Chapter III

Estranged Souls and Fragmented Collective

Collective and individual alienation and the denigration of traditional social and cultural modes were constructs specific to the project of mental and psychological colonization, perpetrated by the colonialist ideology. "Sociologists [. . . ] speak of ‘alienation’ in connection with disassociation from popular culture, nonacceptance of the basic values of one’s society, rejection of the behavioral norms prevailing in it, and the expectation that societal goals cannot be attained except through deviation from such norms" (Schacht 189). The logic of colonization created in the native an inferiority complex, for European education and religion privileged the notion of individualism over the traditional concepts of the community. The onslaught of alien culture and values engendered in the African an intense disregard for his own traditions, values and culture. This dichotomy in values alienated the community from those traditional bonds which they had held sacred and which had helped to engage themselves as a harmonious unit. The native individual exposed to the alien social order found himself estranged from the collective as well as from his own essential being.

The Oxford Companion to Philosophy defines alienation as “a psychological or social phenomenon, characterized by one or another type of harmful separation, disruption or fragmentation, which sunders things that belong together” (1). Alienation is experienced by individuals at intensely personal levels and provokes variegated and complex reactions. For the individual, these range from a sense of powerlessness, cultural estrangement and social isolation. Erich Fromm in The Sane
Society sees alienation as a mode of experience in which a person becomes estranged from himself. "The alienated person is out of touch with himself as he is out of touch with any other person" (120). On the collective strata, this alienation wrecks havoc on the socio-political and economic milieu of the nation. The community drifts in an existentialist scenario, subjugated by forces beyond its control.

Appropriation of land was the declared policy of the colonial regime. The systematic dispossession of their land involved material deprivation and disintegration of the age-old Gikuyu community system and signified an assault on the traditional family units. The expropriation of land proved disastrous for the Gikuyus and their culture, for they had a material as well as a spiritual bond with the land. The Gikuyus believe that the land had been given to their ancestors, Gikuyu and Mumbi, by God. Kenyatta speaks of the significance of the land for the Gikuyus in Facing Mount Kenya:

It is the soil that feeds the child through a lifetime; and again after death it is the soil that nurses the spirit of the dead for eternity. Thus the earth is the most sacred thing above all that dwell in or on it. Among the Gikuyu the soil is especially honoured, and an everlasting oath is to swear by the earth. (21)

The appropriation of Gikuyu land thus caused irreversible damage to the African psyche.

Culture is the means by which people realize their identity and construct their definitions of the self. Economic and political domination can be successfully effected only through cultural control. The colonial regime therefore attempted at cultural domination through a 'colonialism of the mind'. This mental and spiritual indoctrination under colonialism took the form, as Ngugi says in Moving the Centre, "of destroying
people's languages, history, dances, education, religion, naming systems, and other social institutions that were the basis of their self-conceptions as a people" (42).

Education was seen as a tool by the colonial government in their hegemonic struggle with the Kenyan people. Ngugi in an interview with Sander and Munro, states that education was definitely used as a weapon by both the colonial government and by the African people. “Because with an education you could conform with or deny your cultural roots. So the missionaries really started the fight by saying that denying one's cultural roots is necessary before you can get a Western kind of education” (50). The harmony of traditional Gikuyu education with its emphasis on interpersonal relations was marginalized as the British introduced their formal and totally alien system into the tribal set up. In the traditional community, elders exercised a tight control and a tremendous power over the people. Colonial education emphasized the concept of individualism and disturbed the native social structure. South African sociologist Chabani Maganyi explains in Being Black in the World, “at the level of the relationship between the individual and the community, the white approach is characterized by the primacy of the individual, the black approach is characterized by that of the community” (qtd. in Pandurang 106-107).

The Christian church through its educational systems and hymns created a sense of negativity and passivity in the native African, thus aggravating the dependency complex generated by the initial exposure to the colonial forces. Ngugi observes that the church in Africa “has been the greatest cause of the misshaping of African souls and cultural alienation” (HC 35).

Ngugi's novels display his sensitivity to the crisis of culture engendered by
colonialism. Ngugi believes that it is the social forces of a community that is responsible for the reactions and behavioural patterns of individuals in particular circumstances. In his interview with Sander and Munro, Ngugi admits: “I’d be more in line with Tolstoy when he sees in the country the social forces creating certain individuals – individuals as such do not create situations, situations create these individuals” (51).

“A study in individual alienation” as Killam sees it, The River Between, deals with the problematic of tradition and change and the resultant fragmentation of the African consciousness, brought about by the British colonial presence (Introduction to Ngugi 21). The book is set in pre-independent Kenya and depicts the disintegration in each family and the collapse of individual morale. Though this novel was published after Weep Not, Child, it deals with an earlier period when the colonial forces had first penetrated into the interior of Gikuyuland. The novel contextualizes a cultural problem within a Gikuyu society and relates it to the prevalent political and economic situation. It dramatizes the tragic predicament of a people within that social context.

The River Between opens with a picture of relative harmony and ancestral solidarity that existed between the two ridges of Kameno and Makuyu, before they were exposed to the innovations brought in by an alien administration.

The ancient hills and ridges were the heart and soul of the land. They kept the tribes’ magic and rituals, pure and intact. Their people rejoiced together, giving one another the blood and warmth of their laughter. Sometimes they fought. But that was amongst themselves and no outsider need ever know. (RB 3)
of strangers. The tribes still maintained their secrets and the peoples' blood and bones still spoke the language of the hills. This beautiful cohesion was undermined with the arrival of the white man who usurped the land and set into disarray the economic, psychological and cultural framework of the society.

The white man with his weapons of an alien education, religion and culture slowly encroached on the people's land and corrupted the ways of the tribe. Chege, an elder tells his son, "the arm of the white man was long. The conquest of the hills was well under way" (RB 62). We are made aware of a Government Post being established and tax being levied on the people. Even the rain that fell on the soil seemed to be "Carrying away the soil / Corroding, eating away the earth / Stealing the land" (RB 65). The ridges seem to be crying at the loss of the land, their earth, which forms the very essence of their life.

Even in the past, the ridges had fought for leadership but these struggles were largely dissipated within the tribe. These incipient tensions are exacerbated by the introduction of the mission churches and schools. Ngugi states in Sunday Nation that "the coming of the missionaries set in train a process of social change at times involving rapid disintegration of the tribal set-up and framework to which people could cling [. . .]" (5). As the new faith contaminates the hills, the society is confronted by clashes between differing viewpoints and personalities. Kameno maintains its conservative and traditional beliefs while Makuyu embraces Christianity. "The soil no longer answered the call and prayers of the people. The people felt that perhaps it had to do with the white men and the blaspheming men of Makuyu" (RB 80).

Frantz Fanon aptly observes that colonial domination is effected through a
systematic enslavement of native men and women by alienating them from their customs \((WE 190)\). Circumcision, regarded by the Gikuyus as a ritual that affirms their traditional values, is condemned by the Christians as an act of abomination. “Circumcision was an important ritual to the tribe. It kept the people together, bound the tribe. It was at the core of the social structure, and something that gave meaning to a man’s life. End the custom and the spiritual basis of the tribe’s cohesion and integration would be no more” \((RB 68)\). The ceremony of circumcision, which is a ritual of initiation for adolescent boys and girls, contains a spiritual significance as the physical body is linked to the soil with the trickling of blood after the surgery. It involves a sacred bond between the life-giving process of ‘rebirth’ and the power of life flowing through the land. The importance of the ritual lay in “what it did inside a person” \((RB 142)\).

A tribe’s customs and rituals, which embody their spiritual life, play a vital role in maintaining and preserving its identity and purity. To destroy or alienate such a custom is to negate their culture and identity. By denigrating the custom of circumcision, especially that of clitoridectomy, the white missionaries were actually annihilating the people’s identity and alienating them from their spiritual bonds. Kenyatta in *Facing Mount Kenya* says that female circumcision was an important facet of the psychology of the Gikuyus and has enormous educational, social, moral and religious implication. The majority of the Gikuyus believed that the aim of those who attacked this centuries-old cultural tradition was to disintegrate their social order and hasten the process of Europeanization. “The abolition of ‘irua’ will destroy the tribal symbol which identifies the age-groups, and prevents the Gikuyus from perpetuating that spirit of collectivism and national solidarity which they have been able to maintain from time immemorial.”
The foreign nature of the education, introduced by the colonialists to control the hearts and souls of the Gikuyus, was totally alien to the needs of the people. Despite its alien nature, the Gikuyus felt that foreign education would help them to master new skills and equip them better to fight against the foreigner. But this only generated estrangement of the people from their roots and created a class of people who became renegades, iconoclasts and strangers to the ways of the tribe. Quite early in the novel, we are told of men who were sent out by the tribe to learn the wisdom of the land beyond but “they became strangers to the hills” (RB 3).

Chege is one of the wise elders who cannot foresee the disastrous transformation that a foreign system of education can effect in his son. Chege realizes that the Christians would not come to any good and would destroy all that was good and beautiful in the tribe. He does not see it as a contradiction that he, the embodiment of the true Gikuyu, should send his son to the very missionary centre whose existence he has always opposed. Chege sees in his son Waiyaki, the saviour prophesied by their Gikuyu seer, as the one who would lead their people in their resistance against colonialist incursions. He, therefore, sends Waiyaki to Siriana Mission School so that he could be wise in the ways of the white man. He advises Waiyaki “learn all the wisdom and all the secrets of the white man. But do not follow his vices. Be true to your people and the ancient rites” (RB 20). Chege does not realize that Siriana Mission was not only a Christian institution branding their traditional customs as barbaric but also an active agent of colonial oppression. Ngugi has observed in *Sunday Nation* that the European scale of values rejected the traditional modes of behaviour as evil and thus “created in Kenya a
people without spiritual roots which could anchor them to the soil. Education could not be a substitute” (5). Chege fails to conceptualize this and by sending his son to the Christian school, he sows the seeds of Waiyaki’s alienation.

Waiyaki exhibits the psychological conflict which afflicts an individual when an alien education imposes its self-seeking individualist awareness upon his Gikuyu-oriented, communal values. Waiyaki embodies the predicament of an African intellectual, described by Fanon:

in an African country, [...] where the violent collusion of two worlds has considerably shaken old traditions and thrown the universe of the perceptions out of focus, the impressionability and sensibility of the young African are at the mercy of the various assaults made upon them by the very nature of Western culture. (WE 156)

Waiyaki’s exposure to the white man’s ways at Siriana imbues him with Christian values and alienates him from the traditions of his own tribe. Waiyaki finds it difficult to lose himself in the frenzy of the dances and ceremonies accompanying the ritual of circumcision.

Waiyaki’s absence from the hills had kept him out of touch with those things that most mattered to the tribe. Besides, however much he resisted it, he could not help gathering and absorbing ideas and notions that prevented him from responding spontaneously to these dances and celebrations. (RB 39)

Drawn by the abandon with which Muthoni participates in the dance, Waiyaki for a moment forgets his mission school values and takes part in the dance with “the
mad intoxication of ecstasy and pleasure" (RB 42). But a moment later, he is embarrassed at having exposed himself to the crowd. He is so far distanced from his tribe’s traditions and values that he now comes to see his father’s belief in the prophecy merely as an old man’s dream. Waiyaki considers himself apart from it all but at the same time he has “a feeling that he lacked something, that he yearned for something beyond him” (RB 44).

This conflict is heightened in the night after the initiation ceremony as contrary impulses battle for supremacy in his mind. Contrasting images of his father who symbolizes the tradition of the tribe and the Christian missionary who epitomizes the alien values keep him awake. Unable to identify himself completely with his people, Waiyaki is left bewildered and uneasy. “He felt a stranger, a stranger to his land” (RB 60).

His Christian education has created in Waiyaki, a firm conviction in the power of education to unite warring communities. Fired by his passion for education, Waiyaki loses that vital contact with his people. He is unable to reconcile the clash of his viewpoints with the Kiana, a Gikuyu organization meant to keep the tribe pure, while they refuse to accept his synthesizing approach to the Christians. Waiyaki is unable to equate his dreams with the people’s hopes. He cannot identify himself with the people and this aggravates his loneliness. He feels himself standing outside all the unrest in the land. “And at times he felt isolated” (RB 69).

Mala Pandurang observes: The “basic African ontology was dissipated by the white man and his system of education” (107). Western education placed an excessive emphasis on individual awareness and this created a separateness of the individual from the collective. Waiyaki’s education alters his outlook and enforces a dialectic between
his individual interests and those of the community. As Ngugi notes, “This resulted in
the disassociation of sensibility [...] from his natural and social environment that we
might call colonial alienation” (*DM* 117). Waiyaki now desires a greater freedom in
the manner in which he lives his life and refuses to be interpellated by the people. He
dislikes being questioned by the Kiama about his relationship with an uncircumcised
girl and chooses to commit himself to his emotional anchor, Nyambura. His
commitment to one individual supersedes the desires of his community and leads to
their ultimate denunciation of him as their leader and teacher.

The negative and alienating influence of the white man’s religion manifests itself
in the character of Joshua. In *Black Skin White Masks*, Fanon remarks:

> Every colonized people - in other words, every people in whose soul an
> inferiority complex had been created by the death and burial of its local
culture originality – finds itself face to face with [...] the culture of the
> mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in
> proportion to his adoption of the mother country’s cultural standards.
> He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle. (14)

Joshua seeks to wash away his blackness by immersing himself in the Christian religion
for he has come to believe fervently in the power of the White God. His conversion to
Christianity accentuates the hostility between the two ridges. Though the missionaries
have not yet penetrated the hills, Joshua’s house, with its distinct tin roof, stands as a
paradigm of the exposure of the ridges to the alien culture beyond. Joshua is one of the
early converts.

In Siriana he found a sanctuary and the white man’s power and magic.
The new faith worked in him till it came to possess him wholly. He renounced his tribe’s magic, power and ritual. He turned to and felt the deep presence of the one God. Had he not given the white man power over all? (RB 29)

Joshua considers the white men his brothers and renounces circumcision as a sinful rite. He even dedicates a prayer to God to forgive him for marrying a circumcised woman. Joshua’s embrace of Christianity reaches the verge of fanaticism. He is a man with no roots in his past, a man who has lost all connections with his traditions. He hopes that by clinging on to his dream of a New Jerusalem, he can achieve salvation.

Joshua imposes complete submission to the White God within his household. He feels that the religious laws must be strictly obeyed even though he is puzzled by some of the tenets of the alien ideology. The theologian, Dr. Tillich observes in his book, *The Shaking of the Foundations* that a man caught within the religious law inevitably tries to impose it on other people, on his children or pupils. “Many families are disrupted by painful tragedies and many minds are broken by this attitude of parents, teachers and priests” (qtd. in Killam *Critical Perspectives* 155). Joshua’s irrational pursuit of his beliefs disrupts the harmony of his house. He imposes his brand of Christianity upon his wife and stifles her life. Though Miriamu does not share or cherish his sentiments, she accepts the new faith out of her fear of Joshua. Joshua’s fanatical adherence to the new creed is totally life denying. As Waiyaki observes, “He had clothed himself with a religion decorated and smeared with everything ‘white’. He renounced his past and cut himself away from those life-giving traditions of the tribe” (RB 141). Joshua’s blind acceptance of Christianity seems to deny him every vestige of humanity.
When Muthoni disobeys him and gets circumcised, Joshua disowns her and she ceases to be his daughter. Her death does not move him for, to him she is an outcast. His attitude to Nyambura, who remains faithful to Waiyaki, is equally alienating.

Joshua’s daughters Muthoni and Nyambura embody the cultural and psychological conflict experienced by a native upon whom an alien scale of values has been imposed. The white man’s god does not satisfy Muthoni and she desires for something more to quench her thirsty soul. She knows it is beautiful to be initiated into womanhood and chooses to be circumcised. But she cannot completely divest herself from the Christian faith that she has been forced to embrace. Her attempts at reconciling Christianity with the tribal ways result in her death. She dies with the words, “I see Jesus. And I am a woman beautiful in the tribe” (RB 53). Muthoni’s failure exemplifies the fragmentation of the native psyche subjected to a new way of life, which wrenches them away from their roots and traditions. Michael Rice in his article, “The River Between – A Discussion”, contends: “She articulates the dilemma of all those like her who want to fulfil themselves in terms of the rites and values of the tribe but who have become confused by the rival claims of foreign ideas which they do not understand and have not properly assimilated” (128).

Nyambura, like Muthoni, has been brought up to believe that their Gikuyu god represents darkness and that she can be saved only by surrendering before the white man’s religion. But she soon becomes weary of Joshua’s brand of religion. As she becomes increasingly attached to Waiyaki, she gets more and more isolated by her divided loyalties to her father and to her love. She feels alienated by a religion that “ran counter to her spirit and violated love” (RB 134). This sense of isolation and
estrangement prompts her to reject her father and accept Waiyaki, in whom she sees her salvation.

*Weep Not, Child* portrays how the menacing conflicts caused by the colonial alienation of land affects the psyche of the characters and tears families apart. The natives are left bewildered as they find their power to act eroded away, both by the white man’s appropriation of their ancestral lands and by the imposition of alien laws, which prevent them from reclaiming their soil. As in *The River Between*, in this novel too the land is invested with spiritual significance. The people regard it with intense reverence and its alienation is treated as an estrangement from their god and their past.

The harsh realities of the Emergency and the pressures of political and social change, prompt characters into inexplicable actions and behaviour. The colonial powers attempt to divide the natives by creating a group of tenant farmers who become alienated from those who had no land. Frustrated by the loss of their land, lack of employment and estrangement from their people due to their experiences in the Second World War, many of the younger generation turn to the revolutionary movement of the Mau Mau. They attribute the loss of their land to the passivity of their elders and “blamed the foolish generosity of their forefathers who pitied the stranger and welcomed him with open arms into their fold” (*WNC* 65). Painful tensions develop within the once harmonious family units, regarding the loss of land. Kenyatta comments: “When the European comes to the Gikuyu country and robs the people of their land, he is taking away not only their livelihood but the material symbol that hold family and tribe together” (317). The truth of these words is asserted by the disintegration of Ngotho’s home, which epitomizes the disruption and alienation of the entire Kenyan people under colonialism.
Ngotho is a much-revered head of a close-knit family. "The feeling of oneness was a thing that most distinguished Ngotho's household from many other polygamous families. [. . . ] This was attributed to Ngotho, the centre of the home. For if you have a stable centre, then the family will hold" (WNC 45-46). Ngotho's home is well known as a place of peace. For the Gikuyu community, home is a special place where all the young boys and girls gather around the fireplace with gossip and laughter. They frequently join the elders, whose story-telling sessions are often informal techniques of imparting education and knowledge. This harmonious environment is ruthlessly torn apart by the thrust of alien values.

Dispossessed of his ancestral land, Ngotho now works as a 'muhoi' in the farm of a black landowner. He is often accused by his son, Boro, for passively accepting the usurpation of his land. But Ngotho "felt the loss of the land more keenly than Boro, for to him it was a spiritual loss. When a man was severed from the land of his ancestors where would he sacrifice to the Creator?" (WNC 84). He had often felt like crying out or wounding himself to drive away the curse that had alienated him from his ancestral land. But he had done nothing but merely looked on in negative passivity. Ngotho's generation had been stripped off their manhood and determination by the alien scale of values. Ngotho recalls how he, as a young boy, had to fight in the First World War. But when his generation came back tired from the war, the land was gone. His father, overwhelmed with grief over the deprivation of his ancestral land had died as a poor lonely man waiting for the white man to go. The demoralizing effect on the native psyche, which is forced into servile compliance with alien demands, is graphically portrayed in the character of Ngotho.
Taunted by his son for his inaction and indecision, Ngotho makes an abortive attempt on the life of the black landowner, Jacobo. His unpremeditated demonstration once again wins Ngotho the contempt and wrath of Boro. When his wife and son are arrested, Ngotho can only remain inactive. Darkness now falls upon the once stable and peaceful household of Ngotho. “He was no longer the man whose ability to keep home together had resounded from ridge to ridge” (WNC 92). He is overcome by weariness, gets diminished in stature and is often forced to assume a defensive secondary place whenever talking to his sons and their friends.

Sartre, in his Preface to *The Wretched of the Earth*, states that when a native is faced with colonial excesses, he comes to consider himself a ‘potential corpse’. He has nothing to look forward to and he is too weary of it all. “But this weariness of the heart is the root of an unbelievable courage” (20). Ngotho exhibits this courage when he takes on the murder of Jacobo. He is arrested, tortured and castrated by the White District Officer. Ngotho, for whom life has become meaningless, as it is divorced from all that he has valued, now literally loses his manhood. The castration marks the culmination of the loss of his manly dignity, which had been progressively shamed and shattered. Ngotho’s disintegration is now complete, as his psyche is unable to withstand the forces of destruction unleashed by the colonial regime.

The Gikuyu people always saw their deliverance from colonial rule as embodied in education. Kamau quotes Kenyatta: “Education is the light of Kenya” (WNC 43). Ngotho and Nyokabi are proud to send Njoroge to school for they feel that education would lead to the recovery of the lost lands. Education is also seen as a source of enhancement of one’s status in the society. The older generation lacked the foresight
to comprehend the sense of alienation and crisis of identity that an alien education would engender in the psyche of the native.

"The harshest expression of Ngugi’s complex of self-doubt and alienation can be seen in Njoroge of Weep Not, Child” says Richard Peck (29). Njoroge embraces education as a vision, which held the key to a bright future. His heart burns with happiness because he considers education as the "fulfilment of a wider and more significant vision – a vision that embraced the demand made on him, not only by his father, but also by his mother, his brothers and even the village. He saw himself destined for something big, and this made his heart glow" (WNC 44).

But this vision turns into a mere dream, a route of escape from the actuality around him, for education succeeds in completely alienating Njoroge from the society as well as from himself. Soon after he joins school, this estrangement sets in, as Njoroge suddenly finds himself embarrassed by his calico, the only dress he had ever known since birth. Ngugi, in Decolonising the Mind, speaks of the alienation and disassociation of a native child divorced from his natural and social environment by the imposition of an alien atmosphere and an alien language in the colonial schools (17). At school, Njoroge is overtly ashamed of his poor performance at English and attempts to re-establish his ego by mastering the correct form of the tenses.

His psyche completely altered by colonial education, Njoroge is overwhelmed by the complexity of the conflicts that envelop his family and society. The disruption of family life, brought in by the thrust of alien forces, arouses altercation between his parents. But Njoroge does not want to be involved in it and merely desires to be lost in the darkness. Transformed into a dithering coward, he just desires an immersion into
darkness, an escape into a world of dreams and illusions. Always a dreamer and a visionary, Njoroge neither sells out nor joins the revolutionaries. His education, having rendered him totally deficient in moral insight or courage, he prefers to merely stand passive in the sidelines of the struggle, waiting for a sunny tomorrow. In *Decolonising The Mind*, Ngugi comments: "Colonial alienation takes two interlinked forms: an active (or passive) distancing of oneself from the reality around; and an active (or passive) identification with that which is most external to one's environment" (28). Njoroge makes no attempt to mitigate his family's grieves and chooses to opt out of facing reality in the haven of Siriana.

Njoroge considers his school as "an abode of peace in a turbulent country" (*WNC* 61). He uses his education as an excuse to remain disassociated from the violence engulfing the country. He clings on to his vision of education as the answer to the present. "He thought it would be a more worthwhile homecoming if he stayed here till he had equipped himself with learning" (*WNC* 127). In *Writers in Politics* Ngugi points out that a Kenyan child, who is exposed to European education, sees his route to self-realization through the alien heritage and culture. This results in a "self-mutilation of the mind" and "the misplacement of values of national and personal liberation" (29). European education paves the way for individualistic daydreams. Njoroge now harbours illusions of being a saviour destined to bring redemption for his people with the help of a Christian god and an alien education. Njoroge distances himself from the reality that envelops him and chooses to identify himself with a culture that is totally alien to his Gikuyu environment.

Violent upheavals in the community and in his family upset Njoroge's world of
fantasy. His illusions are exposed and along with the shattering of his dreams, his psyche disintegrates. Ngugi points out that human action, individual as well as collective follows their dreams. But when external circumstances are alien to his basic nature, the process of imaging gets flawed and the dreams get distorted. Ngugi adds, “the problem is that colonial education tends to turn legitimate dreams into nightmares!” (WP 29). For the first time in his life, Njoroge comes face to face with a problem to which ‘tomorrow’ is no answer.

His will power broken, the dreamer becomes ‘an old man of twenty’ who has lost his will to live. Life seems to him “like a big lie where people bargained with forces that one could not see” (WNC 103). Mwihaki sees frustration, despair and bewilderment reflected in his eyes. Njoroge attempts to find a way out of his despair and loneliness through Mwihaki. When she rejects him, he does not know where to turn or what course to adopt and tries to sidestep reality by attempting suicide. Lewis Feuer remarks that an alienated person is often compelled to act self-destructively (132). But here again Njoroge’s courage fails him, for never before has he taken an active step in his life. Njoroge’s disintegration epitomizes the general atmosphere of insecurity and frustrated hopes that characterized the fragmented society in Kenya during the colonial regime.

In sharp contrast to Njoroge is his brother Boro, who had been to fight in the Second World War. After serving in the White man’s war where he faced severe emotional trauma over the loss of a loved brother, Boro returns home to find that there is no employment and that the ancestral land has been appropriated by the settlers. His experiences in the war have incurably affected his mind and spirit. He is a representative
of the younger generation who has had to face the brunt of the misfortunes that affected the society following the deprivation of their land. These experiences have deeply bruised his psyche and leave him bitter and disillusioned with his father and those of the older generation for adopting a passive attitude to the dispossession of their land. He becomes increasingly alienated from his father and accuses him. “How can you continue working for a man who has taken your land? How can you go on serving him?” (WNC 30). His injured psyche seems to gain a perverse solace by venting his contempt on Ngotho. The breakup of Ngotho’s home is crystallized in Boro’s rejection of his father.

Totally unconcerned about his personal safety, Boro plunges himself into the Mau Mau movement. To Boro, the retrieval of the lost land would be merely a cheap victory, for he had been witness to the loss of many whom he loved, in the war. In this negative frame of mind, Boro lives destructively for revenge. Sartre elucidates that the violence perpetrated by the colonialists upon the natives rends their hearts, as they are unable to reciprocate these actions. This anger gets buried deep down in their psyche and in their period of helplessness, it manifests as a mad impulse to murder, which is the expression of the native’s ‘collective unconscious’. Sartre continues: “If this suppressed fury fails to find an outlet, it turns in a vacuum and devastates the oppressed creatures themselves. In order to free themselves they even massacre each other” (WE 16). Since he cannot easily confront the colonial forces, Boro decides to exact revenge by killing the black man, Jacobo, who has identified himself with the enemy. After he gives himself up to the police, he feels exultant, for at last, he has been able to give outward expression to the suppressed fury in his heart.
The black Jacobo has sought to identify himself with the whites and has become alienated from his people. Educated in the European school, his daughter Mwihaki feels removed from the political strife going on around her. To her the Mau Mau are people who do not belong to the village, for they are not among her circle of acquaintances. Mwihaki is isolated not merely from the revolutionary movement; she is estranged from her father too. She admits to Njoroge: “The gun and the pistol he carries make him a stranger to me” (*WNC* 106).

The destruction of both these families embodies the divisive nature of the social and political pressures of colonial Kenya, which destroys the community and the family units. They testify to Fanon’s statement that colonialism brings “violence into the home and into the mind of the native” (*WE* 31). Overwhelmed with a sense of failure to deal with an uncertain world, their psyche disintegrates.

“The Emergency has destroyed us” (*GW* 6). This comment, by a villager, summarizes the world of *A Grain of Wheat*. Set on the eve of Uhuru in December 1963, the novel presents the gruelling experiences of the European occupation of Kenya and its aftermath. It has created a group of people subjected to isolation and estrangement, placed in a community at a point of maximum social disintegration. In *Barrel of a Pen*, Ngugi describes the unimaginable suffering, which the Emergency had brought to the Kenyans. The picture of a “ten year rule of colonial terror” (*BP* 29) forms the background of the novel. James Decker reads it as a “document of the fear and uncertainty” that affects the psyche of a community subjected to the brutal domination of another (49). The destruction of the pre-colonial structures drastically affects the psychological mechanisms of the native. Govind Narain Sharma finds that this novel is
“devoted to a portrayal of the violence that was done not merely to body - the land, homes and hearths of the Gikuyu people - but also to their soul, in the form of the spiritual suffering and agony inflicted on them by the white man” (168). The novel presents several characters who have been spiritually wounded.

Mugo is tortured by dreams in which he feels he is about to be smothered by a drop of water. This symbolizes the violence that has been done to the soul of Mugo and the terror perpetrated upon the whole society. Pierre Naville has observed that the content of a human being’s dreams depends on the general conditions of the culture in which he lives (qtd. in BSWM 75). The tensions and agonies of a land devastated by the excesses of the Emergency are enacted in the nervous and restless psyche of Mugo. According to Karen Horney, a person suffers an ‘alienation from himself’ when his spontaneous self is stunted, warped or choked (New Ways 189, 252, 278). Mugo’s native self has been completely warped and choked by the alien colonial environment around him.

Sharma sees Mugo as “symbolizing in his person the African’s alienation which had made him a stranger in his own land” (171). A sense of the collective, a pre-colonial construct, was shattered by the interference of the alien forces. As a result, Mugo, who had been orphaned prematurely, was condemned to a life of unmitigated poverty, filth and loneliness in the house of a drunken aunt. Constantly derided and cursed by her, Mugo grew up with the haunting image of his own inadequacy. Fanon observes that inferiority complex causes a man’s psychic structure to be in danger of disintegration (BSWM 70). Powerless to change his situation, Mugo’s frustration manifests itself as hatred in his heart, often arousing in him an irresistible urge to kill his aunt. But after
her death, Mugo desperately “wanted somebody, anybody, who would use the claims of kinship to do him ill or good. Either one or the other as long as he was not left alone, an outsider” (GW 11).

Yet, whenever he faces an opportunity to involve himself in the affairs of the community and accept social responsibility, Mugo demonstrates an obsessive unwillingness to participate in it. He has developed a pathological fear of action and refuses to acknowledge any design in human existence. He prefers to see events in his life as isolated. “Things had been fated to happen at different moments. One had no choice in anything as surely as one had no choice on one’s birth. He did not, then tire his mind by trying to connect what went before with what followed after” (GW 195). Mugo is one of the few who had not experienced the terror of a police search in his hut at night. He lives in a world of his own, unscathed and unaffected by the early operations of the Emergency. People around him are taken to detention camps, some run to the forests, women take up men’s work and children mature early, but to Mugo all these are scenes in a drama in which he has no role to enact.

Mugo just wants to be left alone to farm his land. The soil forms “the background against which his dreams soared to the sky” (GW 11). He is determined to labour and sweat till he achieves success and forces the society to recognize him. He is mesmerized by delusions that he is Moses, destined to lead the people to a New Jerusalem. Richard Peck remarks that Mugo “is alienated from the people not by his education [. . .] but only by his choice not to be involved and by his messianic delusions” (30). Preoccupied by his selfish motives of improving his own status in the society, Mugo affects a void between himself and the collective. Colonial forces have fragmented his psyche by
annihilating his sense of the community. The split in Mugo's personality prompts him at one moment into a complete withdrawal into himself and at the next, into visions of himself as a prophet or saviour. Colonialism "had hammered into the native's mind the idea of a society of individuals where each person shut himself up in his own subjectivity, and whose only wealth is individual thought," says Fanon (WE 38). The inherent contradiction in Mugo's nature is representative of an individual caught in an explosive colonial situation when the traditionally oriented pattern of the community is destroyed by the alien culture and substituted with a life style based on individually centered pattern.

It is into such a world of Mugo that Kihika, the Mau Mau revolutionary enters and tries to pull him into the stream of the political life around. Mugo has chosen to walk in the twilight, all his life, for his isolation seems to grant him security. Now Kihika has brought darkness into his secure existence and Mugo is overwhelmed with a foamless fury and anger that obliterated even sleep. The alien environment, having transformed him into a purely selfish soul, Mugo wonders, "Why should Kihika drag me into a struggle and problems I have not created?" (GW 220). Therefore, Mugo is overcome with a desire to eliminate Kihika from his life.

Mugo has always found it difficult to make decisions. "Recoiling as if by instinct from setting in motion a course of action whose consequences he could not determine before the start, he allowed himself to drift into things or be pushed into them by an uncanny demon" (GW 29). Unwilling to commit himself to the community, Mugo allows himself to drift into the office of the D.O and reveals the whereabouts of Kihika. All along the way to the office, Mugo is obsessed with the vision of being the saviour of
his people. These lofty thoughts are coupled with the purely materialistic and self-centered thoughts of the reward of money that would come to him. This money would enable him to realize his dreams of a secure and prosperous future in a home of his own. His confidence and psyche destroyed by his inadequate upbringing, Mugo’s unconscious desire seems to be motivated by a need for security.

Mugo is taken to detention a few years later and tortured. But after his release, Mugo, destroyed by the atmosphere of fear and uncertainty, takes refuge in the silence of his hut and recoils from contact with other people. He feels some element of compassion for an old woman who lives in loneliness like himself, but is reluctant to commit himself by making any outward show of human feeling. He is nervous and tremulous when any villager approaches him. When some of the villagers narrate the story of their life and turn to him for companionship, Mugo is terrified and recoils in anger and agitation. Erich Fromm observes that an alienated individual does not experience himself as “a thinking, feeling, loving person” (*Beyond the Chains* 46). When Mumbi confesses the details of her family life, Mugo is overwhelmed by a desire to hurt her for dragging him into her life, for he does not want to drown in the sorrows of others. Mugo wants to escape the treacherous memories that Mumbi’s story awakens in him. He desires to go back to “that state, a limbo, in which he was before he heard Mumbi’s story and looked into her eyes” (*GW* 197).

Mugo symbolizes the alienation of an African village under colonial oppression. Michael Vaughan expresses the view that “Mugo’s consciousness contains the truth of the individual lives of the community” (31). All the elements of an alienated society like the fragmented community, mental anguish and hesitancy to hope manifest
themselves in the character of Mugo.

Karanja’s incurable belief in the permanence of white power alienates him from his people and his community. Karanja’s streak of self-centeredness and indifference to the collective welfare is underscored in a vision he had when he was a youth. He seems to see men and women running in desperate abandon, totally oblivious of the others around them. “Why should I fear to trample on the children, the lame and the weak when others are doing it?” he asks (GW 109). This selfishness becomes heightened in his later life as he gets increasingly enamoured of the white man’s power.

Karanja has always been unwilling to take up responsibility. A member of a community seething under the pressures of an alien system, Karanja lives only for the present. He identifies himself absolutely with the white man. Though Karanja’s behaviour to his own people is worse than that of Europeans, he is at his obsequious best with the white masters. Fanon speaks of this contradictory behaviour pattern in the native: “A Negro behaves differently with a white man and with another Negro. That this self-division is a direct result of colonialist subjugation is beyond question ...” (BSWM 13).

Karanja fears black power and is mortally afraid that Uhuru might mean the end of white administration. White power has given him an immense sense of security and now with impending Uhuru, his security is crumbling to pieces. Fanon elaborates on this dependency complex:

When we consider the efforts made to carry out the cultural estrangement so characteristic of the colonial epoch, we realize [. . .] that the total result looked for by colonial domination was indeed to convince the
natives that colonialism came to lighten their darkness. The effect consciously sought by colonialism was to drive into the natives' heads the idea that if the settlers were to leave, they would at once fall back into barbarism, degradation and bestiality. *(WE 170)*

Karanja’s misery over the impending loss of white power is compounded by Mumbi’s rejection of him. Always motivated by his own individual and selfish interests, Karanja had ignored the words of his mother: “Don’t go against the people. A man who ignores the voice of his own people comes to no good end” *(GW 256)*. Having identified himself with an alien influence, Karanja is left a broken and self-defeated man.

The disintegration of the married life of Mumbi and Gikonyo demonstrates how family relationships are psychologically affected by the complex nature of an alien rule. Gikonyo represents a good man corrupted by the Emergency. Gikonyo’s days in detention had been sustained by the desire of a reunion with Mumbi. He had hoped that when he is released his country would be basking in the glory of its newly gained Uhuru. But to his disillusionment, Gikonyo finds that their dearly earned freedom has become meaningless and that his people continue to be dominated by alien values. Mumbi too has compromised her integrity. His life loses its entire colour and Gikonyo is overcome with a sensation of dullness.

The shattering of his hopes and dreams transforms Gikonyo into a hardened man who seeks solace in hard work in the acquisition of wealth. He has abandoned his traditional values and adopted the values of the alien culture. He makes no attempt to communicate with Mumbi and lives in a world of his own. He schools his desires and vows, “he would never let his voice betray any bitter emotion or his inner turmoil” *(GW 35)*.
Mumbi discovers that her life with Gikonyo has been reduced to a stupid unfeeling silence. Mumbi finds her attempts to reach him turning to be futile, for he has willfully estranged himself from her. As Wangari accuses Gikonyo, “You have broken your home” (GW 200). The influx of alien values has reduced the villagers of Thabai into a disjointed state where relationships prove to be extremely fragile.

The destruction of the integrity of traditional life, brought in by the clash of values in post-independent Kenya, and its effects on the psyche of individual characters living in the village of Ilmorog form the backdrop of *Petals of Blood*. The novel highlights how Christianity, Western system of education and alienation of land continue with heightened intensity in Kenya, even after independence. The experiences of the characters and the events portrayed in the novel are emblematic of what has happened elsewhere in Africa. Finding the land gone after the Second World War, the young trekked to the cities and with this started the decline of Ilmorog. Once a glorious and thriving village, steeped in beauty and tradition, Ilmorog dwindled into an abandoned ghost of its former self. “The centre was swollen with fruit and water sucked from the rest, while the outer parts were progressively weaker and swaggier” (PB 49).

When the disillusioned villagers initiate a march to the city to save themselves from drought, it sets in motion a process of modernization, which destroys the traditional values and demoralizes the inhabitants. Rural Ilmorog comes increasingly under the grasp of the city, almost effecting a recolonization of the area. It brings in spiritual and material drought and the collective tragedy is characterized by the prevalent unrest and cracks in family life. As Ngugi remarks, it marks “a movement from relative stability in a rural culture to a state of alienation, strife and uncertainty, in the modern world” (HC 110).
The physical transformation of Ilmorog is epitomized by the Trans-Africa Highway which brought every piece of land under alienation from its rightful owners. The title is prefixed from Derek Walcott’s poem, ‘The Swamp’, and suggests the destruction of innocent Ilmorog by the capitalist agents of evil, corruption and death. The depth of alienation that has set in the society is illustrated by the exaggerated praise accorded to three murdered men who had brought exploitation to every nook and corner of the village. But the alienated values of the community induce them to glorify these men as agents of happiness and prosperity.

The maiming and disruption of traditional values leads to “acculturation for society, isolation and disillusionment for the individual” says K.Pelsmaeker (10). The community of Ilmorog is a tangle of disoriented and estranged souls who have come here to resolve their personal and social contradictions. The disintegration of their traditional social and moral order leads to conflicts in their personal psyche and this affects their future thoughts and actions. The four protagonists in the novel carry ‘maimed souls’ and seek ways to give meaning to their lives in a world where all are strangers “adrift even in the land of his birth” (PB 237).

A tormented soul, for whom “life [...] had always been a strain” (PB 91), Munira is incapable of commitment and action. Involvement has perpetually been an ambivalent process for him and therefore, he does everything he can to avoid it. Yet, like Mugo, he is incapable of not desiring it. Munira has been taught since childhood to identify success with the capitalistic values of his father and the neo-colonial, material interests of his successful brothers and sisters. His shrinking and introspective personality is an unconscious reaction to his overbearing and contemptuous father, who constantly nags
him for being a failure. In order to negate his father’s influence, Munira chooses a pagan wife only to find her embracing his parents’ hypocritical beliefs with greater fervour. His dream of fulfilment in love vanishes, but he never lifts a finger at the process. Though he finds life a big strain and wants to break loose, he hesitates to act. “It was as if he would not have known what he was running away from and what he was running toward” (PB 91).

In Decolonising the Mind, Ngugi observes how colonial education, instead of giving people confidence and initiative,

\[
\text{tends to make them feel their inadequacies, their weaknesses and their incapacities in the face of reality; and their inability to do anything about the conditions governing their lives. They become more and more alienated from themselves and from their natural and social environment. (56-57)}
\]

Munira demonstrates the deepening of this alienation in an educated intellectual in a period when the country is moving from colonialism to neo-colonialism. Munira remarks: “Some of us who had a schooling … we tended to leave the struggle for Uhuru to the ordinary people. We stood outside … the song I should say” (PB 10). In an attempt to identify himself with the people, he gets involved in a strike at school, leading to his expulsion. While others involved in the strike are able to reorganize their lives, Munira lacking the capacity to combat the world of adult endeavour can only drift from one failure to another. “He was only an outsider, fated to watch, adrift, but never one to make things happen” (PB 23). Munira illustrates Erich Fromm’s observation that an alienated person does not feel he is capable of productive human powers or that he is
the creator of his own acts” (*Sane Society* 111, 113).

Afraid of being criticized by his father and taunted by his wife, Munira escapes to Ilmorog as a form of release. But even at Ilmorog, Munira refuses to be drawn into the villagers’ talk about the expropriation of land and remains convinced of his role as a stranger and an outsider to their activities. The educated Munira proves the fact that “colonial education system produced the kind of education which nurtured subservience, self-hatred, and mutual suspicion. It produced a people uprooted from the masses” (*HC* 14). Munira fears to confront the reality around. He is ashamed of the past and longs to participate in the present but is paralyzed by an alienation, which leaves him “trembling on the brink because he was afraid of the chaos in the abyss” (*PB* 34). Karen Horney’s *Neurosis and Human Growth* describes an alienated man’s failure to own up to the existence of his own wishes (115). Such a person prefers to blot out all of what he “actually is or has, including even the connection of his present life with his past” (156-157).

Munira’s incompetence is revealed even in his teaching where he displays no positive qualities. Choosing to merely perpetuate colonialists’ attitudes, Munira’s declared policy is to teach mere facts and not propaganda about blackness. Munira relishes twilight and looks “forward to the unwilled immersion in darkness. He would then be part of everything: the plants, animals, people, huts, without consciously choosing the links. To choose involved effort, decision, preference of one possibility, and this could be painful” (*PB* 71). The four walls of the classroom guarantee him security against encroachments of the outside world. Depersonalizing himself before any endeavour that demands commitment becomes his chosen way of life. Pelsmaeker
observes, “Munira’s character shows many of the symptoms of a Freudian neurosis: father conflict, lack of identification, lack of decision-making power, a feeling of exclusion from society, hiding inside the classroom” (13).

Unable to identify himself with those around him, Munira attempts to drown himself in the intoxicating effects of the drink, Theng’eta. While under its grip, Munira desires to be buried in Wanja so that he “will be reborn into history, a player, an actor, a creator, not this, this disconnection” (PB 212). But here too, he is reluctant to commit himself and is afraid of Wanja’s hold over his heart. Munira finds he is still a prisoner of his upbringing and of the Siriana Missionary education. He is totally inadequate to print his personality upon any work that he undertakes. When New Ilmorog replaces the old village, Munira too falls apart and drifts helplessly into becoming a fanatic disciple of an eccentric Christian sect.

Wanja represents for Ngugi “the most ruthlessly exploited category of women in Kenya” (Interview Anita Shrev 35). Her childhood leaves her with traumatic memories of feuds between her materialistic father and her patriotic mother. Wanja is punished mercilessly for her schoolgirl crush on a boy and motivated by a sense of revenge upon her parents, she falls a prey to the amorous advances of a debauched, older man. Her action leads to the maiming of her body as well as her soul.

Underlying all her actions is a restless search for love and emotional stability and an attempt to overcome her sense of alienation. She hopes to find solace in Munira but this proves unsatisfactory and only succeeds in deepening her alienation. Ngugi, in Writers in Politics, says, “the result of the alienation from the individual and the collective selfhood was self-abnegation [. . .]” (141). Wanja, hardened by the forces of
a corrupt and alienated system, decides to give up her search for fulfilment and succumb to the new philosophy of 'eat or be eaten'. Wanja realizes that to destroy the enemies she hates, she has to destroy herself. Laing, in *Politics of Experience*, says, "if our experience is destroyed, our behaviour will be destructive" (24). Abdulla, who understands her wounded soul, does not blame her. He feels she is merely tilting the way the world is tilting. Wanja's actions often stem from the trauma and insecurity of her childhood, which reflects the divisive and alienating influences that European values have imposed on family structures in the Kenyan societies.

Born of an African mother and an Indian father, Abdulla has always been agitated by his racial origins. He often recalls how "he had hated himself, his mother, his father, his divided self, how indeed at times he had wanted to kill himself, he who did not belong anywhere" (*PB* 137). He represents the alienated state of the colonized man described by Fanon: "Because it is a systematic negation of the other person and a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly: 'In reality, who am I?'" (*WE* 203).

In an attempt at realizing his identity and desiring for a rebirth as a complete man, Abdulla joins the freedom struggle. He hopes to see the flowering of his people's faith and visualizes political liberty as the crowning glory to their collective struggle and endurance. But, with independence, his dreams fizzle out, his hopes are shattered and his disillusionment with the post-independent regime becomes total. He now hates himself for his lack of achievement in the new society. Karen Horney notes how an alienated individual comes to feel "self-hate", for he is ashamed of what he actually is - of
his feelings, resources and activities (Neurosis 160). In the alien neo-colonial environment, Abdulla is destined to continue to grope in the darkness for his identity. Karega is a prototype of the oppressed poor who feels alienated by the thrust of European values. He finds himself searching for a meaningful existence in the new society wedded to capitalism. Hardened by his experiences, Karega fails to understand Wanja’s love for him. He attempts to still the inner voices of discontent and to ameliorate the lives of his people through education, for then, he can conduct “a daily dialogue with his deepest self” (PB 252). He educates his pupils about the history of Mr. Blackman. “In the beginning he had the land and the mind and the soul together. On the second day, they took the body away to barter it for silver coins. On the third day, seeing that he was still fighting back, they brought priests and educators to bind his mind and soul” (PB 236). But Karega’s learning and extensive reading only serve to heighten his alienation, for they cannot provide him with answers to questions regarding the continued exploitation of the masses, even after independence.

Devil on the Cross portrays the disfigurement of the Kenyan psyche in the neo-colonial environment exposed to the Manichaen world of conflict between two different cultures and values. It marks a thematic and stylistic shift from Ngugi’s previous writing. It is a modern novel which employs traditional elements to tell the story of the economic and cultural alienation that afflicts contemporary Kenya. It is a satiric world where villains openly proclaim their villainy. At the scene in the cave, corrupt politicians, businessmen and civil servants compete with each other to be crowned as the leading extortioner of the people. They sing praises to their own depravity and feel little need to conceal that they are willing slaves of foreign capitalists. Fanon has pointed out that
“in the colonial context the settler only ends his work of breaking in the native when the latter admits loudly and intelligibly the supremacy of the white man’s values” (WE 35). The arrogance of the black capitalist class and their abject grovelling to the foreign masters prove that in the neo-colonial times, the settler has succeeded in his task of breaking in the native psyche.

The journey in the ‘matutu’, with a representative cross section of the modern Kenyan society, reveals the dichotomy that exists in the social and moral sphere between the ordinary people and the black moneyed elite. The worker Muturi says, “Our lives are a battlefield on which is fought a continuous war between the forces that are pledged to confirm our humanity and those determined to dismantle it” (DC 53). Expropriation of land continues even in the modern, neo-colonial scenario. Wangari, a peasant woman who participated in the Mau Mau struggle “so that our children might eat until they were full, might wear clothes that kept out the cold, might sleep in beds free from bedbugs” (DC 40), finds her small piece of land auctioned off and herself arrested for vagrancy in her own country. In sharp contrast to her is Mwaura, a businessman, devoted to the task of maximizing profits. He admits, “business is my temple, and money is my God” (DC 56). Wariinga, alienated from her traditional culture due to her education, resorts to skin whitening creams to satisfy the lust for white skins. The use of whitening creams and hair straighteners signifies the corruption of the nation’s culture and identity. A dedicated student, Wariinga is forced to degenerate into a ‘sugar-girl’ as a result of the exploitation perpetrated on women in the debased society.

Gatuiria, the young student, embodies the deeply alienated youth of the present day. He represents Fanon’s concept of the colonized intellectual who undergoes the
first phase of ‘assimilation’ where “the native intellectual gives proof that he has assimilated the culture of the occupying power” (*WE* 178). Gatuiria is tainted by his affluent background and overseas education and can only stutter like a baby while speaking his native language, Gikuyu. He is often forced to break into English during conversation and knows little of his country or culture. In *Black Skin White Masks*, Fanon speaks of the personality changes induced in the native due to years of exposure to the white hegemony (19). The native’s inferiority complex is intensified in the educated, who must struggle with it increasingly. The wearing of European clothes and the adorning of the native language with European expressions are the legacies inherited from colonial education. The slavery of language constitutes a slavery of the mind and therefore, for many years Gatuiria has been unsuccessfully attempting to discover his cultural roots. His classic intellectual inertia renders it impossible for him to overcome or circumvent his alienation.

Gatuiria hopes to awaken the people through his musical composition, but finds that he cannot catch the tune, for it seems to drift away, leaving only the ashes of the work “without even the tiniest spark” (*DC* 67). Gatuiria, the native intellectual comes back to his people by way of ‘white’ cultural achievements and therefore, he ends up like a stranger. He signifies the disabling effects of western education, which leaves a person trembling on the brink, unable to take a decision or achieve any significance. When he has to choose decisively between loyalty to his moneyed family and to his ladylove, Wariinga, Gatuiria dithers and prevaricates. He can only remain frozen in inaction “hearing in his mind music that led him nowhere” (*DC* 254).

Ngugi’s polemic in *Matigari* is based on Fanon’s observation that the colonialist
ideology which lauds the values of European civilization over African communal bonds, engenders in the native an acute dependency complex. The colonialist ideology of individual self-development is assimilated by the neo-colonial bourgeoisie and this succeeds in drawing the native elite away from his traditional, cultural values. In Matigari, Ngugi shows how mental and psychological alienation of the people in the neo-colonial era can be attributed to the denigration of African communal values by native bourgeoisie, like John Boy Junior, who has imbibed the false colonialist ideologies. Alienation from their own values of the collective and acceptance of the ideological construct of individualism gives rise to a crisis of identity in the neo-colonial period.

Matigari exposes the present day Kenyan government of President Arap Moi, with its repressive tyranny, subservience to imperialism and consequent widening alienation from the masses. It is an unrelenting satire on the destructive power patterns that alienate the people in this society, which has degenerated into an utterly dehumanized one. Matigari’s travel through the country engages him in a total vision of the fragmenting effects of neo-colonial alienation. Fanon has observed that “colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native’s brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it” (WE 170). Colonialist ideology disfigures the colonized’s past when it rewrites African history in relation to its own and ‘others’ its African subjects. The new black elite leaders, similarly, rewrite their history and ‘others’ their own native masses.

In the novel, a minister lauds professors for blatantly falsifying facts and history books. The altered books portray the Mau Mau as traitors while those loyal to the
colonial government are pictured as those who actually brought in independence. The
Minister, in *Matigari*, advises the people to follow the footsteps of professors in
‘Parrotology’ and to sing from the “the official hymn-book, ‘Song of a Parrot’” (*MG*
122). This reflects the literal truth of Daniel Arap Moi’s political philosophy of ‘Nyayoism’
or ‘Follow in My Footsteps’. In his speech in September 1984, Moi called on “ministers,
assistant ministers and every other person to sing like parrots” (qtd. in *DM* 86).

Matigari, a symbolic representative of the Mau Mau fighters, comes from the
forests looking for his ‘home’, which represents the Kenyan nation. He finds that the
neo-colonial society has degenerated into a brutal and materialistic one where all
traditional values are repudiated. It is a world where destitute children scramble for
food in rubbish heaps along with vultures, dogs and cats, and police unleash dogs on
defenceless women. The deprivation of traditional values is demonstrated in the scene
where the children stone Matigari, an old man, while the people look on and cheer.
Matigari wonders, “What curse has befallen us that we should now be fighting one
another? That children and their parents should be fighting while our enemies watch
with glee?” (*MG* 180). The world that appears before him is an upside one where

The builder sleeps in the open
The worker is left empty-handed
The tailor goes naked
And the tiller goes to sleep on an empty stomach. (*MG* 98)

Here, all dissidents are suppressed through arrests and detentions and a mindless
submission to the regime is demanded. “Too much fear breeds misery in the land”
(*MG* 87) and it transforms the masses into impotent cowards. The indifferent and
mindless manner in which the people respond to Matigari’s questions is highlighted in
the description of the indeterminate weather: “It would have been better if it had clearly
rained or clearly shone. Better any of that than this uncertain weather. Yes, better if it
were hot or cold, rather than lukewarm like this” (MG 89). Though the character of
Matigari is more symbolic than realistic, the alienation and exploitation he experiences
are very much a part of the neo-colonial reality of Kenya.

The dichotomy between their age-old communal values and the individualistic
values of the alien culture, expose Ngugi’s characters to psychological and moral
disintegration. Trapped in a system of dominating circumstances, they fall victims to
loneliness and alienation. Assailed by foreign forces, the individuals suffer intensely,
often inflicting wounds upon their most loved ones. The natives lose their roots and
their identity, when they are alienated from their ancestral lands and their ethnic customs.
This engenders in them a dependency complex, which often manifests itself in an
unwillingness to assume responsibilities.

The alienating influences of colonial education, with its emphasis on the notion
of individualism, reduce Waiyaki into a split personality. Completely transformed by
his colonial education, Njoroge is afraid to face the world of adult responsibility. He
can only contemplate suicide as a means to end his frustrations.

The tensions and contradictions generated by the younger generation’s attempt
to regain their land, lead to the disintegration of closely cemented family units. While
Ngotho succumbs to insurmountable despair, Boro reacts to their alienation by unleashing
his bitterness and anger upon others. Faced with the harrowing pressures of the colonial
society, Gikonyo and Mumbi fail to comprehend each other and can only fall apart.
Joshua, who has imbibed the alien values, attempts to cleanse himself from his 'impure' blackness by suffusing himself with the purity of the white man's religion. Joshua's fanatic embracement of Christianity destroys the tranquility of his household. It reduces his daughters, Muthoni and Nyambura, into conflicting souls unable to resolve the contradictions in the world around them. Mwihaki too, is estranged from her community by her education and by her upbringing within a household motivated by alien values. Her father Jacobo, like Joshua, alienates himself from his people because of his excessive zeal to win the favour of the white man. Karanja embodies the alienation and disassociation that colonialism has imposed upon the native's psyche.

The deprivation of Mugo's childhood, combined with the sense of inferiority engendered in him by the colonialist ideology, imbues him with a feeling of irretrievable mediocrity. Obsessed by his selfish motives, Mugo often acts negatively. The decadence of moral values and the absence of identity generated by the neo-colonial ethics, create many contradictions in Munira. Unable to resolve the conflicts in his psyche, Munira merely stumbles through life. Gatuiria desires to establish a sense of identity with his people but he remains unsuccessful, as the colonial ideology has penetrated deep into his self. Both Abdulla and Karega find that they cannot overcome their alienation under the exploitative ethics of the neo-colonial world. Karega's bewilderment over the failure of formal education to provide solutions to the present conditions seems to reflect Ngugi's own disillusionment.

The corrupt and degenerate society compels Wanja to succumb to its values, thus heightening her sense of alienation. Wariinga's education instils in her the need to resort to foreign cosmetic aids to establish an identity with the foreigners.
The thrust of *Devil on the Cross* and *Matigari* is on the alienation of the collective, rather than on the individual, in contemporary Kenya. Colonial ethics have manipulated the native psyche to such an extent that in the modern world, the native leaders are proud to declare themselves as abject slaves to the colonial overlords. They willingly allow the former white colonialists to re-enter their country and to milk it dry, in return for a few crumbs from the masters' table. Economic and social alienation continues, for the people are still not in possession of their land. These novels prove Fanon's contention that "the colonialist bourgeoisie, when it realizes that it is impossible for it to maintain its domination over the colonial countries, decides to carry out a rear-guard action with regard to culture, values, techniques and so on" (*WE* 35).

The crisis of identity, the marginalization and the estrangement that the people are subjected to are even more aggravated and more intensely experienced by the Kenyans in the neo-colonial situation. Failure to achieve in the new society heightens their sense of alienation. The ruptures in the social framework reduce the native to a mere rump, losing all claims to his identity as a man. This alienated individual, disconnected from those experiences which would enable him to identify himself with his nation, loses his sense of being. R.D. Laing observes, "If our experience is destroyed, we have lost ourselves" (24). Laing elucidates further on this type of alienation when he says that when man is stripped of his experience and his deeds, he is bereft of humanity. The alienated native starts exhibiting various hues of negative traits on different occasions. The dichotomous society prompts some to betray their own and this action, later overwhelms them with intense guilt. But, there are others who have internalized the values of the colonizer. These 'comprador bourgeoisie', collaborate with the erstwhile white masters and betray their masses with an utter lack of humanity.
Works Cited


---. *Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Politics*. 


- - -. “Tolstoy in Africa”: an Interview with Ngugi wa Thiong’o.” Interview with Reinhard and Ian Munro. Killam 46-57.


