

Proceedings of the one-day workshop on  
**'THE BODY IN THE ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL  
PRODUCTIONS: BETWEEN AESTHETICS AND  
SIGNIFICATION'**



Actes de la journée d'études et de réflexions sur  
**'LE CORPS DANS LES PRODUCTIONS ARTISTIQUES ET  
CULTURELLES : ENTRE ESTHÉTIQUE ET  
SIGNIFICATION'**

Sous la direction de  
**Klohinlwélé KONÉ**

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# RILE

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- BERGER Gaston, 1967, *L'homme moderne et son éducation*, Paris, PUF.
- DIAGNE Souleymane Bachir, 2003, « Islam et philosophie. Leçons d'une rencontre », Diogène, 202, p. 145-151.
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## DE-CONSTRUCTING AFRICAN POLITICS VIA THE GROTESQUE BODY IN NGŪGĨ WA THIONG'O'S *WIZARD OF THE CROW*

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In Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Wizard of the Crow*, African dictatorship is portrayed through the human body's derisory shape and agency to spotlight the dictator's political drive. This paper highlights how the dictator's body can perform acts of political appetite and domination via the caricature of its grotesquely puffed-up feature. Thus, based on psychoanalytic reading, the article examines African politics and dystopian reality through the grotesqueness used as a literary technique.

Keywords: African dictatorship, deconstruction, dystopia, grotesque human body, political drive



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Dans son œuvre *Wizard of the Crow*, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o dépeint la forme dérisoire et ridicule que prend le corps humain pour mettre en lumière la dictature en Afrique. Cet article met en exergue l'ambition politique et l'appétit politique excessifs du dictateur via le caractère grotesque de son corps. Ainsi, prenant appui sur la psychanalyse comme outil théorique, l'article examine la politique africaine et la réalité dystopique de ce monde imaginaire via l'aspect grotesque du corps humain pris comme technique littéraire.

Mots-clés : Déconstruction, dictature africaine, dystopie, le grotesque du corps humain, ambition politique

### Introduction

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Wizard of the Crow* (2007) can be read as a work of dictatorial and dystopian fiction. In the novel, the writer uses human body to lay bare political appetite, dictatorship and dystopian reality in a fictitious society called Aburĩria. Accordingly, he devises a work of art made up of the grotesquely puffed-up human body which is evocative of excessive political drive, dystopia and dictatorship in the Kenyan political arena and in Africa in general. Indeed, dictators may have a variety of strategies and objectives lurking

behind their domination: power, position, wealth and political drive that re-shape the society and its constituents.

A plethora of African writers and scholars have fictionalized and addressed the issue of dictatorship in the African literary sphere. Among them, M. Isegawa's *Snakepit* (1995) and A. Kourouma's *Waiting for the Wild Beasts to Vote* (2004) can be listed. Isegawa's opus covers the last moments of the reign and dictatorship of Idi Amin Dada Oumee in Uganda. *Waiting for the Wild Beasts to vote* by Kourouma narrates the story of another prototypic figure of African dictator named Koyaga. This dictator rules over the republic of the gulf. The novel depicts figures of various African dictators through animals used as symbols.

An overview of literary works that address dictatorship also suggests some scholars' outputs. C. Baker's and H. Grayson's collective work entitled *Fictions of African Dictatorship: Cultural Representations of Postcolonial Power* is of note. In this book, many a researchers explore the question. F. F. Moolla's article "Figuring the Dictator in the Horn of Africa: Nuruddin Farah's Dictatorship Trilogy and Ahmed Omar Askar's Short Stories" depicts the dictator through his scary shadow despite his absence in the governed's daily life. In fact, the dictator's figure is never represented but rather his scary shadow through the literary device used by the author. Here we are allowed to notice that nothing refers to the dictator's figure as such though his scary shadow hovers over people's life. In "Body politics in *The Wizard of the Crow*, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o," A. Journo draws a parallel between power and human when human attributes such as the body are given power through anthropomorphism. In this article, power is invested with a body, symbolism of strength and force. In this power's relationship to human body, what is laid bare is the corrupted side of the African power holder who endeavours to maintain his desire and pleasure to the detriment of the masses.

Though the novel to be considered deals with dictatorship as the aforementioned works do, it all the same accounts for it a surreal way. In fact, the dictator pictured in the opus uses the inflated human body as a tool of domination to achieve his inordinate political drive. In this vein, *Wizard of the Crow* will be dissected through the Psychoanalytic reading. This theory which owes its origin in the work of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) the founding father of Psychoanalysis will help uncover the hidden causes of the dominating characters' ambition of domination. As S. Freud (2016, p. 161) states "our entire psychological activity were directed toward gaining pleasurable stimulation, toward avoiding painful ones; that it is regulated automatically by the principle of pleasure." Obviously, the ruling class in the book are tightly



bound up with the pleasure and jouissance of power. Most of their actions make me paraphrase Freud in these terms their "selves or egos" are no longer masters in their own homes (1920, p. 130). Their strange attitudes telltale their failure to grasp themselves and control their behaviour or attitude, hence the scope of Psychoanalysis in this study.

Hypothetically, the material the novel is also woven with tallies with grotesqueness and derisory agency of the dictator. Therefore, zeroing in on

grotesqueness, the present paper aims at examining the extents to which Ngũgĩ resorts to it as a ground-breaking narrative technique. It also targets at answering the reason why he uses the swollen human body as a reference to unquenchable political appetite, dictatorship and a symbolism of hope as well.

Therefore, the study will pivot around three main articulations. The first articulation

will be about the painting of the grotesque as a derisory side of African politics. The second part deals with the way the writer uses the grotesque body to castigate dictatorship. As for the last one, it underscores the deconstruction of the grotesque body. This deconstructive criticism is likely to foreshadow a better and bright tomorrow.

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**“The grotesque is best understood by what it does, not what it is. It is an action, not a thing”**

### **I. The grotesque: the derisory side of African politics**

Prior to everything, grasping what the term grotesque means is a must. In *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* by C. Baldick, it is defined as being characterized by bizarre distortions, especially in the exaggerated or abnormal depiction of human features. The literature of the grotesque involves freakish caricatures of people's appearance and behaviour (C. Baldick, 2001, p. 108) as depicted in Ngũgĩ's *Wizard of the Crow* (2007). W. Kayser's definition might tally with the aforementioned dictionary's when he views the grotesque as a "play with the absurd" (1981, p. 187). F. S. Connelly (2012, p. 2) reasons that "The grotesque is best understood by what it does, not what it is. It is an action, not a thing [...] Grotesques come into being by rupturing cultural boundaries, compromising and contradicting what is "known" or what is "proper" or "normal."

As defined, some political leaders' actions and physical traits dovetail with the absurd, the abnormal and the uncanny to make the point in Sigmund Freud's term (S. Freud 1919) in the novel. For S. Freud (1919, p. 1) "the

Uncanny undoubtedly belongs to all that is terrible—to all that arouses dread and creeping horror (...), it tends to coincide with whatever excites dread." Indeed, these characters' bloated features and the country's as well are in favour of the bizarre, the disquieting and disturbing ones. In short, their attitudes amount to horror and awfulness.

Benjamin Mambo, alias Big Ben Mambo who dreams of being the Defense Minister is one of the characters whose agency is evocative of the unexpected attitudes and by extension grotesqueness. The text reads "He (Big Ben Mambo) chose to have his tongue elongated so that in echoing the Ruler's command his words would reach every soldier in the country and his throats to his enemies before they could reach the Aburñrian borders" (p. 15). Alias Big Ben Mambo's devotion and loyalty to the Ruler seems to be beyond the borders of fidelity to have us surmise his ridiculous attitude and behaviour. The text further lays him open to ridicule and then shows through him the shocking and horrendous side of African politics as follows "the lips were pulled and elongated to cover the tongue, but even then not completely and the tongue protruded now just a little" (p. 15).

Here is depicted the grotesque feature of African politics. Such an act is tantamount to getting the ruled class under the ruler's sway and control. Beyond the words, one could imagine the size of such organs (an elongated tongue within elongated lips). We are no longer in human society but in monsters' world, an outside or alien world which aims at scaring others. The writer then makes the reader wonder about the type of society he is given to decipher in the novel. So do some characters as exemplified through the following conversation between the characters of Furyk and Clarkwell:

"The body is rising again. What is the meaning of this?"  
 "It beats all scientific logic" (p. 686).

As an adverb, the "again" implies the repetition of what has been taking place as regards the bloated and puffy body of the Ruler. Like the flabbergasted and thunderstruck characters, the reader is also confronted with the same uncanny which sounds above scientific explanation as "it beats all scientific logic," which amounts to the unmatched and incomparable situation in the world. As a matter of fact, it is not the Ruler's swollen body which beats scientific logic, but the African dictatorship which uses human body to police the governed class. As such, it cannot be defined according to the principle of true politics which indisputably aims at contributing to the welfare of the community instead of self-satisfaction and permanent threat.

For that purpose Both Philip Thomson's and Andrew Casson's thoughts are of interest when they respectively pen that whenever "something which is familiar and trusted is suddenly made strange and disturbing" (P. Thomson, 1972, p. 59), and whenever we are in doubt "as to whether to laugh or to be afraid, whether to interpret the phenomenon before us as belonging to a real world of our senses or to some fantastic world beyond their reach" (A. Casson, 1997, p. 23), then there is the grotesque. The African politics then loses its normal, usual and human trait and then takes another connotation, that of maintaining the ruled and governed people in a sort of fear and threat. If the Ruler's puffy feature beats all scientific logic, this accounts for the unfathomable and inhuman characteristics of politics in Africa.

*izard of the Crow* can be read as a novel dealing with comic flooded with hilarity and mirth paired with the grotesque and absurd scent spread over the story. The metaphor of the pregnant Ruler and that of the country itself is enough to convince the reader of the grotesque trait the book is written in likewise. Dealing with colonization, A. Memmi (1991, p. 147) posits that "Colonization can only disfigure the colonizer." Analogically, I may conjecture that Political drive is disfiguring African political leaders through the physical body destruction as well as political field itself.

Another expression of grotesqueness and absurdity is the grotesque role played by the characters of Machokali and Silver Sikiokuu whose outside and upside down gestures, movements and acts are illustrative of the grotesque body. Accounting for Markus alias Machokali's blind and ridiculous devotion via grotesqueness, the text highlights the man's strange effort to have his body parts elongated:

The story goes that Markus used to be an ordinary member of Parliament. Then one day he flew to England, where under the glare of publicity he entered a major London hospital not because he was ill but because he wanted to have his eyes enlarged, to make them ferociously sharp (...) Enlarged to the size of electric bulbs, his eyes were now the most prominent feature of his face, dwarfing his nose, cheeks, and forehead. (p. 13)

As regards Silver Sikiokuu, the same ridiculous situation is disclosed as follows: "He (Silver Sikiokuu) did not have much money, so he secretly sold his father's plot and borrowed the rest to buy himself a flight to France and a hospital bed in Paris, where he had had his ears enlarged" (p. 14). Silver Sikiokuu borrows money to go and turn his natural ears into artificial scary ones on behalf of the Ruler's power. The writer shares with the potential reader the ridiculous side of this politician and beyond African politicians in addition to the

hilariousness. Therefore, it follows from these two disclosed situations that both the eyes and the ears undergo a metamorphosis on account of these political leaders' devotion to the Ruler. In fact, they have gone to hospital, not to get remedy for an illness, but to trigger other diseases. Such loyalty reminds me of Boxer's blind devotion to Napoleon in G. Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Like the character of Boxer whose maxims are as follows: "I will work harder" and "Comrade Napoleon is always right" (G. Orwell, 1989, p. 84), these political leaders sound to reassert their devotion to the Ruler in *Wizard of the Crow*. No doubt, they have been claiming that the Ruler is always right, hence self-destruction through the scary transformation of their bodies. By showing these characters' cult of personality such a way, the Ruler's close partners deny their own personality to the detriment of the Ruler. Accordingly, they make the Ruler be the epicentre of the people's aspirations.

Obviously, the human body becomes a building material that can be transmogrified according to human's desire, mainly for the political use. Their ridiculous or grotesque attitude is tantamount to their sublimation of political power that may represent the mother's body or object of love (S. Freud, 2016, p. 149) psychoanalytically speaking. Indeed, Freud accounts for the object of love is linked with the mother-child relationship in which the child is always claiming for the mother's body. Analogously, the political power the ruling class is enamoured of makes them become a child whose dream is to remain by the mother's side and get advantage of her. There is then no denial, their sublimation of political activities amount to making them children, and beyond leading them to self-destruction. As R. Harari (2004, p. 279) puts "[s]ublimation possesses a devouring side that is different from the adaptation to culture." as we are given to read through the political leaders' alien agency. Instead of elevating the mission which is theirs to the dignity of true politics which consists in working for the benefit of the community, the politicians in Ngũgĩ's novel make the potential reader see a grotesque and horrendous actions.

Therefore, the limits between the body and the world are weakened (M. Bakhtin, 1984, p. 313) to give room to the strange and unfamiliar picture in *Wizard of the Crow*. The enlarged ears paired with the protruded eyes analogous with electric bulbs suggest these two political leaders' political drive and beyond the stupidity of some African politicians to a certain degree. Ngũgĩ

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**“the human body becomes a building material that can be transmogrified according to human's desire”**

makes me explore a society replete with extraordinary creatures or to use sharp words a daemons world. Anyway, such a depiction is what gives the work of art its charm, its significance and its aesthetics. However, the political leaders' inordinate drive and ambition sound lurk behind and beneath these grotesque actions the author has been castigating.

## 2. Satirising dictatorship through the grotesque body

The question of dictatorship constitutes a burning issue that deserves criticising as we are allowed to read in *Wizard of the Crow* (2007). People in many countries such as Kenya experienced and are still experiencing political oppression. To give credence to such a reality or hypothesis, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o depicts the African ruler's inordinate political drive and lust for power through his grotesquely bulging body. Thus, the writer uses the aesthetics of grotesqueness not to make only a mock of the political leaders; but also to spotlight the dystopian reality the imaginary folk live in. In a society where the human body is no longer used for its natural function, that is the eye for sighting, the ears for hearing, and the tongue for tasting, but for political purpose, then there is a questionable situation that needs satirising. "He (Machokali) wanted to have his eyes enlarged, to make them ferociously sharp, so that they would be able to spot the enemies of the Ruler no matter how far their hiding places" (p. 13). The exaggerated picture of the eyes is part of the grotesque traits. It is crystal clear that Machokali is the Ruler's watchman, the one who is strong-willed to die on his behalf as his name means being able to spot the Ruler's potential foes and if necessary secure him. Wryly the narrator lets us read that the Ruler was so touched by his devotion and public expression of loyalty that he was given the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, an important Cabinet post, so that Machokali would be his representative eye wherever, in whatever corner of the globe lay the Ruler's interests (p. 13). The word "interest" amounts to testifying to the Ruler's hegemony, supremacy, influence and powerfulness. In this hyperbolised description of Machokali's role by the Ruler's side, only dictatorship or totalitarianism squares with grotesqueness. The Ruler and his groupie have us note that people have to abide by their norm, their worldview. Their power must be total, so must be the submission and the loyalty of the people. We are then in the system of the "everything for the power holder and nothing against him," as Machokali's enlarged and wide-open eyes aim at policing people worldwide.

Therefore, Ngũgĩ uses the abnormality, the grotesque as a backcloth of *Wizard of the Crow* to scoff at African politicians and then show their heinous

features. By depicting Machokali's exaggeratedly bulged eyes as the eye of the Ruler, Sikiokuu's hyperbolically widened ears as the Ruler's ear and Big Ben Mambo's extremely protruded tongue as his tongue, the writer shows how African nations are in the dictator's clutches and claws. Here, the cells or the organs of the human body are diverted from their natural role to contribute to a political life far greater than this role. In this way, politics sounds painted like a tool of threat and domination susceptible to shrink human freedom and then subvert Democratic values which are among many others the freedom of expression and the right to freedom.

Indeed, defining dictatorship in *Political Ideologies: Their Origins and Impact*, L. P. Baradat (2009, p. 239) states its nature in the following words:

A totalitarian state is a dictatorship in which the political leaders control every institution in the society and use them for political purposes as well as for the functions for which they are ostensibly designed. (...) All aspects of society controlled by the state are used as mechanism of political manipulation.

In addition to these social aspects and institutions mentioned by Baradat, I may surmise that politics uses the human body for its own purpose in the narrative of *Wizard of the Crow*. Such a contention is illustrative of the boundless force of dictatorship which is likely to make the citizens live in a sort of dystopian world. The reader of this novel is travelling through a dreadful world the imaginary people live in. Clearly, the historical society Kenya and Africa might stand for, offers its citizens both a climate of fear and a climate of terror to use W. Soyinka's words (2004, p. 1). There is no rebuttal, if the Ruler can have an eye on every nook and cranny of the globe through his representatives' swollen bodies (enlarged eye, enlarged ear and elongated tongue), then we live in a climate of fear and terror. In this line of arguments, I concur with Soyinka when he posits that "African nations, caught in an unending spiral of dictatorships and civil wars, are only too familiar with this exegesis of power (2004, p. 28). To apprehend and grasp fully the essence of dictatorship and dystopian society in *Wizard of the Crow*, one needs to view the political characters' use of their bodies as close secret agents willing to crush any opposition and resistance.

M. H. Abrams's definition of the term dystopia is a case in point. In *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, he suggests: "The term dystopia (bad place) has recently come to be applied to works of fiction, including science fiction, that represent a very unpleasant imaginary world in which ominous tendencies of our present social, political, and technological order are projected into a disastrous future culmination" (2005, p. 337). The present fictional world focuses on the dystopian sociopolitical reality in terms of systemic abuses of

power and their resulting negative effects on people. These governed people seem to be under the constant surveillance of the Ruler's henchmen who prevent them from achieving freedom.

Ngũgĩ carries the totalitarian ideal to fruition through the grotesque use of the dictator's fellow rulers' puffy body, thereby making us travel to Georges Orwell's *1984* (1950). In *Wizard of the Crow*, the Ruler's groupie's deformed organs of the sense (eyes and ears) that are watching, and hearing the people tally with Big Brother's menacing eyes that are watching you in Orwell's *1984*. Using the "you," anybody seems to be concerned with Big Brother or the Ruler's threat. Such a reality may go along with the Ruler's agenda in *Wizard of the Crow* to an extent.

Unlike Ngũgĩ who lets his characters morph parts of their bodies into

surveillance tools to cut down on the people's actions and freedom in the fictional society called Aburiria, Orwell has the credit for using technology to watch, threaten and if necessary, kill off rebellious people through the Ruler's pervasive and cumbersome picture paired with his threatening gaze. Obviously therefore, Ngũgĩ's narrative via the grotesque human body is an

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**“The obtuse meaning is a signifier without a signified, hence the difficulty in naming it”**

anguished and horrendous account of the political landscape in present-day Kenya and beyond Africa. It would then be exact to argue that *Wizard of the Crow* portrays the poor political management or dictatorship that seems indecipherable, thereby creating a feeling of a third meaning (R. Barthes 1977, pp. 54-68) that makes the hermeneutical work harder. For Barthes, the third meaning is the obtuse meaning. He writes thus “As for the other meaning, the third, the one 'too many,' the supplement that my intellection cannot succeed in absorbing, at once persistent and fleeting, smooth and elusive, I propose to call it *the obtuse meaning*” (R. Barthes, 1977, p. 54; italics in original). It follows from this contention that the third meaning Barthes alludes to is the obtuse one which is nothing other than what is beyond our comprehension as the grotesquely puffy body described in the opus.

Accounting for the obtuse or third meaning, he pens “The obtuse meaning is a signifier without a signified, hence the difficulty in naming it” (R. Barthes, 1977, p. 61). Correspondingly, I fail to name both the action and the attitude of the Ruler and his collaborators whose bloated body sounds indefinable and abstruse. The swollen body on account of politics is tantamount to arguing that bulging body has no reference in actual life, hence the third meaning. In writing the novel such a way, Ngũgĩ's main goal seems

to display the serious danger dictatorship poses to society. In this vein, he denounces dictatorial practices and some African leaders' inordinate political drive which is hazardous to socio-economic and political stability. He shows the terrifying degree of power and control a dictatorial regime can spawn. Thus, dictatorship can maintain the imaginary Aburĩrian people and by extension the Kenyan or African people in a dystopian society where life is under constant threats. "It is doomsday" as terrified characters reveal in the plot (p. 690). Undoubtedly, the third meaning Barthes refers to is commensurate with the mystery around the political arena in Kenya in particular and in Africa in general. In fact, *Wizard of the Crow* inheres in the background of the African dictator figure together with his mystery which needs satirising for the birth of a fair and a free society.

The writer then strives to shed light on this absurdity of power or what A. Mbembe (2001, pp. 102-141) designates as the aesthetics of vulgarity, because for Mbembe "the grotesque and the obscene are two essential characteristics that identify postcolonial regimes of domination" (2001, p. 103). As a writer in politics as he defines his role, Ngũgĩ refuses to remain indifferent to the pain of his fellow Kenyan or African citizens. In this vein, in *Writers in Politics: A Re-engagement with Issues of Literature and Society*, he determines his social role as follows: "The writer as a human being is a product of history, of time and space. As a member of society, he belongs to a certain class and he is inevitably a participant in the class struggle of his times" (N. W. Thiong'o, 1997, p. 68). Consequently, his struggle, his combat is to revile this vulgarity or absurdity and disastrous characteristics the African politics is run with. However, one should understand that the bloated body as portrayed by the writer is the one with good prospects for Kenya and Africa likewise.

### 3. Deconstructing the grotesque body: a metaphor of hope

In *A Teacher's Introduction to Deconstruction*, S. Crowley (1989, pp. 8-9) posits "[d]econstruction exposes the dissemination of textual meaning beyond what an author might have intended by trying to tease larger systemic motifs out of gaps, aberrations, or inconsistencies in a given text." P. Barry (2002, p. 77) has this to add: "The deconstructive reading, then, aims to produce disunity, to show that what had looked like unity and coherence actually contains contradictions and conflicts which the text cannot stabilize and contain." From these definitions, we are then allowed to understand that beyond Ngũgĩ's portrayal of the puffy human body as a political weapon of dominion, other meanings spring up. In fact, the swollen body is not to police



only the people as one could imagine, it rather means new life made of sanguineness, peace and happiness.

Consequently, we have solid grounds for reading from these binary oppositions: oppression and freedom, bad place and marvelous place or dystopia and utopia, pessimism and optimism, despair and hope, dictatorship and democracy, the rise of a new sun in which people are likely to live in peace given the deconstruction of dark and derogatory words to give room to the appreciative ones. So, the bulging body does not threaten any more, it only lets the potential reader and critic dream about a bright life for the Aburñrian people and beyond the Africans.

Indeed, if Ngũgĩ proposes a reflection on the figure of the despot and his tyrannical performances under the prism of grotesqueness, one must not lose sight of a ray of hope in this grotesquely swollen corpse. As R. Barthes (1975, p. 17) claims “The pleasure of the text is that moment when my body pursues its own ideas—for my body does not have the same ideas I do.” From this standpoint, it is crystal clear that the Grotesque body is not only about absurdity or vulgarity, it equally paints rosy picture of an Africa susceptible to rise from the ashes of despair if I were to let my body or my mind pursue its own idea which amounts to the birth of a marvelous world. Therefore, the Kenyan writer uses the grotesque not to ridicule or satirise only, but he also deconstructs the dictator’s image and agency, then making me give this image or action another meaning or connotation. As such, he has us be sanguine. Thus, reading this text, my pleasure is to decipher a ray of hope. The text gives us to read “To be pregnant is to carry a seed of a becoming (p. 680). This becoming is to me a good prospect for Aburñria and beyond for Africa.

It suffices to consider M. Bakhtin’s reflection on the grotesque again to be convinced of the relevancy of my viewpoint. He (1984, p. 317) writes thus “The grotesque body, as we have often stressed, is a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body. Moreover, the body swallows the world and is itself swallowed by the world.” Correspondingly, with Bakhtin we also find the idea of the grotesque as a continuum, an idea of infinite metamorphoses. We may transmogrify a murky situation into a better one if I were to be on a par with the deconstructionists’ aforementioned viewpoints. In this line of arguments, the birth pangs of democracy in Africa are likely to dawn one day. From page 681 to 682, this faith, this hope is highlighted through the following conversation which looks like a soliloquy on the part of the Wizard of the Crow, the eponymous character. The text reads:

“So I said to myself: Just as today is born of the womb of yesterday, today is pregnant with tomorrow.”

“What kind of tomorrow was Aburiria pregnant with? Of unity or murderous divisions? Of cries or laughter? Our tomorrow is determined by what we do today. Our fate is in our hands.”

“This thought must have been with me when, in a message to Machokali, *I wrote: Take care. The country is pregnant. What it will bear, nobody knows.* I left the note for Machokali because he was then the eyes of our country outside the country” (p. 681; italics in original).

From this soliloquy replete with images, we are left to dream of a bright morrow for the fictitious country and beyond Africa. Far from a foreboding, the metaphor of pregnancy is full of interesting promises. Thus, the bloated feature of both the country and its Ruler acquire an additional positive grotesque scent. The pregnancy of the country together with the Ruler's excessive potbelly is likely to open a hopeful vista, thereby creating another body as put by Bakhtin above. Anyway, the exaggeratedly swollen body of the Ruler in the chamber is commensurate with a bright and promising future. What matters in this description is his unavoidable imminent death to let dawn a new hopeful moment for his country since his body can be swallowed by the world to use Bakhtin. The following excerpt “When at the State House the Ruler, his body still grossly expanding, saw what was happening on television (...) his body was taking up the whole chamber, pushing his doctors and cameramen up against the wall” (p. 689) is suggestive of this upcoming hope.

This balloon figure like of the Ruler portends not a danger for the state, but the disappearance of the Ruler who is eventually the undesirable spot in this imaginary society. Beyond his threatening trait, the Ruler's new shape is likely to lead him to explosion and blowing up. Consequently, the land may retrieve peace and freedom through the deconstructive reading we have been labouring. In depicting the figure of the Ruler under this gigantic angle, the writer makes me infer that from the grotesquely bulging body, a new order can take place. Therefore, the grotesque style the novel is woven with conveys other meanings. As T. Eagleton (1983, p. 128) writes:

When I read a sentence, the meaning of it is always somehow suspended, something deferred or still to come: one signifier relays me to another, and that to another, earlier meanings are modified by later ones, and although the sentence may come to an end the process of language itself does not. (...) No sign is ever ‘pure’ or ‘fully meaningful.’

So, the most cursory examination of Ngũgĩ's representation of the Ruling class's excessive puffed-up body has me deconstruct the conveyed message of despair and then rise to that of hope. In the text, though we read that the author launches into a long tirade against dictatorship through the grotesquely puffy body, he all the same puts across a message of rebirth even though chaotic situation is perceptible as he puts it *Something Torn and New: An African Renaissance* (2009) as the title of his essay. The torn and exploded body should then leave room for a new order further to the demise of the dictator and his henchmen. As S. Freud (2016, p. 207) states in the last sentence of the penultimate paragraph of *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* "But no professional method of procedure is protected from misuse; a knife that is not sharp is of no use in effecting a cure." Therefore, to be effective and efficient, the knife should be well prepared, that is, sharp so that it can work correctly as the user wants it to. Such an image can go along with the swollen body of the ruler. This body must swell and blow up first before the ruler's death. As a result, the society will be released from prison, suffering and dictatorship.

### Conclusion

At the heart of my inquiry through this paper, I have been given owing to Psychoanalytic tool to note the shifting grounds of grotesqueness, especially how Ngũgĩ's *Wizard of the Crow* draws a parallel between the African political leaders' grotesquely puffy body and their unquenchable appetite for political power like a child yearning for his mother's breast and body. Ergo, I have been allowed to consider the grotesque style the novel is written in. Whether it is the grotesquely swollen human body or the metaphoric use of grotesqueness, this fiction remains that of ironical tone, mainly that of exaggeration. I can then put with Bakhtin that "Exaggeration, hyperbolism, excessiveness are generally considered fundamental attributes of the grotesque style" (M. Bakhtin, 1984, p. 303) as it is illustrated in *Wizard of the Crow*. In addition to the hyperbolised description of grotesqueness, Ngũgĩ sounds to construct from the grotesquely puffy body, a hopeful horizon through the metaphor of the pregnant and potbellied ruler and the country's as well.

Undoubtedly, the writer's attempt of fashioning his book in such a way gets answer in this assertion of his "The way power is organized can affect writers and their writing in several ways" (N. W. Thiong'o, 1997, p. 68). Therefore, his fondness for this grotesque tableau is dependent upon the messy situation the referential society is entrapped into. Definitely the whole novel is a dissection of the concept of grotesqueness as it questions the absurdity or

vulgarity, the unquenchable lust for power, the queer and inhuman side of politics, and then helps us have a ray of hope which eventually is likely to break the barrier between the power holders and the governed folk. The author then uses the grotesque as an efficient and effective technique as a key strategy to unveil the hideous side and discourse of dictatorship that lurk behind and beneath instabilities in contemporary Africa in addition to the hopeful message he makes us get.

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