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Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o

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NGŪGĪ WA THIONG'O, currently Distinguished Professor of English and Comparative Literature and Director of the International Center for Writing and Translation at the University of California, Irvine, was born in Kenya, in 1938. A many-sided intellectual, he is novelist, essayist, playwright, journalist, editor, academic and social activist.

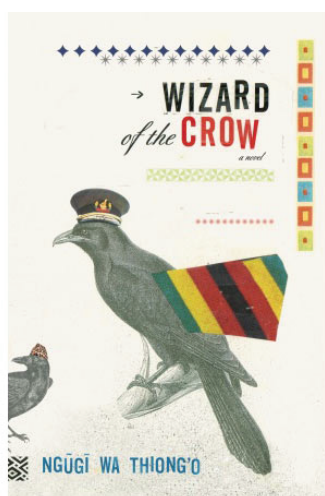
The Kenya of his youth was a British settler colony (1895-1963). As an adolescent, he lived through the Mau Mau War of Independence (1952-1962), the central historical episode in the making of modern Kenya and a major theme in his early plays and novels.

In 1967, Ngũgĩ became lecturer at the University of Nairobi and taught there until 1977, during which time his work set in motion a continental and global debate that later became the heart of postcolonial theories. The year 1977 forced dramatic turns. His novel, *Petals of Blood*, painted a harsh and unsparing picture of life in neo-colonial Kenya. His play, *Ngaa-hika Ndeenda (I Will Marry When I Want)*, was sharply critical of the inequalities and injustices of Kenyan society. Ngũgĩ was arrested and imprisoned without charge at Kamiti Maximum Security Prison.

After Amnesty International named him a Prisoner of Conscience, an international campaign secured his release a year later. However, he was forced into exile, first in Britain and then in the U.S. Ngũgĩ has continued to write prolifically, publishing, in 2006, his crowning achievement, *Wizard of the Crow*, an English translation of the Gikuyu language novel, *Murogi wa Kagogo*. His work has been translated into more than thirty languages.

NGŪGĪ WA THIONG'O

October 7, 2009, 7:00 pm
Lecture Hall
Doudna Fine Arts Center



REVOLUTIONARY MAGIC: Selected Comments on the Wizard of the Crow

Kenyan novelist Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o "mounts a nuanced but caustic political and social satire of African corruption of African society with a touch of magical realism – or, perhaps, realistic magic, as the Wizard's tricks hung on holding a not-so-enchanted mirror to his client's hidden delusions. The result is a sometimes lurid, sometimes lyrical reflection on Africa's dysfunctions – and its possibilities." STARRED REVIEW, *Publishers Weekly*, August, 2006.

"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 ... The tale is fantastic and didactic, told in broad strokes . . . its principal actors wear physical distortions like large, firelit masks." JOHN UPDIKE, *The New Yorker*, July 31, 2006.



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