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The New Press to Publish New Works by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o

“In his crowded career and eventful life, Ngũgĩ has enacted, for all to see, the paradigmatic trials and quandaries of a contemporary African writer, caught in sometimes implacable political, social, racial, and linguistic currents.” —John Updike

New York, NY— The New Press has announced that it has signed a three-book contract with the celebrated Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o: a new memoir, *The Birth of a Dream Weaver*, about the creative process and set during his university years in Makerere, Uganda, to be published in fall 2016; a new and substantially revised edition of his prison diaries, called *Writing on Toilet Paper*; and a new work of fiction, *The Perfect Nine: The Epic of Gikũyũ and Mũmbi*.

Ngũgĩ, a Distinguished Professor of Comparative Literature and English at the University of California, Irvine, came to international prominence as a leading figure in the boom in African writing that arose in the wake of European decolonization. His works, especially *Weep Not, Child*, *A Grain of Wheat*, *Petals of Blood*, and *The River Between*, are often spoken of in the same breath as Chinua Achebe's and Wole Soyinka's work. His 2006 novel *Wizard of the Crow* won the California Gold Medal, first won by John Steinbeck.

The Birth of a Dream Weaver covers Ngũgĩ's formative years at University College, Makerere, in Uganda, from 1959 to 1964. Makerere was considered to be the Harvard of East Africa, a place where many future African political leaders, artists, and writers studied. For Ngũgĩ it was about his birth as a writer. As Ngũgĩ writes in the preface,

I entered Makerere University College in July 1959, subject of a British Crown colony, and left in March 1964, citizen of an independent African state. Between subject and citizen, a writer was born. This is the story of how the herdsboy, child-laborer, and high school-dreamer . . . became a weaver of dreams.

According to Carl Bromley, the editorial director of The New Press, “Ngũgĩ is one the giants of world literature. The Heinemann African Writers Series paperback editions of his novels were treasured in my

house growing up, and Ngũgĩ is a wonderful and most welcome addition to The New Press's list of international writers. His memoir on his genesis as a writer is one of the most powerful evocations of the writing process that I have read."

Ngũgĩ came to world attention in 1977 when he was imprisoned for a year, without trial, after the publication of his novel *Petals of Blood* and the staging of the play *Ngaahika Ndeenda* (I Will Marry When I Want), co-written with Ngũgĩ wa Mirĩ. These works, devastating dissections of Kenya under neocolonial rule, outraged its rulers. Ngũgĩ's *Writing on Toilet Paper* is the remarkable story of survival and resilience under the daunting conditions of a ruthless dictatorship. The memoir describes how, denied paper and writing and reading materials, Ngũgĩ let his imagination break the walls of confinement to speak to the world through fiction he crafted on toilet paper. *Writing on Toilet Paper* was originally published as *Detained* and has been long out of print.

Ngũgĩ's *The Perfect Nine: The Epic of Gĩkũyũ and Mũmbi* is a fabulistic work that tells the story of the founding mother and father of the Gĩkũyũ people—Ngũgĩ's ethnic group in Kenya—and their nine daughters. It is an adventure that begins, according to Ngũgĩ, "with the flight of Gĩkũyũ and Mũmbi from unnamed disasters in an unnamed region north of the Great Lakes who battle earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, fires to reach Mount Kenya, one of the mountains of the Moon talked of by early Egyptians, and finally settling on the lands around the Mountain."

About Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o

Ngũgĩ, born in 1938, lives in California. He is represented by Gloria Loomis of Watkins Loomis Agency, Inc. Four of his nine children—Mũkoma wa Ngũgĩ, Wanjikũ wa Ngũgĩ, Ndũcũ wa Ngũgĩ, and Tee Ngũgĩ—have published novels.

About The New Press

Founded in 1992, The New Press (www.thenewpress.com) is a not-for-profit public interest publisher committed to publishing books that promote and enrich public discussion and understanding of the issues vital to our democracy and to a more equitable world.

For more information, please contact Julie McCarroll, jmccarroll@thenewpress.com