



TRANSIT BOOKS

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SUMMER
2017

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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.

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Dear Reader,

Transit Books has been a longtime dream of ours. For years, when we lived in New York, we noticed a divide between readers of domestic and international literature, and set out to build a carefully curated list of books that might successfully bridge that gap. Two years since our founding, our mission continues to steer our ship: to publish enduring works that carry readers across borders and communities—through new forms, political landscapes, language—at home and abroad.

For our first year of publishing, we're thrilled to introduce award-winning work from Spain, Uganda, Poland, and Peru. April will see the release of Andrés Barba's haunting novel *Such Small Hands* (trans. Lisa Dillman), with an afterword by Edmund White. Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi's debut novel, *Kintu*, which reimagines the history of Uganda through the cursed bloodline of the Kintu clan, follows in May. Critic Aaron Bady calls it "a masterpiece, the great Ugandan novel you didn't know you were waiting for." Over the next few years, we plan to grow to eight titles per year.

We believe that the power of literature lies in its ability to bridge cultural divides, deepen our literary and political imaginations, and educate the heart. We look forward to sharing our first titles with you.

Adam and Ashley Levy
Publishers, TRANSIT BOOKS



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.

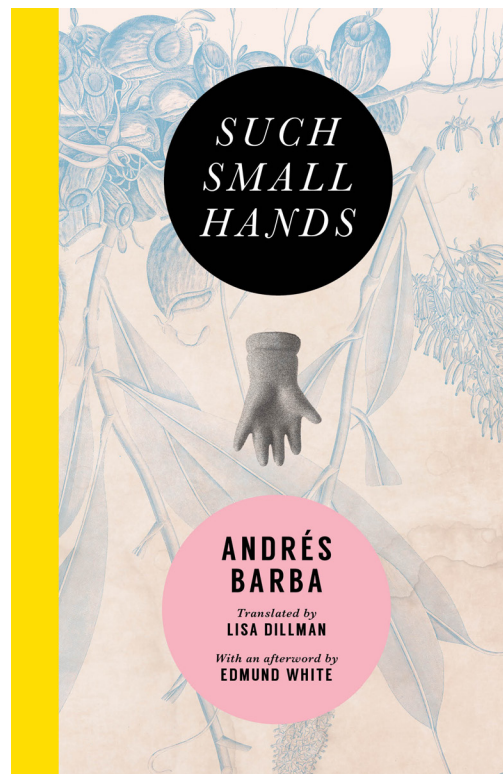
“Every once in a while a novel does not record reality but creates a whole new reality, one that casts a light on our darkest feelings. Kafka did that. Bruno Schulz did that. Now the Spanish writer Andrés Barba has done it with the terrifying *Such Small Hands*.”

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

“Barba explores what the dynamics of an orphanage reveal about any insular community and the trials of its inevitable outcast.”

—**Idra Novey**, author of *Ways to Disappear*

“Andrés Barba needs no advice. He has already created a world that is perfectly realized and has a craft that is inappropriate for a writer of his age.”—**Mario Vargas Llosa**, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature



*It was
once a
happy
city; we
were once
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Fiction, 112 pages
Paperback, \$15.95 • 5.25 x 8
978-1-945492-00-6
Rights Held: World English
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ANDRÉS BARBA is the one the most lauded contemporary Spanish writers. He is the author of twelve books, including *August*, *October* and *Rain Over Madrid*. 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

Winner of the Kwani? Manuscript Project

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.

"*Kintu* is a masterpiece, an absolute gem, the great Ugandan novel you didn't know you were waiting for."—**Aaron Bady**, *The New Inquiry*

"A work of bold imagination and clear talent."
—**Ellah Allfrey**, editor of *Africa39*



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long
and
perilous
journey
lay
ahead.*

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Paperback, \$16.95 • 5.25 x 8
978-1-945492-01-3
Rights Held: North America
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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.

COMING SOON

Swallowing Mercury

Wioletta Greg

+

Lessons for a Child Who Arrives Late

Carlos Yushimito



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