

The rhetorical implications of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Wizard of The Crow*

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Résumé : La grande place accordée au lexique « mot » dans *The Wizard of the Crow* montre l'importance dévolue à la rhétorique dans cette œuvre. Cette étude consiste donc à montrer la capacité de Ngugi Wa Thiong'o à utiliser les attributs de l'art oratoire africain dans son œuvre tout en préservant les exigences de la rhétorique universelle. Le discours de ses personnages puise sa substance dans le rythme et l'image.

Mots clés : mot, rhétorique, persuasion, vérité, magie, discours.

Introduction

The excessive occurrence of the lexical item 'word' throughout Ngugi's *Wizard of the Crow* connotes different layers of interpretation. This linguistic item stands as the basic element in the weaving up of most of the literary features in this novel. Actually, the literary characteristics such as theme, plot, setting, characters and language are all affected by the pragmatic values of the lexical item 'word' in the story. Its importance is clearly shown through the following statement by the Wizard of the Crow who says "that is where we diviners come in," the Wizard of the Crow went on, as if continuing talking

to Virginia. "Words are the food, body, mirror, and sound of thought. Do you now see the danger of words that want to come out but are unable to do so? (p.175). This implies that words are the elements this novel is made of. Regarding the importance of literary texts as instances of communicative discourse rather than simple ornamental product of linguistic stylistic, Ayo Ayodele (1999:158) states: "Contemporary interests regard literary works as not only an exemplification of linguistic categories (form) but as pieces of communicative discourse – a discourse of one kind or the other."

Both the consideration given to a literary work as an instance of communicative discourse and the place given to the lexical item 'word' in *Wizard of the Crow* lead me to find out the rhetorical implications of this novel. Since Ngugi is among those who advocate the use of African languages in African literature, *Wizard of the Crow* was first written in Kikuyu and then translated into English. I am not going to debate about the use of local or foreign language but I will examine the author's ability to make English carry the weight of the African culture. In so doing, I am going to skip the unnecessary debate between J.R. Firth and Daniel Jones who respectively support the prosodic school and the phonemic one. The first scholar considers the sentence as the fundamental unit of linguistic analysis whereas the second one refers to the 'word' as the basic element in a linguistic study. As far as I am concerned both points of views provide substantial tools for a good linguistic examination depending on the objective to be achieved. Accordingly, I will refer to one of them once needed. The completion of this study will be made through the definition of rhetoric, rhetoric motives, rhetoric strategies and rhetoric devices.

1. Definition of rhetoric

Since the ancient time up to now, a lot has been said about the concept of rhetoric. The common feature of all its different definitions refers to it as a speech which is designed to persuade with eloquence. Kenneth Burke (1969:49) presents the diachronic changes in the meaning of rhetoric in the following terms:

"Speech designed to persuade" (dicere ad persuadendum accommodate): this is the basic definition for rhetoric (and its synonym, "eloquence",) given in Cicero's dialogue De Oratore. ... Three hundred years before him, Aristotle's Art of Rhetoric had similarly named "persuasion" as the essence and end of rhetoric, which he defined as "the

faculty of discovering the persuasive means available in a given case. "Likewise in a Lost Treatise, Aristotle's great competitor, Isocrates, called rhetoric "the craftsman of persuasion" (peithous demiourgos), ... Somewhat more than a century after Cicero, Quintilian, in his Institutio Oratoria changed the stress, choosing to define rhetoric as the "science of speaking well" (bene dicendi scientia). ... For he equates the perfect orator with the good man, and says that the good man should be exceptional in both eloquence and moral attributes."

Because of the political issue which is the main theme of *Wizard of the Crow*, I am going to stick to the definition in which rhetoric equates persuasion in a broad sense. This means that I do not restrict myself to the moralistic hortatory but expand my understanding of this word to its pragmatic skill at the service of any cause. Being in the line of avoiding any restriction to the concept of rhetoric, Roland Barthes (1989:83) writes:

"Literature possesses one element which defines it specifically: its language; this specific element the Russian formalist school has already sought to isolate and to treat under the name of Literaturnost, "literariness"; Jakobson calls it poetics; poetics is the analysis which permits answering this question: What is that makes a verbal message a work of art? It is this specific element which, for my part, I shall call rhetoric, so as to avoid any restriction of poetics to poetry and in order to make our concern with a general level of language common to all genres, prose and verse alike."

If language is a mere instrument in scientific fields because they manage to render it as neutral as possible, language is the backbone of literature where the epideictic plays an important role. Here, language is valued for its dedication to the pleasure of the audience. Since literature stands at the crossroads of all scientific domains, topics related to social, psychological, historical and political matters have been given great concerns in most of literary works. That is the case with *Wizard of the Crow* which portrays the Black ruling elite in the Post-Independence Africa where individual and state censorships are very current. And the language is the most vulnerable item when censorship is concerned as Roland Barthes (1989: 25) states: "A language is a much more important object of censorship, perhaps, than all the rest.". The triad made of politics, Africa and language explains to some extent the importance given to the lexical item "word" and "word malady" in *Wizard of the Crow*.

2. Rhetoric motives

When writing this section, my inspiration derives from the bulky and interesting work from Kenneth Burke whose book entitled *A Rhetoric of Motives* (1969) provides substantial and relevant material for this study. Behind any rhetorical performance, there is a motive; be it hidden or not. In this respect, Kenneth Burke (1969:43) writes:

"there is an intrinsically rhetorical motive situated in the persuasive use of language. And this persuasive use of language is not derived from "bad science", or "magic". On the contrary, "magic" was a faulty derivation from it, "word magic" being an attempt to produce linguistic responses in kinds of beings not accessible to the linguistic motive. However, you can see beyond the accidents of language."

From this quotation, I deduce that there are two main rhetoric motives: persuasion and magic. Both elements feature in one way and another characters' discourse in *Wizard of the Crow*. Incantations expressed by the Wizard are the speech acts which induce thoughts, attitudes and feelings in his patients. Persuasion is a weapon used by those who are fighting for gaining the Ruler's consideration and by Arigaigai Gatherer Constable through his storytelling. Regarding the language use of many other characters in this novel, I have to add one more element in the list of these motives: the emotive function of language. However, the motive related to the pleasure of the sound is not effective in such a committed work.

2.1. Persuasion

The first purpose of language is communication which can be only achieved through understanding of the message. Comprehension requires being convinced by what a speaker says. That is why the appropriate word and attitude should be used at the right moment and at the right place. Defining persuasion, Kenneth Burke (1969: 51) states: *"As for "persuasion" itself: one can imagine including purely logical demonstration as part of it; or one might distinguish between appeals to reason and appeals to emotion, sentiment, ignorance, and the like, reserving the notion of "persuasion" for these less orderly kinds of "proof".*

Logical demonstration is what characterises most of the discourses of the characters in *Wizard of the Crow* in which the battle

of words is the main substance of the story. For instance, “No religious center attracted more people of so many persuasions as all Saints Cathedral.” (p.661). The Ruler also takes a great pleasure in organising speech events where his ministers, particularly Machokali and Sikiokuu, are in clash of words. The following quotation is about Machokali’s answer to one of Sikiokuu’s accusation about his relationship with Tajirika. He says:

“Sikiokuu could no longer restrain himself at the antics of his rival. “Kaniuru is my friend,” Sikiokuu said. “But you too, Machokali, have lots of strange friends in Santamaria. If not so, to whom did you go to say farewell in Santamaria just before you left for America? Or will you deny that you made a secret trip to Santamaria?” Caught unaware, Machokali, not sure how much his archenemy knew about this visit, decided to come clean but tinker with the truth here and there. “Yes, I did visit Santamaria, as I do many other parts of Eldares. I did not know that it was prohibited to visit certain parts of Eldares.” “Yes, but why did you go there incognito?” “Look. I went there to meet with my friend Tajirika. We met openly at the Mars Café. Is that what you call incognito?” “Why did you take a taxi instead of your chauffer-driven Mercedes-Benz?” Sikiokuu challenged him. “Surely, everybody knows how difficult it is to drive through Eldares during rush hour. It might even be quicker to take a mkokoteni pushcart.” “Was the taxi going by some other route?” “Taxi-drivers know side streets better than anyone.” “Was it not during the meeting at the Mars Café ... “Don’t twist my words,” Machokali said heartedly. “I told Tajirika that, in my absence ... that may be hidden from him.” (pp. 532-533)

Machokali is so persuasive that he succeeds in eliminating the threat caused by Sikiokuu’s accusation. His words have brought so much evidence that he even dares to question the relationship between Sikiokuu and Kaniuru. This is not good for Sikiokuu who is forced to use all his talent to find a way out from this accusation. Arguments and counter arguments are the main tools of the game of persuading and dissuading.

Being a great storyteller, Arigaigai Gatherer Constable has enough potential to draw his listeners’ attention. Once involved in the search of information, “A.G. rejected the way of force and opted for that of words. He would use his tongue to find his way around and unloosen of his listeners. (p.50)” He enjoys telling stories about the skill and power of the Wizard of the Crow. He is so persuasive that all his accounts sound to be true. His reputation pervades all the country. Actually, he is the source of a lot of rumours which are

spread throughout the country. Tajirika is also among those who use their tongues at their best to get what they want. For instance, the narrator says that *"Tajirika started a new career selling furniture and household goods. He was not a carpenter, but he had the gift of a smooth tongue."* (p.451) Thanks to his tongue, he succeeds to eliminate all his political enemies before overthrowing the Ruler. He is the new almighty president of Aburiria.

Another way of being persuasive is to give the floor to the actual person who is involved in the action. To convince the American Ambassador, Mr. Gemstone, about his capacity to defend the Western interests, The Ruler gives the floor to the Chief of Staff of his army who says:

"Yes" the head of the military said, "we are waiting for this raptag army, first reported to us by a motorcycle rider, to reach the capital. Then we shall encircle it with the armoured cars and the latest guns you sold to us some time ago – old, but against unarmed civilians, still lethal –"

"A national massacre. To be televised. Live," added the head of the police with unmistakable pride.

"You have heard from the horses's own mouth," the Ruler said," (p.579)

This is indubitably the best way to carry out a logical demonstration because the version given by the head of the army cannot be dismissed. So, he is able to transform his words into deeds. The text is full of instances in which speeches are given to the concerned people themselves. This is another example: *"One evening Nyawira told Kamiti that two men would come for him on the following day and take him to meet the Central Committee of the Movement for the Voice of the People so that he could say in his own words and from his own lips that he wanted to be a member"* (p.756). This kind of information is more persuasive than the recycled one which is a second hand one.

Since the aim of magicians and witches is to make-believe, they skilfully resort to persuasion to convince their patients. Accordingly, characteristics of persuasion will come out from time to time in the next section.

2.2. Magic

From ages, people know that words produce wonders when they are properly used. And incantations are efficient treatments given by sorcerers to cure some illnesses. In rhetoric magic, the power of words is used at their utmost as stated by Kenneth Burke

(1969:42): *“When you turn to political exhortation, you are involved in decisions that necessarily lie beyond the strictly scientific vocabularies ... sense of that term.”*

The use of language by the Wizards in this novel is not mere “bad science” but an oral art. Kamiti and Nyawira who are the main witches use incantations to induce actions in other people. But “A person cannot be cured by word or deed unless he or she believes in the power of that word or deed. Now, our people say that good advice springs from frank words, and when it comes to curing an illness, taboos should not be in the way...” (p.279) The Wizard of the Crow’s strength of persuasion drives his patients to trust him and to believe in his words. That is the case with Kaniuru who went to seek more power from the Wizard. He seems doubtful at the beginning and nothing works. He gets a solution to his problem when he agrees to do exactly what the Wizard prescribes:

“He woke up in the morning and went to the mirror in the bathroom and chanted the sorcerer’s incantation seven times, only to have the word seven echo in the corridors of his mind as if it had a life of its own and was asserting itself. The magic must be working Seven. The Seven Herbs of Grace. The word kept playing tricks on him. Sometimes the word seven found itself in the middle of a sentence: The Herbs of Grace were Seven. Sometimes at the beginning: Seven were the Herbs of Grace. Seven Grace. Grace Seven. Grace Mugwanja. Grace Mugwanja?” (p.362)

The only treatment is the repetition of an oral passage which should be performed every morning. As his previous patients, Kaniuru notices great positive changes in his life after strictly following the Wizard’s prescription. The incantations performed by Kaniuru are not mere linguistic entities because these words contain a mystical dimension.

The actual modern world still provides enough room for the witches’ activities. The long queue in front of the Wizard’s shrine shows how people strongly believe in the power of the incantations. Thanks to the street-storytelling accounted by A.G., the whole country is informed about the wonders achieved by the Wizard of the Crow. Most of the patients who suffer from the “malady of words” are cured. For instance, the Wizard of the Crow is sent to America by the Aburirian Government to cure the Ruler. Although most politicians do not want to admit the power of the Wizard, they do not hesitate to consult him secretly. This is the case with Vinjina and Tajirika:

"The Wizard of the Crow started talking as if thinking aloud in their presence. His voice was round and soft, and it soothed and carried the listener along. Nyawira felt her heart drawn to the voice almost as if she had never heard it before. To Vinjina the voice felt particularly powerful because it was disembodied. Even Tajirika responded to its soothing tone, gradually quieting down, and, for the first time in a long while, he seemed to be listening to someone. Vinjina noticed this change in him and was even more grateful to the mysterious voice. (p.175)

Aphasia experienced by The Ruler, Tajirika, Sikiokuu, Vinjina and the Wizard of the Crow himself influence a lot the development of the plot. As a psychoanalyst, the wizard knows the cure required to voice out the inner feelings and he says that *"talking was the first step on the road of healing."* (p.450)

In a political and social environment in which speech is the first element which falls under censorship, people are striving to hide their true intentions which often result in speech disturbances caused by the internal conflict between the unconscious upon the conscious. That is why, the Wizard has to trace back the substances in his patients' psychic life. In this respect, Juliet Mitchell (1988:426) asserts:

"Psychoanalysts, at one level, are hearing and retelling histories. The patient comes with a story of his or her own life. The analyst listens; through an association something intrudes, disrupts, offers the 'anarchic carnival' back into that history, the story won't quite do, and so the process starts again."

The Wizard's patients have first of all to confess what is troubling them in order to unburden all the thoughts which imprison them. He proceeds by using the retrospective story that a character makes about his own existence, a story about his own personality to fill the gap between their own desires and what they experience. The solution lies on the overt expression of the inner thought. Because of the high political pressure, most of Aburirians are syntheses of contradictory attitudes between personal desires and the fight to be in the Ruler's political line. In many cases, the emotive function of language stands as the only way out to expiate the bad stimulus which damages their minds and souls.

2.3. The emotive function of language

Since people have problems to dissociate emotion, feeling and passion, all these three words are used as synonyms in this study. Emotion which is considered as the expressivity of the inner state of mind is carried out through monologues, songs and praises in *Wizard of the Crow*.

Monologues

Living in a hostile environment where free speech is a rare commodity, people are forced to monologue to pull out their inner expressivity. They speak to themselves because no one can be trusted. Actually, they are forced to silence because of politicians' suspicion. Since it is not easy to contain all this pressure, people manage to talk to themselves as if they were talking to somebody else. There are two kinds of monologues: interior and external.

The interior monologue has been rendered effective when the performer is among other people and do not want them to read his mind. He will be absent-minded for a while because he will be deep in his own thoughts that he will be paying less attention to what is going around him. At least, he discharges what troubles him. Before agreeing to cure Tajirika, the Wizard of the Crow engages himself in the following monologue:

"The man must be living in terror of his own silence, Kamiti thought, and witnessing this misery Kamiti felt sorry for him all thought of vengeance vanished. Kamiti was now preoccupied with the challenge posed by the malady. What was this that had made voluble Tajirika's prisoner of silence? And what if and if only?" (p.171)

In this interior monologue, the Wizard tries to sort out how he is going to deal with this case without disclosing his intention to his patient and his wife. All the people who are in trouble when answering questions from the police or the Ruler always make a pause while undertaking an interior monologue for a better appreciation of the situation. When doubting about the degree of confidence of his ministers, the Ruler dives into interior monologues which leave him absent-minded for a while. All the characters in this novel use this technique in order to organise their thoughts first and then find the appropriate words to convince their interlocutors. Such is the case with Kaniuru:

"Besides, Kaniuru feared Sikiokuu's possible reactions. How was he, Kaniuru, going on to explain his visit to the shrine without revealing that he had gone there to seek the very magical protection that Tajirika had talked about in the video? He feared that he might inadvertently disclose the sources of his new wealth, prospective contractors for Marching to heaven. No, Sikiokuu must be kept in the dark. He might demand a share and even rights of seniority. No, the sources of his new wealth and the bank accounts would remain a secret known only to him and Jane Kanyori. But how was he going to impart information without placing himself at risk vis-à-vis the Wizard of the Crow or jeopardizing his own interests by letting Minister Sikiokuu know more than he should know?" (p.364)

Since thoughts are not translated into words, the danger of catching the "malady of words" is high. That is why the external monologue can be a solution.

Actually, the external monologue helps to discharge the psychological burden which may lead to mental disturbances as caused by the "malady of words". In Aburirian autocratic society, each individual is both the patient and the psychoanalyst. This is what Sikiokuu undergoes with the Wizard of the Crow:

"Sikiokuu could hear very clearly what he was being asked but found it difficult to answer. Finally he nodded his head. "No, tell me in words," the Wizard of the Crow insisted. "Do you ever dream of occupying the highest office in the land?" "Yes, I have." He said through clenched teeth. ... Power I dream of that power every hour of the day, whether awake or asleep. And why not? The fact is that today I am the de facto head of the State, the power behind the throne, so to speak, and were the Ruler to fall ill and die today ..." (p.414)

The sharing of this external monologue with the Wizard of the Crow becomes a permanent threat for Sikiokuu's life. He is almost sentenced to death if the Wizard discloses his external monologue to his archenemy Machokali. He felt safe when these words were part of his external monologues but now they belong to the bulk of confidence. To avoid this kind of fatal error, most characters in this novel resort to monologues. Even the Ruler feels confident in voicing out his inner thoughts through external monologues:

"I have reviewed many things in mind," the Ruler started as soon as Machokali, Kaniuru, and Sikiokuu were brought before him, "and I now

know the identity of the real enemy of the country. But in order for me to wage an effective fight against this enemy, there are a few things I want to straighten out...." (p.556)

To keep it secret for himself, the Ruler murmurs these words which are not audible to people around him. In so doing, surprise will be effective. It will require excellent rhetorical skills to find the appropriate answers to the questions which will be asked. Nyawira also resorts to external monologues when searching for Kamiti. She cannot rely on somebody else without jeopardising both her friend's life and her own. That is also the case with Vinjina who is struggling to regain Tajirika's love in speaking to herself so as to unburden the excess of her emotional charge.

The discourse of People of Aburiria is full of monologues because they have to extract themselves psychologically from the group so as to behave as if on an island where their voices are echoed in a mental desert. To achieve the same purpose, some of the characters in *Wizard of the Crow* use songs.

Songs

In Africa, many activities are carried out when singing. A few examples on magic, love and praising will be taken to illustrate my point. Witches adore singing and make their audience respond in chorus. Sometimes, these songs are means to enter the second world through the manifestation of trances. Although the story of *Wizard of the Crow* is interspersed with songs, no illustration is provided of songs used for magic purposes. The first song appears on page 8 as follows:

"A record player was programmed to play only one hymn:

*Our Lord will come back one day
He will take us to his home above
I will then know how much he loves me
Whenever he comes back*

*And when he comes back
You the wicked will be left behind
Moaning your wicked deeds
Whenever our Lord comes back*

The idea of the endless repetition of this hymn pleased him so much that he had amplifiers placed at the four corners of the seven-acre plantation so that passersby and even others would benefit from the tune and the words."
(p.8)

This song aims at praising the Ruler for all the good things he is doing for Aburiria. There is no better way to express praises than through songs. Female lovers in Africa are fond of love songs to express their feelings towards male counterparts. In order to persuade Kamiti to rely on her, Nyawira sings:

*"In the Christian Heaven we shall meet
We shall meet in the Christian Heaven"* (p.87)

Nyawira sings this hymn to soften Kamiti's heart. Both are in a dreadful situation in the State House. Accordingly, Nyawira uses this song to let Kamiti discover or understand that it is her who came to help him.

Praises

Since African political leaders enjoy being praised, all the people around them use their most effective skill to say things which will please them. And the Ruler of Aburirian really likes a lot the performance of his ministers who show how they adore him. They even compare him with the Almighty God as Sikiokuu and Kaniuru put it:

"Yes, Your Mighty Excellency, "Sikiokuu answered quickly, even as he assumed that the Ruler was about to expose Kaniuru. "May the Ruler be praised for his great inborn wisdom," added Sikiokuu.

"It comes directly from God", Kaniuru opined.

"But it also springs from his own efforts," Sikiokuu said, resenting Kaniuru's attempt to join his song of praise. "He has mastered all the book learning."

"He is the true dispenser of knowledge," said Kaniuru. "the teacher of teachers, the number one

teacher. The Ruler is the source of all the knowledge of the world"

"That's enough," the Ruler said, pretending to be angry with their excess. "It is not good to praise a person in his presence; it might embarrass him."

"I, too, share that sentiment, Your Mighty Excellency," said Sikiokuu. "Oh you should hear me when I am not in your presence, for that's when I feel most free to sing your gifts."

"I, too, praise you all the time, wherever I am, Machokali said, not to be outdone.

"Deep in my heart," kaniuru said, "I know no calling higher than that of singing your praises all the times because of what you have done and continue to do for us. One day I overheard my own heart saying, If God and the Ruler were standing together side by side and their hats were blown off their heads at the same time, I would pick up the one that belongs to the Ruler first, and without realizing it I had said loudly: Alleluia, may my Lord and master be praised for ever and ever, Amen."

"I am going to ban this business of people putting me on a pedestal with God," said the Ruler, with disingenuous firmness.

"You would turn every person into a lawbreaker, because that is one law that people cannot possibly obey," said Sikiokuu. (p.541)

All the protagonists involved in this conversation are competing to find the most poignant expression to praise the Ruler. Each of them tries to exaggerate what the first speaker says as if what is said before does not better portray the Ruler's attributes. The reason for doing all this is explained in the following passage from St Augustine quoted by Kenneth Burke (1969:50): *"He likes what you promise, fears what you say is imminent – but to do what they know should be done."*

This passage taken from St Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana* written near the beginning of the fifth century exposes reality which is still current in Africa. In *Wizard of the Crow*, these praises are particularly made by political people who are begging a tiny share

of power from the Ruler. Even students at school and colleges are being taught the science of parrotry as described in the following quotation:

"... because they assumed that the seminar was intended for those who had not yet accepted parrotry as a norm. By eleven o'clock, the main speakers – a professor of the history of parrotology, a professor of the philosophy and psychology of parrotology, a professor of the politics of parrotology, a professor of literary parrotology, a professor of the science of parrotology, and finally the chairman of the seminar." (p.572)

All these bright minds are put together in order to teach the youngsters how to praise their Ruler. The Government of Aburiria does not hesitate to spend money for that; and it is the money well-spent. Even if the Ruler orders him to *"cut out his prologue of praises and get to the point, he did not seem unduly perturbed."*(p.519)

The effectiveness of a rhetoric motive lies on the strategies used by the speaker. Both persuasion and magic are strengthened by the performer's talent which discards any doubt from the listener.

3. Rhetoric strategies

The handling of truth is the most efficient rhetoric strategy because it is the key feature of persuasion. Eloquence itself does not produce effect if it is not associated with truth. Truth refers to order, rules whose values depend on logic, rationality, reason and emotion. A discourse which is true should be coherent and cohesion should be noticeable. However, the complexity of the African political environment may lead to view "truth" in a different perspective because it is not always easy to dissociate truth from a lie and vice versa. This is also the way postmodernists in social sciences handle the concept of truth. For instance, Pauline Marie Rosenau (1992:78) asserts:

"Skeptical post-modernists object to the monopolistic claims made for truth, whatever the rationale. As Derrida suggests, "There is no such thing as a truth in itself. But only a surfeit of it. Even if it should be for me, about me, truth is plural (Derrida 1979:103). These post-modernists understand truth claims to be merely the product of power games, manipulated into position by those whose interests they serve. If this is so, if truth claims are really quite arbitrary, then they do not merit special privileged status or superior authority. As Foucault (1975) puts it, "We are subjected to the reproduction

of truth through power, and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth."

In most African countries in which free speech is not tolerated, people do not hesitate to distort truth and reality for survival purposes. That is the case with Kaniuru who faces a trial in front of the Ruler. He has to charge Sikiokuu wrongly in order to be out of concern. In this respect, the narrator says:

"What Kaniuru did not disclose was that his friend at the bank, Jane Kanyori, had set up a bogus account in Sikiokuu's name to facilitate Kaniuru's supposed deposits. Neither did he disclose that Jane Kanyori had given him a bank card in the name of Sikiokuu, enabling Kaniuru to withdraw the money he had deposited in Sikiokuu's account and redeposit the money in his own at other banks. Everything according to the book. Kaniuru was an artist, and his calligraphic skills became useful in forging Sikiokuu's signature." (p. 536)

With all this evidence, Kaniuru's malice made things difficult for Sikiokuu to prove the opposite. All the bank accounts and the withdrawal cheques bore his name and signature. What else could be needed to charge him? Sikiokuu feels power moving away and he has no means to stop it. The only reasonable attitude is to be silent and wait. In this respect, Pauline Marie Rosenau (1992:78) states:

"Truth by its very existence is said to silence those who disagree. Truth claims "serve to justify the powerful and to make the weak feel at fault and inadequate" (Handler 1988:1036) Lyotard argues that truth "eliminates" the argument of the "other," the point of view of someone else that upsets what we define as the truth even though it is only what we have come to take for granted." (Lyotard, 1984).

Accordingly, a difference should be made between actual facts and evidence. In this case, truth is mainly based on evidence rather than actual facts. And nobody is going to believe Tajirika who is telling his story without distorting a single passage. The Ruler himself says that he has ever met such a crook. A lie is taken for the truth and vice versa. The concept of truth is very ambiguous. No clear distinction is made between lies and truths. The line between the two concepts is always moving depending on the one who is

using the encratic sociolect. The Ruling class as well as the police have their own truth as stated in the following example:

"Excuse me," the Wizard of the Crow said. "It seems as if your men failed to understand what I told them. I thought I'd been clear, but I was wrong. I told your people that my task is to capture daemons that afflict the mind or body; theirs is to capture felons."

"Don't take the police for fools. They know when one is serious and when one is not. They know that words have surface and deeper meanings. The habit of taking bribes has taught them the language of parables. When a policeman wants a bribe he does not say, Give me a bribe; he says, It is very cold today, even if it is hot as hell. And you are supposed to say, Why don't you take this Buri note for tea? So, although you did not say yes directly, the police knew that your no was a kind of yes. ..." (p.406)

It comes out from the above examples and the post-modernists' theory that language or discourse transforms truth largely into a mere linguistic convention. It is a recipient which can be filled with any liquid. It is quite understandable that *"The Ruler was a genius of double talk"* (p.700). The success of such a performer lies on his capacity to control himself in order to eliminate any hint of panic and the quickness of his mind to find the appropriate idea transformed into convincing discourse. This is what makes Sikiokuu says to Tajirika *"Please hold yourself together"* (p.445) when he noticed that there was no coherence in his discourse because of panic. It is the same case with Machokali when the narrator says that *"Machokal tried his best not to panic, but his crestfallen look belied his attempts at indifference."* (p.239). Truth and self-control are consolidated by niceties such as the rhetoric devices which enable to draw the listeners' attention.

4. Rhetoric devices

This section refers to the linguistic or stylistic skill of the practitioners of rhetoric in *Wizard of the Crow*. The efficiency of a rhetoric performance depends a lot on the suprasegments or prosodic features and the rhetoric figures. This novel is full of these linguistic devices used at their utmost to please the Ruler or to better convey their messages. Before tackling the issue related to rhetoric

devices, it sounds interesting to mention that there are two kinds of sociolects. In this respect, Barthes (1989:120-121) writes: "*As a matter of fact, the language of power is always furnished – its simplicity remains valid as long as power and non-power are in their place;...*"

This quotation means that encratic discourse which is within power is full of pedantic neologisms whereas the acratic discourse which is outside power resorts to popular dialects. To some extent, the encratic sociolect is based on repression but the acratic sociolect lies on subjection. The analysis made by Vergeley (2008: 5) can explain the particularity of the register used by the characters in *Wizard of the Crow*. He wrote:

« Depuis plusieurs décennies, l'analyse des discours en situation de travail est devenue un axe de recherche fort dynamique porté par de nombreuses disciplines émanant notamment des sciences du langage, des sciences de l'Information et de la Communication, des sciences du travail, des sciences de la gestion, pour ne citer que ces exemples. L'essor de cet objet empirique et de ce type de terrain de recherche a donné naissance à de nombreux travaux. »

Any occupation produces discourse which may sound incomprehensible to outsiders. That is also the case with politics which sometimes requires a specific register with particular paralinguistic features. Further studies will deepen the analysis about the sociolects within and outside power. For the time being, I am concerned with suprasegments and rhetoric figures.

4.1. Suprasegments or prosodies

The production of speech is subjected to many parameters such as suprasegments to make the message comprehensible. The listeners may miss the gist of the content of the message if he is not aware of the impact of its prosodies. The same utterance performed with different suprasegments may deliver different messages. In this respect, Adebakunola A. Atolagbe (1999:130) asserts: "*A suprasegment or prosody is a feature of speech above the segment (the speech sound – the phoneme), that spreads over the phonemes. It is something not really tangible – the tones used.*"

Regarding the rhetorical analysis of *Wizard of the Crow*, I am mainly interested in intonation, duration, tempo, loudness or

intensity and interruption or pause. But prosody such as nasalization, assimilation, linking, syllabification, accent, rhythm

and stress have been left out because they do not have any particular effect on the characters' discourse in this novel.

Intonation is the first prosodic feature I am going to deal with. It is marked by the fluctuation of the speaker's voice which can lead the listener to take a declarative sentence for an interrogative one or vice versa. In *Wizard of the Crow*, the Ruler is skilful enough that is not always easy for his interlocutors to get the accentual and attitudinal features of his speech. For instance, Tajirika does not know how to react towards the following utterance:

"What have you brought us? The Ruler asked Tajirika almost gently. "Your Mighty Excellency, they came for me in the morning and I did not have time to, uh, to..." Tajirika stammered and then stopped. The Ruler realized what had made Tajirika pause and hastened to put him at ease. "Don't worry about coming here with empty hands. Send your gifts later. What I am now asking you is this: what do you want to tell me in the presence of these counsellors? "About what?" Tajirika asked, puzzled, for he felt that he was being treated as if he was the one who had asked for the audience." (pp. 524-25)

Tajirika is puzzled by the question because the intonation sounds unusual to him. The Ruler is the one who gives orders and how come he can almost be begged to speak without the Ruler being straightforward. Most of his interlocutors are lost when the Ruler uses a low tone. To make them respond he has to repeat himself in a high tone.

Obviously, anybody speaking to the Ruler has to use a low tone. However, when speaking to each other, their tones fluctuate according to the context. The Wizard of the Crow is the only character in the novel to use the normal fluctuating pitch when speaking to the Ruler.

The second point refers to the speed of a speech whose linguistic denomination is tempo. An utterance can be said in a normal, quick or low speed. In this study, the last two devices are the most relevant because they reveal the interlocutor's intentions. As a matter of fact, these two features fulfil linguistic and affective functions.

The slow tempo is used by both the Ruler and the Wizard of the Crow. To show his authority, the Ruler takes all his time before

uttering any word. This also shows confidence in what he is saying because he has the situation under control. The slow tempo

performed by the Wizard of the Crow meets the need to reassure his patient that he can trust him and confess everything. But the other people around the Ruler need to use the fast speed to show their consideration to him. For instance: "*Oh, no, no! "an alarmed Tajirika hastened to deny ---"* (p.747).

Loudness or intensity influences also the content of a message. A loudly spoken utterance in certain speech contexts may suggest quarrelsome or impoliteness on the part of the speaker whereas a lowly spoken utterance may suggest confidence. Accordingly, in this political environment where orders and secrecy are revered, the intensity of the speech in *Wizard of the Crow* plays an important role in the locutor's speech act. Words like murmur, whisper and their synonyms occur a great deal throughout the novel. In the following instance, the Ruler is asking Tajirika, A.G. and Nyoja to keep secret the information about the tree that produces dollar:

"It is difficult, even today, to make sense of what happened afterward. Even A.G., despite his gift of words, was taciturn, but people claimed that this was because he, Tajirika, Njoya, and kahiga had been sworn to secrecy under the penalty of their tongues being cut out for blabbering. But when they would close in on him and beg him to explain with ardent pleas enriched by generous offers of drink. A.G. would tell them to gather around so he could whisper a thing or two. And indeed, true to his word, A.G. would tell this part of the story in a whisper so low that it was hard for some listeners to make out all that he was saying, but they would refrain from interrupting him lest he change his mind and leave the story untold. He spoke loudly only when he paused to swear "True, Haki ya Mungu," his way of punctuating what might otherwise have seemed too incredible a narrative of magic or greed." (p. 550)

Sometimes the volume is high, particularly when Sikiokuu used to question people under arrest.

When a normal conversation is interspersed with long or short pauses, this fact may suggest a particular feeling from the speaker or the listener. It is quite common that many people resort to pauses before answering a question or continuing to speak in order to check the effect of their words on their interlocutors in such a political and social environment in which free speech is a rare commodity. That is the case with many people when speaking to the

Ruler of Aburiria. For instance, Tajirika cannot give his answer straightforward because he needs to think twice: *"I am talking to you.*

The rhetorical implications of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o

276

Tajirika "the Ruler repeated. "Are you hard of hearing? What did you do with the three sacks of dollars? With whom did you share the money?" he added, glancing at Machokali." (p.538)

Tajirika does not hasten to answer because he needs time to make up his mind about what he is going to say. He should say words to express ideas and thoughts which should please the Ruler. For a different purpose, pauses or interruptions are used by A.G. when telling stories to add more suspense to what he will say next. *"When he came to this point in his narrative, A.G. would pause and ask his audience dramatically: Why do you think I am stressing exhaustion? But before anybody could respond A.G. would answer his own question."* (p.546)

In his address to the people of Aburiria, the Ruler makes a lot of pauses so that his words and ideas sink into the population's mind as expressed in the following statement: *"the Ruler paused to allow that to sink in within the minds of his televiewers."* (p.25)

Regarding silence, it is highly praised because of the lack of confidence and trust within the people of Aburiria. Even the Ruler has to keep silent to avoid disclosing his machiavellic plan. In his hiding place, Nyawira and Kamiti have to avoid noise in order not to be seen. Sometimes, the Ruler's silence aims at bringing confusion in his minister's mind who resort to different rhetoric strategies to get the gist of what he really thinks and wants. Another point is the fact that the population is not well informed or not informed at all that is why all kinds of rumours circulate throughout the country. It is not surprising to hear from A.G.'s audience that *"Don't you see? There are elements of truth in the rumors we used to hear."* (p.284) And another case, where people do not want to be disturbed in thoughts such is the case with A.G. when he says that *"I sat down on the rock and Kahiga, and Tajirika followed suit in silence, for to be honest, speech had become unbearable, a burden."* (p.547). On the other hand, the narrator says that *"politicians do love talking, don't they, marvelling at their ability to confer even in silence."* (p.548) *"For days on end, after the drama at Eldares, the Ruler kept to himself, trapped in secrecy. Terrified by what his silence might mean for his future, every minister preoccupied himself with working out strategies for salvation."* (p.235)

Suprasegments are necessary supplements for rhetoric figures because they stand as two sides of the same coin. The prosodic features are fully expressed in a discourse in which figures are well chosen.

4.2. Rhetoric figures

The strength of rhetoric lies on the syntactic presentation of words which may please the ear and stands as a weapon for persuasion. Defining the concept of rhetoric figures, Ducrot and Schaeffer (1995:581) assert:

« L'étude des figures constitue très tôt un domaine frontière entre la grammaire (qui s'octroie une compétence sur les figures de mots et les tropes) et la rhétorique, dont les figures de pensée seraient le domaine privilégié. A côté de la tradition rhétorique, naît une tradition grammaticale identifiable séparée à partir de Donat (IV^e siècle). La distance de la figure à l'expression naturelle et ordinaire est alors qualifiée par référence à la logique et à la grammaire. La figure tire son origine des mêmes sources que les vices de forme : ce serait un défaut si elle était accidentelle et non pas voulue. Grammairiens et rhétoriciens identifient ainsi techniquement les figures comme des vices, utiles dans l'écriture, ou comme des impropriétés, excusables au titre de la déviation ornementale. »

The specificity of a rhetoric figure lies on the fact that its use is not very common among the native speakers. It requires an excellent command of the language which makes this kind of discourse more 'raffiné' than the popular register. Despite their various social and intellectual backgrounds, all the characters in *Wizard of the Crow* handle with much delicacy the subtleties of language through the use of rhetoric figures. For instance, the following quotation illustrates how the minister of Information uses the lexical item "figure of speech" to deny what he said previously:

*"Big Ben Mambo had no problem to reversing himself."
"I want to remind you all that the Wizard of the Crow is here of his own volition. He volunteered to use his facility with mirrors to locate Nyawira's whereabouts," he said, and then added, "I want to apologize to him. I was only being mischievous when I talked about a firing squad. It was a figure of speech. Pumbo la lugha kama alivyosema Shabaan Roberts." (p.683)*

This kind of instances in which rhetoric figures are used can be found throughout the novel. The most common are: paronomasia (the use of homonyms which are not synonyms), chiasm, repetition, hyperbole, synecdoque, oxymoron. Further studies can be carried

out to deepen this point. This present analysis limits itself on a survey of the different aspects related to the rhetoric figures. A

substantial work requires more time and more space because a lot can be said.

Furthermore, less consideration will be given to the classical categorisation of the rhetoric figures which presents three main groups: tropes, figures of thought and syntactic figures because the political issue governs the whole orientation of the story. The tension which prevails throughout the plot leads to the consideration of both the connotative and the ornamental functions of these figures because everybody tries to use at his best his survival strategies in order to cope with such a suspicious environment. So, very few people just speak for the pleasure of the ears because "Yes, words. And actions born of the right words. So take good care of what you say from now on. What poisons a person goes through his mouth ..." (p.364). Accordingly, the rhetoric figures will be presented individually both for their connotative and ornamental functions. Actually, the first function contributes to the expression of the idea or the message and the second one embellishes the discourse.

Chiasm. Chiasm is a rhetoric figure extensively used in *Wizard of the Crow*. It consists in repeating the same word or phrase inversely in the second part of a sentence. For instance, Nyawira says about resisting the Ruler's corrupted government that "We oppose the right of might with the might of right." (p.210). Once more, she uses the same figure of speech in one of her songs when expressing her love to Kamiti: *In the Christian Heaven we shall meet, We shall meet in the Christian Heaven* (p.87). The use of this sophisticated figure of speech by Nyawira reflects her level of instruction. She is not the only one to use chiasm because many other instances are found in the book: "Thank you, Lord of the Universe, for giving me something to save my skin and skin my enemies." (p.224) and "Human will can will away God's will." (p.239). These expressions are properly used because they serve both the connotative and the ornamental functions.

Synecdoque. Synecdoque has an important place in such a novel where autocracy and dictatorship regulate the life of the whole population. So people do not hesitate to consider the words "Ruler" and "country" as synonyms because the Ruler himself claims to make only one with the country.

Hyperbole. Hyperbole is the description of someone or an object through superlatives which exaggerate at its utmost the nature of the concerned item. This rhetoric device is current in a discourse in which praises are highly valued. The most prominent example is when Machokali manages to make the Ruler understand that an invitation to the States was given although the members of the Global bank left without meeting him. He says that *““Your Holiest and Mightiest Excellency, Beloved of the Whole World,” Machokali quickly responded,... ”* (p.242). This is the register commonly used by those who would like to benefit from a dictator. These words contain more fear than sincere respect and affection. Accordingly, it is not surprising that Tajirika says that *“You are a deity who dispenses fair justice to us mortals, giving hope where there is despair, even resurrecting dead souls...”*. (p.561) People may have the impression that the speaker is just expressing himself without any conviction about the content of his own speech. It is a kind of ritual he is supposed to undertake. When Sikiokuu is questioning his lieutenants about the Wizard of the Crow’s ability, he says *“Do you think that the Wizard of the Crow is God’s twin brother?”* (p.419) The complete trust in a wizard’s magic power is a current phenomenon both in traditional and modern communities in Africa. Even if some reluctant people can be found sparsely here and there, the common trend is a strong belief in what he does. This cannot be otherwise because the Wizard of the Crow has shown a lot of evidence. And Sikiokuu himself will resort to the Wizard of the Crow’s power to find out about his destiny. So it is the case with the Ruler.

Repetition. Repetition is the rhetoric figure the most used in African oral languages for it meets different purposes. In the following example, it helps the speaker to stress her idea that the land is the common property to all Aburirians. In order to persuade Kamiti to join the Movement of the Voice of the People, Nyawira says that *“the problems of the country are ours. Nobody can bear them alone. We cannot run away and leave the affairs of the land to ogres and scorpions. This land is mine. This land is yours. This land is ours.”* (pp. 208-209). Another example is taken from page 155 where the narrator says that *“Nyawira described how the bird flew and flew and flew until it finally reached the smelting yard and landed on the branches of a tree.”* and when he says that *“He talked as if words came out first and thought followed, although just now it was more like thought had become tired of following*

words and got stuck in only one desire:" (p. 408). This kind of repetition helps to increase the rhythmic nature of a discourse. In this respect,

Basile Marius Ngassaki (2006: 44) writes that "*N'oublions pas que le rythme est un élément artistique indispensable à l'art et à la littérature orale.*" This shows that Ngugi borrows a lot from traditional African oral literature.

Paronomasia. Paronomasia is a play upon words which sound alike but with different meanings. Three examples have been taken from *Wizard of the Crow* to illustrate Ngugi's ability to handle this technique: "*Agonize less; organize more.*" (p. 427), "*A sacred self soon becomes a scared slave, leading a scarred life.*" (p. 430), "*Crr or was it coral or crawl or cruel?*" (p. 472) and "*a loot-a-continua*" (p.201) which can produce a quid pro quo with "*la lotta continua*".

Oxymoron. The use of oxymoron in this novel is somehow justified by the ambiguity resulted from the content of *Wizard of the Crow* in which ambivalence seems a way out because people are afraid of expressing their exact opinion. Even the Ruler himself is trapped in this game. The narrator says that "*The Ruler was a genius of double talk.*" (p. 700). So, the technique of putting together two antonyms together describes better this flexibility in the opinion. For instance, expressions like "*from the drama of victory*" (p. 282), "*joyous abandon*" (p. 282), "*The Ruler broke into mirthless laughter*" (p. 538), "*Despite his contribution to the dramatic rise in tourism, the Ruler was furious*" (p. 577), "*cold war*" (p. 583), "*it was a smile of suppressed anger*" (p.507) and "*the success of the deception.*" (p.361). This may explain why there are lots of contrasts all over the story. Actually Ngugi enjoys using contrast to demonstrate the uncertainty which prevails in the living atmosphere in Aburiria. This technique reaches its peak with the following examples: "*As the tears of joy streamed*" (p.216), "*They are in and out of focus*" (p. 380), "*we have looked high and low for Nyawira*" (p. 406), "*She enters a hole as in Alice in Wonderland. Darkness. Light.*" (p. 412), "*And in her accounts of her social ins and outs he saw no inconsistencies*" (p. 423), "*recalling all the arguments and disagreements*" (p.431), "*reality and illusion are getting mixed up*" (p. 446), "*I saw doubts and faith struggle inside the man.*" (p. 475), "*the carrot and the stick*" (p. 559), "*The prize for success, each thought, would be exhilarating, the cost of failure.*" (p. 562), "*various expressions of relief and disbelief.*" (p. 495), "*claims and counterclaims*" (p.91), and "*Let's agree to disagree*" (p. 581). This last expression reveals how ambiguous people's discourse is because it is not common to hear people agree to disagree. Because

of the political environment in which free speech is not allowed, characters are forced to use this kind of rhetoric device which is

fully expressed through circumlocutions contained in proverbs, riddles, anecdotes and other kinds of sayings.

Regarding the abundant use of the proverbs by all the characters of *Wizard of the Crow*, it seems interesting to mention a few to illustrate this point.

"But don't burn your bridges." What is the saying? One may find oneself back to places one had thought that one had left for good. (p.213)

Our ancestors used to say that one cannot see the back one's head. (p.280)

"Our people say that hard work always pays." (p.286)

for, as the saying goes, "the early bird catches the worm" Kaniuru said, throwing in a couple more proverbs for what he assumed to be greater profundity. (pp. 86-87)

"My child" Wangahu hastened to say, alarmed by the direction the conversation was taking "Hurry and Hurry-it broke up the house of Harry and Harriet, the English people say. It is not good to rush into decisions. (p.287)

"Well" kaniuru said, somewhat disappointed, "as you like it, for as the saying goes, the one in need is the one who presses his needs. Let me remind you: don't be as slow as the tortoise in the story... Wangahu himself felt like reminding Kaniuru that it was the slow tortoise who won the race, not the hasty hare, but he held back. (p.287)

Sikiokuu was now in charge of the country, and as the Waswahili say, Puka akenda panya hutawala. Might he be not be devoured by the rat that now ruled in the absence of the Cat? (p.299)

"You know the saying that when two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers. (p.378).

Sometimes, the characters themselves complain about the sophistication of the proverbs because their meanings are not always obvious as in the following "brèves reparties":

"Please don't speak to me in riddles. Say directly what you are trying to tell me." (p. 589)

"Please spare me the wisdom of folktales" (p. 473)

A comprehensive list of the proverbs found in *Wizard of the Crow* requires a specific study; that is not the purpose of this analysis. The interest in presenting a sample of proverbs results from the place of the image in African verbal art. Some proverbs

require a substantial interpretation to get its connotation. To consolidate the idea of a strong use of image in this novel, a word is

said about symbols. Ngugi's understanding of magic power of number leads him to create a mystical dimension with numbers seven and three in *Wizard of the Crow*. I am not going to undertake a similar study as the one I did with the impact of numbers in *A Grain of Wheat*. Instead, I will provide a few examples to show the importance given to number seven and three in *Wizard of the Crow*.

"The birthday celebrations would always start at the seventh minute of 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 the Ruler's Birthday. The same applied to time, and any hour, depending on the wishes of the Ruler, could be the seventh hour." (p. 12)

The power of this number is not reserved to the Ruler because Kamiti is using it to cure his patients. For instance, Tajirika was given the following prescription to repeat the incantation: *"Every morning you must stand in front of a mirror look at it, and say the formula seven times. Do that seven days a week for seven months."* (p. 360)

Regarding number three, a religious connotation is given to it. In short, the narrator says:

"How did they come to accept the three as holy?" "Numerical three was the sign. The sweepers, to whom Satan first appeared, were three. One of them has a walking stick with three small twigs at the handle. Into this mix bring in the Holy Trinity. Three then becomes a holy number. ..." (p. 730).

The rhetorical implications of *Wizard of the Crow* reach its paramount with the study of the rhetoric figures. Their abundance expresses the vitality of the characters' discourse and their skill to get out of complex situations.

Conclusion

All the literary features of *Wizard of the Crow* are moulded into rhythm and image which characterise the African verbal art.

Referring to the rhythm which functions through the alternation of two or three elements, Cauvin (1980 : 22) asserts that "*Le binarisme*

consiste à réunir deux éléments qui se mettent valeur mutuellement, soit par parallélisme, soit par symétrie." Parallelism concerns the association of two similar features and symmetry refers to elements which are antagonistic.

The alternation between magic and political issues provides *Wizard of the Crow* with a rhythmic structure which reaches its climax in the curing of the Ruler by the Wizard of the Crow where politics are mixed up with magic powers. The gradual steps have been achieved by Constable, Kaniuru and Sikiokuu who resort to magic powers to gain political promotions. This results from the alternation of political and magic themes through the representatives of the political powers of Aburiria and the defenders of Witchcraft such as Kamiti and Nyawira. The setting is also affected because most crucial events swing from the shrine to the State house.

Accordingly, Ngugi's technique in the handling of language cannot be otherwise because the basic features of all the speeches in *Wizard of the Crow* are made of rhythm. It is the common pattern found in the rhetoric motives, rhetoric strategies and rhetoric devices. Anytime persuasion is used, a counter-argument is produced to dissuade. Supernatural powers alternate with natural ones because Kamiti and Nyawira sometimes doubt about their own mystical powers. It is quite obvious that in such a political environment where tension between both opposite social classes occurs very often, praises and insults stand as the two sides of the same coin.

The alternation of truth and lie in the rhetoric strategies testify that rhythm is the standard pattern which organises all the rhetoric elements in *Wizard of the Crow*. Sometimes truth is mixed up with lie, that makes for instance the Ruler says that Tajirika is a crook although he is just telling the truth. On the other hand, Kaniuru who is lying persuades everybody to believe his story. In this respect, the narrator says that "*The art of his tongue and the strategy of blaming everything on Kanyori was working, Kaniuru thought, so he invented a few more details.*" (p. 716). The success of this kind of performance derives from the ability to control oneself. The loss of it may lead to disaster. That is why most of the speeches in *Wizard of the Crow* are punctuated with pauses and silence. The alternation of speech with pause or silence produces a rhythm which renders to the text all its intensity and seriousness.

The apex of “binarisme” comes out through the figures of speech such as paronomasia, chiasm, repetition in which the rhythm

The rhetorical implications of Ngugi Wa Thiong’o

284

produces both sound and meaning effects. And the image characteristic is expressed through the shower of proverbs, symbols and local words all over the novel. Both characteristics, rhythm and image help to preserve the vitality of the African verbal art.

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Abstract : *The excessive occurrence of the lexical item “word” in Wizard of the Crow shows the importance given to rhetoric in this work. This study aims at showing Ngugi Wa Thiong’o’s ability of handling the features of the African oral art while preserving the requirements of the universal rhetoric. His characters’ discourse is mainly based on rhythm and image.*

Key words: *word, rhetoric, persuasion, truth, magic, discourse.*