playing with
The card that breaks the routine
The act that upsets
Penetrate and pierce the mysteries of the fatal
He is the voice that speaks to the heart when reason loses its mind
There’s a great deal of science that is still ignored and
Everything is in perpetual motion
It is this contradiction that makes you different
That puts you in the rank of those who break the pre-established fatalities
It’s that sense that makes you see a foetus in a sterile womb
An opportunity in misery
A fortune in the depths of a mystery
A glimmer of wisdom in the noggin of the stupid
A glass of wine on the table in a dry hut
The meaning that gives meaning to foolish dreams
He who says that daring is the only thing that really touches the sky
The force of attraction that draws our dreams into daylight
The escape door in a stranger’s eyes
The agreement before the hatchet of war was buried
Failure as a puzzle of the rage to succeed
He’s that curve that you visualize in the invisible
That potion you make for yourself with passion and no ingredients
That link you make between your gait and your daily life
That bridge you build between the impossible and the intrepid
Because the most important thing is the advent of our goals
He’s what you have left when you’ve lost everything
All endured but also all experienced
Proof that the source of your inspiration does not depend on earthlings or anything else
Your closest companion when your loved ones move away from you because
You’re broke
When your self-esteem isn’t worth a penny
He’s that strength that keeps you from getting depressed
Your passivity represses
To overcome the inconceivable
Make aspiration and hope rhyme because
The only limits that limit us are the ones that we set for ourselves
Since no one’s too small to do big things
No little thing is small enough to trigger great feats, so he
He’s called ‘HOPE’
Thank you, SLAM

'Rats-content-et racontez' by Djemislam

Parfois dans la vie, on ne sait quel choix faire
 Cette hésitation peut nous conduire droit dans un enfer
 Je vous jure que je suis une fille digne et enracinée dans mes racines
 Cependant, devenue le sac de frappe de la vie, j'ai courbé l'échine
 Beaucoup me traitent de vendeuse de piment
 Il faudrait dire qu'à ma vie, il manquait un peu de pigments
 Ils ignorent que derrière cette apparence de fille légère
 Se cache une victime des conséquences de la faucheuse
 Rats-content-et racontez
 Pendant que je tombe et me relève
 Vous, vous racontez

Ils me jugent sans savoir par quoi je suis passée
 Ma génitrice perdait ses formes à force de penser
 Plusieurs fois, elle a pensé clamser
 De toutes ces souffrances, elle était lassée
 Épuisée, elle a préféré se réfugier dans un cimetière
 Abandonnant sa petite fille de douze ans dans toute cette galère
 Pénurie de larmes dans mes yeux
 Réussir était mon seul vœux
 Rats-content-et racontez
 Pendant que je tombe et me relève
 Vous, vous racontez

Je voulais gravir les échelons
 Je voulais être la tête et non le talon
 Mais c'était chaud quand même
 J'ai fait face à des comportements très choquants même
 Celui qui était chargé de mon éducation
 S'est chargé de me déposséder de mon innocence
 Il m'a inscrite très tôt au cours de « viens je pisse entre tes jambes »
 Jusqu'à ce que de ma boîte à outils géométriques disparaissent mes règles³¹
 Rats-content-et racontez
 Pendant que je tombe et me relève
 Vous, vous racontez

Traduite en conseil de discipline, la rue m'a accueillie comme beaucoup d'autres
 Il fallait que j'achète de nouvelles règles
 J'avoue que j'ai très vite baissé les bras
 En me traînant chaque jour dans différents draps
 J'ai donné raison à mes détracteurs
 Mais je ne regrette rien, je suis juste tombée
 Aujourd'hui je suis debout, et eux me regardent bouche bée
 Comme quoi, à force de juger les gens, devant leur succès, on ne peut qu'être spectateur

³¹In English, this sentence translates literally as 'to the point that my rulers disappear from my box of geometry instruments'. The French '*règles*' means more than just 'rulers', however; it also means rules, regulations and menstrual periods. Djemi thus seems to refer to a loss of order and of innocence (because of the allusion to schooldays), as well as of physiological regularity.

Rats-content-et racontez
Pendant que je tombe et me relève
Vous, vous racontez

‘Rats-content-and-tell’ by Djemislam

Sometimes in life, you don’t know what choice to make
This hesitation can lead us straight to hell
I swear to you that I’m a dignified girl with my roots ingrained in me
However, having become the punching bag of life, I bowed my back
A lot of people call me a pepper saleswoman
You’d have to say my life was a little short of pigment
They don’t know that behind that light-girl look
Hides a victim of the consequences of the scythe
Rats-content-and-tell
While I fall and get up
You, you’re talking about

They judge me without knowing what I’ve been through
My progenitor was losing her shape because she thought
Several times, she thought about shutting down
Of all the suffering, she was tired of it
Exhausted, she preferred to take refuge in a cemetery
Abandoning her twelve-year-old daughter in all that trouble
Shortage of tears in my eyes
Succeeding was my only wish
Rats-content-and-tell
While I fall and get up
You, you’re talking about

I wanted to move up the ladder
I wanted to be the head and not the heel
But it was hot anyway
I’ve faced some very shocking behaviour even
The one who was in charge of my education
Has taken it upon himself to rob me of my innocence
He enrolled me very early in the course of ‘Come, I pee between your legs’
To the point that my rulers disappear from my box of geometry instruments
Rats-content-and-tell
While I fall and get up
You, you’re talking about

Translated into a disciplinary council, the street welcomed me like many others
I had to buy new regularity
I must confess that I gave up very quickly
Dragging me to different sheets every day
I’ve proven my critics right
But I don’t regret anything, I just fell
Today I’m standing there, and they’re gawking at me
Like what, by way of judging people, to their success, we can only be a spectator
Rats-content-and-tell
While I fall and get up
You, you’re talking about

Texts of pioneers**'Adam et Eve' by Amee**

Une expression fondée sur je ne sais quels critères
Transformée en courant de pensée, elle a fait le tour de la terre
S'est injustement imposée avec un succès planétaire
Parce que nous les concernées n'avons pas jugé utile de la faire taire

Nous avons laissé un jour, des hommes dire que la femme est le sexe faible
Et notre silence a laissé croire que nous étions réellement faibles
Nous nous sommes laissées intimider par leur apparente vigueur
Nous les avons laissé parler sans jamais leur en tenir rigueur

Sans prétendre avoir l'étoffe d'une propagandiste
Encore moins celle d'une grande activiste
Bien loin de moi l'idée de me la jouer polémiste
Mais ma condition m'assigne la tâche de condamner cette considération machiste!

Adam! La supériorité sur laquelle tu bases, elle est fondée sur quoi?
Est-ce due au fait que Eve a été conçue à partir de toi
Ou est-ce parce que tu t'es simplement fié à la gravité de ta voix?
Pour t'autoproclamer comme unique détenteur du pouvoir

Adam tu as décrété que Eve est faible parce qu'elle est plus sensible
Parce que l'égalité dans la différence, pour toi c'est inadmissible
Bien sûr toi Adam, tu n'as considéré que ta robustesse
Comme unique critère de distinction entre force et faiblesse

Adam si Eve est faible parce que créée à partir d'une de tes côtes
La nature elle-même ne vous aurait jamais permise de vivre côte-à-côte
Adam si c'était toi l'être le plus fort
Le tout puissant n'aurait pas jugé opportun de t'envoyer du renfort

Adam si c'était toi qui détenait la plus valeureuse de toutes les âmes
Tu n'aurais pas été endormi lorsque Dieu créait la femme
S'il était incontestable que la force n'appartenait qu'aux hommes
Adam tu n'aurais pas eu la faiblesse de goûter à cette pomme

Si Eve était faible Dieu ne lui aurait pas attribué la charge de l'enfantement
De toute manière Eve ne se contente plus de mettre au monde tes enfants
Eve, n'attend plus que tu reviennes de la chasse ou de la moisson
Parce qu'elle a appris à fabriquer des nasses pour pêcher du poisson

Eve a compris qu'elle n'était pas moins forte que toi
Eve comprit qu'elle pouvait elle aussi construire un toit
Adam tu t'es cru le plus valeureux et le plus fort n'est-ce pas
Mais la « Eve » que tu as crue faible est en train de t'emboîter le pas

Eve est devenue une amazone une savante, une impératrice une souveraine
Eve est devenue présidente, chancelière, scientifique Eve est devenue Reine!

Eve ne reste plus là pantoise ni dans l'ombre ni dans l'attente
Parce que Eve, que tu as connu est aujourd'hui une combattante!

L'être humain n'est qu'une pièce et nous en sommes les faces
Il n'y a pas lieu de se battre pour savoir qui aura la première place
Chaque être est aussi faible qu'il est fort
La femme n'est pas le sexe faible je le proclame haut et fort!

'Adam and Eve' by Amee

An expression based on I don't know what criteria
Transformed into a current of thought, it has travelled around the earth
Unjustly imposed itself with global success
Because we, the people concerned, did not consider it useful to silence it

One day we let men say that women are the weaker sex
And our silence led us to believe that we were really weak
We were intimidated by their apparent vigour
We let them speak without ever holding it against them

Without claiming to qualify as a propagandist
Even less to qualify as a great activist
Far from intending to be a polemicist
But my condition assigns me the task of condemning this macho consideration!

Adam! The superiority you are attributed, what is it based on?
Is it due to the fact that Eve was conceived from you
Or is it because you simply relied on the gravity of your voice?
To self-proclaim as the sole power holder

Adam, you have decreed that Eve is weak because she is more sensitive
Because equality in difference, for you it's inadmissible
Of course you, Adam, have only considered your robustness
As the sole criterion for distinguishing between strength and weakness

Adam, if Eve is weak because created from one of your ribs
Nature itself would never have allowed you to live side by side
Adam, if you were the strongest one
The Almighty would not have seen fit to send you reinforcements

Adam, if he was the one who held the most valiant of all souls
You wouldn't have been asleep when God created woman
If it was indisputable that strength belonged only to men
Adam, you wouldn't have had the weakness to taste that apple

If Eve was weak God would not have given her the burden of childbirth
In any case, Eve no longer settles for giving birth to your children
Eve no longer waits for you to come back from hunting or harvesting
Because she learned how to make nets for fishing

Eve understood that she was no less strong than you
Eve realized that she too could build a roof

Adam, you thought you were the bravest and strongest, didn't you?
But the 'Eve' that you thought weak is now following suit

Eve became an amazon, a scholar, an empress and a sovereign
Eve became president, chancellor, scientist, Eve became queen!
Eve is no longer speechless, or in the shadows or in waiting
Because Eve, whom you knew, is today a fighter!

The human being is but a single entity and we are its faces
There's no need to fight over who will take the first place
Every being is as weak as it is strong
Woman is not the weaker sex I proclaim loud and clear!

'Allez leur dire' by Malika la Slameuse

Allez leur dire qu'ils m'envient sans savoir ce que je vis
Ce que je donne à ce monde de zéro heure à minuit
Une amazone sur scène et des projecteurs qui s'en mêlent
Elle a les mots, elle a les vers, ce petit truc qui émerveille
Je vois ces sourires me dire Malika tu es mon idole
Mais combien d'entre vous savent que sous vos regards je m'immole?
Allez leur dire que j'ai une merveilleuse famille mais je n'ai pas le temps de les voir
Et quand je dis je t'aime à ma mère, elle peine à me croire
Les concerts, les voyages, mes poches sont peut-être humides
Mais j'en donne tellement aux autres que face à mes proches je suis vide
En amour slamazone a cessé d'y croire,
C'est une reine sans roi car ce dernier a peur de la gloire
Allez leur dire que, que j'ai cramé de l'intérieur
Que j'ai compris qu'il n'y a que ma foi qui me donne de la valeur
Allez ...
Dites à ces mêmes que je regrette qu'ils m'aiment tant
D'un amour fictif qui passera sûrement avec le temps
Allez leur dire que j'ai contemplé le bonheur une seconde
J'ai inscrit mon nom mais la liste d'attente est super longue
Allez leur dire que de MALIKA à SLAMAZONE il faut du temps
Et Inshallah mes vers feront le tour du monde

Allez leur dire, qu'ils ont des étoiles dans les yeux
Le rêve est permis mais je me sens seule
Allez leur dire, que la route est longue
Mais Inshallah un jour on pourra toucher les cieux
Allez leur dire, qu'on a tous des rêves
Mais pour les accomplir il faudra bien ouvrir les yeux
Allez leur dire
Moi j'ai tout mis dans les mains de Dieu

Allez leur dire que sur scène quand je ressens tout ce stress
Qu'ils arrêtent de me proposer de la drogue ou du sexe
De la couleur de ma peau à celle de mon foulard le naturel me décrit
Ma foi est présente même si souvent, mon cœur devient gris
Allez leur dire que je suis plus

Sensible aux critiques qu'aux hommages
Aux menaces qu'aux promesses et je sais que c'est bien dommage mais
Un ennemi déterminé vaut mieux qu'un ami qui dort
Au dernier jour il sera là pour vérifier que tu es bien mort
Allez leur dire que ...
J'ai des amis en or,
Qui ne me laisseront jamais tomber même avec mon accord
J'ai juste peur de le dire, peur d'avoir un jour tort
Car la confiance est perpétuelle et
Ne s'enferme pas dans un coffre-fort
Allez leur dire que de MALIKA à SLAMAZONE il faut du temps
Et Inshallah mes vers feront le tour du monde

Allez leur dire qu'ils ont des étoiles dans les yeux
Le rêve est permis mais je me sens seule
Allez leur dire, que la route est longue
Mais Inshallah un jour on pourra toucher les cieux
Allez leur dire, qu'on a tous des rêves
Mais pour les accomplir il faudra bien ouvrir les yeux
Allez leur dire

Moi j'ai tout mis dans les mains de Dieu
Je sais que le chemin est ambigu
Mais j'ai fait mon choix
C'est pour ça que ...
Je chante (4 fois), je slam (4 fois)
Je chante (4 fois), je slam (4 fois)
Allez leur dire, qu'ils ont des étoiles dans les yeux
Le rêve est permis mais je me sens seule
Allez leur dire ...
Allez leur dire, qu'on a tous des rêves
Mais pour les accomplir il faudra bien ouvrir les yeux
Allez leur dire
Moi j'ai tout mis dans les mains de Dieu
Allez leur dire, mes amis, sans savoir ce que je vis
Ce que je donne à ce monde de zéro heure à minuit
Une scène sur scène et des projecteurs qui se mêlent
Elle a les mots, elle a les vers, ce petit truc qui émerveille
Je vois ces sourires me dire Malika tu es mon idole
Vous vous-êtes informés sur plus que vos regards?
J'ai une merveilleuse famille mais je n'ai pas le temps de les voir
Et quand je dis je t'aime à ma mère, elle peine à me croire
Les concerts, les voyages, mes poches sont peut-être humides
Mais j'en ai tellement plus que les autres
En amour slamazone à toi d'y croire,
C'est une reine sans roi car ce dernier a peur de la gloire
Je suis cramée de l'intérieur
Que j'ai compris par tous les temps
Allez ...
Dieux à ces mômes que je regrette
D'un amour fictif qui passera sûrement avec le temps
Je vais contempler le bonheur une seconde
J'ai inscrit mon nom mais la liste d'attente est super longue

MALIKA à SLAMAZONE il faut du temps
Et Inshallah mes vers feront le tour du monde
Allez leur dire, ils ont des étoiles dans les yeux
Le rêve est permis mais je me sens seule
Allez leur dire, que la route est longue
Mais Inshallah un jour on pourra toucher les cieux

Allez leur dire, on a tous des rêves
Mais pour les accomplir il faudra bien ouvrir les yeux
Allez leur dire
Moi j'ai tout mis dans les mains de Dieu
Allez leur dire que sur scène quand je ressens tout ce stress
Qu'ils arrêtent de me proposer de la drogue ou du sexe
De la couleur de ma peau à celle de mon foulard le naturel me décrit
Ma foi est présente même si souvent, mon cœur devient gris
Allez leur dire que je suis plus sensible aux critiques
Aux menaces a priori et je sais que c'est bien dommage mais
Un ennemi déterminé
Au dernier jour il sera là pour vérifier que tu es bien mort
Allez leur dire que ...
J'ai des amis en or,
Qui ne me laissent jamais tomber même avec mon accord
J'ai juste peur de le dire, peur d'avoir un jour tort
Car la confiance est perpétuelle et
Ne se passe pas dans un coffre-fort
Allez-y que de MALIKA à SLAMAZONE il faut du temps
Et Inshallah mes vers feront le tour du monde
Allez leur dire ils ont des étoiles dans les yeux
Le rêve est permis mais je me sens seule
Allez leur dire, que la route est longue
Mais Inshallah un jour on pourra toucher les cieux

Allez leur dire, on a tous des rêves
Mais pour les accomplir il faudra bien ouvrir les yeux
Allez leur dire
Moi j'ai tout mis dans les mains de Dieu
Je sais que le chemin est ambigu
Mais j'ai fait mon choix
C'est pour ça que ...
Je chante (4 fois), je slam (4 fois)
Je chante (4 fois), je slam (4 fois)
Allez leur dire, ils ont des étoiles dans les yeux
Le rêve est permis mais je me sens seule
Allez leur dire ...
Allez leur dire, on a tous des rêves
Mais pour les accomplir il faudra bien ouvrir les yeux
Allez leur dire
Moi j'ai tout mis dans les mains de Dieu.

‘Go tell them’ by Malika the Slameuse

Go tell them that they envy me without knowing what I’m going through
What I give to this world from midnight to midnight
An amazon on stage and spotlights that mingle with it
She has the words, she has the verses, this little thing that amazes
I see these smiles saying to me, Malika you are my idol
But how many of you know that in front of your eyes I’m setting myself on fire?
Go tell them that I have a marvellous family but I don’t have time to see them
And when I say I love you to my mother, she finds it hard to believe me
Concerts, travels, I am visibly tired
But I give so much to the others that in front of my loved ones I am empty
Ceased to believe in slamazon love
She is a queen without a king, because the latter is afraid of glory
Go tell them that, that I burned from the inside out
That I have understood that it is only my faith that gives me value
Come on ...
Tell those kids I wish they didn’t love me so much
With a fictitious love that will surely pass with time
Go tell them that I contemplated happiness for a second
I registered my name but the waiting list is super-long
Go tell them that from MALIKA to SLAMAZON it takes time
And, God willing, my verses will go around the world

Go tell them that they have stars in their eyes
Dreams are allowed but I feel alone
Go tell them that the road is long
But, God willing, one day we can touch the skies
Go tell them that we all have dreams
But in order to accomplish them, we will have to open our eyes wide
Go tell them
I have put everything in God’s hands

Go tell them that on stage when I’m feeling all this stress
That they stop offering me drugs or sex
From the colour of my skin to the colour of my scarf, the natural describes me
My faith is present even if often my heart turns grey
Go tell them that I am more
Sensitive to criticism than to tributes
To threats more than to promises, and I know it’s a shame but
A distinct enemy is better than a sleeping friend
On the last day he’ll be there to make sure you’re dead.
Go tell them that
I have golden friends
Who will never let me down even with my consent
I’m just afraid to say it, afraid I’ll be wrong one day
Because trust is perpetual and
Does not lock in a safe
Go tell them that from MALIKA to SLAMAZON the weather is good
And, God willing, my verses will go around the world

Go tell them they have stars in their eyes
Dreams are allowed but I feel alone

Go tell them that the road is long
 But, God willing, one day we can touch the skies
 Go tell them that we all have dreams
 But in order to accomplish them, we will have to open our eyes wide
 Go tell them

I have put everything in God's hands
 I know that the road is ambiguous
 But I have made my choice
 That's why...
 I sing (four times), I slam (four times)
 I sing (four times), I slam (four times)
 Go tell them that they have stars in their eyes
 Dreams are allowed but I feel alone
 Go tell them
 Go tell them that we all have dreams
 But in order to accomplish them, we will have to open our eyes wide
 Go tell them
 I have put everything in God's hands
 Go tell them, my friends, without knowing what I'm going through
 What I give to this world from midnight to midnight
 A scene on stage and spotlights that blend together
 She has the words, she has the verses, this little thing that amazes
 I see these smiles saying to me Malika you are my idol
 Have you informed yourself on more than looks?
 I have a wonderful family but I don't have time to see them
 And when I say I love you to my mother, she finds it hard to believe me
 Concerts, travels, I am visibly tired
 But I have so much more than the others
 I'm in love with slamazon but it's hard to believe in it
 She is a queen without a king, because the latter is afraid of glory
 I'm burned from the inside out
 That I have understood in all weathers
 Come on ...
 Gods to those kids I miss
 With a fictitious love that will surely pass with time
 I'm going to contemplate happiness for a second
 I registered my name but the waiting list is super-long
 MALIKA to SLAMAZON takes time
 And, God willing, my verses play around the world
 Go tell them, they have stars in their eyes
 Dreams are allowed but I feel alone
 Go tell them that the road is long
 But, God willing, one day we can touch the skies

Go tell them, we all have dreams
 But in order to do so, you have to open your eyes
 Go tell them
 I have everything in God's hands
 Go tell them that on stage when I'm feeling all this stress
 That they stop offering me drugs or sex
 From the colour of my skin to the colour of my scarf, the natural describes me
 My faith is present even if often my heart turns grey

Go tell them that I am more sensitive to criticism
Threats a priori and I know it's a shame but
A determined enemy
On the last day he'll be there to make sure you're dead
Go tell them that
I have friends of gold
Who never let me down even with my agreement
I'm just afraid to say it, afraid I'll one day have
Because trust is perpetual and
Does not take place in a safe
It's a long way from MALIKA to SLAMAZON
And, God willing, my verses play around the world
Go tell them they have stars in their eyes
Dreams are allowed but I feel alone
Go tell them that the road is long
But, God willing, one day we can touch the skies

Go tell them, we all have dreams
But in order to do so, you have to open your eyes
Go tell them
I have put everything in God's hands
I know that the path is ambiguous
But I have made my choice
This is why we have ...
I sing (four times), I slam (four times)
I sing (four times), I slam (four times)
Go tell them, they have stars in their eyes
Dreams are allowed but I feel alone
Go tell them
Go tell them, we all have dreams
But in order to accomplish them, you have to open your eyes
Go tell them
I have everything in God's hands