

Post-independence Disillusionment: A Historical Reading of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Devil on the Cross*¹

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Abstract

This paper undertakes to examine the post-colonial predicaments as limned in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Devil on the Cross* (1982). Reading the novel through a historical gaze, the researchers intend to explore the theme of neo-colonialism, economic exploitation, cultural alienation, and resistance in post-independent Kenya. Denouncing witheringly, Ngugi expresses his disenchantment with post-independent political system and government, wherein the neocolonial elites, in alliance with the white capitalists and new African leaders, monopolise the rewards of independence. The novel is an anatomisation of the lingering effects of colonialism, showcasing the horrendous exploitation and marginalisation of the workers and the peasants at the hands of the elites, who as pawns of the white men perpetuate western domination. This research paper aims at justifying how *Devil on the Cross* is a powerful exegesis on the contradictions and struggles of a newly independent nation like Kenya still embroiled in colonial bequests. The theoretical approach to this research hinges on the theory of post-colonialism and neocolonialism, with special reference to the historical milieu of the contemporary Kenya. In doing so, the paper employs the basic tenets of post-colonialism — interrogating the Eurocentric political view and loudening the voices and experiences of the marginalised groups, and of neocolonialism — highlighting how the native elites, influenced and trained by their own former colonisers, align their economic interests and loyalties with the ex-colonisers, thereby forming specific mechanisms to create and continue power

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imbalance. This paper will explore also the concept of 'elitism' in the novel, and aid to the scholarly expansion of African post-colonial discourse.

Keywords: Capitalism, Elite, Exploitation, Neo-colonialism, Post-colonialism, Predicaments

Introduction

Devil on the Cross by Ngugi wa Thiong'o is a mordant political satire and a saga of neo-colonial predicaments. Ngugi is a prominent figure in African literature and acclaims a great reputation as a reformist, quintessential critic and prolific writer by presenting his radical views on the post-colonial evils prevalent in his country. Through his allegorical narrative *Devil on the Cross*, Ngugi unmasks the stark reality of the post-independent Kenyan society, where mass impoverishment, pervasive misuse of power and curtailment of rights to freedom were the order of the day. The novel uses a highly complex and nested narrative form to explore the theme of exploitation and theft of local resources in post-colonial Kenya. Voicing the same sentiment, Uduenna Nwafor-Orizu (2011) writes that "Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross* is about neo-colonialism ... takes events of post-independence Kenya and examines the neo-colonial tendencies of African governments" (p. 66). The novel mirrors the contemporary exploitative tendencies of the new ruling class and their imperial policies plaguing the post-colonial Kenya. The novel shows how the local leaders, capitalists, and the newly emerged black ruling class in league with the former colonialists are pillaging their own resources and transforming their nation into a destitute one. In this regard, Akparobaro (2012) argues that "the story draws a panoramic view of African life and nations which after their emergence from colonial power and domination generated by the political power as a means of personal enrichment at the expense of the masses" (p. 299).

Written on coarse toilet paper while in detention, the novel fits aptly in the category of a "Pris-literature" and can be viewed as a symbolic gesture of resistance against all modes of exploitative practices. Through this masterpiece, Ngugi portrays the stark reality of newly independent Kenyan states that are still carrying on with the colonial legacies. Through his biting sarcasm, Ngugi unveils the abusive and dominating practices slyly perpetuated through the camouflaged government policies. The ultimate goal of the African struggle for independence was to make Africa free from the traumatizing shackles of colonialism but, contrary to this, the situation took a ridiculous turn. Instead of ending up with the European Imperialism, the hardly-won independence

could not meet up with the visions of independence. Rather colonialism resurrected through the neo-colonial elite. These new ruling class, in collaboration with European capitalists, perpetuated the exhaustively exploitative techniques of their colonial masters. In the name of capitalism and globalization, the Kenyan elite exploit and dominate the peasants, the marginalised, and the women by manipulating the systems of governance for their personal benefit. In the words of Ezeigbo, "African independence is a sham since economic independence has proved a mirage and the sense of dependency is still firmly entrenched in the socio-political and economic life of the independent state" (qtd. in Egbung, 2018, p. 82). Frustrated with the unflattering post-independence development, Ngugi harshly criticizes the representatives of the new ruling class who are the root cause for the predicament of the Kenyan. The elites of the country are still under the influence of their former colonial masters and are pawns at their hands. Their sterility of thought has resulted in the continuation of colonial ideologies and has a great contribution in the exclusion and alienation of the peasant classes. Ngugi claims, "Today, in Africa, we are harvesting the bitter fruits of capitalist and colonialist policy of divide and rule and those of the colonial legacy of an even development....now there are only two tribes left in Africa: the haves and the have nots" (Home Coming, 1972, p. XVII). Presented as a tragic tale of a young Kenyan woman and her hardship, the novel connotes a reasoned critique of a nation made hollow and betrayed by parasitical, greedy, and corrupt capitalists, elite and leaders. The paper aims at exploring the novel through the lens of neo-colonialism and its dire consequences on Kenya, with a sweeping reference to Ngugi's interest in historical factors.

Literature review

Since its publication in 1982, *Devil on the Cross* has gained wide and varied critical acclaim. Researchers and scholars from across the continents have examined and reviewed the novel from multiple perspectives. Some scholars have examined the novel from feminist point of view. Abdullahi Haruna (2022), for example, centres his thesis on justifying how the Bible has been used as a religious weapon to exploit and subordinate women in Kenya. He writes that the novel "is a demonstration of the weaponization of the Bible by men in the patriarchal society of Kenya in oppressing and limiting the possibilities of women" (p. 4). Besides this, the novel has been analysed also from Marxist point of view. Chijoke Uwasomba (2006) states that "*Devil on the Cross* shows the class struggle between the poor and the rich, the exploited and the exploiters" (p.102).

Uwasomba examines the socio-economic crises in Kenya under the influence of Western influence. Further, Alfred and Eke observe that:

The novel paints the society which is full of women's exploitation, abuse, brutality, corruption, theft, robbery, and social injustices. It explores economic exploitation, different forms of abuses perpetrated by the intellectuals and the liberals. It deals with the postcolonial national aspirations and the impact of colonial legacies on the postcolonial nation. Especially how, even after the colonizers left, the post-colonials still remain dependent upon the international economic order that is still controlled by the West. Furthermore, the colonizers also left native elites whose sympathies are more with the colonizers and international forces than with the natives of the postcolonial nation. *The Devil* is a personification of international/colonial capital and the disciples are the native elites who, even after the "Devil" has left still rely on the exploitative practices introduced and mastered by the colonisers. It highlights the role of national elites in oppressing their own people in league with their international masters/ collaborators. It provides an interesting critique of the neocolonialism by exposing its exploitative and corrupt practices. And, most importantly, it provides a Marxist narrative of self-actualization for Wariinga, the lead female character, through politics and lateral solidarity rather than through a romantic form of self-reliance. (p.31)

Yet, there are some scholars who have raised the issue of language war between the language of the natives and the language of the colonisers, depicting Thiong'o's anti-colonising linguistic strategies. Xuan Wang (2024) notes that:

Ngugi wa Tiango's novel *Devil on the Cross* employs a variety of oral elements of Kikuyu tradition as anti-colonising linguistic strategies. This paper intends to explain Ngugi's subversion of the traditional Western narrative discourse by the narrative mode constructed in national discourse from the anti-colonising linguistic strategy that the novel has. It examines the critical consciousness behind Ngugi's anti-colonial linguistic strategy, explores the realistic concern in the novel's historical context, and reveals the anti-colonial consciousness and critical consciousness turn in the novel's linguistic strategy. (p. 135)

Although the novel has been reviewed and analysed in multiple ways, relatively little space has been allocated to the historical reading of the novel, highlighting the

disillusionment and deferral of the dreams of Kenyan people after the nation's independence. This gap between what has been explored and what remains unexplored in the novel can be bridged and addressed by analysing it through the gaze of post-colonialism and neocolonialism. *Devil on the Cross* pictures the situation of Kenya in a befitting way and explores the deterioration of the continent caused by the neo-colonialism. The novel quintessentially spotlights the economic woes, indigence, and discontent and disappoint with their native leaders and rulers after the political independence of the country.

Theoretical framework

This research article appraises the novel *Devil on the Cross* through the postcolonial paradigm, highlighting the historical, cultural, and socio-political milieu. The paper even focuses on the theory of neo-colonialism to explore the themes of deception, betrayal, exploitation, injustice, estrangement, and class struggle in the post-independent Kenya and in Africa by extension. Post colonialism is a theoretical framework designed to scan and study the socio-political, cultural, economic, and psychological aftermaths of colonialism and imperialism in *other* worlds. It sharply bespeaks resistance and subversion of the hegemonic power. Leela Gandhi defines "post colonialism as a theoretical resistance to the mystifying amnesia of the colonial aftermath. It is a disciplinary project devoted to the academic task of revisiting, remembering and, crucially, interrogating the colonial past" (1999, p. 4). Post colonialism endorses social justice, holds up egalitarianism, breaks hierarchies and divisions in the societies, and shuns away the rubrics of colonisation. Pramod K. Nayar (2013) defines post-colonialism as:

It refers to a mode of reading, political analysis and cultural resistance that deals with the history of colonialism and present neo-colonial structures. It is a mix of rigorous epistemological and theoretical analysis of texts and a political praxis of resistance to neo-colonial conditions. It's, in short, a critique. It invokes ideas such as social justice, emancipation, and democracy in order to oppose oppressive structures of racism, discrimination, and exploitation. It asserts the formerly colonized subject's agency- defined as the ability to affect his/her present conditions in the face of continuing oppression. (p.16)

In simple words, post-colonialism is a literary theory that emerged during the twentieth century and focuses on critically analyzing the history, culture, literature, and economic

strategies opted by the colonial countries to oppress the non-European countries. In regard to post colonialism, Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins (1996) write:

The term post colonialism, according to a too-rigid etymology, is frequently misunderstood as a temporal concept, meaning the time after colonialism has ceased, or the time following the politically determined Independence Day on which a country breaks away from its governance by another state. Not a naive teleological sequence which supersedes colonialism, post colonialism's, rather, an engagement with and contestation of colonialisms discourses, power structures, and social hierarchies ... A theory of post colonialism must then respond to more than the merely chronological construction of post-independence, and to more than just the discursive experience of imperialism. (pp. 264-265)

In this sense, post colonialism is concerned with writing an alternative history, interrogating the master narratives, and opposing European expansion and exploitation of the third world countries. M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Harpham (2012) argue that postcolonial studies dwells on the "critical analysis of the history, culture, literature, and modes of discourse that are specific to the former colonies of England, Spain, France, and other imperial powers" (p.305). He asserts that postcolonial studies are concern with the "Third World countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean islands, South America. Some scholars, however, extend the scope ...countries such as Australia, Canada, and New Zealand ... encompass aspects of British literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries" (p.306).

Neo-colonialism may be defined as the continuation of colonial oppression even after the political independence of the colonized nations through new formats. Though the non-European newly decolonized nations may have achieved the political control, the economy, culture, and political policies are indirectly operated and controlled by the European powers. According to Nkrumah (1966), "Neo-colonialism has emerged as the main instrument of imperialism in place of colonization" (p. ix). He further argues that "the essence of neo-colonialism is that the state which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty" (p. ix). Adding his views on neo-colonialism, Nkrumah writes, "neo-colonialist control is exercised through economic or monetary means" (p. ix). From the quotes of Nkrumah, by whom the term 'neo-colonialism' was coined, it can be concluded that after the whites have relinquished power to African, neo-colonialism begins. In this new level, though the

power changes, still the economy is controlled by the whites because of the poor leadership of the African leaders. Nayar (2010) asserts that:

Neocolonialism is the continuing economic exploitation of Asian and African nation-states by the former colonials – Europeans – and American powers. In most cases, neocolonialism is achieved not merely through state control by Euro-American powers but by a nexus between the economic (embodied in the banking and financial systems of the Euro-American ‘First World’), the nation-state (embodied in the politician and governments) and the business house (embodied in multinational corporations), often accompanied by insidious threats of trade sanctions and military action. Neocolonialism, therefore, may be the more insidious and dangerous form of colonialism. (pp. 2-3)

Discussion

Since the commencement of the decolonisation of Africa till date, Ngugi wa Thiongo has stood tall in pantheon of African writers by broaching existential problems of Africa including the scathing critique of the legacies of colonialism estranging the local people. The novel is a detailed exploration of predicaments of post-independent Kenya. The central argument of the novel is to expose the hypocrisies of the local government that promotes the intricate web of exploitation between the peasants and the local elites. Through this ardent satire, Ngugi unveils how African independence ushered in an atrophying political scenario and explores the debacles of the indigenous leadership that translated the vague promises of independence to absurdity. The major concern of Ngugi in this novel is to unmask the diabolic national ills, unabated, intense and pernicious disposition of neocolonialism in post-independent Kenya. The novelist highlights how the national elites in league with their international masters oppress their own people causing re-annihilation of Africa. The focus lies on exposing the exploitative vestigial practices of neo-colonialism and seriously pointing out as to what went wrong in Kenya in its march to progress after the attainment of independence.

The novel is replete with the tendencies of his age and he uses his literary work as a revolutionary tool against the neo-colonial plights. Ngugi interrogates the crisis of post-independence Kenya that has resulted in retrogression, moral decadence, and developmental arrest.

Neo-colonial legacy as depicted in *Devil on the Cross*

The novel is an allegorical and satirical manifestation of the catastrophic repercussions of the colonialism in Kenya. The novel vividly depicts the contagious neo-colonial attitudes and tendencies of the greedy, corrupt elites who earn a privileged status at the expense of the misery of the common people. The central argument in the novel is that the exploitative and victimising strategies of the elites under self-governance are direct outcome of neo-colonialism. Ngugi mockingly remarks at the mechanism of exploitations adopted by the local elites from their colonial masters to perpetuate the legacy of colonialism. The novel portrays the socio-economic and political morass of Kenya as an aftermath of colonialism. Ikechi and Angaye (2020) comment that "Ngugi wa Thion'o's *Devil on the Cross* is one of the narratives of Neo-colonialism, in which the stories explore the attitude of the new African political elites, who amass the nation's commonwealth for their personal aggrandizement" (p. 155). The story commences with a tale about a story about the city of Ilmorog. The novel reads: "Certain people in Ilmorog, our Ilmorog, told me that this story was too disgraceful, too shameful, that it should be concealed in the depths of everlasting darkness" (p. 1). The stigma that the narrator wishes to conceal is the disastrous, shameful and inhuman forms of repressions inflicted by the state upon the working class by deceiving them through the disguise of global marketing.

Set in a newly independent Kenya, the novel highlights the historical and the socio-political contexts on the narrative. In the words of Lunn (2021), "the novel proclaimed to strive for an "uncovering of disturbing aspects of social reality in a critical ironic matter" (p. 53). In the socio-political context, the evolution of Wariinga has a close association with the birth of African Independence in 1963. The recurring dream of Wariinga allegorises the devil as a symbol of neo-colonial efforts made by the 'local watchdogs' to bring about mounting underdevelopment. The silk clad devil is the epitome of the local elites who has become the new face of colonialism. These elites complicit in the exacerbation of the exploitation of the Kenyan people by fostering a government system that fuels up poverty, inequality and social injustice. These elites carry on with the incalculable and unquantifiable assaults, subjugation, plunder, appropriation, and exploitation of the colonial rule prolonging the dystopia and nihilism.

The imprisonment of Wangari, an ex-Mau Mau activist, on the pretext of vagrancy and theft in her own country shows the climax of unjust government who acts on the order of the powerful elites and dominate the working class. The acute

unemployment, unabated corrupting, grinding poverty are all portrayed in the novel to reveal the deplorable situation of African national statues due to leadership failure. The colonial methods which the local elites in power employs to bamboozle the indigenous native form the core of the neo-colonial plight. Regarding these emergent national bourgeoisies and elites, Franz Fanon (1963) states:

These are people who stepped into the shoes of the Former European settlers, doctors, barristers, traders, transport and general agents. From now on, they insisted that foreign companies should pass through their hands whether these companies wished to keep connection with the country or to open it up. The national middle class now discovers its historic mission, that of intermediary. (p. 122)

As successor of the socio-economic, political, ethnic and aesthetic legacies of colonialism and utopia of modernity, Kenyan elites project a meanness that belies the expected qualities of true leader. These local elites mediated ideology of materialism and have completed the task of breaching the fabrics of African culture that was left unfinished by the colonialists. Kwame Nkrumah states that:

The bourgeoisie as a whole cannot be seen in isolation from imperialism and neo-colonialism. While representing only a small fraction of the population, it is nevertheless a great danger to the African masses because of the strength it derives from its dependence on foreign bourgeoisies, capitalism which seeks the peasants and workers of Africa in a condition of perpetual subjection. (qtd. in Akwang, 2004, p. 63)

The replacement of colonial masters by the local elites is what causes the devil to be saved and resurrected. This very essence is captured in the lines spoken by the master to this loyalist slaves: “But what I wish to do now is to prepare positions of leadership for you.... return with money and many banks.... we may love one another always and eat together...” (p. 89).

The novel addresses the outrageous evilness of the neo-colonial system through the magnification of the deeds of theft and robbery by the local elites like Gitutu wa Gataanguru, Kihaahu wa Gatheeca, Mwireri and Kimeemdeeri. The projection of the mental enslavement of the local elites is evident in the lines: “From today I shall not let my face to be too visible. You will represent me in this country” (p. 91). The Devil’s Feast acts as a platform to reveal the avarice, filth and debauchery of the neocolonial

comprado, bourgeoisie who pertain the legacy of colonial domination and exploitation. In this regard, Savage (1970) aptly says that:

Even at the time of independence, Kenya was to be ruled by an alliance of senior politicians, civil servants, and tribal elder who hoped to provide an efficient if paternal system of government backed up by the force of the police and of the army. This was not very different from the colonial style of government except of course, that the ruled were now rulers. (p. 526)

Elitism

The concept of elitism constitutes a pivotal point in the novel and Ngugi uses it to represent the crucial political and social issues in contemporary Kenya. Through a striking contrast of the national elites with the lowest classes, Ngugi presents the elite as a minority that dance on the tune of the white imperialist. Ngugi claims that the effect of the colonial power in Africa “was to create an elite who took on the tongue and adopted the style of the conquerors” (Homecoming, 1972, p. 10). Ngugi categorises the peasants, the students and the workers as one class and in opposition places the exploiters and their foreign collaborators in another class. The latter group of bourgeoisies who occupy a small part of society but monopolise the nation’s economy and governance are termed as ‘elites’. These sycophants have incorporated the colonial traits through colonial education and have been dragged into mental enslavement which boosts them to consider themselves to be superior to their kinds. In *Decolonizing the Mind* (1994), Ngugi expresses this idea by quoting Cheikh Amindou Kane’s phrase from *Ambiguous Adventure*:

On the black continent, one began to understand that their real power resided not at all in the cannons of the first morning but in what followed the cannons. Therefore, behind the cannons was the new school. The new school had the nature of both the cannon and the magnet. From cannon it took the efficiency of the fighting weapon. But better than the cannon it made the conquest permanent. The cannon forces the body and the school fascinates the soul. (p. 9)

In the context of African Elites, they are the wealthy ruling class who are the elect of the European colonisers. Ngugi terms them as “the local watchdogs” of the white men and “the children of the Devil”. According to Marxist ideology, all societies, democratic or not, are run by elites who, thanks to political and economic privileges occupy very important positions within society. In the novel, the members of the elite are those who

maintain control over the state apparatus and government jobs and political affairs. They have replaced the British imperialists and linger the exploitation of workers and peasants. These elites are a social category who became rich and powerful due to support from the British colonial administration. These elites, in pursuit to establish their hegemony over the state and Kenyan society attempt to curtail the freedom of press and prohibit the incorporation of trade unions, women's professional association into the mainstream government. Wariinga's statement "A song of praise begins at home. If you Kenyan men were not so scornful and oppressive, the foreigners..." (p. 249) gives a sneak peek of the realities of the Kenyan elites. These elites are part of the dominant class, occupy a privileged position of prestige in social hierarchy and greatly influenced the course of actions of the community.

In the novel, the representatives of such a social category are the thieves and the robbers who have gathered in the cave to perform at the Devil's Feast in Ilmorog. They have assembled for a competition where they are telling the stories of their criminality and greed without a pinch of hesitation. Since the law keepers and the judiciary are in the hold of these elites they do not bother to conceal their exploitative methods and criminal activities. The words of the master of ceremony support the fact: "Every competitor will mount the platform, and he will tell us how he first came to steal and rob and where he has stolen [...] by his account of his earthly wiles" (p. 94). The participants boast their unlawful, deceptive and repressive acts by exaggerating the actions and give absurd plans to further rob the masses in the future. The competition is enriched with symbolic and allegorical sarcasm of capital rhetoric.

In the novel, we mainly come across four types of elites. The first category comprises of the adulterers such as Wa Gatheeca who exposes his adultery with the wives of his fellow robbers. This category is followed by the false educators, the hurlers of abuse and the business tycoons. The episode of the competition exposes the corrupt, greedy and the nasty bourgeoisie whose only motive is the exploitation and oppression of the masses. All the elites here are attributed grotesque physical image like obesity and opulence. This distortion in their physical attributes is the replica of their distorted character. For instance, Gitutuwa Gataangur is described as having big belly and Kihaähu having long mouth and so on.

The speech made by the various thieves and robbers in the novel justifies that the local elites are equivalent to the Bourgeoisie. These stooges surpass the level of greed by

presenting farcical planning to sell air in container, production of vital organs. This gives a miserable picture of post-independent Kenyan Society, where these elites will stoop to any level to ruin and exploit the downtrodden. The statement made by Gitutuwa Gataanguru, "Learn from the whites, and you'll never go wrong. The white man believes that there's no business to beat that of theft and robbery ... Bible in his left hand... the robbed people of the labour of their lands" (p. 112) lay bare the neo-colonial tendency of the elites who have assimilated the principles of imperialists to plunder their own resources and people. Kihaahu's idea of 'thirst for education oppressed the masses, but it was the basis of the wealth of a select few' apparently shows how the elites use education to cheat the Kenyans. He befools the mass and brags himself in this ironical remark: "That's why I'm very grateful to the masses of the Kenyan people. For their blindness, their ignorance [...] too many awkward questions" (p.129).

In the rebuttal by Ithe wa Mbooi, we get a dreadful picture of the Kenyan Society. When he addresses to the chairmen of the competition and utters "to thieve, to rob and to cheat the poor is alright", we find it to be disgusting but it exhibits the horrendous intention of the elites to deceive and decimate the masses. Their sole motive is to accumulate wealth, power, property, land and money at expense of the dehumanizing the masses. They have started believing in "the democracy of drinking the blood and eating the flesh of the workers and peasants" (p. 89).

To conclude, elitism is a parasite wrecking the nation and is a direct consequence of the colonial ascendancy. Through the stories and parables, Ngugi endeavors to awaken the Kenyan people by revealing the corrupt, destructive and deceptive power of neo-colonialism that has assumed the face of national elites. In the novel, Ngugi has exposed the deeply rooted problems within the post-independent Kenyan societies through the portrayal of elitism.

Post- independence disillusionment

Set against the backdrop of post-colonial period in Kenya, the novel is a classic indictment of neo-colonialism and the crooked practices of the national elites. Independence in Africa aimed at cessation of the European Imperialism - allegorized in the novel as devil. Much to dismay, the vague promise of independence ended with an absurdity.

Independence is a concept associated with getting free from the profound dominating, suffocating, exploitative tendencies of the colonial masters but post-

independent Kenya continues to suffer economic, political, social and cultural regression. Despite the attainment of independence politically in 1963, Kenya continues to wallow under the shackles of corrupt, oppressive and foreign-guided government. It is an elusive critique of post independent Kenya that is still bereft of gaining the rewards of independence. Rather the masses are deceived in a new form of domination with a change of agents. The estrangement and oppression still perpetuated through the capitalists and neo-colonial elites causing sheer disappointment among the masses. Echoing this essence, as cited by Itang, Ezeigbo writes: "African independence is a sham since economic independence has proved a mirage and the sense of dependency is still firmly entrenched in the socio-political and economic life of the independent States" (p. 82). The novel highlights the broken promise of independence by presenting the ordeals of the characters —Wariinga, Wangari, Gatuiria, Muturi, Mwireri and Maruura. The deplorable situation of these characters acts as a mirror to show the steep contrast between the ideals of independence and the reality of the Kenya Society. The society they live in is still gripping with neo-colonial structures and economic inequalities. The metaphorical dream of Wariinga is deliberately deployed by Ngugi to mock at the neo colonial methods displayed and embraced by the upper class Kenyans in the era of post-independence. The dream goes like this:

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 rays walking in the light, propelling the Devil toward of the Cross. The Devil was clad in a silk suit, and he carried a walking stick [...] never again build Hell for the people on Earth. (p. 8)

The devil in Wariinga's dream is a symbol of corruption, exploitation, oppression and disillusionment that perturbs the growth of post-independence Kenya. But the last part of her dream "After three days ... they knelt before him ... stroking their large bellies, which had now inherited all the evils of the world ..." (p. 8) offers a dreadful panorama of the post-independent Kenya, where the local elites collaborate with their cronies and perpetuate the exploitation slavery of their nation. The foreigners and the indigenous neo-colonialist collaborate in order to pillage, plunder and accumulate personal wealth from their country.

The Devil's Feast 'where the national robbers and their foreign delegates (masters) alley to boast about their cunningness to steal from their own people demonstrate the broken promises of independence. These African elites promote the neo-

colonial strategies of materialism, foreign aids, consumerisms, Europhilia and strengthen neo-colonialism through the pauperization of the citizens. In the Devil's Feast, the puppets of the colonial masters ruthlessly display their devilish act of theft and robbery and their cleverness to monopolise the economy and power to the few privileged ones. The local compradors' bizarre self-gratification, display of their wealth and magnificence exposes the monstrous image of capitalism and the parasitic nature of local elites. This allegorical tale of the feast illustrates the failure of African Independence. The testimonies of the robbers are typical of post-colonial irony and the hollowness of the promises made by the government. The situation of Kenya still aggravates with the continuation of colonial policies. Instead of severing the ties of post-colonial domination, subjugation, inferiority, marginalisation and degradation of Africa, the colonial adversity lingers Kenya. The local bourgeoisie or the business capitalist class appropriates Africa's means of production and control the national economy. The meeting of the thieves held in Irmorog, demonstrates the despicable situation of Kenya where all the wealth is amassed by the ruling class and the mass is excluded. This devastating situation is no different than the one in colonial system. The dreams of independence met a tragic end with the persistence of colonial ideologies. Karl Max names typical ideology of the watch dogs of capitalism as "Cannibalism" - the accumulation of wealth by the ruling few at the expense of their fellow citizens, the peasants and the workers who in Fanonian point of views are the "wretched of the earth. The testimony of Garituluwa Gataangure, for instance, denotes the spirit of materialism. His general theory is hunger x thirst = famine (and famine among the masses = wealth for a man of cunning)" (p. 114). Many such wily transactions were carried by the bourgeoisie elites to bankrupt Kenya of its true existence. Mwaura (2005) states "Owing to the Kikuyu-dominated government that was formed immediately after the attainment of independence, a popular myth about the 'thieving' in Kikuyu started. It later escalated until all ethnic groups fashioned their own myths about the others" (p. 140).

The independence in Africa could not end up with the tyranny of the colonialism with rather it continued with the new forms of oppression and corruption. The denial of dignity to the masses, unequal treatment, biasness, sexual harassment unjust behavior, ceaseless suffering, abject poverty and moral decadence portrayed in the novel are all the ailments procreated by the failure of independence. The degeneration of the situation in post-independent Kenya by the local government, the elites, business tycoons who

prolongs the issue of injustice and oppression gives rise to disenchantment among the masses. Chidi T. Maduka (1999) holds the view that "the fight for freedom in Africa is not yet over because independence has not brought significant changes in the life of people" (p. 31). The sexual exploitation of Wariinga, the widening gap between the rich and the poor, the unjust behavior of court towards Wangari, the murder of Mwireri, and the torture of the indigenous people who revolt against the Devil's Feast signal towards the grim situation of Kenya where freedom came just on paper.

Conclusion

Devil on the Cross, the master stroke by Ngugi wa Thiong'o, is a powerful critique of post-independence Kenya. Through a profound exploration and exposition of the enduring legacies of colonialism and its impact on Kenya, Ngugi integrates history into fiction. The novel reflects the problems of deception, betrayal, alienation and disillusionment in post-independence Kenya. These traits were formerly introduced by the colonialists and now are perfected by the local elites. The characters Wariinga, Wangari and Muturi, who are representatives of the working class and the students, strive hard to eradicate the horrendous evils prevalent in the nation. Unfortunately, they become the victims of the obnoxious system. Through the historical allegory, Ngugi examines the socio-political realities of the post-colonial Kenya. Using Marxist undertone, *Devil on the Cross* acts as a clarion call to revolt against neo-colonialism and its capitalist tendencies.

In days to come, researchers can expand the horizon of future research possibilities in this area by locating the novel under study within a larger and vaster comparative framework of other independent countries that once faced the similar colonial experience. Scholars can make a comparative study of *Devil on the Cross* with the works of Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Chimamanda Ngozi and other African writers to voice the common struggles, hopes and aspirations of African nations that failed to keep the nation's promises. Beyond Africa, Ngugi's novels can be studied making a comparative study with the works of Indian writers like Vikram Seth, Arundhati Roy, Amitav Ghosh, Salman Rushdie to trace and foreground shared struggles involving corruption, capitalist exploitation, neocolonial pressures, and failure of government to actualise the people's dream. In conclusion, Ngugi's novels can be studied and analysed comparing and contrasting with the novels from different Commonwealth countries to question and problematise the attitude of post-colonial period.

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Full text can be downloaded: <https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/craiaj> & <http://www.craiaj.info/>

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