

Internal-Time Consciousness in Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's Novels

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Abstract

Studies on Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's novels, specifically *Petals of Blood*, *Devil on the Cross*, and *Wizard of the Crow*, have been commonly read as a reflection of Ngũgĩ's historical and political stances. The assessments of narrative time in these works have commonly been categorised as the different folds of time in the author's experiences. Some critics also analyse these novels as political weapons used in fighting capitalism. These modes of reading these texts have become stereotyped and generated a blurry distinction between reality and fiction and/or between author and narrator. This study deviates from the previous forms of reading that make reference to the author by proffering a different study of time in fiction. It adopts a new approach to study these texts as self-sufficient literary tools. This is achieved through Currie's analysis of internal-time consciousness enshrined in poststructuralism. Internal-time consciousness in these novels is established through narrators' and characters' consciousness of the beginning and end and their zeal to extend the duration of the present by arresting the moment. The study of internal-time consciousness in these texts further explores their literariness by recognising the interconnectivity between characters, events, and actions.

Keywords: internal-time; Currie; consciousness; cause; effect; Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o

Introduction

To study the immanent consciousness of time in fiction means to study internal-time consciousness, which serves as a constituent of the special kind of knowledge present in literature that establishes the relationship between literature and life. Studies on internal-time consciousness have readjusted its border from a core philosophical knowledge to an intrinsic part of other fields such as literature, psychology, and history.



In literature, especially in fiction, the knowledge of internal-time consciousness depicts what Currie (2007) calls fictional knowledge. Internal-time consciousness as a subject in fiction is no longer a peripheral study of point of view; it has gone beyond self-consciousness to reconnect narrators, characters, events, and actions. Joel Krueger describes the interconnectivity between consciousness and activities as intentionality. Approaching this discourse from the phenomenological view, Krueger (2018, 4) maintains that “intentionality is an integrative achievement not of minds, brains, or bodies, but of persons—subjects open and responsive to physical and social environment.” This study enables the interconnectivity of fictional constituents where a thorough analysis of the relations of these constituents through internal-time consciousness exalts the discernment of meanings in *Petals of Blood*, *Devil on the Cross* and *Wizard of the Crow*. The study of internal-time consciousness in these texts confirms the special way time is constituted in fiction and the literariness between fiction and life. It positions time as a subject; as Zahavi (2010, 334), while linking internal-time consciousness to Husserl’s discussion on retention and protention, opines, “it is called inner time-consciousness because it belongs intrinsically to the innermost structure of the experience itself.” He further points out that protention and retention are very vital to presencing and absencing (Zahavi 2010, 335):

Whereas we live through a number of different experiences that arise, endure, and become past, the structure of protention-primal impression-retention might be considered an invariant field of presencing, or even better as an unchanging field of presencing (primal-impression) and absencing (retention-protention).

In the three novels under study, the innermost structure of experiences is derived from the interconnectivity between narrators, characters, events, and actions in the texts. The knowledge of internal-time consciousness in these texts aids in the understanding of these literary texts as a subject of analysis, revealing their aesthetical literariness.

Critical Scholarship on *Petals of Blood*, *Devil on the Cross* and *Wizard of the Crow*

Ngũgĩ’s novels have gained massive criticisms majorly anchored on the political terrain of postcolonialism and neocolonialism. A review on *Petals of Blood* by Salkey (1978, 681) featured the novel as a political one that “satisfies both the novelist’s political intent and the obligation I know he feels towards his art.” This corroborates the perspectives of Podis and Saaka (1999, 105) that examine the novel as one of Ngũgĩ’s revolutionary stages which proffers “a radical critique of Kenyan society, calling for a revolution based on the rediscovery of indigenous culture with its communal traditions.” This analysis projects the literary text as a political weapon embellishing a radical intent. Roos (2002, 154) also engages the revolutionary ideation as she describes the character Wanja in the novel as a representation of “hopes for African women and for their depiction in the works of a growing body of the African canon and post-colonial literature more generally.” Mwangi (2004, 67) concentrates on the harmony of structure

and content as a representation of nationhood in *Petals of Blood*. She (Mwangi 2004, 67) avers that:

the use of diary form, stories-within-the-story technique, and multiple flashbacks to bring together the various narratives and lay bare the evils of neocolonialism as a form of prostitution of the nation by its elites gives the anticolonial novel a rich texture. But patriarchy and colonialism remain deeply entrenched in the narrative's use of untranslated language and gendered tropes.

Furthermore, Ndīgīrīgī (2015, 192) traces the negative effects of colonialism and neocolonialism in *Devil on the Cross* and *Wizard of the Crow*. He examines character names and types in these novels and expresses that classification in *Devil on the Cross* is rooted in imperialism. In his analysis, imperialism dominates both the colonial and neocolonial Africa with different classes of people partaking in it in different ways and “at the end, the spectrum is the revolutionary type comprising the workers and the peasants who oppose imperialism both in the colonial and neocolonial phases in *Devil on the Cross*.” In the same vein, “*Wizard of the Crow* foregrounds the rise of a revolutionary group that destabilizes state power, but this transformative group is a cross-section of the society. The names given to the various types reflect the characters' class loyalties and political loyalties, thereby becoming symbolic” (Ndīgīrīgī 2015, 193). For Ogude (1997), *Devil on the Cross* portrays Ngũgĩ's use of popular forms such as orality to express ideas and transform characters from the traditional way of representation to those who exert changes. Investigating the use of dream and vision to foreshadow events, mirror political situations and changes in the characters, Ogude (1997) points out that the postcolonial contexts reflect through Wariinga's visions and dream. These postcolonial contexts, to him, are domination by the comprador bourgeoisie, the international capitalists and neocolonial dependency in Kenya. He also refers to Ngũgĩ's use of biblical motifs “to appeal to the ordinary Gikuyus who are familiar with the Bible, while remaining steeped in the agonistic world of vice and virtue” (Ogude 1997, 80). He concludes that the novel is a representation of Kenyan history in which the characters play the role of “allegorical symbols” (Ogude 1997, 85). These symbolic characters are those that hold and retain power for themselves, as Uskalis (1996) interprets. In a comparative interpretation, Uskalis (1996, 290) points out the following:

Whereas *Petals of Blood* in particular narrates the patterns of linkage and the tendrils of unity connecting an apparently disparate group of people as an attempt to reveal how the intersubjective structures of dissent can be formed and maintained in a lasting and sustained way, *Devil on the Cross* shows how the complex weaving of links in society work to keep in place and consolidate power and hegemony.

The liberation of the masses from such consolidated power is established in Simon Gikandi's analysis of *Wizard of the Crow* where he views the novel as a reflection of Ngũgĩ's quest for human freedom. Gikandi (2008) assumes that those familiar with

Kenyan politics would see the novel as exposing Kenyan experiences under Moi but for others it reflects the general political situation in Africa. He berates the interference of political mediation in the structure of the novel by pointing out that “its weakest moments are when the characters, forced to pause and reflect on their experiences, break the aura of the storyteller in order to score political points” (Gikandi 2008, 157).

From the different analyses of these novels under study, it is conclusive that these texts have been interpreted as historical, political, and social representations with no studies done on internal-time consciousness in these novels. The need for a new approach to read these novels is also depicted in the above analysis; thus, this study fills this gap through the appropriation of Currie’s perspective on internal-time consciousness.

Internal-Time Consciousness by Currie

Internal-time consciousness in fiction is an aspect of knowledge dedicated to what Currie calls fictional knowledge; that is, to identify internal-time consciousness in fiction means to acknowledge fictional knowledge of time. As Currie (2007, 107) avers, “When it comes to the internal consciousness of time, the novel picks up where philosophy leaves off.” Internal-time consciousness projects the understanding of characters and actions based on time reference; it relates how time structures characters and the actions they display and/or how characters structure time in reference to the actions they display. It is pertinent to note that “when a narrator or a character reflects upon a topic, or provides information, or most obviously, philosophises openly, the idea of a novel as a receptacle of knowledge looks far from implausible” (Currie 2007, 108). To render a clear explanation on internal-time consciousness, Currie (2007, 111) interrogates the margins of literature:

How then are we to know what it is that the novel knows about internal time-consciousness? In order to draw the novel’s knowledge of life into the light, or to return to Wood’s metaphor, in order to give voice to the unspoken knowledge that the novel possesses about time, we require a discourse about literature, or a knowledge of literature. Whether we call this knowledge philosophy, criticism or theory, the gap between this organised and systematic knowledge and the subtlety of life is encountered again in the gap between systematic knowledge and literature. Presumably, however, the gap is less wide, so that knowledge of literature will take us some way towards knowledge of life.

Therefore, an understanding of literature as it mirrors life aids in the understanding of internal-time consciousness since internal-time consciousness is a part of the special knowledge which fiction possesses. Currie points out that in fiction life can be attributed to dead things and the knowledge of time can be structured by the author, narrator or reader’s self-consciousness. This paper presents what the character “knows” about time and how this consciousness is represented in his/her actions. To analyse internal-time consciousness, different time arrows, basically the chronological time and phenomenological time, are recognised in harmony with each other. These time arrows

are harmonised as they impact on the meanings derived from a narrative. As Currie asserts, “the novel gives the impression of knowing itself, of knowing what it knows about time, since it reinforces the co-presence of fictional and textual time” (121). The assessment of fictional knowledge of time in *Petals of Blood*, *Devil on the Cross* and *Wizard of the Crow* is obtained from the internal-consciousness of time among characters; how conscious of time are these characters and how significant is this consciousness in their actions and events that characterise their existence? The relationship between internal-time consciousness and characters’ actions is shown below:

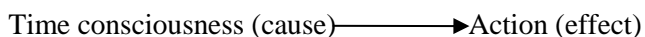


Figure 1: Cause and effect arrow

The diagram above shows that a character’s consciousness of time functions as a cause that characterises his/her action, which is the effect of the cause. As Currie questions, “Can we then speak of the novel’s knowledge of time without assigning this knowledge to the author, or claiming the intentional nature of its knowledge as a kind of conscious encoding in fictional form?” (2007, 123). This study takes a poststructural view on internal-time consciousness.

Consciousness of the Beginning and the End

As a detective novel, *Petals of Blood* (hereafter cited as *PoB*) unearths time; it is concerned with a beginning and an end, depicting events that lead to the murder of the three capitalists so as to solve the puzzle embedded in it. Though the novel contains different arrows of time, most especially chronological time and phenomenological time, on the level of internal-time consciousness the phenomenological time is dormant and it is mostly built on past events in the life of one of the narrators, Munira. In Munira, there lies a character who exhibits “conscious self-consciousness” of time, thus showing that the novel is “a novel that knows what it knows” about time (Currie 2007, 132). Munira’s autobiographical note which he writes as a statement reflects his constant retrospection that “he felt his heart quicken at his return to a seat of his past” (*PoB*, 13). Wittmann (2015, 176) notes that “mind-wandering is associated with the propensity to transiently focus on the past as memories arise and the future as expectation of what might happen.” Munira’s memory functions as an archive which stores the past that keeps interfering with his present. Munira is so conscious of this interference of past events and “he tried to forget his fears, his guilt, his frozen years: he stifled any unpleasant memories of his father or wife or of his childhood and youth with a drink or so” (*PoB*, 17). His consciousness of time is the driving force which leads him to Ilmorog. His flexibility in the presentation of different time loci is distinguished in his actions to the extent that he recalls the starting point of his downfall, as implied by the narrator who tells that “to be made a prefect, Munira started slowly, looking to the ground, absorbed in thoughts he did not know he had, speaking from a past he should

have forgotten, crossing valleys and hills and ridges and plains of time to the beginning of his death” (*PoB*, 27). This means that Munira has a different view of the beginning of events in the novel which is not the same as that of the omniscient narrator who starts the narrative with the crime. For Munira, Ilmorog is not the starting place of events; the crime is an effect of events preceding it. He traces the cause from home, down to Siriana before dwelling fully on events that occurred at Ilmorog. While examining the phenomenological time, he ponders the effect of the past in the present; he reaffirms the presence of internal-time consciousness and the outcome of such knowledge when it is revealed that “his voice had become more and more faint with the progress of the narrative. But it retained the weight and power of a bitter inward gaze. He had not quite realised that a school incident in the early forties could be so alive, could still carry the pain of a fresh wound” (*PoB*, 29).

It is expressive that Munira acknowledges the chronological time, but his recognition of the chronological time is embedded in his advancement of the phenomenological time. His consciousness of the chronological time is observed in “his eyes occasionally darting to the Aspro-calendar, the only decoration on otherwise bare walls” (*PoB*, 42). The Aspro-calendar indicates that while the chronological time is already established and waiting for the phenomenological time to give it meaning, the phenomenological time lies in the memory and awaits recollection. Munira affirms this in his thought below (*PoB*, 42):

What had a silly barmaid’s cry eleven years back—before a single stone building, let alone an international highway, had been built in Ilmorog—to do with the present? He might as well open that book and start with Adam and Eve. But would it not be better—it would surely save time and energy—if he skipped the years and did not indulge a rather—well—a rather vivid memory?

Through his knowledge of time, Munira is conscious of how past events feed on the present time thus weakening the duration of the present time. His constant recollection of past events startles him to say (*PoB*, 53):

I was once again surprised at the depth of my concern. Had I not done away with Fraudshams, Chuis, Sirianas, strikes and politics, the whole lot, years ago? Now and then one occasionally would hear of Siriana’s brilliant success at the state examinations under its eccentric headmaster, but I could never really become involved in the glory of a school which had rejected me. Why should it follow me to Ilmorog? I felt a sudden nostalgia for that time.

But does his consciousness of the dominance of past events stop him from recalling them? It does not because he unconsciously slips back to recollection. Currie (2007, 118) elaborates the presence of the past in the conception of time:

The idea of a person as a part of a social or historical totality is the basis of time structure in many novels, whether it is through the interaction of the individual with history in the

historical novel, or the tension between the temporality of the inner life and the measurement of clock time in the outside world. By putting historical time inside the individual, these novels disturb the ordinary conception of time.

Munira's fascination with beginnings makes him observe different beginnings of past events such as "the growth of Ilmorog from its beginnings in rain and drought to the present flowering in petals of blood" (*PoB*, 45). Also, he registers the journey to the city as the beginning of his "inward journey to a position where I can now see that the man's estate is rotten at heart" (*PoB*, 118). His consciousness of time is also buttressed in his prison routine that he summarises in the following way: "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). This does not only show Munira's knowledge of different time arrows, it also represents the centrality of time in the life of Munira and his ability to consciously and unconsciously roam within time. Moreover, his firm hold on past activities makes him judge people based on their pasts. He facilitates the dismissal of Karega based on Karega's connection with his sister and other past events.

Apart from Munira, Karega also exhibits internal-time consciousness in his actions and interactions with other characters. Just like Munira, his curiosity lies in both chronological and phenomenological time, especially with the history of his people. In one instance he is seen comparing the years of destruction and asking himself questions about time as "the past he had tried to affirm seemed to have a living, glowing ambience in the mouth of the woman on this journey to save a village, a community" (*PoB*, 124). His measurement of time is often in years and events that characterise those years. His quest to understand historical events makes him conscious of his country's present situation and turns him into a physical and psychological wanderer. In one of his mind adventures, "he suddenly stopped in his track and abruptly broke off the intense, ceaseless flow of his thoughts. Beyond, at the very heart of the plains, was a cone-shaped hill, firm but seeming vulnerable in its utter solitude. He looked back, startled by the breathing presence of another" (*PoB*, 125). Although "the breathing presence of another" is Wanja who joins him at the plains, it serves as a pun to explain the interference of the past in the present. His obsession with Kenyan history controls his actions, thus his interpretation of life corroborates Fish's notion that "interpretations will always be controlled by the relatively limited repertoire of interpretive strategies available at any given point in history" (Tyson 2002, 186). The novel ends with a date: "October 1970–October 1975"; this date has no detailed explanation, and thus affirms Currie's notion of the novel knowing more or having a secret knowledge.

Devil on the Cross (hereafter cited as *DotC*) illustrates that "narrative theory shows a preoccupation with memory, retrospect and the archiving of past events" (Currie 2007, 51). Wariinga's internal-time consciousness emphasises beginnings and endings. At the start of the novel, she traces the beginning of her woes to her Being as "she cursed the

day she was born” (*DotC*, 11). For Wariinga, her existence is characterised by problems and it accounts for why she keeps encountering problems. Her consciousness of time goes beyond her conscious state; she remains conscious of time even in her dream where she witnesses the crucifixion of the devil on the cross. She reawakens the memory and arrests the moment where “she saw first the darkness” and later the crucifying of the devil to which “after three days, there came others dressed in suits and ties, who, keeping close to the wall of darkness, lifted the Devil down from the Cross” (*DotC*, 13). This recurring dream (right from her secondary school days) is structured within time which she recognises and it poses as protention. As Currie points out, “Protentions must not be confused with actual futures. Protentions are mere mental orientations towards the future, and it is banal to say that they produce events in the present” (Currie 2007, 76). In her position as a company’s secretary, Wariinga acknowledges time amidst a busy schedule. She boasts of her typewriting skills: she “can pound a typewriter, thirty-five words a minute, and she is now an expert at shorthand—she has reached the speed of eighty words a minute” (*DotC*, 18). She is conscious of her consumption of time in carrying out tasks; she measures her productivity in the chronological time and registers her efficiency in her ability to minimise time spent, showing that “the novel which depends heavily on analeptic and proleptic anachronies appears, above all, to confirm the intimate relation between chronology and sense, since the reader’s act of sense-making involves the rearrangement of events into a linear succession” (Currie 2007, 96).

Wariinga’s consciousness of time causes her to be engrossed in birth and death. Ryan (2009, 144) elaborates that “the evolution of life from birth to death and from growth to decay is obviously not a reversible phenomenon. Let’s call this phenomenon the *biological arrow*.” For Wariinga, birth and death feature in an unlucky person at the same time. Her voice is laden with uncertainty about life and the representation of life and death. For her, birth begets death and suffering can only end after the final death: “all she wanted was that her name should be wiped off the face of the Earth. All she wanted was to vanish as if she had never been born. All she prayed for was for the Angel of Death to come for her and to remove her name from the ledgers of Heaven and Earth” (*DotC*, 151). Her urge to leave the earth comes from the recurring thoughts about her past. She keeps reflecting on her past while she remains conscious of her present; she is conscious that “the things that had happened to her in the past twenty-four hours were truly amazing. She recalled how she had been abandoned by her lover, John Kimwana; how she had been dismissed from her job by Boss Kihira because she was stingy with her thighs; how she had been thrown out of her house by her landlord; how she had been given a threatening note signed by the *Devil’s Angels*. She remembered...” (*DotC*, 135).

At a point, Wariinga’s ideation of endings changes after the Devil’s Feast when she takes up engineering at the polytechnic. Instead of recording the beginning of her woes, she opts for the beginning of her success story through determination and consciousness of her past woes (*DotC*, 216):

Today's Wariinga has decided that she'll never again allow herself to be a mere flower, whose purpose is to decorate the doors and windows and tables of other people's lives, waiting to be thrown on to a rubbish heap the moment the splendour of her body withers. The Wariinga of today has decided to be self-reliant all the time, to plunge into the middle of the arena of life's struggles in order to discover her real strength and to realize her true humanity.

Her consciousness of her past enables her to recognise the distance between the former Wariinga and the present Wariinga, thus showing that "storytelling is not just self-distance but temporal self-distance" (Currie 2007, 49). Wariinga is a time-conscious Being whose past and present actions are separated and yet linked together by her consciousness of time. She endeavours "always to remember the very first day she passed the open air garage. It was a Friday afternoon, about two" (*DotC*, 220). She clearly remembers the day and time, showing internal-time consciousness of such a beginning. This knowledge of time is also present when she narrates her suicide attempt to Gaturia (*DotC*, 137–38):

Truly, even today as we are sitting here, or when I'm alone, silently turning things over in my mind, or when I am typing or simply walking on the road, I can hear the heavy rumble of the train rolling along the rails towards where I stood waiting for it to take me away from all the troubles I had encountered in Nakuru. I stood in the middle of the rails, near the level crossing by Kabacia Estate, Section 58, Nakuru. It was about eleven on a Sunday morning. The train came towards me, belching steam, breathing hard and seemingly singing ... I shut my eyes. I started counting, one, two, three, four, now take me.

All these events she stores in her memory where "the lens in her head" captures them and resurrects them to life (*DotC*, 183). Wariinga experiences change not just in her understanding of beginnings but also in her rejection of that voice which she names "the voice Satan" that almost cost her her life (*DotC*, 212).

In the study of internal-time consciousness, "it might seem reasonable to suppose that contemporary fiction has something new to say about time insofar as these temporal tensions have been placed in the foreground and openly contemplated" (Currie 2007, 93). Internal-time consciousness in *Wizard of the Crow* (hereafter cited as *WotC*) is analysed through the Ruler, Kamiti and Tajirika. The novel displays five beginnings which are not authenticated by the narrator as they are revealed to be based on rumours. These beginnings render possible causes of the Ruler's illness. The first beginning indicates the Ruler's ailment "was born of anger that once welled up inside him" (*WotC* 3); the second puts forth "a curse from the cry of a wronged he-goat" (*WotC*, 4); the third is based on "the aging of his rule" (5); the fourth has to do with "all the tears, unshed, that Rachael, his legal wife, had locked up inside her soul after her fall from his grace" (*WotC*, 6) and the fifth beginning is "the sole work of the daemons that the Ruler had housed in a special chamber in the State House" (*WotC*, 10). These beginnings function "as structural self-designation, as a structural feature, as a thematic concern,

and as a preoccupation of characters” (Currie 2007, 177). The Ruler is conscious of his present position as the general of the Aburiria state; he makes all attempts to maintain the present and absolute power by “making minister plot against minister, region rise against region, and community fight against community” (*WotC*, 231). Power is not a force gained by the Ruler without effort; the Ruler sacrifices his time and honour to make himself so powerful. His rise to power from Vice Ruler to Ruler is achieved more through his internal-time consciousness than his rapport with the white forces. It is revealed (*WotC*, 233) that

in his dealings with the First Ruler of the free Republic of Aburiria, he humbled himself in every possible way, taking all shit from his new boss, marking time as Vice Ruler but biding his time. His capacity to absorb all abuses became legendary, and nobody who saw him kneel, crawl, or cringe before the boss could see the future greatness of the man.

The Ruler’s grudging hold on time is expressed in the inability of his ministers to resolve his birth year. Dual ideas can be deduced from their inefficiency: the first has to do with their lack of knowledge on the exact date; the second could be translated as the fear of limiting or confining the Ruler to time. As depicted in his actions, time is one among many elements under the tentacles of his power. Thus he goes ahead to set his birthday (*WotC*, 12) at

the seventh hour of the seventh day of the seventh month, seven being the Ruler’s sacred number, and precisely because in Aburiria the Ruler controlled how the months followed each other—January for instance trading places with July—he therefore had the power to declare any month in the year the seventh month, and any day within that seventh month the seventh day and therefore the Ruler’s Birthday. The same applied to time, and any depending on the wishes of the Ruler, could be the seventh hour.

He brandishes his power in all activities in the country including the people’s history. As he points out, he and the country are the same; therefore, his history is the history of his country. To implement this notion, he appoints a biographer who moves around with him to capture his every moment “and as everyone knows his biography was really the story of the country, and the true history” (*WotC*, 21). The Ruler’s display of timelessness and his urge to control time lies in his fear of getting caught up in time. He eliminates his biographer when he observes that he captures reality without blemish. We learn (*WotC*, 709) that the Ruler’s

mind was occupied with the sudden realization that the loyal biographer knew too much, that if he could write and record what happened so openly, so vividly, and so graphically, an account that completely contradicted the official version of the Ruler’s and his generals’ heroics as they struggled with bombs exploding, what could he inadvertently say about the story of Rachael and the plantation fire? This man had no imagination to sugarcoat reality and make it more palatable. How did I engage such a fool?

His haste to distort the truth in his biography makes him employ the service of a white Englishman—Henry Morton Stanley, who knows little or nothing about him, to write his biography titled *The Birth of Baby D: The Ruler and the Evolution of an African Statesman: An Objective Biography* (WotC, 743).

Also, the media is not left out of the Ruler's tyrannical scrutiny. The fear of the Ruler's power is witnessed in the distortion of information by media houses. This shows that the archive has lost its basic function which has to do with the preservation of events as they really occurred. As Fritzsche (2005, 17) points out, "the archive thus produces two effects: the boundedness of identity in time and space and the synchronization of time and space within those bounds. Precisely because they are the means to establish provenience and thus expose cultural distinctions, archives are crucial to the infrastructure of the modern nation-state." The archive is a reminder of the limitation of all within time; the archiving of information (distorted or not), confines the Ruler within time. Moreover, the diary written by Professor Din Furyk, which contains information on the Ruler's ailment, shows the inability of the Ruler to control time. The Ruler is unaware of its existence and has no knowledge of the information it contains. The diarist presents the Ruler in a manner that would be distasteful to the Ruler; he describes his eyes as "scared and helpless, like the eyes of a child stricken with fear at the unexpected and the unknown" (WotC, 471).

Aurelius (1955, 8) expresses that time "does strange things in the mind." One of these strange things is the "If" malady suffered by the Ruler whereby "thoughts get stuck inside a person" (WotC, 490). The entrapment of words inside the Ruler can be explained as the clash of the present action and future anticipation. The struggle for existence by both renders the Ruler helpless (WotC, 486):

The Ruler rose to make a speech, completely unaware that the letter in his hand was now shaking. They sat glued to their seats, anticipating his every word. But when the Ruler opened his mouth, no word came out. The Ruler stood there, trying pointlessly to speak. What? The Ruler, lost for words? Terror struck them all: here was the Ruler, his mouth open, attempting to say something but producing only hot air and bronchial wheezing.

It is this ailment that facilitates the contact between the Ruler and the Wizard of the Crow (Kamiti). For one who parades himself as the country, the Ruler gets infuriated when the Wizard of the Crow leaves a note that says the country is pregnant after he (the Wizard) is locked out of his hotel room. His fear and anguish towards the Wizard of the Crow are because of the latter's ability to see beyond the present time; it troubles him "that if the sorcerer could really read what was hidden from the common eye, what did he know about the country, no, the Ruler being pregnant? And why had he chosen to impart his wisdom to Machokali instead of ... he did not even want to complete the thought, for he suddenly felt horrified yet again at being compared to a woman. This sorcerer must be silenced" (WotC, 543). The Ruler's question can be interpreted as

concerning what the Wizard knows about time or about the future. The Ruler does not acknowledge that someone in Aburiria can know more, especially about the future of Aburiria, than he does. It is his need of this secret knowledge possessed by the Wizard alone that moves him to order the arrest of the Wizard. As time slips away from the Ruler, his authority over the people diminishes. Even the media which was formerly “the dictator’s mouthpiece” (*WotC*, 669) no longer project the Ruler as the unchallenged power; the people become their object of interest. The media no longer distort information but present things as they really are. This is captured in the attention they pay to the masses on the day the Wizard appears to address the People’s Assembly: “the media people, expecting a revolution, had already set their cameras in the streets where they expected riots to erupt, with people being stoned and houses burnt down. The poor areas of Eldares had never seen so many television cameras so interested in their fate” (*WotC*, 675). The Wizard is compelled by the Ruler to address the people so as to reveal what lies in the future or what is obscure to the Ruler. The Ruler’s keenness to know what the Wizard knows exposes his limitation which is structured within time (*WotC*, 611):

He wanted him alive so that the man can disclose the secret of how money grows and dead so that he could never reveal it to another soul or reveal that he had revealed it to the Ruler. He wanted him alive so that he could help in the capture of Nyawira and the leaders of the Movement for the Voice of the People, and dead for having heretofore kept privileged information to himself. He wanted him alive to cure him, the Ruler, of his bodily expansion, but dead for claiming that he was pregnant, attracting, to the Ruler’s chagrin, the pest known as world media ... The captive carried much knowledge that, harnessed properly, could benefit the Ruler enormously, but this thought made him angry, because with it he was admitting that the Wizard of the Crow had powers that he, the Almighty, lacked.

The knowledge, which the Ruler fears, resides in the Wizard’s ability to see beyond the past and the present—the Wizard’s ability to see the future and all it holds.

The Wizard is conscious of his ability to roam within time through his imagination: “He could not tell whether he was in a temporary coma or a deep sleep, but when a slight breeze blew it lifted him out of himself to the sky, where he now floated. He could still see his own body lying on the ground and the mountain of garbage, where children and dogs fought over signs of meat on white bones” (*WotC*, 38). While his body is unconscious, Kamiti is internally conscious of his duality in a particular time loci. This ability is attributed to his lineage as his ancestors practised sorcery. But Kamiti goes beyond the present to the past and future. His consciousness of time and how to capture time makes him influential as the Wizard of the Crow. With the use of a mirror, he captures past and present actions or thoughts of people. He cures Tajirika’s malady of words where “thoughts are stuck in his head so that his wishes cannot be denied or fulfilled” with a mirror (*WotC*, 175). Also, he uses this method to cure the Ruler’s malady of words that surpasses medical treatment. The Wizard believes in his efficiency

because of his consciousness of the evolution of time that traces his lineage to seers. When he suffers the same malady, his cure does not follow the same pattern as others as he remains conscious of his environment and “it was difficult even for the most astute of doctors to diagnose an illness in which the patient was silent about symptoms ... Kamiti counted hammers, tweezers, miniature saws, razor blades, needles, knives, scissors, and nails of different sizes and shapes. He did not know what was more terrifying, the array of surgical tools or the master surgeon’s matter-of-fact tone in talking about his past successes” (*WotC*, 624).

The Wizard’s ability to see the future enables him to roam in time and space where he witnesses the decay in the society and concluded that “today is pregnant with tomorrow. What kind of tomorrow was Aburiria pregnant with? Of unity or murderous divisions? Of cries or laughter?” (*WotC*, 681). The Wizard’s profound knowledge of time is overestimated by the Ruler who believes that the Wizard knows more than he should know. In his quest to know the secret of the Wizard, the Ruler employs the service of Tajirika as the governor of the Central Bank but later promotes him to the Minister of Defence so that he could use him as an instrument to “freeze or even abolish the future of a country” and later “have him executed publicly” before he “might one day feel emboldened to challenge his authority” (*WotC*, 750).

Tajirika’s transformation from the Chairman of the Marching to Heaven Project to the Governor of the Central Bank and later to the Minister of Defence makes him conscious of power. He imagines using his power to manipulate time and “the talk of the frozen future triggered Tajirika’s memories of the Museum of Suspended Motion. Had that been a sign of things to come? That he would one day become the chosen instrument to freeze the future of ... who?” (*WotC*, 751). His attempt to arrest the future “with his usual unerring instinct of self-preservation” is portrayed in his elimination of the Ruler (*WotC*, 752). Tajirika’s consciousness of time does not start with his promotions; he has been conscious of the present and attempts to capture the present before he suffers the malady of speech. This attempt is traced to when Tajirika captured the moment he had a handshake with the Ruler as he covered the specific hand with a glove. Also, as the Chairman of the Marching to Heaven Project, Tajirika’s effort to capture his moment of fame makes him maintain the queue “for it meant more visiting cards and attendant money” (*WotC*, 105).

Arrested Moment

It is obvious that the three novels under study embody knowledge about time as they seem “to contain a substantial and complex body of ideas which pertain to time as a topic and at the same time recognize the metaleptic parallel entailed in the relation between the topic of time and the temporal logic of narrative” (Currie 2007, 122–23). Characters’ consciousness of time as explored in their thoughts and actions also reflects their quest to arrest the present moment where the present can stand still without drifting into the past. Munira consciously and unconsciously struggles to arrest the present

without constantly drifting into the past. This is observed when he keeps drifting back to the events at Siriana while writing his prison statement. He exclaims, “There! I was drifting back to the same past” (*PoB*, 53), and at a point, Munira is heard grappling with time by expressing, “No, I must not lose my hold on the present. My earlier trip to Ruwa-ini for instance” (*PoB*, 53). This shows that he has no absolute control of the memory where “the memory holds within it the time of its happening and the time that it recalls” (Currie 2007, 36). Munira’s allusion to the Bible which centres on Jacob wrestling with an angel shows how weary Munira is with the interference of past time and his impatience to detach himself from it with a scream: “Let me go, let me go, I cried to myself: why awaken voices from the past” (*PoB*, 54). Even Wanja testifies that Munira “talks as if he had become frozen with the memory of that event” (*PoB*, 229). The frozen moment is what Tajirika in *Wizard of the Crow* names the “Arrested Moment” (*WotC*, 443). Munira tries to relieve the present while confined to the prison by reading newspapers. These newspapers serve as an archive whereby the present is recorded in a past mode for the future. But in *Devil on the Cross*, Wariinga attempts to arrest the present moment of her victory over the Rich Old Man when she says “look at me” before shooting him (*DotC*, 253). This attempt is to ensure that the last thing the Rich Old Man sees is a picture of her holding a pistol over him.

The fourth theory on the cause of the Ruler’s ailment in *Wizard of the Crow* is fundamental to the study of internal-time consciousness as it presents the depth of the Ruler’s consciousness of time. By confining Rachael to the particular time she complains about his predilection for younger schoolgirls, the Ruler displays his absolute power which he believes time cannot escape. He is conscious of the temporality of time and freezes Rachael’s present to demonstrate that he is timeless. The Ruler plans as follows (*WotC*, 8–9):

Rachael would remain thus, awaiting his second coming, and on that day when he found that she had shed all the tears for all the tomorrows of all the children she had accused him of abusing, he would take her back to restart life exactly from where it had stopped, or rather Rachael would resume her life, which had been marking time, like a cinematic frame on pause. I am your beginning and your end ... I am the past and the present you have been and *I am your tomorrow take it or leave it.*

His attempt to replicate the present shows that his consciousness of time develops from his fear of being challenged. For him, a slip in time is a slip in his authority and being timeless means being very powerful. But the Ruler is ignorant of his limited nature as he makes futile attempts to capture the present through the media, as seen in one of his presentations (*WotC*, 25) where

he pointed at the cameras with his club-shaped staff as if at the terrorists of the Movement for the Voice of the People ... And suddenly he raised the club higher in the air as if ready to throw it at any and all self-styled Moses. The cameramen ducked behind their cameras, and all at once, as if hit by same object simultaneously, every television screen in the country split into seven pieces.

Unknown to the Ruler, freezing the present cannot be achieved through the use of a camera since capturing events through camera means living the present as a past.

Tajirika also demonstrates his quest to capture the moment of his reign by eliminating his rivals. It is not surprising that emphasis on Tajirika's obsession with a frozen moment is buttressed with a magical effect where his teardrops and Virginia's teardrops form an "arrested motion," as a result of which "a flock of birds was frozen in flight above the lake. Some yards into the pool, a dog, barking at the birds, suddenly froze before their very eyes" (*WotC*, 442).

Conclusion

The analysis of internal-time consciousness in *Petals of Blood*, *Devil on the Cross*, and *Wizard of the Crow* has proved to be a new approach to the reading of these novels as it shows the intrinsic interconnectivity between narrators, characters, events, and actions. This extensive knowledge is enabled because the novels and all they encompass are structured within time. Characters are structured within time and space but not all characters possess internal-time consciousness. From the analysis above, it is evident that these characters investigated are internally conscious of time and it is their knowledge of time that structures their actions. This knowledge of time is not restricted to the narrators but can be seen in any character whose actions are woven around time or whose actions express time as fundamental. Characters' consciousness of time makes them aware of the beginning of events and actions that are summed up as causes; it also makes them mark the end of the causes which are also summed up as effects. Some actions/events also perform as both causes and effects. For instance, the journey embarked on by the villagers in *Petals of Blood* turns out to be an effect of famine and it causes the beginning of capitalism in Illmorog; that is, the journey stands as an effect and cause. This is also perceived in *Wizard of the Crow* where the Ruler's fear is an effect of his experiences with the previous government that later causes his downfall. Also, the characters' consciousness of time makes them attempt to arrest time. But while Munira and the Ruler fail in the attempt to arrest time within their conscious self-consciousness, Wariinga arrests the moment of her victory over the Rich Old Man. In summary, internal-time consciousness is fundamental in these novels as it creates a new approach to the reading and understanding of these novels.

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