

NGŪGĪ WA THIONG'O

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o is currently a Distinguished Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of California, Irvine. He is the recipient of eight Honorary Doctorates and an Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Ngũgĩ, formerly an Erich Maria Remarque Professor of Languages and a Professor of Comparative Literature and Performance Studies at New York University, as well as a novelist, essayist, playwright, journalist, editor and academic and social activist from Kenya.

The Kenya of his birth and 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 works.

In 1977, Prof. Ngugi's life and career took a dramatic turn. *Petals of blood* painted a harsh and unflinching picture of life in neo-colonial Kenya. That same year Prof. Ngugi's controversial play, *Ngaahika Ndeenda (I will marry when I want)*, written with Ngugi wa Mirii, was performed at the Kamirithu Educational and Cultural Centre, Limuru, in an open-air theatre. Sharply critical of the inequalities and injustices of Kenyan society, Prof. Ngugi was arrested and imprisoned without charge at Kamiti Maximum Security Prison. An account of those experiences can be found in his memoir, *Detained: a writer's prison diary*. After Amnesty International had named him as a Prisoner of Conscience an international campaign secured his release a year later in December 1978. He resumed his writings and his activities in the theatre and in so doing, continued to be a thorn in the side of the Moi dictatorship. While in Britain for the launch and promotion of *Devil on the cross*, he learned about the Moi regime's plot to eliminate him on his return. This forced him into exile, firstly in Britain (1982–1989) and then in the USA (1989–2002). He remained in exile for the duration of the Moi dictatorship. When he and his wife, Njeeri returned to Kenya in 2004 after twenty-two years in exile, they were attacked by four hired gunmen and narrowly escaped with their lives.

Prof. Ngũgĩ is currently working on Book Two of his memoirs: *In the house of the interpreter*.

His works include:

Weep not child (London, 1964)

The river between (London, 1965)

A grain of wheat (London, 1967)

Secret lives (London, 1969)

Petals of blood (London, 1977)

Caitani Mũtharabainĩ (Nairobi, 1980)

English translation: *Devil on the cross* (London, 1982)

Detained: a writer's prison diary (London, 1982)

Matigari Ma Njirũũngi (Nairobi, 1986)

English translation: *Matigari* (London, 1989);

Homecoming (London, 1969);

Decolonising the mind (London, 1986)

Moving the centre (London, 1993)

Writers in politics (London, 1997)
Penpoints, gunpoints and dreams (Oxford, 1998)
The black hermit (London, 1969)
This time tomorrow (Nairobi, 1972)
The trial of Dedan Kimathi (with Micere Mugo) (London, 1976)
Ngaahika Ndeenda (with Ngũgĩ wa Mĩĩĩ) (Nairobi, 1980)
English translation: *I will marry when I want* (London, 1982)
Murogi wa Kagogo (Nairobi, 2004)
English translation: *Wizard of the crow* (New York, 2006)
Something torn and new: an African Renaissance (New York, 2009)
Dreams in a time of war: a childhood memoir (New York, 2010)

NGŪGĨ WA THIONG'O

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o is tans 'n Buitengewone Professor in Engels en Vergelykende Letterkunde aan die Universiteit van Kalifornië, Irvine. Hy is die ontvanger van agt eredoktorsgrade en 'n erelid van die Amerikaanse Akademie van Kuns en Lettere. Prof. Ngũgĩ, voormalige Erich Maria Remarque Professor in Tale, 'n Professor in Vergelykende Letterkunde en Voordragstudies aan die Universiteit van New York, en 'n Keniaanse romanskrywer, essayis, dramaturg, joernalis, redakteur en akademiese en sosiale aktivis.

Die Kenia van sy geboorte en jeug was 'n Britse kolonie (1895–1963). As adolessent het hy die Mau Mau-onafhanklikheidsoorlog (1952–1962), die sentrale historiese episode in die totstandkoming van 'n moderne Kenia en 'n belangrike tema in sy vroeëre werke, beleef.

In 1977 het prof. Ngũgĩ se lewe en loopbaan 'n dramatiese wending geneem. *Petals of blood* skilder 'n stroewe en onversetlike prentjie van die lewe in neo-koloniale Kenia. In daardie selfde jaar word prof. Ngũgĩ se omstrede drama, *Ngaahika Ndeenda (I will marry when I want)*, in samewerking met Ngũgĩ wa Mirii geskryf, en in 'n opelugteater in die Kamirithu Opvoedkundige en Kulturele Sentrum in Limuru opgevoer. As gevolg van sy uitgesproke kritiek oor die ongelykhede en ongeregthede van die Keniaanse samelewing word prof. Ngũgĩ in hegtenis geneem en sonder aanklag in die Kamiti-maksimum-sekuriteitsgevangenis aangehou. 'n Weergawe van hierdie ervarings word in sy memoire, *Detained: a writer's prison diary*, aangetref.

Nadat Amnestie Internasionaal hom tot gewetensgevangene verklaar het, het 'n internasionale veldtog 'n jaar later in Desember 1978 sy vrylating bewerkstellig. Hy sit sy skryfwerk en sy aktiwiteite in die teater voort en bly sodoende 'n voortdurende doring in die vlees van die Moi-diktatorskap. Terwyl hy in Brittanje is vir die bekendstelling en promosie van *Devil on the cross*, verneem hy van die Moi-regime se komplot om hom met sy terugkeer te elimineer. Dit dwing hom om in ballingskap te gaan, aanvanklik in Brittanje (1982–1989) en daarna in Amerika (1989–2002). Hy bly vir die duur van die Moi-diktatorskap in ballingskap. Nadat hy en sy vrou, Njeeri, na 22 jaar in ballingskap, in 2004 na Kenia terugkeer, word hulle deur vier gehuurde gewapende mans aangeval en kom hulle nouliks met hulle lewe daarvan af.

Prof. Ngũgĩ werk tans aan Boek Twee van sy memoires: *In the house of the interpreter*.

Sy werk sluit in:

Weep not child (Londen, 1964)

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A grain of wheat (Londen, 1967)

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