Chapter VI

Quest for Homecoming

A quest for something elusive, something beautiful, for the ultimate, is a concept that has enticed man since time immemorial. The quest for the Holy Grail is one of the most enduring myths in Western European literature. This search became the principal quest of the Knights of King Arthur and the self-realization of the questing Knight was assured by finding the Grail. But the quest for the self is not a mere legend. Like the search for the ultimate truth, with all its elusive connotations, this quest too is eternal and fraught with the danger of straying from the path and finally returning to the original starting point of the journey. And then comes another attempt and this goes on and on . . .

The consciousness of the self and its full potential, long stifled by centuries of alien domination, find expression though in a sporadic fashion, in the history of any subjugated nation. The brutal forces of colonialism trampled to dust, not merely the traditions and heritage of the egalitarian and communal society, but also its very soul. Yet, amidst all the desolation and darkness, there exists a light at the end of the tunnel. The collective consciousness of the African, which was mercilessly alienated, tries to meander back, but in this journey, some are deluded to unconsciously betray themselves and lose their way. Some sensitive individuals, acutely aware of the collective guilt of this betrayal continue on a quest for self-perception. The feelings of alienation, betrayal and guilt make the quest an intense one and at times, the journey flounders on harsh reality. But the desire to rediscover what is their own and fundamental, propels the African mind into a quest for self-perception. The methods they adopt often differ,
their paths ranging from the sophisticated ones like creative expressions, intellectual pursuits and assumption of responsibilities to the primitive ones like violent armed revolution. Irrespective of the type of struggle, all these paths converge on one road - a quest for self-perception.

The path towards the quest for self-perception is laden with intense mental and physical agony. Some overcome their suffering as the light of self-realization beckons them. Some others are compelled to sacrifice their lives at the altar of perception, so that their individual sacrifice will ultimately lead to the attainment of identity and self-perception for the collective.

Known as the ‘Matigari’ of the literary world, this “most controversial avant-garde writer” (Chakava 27), Ngugi’s creative works attempt at dismantling the denigrating structures erected in the Gikuyu psyche by sustained colonialist propaganda. His novels offer a culture of resistance so as to recapture the right to name their world for themselves and thus to establish their space in the sun. Writing has always been for Ngugi, a way to reconnect himself with the landscape of his birth and upbringing. His narratives are intrinsically linked to his own experiences in Kenya. In his Preface to the short stories Secret Lives, Ngugi admits: “My writing is really an attempt to understand myself and my situation in society and history. As I write I remember [.] the fears, the betrayals, [.] the moments of despair and love and kinship in struggle and I try to find the meaning of it all through my pen” (qtd. in Cantalupo The World 67). His novels, which are statements of psychological decolonization, strive to give voice to his own as well as to his people’s collective identity and to light the path to self-perception, so that the author and his nation can effect a meaningful
'homecoming'. 'Homecoming', for Ngugi, constitutes a catharsis of his people's dislodged psyche and the restoration of the psychological, moral and spiritual integrity of the Kenyan within a transformed social order.

This thesis has attempted to study how Ngugi's efforts at uplifting Gikuyu consciousness has enabled him to undertake a quest for a perception of their native self and thus to achieve a collective fulfilment. Through his fiction, Ngugi attempts to resolve the contradictions of identity in post-independent Kenya, for the individual emotions of alienation, betrayal and guilt represent the collective experience. The influx of alien values has reduced Ngugi's protagonists into fragmented souls, estranged from the collective as well as from their own essential being. With a great deal of empathy, Ngugi portrays how some of these alienated individuals are forced into acts of betrayal by extenuating circumstances and are overwhelmed by a sense of guilt. The traumatized souls attempt in their different ways to overcome these belittling experiences and seek a path towards a perception of their self, their roots.

Ngugi's narratives conceptualize Frantz Fanon's projection of national consciousness and the development of his writings distinctly moves along the path of the native intellectual envisioned by Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* (179). The native intellectual who is alienated and estranged from his existential and cultural being, undergoes the first phase of 'unqualified assimilation' when he is intensely affected by the aesthetics of European culture and literature. This was the period of Ngugi's colonial education when he was charmed by the literature and language of Europe. At that point of time, Ngugi had felt that a writer ought not to allow his involvement to affect his judgment. *The River Between* and *Weep Not, Child* evince the respect Ngugi
had for the benefits accruing from Western education. Waiyaki is deeply influenced by his mission school and Christian virtues and attempts to syncretize Western and indigenous values. To Njoroge and his family, education is an agent of deliverance.

The second stage that Fanon proposes is when the native is 'disturbed' and attempts to discover his identity, his Africanness. But since he has lost touch with his cultural roots, the writer cannot become an integral part of his people. He attempts to interpret old legends and myths, but this is done in the light of a 'borrowed aestheticism'. Ngugi undergoes this disturbed phase when he becomes acutely aware of alienation engendered by his colonial education. His education coincided with his non-participation in the Mau Mau struggle. This creates in him an intense sense of betrayal and guilt. This guilt manifests itself in his sympathetic treatment of the Mau Mau in *Weep Not, Child* and in his portrayal of Njoroge and Munira. Ngugi now, attempts to identify himself with his people by resorting to his ancient cultural forms like songs, legends and riddles in his early works. But there appears to be a fossilization of these oral forms and they seem to be static and lacking in vibrancy. The character of Gatuiria is modelled on this phase of Ngugi's development, where in spite of his desire to be an integral part of his people, he succeeds in catching hold of only the 'outer garments'.

With the publication of *Petals of Blood*, Ngugi moves on to the third phase elucidated by Fanon. He becomes 'awakened' to his shortcomings. He realizes that in order to establish his authorial identity and to become an essential part of his people, he has to be a committed writer activist and create a "literature of combat" (*WE* 193), a fighting literature which will call upon the people to fight against the forces of imperialism. He decides to use his pen and paper as sites of resistance and to give
utterance to the voices of his people, long suppressed by colonialist and neo-colonialist ideology. He is prepared to assume responsibility for his previous ‘wandering’ in the alien colonial jungle and seek a ‘homecoming’ with his people. Ngugi now feels that a writer cannot remain neutral. “Intellectuals are not disembodied voices”, he says (BP 11). They must either commit themselves to the forces of destruction or be prepared to articulate the dreams of the dispossessed majority.

Ngugi becomes more of a revolutionary with Devil on the Cross, a literature of action, which forms part of the organization for revolution. His detention convinces Ngugi of the silencing technique employed by the post-colonial regime. He now realizes that, through his novels, he must create situations where people can break the code of silence imposed upon them by the dominating regime. In Devil on the Cross and Matigari, characters discuss those issues forbidden in real life. At the scene in the cave, the ruling comprador bourgeoisie are made to blatantly expose the excesses that they indulge in. The journey in the matutu reveals the materialistic philosophy of the elite and the marginalization of the erstwhile freedom fighters and of the masses in the post-colonial state. Matigari’s observation during his travels across the country highlights the absolute lack of humane values in the present society.

In keeping with his radical stance, Ngugi calls for a revolutionary reorientation of those structures he sees as socially negative, and to mark out a path towards social and psychological change. In order to resolve his self-doubts and to transcend his alienation, Ngugi decides to “negate his roots in the native bourgeoisie and its spokesman, and find his true creative links” with the masses of Africa (WP 75). He considers the rural folk as repositories of age-old traditions and values. Nyakinyua
and Wangari, besides being icons of the dignified and mature women characters of Ngugi, also represent the wisdom embodied in the ordinary masses. Ngugi suggests that though the nation state has been appropriated by the agents of imperialism, the community as embodied in the ordinary people will be able to confront the problems of alienation, betrayal and guilt and pave the way to an awakened perception of the self and to a new ‘tomorrow’.

Ngugi’s novels highlight the theme of return as a way of reconnecting with fragments of a past torn apart by colonial experience. The narratives of *A Grain of Wheat* and *Matigari* unfold pictures of the return of the Mau Mau fighters. The return of the educated from their alienated states to their socio-cultural bases is represented in Ngugi’s novels, through the characters of Waiyaki, Njoroge, Munira and Karega. All his works express the need to effect the return of houses and land to the dispossessed, and the urgency of the returning to African languages forms a part of this preoccupation.

Ngugi feels he has betrayed his nation by his use of the colonial language. In order to atone for this act of betrayal, Ngugi decides to break free from the socio-linguistic prison of imperialism and seek his roots in the languages, cultures and rhythms of the life of his community. A national literature capable of appealing to the masses can be created only if it starts addressing the people in their own language. As Ngugi says in an interview with Cantalupo: “There is a sense of engagement in Gikuyu language” (209). Explaining the glory of their past in borrowed tongues cannot motivate the people to seek their way to a nativist consciousness.

As recourse to reconnecting with his native culture, Ngugi oralizes the narratives of *Devil on the Cross* and *Matigari*. He reactivates the traditional genre of the gicaandi,
the motifs of the journey and quest and the mode of satire, predominant in their ancient folk tales. The journey motif is explored in Ngugi’s novels to elicit specific social reactions. The journey in *Petals of Blood* and in *Devil on the Cross* makes the people aware of their alienation, the betrayal of values and the ruthlessness of their leaders. Matigari’s journey exposes present Kenya as a land ruled by fear and misery where truth and justice are non-existent. These pictures are intended to provoke the masses to action in order to ameliorate their situation.

Ngugi revitalizes the Gikuyu oral traditions to subvert the Western notions of narrative constructs and to prove that it is possible to create a highly successful post-colonial novel based on traditional modes. The device of the short story within Ngugi’s novels is a post-colonial technique to redefine the African novel as one that is communally read and performed. These stories offer a sharp commentary on the social scenario and also serve as a vehicle to reveal the inner sufferings and anxieties of the protagonists. The legends narrated by Chege comment on the dignity of their past while the conversations in *Weep Not, Child* and *A Grain of Wheat* reveal the sacrifices of the Mau Mau fighters and the ruthlessness of the colonialists during the Emergency. Nyakinyua’s tales present a glorious picture of what Ilmorog was in its pre-colonial days. The stories narrated by Mumbi, Wanja and Abdulla express the pain in their heart while Wariinga, Wangari and Guthera disclose their personal stories with their sense of betrayal, heroism and sacrifice.

Writing in Gikuyu is not a mere nativist gesture as critics like Appiah considers it, but forms a part of the path that Ngugi chooses in his quest for the native self, both for his people and for himself. His Gikuyu novels signify an end to his alienation and
self-colonization. Ngugi employs them, as liberatory tools to create mental and physical space for his people, for oral modes are most suited to express collective aspirations. The songs and rituals appear dynamic and vibrant and are directly related to the people's struggles. Oral forms, unlike written literature, can never be suppressed or appropriated by an autocratic state. They will always be kept alive by the ordinary people and will continue to reverberate throughout the country, raising the consciousness of the masses. The power of Ngugi's oral narratives, and the stupendous success they have achieved in merging the borders of the real and the imaginary can be comprehended, when we recall the discomfiture that Matigari caused to the paranoid, dictatorial regime of Kenya.

"The writer of fiction can be and must be the pathfinder", says Ngugi (DM 85). He, therefore, reclaims the communal bonds of their traditional society as an essential construct in lighting the way towards mental and psychological decolonization. His novels form a part of the national renaissance, highlighting the value and dignity of indigenous culture and social mores. Ngugi firmly believes that a Kenyan's route to self-realization lay through knowledge of ethnic culture and heritage and that a true African personality can be restored only by a journey back to the roots. He is convinced that the excesses of present Kenya an be wiped out by the integration of traditional values into the current political organization.

In order to debunk denigrating colonial perceptions, his novels picture the glory and dignity of their past. The River Between proves that circumcision is not a barbaric rite, but a ritual intrinsic to the very soul of their community. The legends and stories related by many of the elders pay homage and reverence to their past, to their history of resistance and courage. Ngugi’s fiction celebrates the Mau Mau as the highest expression
of his people's commitment to economic and political struggle. *Weep Not, Child* and *A Grain of Wheat* are prolonged meditations on the theme of the national movement. He endows the characters of erstwhile freedom fighters like Abdulla, Wangari and Matigari with immense dignity, pride and humane feeling. But, though Ngugi wants the Kenyan to look to his past, not with guilt, but with a "positive glow of pride and achievement" (*WP* 95), he does not indulge in a mere nostalgic excursion into an idyllic past. He prefers to see the past as a torch to light the path to a more perceptive future. Ngugi's main concern is social reality and therefore, his characters are anchored in the real world of Kenya.

Ngugi's protagonists succumb to psychological imbalances due to sustained colonial and neo-colonial propaganda. Alienated from their ethnic culture, traditions and roots, the native Gikuyu displays a split psyche and an intense sense of inadequacy and helplessness to face the world around. The dichotomous world generates a lack of humane feelings, forcing many to jettison their own values and to betray their own people. The prioritizing of individual welfare over the communal and the professed superiority of alien values compel many to commit acts of betrayal. Some of these sensitive individuals experience the acute need to expiate their sense of guilt and this propels them to intense soul searching. The society's failure to provide a meaningful anchor induces in them, a collective search for their identity. They feel the urgent desire for a regeneration, which will help them to reconnect with their roots and to rediscover their lost identity. The first step in this process towards self-perception is the acceptance of responsibility for one's actions.

Ngugi envisages his people's quest in two directions. The African must undertake
a journey back to his roots, to his ethnic culture and realize the value of love and the strength of communal bonds. This can empower him with the necessary moral and spiritual initiative to take up the quest for a radical and progressive change in the political, economic, social and cultural orientations in contemporary Kenya, and thus, to ensure a hopeful future. A society can achieve a collective fulfilment only if the economic and political aspects are liberated along with the cultural and the spiritual. But, Ngugi comprehends that due to long-term psychological and ideological dependence on Western values, native identity has been adversely affected. It is now no longer possible to retrieve their culture and spiritual integrity or to take a journey back to the roots through peaceful methods of decolonization. Therefore in his post-independent novels, the protagonists undertake their quest to self-perception through the medium of armed resistance. These novels, which demonstrate revolution as brewing again, evince Ngugi’s commitment to violence as a means to purify an unjust order. James Olney refers to the development of the path of Ngugi’s quest when he says that, while morally and culturally he is moving towards a more pronounced traditionalism, his social and political ideology demonstrates a movement towards a radical and revolutionary direction (284).

The dialectic created, upon the native, by colonial education induces upon Waiyaki and Njoroge the alien concept of individualism and forces them to disassociate themselves from the collective. Their perceptions having been thrown out of focus, they lose all sense of their commitment to their people. When they do perceive that they have betrayed the people by their inadequacy to face the reality around, they are tortured by mental anguish. Their path to self-perception lies in a growing awareness of their social and family responsibilities. Waiyaki’s search for the native self lies not...
merely in accepting the need for political change, but also in his growing love for Nyambura. The alienation that Ngugi experienced and the sense of guilt that he felt for his lack of participation in his people’s struggle, finds expression in his portrayal of Waiyaki and Njoroge.

Colonial education and its ideology have deeply penetrated the psyche of Munira and Gatuiria reducing them into indecisive and weak individuals, unable to take an active step in life. Increasingly burdened with guilt at his lack of participation in his country’s affairs, Munira attempts to put himself on the way to self-discovery. But the contradictions rooted in his personality, make him abandon the path of love and finally seek refuge in fundamentalist religion in order to still his inner turmoil. Gatuiria’s attempt to encapsulate the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial moments of his nation’s history into his musical oratorio is highly similar to Ngugi’s oeuvre. But, limited by the walls of his linguistic prison, Gatuiria, unlike Ngugi, is unable to make the journey back to the roots. He is left in a state of intense bewilderment and confusion, for the path to self-perception always seems to elude him.

Waiyaki and Njoroge, though motivated by personal interests at first, realize the values of the community and family later on. They are, therefore, able to make at least the first step towards the journey of self-perception. But since the quest of Munira and Gatuiria remains purely individualistic and personal throughout their lives, the light of self-perception fails to beckon them.

A feeling of irretrievable mediocrity, fostered by the logic of colonialism, alienates Mugo from his community and often prompts him to act negatively. His betrayal of Kihika accentuates his sense of inadequacy and guilt. Overwhelmed by the desire to
expiate his guilt, Mugo now, comprehends the need to assume responsibility for his actions and to accept punishment. Mugo’s identification with his community marks the beginning of his quest for the identity that had so far been denied to him.

Abdulla epitomizes the marginalization and disenchantment experienced by freedom fighters in independent Kenya as they watch the betrayal of their dreams. Weighed down with the guilt of incompetence, the disillusioned Abdulla finally finds his self-realization through the path of his newfound love for Wanja.

The intense trauma of the Mau Mau struggle and the untold suffering of the Emergency lead to the dissolution of family units and personal relationships. The tensions of the early Mau Mau period lead to the disintegration of the once harmonious household of Ngotho and reduce him into a mental and physical wreck. The alienation, breakdowns in communication and the sense of betrayal that occurs in the life of Gikonyo and Mumbi can be attributed to the distressing circumstances of the Emergency, when relationships proved to be extremely fragile. It is a mature Mumbi who perceives that if individuals are to embark on a quest for their self and identity, they must attempt to understand, love, and respect each other and accept their responsibilities. The renewal of love between them implies a return to the ethnic bond of community life, which existed in pre-colonial Kenya.

The colonial ideology has penetrated the native psyche of Karanja, engendering in him an intense degree of dependence and a sense of racial inferiority which prompts him to betray his people. Mugo’s confession sets him on the path of perception. As an initial step in his journey of self-realization, he begins to comprehend the importance of his past and the need to undertake a quest for the identity he had sacrificed for White values.
Ngugi's women protagonists are endowed with greater strength and powers of perception than the others around them. The suffering and the agony inflicted upon the body and the mind of these Gikuyu women have a regenerating effect on the intelligent and morally aware Wanja, Wariinga, Wangari and Guthera. This initiates a process of intense soul searching which ultimately leads them to a perception of their true African self. Wanja's acts of murdering her exploiter and her subsequent union with Abdulla are expressions of her need to negate her past and return to the bonds of love and community life.

Wariinga's education had instilled in her a desire to emulate white values. This later burdens her with the feeling of having betrayed her own culture and values. Guthera finds that the colonial religion in which she had been reared, offers her no solutions to the exploitation and misery she faces all around. Wangari, a freedom fighter, discovers that she is completely alienated and marginalized in the degenerate post-colonial society. Wanja, Wariinga, Wangari and Guthera are no longer prepared to succumb to the neo-colonial forces. They are now ready to face the world on their own terms, to undertake a journey into the depths of their native psyche and to seek their true Africanness. They perceive that it is only through acts of violent resistance that they can throw away the shame and guilt that years of denigration had forced upon them and restore their defiled dignity and self-esteem.

The contradictions in values brought about by the colonial religion induce Nyambura and Muthoni to intense soul searching. Muthoni seeks her path to self-fulfilment in the ethnic rite of circumcision, while Nyambura's attempt at self-perception is through her love for Waiyaki. But their attempts at a realization of their identity remain
unfulfilled, for the society that has lost its moorings fails to understand them.

Karega’s critique on the inefficacy of colonial education reflects Ngugi’s own perception of Western education. Karega is Ngugi’s paradigm of a hero endowed with moral and social positives and embodies his ideological intention of undertaking a quest for his roots through the path of armed revolution. Karega and Kihika voice the author’s desire to effect radical changes in the socio-political milieu in order to ensure a meaningful future and a sense of identity for his people. In their determination, sense of commitment and decision to choose sides with the people, these heroes demonstrate a positive development from Ngugi’s earlier weak-willed protagonists.

Boro and Kamau represent the younger generation of Kenyans who acutely suffer the alienation of their ancestral land and perceive that the path to self-perception lies in resorting to a violent resistance movement to drive out the colonial forces. Even quite early in his life, Ngugi stresses this need for revolutionary action through the character of Kabonyi.

Though Ngugi bestows a great deal of compassion on these lost souls who in their different ways attempt to regain their identity, he unleashes his most virulent criticism on the comprador bourgeoisie who carry their the alienation from the people as a mark of prestige and align themselves wholeheartedly with the values of the colonizers. Unmoved by any sense of humane feelings towards their own people, they experience no pangs of guilt. The assimilation of white values and culture has generated in Joshua and Jacobo, an extreme dependency upon the colonizers. Joshua, enamoured by the European’s culture and religion, develops an absolute disregard for his own ethnic traditions and native gods. Jacobo’s betrayal of his people is motivated by his desire to
win the approval of the white masters and to gain affluence.

In his later novels Ngugi presents a horde of characters who willingly submit to the depersonalization of their native self by the colonial machinery. Waweru Ezekiel and Reverend Jerrod are canons of the disreputable elite who preach piety and practise crass materialism under the convenient mask of religion. The power-hungry politician, Nderi wa Riera, the educated Chui and John Boy Junior offer illustrations of the ignominious neo-colonial natives who set out to destroy the very soul of their community for personal aggrandizement. In *Devil on the Cross* and *Matigari*, the dependency complex and colonial ethics have penetrated so deeply into the psyche of the native leaders that they unhesitatingly indulge in a ruthless exploitation of the masses in return for a few crumbs from the former masters’ table. The strengthening nexus between the former masters and the native bourgeoisie makes it increasingly problematic for decolonization.

The call to moral responsibility, the willingness to accept their past misdeeds and the motivation for a revolutionary struggle arises in the wounded souls of Ngugi’s characters. Ngugi intends his readers to face their responsibilities and to share the collective guilt of weaknesses and passivity, for all are equal participants in the great drama of corruption enacted in the neo-colonial scene of Kenya. Some take an active role in deceiving their own, while others abett the neo-colonial betrayal and chicanery by their silence. Ngugi chastises the voicelessness of the masses, for silence before oppression is tantamount to a betrayal of themselves and their people.

*Devil on the Cross* and *Matigari* manifest Ngugi’s own brand of resistance culture and politics. Ngugi, through these novels, conveys that the path to a perception
of his people's identity lies in an awakened radical consciousness among the masses. Matigari closes appropriately with the image of a man bearing arms to ensure freedom. Muriuki represents the future generation of Kenya who is prepared to lead the people on their quest for self-perception. Ngugi's suggestion at the conclusion of Matigari that resistance will be carried on from the forests is a clear implication of his own resistance from exile.

Ngugi's protagonists in their variety of experiences, in the alienation and fragmentation of their psyches, in their disillusionments and sense of betrayal, in their guilt complexes, in their ability to transcend these limitations and move forwards on a quest for self-perception, represent the many faces of the marginalized masses of Kenya. By picturing these individual states of mind and by his portrayal of the callousness of the new leaders, Ngugi intends to present before every Kenyan "what he was, what he is and what he is being led into" (Sakuntala 119). He hopes to raise the consciousness of his people so that they can move towards self-perception and bring in a decolonization of their mental and physical world. For, "it is when people are involved in the active work of destroying an inhibiting social structure and building a new one that they begin to see themselves. They are born again" (HC 11).

Characters like Waiyaki, Mugo, Kihika and Karega are unable to pursue their quest for self-perception, due to their untimely trials and deaths. But, Ngugi suggests that their initial attempts to perceive their native self would inspire their people to travel further on the path of self-realization. This would ultimately help in achieving an individual as well as a collective regeneration and a perception of their submerged identity.
Ngugi’s novels offer a challenge to his people to confront the forces of imperialism, destructive to their psyche in present day Kenya. The educated young are made to realize that if their knowledge is distanced from its social and political corollaries, the society is doomed to failure. But, his fiction characteristically ends on a note of optimism. His early narratives convey that his people are growing more receptive to the problems and responsibilities that confront them and to undertake the journey to self-perception. The individual acts of violence with which *Petals of Blood*, *Devil on the Cross* and *Matigari* conclude, suggest that the masses are sufficiently awakened to emerge from the culture of silence and fear and to envisage a positive future. Each reader of *Matigari* will experience the resurgence of patriotism and the firm conviction that imperialism in its neo-colonial clothes will not be able to destroy the African people’s spirit of resistance. Each Kenyan would agree with Ngugi, when he optimistically states, “Matigari shall one day return to Kenya, to East Africa” (*MC* 175).

A journey is a part of every man’s life and experiences and subjects him to a variety of situations which confront him with something new or which forces him to re-evaluate his thinking, behaviour or perspective. Every individual’s journey is a process of separation, transformation and return. The denouement of Ngugi’s novels evinces that the author himself undertakes the three stages of the journey along with his protagonists. Many of Ngugi’s characters are seen to have suffered a separation, like him, from their age-old culture and traditions, due to their colonial education. Gradually, Ngugi and many of his protagonists undergo a transformation and realize their alienation from the collective. In spite of the journey being confusing and sometimes extremely
painful to their psyche, they move forwards in their quest to save their community and
their nation from being submerged under the colonial and neo-colonial onslaughts. In
spite of detention and exile from a repressive state, Ngugi continues in his quest to
save his world and to lead his people on the journey of self-perception.

Simon Gikandi observes: “the author, alienated from his peasant roots by his
colonial education and culture, reproduces the voices of the subaltern by generating
emotions from his past in his narratives; such acts of regeneration become, in turn,
moments of intense self-realization [. . .]” (69). Reproducing the glorious past of his
people and narrating his protagonists’ journey from alienation, betrayal and guilt to
self-perception, prove to be extremely regenerating for Ngugi’s alienated psyche. The
creation of his fiction becomes moments of intense self-realization for Ngugi, and
enables him to initiate his people on a quest for their identity and to lead them to a
meaningful ‘homecoming’.

Speaking of Ngugi, Charles Cantalupo comments: “He is a writer who positively
provokes and yet allows for the widest possible range of readers’ responses.
Furthermore, to engage a text of Ngugi is inevitably to collaborate with him in the
creation of a humane meaning for life” (Texts and Contexts xi). His writings reveal
Ngugi’s hopes of healing the wounds in his people’s heart so that they can liberate
themselves from fears and complexes and build up a future where the flowers of peace
and the harmony of their traditional communities will replace petals of blood. Though
influenced by other writers and though the chosen path of his journey of self-perception
often changes, Ngugi’s quest remains purely personal and unchanged. His fiction plays
a vital role in re-establishing the status and identity of the Kenyan so that they can
Ngugi vehemently believes that the world must be changed and the artist’s works must be the embodiment of his people’s dreams for a better world. He seems to agree with Martin Carter whose lines he often quotes: “I do not sleep to dream / I dream to change the world” (Interview Bjorkman 131). But Ngugi is not a mere preacher or a dreamer. Though preoccupied by human relations and emotions, Ngugi distinguishes himself from other creative writers by his political activism and by his determination to change the world of his beloved Kenya, using his writings as powerful tools of combat. Ngugi’s relentless efforts at bringing about radical changes in the inhibiting and negative social structures of his homeland prove that no repression or exile can remove the Kenya he carries in his heart. Through cultural activities of various kinds, Ngugi continues to disseminate the glory and dignity of his people’s history, culture and traditions. Though Ngugi remains the principal object of the Kenyan government’s fantasies of subversion, David Cook and Michael Okenimkpe feel that Kenyans should consider themselves lucky to have him as their spokesman. Very few countries in need of change can boast of such a “radical, committed, out-spokenly articulate” champion as Ngugi proves himself to be (232).

Ngugi’s determination and dreams to effect a true ‘homecoming’ for himself and his people, continues unabated. For, the quest for the native African self rooted in their communal values, and the search for a new political and economic dispensation, which will meet the aspirations of the masses, are not yet over. The quest goes on . . .!
Works Cited


