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### **ABSTRACT**

Unlike many other African male writers, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o portrays women as strong and assertive in the face of the different hardships they face in Kenyan society. He presents women as capable of making changes in their communities. He paints an unconventional portrayal of the African woman. He does not look at women as a separate entity from men. Instead, he presents them as struggling side by side with men. They complement each other. They can get their voice heard, and they are no longer voiceless. Ngugi portrays women from a new perspective through their interaction with men in the same community. He adds that African women are no longer defined only by their femaleness but their humanity as well. Ngugi deviates from the conventional path of looking at African womanhood and seeks a new approach to modern African women. In other words, Ngugi adopts a new outlook that challenges the conventional stereotypical image of African women. This image presents them as subdued, oppressed, and demeaned to a very degraded position in the African society in general and the Kenyan society in particular. It is an outlook that presents African women differently in a new way different from traditional Feminism. In *Devil on The Cross*, Wa Thiong'o presents Waringa and Wargani as two models that represent the womanist vision of the writer in question. Despite sundry sufferings and hardships, they have to experience, both women can appear capable of making changes in their community and working for the sake of their country. Also, Gaturia and Muturi are two models of the African men who cooperate with women in their community in defying the oppressive public forces and working for the welfare of their country.

**Keywords:** Feminism, womanist, assertive, self-actualization, oppressive, patriarchs.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Throughout history, women and their role in society have always been a subject of extensive discussion, controversy, and debate. Women have never been considered equal to men, especially regarding their social rights. Advocating for their rights and demanding equal status has occupied considerable space in literature, not just local but also on an international level. A few years back, feminism was nothing more than a literary concept taught in schools yet never practiced. However, feminism is a social movement that revolves around raising women's living standards and bringing their concerns into the spotlight. With time, this movement has taken different forms such as implicit feminism, explicit feminism, radical feminism, European feminism, black feminism, among many others. However, despite various forms, its essence remains the same. It is concerned with presenting women as a subject of oppression not only by men but also by the different societal institutions as wives, mothers, sisters, daughters, or any feminine being. Again, the various forms of feminism introduce women as oppressed, subdued while struggling to assert themselves in the face of the practices of men in male-dominated societies. Women have always lived in a state of war, fighting for their position in a patriarchal society or angst other oppressive forces that work against them. None of these forms has tried to present women as living in harmony with men while working jointly to improve society.

Therefore, there emerges a need for a new vision that depicts the situation of African women. It is a vision that empowers African women and stands as opposed to other feminist standpoints. It is a new standpoint that challenges the traditional norms and cultural values of the already established situation of African women. Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi, an African female writer, introduces a new vision of African women called Womanism. In her article 'Womanism: The Dynamics of the contemporary Black Female,' she defines Womanism as follows:

A philosophy that celebrates Black roots, the ideals of Black life, while giving a balanced presentation of Black womanhood. It concerns itself as much with the Black womanhood. It concerns itself with the black sexual power tussle and with the world power structure that subjugates black. Its ideals are for Black unity where every Black person had a modicum of power and so can be a brother, a sister, a father, or a mother to the other (Ogunyemi 1985:240).

Ogunyemi wants to underscore that black women should be defined by their femininity and roles in society and as the better half that complements men. She stresses that the ultimate aim of Womanism is the unity of blacks everywhere. Hudson-Weems, an African American female writer, wants to systemize the concept of the newly adopted approach of Womanism. In so doing, she addresses the extraordinary condition of African women's lives. She introduces a similar definition of Woman, the one given by Ogunyemi. Hudson-Weems stated:

An ideology created and designed for all women of African descent. It is grounded in African culture, and, therefore, it necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs, and desires of African women. It critically addresses the dynamics of the conflicts between mainstream feminism, black feminism, African feminism, and African Womanism (Hudson-Weems 1997:24).

Thus, Hudson-Weems rejects any terms that include the word feminism with its different forms because of their self-named, family-centered, genuine in sisterhood, strong, in concert with the male in struggle, whole, authentic, flexible biased implications. Furthermore, she contends that any form of feminism is problematic for the actual situation of African women. Consequently, this paves the way for the emergence of Womanism as an Afrocentric literary tendency.

Womanism, as a theory, includes a set of features that characterize African women's lives and conduct. It sees women as sensible and cooperative beings capable of making decisions in their relationship with the surrounding community and men. These features are summed up by Hudson-Weems where she says "Critical understanding and appreciating the African women is recognizing her common features: a self-definer, a role-player, respected, recognized, spiritual, male-compatible, ambitious, mothering and nurturing" (Hudson-Weems: Reclaiming Ourselves 1993).

The present study examines the African womanist aspect in Ngugi's *Devil on The Cross*. It provides a detailed analysis of the novel in question based on Hudson-Weems' African Womanism Theory. The analysis also provides a new model of African women in their struggle alongside men. In this novel, Ngugi deviates from the traditional way of depicting women as weak, inferior, absurd, subdued, and dehumanized by the different oppressive forces of society. Here, Ngugi presents women capable of working as equals alongside men and making their voice heard by society. Ngugi provides women with the means to define and value themselves within the context of their experiences.

Again, the present study seeks to elucidate several African womanist characteristics, including portraying African women as self-defined, ambitious, rebellious, and courageous. It introduces a different image of African women in contrast to the distorted one usually attributed to them in traditional and modern societies. The researchers seek to highlight the socio-economic circumstances prevailing in Kenya during the post-colonial era to investigate the Kenyan women's lives after independence and underscore how their sufferings have been on the rise. Here, many adverse aspects of society such as prostitution, capitalism, female oppression, gender inequality will be examined.

Tibebu says that Ngugi "reflects the presence of corruption, female oppression by the greed of the country's political, economic, and social elite who, after the struggle for freedom from British rule, and they "have not returned the wealth of the land to its people, but rather perpetuate the social injustice and economic inequality that characterized neo-colonial oppression" (Tibebu 2012:31-2). It is evident that *Devil on the Cross* sheds light on how African people, women, in particular, were struggling in the neo-colonial era. Despite their struggles to get rid of the colonizer's brutality, they have yet not attained complete freedom are still captivated by the native rulers. This means that Kenyan women are still oppressed even after Kenya's Independence. However, they are able to make their voice heard in such hostile circumstances. Thus, the recovery of the African women's self-definition, ambition, willfulness, self-actualization, and courage are the African womanist attributes that run through the whole novel.

Primarily, Kenya's Independence proves a failure to fulfill the Kenyan women's sense of freedom; instead, it intensifies their plight. All promises of freedom are not fulfilled due to the dominance of the capitalistic system. The aspiration for a radical change chatters in such a capitalistic society characterized by the exploitation of the working class. Hence, Wa Thiong'o's main concerns, as an African womanist male writer, are to bring to light the stark reality of the neocolonial life in Kenya to highlight the Kenyan women's intense struggle for self-definition as a dominant feature of African Womanism. In simple terms, "Self-definition describes black women's everyday experiences in their own words . . . [It] allows women of African descent to describe the forces that impact their lives and the ways in which those forces affect their everyday experience" (Gilliam 2013:85). This means that the process of self-definition starts due to different forms of oppression that African women have to undergo during the neocolonial era. Thus, Kenyan women's oppression extends to contemporary Kenya; they are oppressed for various reasons: capitalism, gender, class. Kenya is neo-colonized by some African rulers and capitalists who have longed for personal gains. For this reason, Ngugi "does not support capitalism and the system of governance suitable for Kenya and Africa in general" (Addei et al. 2013:164). Instead, he draws heavily on the drawbacks of the capitalistic regime to underscore how it ruins Kenyan women's stature.

Characteristic of a capitalistic environment is the emergence of whoredom, which spreads in the community and shamefully appeals to a number of Kenyan males. As a result, Black women are expected to spare their chastity for the males' sensual pleasure. Wariinga, the main character, has suffered a sequence of pains. She is physically assaulted by the Rich Old Man, the savage businessman who has impregnated her with a baby and denied acknowledging his relation to the same. In fact, Wariinga is to blame for her affair with an aged person, yet she may be excused for her naïve thinking. She does not have that sufficient wisdom to guide her and direct her behavior. She is too young to avoid men's wicked desires. Being an innocent and pure teenager, she is easily deceived by Old Man's attractive speech. Unfortunately, she takes the man's appealing speech to be genuine affection towards her. Consequently, Wariinga's mind is attracted by his offer of money; he says, "Warringa, my dear, how can you foolishly tie yourself to your books when sugary delicacies, and ripe, juicy fruits, and many other wonders calculated to stir the heart and to warm the body are to be found everywhere in Kenya?" (Devil 1982:143).

The community is expected to be the very source of power that provides its members with liberty and potentials. However, the present Kenyan community is spoiled by different types of oppression and debasement practices. Sarcastically, carrying an illegitimate baby is the direct outcome of the community's evils. Shockingly, this sinful community punishes females harshly if they carry bastard embryos. Consequently, Wariinga's bastard baby is rejected by the community while turning a blind eye to the ongoing practices of prostitution and other forms of corruption. As a result, she is prevented from completing her education or leading an ordinary life. The regime is capitalist-oriented, disregarding all the evil vices prevailing in modern Africa. Therefore, Ngugi launches a battle against this degraded community that has abused African women who are denied their freedom as members of the same community. As Alhabian puts it:

In other words, there is no 'law' that restrains liars of the sort above; no 'law' that can curb such inclinations to selfishness; no 'law' that prevents deception and fraud from taking over; no 'law' that coerces the one who has made promises to fulfill them; also, there is no law that can control the lustful; and most importantly, no 'law' that protects the idiots or restores their rights! (Alhabian 2010:97-8).

Kenyan women's physical violation is regarded as a horrible illness created by degradation in morality. Ethics no longer means a lot for the wealthy class. Corruption has become a public phenomenon in post-colonial Africa. Consequently, African women are hardly given job opportunities except being prostitutes. No other work is available to them but harlotry. This signifies that the contemporary community does not stop granting Kenyan females a lower rank, which has belittled them to a very degraded status. Claire Robertson attacks the Kenyan women's suppression and their eviction from every prestigious rank in the contemporary Kenyan community. They are compelled to offer their bodies to meet the prurient needs of Black males and treated like cattle. This refers to the spread of adultery in Africa too (Robertson 1995:44-65).

The new African position has been established by adjusting to such different conditions. A price must be paid for everything; when they try to get job opportunities, black women have realized that almost all companies and business bosses compel them to commit prostitution so that women can keep their jobs. They may be employed when they agree to submit to the businessmen's sexual desires. Physical rape is the principle that African young women must adhere to in order to be appointed. For example, Wariinga has looked for a job in every store in the capital city, yet the whole of her attempts has been a failure. Most frequently, she meets men who watch her body lustfully. She thought, to get a job, one must have the right skills and abilities. Unfortunately, African women are not characterized by the strength of their personality but the capacity to get into the employer's bed. One of the businessmen discloses the disgraceful reality that "jobs are very hard to come by these days. But a girl like you . . . it shouldn't be too difficult to find something for you to do... Let's go across to the Modern Love Bar and Lodging to discuss the question more fully" (Devil 1982:219). Nevertheless, Wariinga has forcefully rejected his mean flirting and objected to being a pleasure to his mischievous passion.

At another level, financial conditions are ruthless for women resulting in their dependence on men and being dominated even after independence. Women are jobless, and they are separated from all fields of participation. They are not allowed to occupy any management jobs merely because they are women. They suffer from physical harassment as well. These infringements are not given the slightest interest by the African community, which has prevented them from enjoying any advantages and allowed them lower occupations. As a Kenyan womanist, Ngugi's position is similar to Hudson-Weems'; both rejected the male-dominance view, which considers women as inferior fellows mastered and imprisoned by their Black men. Ngugi strongly condemns the male-dominance view as it supports whoredom. Despite living in contemporary African, African females are mercilessly abused. Therefore, the title *Devil on the Cross* denotes that patriarchal authority is to be combated to save not just women but the community in general. Ngugi bases his writings on the womanist notion that Kenyan ladies should have equal privileges to their male counterparts. Men and women must be considered equals in order to destroy the traditional images given to females. Thus, the sex bias is to be dissolved.

Ngugi enthusiastically supports the Kenyan womanist view of togetherness and unification. He recognizes the true crisis of Kenyan femmes, thus embracing the womanist position. The national victory may be accomplished if people march toward this favorable expectation. However, disconnectedness can obstruct their progress

towards a brighter existence. Aristocrats know the vigor of unity if it spreads among the entire abused community. It leads to the elimination of their suppression and harsh subjugation. Consequently, they are compelled to mute their voices and cover their sights to bear the painful living conditions. It is apparent that the disadvantaged group has no chance to participate in every public sphere that affects their country, not to mention the communal circles. Ngugi censures the stubborn force of the materialists whose robbery of the African riches has attained its utmost degree. He starts an attack against the covetousness of the local aristocrats who just aim for their private profit. Wa Thiongo emphasizes that "the coming together of the peasants and the workers in a united and collective manner against their exploiters will liberate them from the present state of bondage and life of misery and poverty" (Uwasomba 2006:105).

Therefore, Ngugi is intensely interested in the causes of the marginalized and crushed African women. In *Devil on the Cross*, black women are quite aware of the surrounding wickedness. They are controlled by the public forces and shaped by the circumstances under which they have to live, and they have to gain sufficient experience from their successes and failures. Wariinga turns out to be quite conscious of the unfavorable circumstances in her community. Her active determination supports her desire to combat and ceases to be a negativist. The submissive attitude that controls her at first is substituted by a bold one in difficult times. She strengthens herself through hard work, challenges, and tenacity. Thus, Wariinga turns out to be a strong woman who possesses the basis of the womanists' thought. As Richard Peck elucidates, Wariinga is "celebrated as perfection personified in some embarrassingly agitprop writing about her role as a Heroine of Toil" (Peck 1986:39).

It is erroneously posited that a woman's primary job is giving sensuous pleasure in Kenyan society. Wariinga refuses to be just an object for physical pleasure and withstands physical abuse, which reveals the total administration of her destiny. That is, she refuses to be a victim of the dehumanizing atmosphere. The unavailability of adequate working opportunities cannot turn Wariinga into a whore, and she goes to decide on the work she is interested in. Ngugi represents a non-confirming model of African ladies that is antithetical to the conventional negative portrait of African women. He presents them as revolutionary figures who can skillfully overcome any obstacle in the process of achieving wholeness. Elaine Savory Fido and Carol Boyce Davies claim that "[a] character's ability to define herself is shaped both by her understanding of the boundaries by which society circumscribes her and by her ability to transcend those boundaries and attain self-actualization while remaining nonetheless within her society" (Davis 1993:336). Ngugi wants to break the prevailing uselessness and pessimism's emblem to find a fresh expectation embodied in Wariinga's development.

Certainly, the way to self-empowerment needs a drastic change that can aid Kenyan women in their endeavor for self-realization through developing a new sense of self-consciousness. They are to trust their capacities to achieve their targets. Wariinga presents a model in changing her status from a submissive woman to a powerful one capable of standing in the face of the odds. In *Devil on the Cross*, Wariinga is initially introduced as a subdued woman. However, her transformation bears various implications that pinpoint many womanist beliefs. She is no longer self-loathed, yet she becomes self-dependent, self-confident, and self-respected.

Consequently, Wariinga recognizes the importance of overcoming troubles but not avoiding them. As a result, she is able to set out anew and go ahead towards new potentials. Simon Gikandi argues that Wariinga's aim is "to break out of the prison house of self-hate and victimization and to assert her identity outside the culture and economy of arrested decolonization" (Gikandi 2000:220).

Generally, the sense of self-aborrence results from a lack of self-confidence. "Wariinga was convinced that her appearance was the root cause of all her problems. Whenever she looked at herself in the mirror, she thought of herself very ugly. What she hated most was her blackness, so she would disfigure her body with skin-lightening creams" (*Devil*: 1982-11). She detests her dark complexion. Therefore, imitation stems from the feeling of self-loathing and lack of self-respect. Wariinga's mistaken idea that having blond hair and a white complexion is the model of the loveliness criteria results in deforming her both externally and intrinsically. She finds it difficult to accept reality and, consequently, she becomes frustrated. Having experienced a series of frustrations, Wariinga reveals solidarity with her African female fellows. Gradually, on this basis, that sense of self-depreciation is substituted by a different, more profound feeling of rootedness and content. Astonishingly, Wariinga's self-perception is depicted here:

This Wariinga is not the one we met two years ago. This Wariinga is not the one who used to think that there was nothing she could do except type for others; the one who used to burn her body with *Ambi* and *Snowfire* to change the color of her skin to please the eyes of others, to satisfy their lust for white skins; the one who used to think that there was only one way of avoiding the pitfalls of life: suicide. No, this Wariinga is not that other Wariinga... The Wariinga of today has decided to be self-reliant all the time, to plunge into the middle of the arena of life's struggles in order to discover her real strength and to realize her true humanity (*Devil* 1982:216).

Wariinga's self-perception is enhanced by her vision of the devil that discloses the shocking truth. Satan's appearance in Wariinga's vision is Ngugi's means to explore her cerebral response to inequality and immorality. She succeeds in this test efficiently and shows her resolution to overcome every aspect of immorality. Ngugi's authentic depiction of Wariinga as a male writer defending the cause of women is unmatched. This is evident in

her rejection of all sorts of worldly temptations Satan has displayed her in the vision and how Satan attempts to persuade her into becoming a devotee. He thinks that she, as a female, will susceptibly accept his offers due to the dire circumstances she undergoes. He does not realize that she has a strong will that enables her to resist him. Wariinga does not seem weak while rejecting his proposals, and, consequently, she starts to follow the path she selects for herself. She is able to subvert Satan's temptation that tries to drag her down into the circle of injustice. Despite the hardships, she appears powerful; she does not succumb or give up her wishes. Eventually, this event enhances her womanist status in looking upon further issues. Wariinga's womanist status is highlighted here by Jennifer Evans:

Wariinga is a 'resistance heroine' because she rises to the challenge confronting her. The experience at the Devil's Feast changes her from a spectator to a participant in the struggle. She gains a positive image and self-esteem by fighting back and refusing to accept the role ascribed to her ("Women and Resistance" Evans 1979:133).

Wariinga is enlightened about the actual events in her surroundings; she firmly decides not to surrender once more. Though hindered by the corrupt community, she continues to struggle. She no longer surrenders to the overwhelming conditions that used to direct her deeds. Instead, she effectively improves her outlook and complies with it. The challenge creates a great sense of hopefulness that she currently develops. Based on Hudson-Weems' womanist view:

[A]mbition and responsibility are highly important in the life of the African womanist... [T]he African woman is taught the importance of self-reliance and resourcefulness, and hence, she makes a way out of no way, creating ways to realize her goals and objectives in life (Reclaiming Ourselves 1993:71-2).

Ngugi also praises Kenyan women's optimism in combating every pressing power in the post-colonial context. Wariinga's fresh belief is to be self-aware. She is able to draw a fresh self-portrait. She can articulate their opinions and revolt for liberating herself. She refuses to make her sufferings to be senseless and decides to get everything stretched out. Her persistence presents her as a distinguished womanist figure. She adopts a hopeful outlook which reinforces her power greatly. In an interview directed by Kenneth Parker, Ngugi emphasizes that "the woman has always been a dominant figure in my writings, and this, in a sense, is a reflection of the dominant place the Kenyan peasant woman has occupied in the struggles against imperialism" (Wa Thiongo 1981:34). Therefore, Ngugi pinpoints the inevitability of transformation represented by the favorably-changed Wariinga. Here, he follows the opinion of Helen Chukwuma, who emphasizes that women:

[A]dopt a positivistic view in crisis, and do not just fold their arms in tears and self-pity. Instead, they think, plan, execute and concretize. Through this maze of self-assertion, the female individualism and personality shows, she appears in another light, as a person capable of taking and effecting decisions (Chukwuma:1989-4).

Ngugi displays Wariinga's growing sensibility is antithetical to her frustration in her past days. Wariinga's potentials enable her to decide her path. She appears very firm while resisting injustices and persists in being honorable. In her article "Feminine Preoccupations in African Literature: A Theoretical Appraisal," Mary E. Modupe Kolawole asserts that "Wariinga's tenacity and boldness in refusing to be a victim of gender intimidation and exploitation is almost unsurpassed even in African women's writing" (Kolawole 2000:119). Thus, Ngugi spotlights the possibility of transformation represented in the modern Wariinga. She is no longer pessimistic about her future. She overcomes the harsh circumstances so as not to be "a mere flower, whose purpose is to decorate the doors and windows and tables of other people's lives," and therefore she becomes "Wariinga, heroine of toil" whose "heroism of life can be discovered only in the battle of life" (Devil :216-7).

Ngugi always praises the achievements accomplished by females in the process of self-actualization. He adopts the view that education is a critical element in reinforcing the status of African women in the face of all forms of oppression. Also, "Odenigbo informs Ugwu in Adichie Chimamanda Ngozi's *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) that '[e]ducation is a priority! How can we resist exploitation if we don't have the tools to understand exploitation?'" (Kivai 2010:11) Education is a means for Kenyan ladies for a self-dependent living. Education for individuals is the gateway for awareness and the meaningfulness of life. It is the path for progress in a corrupt community riddled with capitalism and injustices. It endows women with confidence, bravery, and reliability. Ngugi wants to stress the necessity of education for African women to change their status in society. Wariinga finishes her education and joins a clerical workshop in the capital city. She becomes an efficient mechanic expert whose abilities can compete with males' potentials. She has effectively marked an impact on her occupation. She is able to defy every other male engineering technician and managed to make a triumph.

Wariinga's exceptional abilities prove that she deserves the appreciation of her colleague male engineers who turn to be intimate comrades. "Deep friendship [which has] developed between Wariinga and other workers" (Devil 1982:221). This is an obvious example of Ngugi's womanist approach. This stresses that learning provides her with a new outlook on the world. Instead of retaliating against her patriarchs, she commits to her job as a technician, which eventually helps her finance her studies. As the story of Devil on the Cross runs toward its close, it becomes evident that Wariinga's personality has changed for the better thanks to her becoming a learned lady.

Today Wariinga strides along with energy and purpose, her dark eyes radiating the light of inner courage, the courage and light of someone with firm aims in life- yes, the firmness and the courage and the faith of someone who has achieved something through self-reliance (Devil 1982:218).

Having adopted the womanist approach, Ngugi succeeds in drawing a bright portrait of the Kenyan women who are able to actualize their potentials while combating any hardships. Nevertheless, a new phase of Kenyan women's self-perception necessitates collaboration with Kenyan men. Despite the position of male degradation and objectification, Kenyan women find it necessary to consider the status of males in their community. This stance contradicts the modern feminist attitude set upon the absence of males. Ngugi, as a Black womanist, is involved not in fighting males or revolting against their cruel injustices; instead, his chief preoccupation is to stress the need for the concept that Kenyan women and men have to work collaboratively for the welfare and progress of their country and this is characteristic of Womanism.

In *Devil on the Cross*, Gatuiria is one of the educated African men who are devoted to the help of peasant citizens. As a womanist figure, Wariinga cooperates lovingly with Gatuiria. She appreciates his thoughtfulness and delicacy. Gatuiria is loved for his bravery and firmness despite the heavy burdens that he has to work. Gradually both of them turn to be more attached and affectionate. As a womanist figure, she is more willing to be his wife rather than his girlfriend. She develops a new sense of independence and self-appreciation. Like many women in her community, Wariinga accepts affection but rejects being employed as a pleasure doll. Of course, this demonstrates their womanist status. Kenyan women no longer separate themselves from males' lives; they call for the reciprocal esteem, rejecting the man-dominating exploitation. In *Writing African Women: Gender, Popular Culture, and Literature in West Africa*, Stephenie Newell contends, "[g]ender images and ideologies constantly shift to account for their changing status. This has led to the emergence of new perspectives which interrogate, reformulate and analyze inherited, popular codes" (Newell 1997:1).

Furthermore, in his portrayal of Gutuiria and Wariinga, Ngugi touches upon the idea of bridging the gap between the different classes of society. Gatuiria, who belongs to a wealthy family, reveals his intention to marry Wariinga and return to his father. Of course, this represents the womanist tendency that Ngugi adopts to enact harmony among the various Kenyan classes. The message of this event is that the upper-class male is pleased with having a wife from the poor villagers. Ngugi portrays how men can be sincere to their Kenyan females. Gatuiria resolutely attempts to associate with the laboring group. He disconnects himself from the evil actions committed by his father against the lower-class citizens. Like Hudson-Weems, Ngugi does not support that attitude of malevolence that might be created between Kenyan men and women. He not only directs the attention towards the repercussions of a male-dominated society; he believes in integration between the two sets of the same society.

Ngugi's womanist inclination can be seen opposing the traditional conclusion of novels written by the Black male novelists. He closes the plot with a magnificent triumph of women over men. Upon seeing Wariinga, the Rich Old Man seems frightened and anguished, not because he regrets his physical assault of the girl but because he cares about his public status. Again, he cunningly attempts to persuade her to forgive him and have a fresh start. He seems unable to understand that Wariinga is no longer an object he can play. It is a concluding warning that reinforces reconciliation and fairness. Wariinga murders Rich Man because she thinks it is part of the national struggle to create freedom for both females and the country in general. The action of killing this man heralds the demise of immorality and backwardness too. As pointed out by Chijioke Uwasomba, "[v]iolence in order to change an intolerable unjust social order is not savagery. It purifies man. Violence to protect and present an unjust, oppressive social order is criminal and diminishes man," and "[t]he action, therefore, must be seen in its ideological relevance as a means of overthrowing an unjust social order" (Uwasomba 2006:105). *Devil on the Cross* closes with the murder of the Rich Old Man. He perishes so that the whole community can live on. She says, "I'm not going to save you. But I shall save many other people" (Devil 1982:253). As such, she represents the epitome of the real Kenyan womanist.

Again, the act of murdering the Rich Old Man is a call for the country to estimate the status that a lady's self-awareness has become a fact; it can be seen as a revolutionary change. It is not a retreat status. The demise of Rich Old Man rescues society from materialism that demolishes its values and foundations. So by murdering him, she can live anew. As a womanist character, Wariinga gives her bravery and determination to achieve triumph; Ngugi praises her resolution to eradicate the defects of the community:

Womanism endeavors to assist black people to see, affirm, and have confidence in the significance of their experiences and to be able to face the challenges of all the social oppressive forces impeding black women's struggle for survival and the development of a positive, productive quality of life conducive to women's freedom and wellbeing (qtd. in Sadek 2014:36).

*Devil on the Cross* exhibits the immorality of the Kenyan upper class. Ngugi stands against the communal and public defects that have overwhelmed the nation. Such brutal adverse features are disregarded by the Western feminist preoccupation. Black feminist does not ignore the outlook that seems any miseries experienced by women. Therefore, Wariinga's fight against immorality makes her a womanist character different from characters portrayed by Western feminist characters. She does have selfless interests. She cares about

integration among all the society's members. This contradicts the feminist position that advocates only women. Black Feminism reflects the entire picture of Kenyan women's existence. Wariinga presents the epitome of the African woman who is aware of the public and communal hardships in the post-colonial period. She reflects the womanist outlook which is induced in the national endeavor.

Kenyan womanists exemplified in Wariinga's struggle for both their independence and their nation's independence in general. Wariinga's realization of self-confidence enables her to fight against the different forms of injustice that crush the weak and the poor. Wariinga considers herself a "single organ" who has firmly rejected the "broad highway carpeted with the flowers of self-seeking individualism" (Devil 1982:213). So, by the concluding part of the story, Wariinga becomes a radical leader who urges her abused female natives to resist the capitalistic norms imposed by business groups. As a womanist figure, she refuses to unite with the capitalistic profiteers. Ngugi wants to pinpoint the means by which Wariinga urges the surrounding exploited masses and her ability to direct their thoughts, choices, and behaviors. She persistently tries to inspire this radicalized sense within every exploited citizen to enact the fresh start of autonomy. Wariinga's newly adopted attitude of radicalism parallels her transformation from powerlessness to determination. As Christine Obbo points out:

Women take action to bring about change in their personal circumstances and hence, indirectly more comprehensive social change. It has been shown that East African women are doing something about their situations by tackling the specific problems of poverty, ignorance, and unsatisfactory personal relationships. The women are convinced that if they dealt with poverty and acquired independent sources of income, then dealing with other areas of their lives would be relatively easily (Obbo 1980:156).

As a womanist persona, Wariinga arouses considers it her task to arouse the interest in the urgency of eliminating the different forms of corruption that have endangered African's peacefulness. In his thesis 'Parables of Power and Powerlessness: Exploration in African Fiction Today,' Emmanuel Obiechina thinks that "[i]t has become necessary to demand change," and consequently Kenyan citizens require "a revolutionary impulse that not only demands but also imputes action to save the people" (Obiechina 1992:18). Wariinga reveals that "we aren't going to wait for things to happen by themselves any longer" (Devil 1982:246). She realizes the significance of going ahead for a brighter present and future. Hence, Wariinga appears as the spokesperson of the laboring group and their aspirations. She zealously acts as an advocate of the freedom of the abused community and improvement of their situation. She endeavors "to make any meaningful development in the way of social justice" (Waita 2013:49).

In the novel, one more female character attempts to improve her status in post-colonial Kenya. Wangari belongs to the downtrodden working class who are oppressed at the hand of the wealthy people in Kenyan society. She joins the Mau Mau movement in the Emergency years. After that, she joins the movement for the patriotic fight for independence. Wangari is quite aware of every surrounding force of suppression. Her limited piece of land was sold for her recently to return the money borrowed from the Kenyan Economic Progress Bank.

Nevertheless, she never retreats and is determined to find a job in the capital city, but she fails. She is disappointed by the sudden act of the Kenyan vendor who seeks to create a problem so that she cannot get a job as a salesgirl. As the story tells:

There was a black man in the shop. My heart lifted with hope. I told him all my troubles. Can you believe it? He collapsed with laughter! He told me that the only job he could offer me was that of spreading my legs, that women with mature bodies were experts at that job (Devil 1982:42).

As an African womanist writer, Ngugi seeks to present the public and communal-financial troubles that have spoiled modern Africa. The social system exercises different kinds of pressure on farmers to sell their farms out at a low price. But, of course, such a practice isolates the local citizens from their properties and increases their misery and suffering. Gradually, the situation becomes much worse when the Kenyan police catch Wangari instead of valuating her national successes. As the story tells, Wangari "was taken to court, this morning, charged with intending to steal and with roaming about Nairobi without being a resident of the city, without a job, without a house and without a permit" (Devil 1982:43). The procedure of putting Wangari in jail and sparing thieves and burglars has many repercussions on both laborers and farmers. They realize that the whole system is corrupt and unjust taking an action is required. As Chijioke Uwasomba notes:

Although Wangari's action in inviting the police to arrest the rich robbers fails, it nevertheless helps the people in the course of their struggle for a new society and teaches peasants and workers that the law is not the source of their salvation from capitalist exploitation and as a result, it exists to sustain the status quo. (Uwasomba 206:105)

In "Mother Africa and Heroic Whore: Female Images in *Petals of Blood*," Jennifer Evans points out that "in Ngugi's novels women are shown to have a fundamental role in the struggle against oppression and exploitation, and often courage and hope are ultimately found in their hands" (Evans 1983:57). Many other arrests follow the case of Wangari by the police oppressive regime of post-colonial Kenya. Here, Wangari's arrest is presented as a punishment model for anyone who tries to do the same. Nevertheless, when she is at court, Wangari appears very assertively and defies the magistrate saying, "[l]ook at me properly. I am not a foreigner here like you. And



I am not a vagrant here in Kenya" (Devil 1982:44). Nevertheless, on the other hand, Wangari represents a model to other oppressed people, males, and females, in her resistance and opposition against the different oppressive in the surrounding community.

In this novel, Ngugi gives women the space to freely reveal their suffering and demonstrate their self-determination. He contends, "Because [African] women are the most oppressed and exploited section of the entire working class, I [Wa Thiongo] would create a picture of a strong, determined woman with a will to resist and to struggle against the conditions of her present beings" (Thiongo 1981:10). Thus, he improves the African women's stance and gives a more profound significance to their resistance. Again, Wagnari's stance reinforces her womanist status by talking on behalf of all the oppressed people in modern Kenyan society. The Kenyan womanist fiction seeks to encompass both the male and the female sections of the society without excluding any of them. Clearly, the two genders' contributions are demonstrated by a firm conviction that both live under the same roof of the same country. Ngugi establishes Devil on the Cross on the coexistence of both men and women. One more prominent characteristic of African Womanism is the man-woman rebel against injustice. Ngugi wants to induce the sense of hope that men and women should work for the sake of the same country. He adopts the all-inclusive and comprehensive outlook, which is "based on co-operation and not ruthless exploitation, ruthless grab-and-take, a culture that is born of a people's collective labor" (Homecoming 1973:21-2).

Ngugi seeks to establish a link between the whole African citizens. He presents the womanist principles whose foundation is the integration between the citizens. Wariinga and Muturi represent the poor laborers that are deprived of their freedom. Muturi is a radical opponent of the materialistic injustice created by business people. He is watched moving the citizens' national sentiments against suppression and corruption. He calls for a demonstration against the Kenyan materialist non-native exploiters to restore the oppressed citizens' usurped opportunities. Muturi organizes and plans for such demonstrations against the oppressive forces. Taking Muturi as a leader, the oppressed citizens can express their ailment and make their voices heard. Together with Wariinga, Muturi "continued to carry out awareness and enlightenment of the people on the need to join the struggle that will dethrone the dictators and exploiters as a pusher in a bitter life for all of them, a life where there will be equality and fairness in the distribution of resources" (Asika 2014: 39).

In Devil on the Cross, Ngugi has successfully provided a perfect example of Kenyan men and women who are able to build a promising future for themselves as well as for the whole oppressed society. They have a significant target to achieve. They are aware of the value of improving the way they look upon the surrounding world for a brighter future. Muturi epitomizes Ngugi's womanist view of granting dignity to women and acknowledging their instrumental role in the progress of the community in collaboration with men. As a precise estimation of the role played by women in the society, Muturi, a man persona, shouts, "Wangari, heroine of our country - all Wangaris, heroines of our land!" (Devil 1982:127) His speech signifies a lot of praise and gratefulness. Therefore, Muturi is so interested in highlighting Wangari's ordeal. He willingly and enthusiastically goes to back her to get out from the prison where she has been previously fettered. Because of his conviction in women's potentials, Muturi provides them support and help to stress their honorability. He pushes them forward to "[c]ome one and all. And behold the wonderful sight. Of us chasing away the Devil. And all his disciples. Come one and all" (Devil 1982:201).

## **CONCLUSION**

Devil on the Cross highlights the inevitability of the role of women in contributing to the progress of modern Kenyan. Though women are exploited through different means, their suffering and subjugation have never silenced their expression. They struggle to strengthen their status in post-independence Africa despite such sufferings. They endeavor to improve their lives with the aim of liberating themselves from the shackles of the materialistic dominance of the upper class that takes several different forms of injustice. Ngugi adopts the womanist approach as a means to stress the need for integration between the two sets that constitute the society: men and women to stop their grievousness.

Devil on the Cross is a clear manifestation of the womanist approach as models in their determination, perseverance, tenacity, bravery, aspiration and self-assertiveness, and awareness of their self-potentials and the necessity of their participation in the formation of a new vision of a better future. Still, the book elaborates the Kenyan ladies' increasing knowledge helping to refute every form of tyranny that has led to their suppression. Ngugi wants to bring to light the fact that women should not look upon themselves as a separate entity from the entire body of society. Wagnari, Wariinga, and Muturi are true womanist characters in their outlook of the surrounding world as an active participant in the face of male dominance as well as the hegemony of materialistic power through working together to improve their lives and reform their society, establishes the concept that Kenyan females are able to restore their forcefulness and utilize their own capacities. The book is crowded with dauntless actions, which have manifested the womanist merits of the feminine characters. It points out how Ngugi has continuously magnified his woman characters, granting them a lofty position because of their endless struggle to combat every manifestation of tyranny.

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### Conflict of interest

None

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