

rise and fall of segregation in state-supported graduate schools like those at OU, as well as Clara Luper's explanation of the NAACP's struggle for civil rights during the 1960s by staging lunch-counter sit-ins and other demonstrations in Oklahoma City. Luper's remembering of how the segregated walls of the Katz Drugstores came tumbling down is by itself worth turning to first for the feeling of triumph over bigotry which it evokes.

For the most part, however, the main proportion and attraction of the volume are the selections which deal with the early, frontier era in Oklahoma history. Alice Mary Robertson's "Christmas Time in Indian Territory"; Emma Ervin Christian's "Memories of My Childhood Days in Choctaw Nation"; J.H. Beadle's "Indian Territory in the 1870s"—such accounts as these verify just how intrinsically Native American Oklahoma is in its ancestry and atmosphere. Outside of Beadle, who was the western correspondent for the *Cincinnati Commercial* and wrote for an audience of prospective settlers, most if not all of the authors are average men and women who wrote these reminiscences in a straightforward way, based on keen observation and a spirit of inquiry. Thus *Oklahoma Memories* is representative of people's history and shines all the more for its blemishes and bumps.

Ann Hodges Morgan, now Vice President for Programs at the Kerr Foundation in Oklahoma City, and Rennard Strickland, Research Professor of History and Law at the University of Tulsa, deserve the reader's gratitude for their good taste and sense in selecting, arranging, and commenting on twenty-seven "memories" of interest to both professional historians and amateur buffs.

— Robert Gish  
University of Northern Iowa

**Ngugi wa Thiong'O. *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary*. African Writers Series, No. 240. (Exeter, NH: Heinemann Educational Books, 1982) xxiii, 232 pp., \$6.00 paper.**

In December, 1977, one of Africa's most celebrated novelists, Ngugi wa Thiong'O, was arrested by the government of Kenya and imprisoned for a year without being charged, tried or convicted of any crime. *Detained* is his prison diary.

It is not only an account of his "preventive detention," but is also a harsh indictment of the government of Kenya. Ngugi indicts Kenya for being controlled by "foreign capital" and "foreign economic interests,"

*Explorations in Sights and Sounds*. No. 4 (Summer 1984)

but he claims the real tragedy is the resulting western cultural domination of the Kenyan people. Since the early 1970s, Ngugi has put himself in the forefront of the struggle to help preserve traditional Kenyan culture in face of the onslaught of western culture. He argues that the present Kenyan elite are today's neo-colonialists; in fact, they simply replaced and became the tools of their former British rulers. He adds that even though some of Kenya's leaders were involved in the Mau Mau rebellion of the 1950s, many have, since independence in 1963, sought to protect their power and status by allying with western economic interests. In a compelling statement, Ngugi says how ironic it is that former detainees are now detainers and how former freedom fighters are now denying freedom to others. Ngugi makes it very clear that he is allying himself with the workers and peasants who are struggling against the vast inequity of wealth between rich and poor.

*Detained* also includes a brief history of colonial and post-colonial Kenya from an underclass perspective. Ngugi praises the peasants and workers for their tradition of resistance. He praises not only the resistance of the past against "the colonial culture of silence and fear" but also the present resistance against the "mental colonialism" of the ruling elite. He especially praises resistance through the perpetuation of traditional values in the form of song, poetry, and drama. Ngugi places himself within this tradition of cultural resistance.

The clash between Ngugi, a professor at the University of Nairobi, and the government began when he started to use his art as a weapon against the present rulers. He describes it well in *Detained*. In 1977, he put on a play he wrote entitled *Ngaahika Ndeenda (I Will Marry When I Want)*, Heinemann, 1982). The play was originally written in Gikuyu for Kenya's workers and peasants as an exposé of the ruling elite. In order to put on the play, Ngugi organized the Kamiriithu Culture Centre. Neither the play nor the author survived for long. The government banned the play as a threat to public security, then arrested and jailed Ngugi.

In prison, Ngugi began keeping a diary on toilet paper, the only available writing material. As far as prison diaries go, it is not untypical. It is written in brief episodic form and recounts his experiences with the guards, with the regimentation, the treatment, health care, the solidarity of the detainees and the lack of contact with the outside world. Yet his emotions go much deeper. He describes feelings of despair and psychological terror. He describes the paralyzing anxiety of political prisoners everywhere. Will he be released tomorrow or in fifty years? In addition to the diary, Ngugi also finished a novel while in prison. Using toilet paper and writing in Gikuyu he completed *Devil On The Cross* (Heinemann, 1982) a novel of corruption and the ruling elite.

In December, 1978, after worldwide protests, Ngugi was freed. He tried to regain his teaching post but was refused. In 1981, he tried to re-open the Kamiriithu theatre in order to produce another of his plays. The

government refused to issue him a stage license. As a result of a speech he made protesting the decision, government troops destroyed the theatre. Later in 1982, when Ngugi was in England, he learned that he would not be allowed to return home. He was now a writer in exile.

Ngugi was not alone in this treatment. Since his release other scholars have been detained without charges and others have fled the country. The government was still unable to stem the tide of protest that flowed from the universities. Finally in frustration the government closed several universities.

Ngugi, the artist, has emerged as an activist struggling for the economic liberation of his people. His work, in the form of literature, frees the human spirit from cultural oppression.

— Thomas C. Maroukis  
Capital University

**Ngugi wa Thiong'O. *Devil on the Cross*. African Writers Series 200. (Exeter, NH: Heinemann Educational Books, 1982) 254 pp., \$6.00, \$21.00 cloth.**

James Ngugi without question is Kenya's most prominent and most highly regarded novelist to date. Of the same generation of writers as Achebe, Armah, Soyinka, and Owoonor of West Africa, Ngugi, like them, after a local university education, went abroad for advanced work. In 1964 at Leeds, Ngugi published his novel *Weep Not, Child*, written when he was a student at Makerere. Shortly thereafter, in 1965, he published *The River Between* which he had composed even earlier. With *A Grain of Wheat* the writer completed in 1967 a kind of trilogy, depicting for a western readership a literary explanation and clarification of the historic Kenyan struggle for independence. These novels, written in English, and some plays and short stories brought Ngugi an award in 1965 at the Dakar Festival of Negro Arts and subsequent critical acclaim and broad readership.

Ngugi faced problems common to many African writers: the chosen audience, the means of communication and language, the political message. Like others, protesting colonialism, he sought to downplay his Christian upbringing. He changed his name to Ngugi Wa Thiong'O. He decided to address the Kenyan masses, mainly illiterate and non-anglophone. He undertook to criticize his own government after independence as elitist and partisan. As a consequence, he suffered harassment, imprisonment without charge, and loss of his academic