

# ANALYSIS OF DEVIL ON THE CROSS BY NGUGI WA THIONG'O

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## **INTRODUCTION:**

*Devil on the Cross* is the first novel written by Ngugi in Gikuyu (*Caitani mũtharaba-nĩ*), as an attempt to create and publish Kenyan literature in one of the major Kenyan languages.

The novel is written secretly in prison on the only available material — lavatory paper (toilet paper). This was when he was arbitrarily arrested and detained without trial for producing a popular play (*I Will Marry When I Want*). It is discovered when almost complete but unexpectedly returned to him on his release.

This novel became an immediate success and not only did people read the novel but they also read and narrated it to each other over campfires, on the farms; transforming a published narrative to an oral story.

It tells the tragic story of Wariinga, a young woman who moves from a rural Kenyan town to the capital, Nairobi, only to be sexually exploited by the Rich Old Man from Ngorika, suffers an attempted rape from Boss Kihaara (her boss), and later jilted (dumped) by her boyfriend.

The novel was originally written in Gikuyu and then translated into English by the author. It deals with the post-colonial national aspirations and the impact of colonial legacies on the post-colonial African states. Even after the colonizers left, many African countries still remain dependent on the international economic order controlled by the West. Ngugi highlights the role of elites in oppressing their own people in league with their international masters. The novel is a critique of neocolonialism and its exploitative practices. Above all, he focuses on politically challenging the role of international money and culture in Kenya.

The author focuses on the corrupting influences of international money and culture on Kenya following its independence. Ngugi is addressing the crisis or conflict between the emergent African bourgeoisie and the African masses. He felt the need to invite the workers to gather and crucify the devil as the beginning of the novel reads:

*The Devil who would lead us into the blindness of the heart and into the deafness of the mind should be crucified, and care should be taken that his acolytes do not lift him down from the cross to pursue the task of building Hell of the people on Earth. (Devil on the Cross, page:1)*

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

Ngugi without question is Kenya's most prominent and most highly regarded novelist to date. Like others, protesting colonialism, he sought to downplay his Christian upbringing. He changed his name from **James Ngugi** to Ngugi Wa Thiong 'O. He decided to address the Kenyan masses, mainly the illiterate. He criticized the Kenyan government after independence as elitist and partisan. As a consequence, he suffered harassment, imprisonment without charge, and persecution. When he was released, after a year of detention, Ngugi openly criticized the Kenyan government of the mid-seventies in his plays and other works.

Devil on the Cross is actually his own translation into English of a work in Gikuyu, written on toilet paper in prison, confiscated, but eventually published in East Africa in 1980. The story frame is minimal. The plot action is relayed mainly through the eyes of the new Kenyan woman, Jacinta Wariinga, who grows from her traditional dependent, sex-object role to become an active auto mechanic and spokeswoman for the workers. The main part of the novel is a collection of supposed public speeches by the local and foreign exploiters of the people. They meet in Ilmorog at "The Devil's Feast; A Devil-Sponsored Competition to Choose Seven Experts in Theft and Robbery." The contestants' speeches are a combination of proverbial wisdom and criticism against capitalistic hypocrisy. The Thieves' testimonies are verbose and highly ironic:

*"I don't have much to tell. Too much of anything is poison. But a little is often sweet ... My actions are the trumpet that sounds my abilities as a thief and robber. I myself am the best possible illustration of the sayings ... that tallness is not a misfortune and a hero is not known by the size of his calves. For, indeed, I am the cock that crows in the morning and silences all the others. I am the lion that roars in the forest, making elephants urinate ... "* (109).

The characters are stereotypes. The "good guys" are identified as the student union leader, the workers' union representative, and the peasant leader. These three are betrayed not only by the politicians but also by the corrupted police. The story ends with an epilogue, set two years after the Devil's feast. Wariinga kills her first seducer, the Rich Old Man who had connived with foreign experts and the local black elite to defraud the people.

## **PLOT SUMMARY:**

The novel opens with the narrator, in an hesitant tone, accepting his duty to tell a sad, perhaps shameful, story of an incident in Ilmorog.

In Chapter Two, the novel introduces the reader to the protagonist: Jacinta Wariinga, a woman who has recently lost her secretarial job and boyfriend. When she attempts to kill herself, the man who rescues her hands her an invitation to the "Devil's Feast" in her parents' hometown, Ilmorog. She takes a matatū to Ilmorog. The driver is Mwaūra, who idolizes money. The passengers include Gatuīria, a foreign-educated African Studies professor; Wangari, a rural

peasant woman; Mũturi, a worker; and Mwĩrereri wa Mũkiraaĩ, a businessman. Together, they decide to attend the Devil's Feast.

At the Devil's Feast, local Kenyan elites from the Organization for Modern Theft and Robbery in Ilmorog compete to be chosen as disciples to a foreign delegation of businessmen. During the competition, they boast about their various schemes and swindles, through which they have profited enormously off the labour of the poor and working classes. General discord breaks out when Mwĩrereri wa Mũkiraaĩ suggests that they kick the foreigners out in order to better consolidate their power and wealth.

Although Wariĩnga and Gatuĩria agree to remain as observers, Mũturi and Wangarĩ are disgusted by these events and plot to bring the police to arrest these thieves and robbers. However, when they do so, the police arrests Wangarĩ rather than the guests at the Devil's Feast. Wangarĩ is taken away, and Mũturi leads a march of furious Ilmorog students, workers, intellectuals, and peasants towards the cave. The businessmen all escape.

Two years pass. Wariĩnga and Gatuĩria are engaged. Wariĩnga is now an engineer, while Gatuĩria has completed his musical composition honouring Kenya's national history and culture. Wariĩnga's old boss, Kihara, with the support of businesspeople from America, Germany, and Japan, purchases the carport where Wariĩnga works, so he can wreck it and develop a traveler inn on the site. Gatuĩria takes Wariĩnga to meet his parents. There she discovers that Gatuĩria's dad is the "Rich Old Man from Ngorika" who left her after telling him she had got pregnant. The Rich Old Man is remorseless and is even ready to belittle and abuse Wariĩnga the more. Out of anger and fury, Wariĩnga shoots Gatuĩria's father and a few other visitors, whom she notices were at the Devil's Feast. Gatuĩria is left standing, uncertain whose side to take, as Wariĩnga strides from the house.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE: *DEVIL ON THE CROSS***

What do we make of the title: *Devil on the Cross*?

Ngugi takes the title from Wariĩnga's dream in which she sees the Devil, first crucified by the people, later cut down by the bourgeois elite just in time to allow him to continue to betray any idealistic reformers or agents for positive social and political reform.

*"She saw first the darkness, carved open at one side to reveal a Cross, which hung in the air. Then she saw a crowd of people dressed in rags walking in the light, propelling the Devil towards the Cross. The Devil was clad in a silk suit, and he carried a walking stick shaped like a folded umbrella. On his head there were seven horns, seven trumpets for sounding infernal*

*hymns of praise and glory. The Devil had two mouths, one on his forehead and the other at the back of his head. . . . His skin was red, like that of a pig.” (pg13)*

Wariinga’s dream continues, as the people pronounce the Devil’s ill-deeds before crucifying him:

*“You commit murder, then you don your robes of pity and you go to wipe the tears from the faces of orphans and widows. You steal food from people’s stores at midnight, then at dawn you visit the victims wearing your robes of charity and you offer them a calabash filled with the grain that you have stolen.” (13)*

But then three days after his crucifixion, the Devil is rescued by a certain specific group:

*“After three days, there came others dressed in suits and ties, who, keeping close to the wall of darkness, lifted the Devil down from the Cross. And they knelt before him and they prayed to Him in loud voices, beseeching him to give them a portion of his robes of cunning.” (pg13-14)*

Obviously, this is a retelling of the Crucifixion of Christ. In this case, however, the devil is not being persecuted by the powerful but is being indicted, charged and punished by the people. Similar to the Christ’s story, the Devil is resurrected but by his disciples who want to emulate all his qualities. Therefore, the Devil is a personification of international/ colonial capitalists and the disciples are the native elite who, even after the “Devil” has left (independence) still rely on the exploitative practices introduced and mastered by the former colonizers. We can consider the title in itself as a reversal of the traditional associations with the **cross** and thus read the novel as a journey into the functioning of the “Devil” of capital and the possibilities of resistance against it, especially within the framework of postcolonial states and its workers, peasants, and the poor in opposition to the native elites, the disciples of the Devil!

### **The Novel Reveals that:**

- Colonialism was a devil
- Imperialism is a devil
- Neo-colonialism is a devil
- Independence was a cross
- Communism is a cross
- Unity is a cross

Importantly, we should ask ourselves whether the devil Ngugi talks of:

- Is on the cross
- Was on the cross

- Has been put on the cross
- Should be put on the cross

Right from the start, the novel opens with a call that the devil should be put on the cross by the oppressed class. This appears as an invitation to crucify the devil. It is also vital to identify who are invited to crucify the devil and how should they proceed to crucify the devil.

## **IMPORTANCE OF NARRATIVE FRAMING: *GICAANDI PLAYER***

The story is told from the narrative point of view of Gicaandi Player, who is the “Village Prophet . . . in the traditional Gikuyu community,” but this reliance on a traditional storyteller also provides Ngugi the kind of creative cover to seriously critique the postcolonial nation-state itself. This framing is necessary both to ensure the native audiences that the critique of their nation is not meant to deride them for their “backwardness” and to ensure that a work about Kenya is not read by the international readers as an insider’s authentication of the racialized European myths about Africa. So, the Gicaandi player decides to tell the story of Wariinga after her mother beseeches him to tell her story. The figure of the Gicaandi player, thus, offers his reasons for telling the story as follows:

How can we cover up pits in our courtyard with leaves or grass, saying to ourselves that because our eyes cannot see the holes, our children can prance around the yard as they like? Happy is the man who is able to discern the pitfalls in his path, for he can avoid them. (7)

Thus, the figure of the Gicaandi player creates space for Ngugi to tell the story of national ills, caused by a native elite and their International masters, in a way that the critique itself does not become controversial and becomes a sort of corrective for the natives of Kenya. This framing allows Ngugi to seriously point out as to where and how Kenya has gone wrong in its march to progress after the Independence.

## **THE DEVIL’S FEAST**

This is a feast used by national robbers and thieves with their foreign allies to reveal the tactics they use to exploit, manipulate and impoverish the peasants and workers. During the feast we witness the proud boasting thieves and robbers in the Cave, as the Kenyan bourgeoisie is seen fruitful by the international representatives of thieves and robbers. The leader of the foreign delegation from the international thieves and robbers (whose headquarters are in America) thanks the local thieves and robbers for the great work. It is also noted that thieves who steal out of hunger (chicken) are not given an opportunity to showcase their skills. In order to put an end

to these noisy competitors (who are cronies of imperialism), Wangari invites the police; while Muturi, who believes in the power of workers to arrest thieves, goes ahead to mobilize them. Ironically, the police instead arrests Wangari, who ought to be treated as an informer. The masses struggle only succeeds in scattering the private businessmen. However, many of them are killed during the march.

### **The Speeches in the Cave: International Organization of Thieves and Robbers**

Chapter four of the *Devil on the Cross* is instructive in several ways. One, it stages, satirically, the naked truth of neoliberalism, its basis in greed, and its alliance with postcolonial national elites in exploiting the people, and two, the scene in the cave also serves as a kind of political awakening for Wariinga, who until then had only seen herself as a victim and who had, until then, not seriously thought about her own place within in the nation and about her own true identity.

The speeches, though highly satirized, display the nature of greed that drives the neoliberal capital and since the speeches are delivered at a meeting called by the “European” masters, the naked truth of global capital, still governed by the North-Atlantic nations, is also revealed, for the participants “boast” of their accomplishments, most involving deceiving their own people, to win the praise and awards offered by the International Organization of Thieves and Robbers.

### **Wariinga Character Analysis and Development**

Ngugi takes us through both the physical and mental journey of a young woman, Wariinga. Along the way she encounters many people and challenges that shape her identity. Eventually Wariinga develops into what Ngugi considers an ideal Kenyan femininity to be. However, when the reader first encounters her in the novel, she is confused by the message of what it means to be beautiful by European standards. The gicaandi player describes Wariinga's mental distress over her image and says: “*Wariinga was convinced that her appearance was the root cause of all her problems.*”

In the beginning of the novel, Wariinga is someone who “*hated her blackness*” and straightened her hair with “*red-hot iron combs*” (pg11). Thus, while she is unconsciously attempting to shape her physical self into a European version of herself, she also seems to have developed a kind of deep loathing for her own ethnic and cultural identity. This low self esteem, according to Ngugi is a part of the colonial educational system where the native children do not only learn a foreign language as a “*language of power*” but also internalize a certain disdain for their own languages and culture. Wariinga decides to leave Nairobi to go back to her parents. This decision puts her

on the path to transformation. Surprisingly, it is not a story of a “broken” woman returning to her parents to heal herself: On her way home, Wariinga meets other people: workers, artists, and activists. It is through this encounter with others like her, especially the workers and former revolutionaries, that Wariinga finally defines her own identity.

Her boyfriend refuses to believe her because the gain that is associated with becoming a powerful man's "sugar girl" is thought to be irresistible to women, due to the fact that so many women give into the temptation. In reality, this "temptation" is actually victimization; women like Wariinga who refused to sleep with their bosses are replaced with women who would. In order to break free from her restricted life, Wariinga goes on a quest to find her true identity. She rejects the cultural voice that tells her she is ugly and weak. She also discovers her power as a woman and an individual.

Through a journey to her hometown of Ilmorog, Wariinga gradually changes the way she views herself and how she operates in her society; she becomes a feminist. This not only means that she gets to reclaim her sexuality, she also is able to discard what she has assumed to be true about her identity in terms of Christianity, the work force, and the war for national Uhuru (independence). Her role in Uhuru is as important as her process of adopting feminist values. Wariinga's sexuality majorly illustrates the sexual oppression of women in society. Early on, Wariinga gives in to the neo-colonial voice as a schoolgirl and becomes the sugar girl of the Rich Old Man from Ngorika.

The novel offers lateral solidarity of workers as the ultimate mode of resistance against oppression. It is through her alliances and friendships with her new friends and acquaintances that Wariinga finally becomes a successful mechanic and an engineer. By the time we reach the ending, we already know that it took a whole community of like-minded comrades, a certain degree of understanding of local and global politics to transform Wariinga from an object of oppression to an “angel” of destruction.

In the final scene, after having shot her oppressor (Mr. Gitahi), Wariinga is transformed into a goddess-like figure and the novel ends:

*“Wariinga walked on, without once looking back. But she knew with all her heart that the hardest struggle of her life’s journey lay ahead . . .”* (254).

We can be tempted to call this an open ending, but as we have seen Wariinga transform over the course of the story, we have no doubt imagining that she will be all right and that she will always have friends and comrades to rely on!

## INTENTION OF THE AUTHOR:

Through this novel, the author portrays his sympathy to the working class. He reveals economic inequalities found in the capitalist societies. Ngugi exposes the plight of the masses and workers in post-colonial Africa. Due to loss of confidence in the ability of the elite to build a successful post- independence society, the masses are determined to fight for change (represented by Muturi).

Muturi, Wariinga and Gatuiria represent the peasant workers while Gitutu Wa Gataanguru, Kihaahu and Mwireri represent the bourgeoisie. Therefore, there is a struggle between the victims exploitation and the exploiters. This conflict and tension results into the battle between the rich and the poor.

Ngugi attacks **western religion** that hypocritically preaches humility and acceptance of sins to the victims of oppression but does not preach the same to the oppressor. It is used to extend the imperialist's opportunistic and manipulative policies. **Betrayal** is evident when the collective efforts of Kamiriithu peasants and workers wanting to change their lives are thwarted. They are made passive recipients of Harambe charity.

The author also presents religion as a tool for hiding self-seeking opportunism. Mr. Gitahi (The Rich Old Man from Ngorika), who is a pillar of a certain religious sect, is asked by Wariinga whether he intends to marry her as second wife he says:

*"I am a man of the church. I just want you to be mine. I'll find my own ways of coming to visit you."* This is clear religious hypocrisy among a good number of church men and women.

The author advocates for a revolution, very likely the alternative religion. Muturi tells Wariinga:

*"Maybe I'm a priest who has not yet been ordained... But I belong to an order that has been called to serve by the poverty of the people of Kenya."* Muturi suffers for his efforts to raise the consciousness of the workers and rally them to stand up for their rights. Their alliance is sanctified: ***"The Holy Trinity of the worker, the peasant, the patriot."***

**Exploitation** is seen when the capitalists brag about milking and enjoying the blood and sweat of the workers and peasants. Gitutu proudly boasts of how he takes vast estates from the white settlers and sells plots to local citizens at exorbitant prices.

**Corruption:** There is an attempt to bribe Wariinga with absentee ownership of a ranch which should be the heritage of ranks of honest workers. Gitutu admits grabbing land from the people using their money. **Social welfare**, for instance, education, local government and housing has turned into a lucrative business. Fraudulent schools with false standards serve only to attract wealthy parents by only replacing the local syllabi with a foreign one. This is sheer robbery and manipulation.



The law and the police are there to protect the oppressive and exploitative system instead of promoting universal justice. Through Muturi, the author condemns this exploitation, suffering and poverty.

## **CHARACTER AND CHARACTERISATION:**

The term “characterisation” is used in literature to refer to the presentation of characters in a literary work. In other words, it refers to the linguistic construction of fictitious people, their painting, their naming, and their enrolment in a work of fiction. This can be through the characters’ direct descriptions, external appearance and environment or their speeches and actions, or through naming characters.

### **CHARACTERISATION OF THE CAPITALISTS/ROBBERS/LOYALISTS.**

#### **1. The master of ceremonies, who is described in these terms:**

“He had a well-fed body; his cheeks were round, like two melons; his eyes were big and red, like two plums; his neck was huge, like the stem of a baobab tree. His stomach was only slightly larger than his neck. He had two golden teeth in his lower jaw, and when talking, he opened his lips wide so that the gold teeth could be seen. He had on a silk suit which shone in the light, changing colour according to the intensity of the light and the angle of the beam.” (p.87).

The description can be summed into three similes, in which the MC’s cheeks are likened to “melons”, his eyes to “plums” and his neck to “the stem of a baobab tree.” All these items – melons, plums, baobab stem – denote fleshiness and fatness. There is also one comparative of equality in which the size of his neck is equalised with that of his belly, which gives the picture of a disproportionate person. There is one projected clause introduced by the purpose-expressing conjunctive locution “so that”, which clearly shows the show-off character of the MC.

#### **2. The seven foreign capitalists**

“The seat taken by the leader of the foreign delegation was a little higher than the others. On his right sat three foreigners, and on his left sat the other three. As she stared at them, Wariinga noted that their skins were indeed red, like that of pigs or like the skin of a black person who has been scalded with boiling water or who has burned himself with acid creams. Even the hair on their arms and necks stood out stiff and straight like the bristles of an aging hog. The hair on their heads was brownish, the colour of moleskin. It was long, and it fell on the shoulders as if it had never been shaved off or cut off since birth. On their heads, they wore hats like crowns. Each crown was decorated with seven metal objects shaped like horns, which gleamed so brightly that

they almost blinded the eyes. All the crowns looked alike, but the leader's was a little larger than the others. The tips of the horns were twisted into the initial of the country that each delegate came from. There were differences in the suits they wore. The one worn by the leader was made of dollars, the Englishman's of pounds, the German's of Deutschmarks, the Frenchman's of francs, the Italian's of lire, the Scandinavian's of kroner, and the Japanese delegate's of yen. Each suit was decorated with several badges, like those worn by scouts. The badges were made of metal, and like neon advertisements, they flashed on and off, illuminating the words that were inscribed on them...." (p.91).

This is how the narrator introduces the members of the G-7 at the time (US, Japan, Germany, UK, France, Italy, and Canada.) In the description above, the sitting position, the height of the seat and the size of the hat worn by the American delegate are all indicative of the centrality and paramouncy of his country in both the G-7 and the capitalist system. This paramouncy is also signaled by the use of two comparatives of superiority (a little higher, a little larger) to show the relative power of the US over the others. In addition the currency of each member country has been used to mark its delegate's identity. Seven similes, three of which liken a white man to "a pig", or "a hog" or 'a burnt or scalded black man." The other four create these associations "hats=crowns", "hat tops=horns," "delegate's badges=scout badges," and "badges=advertisements". There is one simile, the noun phrase "the colour of a moleskin", which can be rephrased into "as brown as a moleskin," likens the white man's hair colour to a "moleskin's". Finally there is one estranger "as if", which shows not only the externality of the observer but also the speculative/uncertain nature of the observation. The number "7", i.e., the number of horns on each delegate's hat, is very significant here not only for it represents the number of countries within the G-7 at that time, but it also creates a parallel between this Group and the Devil as depicted below:

*"She saw first the darkness, carved open at one side to reveal a Cross, which hung in the air. Then she saw a crowd of people dressed in rags walking in the light, propelling the Devil towards the Cross. The Devil was clad in a silk suit, and he carried a walking stick shaped like a folded umbrella. On his head there were seven horns, seven trumpets for sounding infernal hymns of praise and glory. The Devil had two mouths, one on his forehead and the other at the back of his head. His belly was sagged, as if it were going to give birth to all the evils of the world. His skin was red, like that of a pig. Near the Cross he began to tremble and turned his eyes towards the darkness, as if his eyes were being seared by the light. He moaned, beseeching the people not to crucify him, swearing that he and his followers would never again build Hell for the people on Earth. But the people cried in unison: 'Now we know the secrets of all the robes that disguise your cunning. You commit murder, then you don your robes of pity and you go to wipe the tears from the faces of orphans and widows. You steal food from people's stores at midnight, then at dawn you visit the victims wearing your robes of charity and you offer them a calabash filled with the grain that you have stolen. You encourage inciviousness solely to*

*gratify your own appetites, then you put on robes of righteousness and urge men to repent, to follow you so that you show them the paths of purity. You seize men's wealth, then you dress in robes of friendship and instruct them to join in the pursuit of the villain who has robbed them.' And there and then the people crucified the Devil on the Cross, and they went away singing songs of victory. After three days, there came others dressed in suits and ties, who, keeping close to the wall of darkness, lifted the Devil down from the Cross. And they knelt down before him, and they prayed to him in loud voices, beseeching him to give them a portion of his robes of cunning. And their bellies began to swell, and they stood up, and they walked towards Wariinga, laughing at her, stroking their large bellies, which had now inherited all the evils of the world..."(pp.13-14)*

From this quote, therefore, the Devil's hat has 7 horns, just like those of the delegates, his skin is likened to that of a pig, just like the delegates', and his belly compares well with that of most of the competitors or robbers. The Devil is dressed in silk suit, like most of the competitors/robbers.

The European judge, who tries Wangari for vagrancy, is described in terms similar to those of the Devil and the delegates (the pig-skin imagery, the lizard-like nose):

*"The judge was a European, with a skin that was red like a pig's. His nose was peeling, like a lizard's body. He wore glasses with big arms" (p.43).*

All these similarities do lead to the impression that the Devil in question is the embodiment or personification of capitalism or imperialism represented by the G-7 (the Group of the Seven most Industrialised countries in the world at the time the story was written; with the admission of Russia into the Group in 1997, it became the G-8.)

The following equation can be established: Capitalism=G-7= Devil=Robbery=Theft.

The crucifixion of the Devil by men in rags is synonymous with the destruction of capitalism or colonialism by Kenyan peasants, workers and Mau Mau militants and its resurrection three days later by the suit-wearing men becomes the rebirth of colonialism, that is, neo-colonialism, by the country's political and economic elite.

There is a substitution of Christ for the Devil. The paintings of Christ and the Devil on the walls of the Church of the Holy Rosary and their reverse experience in the heroine's mind can be said to have strong ideological clues:

*"What Wariinga tried hard to avoid— though her eyes kept straying in that direction — was looking at the pictures on the walls and windows of Church of the Holy Rosary. Many of the pictures showed Jesus in the arms of the Virgin Mary or on the Cross. But others depicted the Devil, with two cowlike horns and a tail like a monkey's, raising one leg in a dance of evil, while his angels, armed with burning pitchforks, turned human beings on a bonfire. The Virgin Mary, Jesus and God's angels were white, like Europeans, but the Devil and his angels were black. At*

*night, Wariinga would have a recurrent nightmare. Instead of Jesus on the Cross, she would see the Devil, with the skin as white as that of a very fat European she once saw near the Rift Valley Sports Club, being crucified by people in tattered clothes –like the ones she used to see in Bondeni –and after three days, when he was in the throes of death, he would be taken down from the Cross by black people in suits and ties, and thus restored to life, he would mock Wariinga.” (p.139).*

As is traditionally painted in European literature, God, Christ, Mary, God’s Angels, and Europeans are white, pure and positive while the Devil, its Angels and Africans are black, impure or bad and negative. But in the heroine’s nightmare, the Devil is as white as a European, is crucified by black people in rags and resurrected by other black people in suits and ties. This means that the Kenyans elite are almost entirely responsible for the rebirth of colonialism in the country. The three similes (like, like, like) and one comparative of equality (as white as). The characterisation of the Kenyan capitalists/robbers/thieves has the same modal characteristics as the one of the Devil and its representatives.

### **3. This is the physical description of the first competitor or robber:**

*“The suit that this competitor was wearing was the kind that had been baptized Napier-Grass-Son-of-Trembling. It showed no sign of ever having been pressed. He was tall and lanky. But his eyes were big; they were like two electric bulbs hanging from a tall eucalyptus tree. His arms were long, and he swung them this way and that way, as if he did not know what to do with them –whether to put them in his pockets, to hold them stiff, like a soldier standing to attention, or to fold them, like a man in defiant mood ...And there and then, Ndaaya, bending low on the platform, Ndaaya wa Kahuria began swinging his arms this way and that, as if he could see real chickens in front of him, .....”(p.94).*

The three similes (eyes like two electric tubes; arms like a soldier standing to attention, arms like a man in defiant mood); and two estrangers (as if, as if...).

**4.** The next robber to compete, a lukewarm court clerk during the emergency, son of a loyalist become a big landowner and a billionaire, **Gitutu wa Gataanguru** by his traditional name and Rottenborough Groundflesh Shitland Narrow Islamus Joint Stock Brown by his European/Christian name, is described as follows:

*“Gitutu had a belly that protruded so far that it would have touched the ground had it not been supported by the braces that held up his trousers. It seemed as if his belly had absorbed all his limbs and all the other organs of his body. Gitutu had no neck –at least, his neck was not visible. His arms and legs were short stumps. His head had shrunk to the size of a fist. That day Gitutu wa Gataanguru was sporting a dark suit and a white shirt with frills. A black bow tie, which looked as if it had been stuck to his chin, stood where his neck should have been. His walking stick was decorated with pure gold. While he talked, Gitutu stroked the side of his belly with his*

*left hand and swung his walking stick with his right hand. He panted as he talked, like a person carrying a heavy load.” (p.99).*

A look at the European name, “shitland”, “groundflesh”, and “rottenborough”, is enough to grasp the denotation of distastefulness it conveys. The physical description, with phrases such as “belly touching the ground”, “belly that protruded so far”, “belly had absorbed his limbs”, “no visible neck”, “head shrunk to the size of a fist”, gives the picture of a man reduced to his belly as all other parts of his body are over dominated by the tummy. The words “seemed as if, looked as if”, the two metaphors “arms and legs= short stumps; head = fist” and the simile “like a person carrying a heavy load”. These give the impression of a subjective observer watching and interpreting the character’s actions speculatively from outside.

“By the time Gitutu wa Gataanguru had finished his testimony, he was panting with fatigue. Drops of sweat fell to the floor. His protruding belly was trembling as if it wanted to break loose and fall to the ground”

**5.** The other robber or thief to be portrayed, a former Primary School teacher become school owner, then County Councillor and politician, is **Kihaahu wa Gatheeca** by his Kikuyu name, and Lord Gabriel Bloodwell-Stuart-Jones for foreign name, is described like this:

*“Kihaahu was a tall, slim fellow: he had long legs, long arms, long fingers, a long neck and a long mouth. His mouth was shaped like the beak of the kingstock: long, thin and sharp. His chin, his face, his head formed a cone. Everything about him indicated leanness and sharp cunning. That day, Kihaahu was dressed in black-and-grey stripped trousers, a black tailcoat, a white shirt and a black tie. Standing on the platform, he looked like a 6-feet praying mantis or mosquito.” (p.108).*

The three similes (mouth... like the beak of the kingstock; he looked like a 6-feet praying mantis; he looked like a mosquito), and the metaphor (head= a cone). As it appears, there is a resort to animal imagery (beak of a king-stork, praying mantis, mosquito) in the painting of this character. The kingstock is a very tall long-legged bird with a heavy bill; known for its rigid stance and as a tyrant flycatcher; the mantis is a slender predatory insect waiting motionless for prey with its forelegs folded like hands in prayer; and a mosquito is known for bloodsucking and causing diseases.

**6. Nditika wa Nguunji**, a former loyalist, become a wheelerdealer and insider-dealer, conveys a similar sense of animalisation or objectification:

*“Nditika wa Nguunji was very fat. His head was huge, like a mountain. His belly hung over his belt, big and arrogant. His eyes were the size of two large electric bulbs, and it looked as if they had been placed on his face by a Creator impatient to get on with another job. His hair was parted in the middle, so that the hair on either side of the parting looked like two ridges facing*

*each other on either side of the tarmac road. He had on a black suit. The jacket had tails cut in the shape of the wings of the big green blue flies that are normally found in pit latrines or among rotting rubbish. His shirt had frills all down the front. He was wearing a black bow tie. His eyes rolled in time with his words. His hands rested on his stomach and patted it gently as if beseeching it not to stick out towards the people with such arrogance.” (p.176).*

In the words ‘it looked as if, as if’, the simile (looked like two ridges), and the noun phrase “the size of two electric bulbs” is rewritable into “as big as two electric bulbs”, which compares the man’s eyes to two electric bulbs. In addition, lexical items like “pit latrines”, “rotting rubbish,” and “big green blue flies” clearly give a denotation of decay associated with the character being thus portrayed.

**7. Kimeedeeri wa Kanyuanjii**, a loyalist, a former District Officer, now a Permanent Secretary, a big landlord and billionaire.

*“You should be there to see Kimeedeeri wa Kanyuanjii. His mouth is shaped like the beak of the red-billed ox-pecker, the tick bird. His cheeks are as smooth as a new-born baby’s. His legs are huge and shapeless, like giant banana stems or (like) the legs of someone who is suffering from elephantiasis. But his disease is simply grossness that comes from over-eating. His neck is formed from rolls of fat, like the skin of the hairy maggot. But this astonishing body, these legs and neck, have been completely covered by a white suit and a bow tie...” (pp.186-7)*

The four similes (mouth like the beak of the red-billed ox-pecker; neck like the skin of a hairy maggot; legs like giants banana stems; legs like those of someone suffering from elephantiasis;), one comparative of equality, which is also a simile (mouth as smooth as a new born baby’s). As can be seen the same animal imagery (ox-pecker, maggot) or of disproportion or decay (huge banana stems, elephantiasis) is resorted to here.

Interestingly, Gatuiria’s short description of the same character does fit together with that of the above, as he says: “Kimeedeeri wa Kanyuanjii was certainly there, but it was difficult to tell whether he was a human being or a fat, hairy worm with a beak” (p.196).

**8. Another robber is named Fathog Macura wa Kimeengemeenge**

*“His belly was so huge that it almost bulged over his knees” (p.122).*

**9. Superintendent Gakano:**

*“Gakano, springing to attention, saluted and started offering apologies and begging for forgiveness in a trembling voice. He spoke as if fear had penetrated his flesh and bones and (as if) he did not understand the use of the comma or full stop” (p.197).*

This description contains the words (as if, as if), which marks the observer's externality to that which is observed and the speculative nature of his/her observation.

Generally, we can say almost all the followers of the Devil/capitalism (G-7 members and loyalists) are painted through animal and object imagery by means of comparison (simile and metaphor). This means that the observer sees capitalism and loyalism in terms of animalism/animosity/devilishness/ugliness, while patriotism is viewed in terms of humanism/beauty. Indeed, there is some image/symbol of parasitism and uglification associated with capitalism, as can be seen in this comment by Gatuuria:

*"fleas, jiggers, bedbugs...are there more of those in Ilmorog's slums than the human parasites we have left behind in the cave?" Gatuuria asked slowly, as if he were talking to himself"* (p.131).

Waringa sees Gatuuria's father, a business tycoon who spoils her life and whom she has just gunned down out of revenge, as a multidimensional parasite:

*"There kneels a jigger, a louse, a weevil, a flea, a bedbug! He is mistletoe, a parasite that lives on the trees of other people's lives!"* (p.254).

This may be the great work of the writer's indirect use of animal images through characters' speeches to criticise, not only the unproductiveness of capitalism, but also of its parasitism. Waringa resorts to seven metaphors to judge the capitalists, represented by Gitahi: jigger, louse, weevil, flea, bedbug, mistletoe, and parasite. In this judgement, there also are two exclamations (!,!), which, in this context, express the speaker's degree of anger and indignation towards her oppressor.

*"Waringa looked at him like a judge at an unrepentant prisoner who is pleading for mercy"* (p.249)

*"Waringa commanded, with the voice of a judge"* (p.253).

*"She began to speak like a people's judge about to deliver his judgement"* (p.253).

In this quote below, stink and decay are equated like 'smelled, the fart of a badger, rotten beans, over-ripe bananas, nausea' help to hint to the collective rottenness of the robbers.

*"Waringa could not bear the scene in the cave any longer. The talk sat heavily on her mind, like a log of wood. The breath of the speakers smelled worse than the fart of a badger or of someone who has gorged himself on rotten beans or over-ripe bananas. Nausea swept over her. She excused herself to Gatuuria and lied that she was going out to answer a call of nature. But what she wanted most was a breath of clean, fresh air...She sat on the grass and leaned against a black wattle tree, breathing a long sigh as if the load were being lifted from her heart."* (p.182)

## CHARACTERISATION OF THE PATRIOTS.

While the capitalists are distastefully or animalistically painted, it can be noticed that the characterisation of the patriots (Wariinga, a worker, a mechanical engineer; Muturi, the worker-delegate; Wangari, the peasant woman and former Mau Mau; Wariinga's mother, a former Mau Mau-detainee; the unnamed students' leader, etc) is much more admirable both lexically and modally. Let us consider these three depictions of the heroine Wariinga:

*“Wariinga was convinced that her appearance was the root cause of all her problems. Whenever she looked at herself in the mirror she thought herself very ugly. What she hated most was her blackness, so she would disfigure her body with skin-lightening creams like Ambi and Snowfire, forgetting the saying: That which is born black will never be white. Now her body was covered with light and dark spots like the guineafowl. Her hair was splitting, and it had browned to the colour of moleskin because it had been straightened with red-hot iron combs. Wariinga also hated her teeth. They were a little stained; they were not as white as she would have liked them to be. She often tried to hide them, and she seldom laughed openly. If by mistake she laughed and then remembered her teeth, she would suddenly fall silent or else she would cover her lips with her hand. Men would sometimes tease her, calling her Wariinga, the angry one, because of her lips, which were always firmly pressed together. But when Wariinga was happy and forgot to worry about the fading whiteness of her teeth and about the blackness of her skin and laughed with all her heart, her laughter completely disarmed people. Her voice was as smooth as perfume oil. Her eyes shone like stars in the night. Her body was a feast for the eyes. Often, when she walked along the road without self-consciousness, her breasts swaying jauntily like two ripe fruits in a breeze, Wariinga stopped men in their tracks. But she would never appreciate the sheer splendour of her body. She yearned to change herself, in covetous pursuit of the beauty of other selves. Often she failed to dress in harmony with her body. She rushed to copy the ways in which other women dressed. Fashion, whether or not it flattered the shade of her skin or the shape of her figure, was what governed her choice of clothes. Sometimes, Wariinga distorted the way in which she held herself by trying to imitate another girl's stride. She forgot the saying: Aping others costs the frog its buttocks. (pp.11-12)*

The narrator depicts how the heroine sees herself in relation to others that she imitates. The two proverbs are enough to grasp the narrator's negative judgement on an attempt to see and change oneself by comparison with others.

The change in Wariinga's physical appearance as she stops comparing herself to others is clearly brought to light by the Devil, the Exploiter, the Liar, the Grabber, the Tempter, the Judge, in (22) below:



*“You have a young body. The joys of life are all before you. If you hadn’t taken to singeing your hair with hot combs and your skin with lightening creams like Ambi, the sheer splendour of your body would have been pulling a thousand and one hearts behind it. The blackness of your skin is smoother and more tender than the most expensive perfume oils. Your eyes are brighter than the stars at night. Your cheeks are like two fruits riper than the blackberry. And your hair is so black and soft and smooth that all men must feel like sheltering from the sun in its shade” (p.192)*

Wariinga in a more positive light when she stops skinbleaching and dressing to please others or to look like them, she is described thus:

*“Wariinga was dressed the Gikuyu way. A brown cloth, folded over a little at the top, had been passed under her left armpit, the two ends gathered together and held at the right shoulder by two flower-shaped safety pins, so that her left shoulder was bare. The cloth was long and fell to her ankles; its edges were held together on her right side by safety pins. Around her waist Wariinga had tied a knitted belt of white wool, the two long, loose ends of which fell the length of the cloth to her ankles. On her feet she wore leopard-like sandals. Around her neck were necklaces of white, red and blue beads, which sat beautifully on her breasts. She had Nyori-like earrings. Her hair was smooth, soft and black. As she walked, Wariinga appeared to be the child of Beauty, mother of all beauties, just created by the creator of the twins, elegance and beauty.” (p.242)*

This is an over-praise of the beauty of a woman who has given up skin-bleaching and modern European clothes to keep to traditional dressing on her natural skin. The descriptive phrases like “beads, which sat beautifully on her breasts,” “the child of Beauty,” “mother of all beauties,” and “elegance and beauty” clearly show a description couched in highly hyperbolic terms.

The physical description of Wariinga’s mother, a farming woman and Mau Mau detainee, reinforces the above portrayal of Wariinga as “the child of Beauty,” and “mother of all beauties” (23)

*“She is elderly, but she is one of those people who never seem to age. Her white-and-black flowered frock, though a little faded, fits her well” (p.234).*

### **Wangari’s description:**

*“Oh, I’ve never come across a woman with so much courage! Wangari calmly walked up to the platform, and she silenced the whole cave with the power of her eyes –it was as if they were flames of fire –and then she denounced the thieves in a voice that did not betray the slightest trace of fear” (p.196).*

*“It looked as if everyone in the cave had been transfixed by the electric power of Wangari’s words. Oh Wangari was beautiful! I can tell you. Oh, yes. Wangari’s face shone as she stood before us all and it looked as if her courage had stripped years from her body and given her a new life. It was as if the light in her face were illuminating the hearts of those present, and her voice carried the power and authority of a judge” (p.197).*

*“And she was led out, still singing her defiance, her chained hands raised high above her head, the links gleaming like a necklace of courage. “Wangari, heroine of our land!!” (p.198).*

*“Gatuuria paused, as if WangarU’s courageous voice were ringing in his ears. ‘WangarU, heroine of our land!’ GatuUria said again, slowly” (p.198).*

*“ I would rather put on earrings made of dry maize stems...the only problem is that I missed my chance to have my ears pierced....Because ours was not a time for adorning our bodies with flowers. Ours was a time for decorating ourselves with bullets in the fight for Kenya’s freedom,” Wangari said with pride, because she knew that the deeds of her youth had changed Kenya’s history” (p.127).*

*“But Muturi looked at Wangari, his heart overflowing with sudden pride and happiness: Wangari, heroine of our country! –all Wangaris, heroines of our land!” (p.127)*

The description of **the unnamed student leader** cannot arouse some admiration from the reader:

*“He had a youthful build, though his face displayed maturity. He had a mass of jet-black hair and a beard like that of a small he-goat. His dark eyes shone with the light of a wisdom that sees many things hidden in the distance....He had on khaki jeans and a brown leather jacket. Under his left arm he carried a black leather bag” (p.14)*

The description of the robbers’ flight from the attacking masses is given with so many tenor clues that it cannot be viewed as ideologically neutral:

*“Any thief who managed to squeeze through would lumber across to his car like a hippo, and after a second, would raise dust as he speeded away, saying his prayers with all his soul.. Those who did not have fat bellies –the clan of the skinnies –would jump through the windows, and touching the ground, would dart away like arrows...But Wariinga was able to witness the wonderful spectacle of Gitutu wa Gataanguuru and Nditika wa Nguunji, trying to run away, like two spiders with eggs, while their buttocks were lashed by their pursuers with sticks. By the time they reached their cars, they were panting and the sweat of pain and fatigue and fear fell to the*

*ground in drops like rain during a heavy downpour. But when the foreign thieves were about to leave, their laughter turned into menacing roar. The people roared like a thousand angry lions whose cubs had been taken away from them.....After a while, not a single thief or robber was left in the area of the cave. All of them had managed to flee, as if they had suddenly grown wings of fear” ‘pp.207-8)*

The five similes are likening the thieves and robbers to animals and things (hippos, pregnant spiders, arrows) and their sweating to a heavy downpour and are portrayed as being fearful. The people are portrayed as strong. They are depicted as “a thousand angry lions.”

Above all, it can well be contended that almost all loyalists, i.e., supporters of western imperialism and capitalism, are painted with animal imagery. On the hand, the patriots, who all have links with Mau Mau, are admirably painted in terms of positive concepts such as beauty, heroism, courage, wisdom, strength, power, authority, etc.

## **CHARACTER ROLES:**

### **1. Robin Mwaura:**

Mwaura reveals the dehumanizing philosophy that is required to make it in his class. His name means “the one who steals,” and it implies one who would steal somebody’s clothes off one’s back. There is something casual and indifferent about Mwaura’s approach to human life, which emphasizes the Mwaura aspect. He kills, or has people who stand in his way to riches killed, quite casually, as if he were actually taking back a life that belonged to him. The examples from the emergency, when Mwaura was a homeguard, suffice to illustrate this. It is significant that Mwaura is the one who arranges for Mwĩreri’s death for a fee. As a member of the Devil’s Angels, he is responsible for the murder of those who refuse to be robbed. He represents the pro-colonial type, sellouts during the colonial period, but people who in the neocolonial stage worship at the shrine of money, ready to commit any crime, “in loyal obedience to the molten god of money.”<sup>25</sup> These characters are shown as people who are devoid of any positive and humanistic outlook on life. Mwaura’s principles (or lack of them) are representative.

The bourgeoisie use the police force to safeguard their exploitative hold on the country. Continued exploitation of the people is made possible by the support that the bourgeoisie receives from the police force. This is well illustrated through Superintendent Gakono in Devil on the Cross. In the novel, we are shown that the only order that the police help to maintain is the exploitation of the poor. Thinking that Wangarĩ has information on the common “thieves,” Gakono praises her, telling her that if all people were to volunteer information like her, “the whole country would be cleansed of theft, robbery, and similar crimes and those who had [emphasis mine] would be able to enjoy their wealth and sleep soundly without any worries.”<sup>29</sup>

When he interrupts the meeting of “thieves” at the cave and realizes his blunder, we are told that when he is criticized angrily by the master of ceremonies, “[he], springing to attention started offering apologies and begging for forgiveness [emphasis mine] in a trembling voice.”<sup>30</sup> A law enforcement officer, Gakono, like a child caught in the wrong, mumbles his apologies in an unpunctuated, incoherent, and jumbled sentence of about a hundred words. This is the trembling of the beggar in the presence of his provider. We are shown that Gakono and his force are essentially withered, disabled, and unable to bring about any change in the status quo. They merely superintend and guard against any change from a system that implicitly benefits them, hence their reactionary nature.

Warĩnga of Devil on the Cross refers to a woman who wears such rings as adornments, thus translating as “of the rings” and conjuring up the image of a beautiful woman. The bourgeois characters’ habits and presumptions in Devil on the Cross shows their objectification of women: a woman is regarded as a decoration, a flower to adorn men’s lives. She is seen as a game to be played when a man is bored or old, rekindling a kind of vitality that the wives cannot, by implication, rekindle. She is an animal to be hunted. The woman, especially the young woman, is seen as veal or the spring chicken for an old man’s toothless gums. She is perfume to be applied when it is scented but to be discarded at will when it has lost its scent. She is the fruit to be picked at leisure, sucked juiceless and discarded, and is something that can be owned. She is the rings to be worn, an adornment to men. At another level, the woman is regarded as a being with only one organ. It seems to be Warĩnga’s role in the novel to emphasize that women play more than a sexual role and should, in fact, be taken on an equal basis with men.

Warĩnga emphasizes that the woman is not man’s flower, an inanimate object, that ornament to be worn to decorate the man, or the scented perfume that the man wears when going to dance, discarding it once it loses its scent. It is significant that Warĩnga studies engineering at the polytechnic, a “male” subject, and takes martial arts, both of which are meant to make her self-reliant. It is also significant that after her mental metamorphosis, Warĩnga meets Gitahi, the man who almost ruined her life. Like all the other bourgeois characters, Gitahi believes that the woman is a flower, an ornament that can be bought like property. Like most richmen, Gitahi hopes to re-conquer Warĩnga by promising her gifts and not through the art of courtship.

Warĩnga’s refusal of Gitahi’s gifts is a denial to become his fruit, his flower, or ornament, somebody else’s property. Though acting out of personal revenge, she kills Gitahi “to save many other people, whose lives will not be ruined by words of honey and perfume.”<sup>36</sup> In killing Gitahi, therefore, Warĩnga kills the destroyer of womanhood, the symbol of wickedness, thus symbolically removing the obstacle to the realization of women’s dreams. Also, Warĩnga eliminates a representative of the exploiting force, since Gitahi means “the one who scoops,” the indiscriminate scooping that is characteristic of the bourgeoisie.

Warĩinga appears a credible protagonist exemplifying the liberation of women, even going through a revolutionary change. She is a character who develops from passion to purpose. While she is portrayed as the representative worker, Warĩinga is used more to develop the theme of women emancipation. This is reflected in Warĩinga's metamorphosis into a mentally liberated woman, basically a feminist.

Note:

- Gatuiiria means the Seeker
- Wangari means the leopard
- Wariinga, means "Woman in chains"

## **MAJOR THEMES:**

### **Despair and turmoil**

Jacinta's story is both individual and communal. On the communal front, she suffers with her community in the difficult wake of Kenyan independence. The fledgling nation has not had what most would call a peaceful transition, nor is there stability. Jacinta's private life makes this many times worse, because she is in turmoil about the death of her boyfriend. Without his companionship, she does not see any hope for the future, and the novel takes time exploring her suicidal depression thematically.

### **Instability and corruption**

Jacinta survives her suicidal depression with the help of a random passerby who stops her and invites her to an insightful feast where she learns about corrupt businessmen and the various ways they profited by corruption. In general, their stories are about exploiting the instability of the government to cut corners. They are sometimes guilty of business practices that verge on slavery of their own community, but the men are rich enough to get away with it in the unstable economy.

### **Evil and money**

The whole "Devil" motif in the novel is a reference to this central theme. Jacinta is saved from suicidal depression and invited to a club where she does not belong. There she learns firsthand that many of the richest people in her economy are not even trying to help Kenya become a stable and sovereign government. They betray their own people in many different ways and then boast in those betrayals. The thematic connection between evil and money gives Jacinta

something other than hope or happiness; it gives her deep anger at the mistreatment of people happening in her own community.

- Neo-colonialism
- Greed and materialism
- Exploitation
- Injustice and oppression
- Corruption
- Change
- Suffering
- Hypocrisy
- Betrayal
- Religion
- Disillusionment

## SYMBOLISM IN DEVIL ON THE CROSS

- The representatives of the neo-colonial powers are said to be dressed in suits made out of paper money of their respective home countries.
- **The Matatu Matata Mataamu:** It is used to symbolize the lower and underprivileged class striving for freedom of speech – the likes of Wangari, Muturi, Gatuiria and Wariinga.
- **The Cave:** This represents the devil's world dominated by men of profit and women of leisure. It reflects the influence of capitalism over Africa.  
The cave in Ilmorog is where the Devil's Feast takes place. Despite its name, the cave is a very posh and luxurious place. The narrator observes, "But was it really a cave – or the finest of houses..." (pg 92). The floor is polished and clean, and the barmaids are dressed like Playboy Bunnies. However, the fact that it is called a cave emphasizes the disgusting side of the Thieves and Robbers activities. The cave highlights the way in which it acts as a kind of hiding place, from which the greedy capitalists of the novel are able to plot and boast about their schemes.
- **The title of the novel is both symbolic and ironic:** It is an inversion of the story of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The devil is crucified by the workers and peasants, then taken from the cross and nurtured towards resurrection by the rich and the powerful who live by Satan's creed and prosper as he prospers. Ngugi opts for this biblical allusion to underline the concept of good and evil.
- **The Cross:** The Cross upon which the devil is crucified and then saved is a symbol of the incomplete process of decolonization and independence. While the peasants believe that

they have won freedom through political independence, the devil resurges – as did Christ, in a new form: Neo-colonialism.

- **National Dress:** Throughout the novel, national dress is referred to as a symbol of the cultural resistance of a nation against its colonial and imperial oppressors. When Wariinga wears national dress to the tea party at Gatuiiria's parent's house, she participates in an act of resistance against cultural imperialism, which dictates the wearing a diner/party dress for such an occasion.
- **Suits:** These are used as symbols of capitalist ideology. The capitalist businessmen wear suits in order to communicate their status and wealth, and to demonstrate their abilities to exploit and steal everything available to satisfy their greedy and materialistic intentions.
- **Nairobi:** The young man who prevents Wariinga from committing suicide, at the beginning of the novel describes Nairobi as "large, soulless and corrupt" (pg 15). Surely Wariinga experiences Nairobi that way.

## NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES

- Symbolism
- Omniscient/third person narrator
- Dialogue
- Irony and satire
- Biblical allusion
- Description
- Contrast
- Flashback/reminiscence
- Use of proverbs
- Use of drama within a novel
- Use of songs, dance and formal patterns of celebration and mourning.

### NB: The novel Devil on The Cross:

- Presents a society full of women exploitation, abuse, brutality, corruption, theft, robbery, and social injustices.
- It tells the tragic story of Wariinga, whose name means "Woman in chains" a young woman who moves from a rural Kenyan town to the capital, Nairobi, only to be exploited by her boss (Boss Kihaara) and a corrupt businessman (Mr. Gitahi).
- Her story and the struggle she faces illustrate those of post-colonial African states.
- Wariinga grows from a traditional local girl to become an auto mechanic and outspoken woman of his nation.

- The main part of the novel is concerned with speeches of the local and foreign exploiters who meet in Illmorg at the Devil Feast organized on theft and robbery to choose experts in theft and robbery.
- At the feast, all the exploiters are concerned with the wealth of poor snatched. Every speaker declares how many cars he owns, how many wives, “sugar girls” and how much property they have.
- Warinnga’s life throughout the novel is very hard:
  - a) she is worried about her shabby figure.
  - b) She struggles very hard to find a job, “*Women’s thighs are the table on which contracts are signed*” (p. 19).
  - c) Suffers attempted rape by her boss (Kihaara)
  - d) Impregnated and dumped by a Sugar Daddy (The Rich Old Man from Ngorika) while still a student.

#### **Last dialogue between Wariinga and Gitahi**

‘*You snatcher of other people’s lives, do you remember the game you and I used to play, the game of hunter and hunted. Did you imagine that a day might come when the hunter would become hunted?*’

‘*What is done can’t be undone...*’ the man interrupted. ‘*Wariinga.... My darling, my little fruit, my orange, my flower to brighten my old age!*’ He went on, carried away by his words. He didn’t see Wariinga take out the pistol.

‘*Look out at me!*’ Wariinga commanded, with the voice of a judge...his words suddenly ceased. The people outside heard the shots. (pg 253)