



Facets and Functions of Linguistic Displacement in Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood*: A Functional Structuralist Perspective.

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Abstract – This paper analyses the various uses of linguistic displacement or time game in *Petals of Blood* (1977) in order to show how they have helped Ngũgĩ waThiong'oexpress his vision of time and history and to project a socialist revolution in Kenya towards 1978-9. It uses the functional structuralist approach, based on the identification and critical analysis of discourse-strings as related to the expression of time by the omniscient observer or narrator and characters in order to point out instances of the use of cultural, psychological and historical time and their inclination to un-date or mis-date and mix-date, andto show the gap between the writer's discourse and story time.

Key words: linguistic displacement, story time, discourse time, a-temporality, polychronic time.

Résumé – Cet article analyse les différents usages du déplacement linguistique ou 'jeu de temps' dans le roman '*Petals of Blood*' de l'écrivain kényan Ngũgĩ-wa-Thiong'o pour démontrer comment les manipulations du temps lui ont permis d'exprimer sa vision du temps et de l'histoire et de projeter une révolution marxiste. Il s'appuie sur la théorie structuraliste fonctionnelle, basée sur l'identification et l'analyse critique de séquences de discours se rapportant à l'expression du temps par le narrateur omniscient et les personnages afin de ressortir les différents aspects de temps (culturel, psychologique et historique) et la tendance de ceux-ci à 'ne pas dater', ou à 'mal dater' et 'pluri dater' les événements, et de révéler la différence entre le temps de l'histoire et le temps du récit.

Mots clés : déplacement linguistique, temps de l'histoire, temps du récit, atemporalité, temps polychronic.

1. Introduction

Among other properties of human language, linguistic displacement plays a prominent role and can greatly contribute to the creative function or use of language. The Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ-wa-Thiong'o has variously resorted to this language resource to somewhat create a time game in his novel *Petals of Blood* (1977). Indeed, in this novel, there are many cases of inaccurate and multiple time-references to the same event and date suspensions that are worth exploring to uncover the writer's and his characters' use of time and the motivation for such use.

This paper, thus, aims at analyzing or decoding the time-game created by the writer to show how it helped his characters (Munira, Karega, Wanja, Abdulla and the Lawyer) express their views of the passage of time and to refer

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other real characters and events as if they were fictional ones. It is divided into two main sections. The first briefly overviews theoretical concepts (linguistic displacement or time game in narrative, functional structuralist approach, contextualization) with a view to showing the link between them. In the second section, we (i.e. the authors) have identified and analyzed instances of temporal displacement, confusion and how the passage of time is lived and expressed by Thiong'o's narrative agents (3.1). As it is a widely shared view that the linguistics-oriented study of literature is both an act of description and interpretation, the interpretative activity would be impossible without the placement of the findings arrived at from the analysis into their situational, cultural and ideological context (Malinowski, 1923; Firth, 1958; Halliday, 1985a; Eggins, 1994/2004; Fischer, 1963; Fowler, 1986). That is why we have devoted section 3.2 to the recapitulation, contextualisation and interpretation of our findings from section 3.1.

2. Linguistic Displacement, Functional Structuralist Approach and Contextualisation.

The term '*displacement*' is used by linguists to refer to the language feature that allows the user to speak/write about events that are remote from present perceptions and locations. Language can be used to talk about past events and to make projections about the future, to talk about the past, or the future, as if it were the present (Aitchison, 2003: 16; Yule, 1988: 17). This means that a writer/speaker may mediate to present or structure or organize events, not in their natural order of occurrence, but in his/her own chosen order in order to highlight a particular message. This mediation is achieved through what discourse analysts call '*narrative structure*' or '*discourse*' (Uspensky, 1973; Fowler, 1975, 1981; Wellek and Warren, 1979; Genette, 1980; Rimmon-Kenan, 1986).

Indeed, though the Russian formalists had initially used a word that translates into '*plot*' for it, discourse exponents later adopted the phrase '*narrative structure*' or '*discourse*' to refer to the *plot*, i.e., the order of appearance of the events in a work of fiction, be it clockwise/chronologically, in the form of flash-back, flash forward, or anticlockwise (Wellek and Warren, 1979: 218). In other words, '*narrative structure*' or '*discourse*' is the artistically ordered presentation of events, which generally involves temporal displacement: starting from the end or the middle, backward and forward movements, embedment characters' stories within the main story...etc. Narrative is usually divided into two: *story and discourse*. In simpler terms, '*story*' is *what* is depicted in the narrative and '*discourse/narrative structure*' is *how* it is depicted, that is, how language is structured to express events. The relationship of

narrative structure (i.e. narrative discourse patterns) to story (i.e. a series of events) is expressed by Culler (1981) as follows:

If narrative is defined as the representation of a series of events, then the analyst must be able to identify these events, and they come to function as a nondiscursive, nontextual given, something which exists prior to and independently of narrative representation and which the narrative then reports....The analyst must assume that the events reported *have a true order, for only then can he/she describe the narrative presentation as a modification or effacement of the order of events*. In applying these assumptions about the world to the texts of narrative, we posit a level of structure which, by functioning as a non-textual given, enables us to treat everything in the discourse as a way of interpreting, valuing and presenting this non-textual substratum (pp.171-2, my italics).

It can be noticed here that structuralists place more emphasis on *how* the events are presented, the order of their presentation (Halliday, 1985; Eggins, 1994). This becomes relevant to Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood*, as one can notice some temporal displacement of reality events in his fiction and transposition of real events into fictional ones by his narrative agents.

In addition to the structuralists' emphasis on structure, it must be pointed out that the term "*Structuralism*" in itself has proved to be controversial and polysemic (Barthes, 1963/72, Mukařovk , 1964; Culler, 1981; Eagleton, 1983, etc). At this point, the initial object of the structuralist approach, as Culler defines it, in his foreword to Genette (1980), needs calling to mind:

The structuralist study of literature...sought not to interpret literature but to investigate its structures and devices....The project was to develop a poetics which would stand to literature as linguistics stands to language and which therefore would not seek to explain what individual works mean but would attempt to make explicit the system of figures and conventions that enable works to have the forms and meanings they do" (p.8).

This entails that the approach was not that concerned with meanings of stories but rather with mechanisms used and their interpretation. This is what Genette unequivocally means in stating:

Literature had been regarded as 'a message without a code' for such a long time that it became necessary to regard it momentarily as 'a code without a message'...the Structuralist method consists in an analysis of the 'immanent structures' of the work in contrast with what Wellek and Warren (1962) call the 'extrinsic' approach" (Jefferson and Roney, 1982: 87).

However, the concept has evolved from the purely descriptive brand to a more functional one; the adjective "*functional*" being related to "*functions of language*" (Halliday, 1985a) and to "*functionalism*".Indeed, pioneered by Malinowski (1923/46), the "*the functionalist approach*" is interested in establishing the systematic uniqueness of each culture by stressing the specific functions of its institutions and focusing on the differences between cultures rather than their similarities (Oyekan, 1993).As a result, this '*functional structuralist approach*,' later renamed '*Systemic Functional Linguistics*' in the Hallidayan framework, argues that language is structured to express at least

three meanings or metafunctions and that those meanings are influenced by the social, cultural and ideological contexts in which they are exchanged (Halliday, 1985a; Eggins, 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). As such, an analysis drawing on this dual approach would entail the identification and analysis of relevant linguistic structures and features in order to reveal their different meanings, then the interpretation(s) of those meanings through their contextualisation (social, cultural, ideological) for a better appreciation of them (Malinowski, 1923; Firth, 1958; Halliday, 1985a; Eggins, 1994; Fischer, 1963; Fowler, 1986).

Much earlier, Malinowski (1923/46) expresses the need to understand the cultural context in which language is used as follows: *“The study of any language, spoken by people who live under conditions different from our own and possess a different culture, must be carried out in conjunction with the study of their culture and their environment”* (p.306). Specifically, Allen (1975) puts the culture-literature link as follows: *“Literature is a facet of a culture. Its significance can be best understood in terms of its culture and its purpose is meaningful only when the assumption it is based on are understood and accepted”* (p.111). Regarding the social or situational context, Fischer (1963), just like Firth (1958) and many others, stresses that the ‘social element’, i.e., the social context in which the work is written, is very crucial, as he writes:

An analysis of style, however intelligent it may be and however brilliant its insights into specific problems and details, is bound to fail unless it recognizes that context –that is to say, in the last instance, the social element –is the decisive style-forming factor in art (p.152).

He suggests that the critic should *“study the social conditions, movements and conflicts of the period, the class relationships and struggles and the resulting ideas”* (p.151). As for the context of ideology, it is made up of a set of beliefs, values, perspectives and categories by reference to which a person comprehends the world (Eggins, 1994; Fowler, 1986; Ngara, 1986). It is sometimes even more important because whatever the situation and culture we are engaged in, our use of language is always influenced by our ideological perspective, the particular angle of vision we adopt faced with a particular issue.

After briefing these relevant issues (linguistic displacement, functional Structuralist approach, contextualisation), we now turn to the analysis of the writer’s time game.

3. Facets and Functions of Linguistic Displacement in *Petals of Blood*.

3.1. Analysis of Temporal Displacement in the Novel.

Linguistic displacement operates in the novel through various aspects: miss-dating (i.e. giving unclear or wrong dates to events), mix-dating (i.e. giving different dates to the same event), un-dating (i.e. reluctance to date events), time

acceleration/deceleration, and polychronism (i.e. a view of time that allows for interruptions, delays and accelerations), etc.

The first visible time reference in the novel relates to the hanging of Nding'uri, Karega's elder brother and Abdulla's cousin and childhood friend:

(1) "Munira was really shocked when **in 1953 or so** he heard that Mariamu's son had been caught carrying weapons for Mau Mau and was subsequently hanged" (p.15, our emphasis).

Later, the reader is told that Abdulla has been with Nding'uri the day they have been arrested but has had a close call into the forest. Then, he identifies Kimeria, the man who has betrayed them, as one of those eating the fruits of Uhuru, while he, who has lost everything in the struggle, is denied a job (p.255). His bitterness at this injustice makes Abdulla escape into Ilmorog: '*...I wanted to go **deep deep** into the country where I would have no reminder of so bitter betrayal'* (p.255). Then, what does his (2) "*A **sixteen-year mist** had cleared*" (p.316) refer to? If it refers to his betrayal by Kimeria, as computations show thereafter, then it traces the betrayal back to 1963 (1979-16). This creates a 10- year-gap between the two references: 1953 and 1963; between the narrator's and Abdulla's.

Indeed, there seems to be some mental time-acceleration/deceleration for the characters; and the omniscient narrator or writer seems to have fictionally transposed the clash between real time and psychological time. This acceleration is seen in how Karega in (3a) and Munira in (3b) refer to the time of their respective expulsion from Siriana:

(3) a. "I left there...I was expelled....*about a year and half back...almost two years...about three years*. Time flies" (POB: 167, emphasis added).

b. "We were expelled around *-I think it was in 1946* -because it was the age-group called Cugini/Mburaki" (POB: 330, emphasis added)

c. "their fears and troubles took place against a background of tremendous changes and troubles as can be *seen by the names given to the age-sets between Nyabani and Hitira: Mwomboko...Karanji, Boti, Ngunga, Muthuu, Ng'araguYaMianga, Bamiti, Gicina Bangi, (and) Cugini-Mburaki*" (POB:27, emphasis added).

While temporal confusion and acceleration are clearly visible in (3a), it can be noticed in (3b) that Munira has drawn on cultural time unit, that is, the age-group, to determine or justify the Western time, the year. This revelation may partly indicate that part of the reason behind the relative inaccuracy of time reference is the use of cultural time unit to deduce historical time. Though it looks paradoxical for somebody from a Christian family, the use of cultural

time, as a denominator for Western time, seems to have been the basis of Munira's ignorance of his birth day and month and his inability to identify his zodiac sign (p.271.)

This use of age-group as time reference tells the reader something culture-specific about the Gikuyu. They do not, in the past at least, keep birth records; a Gikuyu birth was not viewed as signifying the arrival of a single individual but as that of a whole generation. In addition, their memory of the past did not depend on events in an individual's life but rather on salient events that befell the community on a generation, such as a severe drought, famine or a battle against an enemy. As a result, the meaninglessness of European names (POB: 125, 177) somewhat comes from the situational name-giving practice among the Gikuyu. In this society, names somehow function as historical record-keeper. They are given by age-groups to refer to historical events and others that mark the age-grade (Kenyatta, 1938). It can be seen (3b) earlier how the age-group, which is a cultural time-marker, is used to determine the Western time. This temporal and historical function of the Gikuyu names is illustrated (3c) above, as it is implied that the age-grade names reflect the Gikuyu people's troubles and crises during World War II.

The time acceleration-deceleration, which can translate into the African notion of time-elasticity, can be seen in how Wanja refers back in (5a) to the Theng'eta party and how Munira sees in (4d) his three-day absence from Ilmorog and his time in prison in (4c):

(4) a. "You see how I talk **as if** all this was **ages ago**. Yet only **a few years...yes, a few years**" (POB: 38, emphasis added).

b. "I used to work...it sounds **so long ago**...I am talking about **last night**, but it feels **like**

many years ago to me" (POB: 97, our emphasis).

c. "Do you remember the night of Theng'eta drinking? *It's a long time, a year ago*" (POB: 249, emphasis added).

d. "He *felt as if he had been away three years instead of only three days*" (POB: 106, our emphasis).

e. "Time was a *vast blankness* without a beginning, middle and end, no tick-tock-tick-tock divisions, *no* constant lengthening and shortening of shadows, no human altercations of laughter and the to-and-fro activity which ordinarily made him aware of *time's measure and passage*" (POB: 191, italics added).

f. "Her warmth gradually powered his lungs, ribs: *life quickened* in him. He felt this sharp pain of *death-birth-death-birth* and he tightened his left hand round her right-hand fingers" (POB: 229-230; italics added).

In (4a), an event that has taken place about six or seven years earlier looks psychologically close enough. This event – her being lured out of school, raped, impregnated and rejected by Kimeria and her subsequent dropping of her child in a lavatory – seems to still be so fresh in her mind that she still lives it in a near past. This psychological proximity may be justified, as it is the event that has made her what she is. On the other hand, just as yesterday looks so many years in (4b), one year looks such a long time for Wanja in (4c), and three days looks so long as three years for Munira (4d).

In (4e), however, the lengthening and shortening of time is also seen as a psycho-logical thing which is denied to Munira who has gone through similar impressions (i.e.; his imprisonment), as other dimensions to time measurement will show shortly. In (4e), it is added that shadow length serves as a measure of time, so do clock units (seconds, minutes, hours), and interpersonal or social contacts. Such notion of time adequately reflects the situational context of Munira, locked up as he is in a cell, where there are no clock units, no sun beams, and no human contacts for him to appreciate the passage of time, be it in the Western/modern way (clock units), or in the traditional one – the sun's position and brightness – or interpersonally or socially. In (5f), even though life is used as a substitute for time, there appears another good illustration of the incremental effect of its passage, as reflection of the emotional state of the character. The life-death-life-death sensation may as well be an expression of the young character's succumbing to Wanja's warmth and sensuality, as the impressively sensational sexual ritual between them draws close, or it may be that of the writer's notion of cyclicity of life and time.

The psychological time acceleration can also be seen in the difference in the time units used in the novel. Indeed, before 'the fatal Saturday' (p.314), time is predominantly measured in larger units such as '*years*', '*months*' and '*moons*': '*twelve years*' (p.5), '*two moons*' (p.9), '*six months*' (p. 21; p.304), '*ten years*' (p.195, p.302), '*five years*', etc. However, after that Saturday, there is a shift to smaller time units like '*weeks, days, hours, minutes, etc*' and the novel ends with '*tomorrow*': '*that Saturday*' (p.2), '*six o'clock*' (p.4), '*last night*' (p.5), '*the morning*' (p.300), '*ten days earlier*' (p.300), '*a whole week*' (p.314), '*tonight*', '*tonight*', '*at noon*', '*today*' (p.315), '*tonight*', '*this Saturday*', '*tonight*', '*not tomorrow...not the day after...but tonight*' (316), '*at about seven*' (p.317), '*the tenth day*' (p.319, p.320), '*the last day*' (p.329), '*a few minutes*' (p.330), '*on the crucial Friday*', '*tonight*', '*a whole week*', '*Saturday evening*' (p.332), '*a minute*', '*tomorrow*' (p.344), '*tomorrow*', '*tomorrow*', '*tomorrow*' (p.345). This shift from

larger time units to smaller ones creates some sense of urgency to end the socio-economic inequalities in independent Kenya. Indeed, the move toward the smallest possible unit of time does give the impression of a bomb timed to blast without delay. As this 'tomorrow/future' is 'a Chui-free, Nderi-free and Kimeria-free one' (p.327, 344), this use of time somehow serves an ideological function. Indeed, Chui and Nderi are found to be fictional reflections of Jomo Kenyatta (Amoussou, 2011). A future free of them means a Kenyatta-free one.

Although the psychological time works almost similarly with the other characters, there is an impression that Munira's case is more related to character than to pessimism. In (5) "*Munira relished twilight as a prelude to that awesome shadow*" (p.71), the narrator somehow hints to the effect of season/time on the character's mood. Indeed, Munira's pleasurable anticipation/enjoyment of twilight somehow expresses his isolationist character, as not many people would anticipate the coming of a new dawn, a new beginning and symbol of hope, rather than that of a night. Perhaps, the best way to sum up Munira's character is to contend that he has been "*born under a wandering star*", as in (6) below, he associates himself with all the star signs:

(6) He did not know the day or the month of his birth but every reading *seemed* to apply to him. He read:

- CAPRICORN, Dec.12-Jan.20: 'You can be turned on quickly by others who are unique in some outstanding way.' He *thought he must have been born or conceived under Capricorn*.

- SAGITTARIUS, Nov. 23-Dec.21: 'Since you tend to fall in love with love, it is not surprising that at times you are more or less blinded to the reality of many situations and people: being something of a dreamer when it comes to matters of love, you have a tendency to fantasise most of your love and sexual experience.' He *was sure he had* been born under Sagittarius.

- Gemini, May 22-June 21: 'Once you develop an emotional interest in someone, you are inclined to persist until you are totally accepted or totally rejected.' Gemini *was really* his star. So that depending on his moods, he variously imagined himself born or conceived under every star: practically every prediction and every advice *seemed* to apply to him. Sometimes he would try to act on different starry guides, hoping that one at least *might* prove true and prophetic. But nothing *seemed* to happen (p.271, our emphasis)

As the high-level modalisers '*must, was sure, was really*' show, Munira is convinced that he has been born under all the star signs, which is really impossible. However, with the narrator's low-level modalisers '*seemed, seemed*,

might, seemed', it is implied that Munira is just a dreamer or fantasist who has some problem facing the realities around him.

One of the most noticeable instances of temporal displacement in the form of temporal confusion comes in Munira's and Karega's using three different time references to the same event, i.e., Karega's short stay in Ilmorog. On meeting the young man drunkenly fighting in a bar in Limuru, Munira uses two time references in (7a) and (7c) to the event while Karega, from the narrator's point of view, uses a different one in (7b), and Wanja still a totally different unit in (7d):

(7) a. "How could I forget that this drunken wreck had only **eighteen months** or so back -though it *felt like ages past* -been at my hideout in Ilmorog and I had let him go?" (p.103) (our emphasis)

b. "Things have changed", Karega said thoughtfully, remembering their last encounter in Wanja's hut **six months back**. "I should say times have changed," he added (p.108) (our emphasis).

c. "He remembered his strange conversation with Karega **almost two years back** and his own thoughts about an unevenly cultivated garden" (p.83) (our emphasis).

d. "*One day* you say don't touch drinks. You drink milk or water. Yet *the next time*, you are drunk and fighting in a bar" (p.126) (our emphasis).

The fact that the characters are drunk when utterances (7a) and (7b) are made may partly account for the referential clash. In Munira's case, however, he has been drinking from bar to bar to forget the many discoveries he has made during such a short trip (his father's change, Wanja's experiences, his own ones at the tea-party...etc). He, thus, establishes proportionality between the number of events and the amount of time, as (4d) shows earlier. Intertextually, this drink-to-forget episode finds a parallel in waThiong'o's visit to the same town, i.e., Limuru, in 1971, while he was already writing the novel:

In 1971 I returned to Kenya from a one year spell teaching African literature... at Evanston, Illinois. I looked at the tired bewildered faces of people. I went to places where people went to drown their memories of yesterday and their hopes and fears for tomorrow in drinking. I visited various bars in Limuru, drinking, singing and dancing and trying not to see or to remember...." (Ngugi-wa-Thiong'o, 1972: 49).

As it appears, Munira's bewilderment and escape into drinking from place to place (1969) becomes some fictional evocation of Ngugi-wa-Thiong'o's similar experience (1971), which creates both a two-year time-gap and a reversal of order between the fictional time and the real one.

As the characters (Munira, Karega and Wanja) get drunk to forget, it can be claimed that, in that state, the notion of time escapes them and they have the impression of a quick passage of time: "*Life quickened in unwilled expectation*" (p.128). However, the omniscient narrator's time reference can be taken as the near right one; his omniscience entails that he has been present when Karega first visits Wanja and is still present when he gets drunk. This referential accuracy can also be witnessed in the first date '1946' in (8a) below, where there is no hesitation in dating Munira's exclusion from Siriana. However, the phrase '*the last six years or so*' in (8a) lacks precision. In (8b), Munira gives a rather vague, different time-frame or range:

(8)a. "After leaving Siriana in **1946**, he had taught in many schools around Limuru....and for ***the last six years or so*** at Manguo. Hence he felt his heart quicken at his return to a seat of his past." (POB: 13, our emphasis).

b. "He had not quite realized that a school incident in ***the early forties*** could be so alive, could still carry the pain of a fresh wound" (POB:29) (emphasis added).

The use of the time reference '*the early forties*' sends the incident 1 to 5 years back (1940-45), rather than the late 40s implied by the 1946-reference. Here, the reader gets a glimpse of Munira's psychological attitude to the past. While he tries to evade his past, events keep reminding him of it, making him relive it in the present and feel the same pain as in the past.

There are other time references that help to locate the occurrence of some significant events in the novel, namely the journey to the city, the Theng'eta party, the Karega's dismissal from his teaching position, and the arson. For instance, two days after the party, the reader is told that Munira (9) "picked out *Not Yet Uhuru*" (p.239), a book published by Oginga Odinga in 1968. This means that Karega is sacked from Ilmorog Primary School after 1968. Later, Wanja, trying to persuade Munira to hire Karega back, dates the party back to one-year: (10) "*Do you remember the night of Theng'eta drinking?...It's a long time, a year ago*" (p.249). This means that Karega has left Ilmorog at the earliest in 1969, a year after the party, which has taken place on December 31, as Wanja wakes up the following morning with (11) '*Happy New Year*' (p.230). Having spent two years there by then, it can be argued that the KCO tea party, which takes place two years earlier, dates back to 1967 at the earliest. If Munira has spent two years in Ilmorog before then, it can then be deduced that both Abdulla and he have come there in the early 1965. As a result, if the arson takes place twelve years later, then the earliest year for its occurrence is 1977. Karega, therefore, comes back to Ilmorog in 1974/75 (5 years after his departure) and, having spent two years back there before the arson, it can be assumed to take place in 1976/7. In that case, it can rightly be claimed that the murdered top African

politician a year before his departure is Tom Mboya, murdered in 1969. On p.247, Munira is shown to be writing the annual report, 5 years after his arrival, that is, in 1969 at the earliest or 1970 at the latest. And that is the year he suggests that Karega leave the school, and gets him sacked a year later (1970/1971). If the latter has spent 5 years out of Ilmorog, then he comes back around 1974/5, to spend two other years there before the arson, which can then be said to take place in 1976/7. What is more, when Abdulla makes a partnership proposal to Karega just after his dismissal by the Munira-Mzigo duo, we get still another time reference that fixes the reader more on the 1970/71 potential above: **(12)**“Wanja looked at Abdulla and she remembered a similar offer to her *five years back*” (p.252). As there is some likelihood about 1964/5 as the year Munira, Abdulla, and Wanja have come to Ilmorog, a move forward (1964/5+5) fixes 1969/70 at the earliest as the year Karega leaves Ilmorog.

In addition, on the trip to the city, another time clue is given through Nderi's introspection that helps the reader to identify the period of the KCO-oath initiative: **(13)**“But his argument had been given substance by the unexpected effect of the assassination of the Indian and later of a top African politician. Suddenly, even those top few who opposed it were for the idea” (p.186). Having earlier suspected the murdered top African politician to be Tom Mboya (July 5, 1969), it ensues from the quote above that the Mass Tea Party has become official in 1969, and the trip has taken place in the late 1969 or early 1970 more surely; and if Munira and Wanja **(14)**“have been there (i.e., in Ilmorog) for over *two years*” (p.181), i.e., a bit fewer than 3 years, the earlier suspicion that they have come to Ilmorog in 1964/5 becomes shattered; the earliest year for their arrival becomes 1966/7. This discovery alters another claim earlier made that the arson takes place in 1976/7; this becomes at the earliest in 1979 now (1969 +10). However, it confirms three earlier claims: the journey (1970); Karega's dismissal and departure from Ilmorog (1970/71), the assassination of the lawyer (1975/6). Only now does Abdulla's ‘*sixteen-year mist had cleared*’ (p.316) become intelligible. It does not refer to Abdulla's betrayal by Kimeria (1953), as this creates a 10-year-gap between the narrator's time and the character's one (1979-16= 1963). As it turns out, the ‘*sixteen-year mist*’ stands for the ‘*sixteen-year-old independence*’ (1979 -16=1963) and the ‘*mist*’ stands for his ‘*illusion*’, the clearing of which becomes his ‘*disillusion*’ about Uhuru expectations.

The time of the journey gets still further likelihood from another time reference by the village elders: “in *the middle of January*” (POB: 80), that is, a bit before the journey:

(15) a. ‘It could be. I hear they might be sending **travellers to the moon**. Is it possible?’ (POB: 79, our emphasis)

b. 'Is it true that these people are trying to walk to the moon, Mwalimu?' (POB: 81, our emphasis)

If these references can serve any yardstick, it can be deduced that the characters are in January 1969 when these utterances are made. As a matter of fact, the travel/walk to the moon refers to the landing of Neil Armstrong on the moon with Apollo 11 on July 20/21, 1969. This confirms that Munira arrives in Ilmorog in 1966/7 (1969-2), that the assassinated Indian communist is Pinto Pio Gama (February 24, 1965), that the assassinated top African politician is Tom Mboya (July 5, 1969), that the Tea Party takes place in 1969, and that the journey takes place in late 1969/early 1970.

A good temporal clue about the journey can also be derived from the security agent posted at Rev. Jerrod's gate at the Blue Hills:

(16) "Suddenly two dogs came rushing toward them. The volume of their combined barking was enough to make one halt and take to his heels. But a man emerged from behind a pine tree and ordered them to halt. A watchman, they thought: he had a blue uniform and a white cap on which the words **Securicor Guards** were written" (p.146).

Digging into Kenya's security history, one will find out that the inscription on the guardsman's garment is the style of the London-based *British Securicor Guards Ltd*, the biggest of the 90 security firms then operating in Kenya. Its Kenyan subsidiary, *Securicor Kenya Limited*, was formed in 1969 (Ngugi-wa-Thiong'o, 1981). As such, it can be pointed out that the journey to the city has taken place at the earliest in 1969. This means that Munira's arrival in Ilmorog 2 or 3 years earlier can be rightly set in 1966/7, as confirmed earlier, and the arson can be confirmed to take place in 1978/9, which entails that it is a predictive event. What is more, while writing his statement in detention, Munira, after reading the press statement by MP Nderi, remembers the journey: (17) "He recalled the picture of the MP *ten years back pontificating in a solemn suit and tie....miraculous intervoention*" (p.195). This confirms that the journey must have taken place in 1969, whether we trace backward from 1979 when the arson takes place or forward from 1966/7 when Munira arrives in Ilmorog.

From the analysis of time use, it can also be deduced the murdered Lawyer in the novel is J.M. Kariuki, or at least is characterized after him. Indeed from (18) below, the reader can easily infer the difference of character between the Lawyer and other lawyers and identify him further with J. M. Kariuki:

(18) Karega expected to see an old man with heavy-rimmed glasses or something and grey hairs with striped rousers, a waistcoat, a hat, and an umbrella by his side. But he saw a man, *maybe in his forties*, but with a

white short-sleeved shirt and a simple tie, looking *too young to be a lawyer and to have that crowd waiting to see him. On a closer look*, Karega noticed that his face had a touch of weariness, and his eyes were restless *as if* troubled by an inner light, an inner consciousness, weighed down, *it seemed*, by a burden of abundant knowledge (pp. 158-9) (our emphasis).

While the modalisers '*maybe, as if, seemed*' point to the focaliser's subjectivity regarding the youngness of the lawyer, the time-reference '*in his forties*' helps to show that the Lawyer is an age-mate to Kariuki (March 21, 1929-March 2, 1975), who was about **41/42**, when the journey takes place (1969/70). In the Lawyer's speech in (19) below, two time references are made:

(19) Then *Peter Poles shot dead an African who had thrown a stone at his dogs*. The trial raised a lot of interest in Siriana. We were all happy when he was condemned to death....Fraudsham called a school assembly. He argued about the need to be sensitive to animals...did we want to be merciless like those Russians who, in the face of world protest, sent *a dog, poor Laika*, into space to die?(pp.164-5, emphasis added).

The killing of Kamame Musunge by Peter Harold Poole took place in **1960** and the Russian-launched Sputnik II carrying the dog Laika on **November 3, 1957**. This means that the Lawyer has been in Siriana up to 1960 and his return from America just after independence, after graduating in law, can be situated around 1964/5. Not only does this time reference testify to the young age of the Lawyer, but it fixes his age at about the *late forties*, which is close the 46-years of age when Kariuki was murdered (1975 -1929= 46.)

The similarity between the fictional lawyer and Kariuki surfaces also in the coincidence the circumstances of their death. Kariuki was taken to a valley in Ngong Hills and shot dead and left for hyenas to eat (Thiong'o, 1981). The lawyer's murder is similarly described:

(20) "It was at this time that we heard the terrible news. He had been taken from a big hotel and taken a mile or so from the Blue Hills and was shot and left for hyenas to eat" (p. 297).

The phrase '*this time*' in (20) refers thus to '*March 1975*', as the valley where the Lawyer is killed is located in "*Ngong Hills*" (p.161). This setting correspondence reinforces the age- similarity earlier suspected between Kariuki and the Lawyer. In (21) below, the Lawyer uses a metaphor that carries some time reference:

(21)'You see...they can't fault me on education or on professional qualifications. They can't fault me on involvement in the struggle. They can't fault me on property. *They can't say I am a Kaggia*. So I can speak

fearlessly for the poor and for land and property reforms (POB:301) (ouremphasis).

The pun or metaphor “they can’t say *I am a Kaggia*” evokes a real political event in Kenya. Indeed, on *April 11, 1965*, Kenyatta visited Kadura when he launched a bitter attack on Bildad Kaggia, his former fellow-detainee, only 17 months after independence:

We were together with **Paul Ngei** in jail. If you go to Ngei’s home, he has planted a lot of coffee and other plants. What have you done for yourself? If you go to **Kubai**’s home, he has a big house and a nice shamba. **Kaggia**, what have you done for yourself? We were together with **Kungu Karumba** in jail, now he is running his own buses. What have you done for yourself?” (Cited in Thiong’o, 1981: 89, our emphasis)

It comes out clearly that, for Kenyatta, the accumulation of wealth is the sole criterion of social and political worth, and that the sole reward from involvement in the struggle was that it became the iron-clad opportunity for personal gain, and anyone who does not do so is viewed as being lazy or stupid or a traitor. This attack thus becomes a historical twist, as it came from a man who, in 1947, about the age of 50, did not have a proper house of his own and who could build one only out of raised funds (Murray-Brown, 1972: 230). In *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), a similar evocation of significant political events can be seen in this description of Harry Thuku, an early Kenyan political figure:

(22) *Long ago*, Young Harry had also been detained, and sentenced to live alone on an island in the Indian Ocean for seven years. He had come back a broken man, who promised eternal co-operation with the oppressors, denouncing the Party he had helped to build. *What happened yesterday could happen today. The same thing, over and over again, through history* (p.92) (emphasis added).

It must first be noticed that there is some temporal displacement about the Harry Procession. In actuality, the event took place on March 15-16, 1922, and Harry spent 9 years in detention, but in fiction it is referred to as the ‘1923 Procession’ and he is said to have spent 7 years in jail. Though this time-alteration can be understood as an attempt to belittle Harry’s suffering in the struggle because of his divided loyalties, it may also result from the dichotomy between the term sentenced (7 years) and the term actually served (9 years). Despite such temporal deviance, Harry’s shift from people’s politics to a loyalist, in this context where people are doubtful about Jomo’s position, is a likely indicator of a possible cooperation of Jomo with the White man. Indeed, the last two sentences quote (22) above hint to the possibility of a new Kenyatta, too. Indeed, as the temporal phrases ‘*yesterday; today; through history*’ suggest,

this use of time helps to point to the fact that history can be cyclical, it repeats itself as the Jomo's divided loyalty is seen as an evocation of Thuku's.

On the visit by the hypocritical Christian duo before Munira's trial, we still have a time clue that betrays the writer's attempt to make us believe he is using psychological or fictional time rather than the historical one:

(23) Do you remember that in 1952 you refused to take the Mau-Mau oath for African Land and Freedom? And yet in 196--, after Independence, you took an oath to divide the Kenya people and to protect the wealth in the hands of only a few. What was the difference? Was an oath not an oath? Kneel down, old man, and ask for the forgiveness of Christ (pp.341-2) (emphasis added).

The writer's disinclination to name and date accurately is visible: 'in 196--'. This might technically be seen as a show of naïveté. Otherwise, one can hardly understand why someone like Munira, who is to be death-sentenced and has nothing to lose, should refrain from dating adequately in (23) above.

Finally, polychronism seems to be the basis of linguistic displacement in the novel. In actuality, some cultures view time as monochronic (m-time) while others see it as polychronic (p-time). M-time is characterized by its linearity/irreversibility-'The clock can't be put back'/'You never bathe twice in the same river'-and is experienced as being close to tangible as can be seen in verb phrases like 'to save time, to waste time, to spend time, to lose time, to bide by time or to stick with time'. As for P-time, it is featured by the simultaneous occurrence of many things and, in the words of Hall and Hall (1990), by "a great involvement with people" (p. 172). The two views find their expressions in these two sayings: while for most Americans 'time is money; run therefore and save both of them', for Nigerians 'the clock does not invent man'. Thus, p-time allows for interruptions, delays and accelerations and is based on the concept that human activities are not expected to proceed as clockwork, as is implied in m-time.

Thiong'o's view of time is somewhat a polychronic one, as his narrator's rejection of time linearity is expressed in this criticism of how Munira recounts the five-year changes in Ilmorog to Karega:

(24) The way Munira told it was *as if* things happened in a neat sequence of time and space. Yet Munira had experienced the events and the changes as chaos inside and outside himself, and he a comic spectator with comic passions of an old man, unable to act.... So in telling it to him who sat so still..., he knew that he was falsifying history (POB: 269).

As such, monochronism entails historical distortion, with its singularity in the bourgeoisie view, while polychronism, with its inherent plurality of views, becomes the structuralist concept of time. Such is also the socialist view of time and seems to be one of Thiong'o's uses of time as can be seen through his

characters' perceptions. From this perspective, time seems to draw close when the event is sad, expressing some freshness of the wound or the desire to escape one's past, and it seems to escape far back when the event is pleasant, expressing a desire to relive such an event. There seems to be a theory of the inescapability of one's past or fate; it is like your shadow: you flee from it, it follows you; you follow it, it flees from you. Such a theory applies to Thiong'o's protagonists like Njoroge (*Weep Not, Child*), Mugo, Karanja and Gikonyo (*A Grain of Wheat*), Munira, Wanja, and Karega (*Petals of Blood*).

The next section recapitulates the major findings of the analysis and attempts some interpretations for them.

3.2. Recapitulation and Interpretation of the Findings

The previous section's findings on time presentation can be summed up as follows:

(i) There is a shortening and lengthening impression of time passage to reveal the psychological outlook of the characters, as in examples 3a, 4a, 4b, 4c, 4d, 4e, 4f, 5, 6, 7, and 10).

(ii) There also is some general reluctance from the writer/narrator and characters to date the events accurately, as in examples 1, 2, 3b, 5, 6, 8a, 8b, 12, 13, 15, 16, 22, 23, and 24.

(iii) Some socio-cultural events and practices such as the age-grade names, the circumcision ceremony, the sun's position, etc., are used as time-evokers (examples 3b, 3c, 4e, 10, and 11).

(iv) Similarly, some political events are used to evoke time: the hanging of the Mau Mau (1a), the Kaggia attack (example 21), the walk to the moon (example 15), the trial of Peter Poole (example 19), and the evocation of Jomo Kenyatta's betrayal through that of Harry Thuku (example 22).

(v) The decoding of the writer's time game, which has required a lot of computations (examples 2, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17), has helped to determine the time of the trip to the city and of the Mass Tea Party/KCO-oath, and to reveal some political characters and their murders: the Indian Communist (i.e. Pinto Pio Gama), the top African politician (i.e. Tom Mboya) and the Lawyer (i.e. J.M. Kariuki).

(vi) The same computations reveal how disparity between story time and discourse time, which entails some polychronic use of time, is played upon to project for 1979 the most important plot-significant event in the novel, the arson and shooting resulting in the death of Chui and Nderi, who are found to be fictional reflections of the then President, etc.

These findings from the analysis of the writer's time presentation can be said to reflect his views of time and they need to be interpreted in a certain

context to be better understood. Let us first see what Proust (1970) has to say about the link between people's mood and the passage of time, which will help in understanding both the characters' temporal confusion, acceleration or deceleration summed up under finding(i) and, thus, the writer's psychological view of time: "*The time that we have at our disposal everyday is elastic; the passions we feel expand it, those that we inspire contract it; and the habit fills up what remains*" (p.465). A link can even be established between time in the novel and practical everyday life where people have the impression that some days are longer than others, depending on their psychological outlook, which, in turn, is influenced by their ideological, social and cultural contexts. A similar point about the shortening effect of mood or psychology on the passage of time can be seen in the Bible where one can read: "So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed *only* a few days to him because of the love he had for her" (Genesis 29:20; Bible's italics). So, the temporal acceleration and deceleration in the mind of Thiong'o's characters (Munira, Karega, and Wanja) can be said to result from the structuralist and socialist realism (Ngara, 1986; Fisher, 1963) which implies that time is a reflection of our mind.

Secondly, the reluctance to date accurately (finding ii) must be related to the nature of the character and event being referred to. Indeed, part of the time imprecision can be said to express Munira's hesitant character- as the modalisers '*I think, or so, or so, seemed, seemed, might, seemed, as if*' in the time-related quotes (examples 1, 3b, 5, 6, 8a, 8b, 24) about him show (Fowler, 1986; Eggins, 1994/2004; Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004).

Not only does the nature of the personage impact on time accuracy, but time evocation through cultural and political events (findings iii, iv) does as well. Indeed, the use of culture-specific (Kikuyu and Swahili) time units and measurements contributes to the imprecision. For instance, the Swahili time runs from dawn (6 a.m.) to dusk (6 p.m.), rather than midnight to midday, which means that both 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. are "one o'clock," while both midnight and midday are "six o'clock." As for the Kikuyu time, it is recorded and gauged by age-grade names, and, as there is a 9-year gap between two successive age-grades or '*riika*' or circumcision generations, this use can result in some inaccuracy during conversion into Western time, just as the Swahili measurement can (Jenkins & Turner, 1996/2008 ; Muriuki, 1974).

As for the writer's disinclination from accurately dating political events (findings iv and v), it can have many interpretations. Actually, the events not precisely dated evoke some of the major crises in Kenya's political history (the Mau-Mau's hangings by the Colonial Government, Harry Thuku's and Jomo Kenyatta's betrayals of the nationalist cause, the murders of Pinto Pio Gama, of Tom Mboya, and J.M. Kariuki, the Mass Tea Party, etc.). These murders were seen as such ugly realities of the New Kenya that the 1966-78 period was decried

as another Emergency (Owomoyela, 1993: 35). As these assassinations were blamed on Jomo Kenyatta and his clique, and were officially covered up (Ngugi-wa-Thiong'o, 1981; Kigunda, 2010; Kwama, 2013, Idangasi, 2015), the writer's open denunciation of them can be seen as an anti-government effrontery and act of agitation. Thus, miss-dating and refusal to date these events can first be seen as a way of inviting the readers, Kenyans, to go and find for themselves. Secondly, even though the Mass Tea Party did not become official until 1969, the system had been secretly in place 3 years or so before (Ngugi-wa-Thiong'o, 1981; Kinyatti, 1987). However, Idangasi (2015) links the event to the Government's desperate search of forced unity following the dissensions caused by Mboya's murder (July 5, 1969): "At the same time (i.e., in December 1969,) we were hearing of Mau Mau-like oath rituals in central Kenya, this time not to recover ancestral lands but to ensure that the leadership of this country remained in the House of Mumbi". As such, the writer's refusal to date volatile political events can be seen as the expression of his fear of direct censorship. Indeed, backed by KCO, "the most feared instrument of selective but coercive terror" (p.186), the Jomo clique became more stringent on speeches/writings that might embarrass its officials from 1966. Lindfors (1980) reports a comment by Okot p'Bitek in 1976 that can be tagged prophetic about what would befall Ngugi-wa-Thiong'o on the last day of 1977:

Writers in East Africa are becoming timid because *they know the hawk is flying overhead. They know there is detention and imprisonment awaiting us, and I think this is discouraging people from commenting on certain political matters that are going on in all East African countries. There is self-imposed censorship because people are afraid to speak out, although occasionally, in their lighthearted way, they do manage to say something* (p.144; italics added).

This applies Ngugi-wa-Thiong'o; his reluctance to date accurately (findings iv, v) may be interpreted either as a manifestation of his self-censorship or an illustration of his 'lighthearted' way to write on volatile political issues. In this regard, Genette (1980:220) says that Stendhal's disinclination to date, to antedate, and, it may be added, to misdate or mix-date, is motivated by reasons of political prudence.

Moreover, the writer's adoption of polychronic time (finding vi), with its inherent 'delayability', accelerability, interruptibility, circularity and non-directionality seems to be at the background of the temporal displacement noticed in the novel. Once again, Proust makes his view known of the fictional manipulation of time, which turns it realistic, as; to him there is a parallel between the general view of time and the apparent movement of the sun:

In theory one is aware that the earth revolves, but in practice one does not perceive it, the ground upon which one treads seems not to move, and one can live undisturbed. So it is with Time in one's life. And to make its flight perceptible

novelists are obliged, by wildly accelerating the beat of the pendulum, to transport the reader in a couple of minutes over ten, or twenty, or even thirty years (p.369).

It can even be claimed that there is a link between the fictional time and Einstein's theory of relativity (June 1905), which is expressed in these words:

For example, imagine that you and a friend perfectly synchronised your watches. Your friend then flies around the world, while you stay at home. When he returns, the time displayed by his watch will lag a fraction behind that on yours. From your view, time has slowed down on your travelling friend while for him time has accelerated on you. (*Awake!* September 8, 2005; p.21.)

This clashed with a fundamental belief of scientists such as Isaac Newton—that the measurement of time is a constant throughout the universe. Thus, in the writer's general use of time, one can see how structuralist and socialist realistic motivation can adapt itself to both subjectivity and scientific objectivity; at times the novelist distorts the time to show things as they really are, which experience does not make us see clearly, at others, he/she does so to show things as they are illusively lived. In particular, Ngũgĩ-wa--Thiong'o can use language features, here the notion of linguistic displacement, to illustrate two major creative uses of language: either to mask the truth or to unmask the truth; either to veil the truth or to unveil the truth; either to put clouds over reality so that nobody or few could see it or to clear away the fog so that reality/truth can be seen with naked eyes in all its beauty and ugliness. And the reality in fiction, just like real-life reality, is either ugly or beautiful; this beauty/ugliness lies in the eyes of the beholder.

Finally, the computations leading to finding (vi) have helped to show how the writer has projected a systematic elimination of oppressors and betrayers like Nderi, Chui and Kimeria for 1979, i.e., 02 years after the novel was published (1977) and 04 years after it had been written (1975). As Chui and Nderi are proved to be fictional reflections of Jomo Kenyatta, the projection of their murder for 1979 (Amoussou, 2011), which thus becomes a predictive event, is synonymous with that of President Kenyatta, at least fictionally, for the same year. As it turns out, the time game can become very dangerous in some political contexts. Genette (1980) attested to this with reference to Proust (1970) when he wrote: "'to create (and not: *play*) a game with Time' is not only to *play with Time*, it is also to *make a game of it*. But a '*formidable*' game. In other words, also a *dangerous* one" (p.160) (his emphasis). The play with time can clearly be seen in the gap between the main story time (1965/6-1978/9) and discourse time (1970-1975). On the last page of the novel, Ngũgĩ-wa-Thiong'o said it was written between October 1970 and October 1975, but on its launching in 1977, he (1981) stated: "For me, the *say* contained between the hard and soft covers of *POB* took place over a period of six years, 1970 to 1975, with a spell into 1976" (p.94) (his emphasis). It can be inferred from this that Ngũgĩ-wa-Thiong'o's

disinclination to date accurately is not limited to fiction but can be felt in his speeches, too.

On the whole, Ngugi-wa-Thiong'o's time manipulation serves a psychological function (i.e. time is used to reflect the mood and character of people), a cultural function (i.e. cultural events can be used as time-markers, and, as Africans view time as being elastic, it can be contracted and extended, accelerated, delayed, conflated, etc.); an aesthetic and polychronic function (i.e. time is to create an illusion of reality) and a politico-ideological function (i.e. it is based on his view that the past, present and future can be viewed as the same, and one can talk of the present as if it were the past and the future and inversely). Placed in Kenya's context, since the same causes produce the same effects in the same conditions, the continued exploitation in Kenya will call for another Mau-Mau guerrilla and a systematic elimination of the betrayers of the Uhuru promises.

4. Conclusion.

This paper has started with the assumption that Ngugi-wa-Thiong'o has drawn on the language feature of '*linguistic displacement*' to create '*a time game*' in his *Petals of Blood*. This game involves date suspensions, mix-dating, miss-dating, temporal acceleration and deceleration, etc. In the main, through these time manipulations, the writer has not only revealed the mood or mental state of his main characters in the face of various sorts of injustice, but also expresses his hesitancy and fear in opening dating some cultural and political events. Finally, his clever use of time has helped him to project some apocalypse or total destruction of Kenya's political and economic institutions represented by Chui, Nderi, Kimeria and Mzigo. As such his use of time is mainly influenced by the situational, cultural political and ideological contexts of his narrative agents and his own. The main message thus is: if the regime does not stop murdering political opponents and oppressing the people, the latter will be left with no alternative but to use whatever means at their disposal (murdering, armed struggle, popular revolution) to get their liberation.

To convey this aggressive message, the time game (temporal displacement, polychronism) becomes necessary for the writer to create an *illusion of reality*; i.e., what could be, rather than what really is. Beleaguered and guilt-rotten politicians often take such illusion as another reality that threatens theirs. This is certainly why Kenyan politicians accused the book for '*containing subversive words and passages*' and its author for '*harbouring highly dangerous and suspicious intentions*' (Ngugi-wa-Thiong'o, 1981: xvi). At any rate, it can be forcefully contended that Ngugi-wa-Thiong'o's time manipulation is a sheer success.

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