The urge to undertake a quest for one's native self, one's identity, has been an irresistible concern for the people of once colonized nations. Consequently, writers from the Third World have all been motivated by the need to give expression to their people's psychic journey towards self-perception. This journey often entails a travel through paths of alienation and an attempt at identification with the colonizer which leads to betrayal and its subsequent guilt, before the scarred souls can reach the road to self-realization. No writer has been as sensitive, as radical or as comprehensive as Ngugi wa Thion'go in securing a psychological, cultural and political liberation for his people. Ngugi's novels are discourses on the disintegration of the ethnic self of the native Gikuyus and the psychological forces that propel them on the quest for their nativity. This thesis attempts to illustrate the diverse reactions manifested by the protagonists in an environment suffused with alien values, and their efforts at self-perception.

The emotions of alienation, betrayal, and guilt are emblematic of the individual and collective experiences of the post-colonial scenario. The first chapter, an introduction, traces the works of other Third World writers preoccupied with these themes and with the process of decolonization, a pervasive construct of contemporary world politics and culture. The development of African literature, particularly of the genre of the novel, governed by a cultural ontology that is a
deviant from the western mode, is studied. The chapter locates Ngugi within this specific artistic milieu, for comparative appreciation.

The sensitivity and empathy prevalent in Ngugi’s fiction is largely the result of his upbringing within a traditional Kenyan community and his exposure to colonial education. The second chapter surveys the psychological and political dynamics responsible for Ngugi’s determination to debunk negative Eurocentric versions of their history, to raise the consciousness of his people and thus to lead them to self-perception. Literary figures who affected Ngugi and the seminal influence of the psychiatrist Frantz Fanon upon the author’s life and thinking are highlighted. A comprehensive understanding of his novels can be gained only by a study of his non-fiction, which provides the theoretical background for his fictional world. This chapter acknowledges the post-colonial aspects evident in Ngugi’s fiction.

Confusion and bewilderment of the individual psyche and the disintegration of the society are the undisputed contribution of the colonial and neo-colonial ideology. The third chapter narrates the alienation that has penetrated the land and the souls of the characters, thus effectively disempowering them. Conditioned by the concepts of an alien religion, education and culture, the protagonists find themselves strangers amidst their own people, groping in vain for their submerged identity.

Obsessed with the values of the White culture, some of the Africans degenerate into betayers who unhesitatingly deceive their own. The intense dependency complex engendered in them prompts the comprador bourgeoisie to
exhibit an absolute lack of coherence or stability, rendering it impossible for them to govern the country without the necessary props from their erstwhile masters. But, some of the natives, haunted by images of their treachery, are compelled to travel through valleys of guilt and humiliation. The fourth chapter focuses on the degeneration of the native psyche and the resultant trauma of shame and guilt experienced by a few sensitive souls.

The disturbed and restless native self of the African is prompted to search for an anchor in a society that has failed to provide him with a sense of belonging. Ngugi’s protagonists attempt to heal the wounds that had ruptured their psyche and to undertake a quest for their native self. The fifth chapter is devoted to the portrayal of the characters’ attempt to seek a perception of their self through varied paths, depending upon the diversity of their experiences.

The last chapter analyzes the journey of Ngugi’s protagonists from a fragmented world, to a treacherous milieu where their psyche is further torn asunder, through depths of despair and guilt and finally reaching the light of perception. While this quest is effected in a successful manner for some, others prove to be victims sacrificed by the dichotomous society in its mad and relentless pursuit of materialism. An attempt has been made to reveal how Ngugi’s fictional recreation of the psychological and cultural life of his nation proves to be an act of intense self-realization for the author himself.