



Women's fight in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Devil on the Cross*: a structural analysis

NGOIE MWENZE Honoré

Professor at the School of Criminology, University of Lubumbashi (UNILU)

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Article No.: 030718034</p> <p>Type: Research</p> <p>DOI: 10.15580/GJLLR.2018.1.030718034</p> <hr/> <p>Submitted: 07/03/2018</p> <p>Accepted: 26/03/2018</p> <p>Published: 02/04/2018</p> <hr/> <p>*Corresponding Author Ngoie Mwenze Honoré E-mail: honoremwenze@gmail.com</p> <hr/> <p>Keywords: Women's fight, semiotic square, exploitation, liberation or "uhuru"</p>	<p>This paper attempts to investigate the meaning of Ngugi's <i>Devil on the Cross</i>. Through the analysis of the novel structure, it pursues a revelation of the social disease painted in the novel and a detection of the kind of Women's fight and its protagonists engaged in the revolution of the fictional society. This research bases its analysis through Algirdas Julien Greimas' semiotic square model. As a result, the build of the semiotic square summarizes the novel into the binary words: exploitation and liberation or uhuru. While the exploitation is the work of the thieves and robbers including their disciples, local or foreign supporters (belonging to the ruling class), the battle of liberation is the work of protagonists that belongs in majority to the weak class. The women fight takes place in this last view when they are engaged to put an end to their multi-victimization. Women protagonists are engaged in their liberation and the liberation of the whole fictional Kenyan society. Wangari's strategy fails to arrest and to put into everlasting jail those who foot masses. After experiencing the trouble of past events, Jacinta Wariinga, another woman, chooses simply to kill the figurehead of sexual abuses and workers exploitation. And the act of killing the Rich Old Man from Ngorika and his two guests, mentioned in this novel, marks the symbol of woman's victory. Consequently, the plot appears to be the schism between the actants of the upper class and those of the lower class, the majority and the minority. In the fight of these two classes, masses are victorious on the wealthy people who are a minority.</p>

INTRODUCTION

Fictional universes portray human societies. Their authors use diverse techniques to paint some common good, evils, diseases... related to different political, economic, social and moral situations. In these fictionalized realities, writers create, in different manners, their characters which, directly or indirectly, cause events or participate in their course, events located in different settings. The way to express their message through a literary work seems to be attractive to the kind of readers who need to discover in the light of the text, what is the content, to stand inside the text and to discover through linguistic structures, the functioning of the textual society.

We focus our interest on novels published in the East, essentially on the one written by Ngugi wa Thiong'o who generally satirize, the fictional micro-universe found in his novels. Particularly, women characters engaged in the struggle against some social illnesses fascinated our reading of *Devil on the Cross* and this fight has motivated us to concentrate on this topic inside this novel produced in exceptional conditions of detention.

In *Devil on the cross*, women characters are victimized as well as men in an exploited society. Apart from the general context of oppression faced by both men and women, women characters and their sisters are moreover denigrated, abused and harassed by those who belong to the leading class or to the rich class. They do not live passively as spectators crying days and nights against their oppressors and executioners. They stand up in terms to fight and to save themselves, their feminine qualities and to redress the society. These women's determinations constitute the entrance of our problem expressed through this major research question: through the semiotic square, what strategies made by women characters, are generally considered weak, in their fight against the evil forces for the purpose of saving their womanhood, and the whole society?

This central research question is detailed in these sub-questions:

- What is the social, political and economic context expressed in the textual society?
- Which kind of oppression or exploitation victimized the novel universe, especially in relation with women?
- Who are engaged in the struggle against the negative forces?
- What strategies are exploited by heroines to face those forces of evil?
- What resistance did they face on the battlefield?
- Did women succeed or fail in their battle against their executioners or workaholic?

Through this paper, the initials *DOTC* means *Devil on the Cross*.

LITERATURE SURVEY

Full of "devils", *Devil on the cross* paints one fictional society characterized by some abuses, illnesses or social injustices. This novel contains many themes related to politic, economic, social. These themes are exploited in different literary work. Many literary studies were done on it through different methods and aims. The novel reveals many elements related to Marxism or the class struggle between the rich and capitalist upper class and the proletarian working low class. In this vein, Muzigirwa [1] Odun Balogun [2] centered their topic on Marxism or the "Hagiography of a Marxist".

Other literary critics have analyzed the satirical elements or Ngugi wa Thiong'o used satire. Through elements of snobbery and sarcasm within the imagery, Ngugi portrayed the character Gitutu wa Gatanguru in this light when he says that 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 his trousers. It seems as if his belly had absorbed all of 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 shrunk to the size of a fist." (DOTC, 99) This quotation can be depicted as a use of satire. The exaggerations and sarcasm are used when portraying the wealth of Gitutu, due to him being a master, through his weight over-exemplifying Gitutu's power and status within society [3,4]. Other researchers [2,3,4], like this cited above and others, reveal the lens of the cultural and traditional aspects of Kenya, Ngugi incorporates songs within the text of *Devil on the Cross* which are used as an act of satire. Ogunjimi reveals "Oral Tradition and Social Vision in Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross*" [5].

Other researches based their analysis on other aspects: characterization, settings, capitalism ideology. Some analysis essays deal with the characters. For example, Brumley focused her thesis on the main character of Jacinta Wariinga, whose name means "Woman in Chains." She argues the feminist role of Jacinta in the revolution. She examines the function of gender and feminism through this major character [6].

Devil on the Cross has literary richness which cannot be analyzed through one scientific work. The plot contains many other aspects than the ones we just mentioned. Each literary critic sees in the work an aspect that he analyzes. It is within this framework that we have read this novel, trying to highlight an aspect related to the structure of the novel.

METHODOLOGY

This paper is focused on structural analysis using the Algirdas Julien Greimas' semiotic square [7,8]. This tool can summarize the understanding of the meaning of *Devil on the Cross*. Greimas semiotic square is inspired by semiotic studies. For a recall, Semiotics is the theory of sign systems or "the social construction of meaning by sign systems", according to

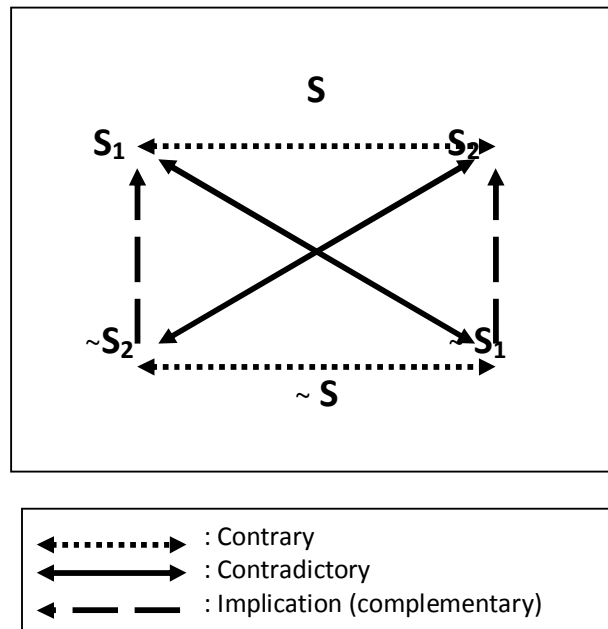
Branston & Stafford[9]. A semiotic analysis of a literary text deals, instead of with the themes and general meaning, with the way in which meaning is produced by the structures of interdependent signs, codes and conventions. The text is hereby considered as a sign.

And generally speaking, for Van Zoest, semiotic studies extend infinitely the boundaries of the notion of the text [10]. Unlike formalism which is interested in what a text means, semiotics/structural analysis looks into 1) how a text comes to "mean" (how language constructs our sense of reality depending on the relationship between the two parts of the sign,

signifier/signified), and 2) how a language system functions and operates.

While structuralism is more of a systematic approach to literary study, semiotics focuses on the analysis of significance in *all* types of texts – literary and cultural seeing of the context.

It says that the semiotic square is the essential "paradigmatic" form of Greimasian semiotics, the "form of the content" (a form which is a content) or constitutive structure. Greimas represented this tool as shown below:



The semiotic square includes essentially terms, metaterms (compound terms), relations (between terms) and operations. Identifying terms, S_1 deals with a positive seme, S_2 with the negative seme, S describes the complex axis ($S_1 + S_2$). Terms S_1 and S_2 are called the "contraries" and terms $\sim S_2$ and $\sim S_1$ are the "subcontraries" (because they are contrary terms located "below" the contraries); terms S_1 and $\sim S_2$ are the "contradictories", and terms S_2 and $\sim S_1$ are "contradictories" as well.

The Semiotic Square is formed of an initial binary relationship between two contrary signs. S_1 is considered to be the assertion/positive element and S_2 is the negation/negative element in the binary pair. The second binary relationship is now created on the $\sim S$ neutral axis (neither S_1 nor S_2). $\sim S_1$ is considered to be the complex term, and $\sim S_2$ is the neutral term. This is where the principle of difference is brought into play: every element in a system is defined by its differences from the other elements.

It is important to mention that **contrariety**, contradiction and **complementarity** are bidirectional relations (that is S_1 is the opposite of S_2 and vice versa), whereas implication is unidirectional, from $\sim S_2$ to S_1 and from $\sim S_1$ to S_2 . Concerning the axis S and $\sim S$, the S -axis is a hyponym of the $\sim S$ -axis. The $\sim S_1$ element combines aspects of S_1 and S_2 and is also

contradictory to S_1 . The $\sim S_2$ element contains aspects of neither S_1 nor S_2 .

RESULTS

1. Synopsis of the novel

Synopsis is generally known as a series of events or happenings that organize a text. Todorov and Weinstein consider it "a movement from one state of equilibrium through a state of disequilibrium to a final state of equilibrium that is similar to, but not the same as, the first state of equilibrium" [11]. It is made up of different steps: the exposition, the inciting incident, the rising action, the climax, the falling action, the resolution and the dénouement. Devil on the Cross has many events concentrated around these elements composing the synopsis.

- **Exposition (initial situation): Kenyan citizens living neo-colonialism (in post-independence era)**

By exposition, the writer hereby introduces the characters and the setting, and gives, if possible, the necessary background to the story. Devil on the Cross

locates the story in modern Kenya with Nairobi as the capital and other towns like Ilmorog, Nakuru, Mombasa... The story takes place in the post-independence period characterized by neo-colonialism. The former colonizers (British) still rule the country indirectly through Kenyan black people.

In this country were born characters like Wariinga, Wangari, Muturi, Gatuiri and there are also old people like the Rich Old Man from Ngorika, Boss Kihara, Gitutu wa Gatanguru, Kihaahu wa Gatheeca, Mwireri wa Mukiraai. Those persons are divided into two social classes: the wealthy class and the poor class.

After arresting her parents in Ilmorog, the protagonist Wariinga faces many problems in Nakuru and in Nairobi:

- **Wariinga at Nakuru**

From a "woman of the Catholic church", Wariinga changed her life completely when she became the Rich Old Man's girlfriend. Unfortunately, she became pregnant by the Rich Old Man from Ngorika, but the latter refuses to support the pregnancy. She fails in strategic abortion. When she faces all these troubles, she attempts to commit suicide (on the rails) but she is saved miraculously thanks to a certain man's intervention.

- **Wariinga migrates to Nairobi**

In Nairobi, Wariinga works as secretary in the *Champion Construction Company* before facing another kind of troubles. She has been dismissed from her job by Boss Kihara because she refuses his advances. Her younger lover, John Kimwana, abandons her. She has been thrown out of her house by the landlord. Looking for a job, Wariinga finds that she must be the bosses' girlfriend before getting a job. To have a job, you must pass by the Boss's bedroom. On this nowadays fashion, Wariinga says:

She enters another office. She finds there another Mr Boss. The smiles are the same, the questions are the same, the rendez-vous is the same – and the target is still Kareendi's thighs. The Modern Love Bar and Lodging has become the main employment bureau for girls, and women's thighs are the tables on which contracts are signed. A maiden once drowned in a sea of sweetness. (...) Modern problems are resolved with the aid of thighs (DOTC, 19).

She finds Nairobi, soulless and corrupt. For Wariinga, all these problems start with the Rich Old Man's adventure. She disfigures her body and imitates another girl's stride.

After facing many troubles and saved from her new attempt at suicide, "she cursed the day she was born" and decided to go back to her parents in Ilmorog. But the young man who has saved her gives

her the invitation to the Devil's feast, the competition in the theft and robbery.

• **The inciting incident: The arranging of the Devil's feast in Ilmorog**

The inciting incident is defined as the "impetus" of the central conflict. It is the event that provokes the conflict. *Devil on the Cross* informs that there is a feast which will take place in Ilmorog a certain Sunday. This feast will gather thieves and robbers of Ilmorog receiving their guests from abroad, America, England, Germany, France, Italy, Sweden and Japan, seven countries belonging to the International Organization of Thieves and Robbers (IOTR). This great feast is arranged by the "Organization for Modern Theft and Robbery in Ilmorog". Mwireri wa Mukiraai gives this precision:

This feast is not a Devil's feast, and it has not been organized by Satan. This feast has been arranged by the Organization for Modern Theft and Robbery in Ilmorog to commemorate a visit by foreign guests from an organization for the thieves and robbers of the Western world, particularly from America, England, Germany, France, Italy, Sweden and Japan, called the International Organization of Thieves and Robbers (DOTC, 78).

The aim of this feast is to establish the Ilmorog branch of the Organization for Modern Theft and Robbery through the election of "Seven Experts in Modern Theft and Robbery" in Ilmorog and to choose the best thief as written on the invitation card even if the majority attending this feast believe in God and are also great members in different churches. The competitors talk about their wives, their mistresses (called sugar girls or "Ready-to-yeild"), the cars they drive and those driven by their wives, and how they get their wealth.

That event justifies the travel to Ilmorog of certain passengers (Gatuiri, Wangari, Muturi, Mwireri wa Mukiraai, Wariinga) in Mwaura's MATATA MATATU MATAMU model T. Ford, each one with his or her experience of the country.

• **The rising action: Devil's feast and throwing out of the cave the thieves and robbers by Njeruca crowd**

The rising action or the complication shows the event during which the problem reaches a higher intensity. It occurs around the Devil's feast in Ilmorog and the expulsion of the thieves and robbers from the cave by the crowd of men, women, children from New Jerusalem (Njeruca).

Wariinga and her journey companions attend this feast set in the cave in Golden Height (Ilmorog). Wangari tries to inform the Ilmorog police to catch those men who suffer people, but she is herself caught by the same police. Workers, peasants and students from

Njeruca (New Jerusalem) come with Muturi to disturb this feast. They succeed in throwing them out after a battle between the forces of the united workers and the forces of the thieves and the robbers. Muturi says:

"Those thieves were armed, but none was able to use his gun because they were terrified by the eyes and the massive roar of the crowd. Kihaahu wa Gatheeca was the only one who tried to shoot at me" (DOTC, 211).

The scene is quite ridiculous at the door of the cave or outside this location. The narrator says it through this funny and humoristic description:

The drama at the door to the cave, as several thieves and robbers attempted to squeeze their bellies through it at the same time, was both comic and sad. 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. And the workers would run after them shouting: There he is! There he is! Hunt him down! Hunt him down! Catch thief! Catch thief! (...) The yard was a chaos of running feet as the owners of the palaces and mansions in Ilmorog's Golden Heights were chased by the Njeruca shanty dwellers (DOTC, 207).

- **The climax: the end of the Devil's feast in many murders**

The climax, also called the Crisis or the Turning point, is the highest point of the conflict. Some disasters happen in a course of events after the military and the police intervention. Apart from the arrest of Muturi and the student's leader of Ilmorog, many people die on both sides. The result of confrontation mentions five workers killed by the forces of the bourgeois law and order and many fatal injuries at the side of Njeruca crowd. Workers and peasants kill two soldiers. But Mwireri wa Mukiraai is killed on his way back to Nairobi by a certain servant of thieves and robbers.

- **The falling action: Love affairs between Wariinga and Gaturia**

In the falling action, the conflict starts decreasing. Shortly, it is the event preceding the climax and leading to a resolution or a solution. In the novel, we qualify love affairs between Wariinga and Gaturia as the falling action. Wariinga and Gaturia fall in love after meeting in the vehicle called matatu. Back to Nairobi, Wariinga spends two years at the Polytechnic. She has one more year to go and complete the course. To pay her fees, Wariinga refuses money from Gaturia

but she manages only by undertaking all sorts of odd jobs and she offers her services as a self-employed mechanic in a certain garage in Nairobi. She is attending judo and karate classes at the Kenya Martial arts Club. She resolves that she is able to defend herself and stands on her own in every way. Wariinga changes completely during the following two years as the narrator says:

The Wariinga of today has decided to be self-reliant all the time, to plunge into the middle of the arena of life's struggle in order to discover her real strength and to realize her true humanity. No, this Wariinga is not that other Wariinga (...) Cleanliness is bathing. A hero is known only on the battlefield. A good dancer is known only in the dance arena (DOTC, 216).

Wariinga and Gaturia decide to be engaged and, two years later after the Ilmorog feast, they go to inform their parents respectively at Ilmorog and Nakuru. They leave Nairobi a certain Friday and spend the night at Ilmorog (at Wariinga's parents) before going to Nakuru the next Saturday (at Gaturia's parents). Their journey is pleasant. They arrive at Nakuru.

- **The resolution: Murder of Hispaniora and his two guests**

The resolution relates to the end of the conflict. Apart from the deaths linked to the confrontation between workers and their helpers against the exploiters two years before the Devil's feast, the novel indicates another death, that of the Rich Old Man of Nakuru, named Hispaniora Greenway Ghitahy. This one is killed by Wariinga in a particular context. When Gaturia and his bride arrived at Nakuru, Wariinga recognizes the Rich Old Man who impregnated her and abandoned her in sorrow. The wealthy man, named Hispaniora Greenway Ghitahy, is also Gaturia's father, the father of her fiancé. Instead of receiving his son's bride, the Rich Old Man receives her former "sugar girl". He orders everybody to go out and leave him with her son's bride, according to modern tradition.

Trembling, the Rich Old Man from Ngorika tries to save his social class and religious rank. Then he negotiates with Wariinga to go back to Nairobi, to abandon her son and to stand as her mistress in darkness. Wariinga does not accept despite Hispaniora's pleading mercy. To end this behavior, Wariinga takes her revenge and kills Hispaniora with three bullets coming from the gun obtained from Muturi two years ago. The day comes when the hunted becomes the hunter.

Outside, she also kills some thieves and robbers who attended the Devil's feast like Kihaahu wa Gatheeca and Gitutu wa Gataanguru. Other, like Robin Mwaura and Nguunji wa Nditika, save themselves. But

"two people who tried to capture her were greeted by judo kicks and karate

chops, and they were felled. Wariinga calmly walked away, as the people watched her from a safe distance" (DOTC, 254).

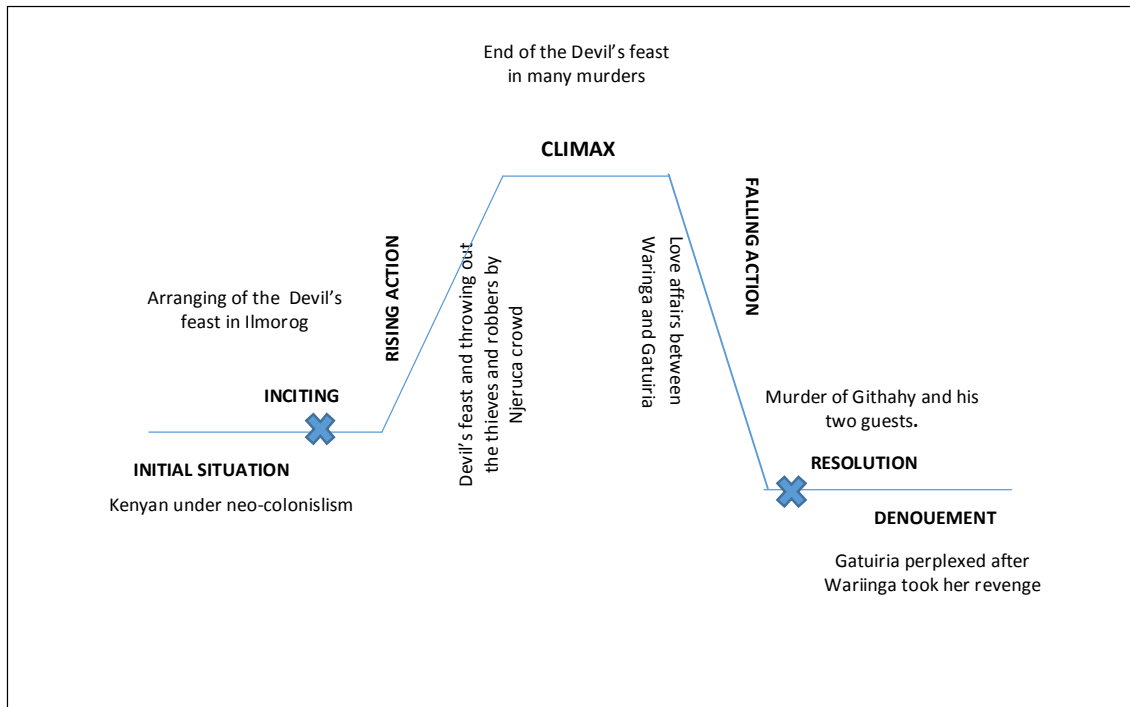
- **The dénouement: Gatuiria perplexed after Wariinga took her revenge**

The dénouement shows the events that preceded the resolution of a conflict to put completely an end to it. After the murder of Hispaniora Greenway Ghitahy, Gatuiria's father, by Wariinga, Gatuiria's bride, Gatuiria is perplexed. He has no reaction to his beloved one killing his father. The narrator describes his attitude below:

"Gatuiria did not know what to do: to deal with his father's body, to comfort his mother or to follow Wariinga. So he just stood in the courtyard, hearing in his mind music that leads him nowhere. He stood there in the yard, as if he had lost the use of his tongue, his arms, his legs" (DOTC, 254).

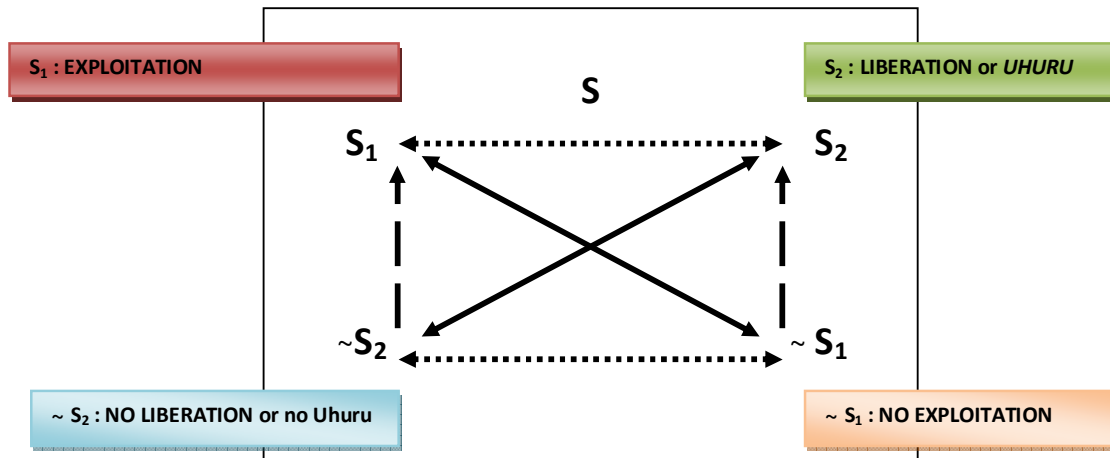
Gatuiria faces the secular battle between love and duty. He is wedged between duty and love affairs, he does not know which way to choose. Meanwhile, Wariinga who takes her revenge, goes away *"without once looking back"* (DOTC, 254).

Considering these steps related to different events, we can schematize the synopsis of Devil on the Cross as follows:



2. Semiotic square of *Devil on the Cross*

As Wangari, Wariinga is the female protagonist. As a multi-victim, she entered into the struggle in order to liberate the masses [12]. The semiotic square of *Devil on the Cross* would therefore look somewhat like the chart below:



The reading of *Devil on the Cross* allows us to establish that Kenyan people (low class) are exploited by the upper class. Through Wangari, Muturi and Wariinga, Workers, fight against this bad treatment. It appears as an implied dominant binary relationship: Exploitation (S_1) and liberation (S_2). In fact, mass exploitation has reduced people to animal or things to be managed at the will of the rich. The rich people (employers and traders) exploit workers and peasants. They make them victims of mistreatment, insults... Their right of strike is banished by a presidential decree. The rich class is connected to the public institutions to defend their interests. The police, the army, the court of justice are all connected with them. This is the meaning of S_1 related to the figures of thieves and robbers and their guests and protectors. And through Wariinga's experience in Nairobi, the narrator highlights the problem of sex exploitation which has become prevalent in contemporary Kenya [13]. The ruling class increases the dehumanization of Kenyan womanhood.

In this chaotic universe, where people become either very rich or very poor, liberation (S_2) is quested through different ways: strikes against slavery wages maintained by employers, arrest of the figures of social and professional abuses, mass revolution, or simply violence by executing the tenors of the devil system... The quest of liberation involves the implication of protagonists like the women Wangari and Jacinta Wariinga and the man Muturi. After the arrest of Wangari and Muturi two years ago, Jacinta Wariinga comes into charge to pursue the fight against neo-colonialism and capitalism. She is determined to execute figures of exploitation and to threaten those who stay alive. Wariinga's determination indicates women's fight against abuses and slavery. She cannot accept to consider women like easy sexual prey. She refuses to believe that "women's thighs are the tables

on which contracts are signed" (DOTC, 19). That is why she stands in the fight against evils in society.

Agho says it through these words: The novel focuses more emphatically on the particular dilemma of women in a rapidly changing society, and their exploitation in terms of class and sex, using women's position as a measure of the ills of contemporary Kenya. Jacinta Wariinga, the heroine of the novel, is both a victim of sex and class exploitation, first as a woman and then as a worker [13].

Approaching S_1 and S_2 , the analysis of the semiotic square pushes us to describe the complex axis S made by contraries. S_1 (Exploitation) and S_2 (Liberation or *Uhuru*) are opposed and give an account of the contrary forces which stand in *Devil on the Cross*: the forces of exploiters on the one hand and the forces of liberation on the other hand, forces embody by different characters. This conflict is helpful to the course of events as each part develops strategies to maintain the domination or to be free. It is also the opportunity to develop "feminist consciousness and solidarity" [12] through women characters like Wangari and Jacinta Wariinga in order to liberate women and masses. Waghmare writes: "*Devil on the Cross* represents an effort towards the liberalization of Kenyans from the claws and shackles of imperialism as they deal with neocolonialism in all its virulent manifestations" [14]. The novel glorifies the struggle of the Kenyan masses against the corrupt forces.

Concerning the struggle done by women specifically, Wangari throws the pillar of the battle to try to push police to arrest thieves and robbers. But because of their connection with the forces of order, the action does not succeed. Yet it constitutes a shed of light on Wariinga's way to the total victory of the devil for thanks to this partial failure, she happened to think more on how to dismantle the devil. Galvanized by lessons learnt from the past and present

experience, the different trials encountered by Wangarii, Muturi, Mwireri and all her other duplications, Wariinga takes the responsibility as community spokeswoman and therefore sharpens her forces against forces of evil, gathers means and skills, shows her concern for masses of workers, peasants and students' welfare above her personal pleasure and satisfaction [1].

In addition to the point of view above, Brumley says: Wariinga remains in the god-like position of judge and savior and after his useless words of persuasion, she demands he face her, look her in the eye while he kneels before her, and then pulls her pistol from her purse and shoots him dead. In this final scene, when given the ultimate buying power, the Rich Old Man as her capital, she chooses to reject the enslavement of capitalism, maintain her purity as her own woman, and kill the symbol of the capitalist beast. There is no doubt that Wariinga's feminization is complete [6].

The resolution of the opposition described above as liberation or *Uhuru* (S_2) and no liberation ($\sim S_2$) might be represented by the increase of poverty, misery and abuses. It means that the political and economic system ruling modern Kenya will continue to make more victims. But no exploitation ($\sim S_1$) can yield the building of the middle class and the decrease of mass poverty. These elements introduce the analysis of subcontraries and their axis $\sim S$.

No liberation or no *uhuru* ($\sim S_2$) implies exploitation (S_1). No liberation maintained Kenyan people in hostage. This axis concerns the complementary relation. It denotes that the failure of the revolution made by different progressive protagonists, essentially Wariinga, will allow the everlasting exploitation. Among the actions done by the fighters of freedom, some fail while others succeed. In this case, as a process, entire liberation does not happen. Exploitation openly or secretly continues its operation. The end of the novel does not suggest anything reporting neither to the total *uhuru* nor to the total exploitation and the eradication of abuses.

No exploitation ($\sim S_1$) involves liberation (S_2). The decreasing of exploitation and the suppression of the tenors of exploitation pave the way towards liberation. Is it possible to have any society without cases of exploitation or abuses? This perfect society can never exist in the world. The story of the novel informs the stopping of the course of bad events and their authors, simply the dusk of the evils.

The axis $\sim S$ shows hypothetic elements or events that are not written clearly in the novel. It means that exploitation did not end but liberation as a moment is reached but the effects of this liberation are not celebrated and lived.

3. Women' fight or women's liberation

In *Devil on the Cross*, women are presented as victims of exploitation by neo-colonialists and considered things or objects of pleasure by local leaders or games by foreign people from Europe or America or simply the men food. They are reduced to the role of

motherhood, attracting men or decorating bed of foreign tourists or "*leaving the whole field open to men*" (*DOTC*, 141), never saying no with their thighs in front of money, thighs sold on the "market of love".

Analyzing the same text, Agho says: "the novel focuses more emphatically on the particular dilemma of women in a rapidly changing society, and their exploitation in terms of class and sex, using women's position as a measure of the ills of contemporary Kenya. Jacinta Wariinga, the heroine of the novel, is both a victim of sex and class exploitation, first as a woman and then as a worker. From her childhood, she nursed the ambition of becoming a mechanical engineer. This was long before the Rich Old Man from Ngorika seduced and impregnated her, thus temporarily making her stall in her ambition. She is later able to complete her junior school certificate course and afterwards a course in typing and shorthand to qualify as a confidential secretary. With a professional certificate in typing, Jacinta starts to roam the streets of Nairobi for a job. The story is the same everywhere, except she accepts to be her prospective employer's 'sugar girl', she cannot be employed. Even her brief stint at the Champion Construction Company ends when she refuses to be raped by her boss. This also coincides with her ejection from her apartment, making her decide to go back to Ilmorog. Through Wariinga's experiences in Nairobi, Ngugi highlights the problem of sex exploitation, which has become prevalent in contemporary Kenya"[13].

Apart from young women like herself, older ones like Wangari are not spared this harrowing experience. She also refused to spread her legs on the "market of love".

In short, Wariinga's anecdote on the fate of Kareendi, the archetypal Kenyan girl, removes the experience of sexual harassment". We can read in the novel that modern-day Kenya has become a country within "*women thighs are the tables on which contracts are signed [and] modern problems are resolved with the aid of thighs. He who wishes to sleep is the one who is anxious to make the bed*" (*DOTC*, 19).

Women constitute the group mostly oppressed in Kenyan society, especially in sexual harassment.

Women took conscience of this stigmatization and dehumanization of Kenyan womanhood especially by members of the national bourgeoisie. They enter in a battle against these bad considerations based on traditional gender roles negating equality of sexes. In this outlook, Wariinga "presents a mature feminine vision of a woman ready to confront the social, cultural and political challenges of postcolonial Africa in the 21st Century" [15]. She represents the struggle against corruption and adulteration of foreign culture, primarily against neo-colonial elites which have subjugated women to secondary roles which are diametrically opposed to their revered status in traditional Gikuyu society.

The narrator argues about this women stigmatization and Wariinga's awaking in these words:

People love to denigrate the intelligence and intellectual capacity of our women by saying that the only jobs a woman can do are to

cook, to make beds and to spread their legs in the market of love. The Wariinga of today has rejected all that, reasoning that because her thighs are hers, her brain is hers, her hands are hers, and her body is hers, she must accord all her faculties their proper role and proper time and place and not let any one part be the sole ruler of her life, as if it had devoured all the others. That's why the Wariinga of today has said goodbye to being a secretary and has sworn that she will never type again for the likes of Boss Kihara, bosses whose condition for employing a girl is meeting for a five minutes of love after a hard drink (DOTC, 218).

Kenyan men think that there is no other job a woman can do apart from cooking food and massaging bodies. They forget the necessity of women during the Mau Mau rebellion as Wangari has shown it in this text: *"Why have people forgotten how Kenyan women used to make guns during the Mau Mau war against the British? Can't people recall the different tasks carried out by women in the villages once the men had been sent to detention camps?" (DOTC, 245).*

Apart from this women's contribution in a certain era, Wariinga succeeds to study in Polytechnics generally reserved to men and to work as a mechanic engineer among men. Firstly, they denigrate her and then they respect her after proving her best proficiency. When Wariinga is working in a garage, a man teases her while he is working on his car. Wariinga rebukes him but the man continues and touches her breasts. Wariinga gives him a lesson with kicks and chops as it is revealed below:

Wariinga turned like lightning, and in a twinkling of an eye, she had assaulted him with judo kicks and karate chops that for a time he saw stars. When he was finally felled by her judo kicks, he beseeched her to stop: 'I'm sorry'. The man got to his feet, took his car keys, started the engine and literally raised dust on the tarmac as he drove away (DOTC, 221).

Did women succeed in saving themselves in Devil on the Cross? Liberation is a process. Results come slowly. Gutierrez says: liberation is an arm or product of resistance. It expresses the aspirations of the oppressed peoples and social classes emphasizing the conflict aspects of the economic, social, and political process which puts them at odds with wealthy nations and oppressive classes. Liberation is attained when the people are said to be truly free; when they control all the tools, instruments the means of their physical, economic, political, cultural and psychological being. Put differently, when the people control the means and context of their integrated survival and development they are considered liberated [16].

In this point of view, it is difficult to assert that women have reached this level or that they are totally liberated. What we can say is what Agho suggests: Devil on the Cross ends in a manner that suggests

some possibilities of a new social order in the future. By a twist of irony, Ngugi reveals the fact that the Rich Old Man from Ngorika, who had earlier tarnished Wariinga's image is no other than the father of Gatuiria, her fiancé, who is arranging to marry her. Though this discovery shatters the hope of the lovers, it affords the heroine the opportunity to avenge her earlier humiliation as she kills the old man and two of his guests at the reception organized to receive Gatuiria and his intended wife. Although essentially an individual achievement, this action is also part of the revolutionary process meant to completely exterminate the oppressors [13].

Uwasomba says: "The shooting and killing of the devil's accomplices, including the rich old man of Ngorika (whose son, Gatuiria, Wariinga has fallen in love with) show the determination of the masses to liberate themselves" [17]. This violence is used in order to change an intolerable, unjust social order. The women's determination is there, and thanks to them, masses are mobilized to change the course of the Kenyan society. Wariinga puts an end to her multi-victimization by executing some of the doers of evils in society.

CONCLUSION

The structural analysis of Ngugi wa Tshiong'o's Devil on the Cross allows us to understand women's fight against neo-colonialism as a political system and capitalism as the economic system ruling the particular fictional society called "modern Kenya". Women protagonists use methods and strategies to free themselves from victimization. Through their conquest, the aim is to save all Kenyan people, especially the ones who belong to the lower class.

The building of the semiotic square regarding Greimas' theory reveals the meaning of the novel into the binary words: exploitation and liberation or uhuru and their sub-contraries and contradictories which allow the moving of the novel's plot. While the exploitation is the work of the thieves and robbers including their disciples, local or foreign supporters (belonging to the ruling class), the struggle of liberation is the work of protagonists, essentially women, belonged in majority to the weak class. In this view, the women's fight takes place when they engage in putting an end to their victimization by executing the authors of many crimes, social, moral and professional. The schism appearing in the plot dividing actants and their relationship, even different locations which appeared in the course of events of the novel, between the upper class and the lower class, the majority and the minority. But masses come to be victorious over the wealthy people who are a minority, the weak women on the strong and powerful men, and the forces of lightness on the forces of darkness.

To sum up, women protagonists are engaged in their liberation and the liberation of the whole Kenyan society. Wangari's strategy fails to arrest and to put in everlasting jail those who foot masses. After experiencing the past events, Jacinta Wariinga, another woman, chooses simply to kill the figurehead

of sexual abuses and workers exploitation. Her murder act constitutes her quest for Uhuru. She takes up her role in the national allegory and turns away to continue to fight as a feminist and an individual.

The act of killing the Rich Old Man from Ngorika and his two guests marks the symbol of woman's victory. In this view, Ndigirigi says: In killing Ghitahy, therefore, Wariinga at one level kills the destroyer of womanhood, the symbol of her debauchery, thus symbolically removing the obstacle to the realization of women's dreams. In this way, she points to the need to see the 'humanness' behind the beauty, hence the recognition of women apart from their beauty and their sex. Her shooting of Ghitahy is shown as part of the larger struggle to root out such parasites from the society [18].

COMPETING INTERESTS

The interest of this study is the building of the semiotic square of *Devil on the Cross* regarding Greimas' theory. This literary practice reduces the meaning of the novel into the binary words: exploitation and liberation or uhuru and their sub-contraries and contradictories which allow the moving of the novel's plot. Consequently, the binary words shows the schism appearing in the plot dividing actants and their relationship, even different locations which appeared in the course of events of the novel, between the upper class and the lower class, the majority and the minority. It is in this case we can understand the struggle of liberation leads by protagonists, essentially women. In this battle, masses come to be victorious over the wealthy people who are a minority, the weak women on the strong and powerful men, the forces of lightness on the forces of darkness.

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTIONS

Through Greimas' semiotic square model, the author of this paper reduces the novel *Devil on the Cross* to a single meaning which is only one interpretation of the text based on the binarity of two linguistic signs: exploitation and liberation. While the exploitation is the work of the thieves and robbers including their disciples, local or foreign supporters (belonging to the ruling class), the battle of liberation is the work of protagonists belonged in majority to the weak class. The women fight takes place in this view when they are engaged to put an end to their victimization. The author of this paper shows also that the plot of *Devil on the Cross* appears to be the schism between the actants of the upper class and those of the lower class, the majority and the minority. The result of the struggle between them reveals that masses are victorious on the wealthy people who are a minority.

AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

NGOIE MWENZE Honoré is a PhD in Criminology, Master in French Language and Civilization and

Under-graduate in English and African culture. Currently, he is Professor at the School of Criminology of the University of Lubumbashi, DRC. He leads his research in two different areas: In criminology, he is interested in the policing of mining sites, the private security market and the questioning of the co-production of security by a plurality of actors or organizations, public, private, voluntary, hybrid... In literature, English or French, he carries literary discourses on African novels in terms of socio-criticism or structural analysis.

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