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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi wins Kwani? Manuscript Prize

Uganda's Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi has won the Kwani? Manuscript Project, a new literary prize for unpublished fiction by African writers, for her novel *The Kintu Saga*.

2nd place has been awarded to Liberia's Saah Millimono for *One Day I Will Write About This War* and 3rd place to Kenya's Timothy Kiprop Kimutai for *The Water Spirits*.

Winner Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi said:

"It is hard for me to express my joy because sometimes language can be limited - even for a writer. When you have been writing as obsessively and for as long as I have, winning a competition like this one is like stepping out in the sun after a protracted period in the dark."

The winners were selected from a shortlist of seven by a high-profile panel of judges chaired by award-winning Sudanese novelist Jamal Mahjoub and including Deputy Editor of Granta magazine Ellah Wakatama Allfrey, leading scholar of African literature Professor Simon Gikandi, Chairman of Kenyatta University's Literature Department Dr. Mbugua wa Mungai, editor of Zimbabwe's Weaver Press Irene Staunton and internationally renowned Nigerian writer Helon Habila.

Chair of Judges, Jamal Mahjoub said:

"All three titles chosen by the judges display an urge to engage with the complexities of modern day Africa. They tackle issues such as civil war, the struggle against poverty, and the continent's historical heritage, among other themes. As a manuscript award this prize naturally seeks to focus less on finding a perfect finished product than work which shows literary promise as well as a breadth and depth of vision. The winner and two runners up all reflect these values.

The winner, **Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi's** *The Kintu Saga*, is an ambitious attempt to bring the history of Uganda into the present lives of the novel's protagonists. Through successive generations, the author sketches out the continued relevance of the past in the present.

In 2nd place, **Saah Millimono's** *One Day I Will Write About This War* provides a moving portrait of a young boy in Liberia who finds the hardships of his life relieved by the family of a girl he meets at school. Their lives are turned upside down with the arrival of the civil war.

In 3rd place, **Timothy Kiprop Kimutai's** *The Water Spirits* shows great maturity in its depiction of characters and the relationships between a single mother and her two children. The

author deftly manages to tread a fine line between the state of the mind and the world of the imagination.”

Judge, Ellah Wakatama Allfrey said:

"Reading the entries for the Kwani Manuscript Project afforded the greatest of luxuries - a sneak peek at the publishing possibilities of a continent, the novels that will, all good things permitting, find their way to readers in the near future. There were historical novels, domestic-focused dramas, tales of war and of love. Even a steam-punk narrative that especially delighted this reader's heart. The aim had been to prod the ambitions of writers across Africa and her diaspora and the ambition, talent and skill exhibited in the long list was exhilarating. Even beyond the very deserving winner and the two runners-up, there are books on the longlist that deserve to find their readers in the wider world. It was a unique experiment, that will, I believe, culminate in reading pleasure for many, on the continent and beyond."

The winner will receive 300,000 Kenyan Shillings (equivalent \$3500), with 2nd place receiving 150,000 KShs and 3rd place 75,000 KShs.

The Kwani? Manuscript Project was launched in April 2012 and called for the submission of unpublished novel manuscripts from African writers across the continent and in the diaspora. The prize received over 280 qualifying submissions from 19 African countries. In 12th April 2013 a longlist of 30 was announced and on 17th June a shortlist of seven was announced. Also shortlisted for the prize were:

Ayobami Adebayo, *Stay with Me* (Nigeria)

Ayesha Harruna Attah, *Saturday's People* (Ghana / US)

Stanley Gazemba, *Ghettoboy* (Kenya)

Toni Kan, *The Carnivorous City* (Nigeria)

Kwani Trust's Managing Editor, Billy Kahora said, "In reviewing the shortlisted stories, I'm blown away by the potential these manuscripts hold, the different styles, concerns and voices that they bring to new contemporary African literature, and further add to Kwani's fiction list. We can't wait to bring them out as novels in the region and partner with publishing houses across the continent to make them available across Africa."

Kwani Trust plans to publish the winners, as well as additional manuscripts from across the shortlist and the longlist, with the first titles planned for publication in April 2014. The Trust will also be partnering with regional and global agents and publishing houses to secure high profile international co-publication opportunities.

We wish to thank the following organisations for their support, advice and help launching this new literary prize: Africa Book Club, African Books Collective, African Writers Trust, Arterial Network, Association of Nigerian Authors, Bakwa Magazine, Black Book News, Book Slam, British Council, Caine Prize, Cassava Republic Chimurenga, Commonwealth Foundation, Femrite, Ghana Association of Writers, Ghana Book Publishers Association, Goethe Institut, Granta, Jungle Jim, Malawi Writers Union, Mazwi, Pambazuka, PEN Sierra Leone, Royal Africa Society, Samandari, Saraba Magazine, Sea Breeze Journal, Spoken Word Rwanda, Storymoja, The Star, Uganda Modern Literary Digest, Wamathai, Wasafari, Writers Association of Botswana, Writers International Network Zimbabwe, Writers' Project for Ghana, Zambia Women Writers Association, Zimbabwe Women Writers.

Kwani Trust is also indebted to Lambent Foundation for financial support towards the administration of this project, as well as the Prince Claus Fund for a Euro 25,000 prize in recognition of the Trust's work that acted as seed money for this project.

For further information, images or interviews, please contact:

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The Kwani? Manuscript Project Winners

Winner: Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi, *The Kintu Saga*

Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi is an Associate Lecturer at Lancaster University where she completed a PhD in Creative Writing. She was born in Uganda and moved to the UK in 2001 to study for an MA. She lives in Manchester with her husband Damian and son, Jordan. Her work has been published by *African Writing Online* and *Commonword*. She also runs the African reading group, *ARG!*, in Manchester which focuses on obscure African writers. She is currently working on her second novel.

Synopsis At dawn, on Monday the 5th of January 2004 in Uganda, the curse of Kintu strikes. Kamu Kintu is brutally murdered by a mob in Bwaise. Three months later, ten men involved in his murder are found dead, their bodies strewn along Bwaise's main street. The story then travels back to 1750, to the beginning of the curse in the old kingdom of Buganda. *The Kintu Saga* follows the misfortunes of the Kintu clan over 250 years, blending Ganda oral tradition, forms of myth, folktale and history with biblical elements. The novel explores ideas of transgression, curse and perpetuity, looking back at the history of Buganda Kingdom and tracing birth of modern Uganda.

2nd Place: Saah Millimono. *One Day I Will Write About This War*

Saah Millimono was born in 1981 and is a graduate of St. Michael's Catholic High School in Monrovia, Liberia. He worked for 6 years as a freelance fiction writer for the Liberian Observer Corporation and in 2009 won the Short Fiction Prize of the *Sea Breeze Journal of Contemporary Liberian Writings*.

Synopsis Tarnue and Kou are from different backgrounds, young, ambitious, and in primary school. Suddenly the Liberian Civil War erupts; they and many others are altered in ways they could hardly have thought of. *One Day I Will Write About This War* tenderly explores this unlikely childhood friendship and multiple human costs of war.

3rd Place: Timothy Kiprof Kimutai, *The Water Spirits*

Timothy Kiprof Kimutai is 27 years old and interested in finding an audience for his stories. He participates in creative writing workshops with Amka Space, a writing forum provided by the Goethe Institute in Nairobi.

Synopsis Kogi sees an alternate world when his mother points a knife at her chest ready to plunge it in. He finds a girl lying unconscious by the river, carries her home and lets her live in their chicken house - all the while thinking that she is a water spirit. He dreams of bringing back rare chicken breeds from the brink of extinction. *The Water Spirits* places the mysterious alongside the quotidian, exploring Kogi's relationships with the water spirit, his newly-widowed mother Susanna and sister Chebet, and the pains of feeling powerless.

Notes for editors:

1. Established in 2003, Kwani Trust is a Kenyan based literary network dedicated to developing quality creative writing and committed to the growth of the creative industry through the publishing and distribution of contemporary African writing, offering training opportunities, producing literary events and establishing and maintaining global literary networks. Our vision is to create a society that uses its stories to see itself more coherently.

<http://www.kwani.org/>

2. The Kwani? Manuscript Project launched in April 2012. Kwani Trust called for the submission of unpublished fiction manuscripts of between 45,000 and 120,000 words from African writers across the continent and in the diaspora. <http://manuscript.kwani.org/>

3. The Chair of Judges is Jamal Mahjoub, an award winning writer of mixed British/Sudanese heritage. He has written seven novels including *The Drift Latitudes*, *Travelling with Djinns* and *The Carrier*. His writing has been widely translated and has won a number of awards including the Guardian/Heinemann African Short Story Prize, the NH Vargas Llosa prize and the Prix d'Astrobale. He has also been the chair of the Caine Prize for African Writing.

<http://www.jamalmahjoub.com/>

4. The judging panel also includes:

Ellah Wakatama Allfrey, Deputy Editor of *Granta*, an international literary journal of new writing. Before joining *Granta*, she was Senior Editor at Jonathan Cape, Random House where she introduced a list of young African writers including Brian Chikwava, Dinaw Mengestu and Peter Akinti. She sits on the board of Writers' Centre Norwich and the Council of the Caine Prize for African Writing. A Fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts, she was awarded an OBE in 2011 for services to the publishing industry.

Helon Habila, author of *Waiting for an Angel* which won both the Commonwealth Writers Prize and the Caine Prize for African Writing. His second novel, *Measuring Time*, was published in 2007, won the 2008 Virginia Library Foundation Fiction Award and was shortlisted for the 2008 Hurston/Wright Legacy Award. His third novel, *Oil on Water*, was published in 2010 and was shortlisted for the 2011 Commonwealth Writers Prize and the Orion Book Award.

<http://www.helonhabila.com/>

Simon Gikandi, Robert Schirmer Professor of English at Princeton University and editor of *PMLA*, the official journal of the Modern Languages Association (MLA). He was born in Kenya and graduated with a B.A. [First Class Honors] in Literature from the University of Nairobi. His publications include *Reading the African Novel*, *Writing in Limbo: Modernism and Caribbean Literature*,

Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism, The Columbia Guide to East African Literature in English Since 1945 and *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*.

http://english.princeton.edu/index.php?option=com_faculty&Itemid=28&func=fullview&facultyid=14

Dr. Mbugua wa Mungai, Chairman of the Literature Department at Kenyatta University. He received his PhD from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem for a thesis exploring identity politics in Nairobi matatu folklore. His research interests include urban folklore, popular culture and disability. He is the editor of *Remembering Kenya Volume 1: Identity, Culture and Freedom*.

<http://www.ku.ac.ke/schools/humanities/index.php/faculty/staff-profiles/71-dr-mbugua-wa-mungai>

Irene Staunton, co-founder of Weaver Press in Zimbabwe. She is the editor of the short story collections *Writing Still: New Stories from Zimbabwe*, *Laughing Now: New Stories from Zimbabwe*, *Women Writing Zimbabwe* and *Writing Free*. <http://www.weaverpresszimbabwe.com/>

5. The Kwani? Manuscript Project Shortlist

The seven shortlisted titles, selected from a longlist of 30 without the author's name attached, were:

Ayobami Adebayo, *Stay with Me* (Nigeria)

Ayesha Harruna Attah, *Saturday's People* (Ghana / US)

Stanley Gazemba, *Ghettoboy* (Kenya)

Toni Kan, *The Carnivorous City* (Nigeria)

Timothy Kiprof Kimutai, *The Water Spirits* (Kenya)

Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi, *The Kintu Saga* (Uganda / UK)

Saah Millimono, *One Day I Will Write About This War* (Liberia)

6. The Kwani? Manuscript Project Longlist

The seven shortlisted manuscripts were chosen from a longlist of 30 announced on 12th April 2013.

The longlist of 30 was selected, without the author's name attached, by a panel of 9 readers, made up of writers, editors and critics from East, West and Southern Africa, as well as the UK and the US. The longlist represented 10 African countries and showcased literary fiction across and between a range genres from fantasy to crime to historical fiction. Kwani Trust's Managing Editor, Billy Kahora said: 'This longlist begins the actualization of a long-held Kwani? ambition - to build a significant novel series of new original voices across the continent. To replicate the work we've been doing for the last 10 years with the short fiction form, creative non-fiction, spoken word and poetry in East Africa when it comes to the novel form.'

Jumoke Verissimo, *A Night Without Darkness* (Nigeria) W. E. Mkufya, *Pilgrims from Hell* (Tanzania)

Manu Herbstein, *Ramseyer's Ghost* (Ghana)

John Nkemngong Nkengasong, *Across the Mongolo* (Cameroon)

Ayesha Harruna Attah, *Saturday's People* (Ghana / US)

Nick Wood, *Azanian Bridges* (South Africa / UK)

Ayobami Adebayo, *Stay with Me* (Nigeria)

Emmanuel Iduma, *Becoming God* (Nigeria)

Nikhil Singh, *Taty Went West* (South Africa)

Muthal Naidoo, <i>Born Different</i> (South Africa)	C.A. Davids, <i>The Blacks of Cape Town</i> (South Africa)
Toni Kan, <i>Carnivorous City</i> (Nigeria)	Bisi Daniels, <i>The Colour of Oil</i> (Nigeria)
Ponatshego Moshwa, <i>Diary of a Criminal</i> (Botswana)	Nicholas Ochiel, <i>The Haggard Masturbator</i> (Kenya)
Tony Mochama, <i>Dining with the Dictators</i> (Kenya)	Mbuh Tenu Mbuh, <i>The Inheritors</i> (Cameroon)
Stanley Gazemba, <i>Gbettoboy</i> (Kenya)	Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi, <i>The Kintu Saga</i> (Uganda / United Kingdom)
Eden Nthebolan, <i>Homebrew</i> (Botswana)	Emmanuel John Hevi, <i>The Mad Brigadier</i> (Ghana)
Philo Ikonya, <i>Invincible Nubia</i> (Kenya / Norway)	Timothy Kiprop Kimutai, <i>The Water Spirits</i> (Kenya)
Abdu A. Mohiddin, <i>Monsoon and Miracle</i> (Kenya / UK)	Christopher Mlalazi, <i>They are Coming</i> (Zimbabwe / US)
Tsitsi Dangarembga, <i>My Mother's Breasts</i> (Zimbabwe)	Blessing Musariri, <i>Useful Knowledge for the World Class Detective</i> (Zimbabwe)
Saah Millimono, <i>One Day I Will Write About This War</i> (Liberia)	Clifton Gachagua, <i>Zephyrion</i> (Kenya)
Philip Begho, <i>Penny for an Orphan</i> (Nigeria)	