

October: A Novel

By Zoe Wicomb

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“Mercia Murray is a woman of fifty-two years who has been left.” Abandoned by her partner in Scotland, where she has been living for twenty-five years, Mercia returns to her homeland of South Africa to find her family overwhelmed by alcoholism and secrets. Poised between her life in Scotland and her life in South Africa, she recollects the past with a keen sense of irony as she searches for some idea of home. In Scotland, her life feels unfamiliar; her apartment sits empty. In South Africa, her only brother is a shell of his former self, pushing her away. And yet in both places she is needed, if only she could understand what for. Plumbing the emotional limbo of a woman who is isolated and torn from her roots, *October* is a stark and utterly compelling novel about the contemporary experience of an intelligent immigrant, adrift among her memories and facing an uncertain middle age.

With this pitch-perfect story, the “writer of rare brilliance” (*The Scotsman*) Zoë Wicomb—who received one of the first Donald Windham–Sandy M. Campbell Literature Prizes for lifetime achievement—stands to claim her rightful place as one of the preeminent contemporary voices in international fiction.

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Editorial Review

Review

Praise for *October*:
"Wicomb adeptly navigates time, place, and the minds of various characters to illustrate the impact of apartheid on one family."
—*The New Yorker*

One of Flavorwire's 10 Must-Read Books for March 2014

"Wicomb (*Playing in the Light*) contemplates the meaning of family, the limits of forgiveness, and the deep responsibilities of having children. [*October*] provides an insightful look at how 'memory is bound up with place,' and at what it means to return home."
—*Publishers Weekly*

Praise for Zoë Wicomb:
"An extraordinary writer. Zoe Wicomb has mined pure gold from that place [South Africa]—seductive, brilliant, and precious, her talent glitters."
—Toni Morrison

"Wicomb deserves a wide American audience, on a par with Nadine Gordimer."
—*The Wall Street Journal*

"A sophisticated storyteller who combines the open-endedness of contemporary fiction with the force of autobiography."
—Bharati Mukherjee, *The New York Times*

Praise for *Playing in the Light*:
"Post-apartheid South Africa is indeed a new world. . . . With this novel, Wicomb proves a keen guide."
—*The New York Times*

"Delectable. . . . Wicomb's prose is as delightful and satisfying in its culmination as watching the sun set over the Atlantic Ocean."
—*The Christian Science Monitor*

"[A] thoughtful, poetic novel."
—*The Times* (London)

"Deep and subtle. . . . This tight, dense novel gives complex history a human face."
—*Kirkus*

Praise for *The One That Got Away*:
"Combine[s] the coolly interrogative gaze of the outsider with an insider’s intimate warmth."
—J.M. Coetzee

About the Author

Zoe Wicomb is a South African writer living in Glasgow, Scotland, where she is Emeritus Professor at the University of Strathclyde. The author of "Playing in the Light" and "The One That Got Away" (both available from The New Press), she has been awarded one of the inaugural Windham Campbell Prizes for fiction writing.

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Catherine Gober:

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