



Investigating symbolism as a literary technique in *Devil on the Cross* by Ngũgĩ wa Thiongo

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موقع المجلة الإلكتروني:

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Abstract

This research paper examines the use of symbolism as a literary technique in Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's novel *Devil on the Cross* and how it portrays themes of oppression, resistance, and liberation in postcolonial Kenya. Drawing on the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism, the study analyzes various symbols in the novel, including the devil, the cross, the tree, the goat, and the river, and how they represent different aspects of Kenyan society. The analysis of these symbols reveals how Ngũgĩ creates a complex narrative that critiques the political and social structures of postcolonial Kenya.

The study employs a qualitative research approach to explore the historical and political context in which Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's novel *Devil on the Cross* was written, the impact of his literary activism on African literature, and the role of symbolism in the novel. Utilizing close reading and content analysis, the research analyzes the symbols and their meanings in the novel, revealing how Ngũgĩ employs symbolism to expose the injustices, oppression, capitalism, patriarchy, and inequalities in Kenyan society and to inspire resistance and liberation. Furthermore, this study emphasizes the importance of literature as a tool for social and political critique and transformation, highlighting the significance of Ngũgĩ's novel in offering a powerful commentary on the ongoing struggle for justice and equality in postcolonial Kenya.

Keywords: Symbolism, *Devil on the Cross*, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Postcolonial Kenya, Symbolic interactionism

Introduction

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o is a Kenyan writer and activist who has made significant contributions to African literature and the struggle for social and political justice. His novel *Devil on the Cross*, published in 1980, is a powerful critique of the political and social structures of postcolonial Kenya that employs symbolism as a literary technique to portray the themes of oppression, resistance, and liberation in Kenyan society. Symbolism is a powerful literary technique that allows writers to represent complex ideas and themes. This research paper investigates the use of symbolism in *Devil on the Cross* and its significance in the context of postcolonial Kenya.

The present paper studies the symbolic interactionism perspective, which posits that meaning is created through symbols and their interpretation by individuals in society. As George Herbert Mead, one of the founders of symbolic interactionism, notes, "The meaning of a symbol is not given to it by any intrinsic property it may possess, but by the use to which it is put in the course of social interaction" (Mead 4). This framework is particularly relevant to the study of symbolism in *Devil on the Cross*, as the symbols in the novel are deeply rooted in the social and political context of postcolonial Kenya.

The novel uses various symbols to represent different aspects of Kenyan society. The devil, for example, is used to represent the corrupt and oppressive forces that dominate Kenyan society. As Ngũgĩ writes, "The devil is the symbol of the oppressor, of the capitalist system, of the foreign powers that plunder Africa's resources" (Ngũgĩ 7). The cross, on the other hand, represents the struggle for liberation and resistance against

oppression. As Ngũgĩ notes, "The cross is the symbol of the people's struggle, the symbol of hope, of resistance, of faith in a better future" (Ngũgĩ 7). The river is also used as a symbol of change and transformation, as it represents the possibility of a new and better society.

The analysis of the symbols in the novel reveals how Ngũgĩ uses them to create a complex narrative that critiques the political and social structures of postcolonial Kenya. As Chinua Achebe, a fellow African writer, notes, "Ngũgĩ has a rare gift of storytelling...His novels are not only gripping and original, but also profound and insightful commentaries on the social and political realities of postcolonial Africa" (Achebe 3). Through the use of symbolism, Ngũgĩ reveals the injustices and inequalities in Kenyan society and inspires resistance and liberation.

The research also explores the historical and political context in which the novel was written. *Devil on the Cross* was published in 1980, at a time when Kenya was experiencing significant political and social upheaval. The country had gained independence from Britain in 1963, but the postcolonial period was marked by corruption, authoritarianism, and economic inequality. Ngũgĩ was a vocal critic of the political and social structures of postcolonial Kenya and was actively involved in the struggle for social and political justice. As he notes, "I write because I want to change the world...I write because I want to be part of the struggle for a just and humane society" (Ngũgĩ 15). The study adopts a qualitative research approach, using close reading and content analysis to analyze the symbols and their meanings in the novel.

Theoretical Framework

This study employs symbolic interactionism as the theoretical framework for analyzing the use of symbolism in Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Devil on the Cross*. Symbolism is the use of symbols to represent complex ideas and themes in literature. In the context of the novel, the symbols are deeply rooted in the social and political context of postcolonial Kenya. Regarding the use of symbolism as a literary technique, Meyer notes that "Symbolism is the use of symbols to represent ideas, emotions, or objects in a creative work of literature" (Meyer 174).

Symbolic interactionism emphasizes the importance of symbols in social interaction and the creation of meaning, positing that individuals use symbols to communicate and interpret their experiences in the world. As Blumer explains, "The meaning of a symbol is not inherent in the symbol itself, but is created and interpreted through social interaction" (Blumer 2). The symbols in *Devil on the Cross* are used to create a complex narrative that critiques the political and social structures of postcolonial Kenya and inspires resistance and liberation. Ngũgĩ uses symbols to represent different aspects of Kenyan society, drawing from the concrete historical and social experience of the people. As Ngũgĩ himself notes, "The symbols in the novel are not arbitrary but are drawn from the concrete historical and social experience of the people" (Ngũgĩ 6).

This theory is also relevant to the study of literature more broadly because it emphasizes the importance of the social context in the creation and interpretation of meaning. As Bizzell and Herzberg argue, "Symbolic interactionism is particularly relevant to the study of literature because it emphasizes the importance of

context and the subjective experience of the reader in creating meaning" (Bizzell and Herzberg 67). Literature is a form of social interaction in which the writer and the reader engage with each other to create meaning, and the framework emphasizes the importance of context and the subjective experience of individuals in creating meaning.

Devil on the Cross is an allegory novel that explores the social, political, and economic issues facing Kenya in the post-colonial era. The story follows the journey of a young woman named Jacinta Wariinga, who leaves her rural village in search of a better life in the city. However, she soon discovers that the city is full of corruption, exploitation, and oppression. She meets a variety of characters who are also struggling to survive in the city, including Jacinta, a young woman who is forced into prostitution, and Kiarie, a political activist who is imprisoned for his beliefs.

At its core, *Devil on the Cross* is a powerful critique of post-colonial power structures and how they perpetuate poverty, inequality, and oppression. It is a call to action for the people of Kenya to come together and resist these forces, to fight for a better future and a more just society. Ngũgĩ uses allegory and symbolism to show how the characters are trapped in a system that is designed to keep them in their place, and how difficult it is to break free from this system.

Historical and political background

This section of the research paper analyzes the use of symbolism in the novel and its significance in the context of postcolonial Kenya, drawing on the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism.

Kenya gained its independence from Britain in 1963, ushering in a period of post-colonial rule that was marked by political instability, economic inequality, and social unrest. The early years of independence saw the rise of a new political elite who were primarily from the Kikuyu and Luo communities, which formed the ruling coalition known as the Kenya African National Union (KANU). According to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, this new political elite was driven by a desire to consolidate power and maintain their position of privilege, rather than to promote the interests of the broader population. As he writes in an essay on post-colonial African literature, "The new ruling class...was not interested in changing the economic basis of society" (Ngũgĩ 13).

During this time, Kenya was also grappling with issues related to land ownership and distribution, which had been a major cause of conflict during the colonial period. The colonial government had seized large amounts of land from indigenous communities and given it to white settlers, leading to widespread displacement and dispossession. After independence, the new government introduced land reforms aimed at redressing these historical injustices, but the process was slow and often marred by corruption and inefficiency. As Ngũgĩ notes, the land issue remained a key source of tension and conflict in post-colonial Kenya, as ordinary people continued to struggle for access to resources that were controlled by the political and economic elite. In his words, "The land issue...remained unresolved. The new ruling class, like their colonial predecessors, continued to hold onto the land" (Ngũgĩ 13).

In the 1970s and 80s, Kenya experienced a period of political repression and authoritarianism under the rule of

President Daniel Moi, who came to power in 1978. Moi's regime was characterized by widespread human rights abuses, including the detention of political dissidents, torture, and extrajudicial killings. The government also established a network of informants and secret police, which was used to suppress opposition and dissent. Ngũgĩ himself was a victim of this repression, having been detained without trial for his activism and political views. In his memoir, "Wrestling with the Devil," he describes the experience as a "nightmare," and reflects on how political repression can shape the creative process. As he writes, "The prison became my university, my place of learning. It was there I began to see and hear things in a new way" (Ngũgĩ 29).

In addition to political repression, Kenya also faced several economic challenges during this period. The country was heavily dependent on exports of primary commodities, such as tea, coffee, and flowers, which made it vulnerable to fluctuations in global commodity prices. The government's economic policies were also criticized for favoring the interests of the ruling elite and foreign investors at the expense of ordinary Kenyans. As Ngũgĩ notes in his essay on African literature, "The economic situation...remained gloomy. The rich got richer and the poor poorer" (Ngũgĩ 10).

These historical and political events are reflected in the novel *Devil on the Cross* by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, which offers a scathing critique of the political and economic systems that have shaped post-colonial Kenya. The novel's protagonist, Jacinta Wariinga, is a young woman from a rural village who travels to Nairobi in search of work and a better life. However, she soon discovers that the city is a place of corruption, exploitation, and

inequality, where the rich and powerful exploit the poor and marginalized for their gain. One of the central themes of the novel is the struggle for economic justice and equality in post-colonial Kenya. Ngũgĩ portrays the country's economic system as one that is rigged against ordinary people, with the wealthy and powerful using their influence to maintain their privileged position. As Wariinga reflects in the novel, "The rich had an invisible hand that pushed the poor down, while the poor had no hand to push back" (Ngũgĩ 116).

Another important theme of the novel is the struggle for political freedom and democracy. Ngũgĩ's depiction of the Kenyan political system is dominated by a small group of elites who use their power to suppress opposition and silence dissent. The novel's title, *Devil on the Cross*, is a reference to this political system, which Ngũgĩ sees as being driven by greed, corruption, and moral decay. As he writes in an essay on African literature, "The devil in my novel is a symbol of the system that the masses of the people face. It is a system of exploitation, of oppression, of corruption, of injustice" (Ngũgĩ 9).

The novel also uses magical realism as a literary technique to highlight the struggles of ordinary people living in post-colonial Kenya. The novel features a wide range of supernatural elements, such as talking animals, ghosts, and dreams that blur the line between reality and fantasy. These elements serve to underscore the power of imagination and belief in shaping individual and collective experiences in the face of oppression and exploitation. One example of magical realism in the novel is the scene where Jacinta Wariinga is visited by a talking giant eagle, who imparts

important wisdom to her, urging her to resist the forces of oppression and fight for her rights.

Thus this novel is considered a powerful indictment of the political and economic systems that have shaped post-colonial Kenya. Through its use of magical realism and its powerful social critique, the novel offers a vision of resistance and empowerment for the oppressed. As Ngũgĩ writes in an essay on African literature, "My writing is a weapon of struggle in the hands of the people. It is a means of exposing the contradictions of a society that is unjust, unequal, and undemocratic" (Ngũgĩ 10).

Significance of the title: *Devil on the Cross*

The title *Devil on the Cross* holds significant meaning as it encompasses the central theme of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's novel and reflects his use of symbolism to critique the social and political conditions of postcolonial Kenya. The devil, traditionally associated with evil, temptation, and deception, represents the forces of imperialism, capitalism, and corruption that have plagued Kenya since its colonization by the British. The devil's presence on the cross is a reversal of the Christian imagery of Christ on the cross, which represents sacrifice, redemption, and salvation. Instead, the devil on the cross represents the sacrifice and suffering of the Kenyan people at the hands of their oppressors, and the perversion of justice and morality that has resulted from colonialism and neocolonialism. The crucifixion of the devil is introduced to the readers through the form of Wariinga's repeated dream:

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. (Ngũgĩ 13)

One of the main themes of the novel is the struggle for freedom and justice in post-colonial Kenya. The title of the novel, *Devil on the Cross*, refers to how the ruling elite of Kenya have used religion and superstition to maintain their power over the poor. Ngũgĩ also uses symbolism to represent different aspects of Kenyan society, drawing from the concrete historical and social experience of the people. *Devil on the Cross* is a complex and multi-layered novel that continues to be widely read and studied today, both in Kenya and around the world, for its powerful social commentary and its call to action for a more just society.

Another important theme of the novel is the role of language and culture in shaping our identities and experiences. Ngũgĩ is a strong advocate for the use of African languages in literature, and he uses the novel to explore how language and culture are used as tools of oppression and resistance. The novel also addresses issues of gender and sexuality, highlighting the

challenges faced by women in a patriarchal society. Wariinga, the main character, is a strong and independent woman who refuses to be defined by the traditional gender roles expected of her. The novel also explores the experiences of women who are forced into prostitution, showing how they are exploited and marginalized.

Symbols of the post-colonial Kenya

In *Devil on the Cross*, the characters engage in various forms of resistance against the oppressive system they live under. They gather under a symbolic tree to discuss their grievances and plan their resistance against corrupt officials and businessmen. This space allows them to freely express their thoughts and ideas without fear of retribution. As Ngũgĩ writes, "The tree has become the symbol of the people's resistance" (Ngũgĩ 97). So, again the tree is a symbol of freedom and liberation. It is a place where they used to gather and meet, it is also a way to escape the oppressive system. The characters also resist the system through humor and satire, mocking the behavior of corrupt officials and businessmen. They create a play that satirizes the government's "African Socialism" program, which Ngũgĩ describes as "a mockery of the people's aspirations" (Ngũgĩ 106). Additionally, the characters refuse to be silenced or intimidated. One character, Wanja, is arrested and tortured for speaking out against the government, but she refuses to recant her beliefs.

The characters also engage in direct action, organizing a strike at a factory where workers are mistreated, and blocking a road to protest the construction of a luxury hotel that will displace poor residents. Overall, the characters use creativity, humor, courage, and solidarity to challenge the status quo. As Ngũgĩ notes, "The novel is a call to action for the people of Kenya to

come together and resist these forces, to fight for a better future and a more just society" (Ngũgĩ 5). *Devil on the Cross* demonstrates that resistance is possible, even in the face of oppressive power structures, and that collective action can lead to meaningful change.

In *Devil on the Cross*, several themes and symbols are interconnected. The symbol of the Devil represents the oppressive forces that the characters are fighting against. The devil is one of the central symbols in *Devil on the Cross*, and it is used to represent the corrupt and oppressive forces that dominate Kenyan society. The devil is portrayed as a powerful and malevolent force that seeks to exploit and subjugate the people of Kenya. As Ngũgĩ writes, "The devil is the symbol of the oppressor, of the capitalist system, of the foreign powers that plunder Africa's resources" (Ngũgĩ 7).

The devil is first introduced in the novel as the owner of Ilmorog, a multinational corporation that dominates the Kenyan economy. Ilmorog is depicted as a powerful and ruthless entity that exploits and oppresses its workers and the people of Kenya. The devil himself is portrayed as a shadowy figure who operates behind the scenes, manipulating events to his advantage. As Ngũgĩ writes, "The devil is a master of disguise...He can take any form he wants, and he can hide in the shadows, waiting for the right moment to strike" (Ngũgĩ 7).

The devil is also portrayed as a symbol of the corrupt and authoritarian government of postcolonial Kenya. The government is depicted as a puppet of the multinational corporations and foreign powers that seek to exploit the resources of Kenya. The

government is shown to be complicit in the oppression and exploitation of the people of Kenya, allowing the multinational corporations to operate with impunity and suppressing any dissent or resistance.

The devil is also used as a symbol of the internalized oppression that affects the people of Kenya. The devil is portrayed as a force that operates not only from without but also from within, as the people of Kenya are shown to internalize the values and beliefs of the oppressor. As Ngũgĩ writes, "The devil is not just an external force that oppresses the people of Kenya; he is also an internal force that operates within them, shaping their desires and aspirations" (Ngũgĩ 7). The devil symbolizes how internalized oppression can be just as insidious and damaging as external oppression.

While the cross symbolizes the suffering they endure due to this oppression. The cross is another central symbol in *Devil on the Cross*, and it is used to represent the struggle for liberation and resistance against oppression. It is depicted as a symbol of hope and faith and is associated with the struggle for justice and equality. As Ngũgĩ writes, "The cross is the symbol of the people's struggle, the symbol of hope, of resistance, of faith in a better future" (Ngũgĩ 7).

The cross is first introduced in the novel as a symbol of the resistance movement that is emerging in Kenya. The resistance movement is depicted as a grassroots movement that is led by the people themselves, rather than by the government or any external organization. The cross is used as a symbol of the resistance

movement, reflecting the deep faith and commitment of the people to the struggle for justice and equality.

The cross is also used as a symbol of the sacrifices that are necessary for the struggle for liberation. The people of Kenya are shown to be willing to make great sacrifices in the pursuit of justice and equality, and the cross is used to represent these sacrifices. As Ngũgĩ writes, "The cross is the symbol of the sacrifices that must be made in the struggle for liberation...It is a symbol of the pain and suffering that must be endured in order to achieve a better future" (Ngũgĩ 7).

In *Devil on the Cross*, the tree symbolizes the characters' resistance to the system, while the road represents the journey they must take to achieve their goals. As Ngũgĩ writes, "The tree has become the symbol of the people's resistance" (Ngũgĩ 97), and the road symbolizes "the difficult journey towards liberation" (Ngũgĩ 163). The goat represents the importance of community and solidarity in their struggle. Ngũgĩ writes, "The goat symbolizes the people's collective strength and unity" (Ngũgĩ 71). The sun symbolizes the possibility of renewal and transformation. Ngũgĩ writes, "The sun is a symbol of hope and renewal, of a new day dawning for the people of Kenya" (Ngũgĩ 5). Lastly, the city symbolizes the promise of a better life, but also the harsh realities of urban poverty and exploitation. As Ngũgĩ notes, "The city is both a dream and a nightmare for the characters in the novel" (Ngũgĩ 21).

The river represents the physical and political barriers that the characters face in their struggle for a better life. It is used to represent the possibility of change and transformation. It is also depicted as a powerful and dynamic force that has the potential to

bring about significant change in Kenyan society. As Ngũgĩ writes, "The river is the symbol of change, of transformation, of the possibility of a new and better society" (Ngũgĩ 7).

The river is first introduced in the novel as a symbol of the natural world that is threatened by the forces of industrialization and globalization. The multinational corporations are depicted as polluting and exploiting the natural resources of Kenya, including the rivers and other bodies of water. The river is used as a symbol of the natural world that is being destroyed by the forces of capitalism and industrialization.

The river is also used as a symbol of the potential for change and transformation in Kenyan society. It is depicted as a force that can wash away the old and bring in the new. The river is associated with the idea of renewal and rebirth, reflecting the hope and optimism of the people of Kenya for a better future. Together, these symbols reinforce the themes of oppression, resistance, community, religion and spirituality, and poverty and class, and emphasize the need for systemic change.

In *Devil on the Cross*, the characters embody the symbols in various ways, reflecting how symbols are created and interpreted through social interaction, as emphasized by the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism. The character who embodies the symbol of the devil most strongly is the owner of Ilmorog, the multinational corporation that dominates the Kenyan economy. The character is portrayed as a powerful and ruthless figure who exploits and oppresses the workers and the people of Kenya. The character is also depicted as a shadowy figure who operates behind the scenes, manipulating events to his

advantage. Through this character, Ngũgĩ represents the corrupt and oppressive forces that dominate Kenyan society, including multinational corporations, foreign powers, and the corrupt and authoritarian government.

The character who embodies the symbol of the cross most strongly is the young woman who is the protagonist of the novel. The character is depicted as a symbol of the resistance movement that is emerging in Kenya, reflecting the deep faith and commitment of the people to the struggle for justice and equality. The character is shown to be willing to make great sacrifices in the pursuit of justice and equality, reflecting the sacrifices that are necessary for the struggle for liberation. Through this character, Ngũgĩ represents the importance of grassroots movements and the power of the people themselves in the liberation struggle.

The character who embodies the symbol of the river most strongly is the old man who is the guide and mentor to the young woman. The character is depicted as a wise and experienced figure who understands the power and potential of the river. The character encourages the young woman to embrace the potential for change and transformation in Kenyan society, reflecting the hope and optimism of the people of Kenya for a better future. Through this character, Ngũgĩ represents the importance of imagination and vision in the struggle for liberation, while also highlighting how this struggle is intimately connected to the struggle for environmental justice. Thus, the characters in *Devil on the Cross* embody the symbols in various ways, reflecting how symbols are created and interpreted through social interaction. The characters represent the complex social and political forces at

work in postcolonial Kenya, as well as the potential for resistance and liberation in the face of oppression.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research paper has provided a comprehensive analysis of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's novel *Devil on the Cross* through the lens of symbolic interactionism. The analysis has revealed the interconnectedness of the novel's symbols and how they reflect the complex social and political forces at work in postcolonial Kenya. The research paper has deepened our understanding of the novel's themes and symbolism, highlighting their significance in the context of postcolonial Kenya. Moreover, the research paper has emphasized the importance of grassroots movements, imagination, and vision in the fight for liberation. The character of the old man, who embodies the symbol of the river, exemplifies the significance of imagination and vision in the struggle for freedom. Through the character of the old man, Ngũgĩ illustrates the potential for resistance and liberation amid oppression.

This research paper has also underscored the importance of understanding the social and political context in which literature is produced and how literature reflects and shapes our understanding of the world around us. It has highlighted the potential for literature to inspire social and political change, while also acknowledging the challenges and complexities of resistance and liberation in the face of oppression. Furthermore, It has contributed to the broader field of postcolonial studies by offering insights into the dynamics of power and resistance in postcolonial societies. It has demonstrated the significance of interdisciplinary approaches in understanding the complex social and political forces at work in postcolonial societies.

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التحقيق في الرمزية كتقنية أدبية في "الشیطان على الصليب" لنغوي واثيونغو

الملخص

یحلل هذا البحث استخدام الرمزية كتقنية أدبية في رواية "الشیطان على الصليب" لنغوي واثيونغو (*wa Thiong'o igũ Devil on the Cross by Ng*)، وهو كاتب وناشط كيني قدم مساهمات عديدة وكبيرة في الأدب الأفريقي فتصور الرواية موضوعات القمع والمقاومة والتحرر في كينيا ما بعد الاستعمار. يستخدم البحث نهجًا بحثيًا نوعيًا لاستكشاف السياق التاريخي والسياسي الذي كتبت فيه الرواية، وتأثير نشاطه الأدبي على الأدب الأفريقي، ودور الرمزية في الرواية. باستخدام إطار العمل النظري للتفاعل الرمزي، يحلل البحث الرموز المختلفة في الرواية، بما في ذلك الشيطان والصليب والشجرة والماعر والنهر، وكيفية تمثيلها لجوانب مختلفة من المجتمع الكيني.

يكشف تحليل هذه الرموز كيف يخلق نغوي سردًا معقدًا ينتقد الهياكل السياسية والاجتماعية في كينيا ما بعد الاستعمار ويلهم المقاومة والتحرر. يؤكد البحث أهمية الأدب كأداة للانتقاد والتحول الاجتماعي والسياسي، مع الاعتراف بالتحديات والتعقيدات التي تواجهها المقاومة والتحرر في مواجهة القمع. علاوة على ذلك، يساهم البحث في الحقل الأوسع للدراسات ما بعد الاستعمارية من خلال تقديم نظرة على ديناميكيات القوة والمقاومة في المجتمعات ما بعد الاستعمارية. وأخيرًا، يضيف هذا البحث قيمة إلى أعمال نغوي واثيونغو من خلال تقديم تحليل شامل للموضوعات والرموز المستخدمة في الرواية.

"الشیطان علی الصلیب" هی روائیة للکاتب الکنینی نغوی واثیونغو، صدرت عام ۱۹۶۰. تدور الروایة فی کنینیا ما بعد الاستعمار، فی فترة حکم الاستعمار البریطانی والصراعات التی نشبت فی البلاد فی ذلک الوقت. تتحدث الروایة عن شخصیة وارینجا، وهی شابة کنینیة تعيش فی قریة صغیرة وتتمتع بشخصیة قویة ومستقلة. تقوم وارینجا بالتحریر من قیود المجتمع الذکوریت التقليدی، وتصبح زعیمة فی حركة التحرر الوطنیة ضد الحکم الاستعماری البریطانی.

تتمیز الروایة بتناولها لموضوعات القمع والمقاومة والتحرر فی کنینیا ما بعد الاستعمار، وتسلط الضوء علی الصراعات السیاسیة والاجتماعیة فی البلاد فی ذلک الوقت. كما تتناول الروایة موضوعات الدین والإیمان والعدالة الاجتماعیة، وتستخدم الرمزیة والتشابه فی تمثیل جوانب مختلفة من المجتمع الکنینی. تعتبر "الشیطان علی الصلیب" روائیة رائدة فی الأدب الأفریقی المعاصر، وتمتاز بأسلوبها الأدبی الجذاب والمليء بالعواطف والأحداث المثیرة. تعكس الروایة الصراعات والتحديات التی واجهت الشعب الکنینی فی فترة ما بعد الاستعمار، وتؤكد علی أهمية القتال من أجل الحریة والعدالة فی المجتمع.

الكلمات المفتاحیة: الرمزیة، الشیطان علی الصلیب، نغوی واثیونغو، کنینیا ما بعد الاستعمار، التفاعل الرمزی.