

## The Carnavalesque Grotesquerie in Richard Wright's *Big Black Good Man*

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### Abstract

This study proposes a Bakhtinian carnivalesque reading of Richard Wright's story "Big Black Good Man." In his investigation of the pre-historic epistemologies of the novelistic discourse, Mikhail Bakhtin mulls over the Rabelaisian grotesque delineations as being among the nascent manifestations of that discourse. The workings of the carnival dynamism in Wright's piece is meant to question not only the genre frames, but also to playfully lay bare the violent hierarchies that characterize human expectations and ideational schemata. This "parodic" stylization on his part might amount to even being critical and self-critical burlesquing (caricaturing) that renders literature a discursal spectacle of the space-racial imaginary. Wright's story is replete with this carnivalesque tendency that dwells on meaning/power being negotiated and produced through the materiality and corporality of characterization and setting as well as plotting, making use of the geo-visual preconceptions and sensibilities. These sensibilities are here approached in the context of a carnivalesque-grotesque ecology.

**Keywords:** Richard Wright; Bakhtin; Carnavalesque; Grotesquerie; Uncanniness.

Although it is not the place here to trace and discuss the genealogy of the American naturalism, much less Richard Wright's practice on that front, still it is significant to point out how a writer in the line and vein of Wright comes to finally re-orchestrate the time-honored generic rubrics of this formerly dominant tendency in the American letters. Thus, his naturalistic-satiric leanings might be seen suffering a shift in "the dominant"<sup>1</sup>, just to borrow Roman Jakobson's terminology, which entails other issues, be they formal or thematic, pertinent to the question of literary evolution.

To map out the Wrightesque opus, it is apt to say that his writerly credo of naturalist fiction has come to preside over as well as to exhaust this tendency in the American literary canon in modern times. His earlier, and even later, naturalist writing is better characterized as having "a scientific standpoint, inventing test-tube situations" (Bradbury 1992, 132) where age-old heroes such as Bigger Thomas and Cross Damon are placed. These situations might now be freshly approached from the perspective of the Bakhtinian poetics of carnivalism, given the shared ground both the naturalist practice and the carnivalesque earthliness as seminally theorized by Mikhail Bakhtin could be related to. Also given the

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fact that the naturalist tradition has been more practiced than theorized, despite the critical legacy associated with it, it is to be accommodated now in the context of the aesthetic of carnivalism and grotesque realism. Hence, it is attempted, through the lenses of the said aesthetic, to see how this tradition has been appropriated in the writer's hands for him to move beyond the confinements of the naturalist determinism. Conversely, one might bring to bear Malcom Cowley's and Frank Norris's designation as regards the "pessimistic determinism" of naturalism which is prone to be diluted, as they tend to see it amalgamated "with romantic optimism about the future of mankind" (1947, 414, 415). Such optimism is already prefigured by what Bakhtin deems to be the romantic "revival of the grotesque genre ... [that is] very different from the carnival folk concept of the previous ages, although still containing some carnival elements" (1984, 36). This is a further reason why the Jakobsonian notion of the dominant is better recalled as a rationale along with a Bakhtinian reading of Wright.

As writer of such epoch-making works as *Uncle Tom's Children* (1938) and *Native Son* (1940), with all the protest lore emanating from his now well-canonized literary legacy, Wright sounds to have taken an utterly different route with narratives that thrive in the comic, satiric and even the self-critical in his "Eight Men" (1961). With the writer's traditional topoi and thematic formations now being reintroduced in a ludic fashion, one might propose that he is self-consciously involved in carnivalizing his opus and the patterning of his writerly experience by himself acting out self-subversion. This might prove true of his very valedictory piece "Big Black Good Man" where he shows traces of what amounts to being a neo-baroque stylization that defamiliarizes the violent hierarchies—the potentially visual violence is to be stressed here—that typify the genre frames of the grotesque in art and literature. This entails having the naturalist potentials pressed to their limits, and thus carnivalized to the extent that Bigger Thomas's existential invisibility, for example, morphs into a grotesque, yet dialogic, visibility.

Having this premise in mind, the aim is to approach Wright's fiction from the perspective of carnivalism as inherent in Bakhtin's dialogism, which throws a fresh light on the schismatic discourse having to do with the racist and sharply polarized white-black binary. Carnival, or the carnivalesque, as a discursive socio-cultural manifestation of the heterogeneity of human discourse and praxis is to be examined in the plotting and characterization of Wright's story, as it shows art's dialogic nature *vis-a-vis* the otherwise authoritative monologism and cultural monotonies. What is more, the carnivalesque component is spatialized (concretized) through the materiality of the story elements that dialogize the optic or visual apparatus. This is so because of the fact that the grotesque, according to Bernard McElroy, is aesthetically based in the physical and the visual in the pictorial arts, whereas in literature this agency is taken over by narration and description that correlate to visualization (1989, 7). That is why here and elsewhere the topographical facets of the carnival dialogics and its grotesquerie seem to be the dominant in the artistic and literary renditions. Incidentally, the very "modern concept of 'race' has depended on visual epistemologies" (Tuhkanen 2009, xi), which is particularly relevant to the carnivalesque spectacle as narrativized, or rather space-raced, in Wright's anatomy of racial corporality and imaginary.

In Wright's "Big Black Good Man," the narrative seems to have invested in what Bakhtin designates as the chronotope of encounter in the "alien world" (1981, 245). In this particular piece, the body- and

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place-based dialogism and semantics rely heavily on its carnivalesque facet stamped now with its quasi-gothic and neo-baroque environs. A slice of this dialogics will suggestively give an idea about the matrices at work in this alien-world encounter:

"You laugh?" Olaf asked whimperingly.

"Sure I laugh," the giant shouted.

"Please don't hurt me," Olaf managed to say.

"I wouldn't hurt you, boy," the giant said in a tone of mockery. "So long." (1961, 104–5)

The alien-world encounter as such recalls "the play of the Baroque [that] involves the bleeding of borders, an invitation to the spectator to step into another reality" (Egginton 2005, 62). The uncanny nature and human-ecological nuances of this encounter and its dialogics, moreover, have an enantiomorphic bent and character that is usually met with in the Afro-American literary experience and thematics, but faintly dealt with as far as the negotiation of power apropos of carnivalesque inversions and grotesquerie in Wright's fiction are concerned. Enantiomorphism in this context is meant to imply positioning oneself as a virtual object due to the workings of double-mirroring (reversals) of carnivalism.

Wright's narrative here dwells on the idea of difference by pushing the binaries to their absurd and ludic extremes *provisionally*—and parodically—rendering the racial spectrum solely consisting of stark blackness and stark whiteness. The story, so it seems, "comically upsets stereotypical expectations and gently mocks white paranoia" (Scofield 2006, 189). It tries, however, to implicate the space-racial imaginary beyond being a farrago of paranoiac underpinnings by spatializing and thus defamiliarizing worldviews. This becomes even more evident by the mere choice of the locus. In this case, it is the geographical periphery of whiteness, or of the white race: namely, the wintry Copenhagen, where the avatar of the black beast or the dark mammoth entity is now haunting the utter North. Though Michael D. West underestimates the choice of the story's foreign *mise en scène* as being typical of an impressionistic travelogue mostly based on the writer's short visit to Sweden (2011, 364), yet it is notable that sometime in his writerly adventure "Wright ultimately pursued transnational spaces that allowed him to reconfigure narrative as unbound to national literary forms and social relations" (Craven & Dow 2011, 70). This search for transnational spaces is further endorsed by Thadious M. Davis who underlines Wright's predilection "for the consideration of the intersection between race and place manifested in the power struggle" (2011, 83). In keeping with the dialogic-carnavalesque dynamism, this might call to mind the blackface minstrelsy<sup>2</sup>, especially in its creolized variations, as the writer now, loaded with the earlier Afro-American mimetics, tries to negotiate these representations or spatializations through the aegis of counter-mimetics, or counter-creolization for that matter.

This would also translate in "Big Black Good Man" in the very creation of the platform of geo-visual grotesquerie which proves graspable as it prepares the reader to recall from his literary depository other genre variations of the Great North narratives. Presumably, in this very context, the reader is about to read one of these narratives in reverse, and let this be, for instance, a travesty of Jack London's fictioning of the North. It is stimulating to have Wright's naturalist black mimetics re-inscribed in the white mimetics

of London, himself a naturalist, who is tacitly travestyng this mimetics in his *The Mutiny of the Elsinore* (1914). By re-mapping London's literary geography, it follows then that the black beast is now faring in the white wilds of civilization, geared, so it seems, with its beastdom. To go even further, one might argue that Wright's grotesque design is overwritten against the backdrop of Anglo-Saxonism as experienced and expressed by London's anxious "white-skinned, blue-eyed Aryan[']s" (London 1915 [1914], 161) last sigh when under sail in the South Seas. He is the deteriorating Nietzschean "blond beast" (2007, 23) who "perishes because of the too-white light he encounters" (London 1915 [1914], 161). This paragon of the white race is now ironically, if not ludicrously, going to perish because of the *too-dark* presence he encounters. This dialogic-carnavalesque dismantling of power—i.e., uncrowning—is thus stated by Bakhtin:

All that is high wearies in the long run. The more powerful and prolonged the domination of the high, the greater the pleasure caused by its uncrowning. Hence the great success of parodies and travesties, when they appear at the right time, that is, when the reader wearies of high matters. (1984, 305)

Likewise, London's text betrays a primordial carnivalesque moment through the tentative and temporary questioning of the waning white authority and monotones being now self-subverted. The carnivalization of the white-dark atavism of London's narrative thus vicariously goes on: after the mutiny of the Elsinore, the brunettes beget the dark beast who walks in now to take over the mainland Elsinore and to dethrone its king, having already *uncrowned* Captain West, this *inevitable white man*, whose existence is overwhelmed by the "inevitable clown-grin" (London 1915 [1914], 114) in a reverse journey that reshuffles the stereotypical mythoi.

The aesthetic of the carnivalesque reversal as such seems to have been materialized in Wright's hands and become the driving principle of plotting that morphs into the propensity of the game. In rapport with the carnivalesque-theatrical props in the story's plotting is Mark Seltzer's theorizing about the practical joke in the context of uncanniness. The human-ecological underpinnings of his presentation of the counterfactual interaction between different worlds might be appropriated to be concomitant with the Bakhtinian counter-mimetics of grotesque realism. The carnival might thus be readily seen as a manifestation of the "socialized trance" (Goffman 1982, 113, as cited in Seltzer 2016, 135) of the frame-breaking and the frame-building. "The practical joke," Seltzer contends, "is one of the calisthenics of social interaction rituals by which make believe makes belief and then discredits it," describing "a function for fictionality in the little worlds sustained by these encounters" (2016, 135). Debatably, the trance here is intermediated by the space-racial imaginary nourished, as it were, by the violence of the visible, which endows it with its subversive character.

The narrative, or rather the counter-minstrelsy, in "Big Black Good Man," is seeded by one of these encounters. It opens up with a Danish hotel clerk who is mesmerized by the apparition of the big Afro-American guest. The very moment Olaf Jenson's placidity and well-being is stirred by the visitation of the "brooding black vision" (96) and "evil blackness" (103), the racial ramifications of blackness and negritude are magnified, spectacularized, and even gothicized. The Londonesque, and even the

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Hamletesque, topoi of Elsinore are not hard to grasp in Wright's refashioning of the experience as disseminated in those Ur-texts. Consistent with the chronoptic representations of the alien world, it is apt to say that Jim does not look like any 'Niger' Olaf has ever met before. He is one of those giants of myth, or maybe he is the diabolic Titan—it is tempting to recall the Titan Oceanus: the conquered god whose power is now regained—who has just been cast by the sea. On the face of it, it seems that this *gargantuan* black entity, whose ancestors were driven away in the high seas in the slave-ships, is now coming back on the deck of one of those modern-age freighters to exact the historical and the universal revenge, in some mysterious way, on this Danish, this typical pedigree of whiteness who is now being perplexed by a reversed white blackface performance.

Olaf's hotel-managing humdrum—or here placid, mock officialdom—is suddenly and horribly disturbed when

he just stared up and around at the huge black thing that filled the doorway. His reflexes refused to function; it was not fear; it was just simple astonishment. He was staring at the biggest; strangest, and blackest man he'd ever seen in all his life. (95)

It is apt to refer to Bakhtin in his attempt to map out what he terms grotesque realism as he underlines that “[e]xaggeration, hyperbolism, excessiveness are generally considered fundamental attributes of the grotesque style” (1984, 303). This excessiveness has more to it than meets the eye. On the one hand, “[a]thletic competition, in several ways,” John Dudley argues, “functions as a metaphorical representation of the ideology of naturalism” (2002, 53). On the other hand, and as far as the encounter depicted above is concerned, it is important to notice that “[a] grotesque world in which only the inappropriate is exaggerated is only quantitatively large, but qualitatively it is extremely poor, colorless, and far from gay” (1984, 308). Therefore, the gayness in the aforesaid encounter derives from what Bakhtin designates as the grotesquery of the “pathos ... of the qualitative wealth” (1984, 308). What appears to be a simple astonishment on the part of the hotel clerk turns out then to be the racial fear—qualitatively exaggerated, or rather spatialized, for that matter—as the narrative proceeds.

Yet for now, Olaf's experience might be conceived in terms of the uncanny as defined by Sigmund Freud as “that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar” (1997 [1919], 195). The narrative, too, goes on detailing the Frankensteinian disproportionate black mass, which brings to bear the Bakhtinian designation of the carnivalesque body: “It towered darkly some six and a half feet into the air, almost touching the ceiling, and its skin so black that it had a bluish tint. And the sheer bulk of the man!” (96). Obviously, the black thing is presented in terms of grotesque realism, which combines the gothic and the comic in the amalgam of the serio-comic fiction, as “there is a built-in narrative tension between the ludicrous and the fearful, the absurd and the terrifying (Edwards & Graulund 2013, 4). The very description of the human body, what is more, goes in tandem with what Bakhtin has to say of the Rabelaisian delineations: “The human body becomes a building material. The limits between the body and the world are weakened” (1984, 313). This neo-baroque symbiosis of the world and the body creates a grotesque ecology out of the shards and flotsams of the phenomenal world which could be readily groped for in Wright's text:

His chest bulged like a barrel; his rocklike and humped shoulders hinted of mountain ridges; the stomach ballooned like a threatening stone; and the legs were like telephone poles... The big black cloud of a man now lumbered into the office, bending to get its buffalolike head under the door frame, then advanced slowly upon Olaf, like a stormy sky descending. (96)

This grotesque ecology and its unruly condition, furthermore, has a quasi-revolutionary twist to it; it is nothing else but the ritual of the "comic crownings and uncrownings" (Bakhtin, as cited in Roland Knowles 1998, 6) based on ambivalence, where the king becomes the jester and the jester the king, as already intimated in London's inevitable clown-grin.

This twist, or rather poetic, goes into the very plotting of the narrative and orchestrates its grotesque thematics of the qualitative wealth. Nowhere is this better registered than in the idea of the black man's physical features and stature being magnified and Olaf's being diminished:

There was something about the man's intense blackness and ungainly bigness that frightened and insulted Olaf; he felt as though this man had come here expressly to remind him how puny, how tiny, and how weak and how white he was. (96–97)

In keeping with the Freudian uncanny, it might be argued that though the Fool has provisionally become the king when the now physically-dwarfed Olaf proves to be so submissive to Jim's behests, following the unacknowledged law of the carnival, yet the above-delineated confrontation has much more to it in terms of abject heroism. Conversely, Jim's bitter disproportionality is that of "the Abject Hero [who] is again doomed to a doubled existence: parodying a role that is, in reality, already his own, and imitating a state that he already inhabits" (Bernstein 1992, 31). To recall Seltzer's poetic of the social trance apropos of Bakhtin's dialogic defamiliarization of the world it might be posited that by having his image doubly reflected in the racial mirror, Jim self-consciously masters the art of caricaturing himself. His monstrosity is watered down and thus becomes subversive by him "occupying the logically impossible space created by the intersection of the satanic and the servile (Bernstein 1992, 27). This sense is to be building up even further when the locus of the story is seen as very typical of the carnivalesque ambience; the hotel Olaf is running embraces people, usually students and sailors, from different nationalities, which considerably reifies the carnivalesque nature and induces the space-racial imaginary of the narrative in hand. Actually, it is more a brothel than a hotel—just reminiscent of the medieval taverns and alehouses—where hierarchies and issues of class, gender, and race, are provisionally suspended. This is the very locale where Lena, the whore, feels at home, and she never finds anything alarming or menacing in the uncanniness of Jim. Moreover, the immanent dialogics of Lena's body—itsself shared by all and becoming also a genuine part of the world's material and its human ecology—translates into her mediocre position as the unruly and ambivalent woman in the carnivalesque tradition; she is "the devoured and the devouring womb of the earth and the ever-generated body of the people" (1984, 226). She is herself the bodily representative of the carnival uncanniness, being the threshold oscillating between Olaf's coziness and Jim's monstrosity.

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As the cultural bearings of Wright's story disseminate through the body's visual apparatus and its space-racial derivatives, it is apt to say that the double climax of the narrative, when Jim on two different occasions approaches Olaf and embraces the latter's throat, tallies with the grotesque realism of the body's deformity and malfunctioning via carnivalesque counter-calisthenics. Jim's, and for that matter Wright's, sense of emplotment—this grotesque reconfiguration of human ecology—might be understood as a mock rehearsal of the Foucauldian body politic, which is “a set of material elements and techniques that ... invest human bodies and subjugate them by turning them into objects of knowledge” (Foucault 1977, 28). Given this emplotment, Jim's and Olaf's bodies turn into objects of knowledge via the metaphorism and mechanism of the carnival and the characterization of abject heroism. Hence, both characters' subject-positions seem to be estranged and reduced to the grotesque body that opens up into a new whole. This is how Jim's and Olaf's bodies are infused, with the former being noticeably hyperbolized and the latter being degraded:

They stood an inch apart. Olaf's pasty-white features were glued to the giant's swollen black face. The ebony ensemble of eyes and nose and mouth and cheeks looked down at Olaf, silently; then, with a slow and deliberate movement of his gorillalike arms, he lifted his mammoth hands to Olaf's throat.... He [Olaf] could not move. He wanted to scream, but could find no words. His lips refused to open; his tongue felt icy and inert. Then he knew that his end had come when the giant's black fingers slowly, softly encircled his throat while a horrible grin of delight broke out on the sooty face... Olaf lost control of the reflexes of his body and he felt a hot stickiness flooding his underwear. (103–4)

The exaggerated delineation of the body parts; that is, “the ebony ensemble of eyes and nose and mouth,” those parts that protrude allowing the body to infuse with the other bodies and with the world are more often than not emphasized in Bakhtin's theorizing about the grotesque body and its imagery (1984, 316). Of extreme significance here, too, is the attention being geared toward Olaf who is reduced to the lower parts of his body when he wets and smears his underwear. Such somatic transformations have further implications in the context of the carnivalesque ecology.

The rotation of the grotesque human body as representative of the human condition is best shown in Bakhtin's account of it:

The entire logic of the grotesque movements of the body (still to be seen in shows and circus performances) is of a topographical nature. The system of these movements is oriented in relation to the upper and lower stratum; it is a system of flights and descents into the lower depths. *Their simplest expression is the primeval phenomenon of popular humor, the cartwheel, which by the continual rotation of the upper and lower parts suggests the rotation of earth and sky.* This is manifested in other movements of the clown: the buttocks persistently trying to take the place of the head and the head that of the buttocks. (1984, 353; italics mine)

Being caught in the mechanism of the humorous cartwheel, and rendered in terms of the cosmic tropes, Jim and Olaf's somatic infusion or reversal has a further carnivalesque-evolutionary twist, as this rotating topography and movement is considerably substantiated by another Bakhtinian percept, which is *becoming*:

The grotesque body... 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. (317; italics mine)

This act of being mutually swallowed begins with Jim ravishing the world, “[a]t once the room seemed like a doll's house, so dwarfed and filled and tiny it was with a great living blackness” (98). On the other hand, Jim's gross corporality that seems to swallow—by means of his upper orifice—Olaf and his world is now about to be swallowed and to become part of the world-building material.

Hence, in between the narrative's two climaxes—that quantitatively and qualitatively concretizes the grotesque encounters that *body forth* the human disproportionality—the body's grotesquerie persists, and the comic nuances in the story well up in Olaf's counter-fiction where he fancies inflicting revenge on Jim. His wishful imaginings and "fantasies of *cannibalistic* revenge" (106; italics mine) are enmeshed with his visualized “primitive hate for that black mountain of energy, of muscle, of bone” (101) in such a mock-heroic, or rather abject-heroic, manner. These fantasies are also theatrically rendered in the spectacle of a dream or a nightmare which is a quasi-gothic rendition of the Bakhtinian cosmic cartwheel:

He saw that freighter on which the giant was sailing; he saw it springing a dangerous leak and saw a torrent of sea water flooding, gushing into all the compartments of the ship until it found the bunk in which the black giant slept. Ah, yes, the foamy, surging waters would surprise that sleeping black bastard of a giant and he would drown, gasping and choking like a trapped rat, his tiny eyes bulging until they glittered red, the bitter water of the sea pounding his lungs until they ached and finally burst. (105)

It is significant that the aforesaid Londonesque maritime white mimetics and metaphorism are in a carnivalesque negotiation of power with the black mimetics. Furthermore, it is debated that “the grotesque body is an intertextuality of nature” (Irimia 1995, 88), which would translate into the carnivalesque calisthenics being now acted out in a baroque of natural forces:

The ship would sink slowly to the bottom of the cold, black, silent depths of the sea and a shark, a *white* one, would glide aimlessly about the shut portholes until it found an open one and it would slither inside and nose about until it found that swollen, rotting, stinking carcass of the black beast and it would then begin to nibble at the decomposing mass of tarlike flesh, eating the bones clean... Olaf always pictured the giant's bones as being jet black and shining. (105–6)

Here and elsewhere in the story, the etymological tones of the word *carnival* are evocative of the *fleshly material* that is *put away* for further use in the context of this natural-human intertextuality. Hence, this



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fanciful enactment of how Jim's 'mass of tarlike flesh' is swallowed—or decomposed—by the world is to be figured as an integral part of the grotesque-ecological becoming.

Given this act of becoming, it is worth noticing that Bakhtin associates the element of water, and salty water for that matter, with Pantagruel who pours sea water in the drunkards' mouths. Likewise, Jim's, or Titan Oceanus's, lungs being now filled with the bitter water seems to be a slice reported from the Rabelaisian universe. What is more, in his Pantagruel-like revenge trance Olaf seems to be so pathologically focused on the giant's openings and kinetic dynamism, with the red eyes bulging and the lungs bursting, which is nothing but a grossly carnivalesque thematic very much in tandem with the pathos of the qualitative wealth.

As shown, the above excerpts are quite tellingly replete with the grotesque body imagery that serves as if it were an uncanny counter-narrative rendered in the metaphorism of cannibalism, globally acted out on behalf of Olaf. As such, "cannibalism plays out, materially and figuratively, the integration of the self into the other, the other into the self, the abnormal into the normal" (Edwards & Graulund 2013, 7). It is, and by adhering to Bakhtin's law of becoming, the agency whereby the human flesh, reconfigured now as meat, is being furthermore swallowed by the world to be further integrated into the world material. This integration entails another Bakhtinian percept; the death-by-water motif is so redolent of the carnivalesque trope of corporal degradation which is characteristic of carnival *per se* best represented here by Jim's watery grave. This integration of or negotiation between the metaphors of power and the metonymics of the body is so characteristic of the workings of the carnival that has the world-body for its material and dialogic imagination. Of this world and imagination, Wright's story partakes as it tries to create, through the optic apparatus, a new whole bodying forth that which has long been abstracted, aestheticized and theorized.

In order for the carnivalesque aesthetic to be qualitatively actuated, it needs to parodically recall the genre-textual milieu of the Ur-texts, whether these be Wright's or the others', against which the subversive potential is given a voice—or a space-spectacle for that matter. In Wright's narrative, the spectacularized discourse is shown as dwelling on space-racial spectrum that thrives in equally defamiliarizing the Northern and Southern spectacles through engaging those literary geographies. The dismantling of the worlds or spatial frames through the carnivalesque motif of doubling, now represented by the uncanny setting and motivated by the dynamism of abject heroism, results in the fictional, neo-baroque poetic of world-building and re-building. This is so central to the carnivalization of both the world and literature best expressed through the negotiations of power between the body-politic and the body-poetic being mediated by a purported grotesque ecology.

## التغريب الكرنفالي في قصة (الأسود الضخيم الطيب) لريتشارد رايت

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### الملخص

تقترح هذه الدراسة قراءة كرنفالية باخтинية لقصة ريتشارد رايت (الأسود الضخيم الطيب). ففي تقصيه للنظم المعرفية في بواكير الخطاب الروائي يتوقف ميخائيل باختين طويلاً عند التمثلات التغريبية لدى فرانسوا رابليه، ويعدّها إحدى التظاهرات المؤسسة لذلك الخطاب، فحضور تلك التمثلات الكرنفالية في نص (رايت) يكسر أطر الجنس الأدبي، ويعرّي الثنائيات المعرفية التي تسم أطر التفكير والتوقع، ويجري هذا عبر الأسلبة الساخرة الناقدة والناقدة للذات التي من شأنها أن تجعل من الأدب فضاءً خطابياً للخيال العرقي وتداخلاته. ويزخر نص (رايت) بتلك النزعة الكرنفالية التي توظف تداول المعنى وإنتاجه/السلطة عبر تأكيد الحضور المادي للشخصيات والمكان والحبكة باستحضاره للحساسيات والمباني الجيوبصرية التي يجري تقصّيها ههنا في سياق أيكولوجيا التغريب الكرنفالي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ريتشارد رايت، باختين، كرنفالي، تغريب، الغرابة.

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> In his theorizing about the dominant, Jakobson states: “We may seek a dominant not only in the poetic work of an individual artist and not only in the poetic canon, the set of norms of a given poetic school, but also in the art of a given epoch, viewed as a particular whole.” (1987, 42)
- <sup>2</sup> As an American theatrical form, Blackface minstrelsy or Blackface “is a specific performance mode and genre that developed in the early nineteenth century. With characters with names like Jim Crow, Zip Coon, and Mammy, these performances were comprised of skits, monologues, songs, and dances that supposedly imitated [and caricatured] enslaved persons or recently freed enslaved persons.” (Thompson 2021, 22)

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