



**TRANSIT
BOOKS**

**FALL
WINTER
2017**

MASTHEAD

Adam Z. Levy, PUBLISHER

Ashley Nelson Levy, PUBLISHER

Justin Carder, DESIGNER

Liza St. James, EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Molly Ashby, EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Paola Vergara, INTERN

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Susan Bernofsky

Andrew Eisenman

Jennifer Hastings

Alex Zucker

Jeffrey Zuckerman

Transit Books is a nonprofit publisher of international and American literature, based in Oakland, California. Founded in 2015, Transit Books is committed to the discovery and promotion of enduring works that carry readers across borders and communities. Visit us online to learn more about our forthcoming titles, events, and opportunities to support our mission.

TRANSITBOOKS.ORG

TRANSIT BOOKS

FALL
WINTER
2017

TRANSIT BOOKS

table of contents

FALL WINTER 2017

WIOLETTA GREG SWALLOWING MERCURY
CARLOS YUSHIMITO LESSONS FOR A CHILD WHO ARRIVES LATE
ANDRÉS BARBA THE RIGHT INTENTION

SELECT BACKLIST

ANDRÉS BARBA SUCH SMALL HANDS
JENNIFER NANSUBUGA MAKUMBI . . . KINTU

September 12, 2017

Swallowing Mercury

Wioletta Greg

TRANSLATED FROM THE POLISH BY

Eliza Marciniak

Longlisted for the Man Booker International Prize 2017

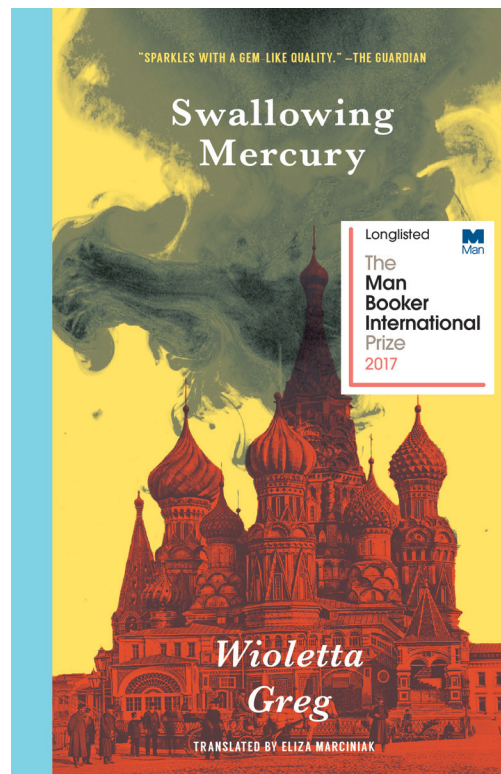
In this celebrated debut from prize-winning poet Wioletta Greg, Wiola looks back on her youth in a close-knit, agricultural community in 1980s Poland. Her memories are precise, intense, distinctive, sensual: a playfulness and whimsy rise up in the gossip of the village women, rumored visits from the Pope, and the locked room in the dressmaker's house, while political unrest and predatory men cast shadows across this bright portrait. In prose that sparkles with a poet's touch, Wioletta Greg's debut animates the strange wonders of growing up.

"The book's appearance in the U.S. is a great gift . . . Greg's masterful first novel is charming, seductive, and sinister by turns."—*Kirkus Reviews* (Starred Review)

"This enchantingly elliptical fiction debut by British-domiciled Polish poet Wioletta Greg sparkles with a gem-like quality."—*The Guardian*

"Wioletta Greg's first novel shines with a surreal and unsettling vigor. As an award-winning poet, Greg writes with a lyricism that brings alive the charms and dangers of Wiola's life."—*The Financial Times*

"*Swallowing Mercury* is both magical and sinister, a memoir and a fairytale and, like Wiola, completely captivating."—*The Irish News*



*The wind
puffed out
her jacket
and lifted
it up like
a bright
blue
lantern.*

Fiction, 146 pages
Paperback, \$15.95 • 5.25 x 8
978-1-945492-04-4
Rights Held: US
Agent: Portobello
Ebook Available

WIOLETTA GREG is a Polish writer; she was born in a small village in 1974 in the Jurassic Highland of Poland. In 2006, she left Poland and moved to the UK. Between 1998–2012 she published six poetry volumes. Her works have been translated into English, Catalan, French, Spanish and Welsh.

ELIZA MARCINIAK is an editor and translator. She lives in London.

an excerpt from

SWALLOWING MERCURY

IN THE SAME YEAR THAT A RUMOR spread through Hektary that the Pope would drive past our village, my father took over the running of the farm and, to my grandmother's dismay, began to introduce reforms, gradually turning our homestead into an unruly and exuberant zoo. It wasn't just beehives and cages with goldfinches, canaries and rabbits, or a dovecote in the attic, where clumsy nestlings hatched out of delicate eggs that looked like table-tennis balls. In the middle of February, right after my birthday, wanting to cheer me up after the loss of Blacky, Dad pulled out of his jacket a little soggy, squeaking ball of fluff, which by the warmth of the stove gradually began to turn into a several-weeks-old Tatra sheepdog. We called him Bear.

That spring, my father got hold of an excavator and widened the pond behind our house, close to the road. My mother forbade me from going anywhere near it, but after she left for work I would sneak out to what now looked like a trapezium-shaped clay-pit pool. I would crouch by the mound of excavated soil, holding on to the stubs of whitewashed trees or clumps of sweet flag surrounded by frogspawn, and I would watch the wrinkles made on the water by pond skaters.

One Sunday just before the arrival of the Pope, my father handed me the binoculars and told me to watch the nearby field. "A good opportunity came up, so I got you a number in

exchange for a liter of vodka," he whispered, pointing at the farthest meadow, sprinkled with dandelions. "That's where we'll build a new house."

I didn't know what this "getting a number" involved, but I had come to think that since his return from military detention, Dad had been living in two houses: one was a stone ruin wobbling unsteadily over its limestone foundations, while the other, which for years had been forming in his head, was a clean brick house with central heating, an attic scented with resin and a shiny bathroom tiled from floor to ceiling.

That evening, I noticed that my grandmother had prepared a cake and had washed the floor with diluted vinegar, which usually heralded the imminent arrival of guests. Sure enough, shortly afterwards, women from the village began to arrive: my grandmother's two sisters, Zofia and Salomea, almost all of our female neighbors from Hektary and, to my surprise, Stasikowa the dressmaker, who seldom dropped in on anyone because she was buried up to her ears in work. Including Mum, there were probably a dozen women at our house. They had all brought cloth pouches and farm sieves, which were covered with kerchiefs.

November 14, 2017

Lessons for a Child Who Arrives Late

Carlos Yushimito

TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH BY

Valerie Miles

A tin man ponders the mysteries of death as a heart starts to take charge of his limbs, while in a place not so far away a boy tries to play the piano like Margarita, the teacher's cruel and beautiful niece. In stories filled with violence and tenderness, love and disconnection, Carlos Yushimito's long-anticipated debut explores the subtle space of estrangement.

"Carlos Yushimito is one of the few writers in Latin American literature today creating new ways to look at the world."

—**Yuri Herrera, author of *Signs Preceding the End of the World***

"Yushimito is a rising star in contemporary Spanish fiction."

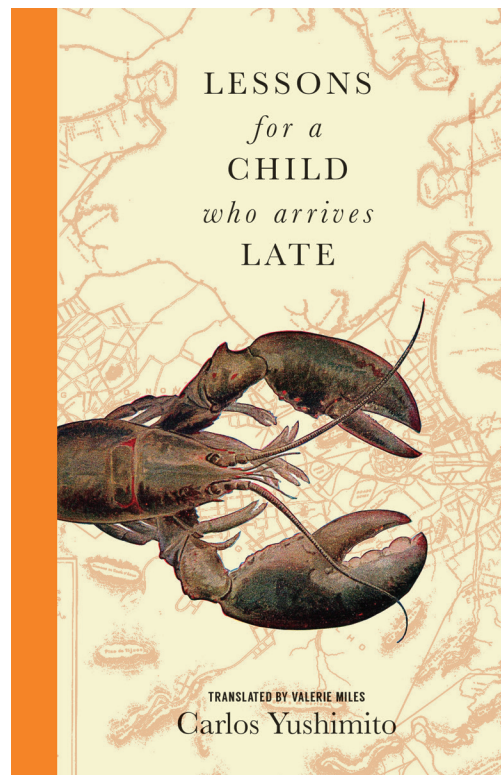
—**Carles Geli, *El País***

"The new generation is represented by Carlos Yushimito, the author of a fascinating and unique set of stories set in an imagined, timeless Brazil constructed from hearsay and literature."

—***Diario El Comercio***

"A unique breath of fresh air in an everyday setting. Genuine, necessary writing."

—***La Vanguardia***



*I could
feel his
sour,
cachaça
breath on
my ear.*

Fiction, 246 pages
Paperback, \$15.95 • 5.25 x 8
978-1-945492-05-1
Rights Held: World English
Agent: Schavelzon Graham
Ebook Available

CARLOS YUSHIMITO was born in Lima, Peru, in 1977. In 2008 he was chosen as one of the best young writers in Latin America by Casa de las Americas and the Centro Onelio Cardoso de Cuba; and in 2010, by Granta as one of the Best Young Spanish Language Novelists. He recently joined the University of California, Riverside, faculty after receiving a PhD from Brown University.

VALERIE MILES is an American writer, editor, and translator who lives in Barcelona. In 2003, she co-founded Granta en español. She writes and reviews for the *New York Times*, *The Paris Review*, and *El País*.

an excerpt from

LESSONS FOR A CHILD WHO ARRIVES LATE

I COULD FEEL HIS SOUR, *CACHAÇA* BREATH on my ear as I slipped out of my uniform in the stockroom. It was Bautista, the manager. His face was dripping sweat. He must have been fooling around already, I supposed, as usual, when I saw how he screwed up his mouth to fling bumbling words at me. It wasn't strange for me to be taken with a strange sense of embarrassment. A sneaking sense of guilt. For a few seconds, I felt as though someone were watching a slow motion shot of two lobsters copulating and there I was standing by his side, in front of twenty television screens broadcasting the same image. Slowly. So very slowly. Zé Antunes says the best sales pitch for an appliance store like ours is to have all the televisions tuned in to the Discovery Channel.

"It's like this," he says, imagine we air a rock concert or a soccer game: parents will associate the television set with drugs or poorly employed leisure time. If we put a movie on, a forty something married woman with university age children will remember with nostalgia and unwitting resentment, that her husband rarely takes her to the movies anymore.

Zé Antunes says the educational channels boost the chances of clinching a sale, and it must be true because parents always consider education to be a good investment, and they'll never skimp where it's concerned.

"That's the sweet spot we have to target: the jugular vein of sales," he asserts.

Zé Antunes knows a lot about the animal kingdom, though not so much about sales and marketing. That's why I try to pay attention to what he says, soak up all that wisdom of his.

With Bautista it's different, though. Watching his overblown gestures, almost certain his atrophied nose had snorted a good bit of blow that afternoon, I chewed on his idea of happiness and the good deal he must have struck with the Draco distributor. Common knowledge says that one thing leads to another. And Bautista really knows the business because his father is the owner, and one of the richest and most influential men in *Río de Janeiro*.

"I have a new get-up for you tonight, Toninho."

Patting me on the back cozily, Bautista remained alert, not realizing that I had no desire to spend another debauched night at his side. That's why, even though he insisted, I preferred not to raise my head and confirm or deny the remark. I just kept on with my whimsical striptease till I recovered my human shape again.

He finally gave up. Maybe he was intimidated by my self-possession. He pointed a finger pistol at me, and squeezed the trigger in his bloodshot eyes:

"I'll wait for you out in the car."

February 13, 2018

The Right Intention

Andrés Barba

TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH BY

Lisa Dillman

Nothing is simple for the men and women in Andrés Barba's stories. As they go about their lives, they are each tested by a single, destructive obsession. A runner puts his marriage at risk while training for a marathon; a teenager can no longer stand the sight of meat following her parents' divorce; a man suddenly fixates on the age difference between him and his younger male lover. In four tightly wound novellas, Andrés Barba establishes himself as a master of the form.

"Every once in a while a novel does not record reality but creates a whole new reality, one that casts a light on our darkest feelings. Kafka did that. Bruno Schulz did that. Now the Spanish writer Andrés Barba has done it with the terrifying *Such Small Hands*."

—Edmund White author of *Our Young Man*

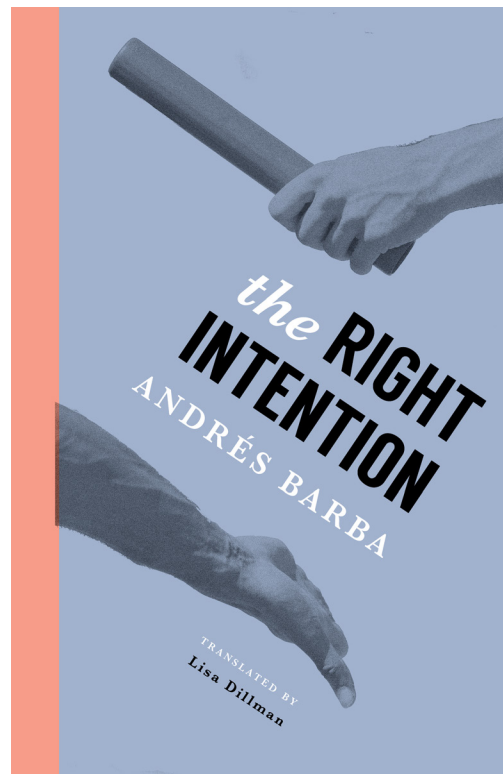
"Barba is intensely alive to the shifting, even Janus-faced nature of strong feeling."—*San Francisco Chronicle*

"Each one of these pages is exquisite."—*Music & Literature*

"A lyrically rich and devastating portrayal of adolescent struggle."
—*ZZZZYVA*

"A darkly evocative work about young girls, grief, and the unsettling, aching need to belong."—*Kirkus Reviews (Starred Review)*

"A novel you won't soon forget."—*Publishers Weekly*



He enjoyed that in the same way he enjoyed his solitude, his collection of consolations.

Fiction, 231 pages
Paperback, \$15.95 • 5.25 x 8
978-1-945492-06-6
Rights Held: World English
Ebook Available

ANDRÉS BARBA is the one the most lauded contemporary Spanish writers. He is the author of twelve books, including *August*, *October* and *Such Small Hands*. In addition to literary fiction, he has written essays, poems, books of photography, and translations of De Quincey and Melville.

LISA DILLMAN won the 2016 Best Translated Book Award for her translation of Yuri Herrera's *Signs Preceding the End of the World*. She translates from Spanish and Catalan and teaches in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Emory University.

an excerpt from

THE RIGHT INTENTION

SIMPLY, ALMOST PAINLESSLY, HE HAD BECOME resigned to the fact that he himself would never demand the things the personals were asking for, and although on a couple of occasions he had contracted a rent boy and brought him up to his apartment, the fact that he had to pay, the whole act of the wallet, the question, the exchange, turned him off to such a degree that he would then become uncomfortable at how long he took and once or twice ended up asking the guy to leave out of sheer disgust.

The dog barked and he found his shoes to take him down for a walk. He left the light on and put on his coat.

Monday everything looked the same from the bank's office window. A Coca-Cola sign flashed on and off, as did the recently hung lights announcing the imminent advent of Christmas. He had heard something about an office party and, although he'd said he would go—declining would have launched a desperate search for excuses—they knew, as he did, that it had been years since he had last liked Alberto's jokes (always the same, whispered to the new secretary or the newest female graduate to be hired), Andrés's toasts and Sandra's conversations about the kids. The fact that he was the oldest employee at the office allowed him to decline those invitations, ignore them without having to worry about subse-

quent hatreds that were felt but never expressed. He enjoyed that in the same way that he enjoyed his solitude, his collection of consolations and little excesses (Napoleon cognac, fancy cigarettes, a weekly dinner at an expensive restaurant) that he had grown used to and that led him to grant that he was a reasonably happy man. Jokes about his homosexuality told in hushed tones at the office met with his indifference, making him invulnerable, and although his exterior coldness had begun as a survival technique, now he really did feel comfortable in it, like someone who finally finds a warm place to take refuge and decides to make do, without yearning for anything better.

TRANSIT BOOKS

**SELECT
BACKLIST**

April 11, 2017

Such Small Hands

Andrés Barba

TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH BY

Lisa Dillman

AFTERWORD BY

Edmund White

Life changes at the orphanage the day seven-year-old Marina shows up. She is different from the other girls: at once an outcast and object of fascination. As Marina struggles to find her place, she invents a game whose rules are dictated by a haunting violence. Written in hypnotic, lyrical prose, alternating between Marina's perspective and the choral we of the other girls, *Such Small Hands* evokes the pain of loss and the hunger for acceptance.

"Every once in a while a novel does not record reality but creates a whole new reality, one that casts a light on our darkest feelings. Kafka did that. Bruno Schulz did that. Now the Spanish writer Andrés Barba has done it with the terrifying *Such Small Hands*."

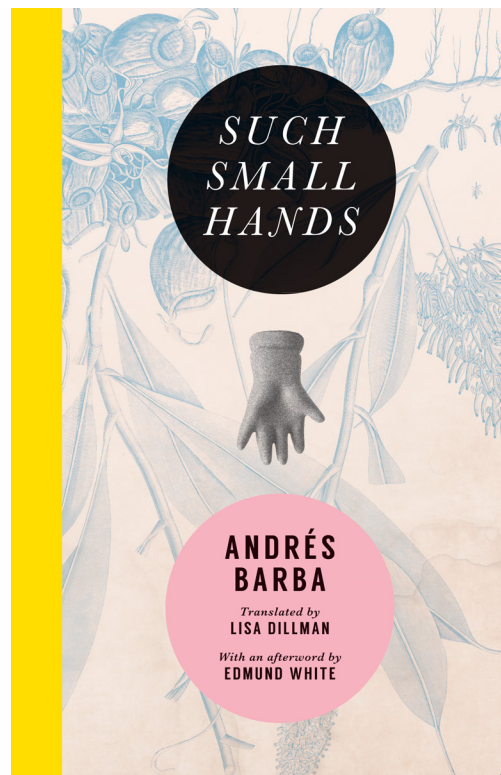
—**Edmund White** author of *Our Young Man*

"Barba is intensely alive to the shifting, even Janus-faced nature of strong feeling."—*San Francisco Chronicle*

"Each one of these pages is exquisite."—*Music & Literature*

"A lyrically rich and devastating portrayal of adolescent struggle."
—**ZYZZYVA**

"A darkly evocative work about young girls, grief, and the unsettling, aching need to belong."—*Kirkus Reviews* (Starred Review)



*It was
once a
happy
city; we
were once
happy
girls.*

Fiction, 112 pages
Paperback, \$15.95 • 5.25 x 8
978-1-945492-00-6
Rights Held: World English
Rights Sold: UK / Common-
wealth (Portobello)
Ebook Available

ANDRÉS BARBA is the one the most lauded contemporary Spanish writers. He is the author of twelve books, including *August*, *October* and *Such Small Hands*. In addition to literary fiction, he has written essays, poems, books of photography, and translations of De Quincey and Melville.

LISA DILLMAN won the 2016 Best Translated Book Award for her translation of Yuri Herrera's *Signs Preceding the End of the World*. She translates from Spanish and Catalan and teaches in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Emory University.

an excerpt from

SUCH SMALL HANDS

IT WAS ONCE A HAPPY CITY; we were once happy girls. They used to say: do this, do that, and we did it, we turned our hands, we drew, we laughed; they called us the faithful city, the enchanting city. We had proud eyes, strong hands. People thought we were just girls then. We used to touch the fig tree in the garden and say, “This is the castle.” And then we walked to the black sculpture and said, “This is the devil.” And then we’d go back to the orphanage door and say, “This is the mountain.” Those were the three things: castle, devil, mountain.

That was the triangle you could play in.

And there was the hall mirror.

And our summer dresses.

And the night they changed our sheets and it felt so good to climb into fresh-smelling beds.

And the days we got sanjacobos for lunch: breaded fried ham and cheese.

It was as if we were all one mouth eating the ham, as if our cheese were all the same cheese: wholesome and creamy and tasting the same to all of us. The cheese was happiness. But then we had class after lunch, and it was long. And the time between lunch and class, and then between class and break time, passed slowly, suspended in the air.

When class was over we liked to play. We’d sing as the jump rope hit the sand with a dull crack. To get in the circle you had to pay attention, had to calculate the jump rope’s arc, its speed, adapt your rhythm to the chorus. Once you were in you felt exposed, tense, as if each time the rope cracked down, it hit your mouth, or your stomach. With each thump you went around the world, instantly, quick as lightning; you had to make it. And hide-and-seek: you’d crouch behind a tree and then become part of the tree; if you didn’t move you were invisible. You had to stay there, kneeling, feeling the coarse playground sand digging into your knees, leaving marks on your skin, until someone called your name, and then you had to run to base, where you were safe. What a strange word: safe.

One afternoon the adult said, “There’s a new girl coming. Don’t be scared.”

But we weren’t then. At first we weren’t scared.

Before Marina ever arrived, first came speculation.

We didn’t know any other way to love.

May 16, 2017

Kintu

Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi

INTRODUCTION BY
AARON BADY

Longlisted for the Etisalat Prize for Debut African Fiction

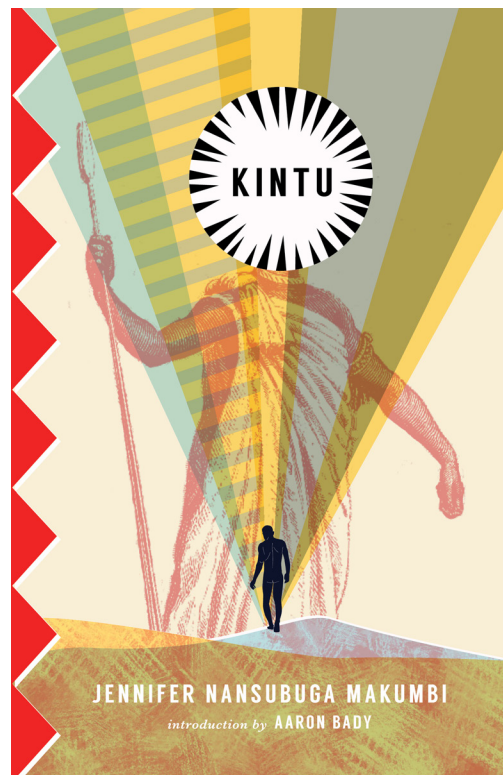
Winner of the Commonwealth Short Story Prize

First published in Kenya in 2014 to critical and popular acclaim, *Kintu* is a modern classic, a multilayered narrative that reimagines the history of Uganda through the cursed bloodline of the Kintu clan. Divided into six sections, the novel begins in 1750, when Kintu Kidda sets out for the capital to pledge allegiance to the new leader of the kingdom of Buganda. Along the way, he unleashes a curse that will plague his family for generations. In an ambitious tale of a clan and a nation, Makumbi weaves together the stories of Kintu's descendants as they seek to break from the burden of their shared past and reconcile the inheritance of tradition and the modern world that is their future.

“A masterpiece of cultural memory, *Kintu* is elegantly poised on the crossroads of tradition and modernity.”—*Publishers Weekly* (Starred Review)

“Reminiscent of Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, this work will appeal to lovers of African literature.”—*Library Journal* (Starred Review)

“Passionate, original, and sharply observed, the novel decenters colonialism and makes Ugandan experience primary.”—Book Riot



*A
long
and
perilous
journey
lay
ahead.*

Fiction, 443 pages
Paperback, \$16.95 • 5.25 x 8
978-1-945492-01-3
Rights Held: North America
Ebook Available

JENNIFER NANSUBUGA MAKUMBI, a Ugandan novelist and short story writer, has a PhD from Lancaster University, where she now teaches. Her first novel, *Kintu*, won the Kwani? Manuscript Project in 2013 and was longlisted for the Etisalat Prize in 2014. Her story “Let’s Tell This Story Properly” won the 2014 Commonwealth Short Story Prize.

AARON BADY is a writer in Oakland, California, and an editor at *The New Inquiry*.

an excerpt from

KINTU

IT WAS ODD THE RELIEF Kintu felt as he stepped out of his house. A long and perilous journey lay ahead. At the end of the journey was a royal storm—the princes had been fighting for the throne again and weapons had not yet been put away. He could be carried back, his head severed from his shoulders—commoners tended to lose their heads when royals fought. Yet, Kintu Kidda, Ppookino of Buddu Province, was glad to step away from his home.

It was Babirye, his other wife.

Kintu had last seen her in the morning, taking the goats to feed on banana peels. Her eyes were angry and he had looked away. Kintu had never found respite in Babirye's eyes, not even on their wedding day. He thought of the fabled men who unwittingly married spirits but then dismissed the thought. Babirye was not a demon, just a dreadful woman. He shooed her out of his mind. It would be unwise to carry the extra weight of a glowering wife on this journey.

He paused at the threshold of Mayirika, his principal residence. The world was still. A spray of young stars streaked the sky on his right. On the left, a few lone ones, elderly, blinked tiredly. Around him, the midnight air was cold and calm. Darkness was thick. Fireflies tried to puncture it—on, off, on, off—in vain. Kintu was satisfied with the conditions. It was

the reason why he and his men were setting off at midnight. They would make good distance before dawn broke and then there would be a short space when the sun was still lethargic. At midday when the sun started to bake the world, they would stop for the day and sleep until midnight when they would set off again.

From where he stood, Kintu could hear Nnondo, his headman, briefing the men below the courtyard, at the gate. He could not see them but he felt the feverish excitement of the younger men, probably impatient to start the journey. The older men were good at masking their excitement. Kintu touched his short spear, which he kept in a sheath near his stomach. He adjusted his barkcloth and then the leopard skin on top. He stepped away from his threshold.

As he walked across the vast courtyard, two figures scurried out of the older boys' house. His sons, Kalema and Baale, were late and had missed the briefing. Kalema was going to find work in the capital while Baale wanted to accompany his brother until daybreak when he would return home. Kintu shook his head as they ran past.

“You two should have been women.”

As his men closed the outer reed gate, something made Kintu look back. The three main houses, now silhouettes, were silent. As instructed, everyone, including his twin wives Nnakato and Babirye, children and servants, were in bed. Yet, he felt someone, something spying. He hesitated a moment then stepped into the journey.

GENERAL INQUIRIES

Transit Books
2301 Telegraph Ave
Oakland CA 94612

editors@transitbooks.org • transitbooks.org

BOOKSTORE TRADE ORDERS

Transit Books titles are sold and distributed
throughout North America by:

Consortium Book Sales & Distribution
34 Thirteenth Ave, NE, Suite 101
Minneapolis, MN 55413

T: (800) 283-3572

F: (800) 351-5073

cbsd.com

PERSONAL ORDERS

Individuals can purchase Transit Books titles through our website,
bookstores everywhere, and all major online retailers.

PRESS AND MARKETING INQUIRIES

To request advance or review copies of any of our titles, please
email us at editors@transitbooks.org. Along with your request,
please include your affiliation and provide links to previous re-
views, if available.

ACADEMIC DESK COPY REQUESTS

Desk copy requests should be sent to editors@transitbooks.org.
Please include the name of the professor, course description, and
expected enrollment.



**Publishing enduring works
that carry readers across borders
and communities.**

TRANSITBOOKS.ORG

