

One story, different renditions: The case of cartoonature on Zimbabwe's post-2000 fast track land reform programme

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Abstract

This study critically examined the framing of the Zimbabwe land issue through a cartoon each from The Herald, The Sunday Mail, The Zimbabwe Independent, The Daily News and Moto, representing government, private and church run print media voices. The Framing theory guided analyses of the selected cartoons. This paper problematises the land issue more as a site of contest; an emotive issue whose mootness depends on race, ideology, politics and economics. These frame the reception and rejection of the land discourse in Zimbabwe. Cartoonists are not the news foot soldiers, but are consumers of that news which they then comment on through their works of art: cartoons. An event occurs, a journalist deems it as newsworthy and covers it. This is then taken up by the cartoonist, who gives it his or her own artistic impression through a cartoon. The cartoonist re-creates, repackages and re-presents news in a defamiliarising fashion creating cartoonature in the process and forcing the reader to look at whatever subject is tackled anew, with awe. The recreation is done under the ambit of a particular newspaper frame or philosophy. What is interesting is that none of the newspapers openly talks about its partiality, hence our interest in how these supposedly neutral newspapers re-tell the story about land through the medium of cartoonature. The Herald and The Sunday Mail, it is shown, assume a pro-government stance in their approach to the land issue, defending it as a legitimate decolonisation issue. The Daily News and The Zimbabwe Independent, on the contrary, frame land repossession as 'land grab' or 'land invasion' while Moto, a church owned monthly newspaper, exhibits skepticism at the manner in which the land issue was tackled, characterising it as chaotic and ill-conceived. Through such techniques as hyperbole, burlesque and caricature, the chosen cartoonists fiercely defend their paymasters' positions in the feverishly contested and partisan arena of land in Zimbabwe, in an effort to woo the readers to their interpretative camps. It would benefit the reader to sample from the news buffet offered to avoid information marasmus.

Keywords: *Fast Track Land Reform Programme, Framing Theory, Third Chimurenga, Cartoons, Cartoonature, The Herald, The Sunday Mail, The Zimbabwe Independent, The Daily News and Moto.*

Introduction

The land issue has been central to Zimbabwean history ever since the occupation of the country by the Pioneer Column in 1890. The Pioneer Column was a force raised by Cecil John Rhodes, a British imperialist, through the British South Africa Company, to occupy Zimbabwe which he named Rhodesia. The period of this occupation started in September 1890 and ended in April 1980 after a protracted war and an eventual ceasefire agreement

hosted by Britain. The colonial occupation was characterized by European settler rule of the country and brutal dispossession of indigenes of their land. A series of land legislation deprived the majority of their land rights while granting rights to a few privileged white elites (Moyo and Ashurst, 2007; Nyawo-Viriri-Shava, 2012). The following quotation summarizes the scale of dispossession within the first twenty five years of occupation:

By 1914, white settlers, numbering just 23,730, owned slightly more than 19 million acres of land while an estimated 752,000 Africans occupied a total of 21,390,080 acres of land (Mutasa, 2015: 3)

The first liberation wars ignited mainly by the land dispossessions began in the late 1800s, but these were quashed by the settlers' superior weaponry as celebrated in the cartoon below:

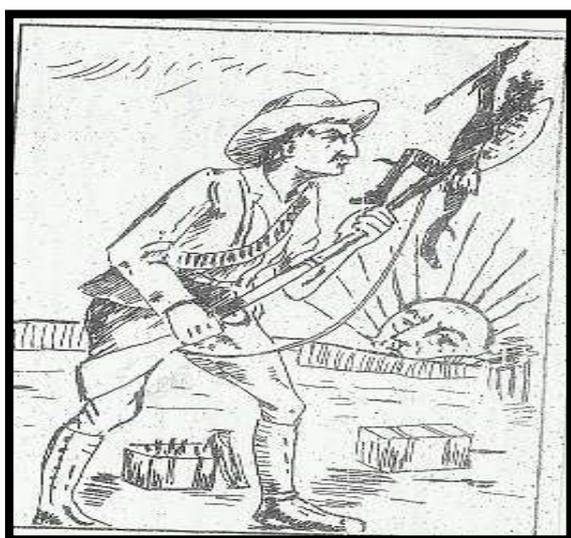


Fig. 1: Cartoon from *The Labour Leader* of 23 May 1896.

This cartoon, from *The Labour Leader* of 23 May 1896, cited in Prew, Pape, Mutwira and Barnes (1993), shows the thinking that might is right. Brute force was used to vanquish and dispossess the indigenes in the name of Anglo-Saxon 'civilization'. This is what Cecil John Rhodes, the founder of the British colony of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), said about the issue of imperialism which inevitably led to the denigration and subjugation of anything associated with the colonial subjects, a conviction loyally put into practice by his lieutenant L.S. Jameson in the cartoon above:

I contend that we are *the finest race in the world* and that the more of the world we inhabit the better it is for the human race. Just fancy those parts that are at present inhabited by the most *despicable specimens of human beings* what alteration there would be in them if they were brought under Anglo-Saxon rule (*Emphasis added*)(Atkinson,1972:5)

The mighty in the above scene seem to have come to Africa prepared to destroy any obstacle to their mission.

What followed were more dispossessions and evictions of the black people from fertile lands to inferior and ecologically hostile reserved lands called Tribal Trust Lands. The first significant piece of land legislation enacted by the white colonialists was the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 which legally enshrined a racially divided land allotment. Whites, who comprised just 5% of the population, were allocated half of the country's land. The other half was shared amongst the blacks, forestry, national parks and other government developments (Mutasa, 2015). Successive colonial governments, since then, legislated the allocation of land thereby pushing the indigenes slowly, but surely out of their ancestral land.

The many grievances with the colonial administration, chief of which was land dispossession, led to a guerrilla warfare from 1965 to 1979. At the 1979 ceasefire talks hosted by Britain at Lancaster House, a new constitution was drafted. The new Zimbabwean government's hands were tied because, according to the Lancaster House Constitution, land was to be distributed following the willing seller and willing buyer policy during the first ten years. Mounting disgruntlement on the largely unresolved land issue later led to the forcible occupation of 'white land' by landless black people in 1998 at Igava Farm in what is referred by Zimbabweans as 'jambanja', which literally means 'anarchical'. The landless people's patience had run so much out that they literally and proudly started taking the law into their hands. In fact, the 'cadres' of this revolution called it the Third Chimurenga, which they saw as a continuation of the struggle by the black people which had started 'officially' with the Anglo-Ndebele war of 1893.

The cartoons produced by both public and private newspapers after the initial small scale re-occupation of land in the Svosve area of Mashonaland in 1998 constitute the raw materials of

this research. The researcher thinks that this is a very important and interesting part of the country's history; hence the prominence it is being given here.

Justification of the Study

Cartoons are under-researched in Zimbabwean literary and cultural studies, yet they are significant at national level and in political and social circles. In fact, even the collection or compilation of cartoons into books in Zimbabwe may be looked at as just a drop in a massive ocean when one takes cognisance of how many cartoons are produced per year. The few notable collections or compilations are those by Boyd Maliki, *The Chronicle* newspaper cartoonist in the late 1980s and, recently, Tony Namate's *Emperor's New Clods*. The few who have analysed cartoons in Zimbabwe include Frederikse and Partridge (1983), in *None But Ourselves: Masses vs Media in the Making of Zimbabwe*, where the author looks at the role of the media in the making of Zimbabwe. McLoughlin (1989), in *Reading Zimbabwean Comic Strips*, focuses on the comic aspect by looking at Namate's Chikwama strip. Arnsten (2010)'s *Committing Journalism and A View of the Zimbabwean 2008 General Elections as Interpreted by Internet News Cartoons* and Knowledge Mushohwe's Masters dissertation entitled 'An Analysis of Selected Editorial Cartoons Published During Zimbabwe's 2008 Elections' focus on cartoon depiction of the 2008 elections. *Nyamanhindi*, in Vambe's (2008) *The Hidden Dimensions of Operation Murambatsvina in Zimbabwe*, focuses on cartoons and the depiction of the troubled Murambatsvina period. Out of the above efforts, none have looked at cartoons and Zimbabwe's controversial land reform per se, hence the need to give this era of Zimbabwean history, as depicted in cartoons, the attention it deserves.

Cartoons are generally not taken very seriously in Zimbabwe, as pointed out by one of Zimbabwe's leading cartoonists, Knowledge Mushohwe:

Editorial cartoons are therefore "misfits" in the print media landscape, unable to conform to norms and set standards in journalism. It is by no means surprising that Zimbabwe Union of Journalists (ZUJ), or National Journalists and Media Awards (NJAMA) does not have a category for cartoonists under their annual awards structure. (*The Herald*, 21 September 2011).

Cartoonists are not part of the top newspaper people acknowledged in newspapers. They are taken as part of light-hearted entertainment as Horne (2011:50) posits: "The term 'cartoon' connotes something inconsequential and light weight..." This paper shows that cartoons may

use humour as a vehicle but this is not the destination or end. News gathering and writing is taken as primary while cartooning is seen as secondary and at times a new creation altogether. The latter is based on news gathered by 'real' journalists in the field who are *expected* to be accurate and unbiased. Cartoonists give their impression or interpretation-what they produce is art not fact. Their art is based on the supposed facts from field journalists, a trait cartoonature shares with other art forms that are based on actual historical events. The cartoonist can therefore be perceived as an artist on a mission surrounded by technical news gatherers and processors.

Cartoons may be seen in the same way Plato viewed literature that they are reflections of reflections. Firstly, there is the event, secondly there is the field journalist, the witness to the unfolding event and thirdly and further distanced from the event or 'truth', is the cartoonist. This research will look at how cartoons from the different Zimbabwean newspaper stables tell the story of the post-1999 Fast Track Land Reform Programme, a programme ostensibly meant to address the century old land imbalances.

Brief Literature review

Definition of 'cartoonature'

The term 'cartoonature', as used in this study, will refer to the systematic study of works of art which are ordinarily referred to as cartoons, which are generally made up of a drawing and, in most cases, an accompanying written text. The cartoon from which cartoonature gets its fodder is "a hybrid of text, pictorial representations, symbols, shadings and humour that become a puzzle, a sophisticated rebus that is affectively engaging to skimmers"(Bush,2012:5). These art forms may be directed at different readers, hence one can talk about children's cartoonature, young adult cartoonature and adult cartoonature the same way one can refer to children or adult literature. But the categories, as those in conventional literature, are not clear cut and neat. The definition of literature should not be static or cast in stone-in fact, it has not been. For example, the conceptualisation of 'literature' before the novel was different from the one after the creation of that new art form. This study argues that cartoons, which are part and parcel of popular culture are, not only "the revolutionary essays of our time", as posited by Robinson (1981: 7), but are also the *literature* of our time. This research argues that a cartoon is as good a text as any of its written counterparts in the

form of poetry, drama or narrative and should, therefore, be viewed as a branch of literature which can be called cartoonature (Nyoni, 2018) which can be subjected to various interpretations such as Marxist, Feminist, Reader Response, Formalist, Biographical, Psychoanalytic, among others (Nyoni, 2019). In the confines of a journal article, the writer can only subject the chosen cartoons to one theory, the Framing Theory. As part of ubiquitous and affordable mass produced texts, newspapers, cartoons have become in a way part of what can be referred to as 'fast-literature' of this our technological age-an age which might not have time to read the 'traditional' novel, poem or play, unless it is on the curriculum diet as a set-book.

Cartoons are not meant to be mouthfuls or 'mind-fuls' or 'eyefuls'-they are supposed to be 'read-as-you-go' mass culture art forms by people who do not have all the time in the world. As Morris (1989:3) contends, "we expect to skim or glance at the cartoon, grasp its message, laugh or groan and move on." A cartoon is supposed to be the million dollar snapshot sent to the judges-the snapshot which is meant to forever change the fortunes of the photographer so it has to be impeccably executed. Boileau (in Colldeweih, 1998:44) declares that "one of the best things about a cartoon is that it's quick, you've got one shot and it's sort of like shooting an arrow: it's quick and clean and you get right to the target."

In spite of its economy of expression, a cartoon is still potent. As succinctly put by Ivan Turgenev, "A picture may instantly present what a book can set forth in a hundred pages" (cited in Dhand, 2004:156). A cartoon as will be shown in this study does not only compact/condense what a book can set forth, but often goes beyond depiction or 'presenting' and delves into interpretation.

Besides the diction by the cartoonist representing the literary side of the work of art, there is also the graphic or pictorial component which also tells the story. In fact, in many cartoons, the graphic or pictorial aspect tells most of the story while the words provide the 'signature'-the memorable indelible stamp. On the effect of this art form on the skimmers or readers, Morris (1989:80) argues, thus:

By allying a picture with a text they activate more of the reader's senses. They thus invite greater involvement, offering a suggestive pattern to be grasped in its totality rather than informative discourse which must be followed one step at a time...

A cartoon, like any other form of literature, reflects the mood or allegiances of the artist. As postulated by NgugiwaThiong'o (1981: 1), "every writer is a writer in politics." A lot of

stories are reported on a daily basis in daily papers yet only a single story captures the attention of the artist, the cartoonist or the newspaper editor. The cartoonist, first and foremost, assumes the role of a reader or a selective reader to be exact, who, because of his/her background, chooses to comment, through the medium of a cartoon, on a particular story or incident. It is even more interesting when it comes to weekly newspapers. After a week's avalanche of stories, the cartoonist chooses to comment on one special one. At times, more than one cartoon is produced on the same issue or story which may not necessarily be the field journalist's headline story for the different days. This observation may imply that cartoonists may have their own 'headline' stories different from the field journalist or editor, as long as they meet the tone and texture of the newspaper stable; that is, as long as they are within the radar of the newspaper frame. A cartoon is art as contrasted with news which is meant to be factual. As art, it should be brought home to the arts for scrutiny and, hence, we suggest that it be treated as literature, specifically cartoonature. This paper treats the chosen cartoons as pieces of 'literary' work.

Cartoonature and literature

Bressler (2011:14) argues that the chief purpose of literature is the telling of a story:

While it may simultaneously communicate facts, literature's primary aim is to tell a story. The subject of this story is particularly human, describing and detailing a variety of human experiences, not stating facts or bits and pieces of information...literature concretizes an array of human values, emotions, actions and ideas in story form.

This research argues that what conventional literature does, as observed by such scholars as Bressler (2011), here, is also done by cartoons. Cartoons tell stories which can be comic, tragic, farcical or melodramatic and should, in fact, be taken as a sub-genre of literature.

Theoretical Framework

This study makes use mainly of the Framing theory to critically investigate the representation of the land issue in cartoonature. Framing theory has been chosen in this study because it suggests that how something is presented (the 'frame') influences the choices people make or how they eventually perceive something or an issue (Butler, 2009). Fairhurst and Sarr (1996) aver that the concept of framing is related to the agenda – setting tradition. The basis of

Framing theory is that media focuses attention on certain events and then places these events in a field of meaning. In order to quickly and efficiently process large amounts of information and make sense of complex stories, journalists, thus, use frames which are often taken aboard by the 'scavenging' artist, the cartoonist. To Tversky and Kahneman (1981), frames are abstract notions that serve to organise or structure social meanings. This organisation aims to 'channel' readers' in a certain preferred tunnel of interpretation, especially when handling controversial political issues, but may not always achieve this (Lester & Ross, 2003). In short, newspapers have agendas which they project or conveniently package through frames (Entman, 2003). Framing theory "helps in understanding the multiple ways in which journalists display value judgments in the products they create" (Moritz in Stuart, 2010:322). This is done through, according to Lester and Ross (2003:32), "the selection of what to cover, the prominence given to that coverage in terms of headline size ...as well as the choice of words, images ..." While writers may try to contain the meaning of a word in order to communicate certain dominant and preferred meanings, a word refuses to remain stable and, in the process, creates other multiple meanings in readers (Derrida, 1978). This view is shared by Bakhtin (1981:300) who maintains that "the truth is redefined not merely as a consensus, but as a product of verbal ideological struggles, struggles which mark the very nature of language itself." The above is also true when it comes to drawing as in cartoons which are a form of 'writing'. The tools a writer or cartoonist may think he or she is employing may have minds of their own, by rebelling against their employer and telling the story in a different way and, therefore, effectively telling a different story from the preferred rendition.

Coupled with the Framing Theory is Semiotics, which is the study of signs (Chandler, 2001). A cartoon is made up of a concoction of carefully and deliberately picked signs such as language, graphemes written in a certain way for impact, colour and drawing. This makes the employment of semiotics in a study of this nature natural and inevitable. Also inevitable is cross-disciplinary references and cross-references in order to fully understand and appreciate the hybridity of cartoonature. Although the Framing theory is associated with journalism, the concept can be extended to artistic creations such as cartoons since every artist can be said to frame whatever he or she is 'talking' about. By choosing phrases such as *land repossession* or *land grab* in describing what happened in Zimbabwe in the post 1998 era, the writer or speaker would not only be framing the land issue as he/she or his/her benefactor or paymaster wants, but will also be taking a political stance.

Paradigm, Approach and Design used

This research falls in the ambit of the interpretivist paradigm and uses the qualitative approach or methodology which, according to Creswell (2014:3), “is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem”. The design is qualitative content analysis using Framing theory. According to Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen and Razavieh (2010:29), content analysis “focuses on analyzing and interpreting recorded material to learn about human behavior. The material may be public records, textbooks, letters, films, tapes, diaries, themes, reports, or other documents.”

The major question document analysis seeks to answer is “What can be learned about this phenomenon by studying certain documents?” (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen and Razavieh, 2010:31). In this research, cartoons from government, private and church run newspapers are studied in an effort to deduce how *they* retell the story about the land reform in Zimbabwe. In doing this, the study will conclude whether the story has one version or whether the tellers’ backgrounds influence the form and content of the story and, at the end of the day, come up with their own ‘renditions’ and how readers can deal with the multifarious nature of these renditions.

Analysis of selected cartoons

Government owned Papers’ Framing of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme: Zimbabwe takes back its own

The Herald

The Herald is a government owned daily newspaper in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe Newspapers, that publishes the paper, is the oldest newspaper publisher and commercial printer in Zimbabwe, as well as being the largest publisher of newspapers, having been in the industry since 1891. It publishes 13 newspaper titles and runs a Broadcasting Division. The newspapers under its stable also include *The Sunday Mail* (<https://www.herald.co.zw/about-zimpapers/>). As government owned, newspapers under this stable, especially the big two published in the capital Harare (*The Herald* and *The Sunday Mail*), are believed to be government mouthpieces. In fact, they are regarded as mouthpieces of the ruling party whose policies are implemented by the government of the day.

The cartoon below which appeared in *The Herald* of 25 May 2002 features a map of Africa showing all the countries. Highlighted is a smiling image of Zimbabwe, turned into a visage and, therefore, personified. The eyes are bright and looking up in confidence.

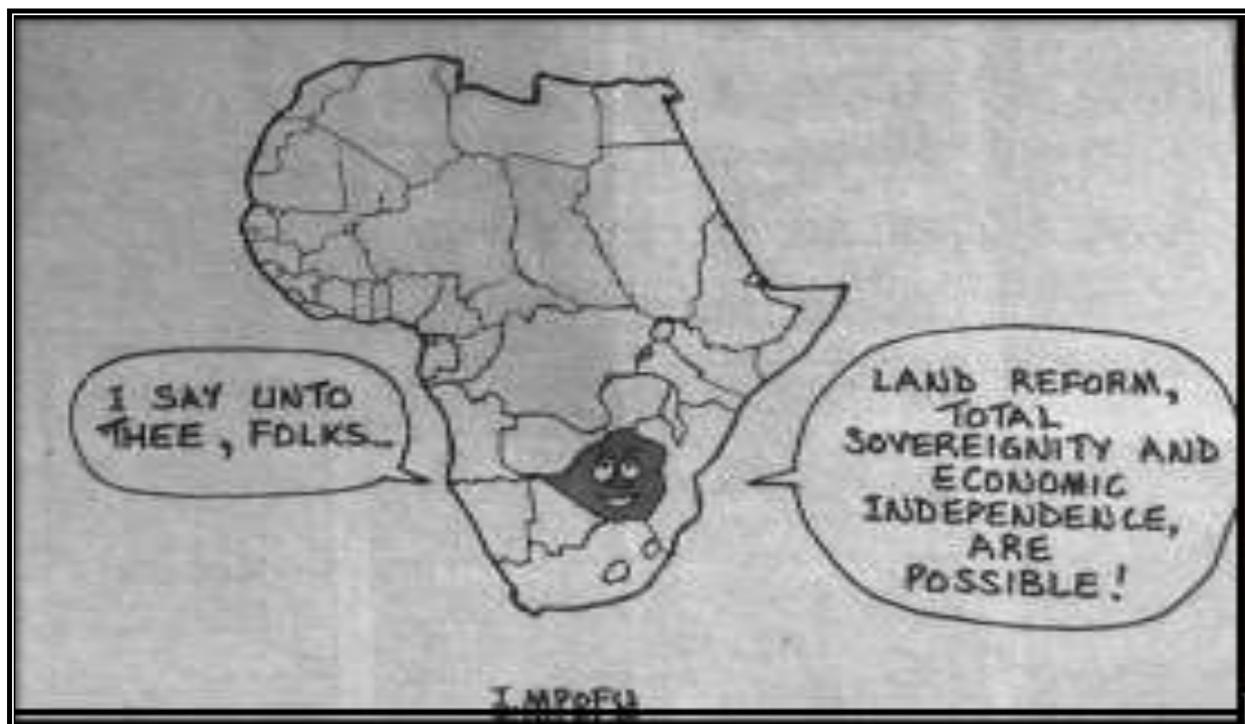


Fig. 2: A cartoon from *The Herald* of 25 May 2002

In sync with the left to right culture of reading in the interpretive community, we first read what is on the left of the map: 'I say unto thee folks...' which is completed on the right side of the map thus: 'land reform, total sovereignty and economic independence are possible!' The pause after the word 'folks' helps to point at the addressees; that is, the over fifty African states that were subjected to colonialism and are still not totally free today. These constitute the elements of the 'sentence' between 'folks' and 'land'. After the word 'folks', the reader continues to read the cartoon across the African continent to complete the message.

Zimbabwe is talking from experience after repossessing land and, thus, presumably 'completing' its independence. The fact that Zimbabwe's image on the map is highlighted shows that the country has achieved what the other African countries that have colonially induced land imbalances are yet to. It is significant that the colour Zimbabwe has assumed is black/deep grey. This is in sync with black pride and consciousness associated with Pan-Africanism. It is also significant that the language used is reminiscent of Biblical language—the word of God, making the statement sacrosanct and undisputed. There is, therefore, the suggestion that land is God-given and a birthright all should demand back from erstwhile

colonisers. The initial statement is meant to draw the listeners' attention to the vital message on the right.

It is significant that the cartoon was published on 25 May (2002) which is Africa Day, a holiday set aside to commemorate the founding of the Organization of African Unity on 25 May 1963, whose initial aim was to encourage the decolonisation of African states that were still under colonial rule. The cartoon is, therefore, a reminder to African Union states who are yet to fully address the founding principles of the organisation, particularly, the return of African land to Africans without which decolonisation is incomplete, to do so.

The Sunday Mail

The Sunday Mail is a government owned weekly newspaper.



Fig.3: A cartoon from *The Sunday Mail* of 1 September 2002

In a 1 September 2002 edition, the above (Fig.3)*The Sunday Mail* cartoon depicts two men in an emotionally charged interaction. The cartoon has two main characters: two men and a mouse. One of the men is the then British Prime Minister, Tony Blair. We conclude this by noting the iconic resemblance between the man in a black suit and Tony Blair although the image is hyperbolised. In fact, the whole cartoon can be read as a piece of caricature or burlesque, whose aim is to laugh at the 'ridiculousness' of Blair's meeting with the unnamed farmer. The cartoon is in the fold of the destructive satirical category which attacks the legitimacy of the political system about which it comments (Townsend, McDonald & Esders,

2008). Such cartoons also use language and signs which reflect contempt, radicalism and hate. The art, according to Press (1981:76), is “meant to be cruel and to hate” because it seems to be powered by extremist views that “come out of revolutionary fervor or social despair” (Manning & Phiddian, 2004:30). The role of Tony Blair, as representing the powerful, but meddling West in the land reform programme of distant Zimbabwe, is questioned. The revolutionary fervor that led to the different ‘chimurengas’ is resurrected.

We gather from the man in shorts (the farmer) that the man he is talking to is Mr. Blair. The physical features of the two men suggest that they are of Caucasian extraction. The ex-farmer, who looks unkempt, cries out to Mr. Blair to help ‘them’ to avoid destitution, suggesting that this is a ‘members only’ meeting. The ‘newspaper’ on the ground provides the reader with the background information that the evicted farmers meet Blair in Mozambique playing the role of the narrator or chorus in a dramatic piece. The dress of the men reflect their current conditions: as the Prime Minister, Blair is well-kept in a suit while the evicted farmer, with dropping socks, oversized shorts and unkempt hair, looks clownish and destitute. The exasperated Blair cannot look his kinsman in the face who has fallen on hard times. He is so near Zimbabwe where the land repossessionings are taking place, but can do nothing to assist his kith and kin. The farmer emphasises that “they took **our** land away.” The use of the pronoun ‘they’ separates the two racial groups. Twenty two years after independence, the nation seems to be still divided along racial lines-the blacks are the ‘they’ while his fellow whites are the ‘we’.

What is interesting is the comment from the supposed neutral view represented by the mouse which asks rhetorically: “Am I missing something here? A British Prime Minister and British sons discussing Zimbabwean land?”

In the mouse’s speech are emphasised the words ‘British’ and ‘Zimbabwean’ to stress the ridiculous nature of the agenda of the meeting. What is interesting is the fact that the discussion was done in ‘borrowed’ Mozambican facilities, far away from home (United Kingdom). The use of the word ‘Zimbabwean’, to suggest (indirectly) the black people, and British, to include white people, including those whose parents were born in Zimbabwe also *others* the other group (the white people). The fact that the white farmers are appealing to an external white power suggests that they pay allegiance to that and may not exactly see themselves as African/Zimbabwean; hence, the use of the phrase “**they** took **our** land away”. The West, as represented by Tony Blair, here, is framed as suffering from a colonial hangover which preached the Gospel of White Supremacy. Although Tony Blair says nothing

during the exchange, his animated face speaks volumes about his disgust at the stratagems of the 'diabolic' inhabitants of the former colony who seem to have forgotten who the boss is. The reader is expected to laugh at the futile machinations of the British Prime Minister and his kith and kin. This is partly done through the use of caricature-the men have exaggerated features such as ears and oversized shoes and the contents of their exchange which seem to be devoid of substance that hover on the plane of the absurd. The editorial in the same paper entitled 'No Backers for Blair's Racist Rhetoric on Land' in *The Sunday Mail* points out that

The motivation for the visit, it would seem, is to meet white commercial farmers who have had part of their land acquired for resettlement of the landless black majority. In other words, it is a racist agenda to try and land support to his kith and kin. What this confirms then is that Britain and the rest of the Western Alliance's opposition to land reform in Zimbabwe is a racist stance. They believe that it is an unforgivable sin to take land from a 'righteous' white community and give it to a 'demonic' black community. They see the distribution of land in Zimbabwe as an affront to the supremacist position that the white Western world has arrogated to itself (*The Sunday Mail* 1 September 2002).

By making the white farmer anonymous and Tony Blair 'real', the cartoon may want to emphasise the FTLR as a real war between Zimbabwe and Britain, not with the white farmers per se. This modifies the readers' understanding of the issue by suggesting that the land problem is bigger than the few Anglo-Saxon descendants in the country. Blair, as Britain, the former coloniser's Prime Minister, signifies the link with the colonial legacy. However, the cartoon seems to suggest that by having Mozambique as the rendezvous and by meeting the 'wrong' people, his mission is futile and unwise. This dovetails well with the depiction of the two in the cartoon as jesters that are not supposed to be taken seriously. The close relationship between the 'chemical content' in the editorial and the cartoon, albeit largely different in their 'physics', may indicate the second fiddle role the cartoonist plays by extending or just echoing the official position as represented by the editorial with its lofty language. On the other hand, it can also be seen as showing the artistic acumen on the part of the cartoonist, by converting high sounding words into a reductionist easy-to-digest concoction of signs that appeals to the heart, instead of the head.

Privately owned Papers' Framing of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme: Land grab

This section shifts the focus to the private media's depiction of the contentious issue of land through the medium of cartoons published in *The Daily News*. The newspaper under scrutiny

is targeted at a potpourri of readership, cutting across the whole spectrum of individuals and classes differently affected by the so-called 'land grab'. This formulation is very important because it dismisses and delegitimises what has been called 'land reform' by government.

The Daily News

The Daily News is an independent Zimbabwean newspaper established in 1999 by Geoffrey Nyarota, a former editor of *The Chronicle*, a government owned newspaper published in Bulawayo. The newspaper at one time surpassed the government sponsored *The Herald* in readership, offering 'the other side' to the 'incomplete news' offered by the many state newspapers. If it was not offering 'the other side of the news coin', it was certainly offering the missing part to complete the Zimbabwean story as suggested by its motto: "Telling it like it is", a motto which was a boisterous suggestion that news was not told as it should have been prior to the newspaper's establishment. This jostling for space with the main state paper, *The Herald*, in the latter's bastion, the capital city, is alleged by some Zimbabweans to have led to the bombings of the newspaper facilities by alleged state agents. In addition, the numerous arrests of *The Daily News* editor were seen by its sympathisers as attempts to destabilise its operations since the state paper was now playing second fiddle, an indirect barometric reading of the ruling party's waning popularity. The bombings might as well have been an inside job to draw sympathy from observers and create a portrait of a persecuted media martyr. *The Daily News* was banned by the government in September 2003 after failing to comply with government directed media operation specifications. The paper was granted the right to re-open in May 2010 by a government commission.

The paper's relationship with government could be characterised as that of a cat and a mouse, with accusations and counter accusations of foul play. For instance, government would accuse the paper, not only of playing the spokesperson's role for the main opposition, the Movement for Democratic Change (which interestingly was formed more or less at the same time the paper was established) but, also, of receiving funding from the West, and, thus, playing the Althusserean ideological state apparatus role on behalf of the revolutionary government's sworn enemy number one. On the other hand, the paper was vitriolic in its attack of government operations and institutions, particularly the liberation war veterans, the pivot from which the land repossession machinery was propelled, whom it described as 'rogues', 'so-called veterans', 'lawless', 'thugs', 'settlers on white farmers' land' and 'hooligans,' in its news reports. It was also 'cruel' in its cartoon depictions of the same yet, in

its first issue of 21 March 1999, the paper pledged that it would be neither "pro-government" nor "anti-government", but would "be a medium for vibrant discourse among the divergent political, social, religious and other groups of Zimbabwe", as well as fight for press freedom and freedom of speech.

The focus of this section of the paper is now on how this differently constituted (in terms of ownership and philosophy) Zimbabwean paper frames the land issue through cartoons. The argument is that for a cartoon to see the day in a particular newspaper, it has to be in sync with the frame of that media house. The cartoonist does not have the final say of what is eventually published.

The cartoon below shows Joseph Chinotimba (current ruling ZANU PF party Member of Parliament), one of the leaders of the war veterans, dressed in a straw/ grass outfit complete with a straw hat and bonfire in hand, face to face with a frightened white farmer and his son.



Fig. 4: Cartoon from The Daily News of 24 August 2002

The three characters in the cartoon are not named, but the reader can easily tell from the iconic resemblance of the drawing that the 'terrorist' is Joseph Chinotimba. The initiated reader is acquainted with Joseph Chinotimba's famous straw hat that he wore during the height of land repossession in the late 1990s and early 2000s and his pivotal role in leading 'land invasions'. The land reform exercise was spearheaded by war veterans who also acted as the executors of the long lost estate, parceling it out to land hungry indigenous people. As

a member of the national war veterans' association executive, Joseph Chinotimba played a leading role during this period of Zimbabwe's history christened The Third Chimurenga by the ruling party abandoning his job as a security guard in the Harare City Council. The preferred reader of this cartoon is expected to look at the war veterans as a violent diabolic group bent on destruction of the thriving farming business, as represented by the white community. The indigenous people clamouring for land are there to cause trouble: land 'repossession' is not seen as restitution, but as disruptive.

The straw hat became Chinotimba's trademark, making him conspicuous and more or less becoming or assuming *the* face of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme. To the private media, particularly *The Daily News* cartoonist and, by extension, the paper's editorial policy, this face is that of the devil. The heavy black strokes in the drawing are meant to emphasise the blackness often associated with the devil. As bemoaned by Dambudzo Marechera "... blackness is equated with funereal, bad, dirty, prohibited, odium, condemnation, shame, defame, ruffian, sorcery, offenders" (Marechera, 1990:79).

The figure of Joseph Chinotimba, the then Chairman of the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association of Harare Metropolitan Province, *the province* in terms of decision making, is meant to instill fear into the white settlers who helplessly cuddle each other for futile protection from the unsmiling, wide-eyed 'black monster'. Joseph Chinotimba was often observed wearing a straw hat, not a straw outfit, as depicted in the cartoon. This is meant to lampoon the Fast Track Land Reform Programme, in general, and Joseph Chinotimba, in particular. The cartoon, like its counterpart in Fig. 3 from *The Sunday Mail* is in the fold of the destructive satirical category which attacks the legitimacy of the political system about which it comments (Townsend, McDonald & Esders, 2008). Unlike the former that attacks the West's self-ascribed global policing role, this cartoon focuses on the legitimacy of the local leadership that is perceived as a cabal using the emotive land issue to fan ordinary Zimbabweans' emotions for their own political expediency. Hence, the rebus of signs employed reflect contempt, radicalism and hate (Press (1981; Manning & Phiddian, 2004:30). From the concoction of signs, the reader can detect despair. The despair comes from the fact that the white farmer community representatives shown in the cartoon cannot do anything to stop the tsunami.

By depicting Joseph Chinotimba in a conspicuously black 'straw' outfit, juxtaposed with the harmless-looking and weaponless white father and son, the cartoonist reduces the perennial land issue to an uneven contest between a powerful black violence trotting group against a

white innocent, meek and peace loving group. There are, therefore, binary opposites as in black versus white and powerful versus powerless. Joseph Chinotimba “chooses” to put on a straw outfit; thus, reminding the reader of the distant early man days or Adam in the garden of Eden where the guilty Adam had to hastily cover his nakedness using vegetative resources. In short, the dressing by Joseph Chinotimba in the twenty first century conjures up feelings of backwardness or retrogressiveness or lack of civilization, as perceived through Anglo-Saxon lenses. The straw outfit is highly inflammable, yet Joseph Chinotimba is literally and metaphorically playing with fire as he is literally covered in straw from head to toe, an allusion to the ‘self-inflicted’ wounds Zimbabwe contended with after the land reform. The cartoonist depicts Joseph Chinotimba in this light to incite the reader against him and what he stands for. Joseph Chinotimba’s stern look resembles that of a bird of prey ready to attack and make a meal out of its helpless victim after pursuing and cornering it. The clenched left fist, reminiscent of his party (ZANU PF)’s symbol, a symbol its opponents associate with violence, shows that he is ready to pounce on his hapless prey, whose vulnerability is emphasised by the shorts and T-shirts they are wearing. In the background are huge, but unclear structures which may show the prosperity which was on the farm before the incident shown. The lack of clarity on the buildings shows the unclear future of the farming industry after the eviction of the settlers. The cartoon, therefore, perceives the Fast Track Land Reform Programme as ill-conceived as it would impact negatively on the agricultural industry.

The cartoon does not furnish the reader with information on why the land ‘invaders’ use grass to cover their bodies. If this is done in order to show their lack of resources, it does not tell us why that is the situation and what role the ‘white victims’ of the land invasion might have played in the impoverishment of the other group. Joseph Chinotimba seems to be very angry and seems to want to torch the white farmer and his son, but the cartoon is silent on the reason behind that anger. In other words, the cartoon blames the ‘black victim’ for the altercation on the farms, yet the land was initially violently taken away from the black people and some owners either killed, maimed or transformed into virtual slaves on their former pieces of land. As postulated by Woddis (1960:1):

Both during and since the great scramble for Africa by the Western imperialist powers...land grabbing has been the central aim. By direct seizure, conquest, pressure on chiefs, trickery, swindling, the repudiation of pledges and promises, by every means open to them, the representatives of the European powers took land.

Anyone who is acquainted with Zimbabwean history after 1850 appreciates how accurate Woddis' characterisation of the land question is. Roger (1964:51) provides a more vivid picture thus:

The moment a [white] man had pegged his farm...he regarded the African villagers on it as his serfs who would have to work for him. The chief means of mobilizing this pool of labour in the first years was the sjambok or hippo – hide whip, and after 1908 labour agreements which committed tenants to work several months, usually three, for the privilege of remaining on their ancestral land.

The cartoon's silence on the brutal chapter described above and that is so graphically represented in the cartoon in Fig.1, is too loud to go unheard as pointed out by Sir Shridath Ramphal, the Commonwealth Secretary General (1975-1990):

Black Zimbabweans were dispossessed of the land that was theirs within the lifetime memory of some, and certainly in the lifetime of the generation before. Now, if you forget that, then you can't answer rationally any of the pertinent questions about Zimbabwe. And I think it is the forgetting of that, that ultimately has led us to where we are (cited in Moyo & Asthurst (Eds.), 2007:158).

The Shona in Zimbabwe have a proverb, '*Chinokangamwa ishanhu asi muti watemwa haukangamwi*', which literally means 'it is the axe that forgets but the cut tree doesn't'. The tree cannot forget because its memory is perennially watered by the grotesque and, sometimes, bleeding wound left by the axe. When the tree is reminded of the painful encounter, it should not fain ignorance and when roles are exchanged and when the previous hunter is hunted, the former should not cry foul.

The cartoon depicts the war veterans as using brute force which may conquer because of its might, but which, nevertheless, may fail the Western moral acid test. This is the angle the cartoonist wants the reader to read the issue about land repossession –as a brutal and satanic exercise which deprived the peace-loving white community, not only of a livelihood but also, of a God-sent mission to serve and save the black people through model land use culture. What is interesting is the fact that the white farmer has a son and there is no sign of the child's mother-perhaps the 'devil' has already devoured her vampire-like and is now moving to its next victim, horror film style-like. This is meant to show the destructiveness of the land reform, not only in economic terms, but also socially. It is pretentious for this cartoon to frame the land issue in Zimbabwe as having started with the land occupations in

the late 1990s, yet this has been a simmering century-old wound which was bound to explode and cause discomfort to both the bearer and those around. The cartoon is also silent on the violence which was also meted out on the land hungry black people by the white commercial farmers at times with the assistance of 'their' farm workers in an effort to thwart land repossession. It would reflect the zenith of naivety to suggest that all the over 4 000 white commercial farmers folded their hands in surrender to the so-called land invaders taking cognisance of the fact that they naturally kept an assortment of guns, albeit legally. For instance, in an article entitled 'Farmers lose property to land grabbers', *The Daily News* of 29 March 2002 reports of a named white farmer losing property to 'black invaders' which included: "...a Leigh field power source, an FN 9mm pistol, Rigby 9mm rifle, Walther .22 Hornet rifle, Winchester .22mm rifle, Slettne 12-bore shotgun." With such an assortment of weapons by one individual and with as many as 4 500 white commercial farmers of a heterogeneous temperamental endowment, a blanket Stephen-type martyr-like response to such a life changing occurrence as land dispossession, as suggested by the above cartoon, would be difficult to believe.

What may have worked against the white farmers' favour were the demographic statistics as they were swimming against an avalanche of old simmering indigenous anger.

The Zimbabwe Independent on the 'new farmer'

The Zimbabwe Independent is a privately owned weekly newspaper in Zimbabwe by Alpha Media Holdings. This company also publishes *The Standard* and *NewsDay*.

This cartoon from *The Zimbabwe Independent* graphically tells the story of the 'new farmer' from 2000, when the blacks repossessed land, from the point of view of the privately run media which is skeptical about land reform and indigenisation. The term 'new farmer' is widely used in Zimbabwe to refer to black farmers who were allotted land after the post-2000 Zimbabwe land 'invasions'.

Fig. 5: A cartoon from The Zimbabwe Independent of 18-24 October 2013



The winding path from 2000 to 2013 can be perceived as an indexical sign indicating lack of development and focus. The 'winding', which suggests moving from side to side, may indicate unsteadiness on the part of the farmers who need to find their feet. The few dotted shrubs may indicate the deforestation which has been characteristic of resettlement areas. The land is generally bare in terms of vegetation and in terms of the built environment. The pegs indicating the 'milestones' indicate a lack of commitment—they seem to be makeshift and overgrown by grass. It seems the outstanding achievement has been the accrual of time on the farms, not production or change of material status of the farmer. On the farmer's left hand side is a winding path, another indexical sign of lack of infrastructural development in newly resettled areas. In Geography, meandering river courses reflect a river at the old stage. During the youthful stage, the river has lots of energy and flows fast, straight and deep while, at the old stage, the river moves slowly, staggering from side to side, struggling with its load and even abandoning some of it along the way. Engineers know that this is not the ideal site for dams and Hydro-electric power. There has been some flow in the river since 2000, but this is at the wrong velocity. The image of a slow flowing river is in tandem with the old tired looking 'new farmer' with 'slow' technology, singing the same old mournful monotone of government inputs, putting on old clothes thirteen years after being 'empowered'. Directly above the new farmer is a black cloud, a natural indexical sign of imminent rain, the sign of

the planting season, yet the farmer with hoe in hand declares: ‘WE ARE WAITING FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO ASSIST US WITH INPUTS’. This is capitalised for emphasis as well as to show disgust on the part of the cartoonist. The farmer is unprepared for the job. The government inputs are on the ground, exposed to the elements and very likely to be spoilt by the rain which, ironically, is supposed to make them germinate (provided they are placed in the right place), *in* the ground not *on* the ground. The blank looking farmer puts on torn clothes including a torn hat—a hat is an inexpensive, but important piece of clothing, yet the new farmer can afford to wear a hat with the whole top missing. This may show a character who is irresponsible and not serious. A serious farmer would have overalls and gumboots. The cartoonist seems to be asking the question: ‘Can we entrust our food security as a country in the hands of such a character?’ A *new* farmer in the post-2000 era is expected to be technologically compliant and armed (technologically). The words ‘new farmer’ are in capitals and in quotation marks to mark them out for special treatment. They are in quotation marks to indicate doubt on their authenticity—there is a contradiction between semantics and what is obtaining on the ground. How can a hoe-wielding farmer conquer twenty first century hunger? The word ‘new’ has connotations of scientific advancement, bettering of the old, independence, visible output and infrastructural development, especially after thirteen years of state assistance. This particular farmer is still waiting upon government to provide free inputs; hence, the worm muses “13 YEARS OF DEPENDENCE”, in capitals for emphasis. The worm, like many Zimbabweans on the political ‘terraces’, believes that some of the new farmers are cry babies who resist being weaned and seem to believe that it is their right to wait for *inputs* even after more than a decade of supposed farming. One is reminded of Charles Mungoshi’s *Walking Still* where one walks while still, where time passes, energy is expended without any movement taking place. In the cartoon, there are pegs on the meandering road which show the years passed, yet the new farmer is still ‘new’—green and prone to blunders and, worse still, ageing, but resisting to grow. Such characters would be referred to as flat in literature and we can still call them flat in cartoonature.

The cartoon is an indictment of the ineffective farmer as well as government policy which creates a dependence syndrome. Thirteen years after land allocation, inputs should not be handed out—farmers should be clamouring for other bigger ways government could assist them, the cartoon seems to suggest.

Moto’s Framing of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme: Lawless

The paper's focus shifts to how *Moto* magazine/newspaper frames the land question in Zimbabwe through cartoons. *Moto* is registered as a **newspaper** at the General Post Office as indicated on the cover of each issue. This means that, technically and legally speaking, *Moto* is both a newspaper and a 'magazine'. *Moto* is a church-run newspaper. *Moto* can, therefore, be viewed as a special type of print media publication, resembling the famous bat-part bird and part mammal and, hence, enjoying the best out of the two worlds. The power of *Moto*, in part, derives on claiming this dual identity: as a newspaper, it deals with the day to day issues and, as a magazine, it contains reflective essays commenting on particular issues. Coming out after a period of one month gives it adequate time to reflect on issues reported on. As a monthly paper, *Moto* would really concentrate in analysis of news which would have been reported on over a period of a month, by daily and weekly newspapers across the media divide. This explains why it was chosen for the research; that is, to introduce a new amphibious element which is not enjoyed by the other publications.

Churches purport to stand for the poor, the marginalised and the downtrodden and purport to view all people regardless of their colour, creed and religious persuasion, as equal before 'Man' and God. The Catholic Church played a positive role during the war of liberation in Zimbabwe and strained relations developed with the settler regime (Chennells, 1980). *Moto* as a newspaper is published by the largest Christian denomination in the world.

One of the earliest *Moto* cartoons published after the Fast Track Land Reform Programme appeared in August 1999 showing two sets of people. There is Robert Mugabe, the then President of Zimbabwe, on the plough, and Kumbirai Kangai, the then Agriculture minister, with the whip and a small boy leading the two oxen span drawing the plough. Not far from this team is a presumably white commercial farmer on a tractor. Robert Mugabe reminds Kangai not to develop cold feet on the issue of land repossession. The exclamation at the end of the utterance and the bold and capitalised 'no cold feet' are indicative of heightened emotions on the part of the then President at the possibility of his lieutenants in government chickening out of the land reform. In response to the instruction from his boss, Kumbirai Kangai urges the two black oxen, Busuman and Jambruit, to remain focused in the furrow (foro): "Busuman! Foro-o! Hey! Jambruit!" Kangai's utterance is also in bold and three exclamation marks accompany it to show the urgency and importance of the land repossession matter. A kinesics reading shows that both the then President and the Agriculture minister are not even looking at the white farmer who is accusing them of land grabbing to show that they do not take his accusations seriously. The oculusics or study of

eye contact indicates a man who is disgusted by the ‘invaders’ and stares at the ‘intruders’ whose necks he wishes he would literally wring.

Fig. 5: A cartoon from *Moto* of August 1999



The cartoon shows two sets of workers: there is the team of three characters who form the main focus of the cartoon. We can make this conclusion by looking at the coverage the threesome get: they are depicted as bigger and at the fore of the pictorial representation; hence, more important and forming the main plot. The fact that they are three, as opposed to the lone farmer, shows a communalistic African spirit. The boy is leading a strong and healthy pair of oxen. On his part, the boy is being taught responsibility and hard work early in his life. His involvement on one hand suggests continuity-as belonging to a youthful generation, the Fast Track Land Reform Programme is assured of a life after that of the current drivers. On the other hand, the cartoonist frames the land programme as ill-prepared, as reflected by the fact that the ‘new’ farmers in the cartoon only have 2 oxen, Jambruit and Busumani, which draw the plough and there are three people doing the job which can be done much faster by one person using a tractor and the child leading the span is expected to be in school. The cartoon, therefore, scoffs at the ‘slow’ technology, the wastefulness of human resources as well as time.

The two reflect two different attitudes: the new farmers can be seen as villains-as an ill-advised lot bent on reversing Zimbabwe's famed SADC bread basket status so sung about in the media and Geography textbooks prior to land repossession. The new black farmers can also be viewed as victims who have been economic spectators in their own country who have not much to show for their political independence over three decades after 'flag independence' (Ngugi, 1981). This observation shows the polysemous nature of art, cartoons inclusive, and the fact that the artist cannot pin the reader to a certain preferred interpretation.

The cartoon uses name dropping for Kumbirai Kangai, whose name is written on his trousers. This is meant to identify him and to make it easy for the skimmer to identify the main players in the cartoon and, thereby, 'complete' the 'jigsaw puzzle since

The political cartoon is a hybrid of text, pictorial representations, symbols, shadings and humour that become a puzzle, a sophisticated rebus that is affectively engaging to skimmers (Bush, 2012:5)

The white commercial farmer, exasperated by what he perceives as seizure of 'his' property, goes on to accuse the indigenous people who are repossessing land of unfair play by taking away land without compensation. The picture painted is that of lawlessness which can only brew chaos for the country. This is one side of the story since the so-called land grabbers also have plausible reasons for their actions: land was taken forcibly from their ancestry leading to suffering and political insurgence; so, it is only right to right the past wrongs: there is a moral obligation to redress the paradox of indigenous people who have the worst part of their land. As postulated by Herbst (1990:37)

Land was the central issue during liberation struggle for Zimbabwe and continues to be the most important domestic issue in the post-independence period. The appropriation of African land by European settlers guaranteed White economic dominance and Black poverty during the colonial period, and the inequitable distribution of land in Zimbabwe today is the most dramatic symbol of the enduring structures of an unequal society (Herbst, 1990: 37).

What Jan van Riebeeck says about the Khoikhoi protestation against the loss of their land after their war with the Dutch in 1660 is applicable to all the dispossessed peoples in Africa, including Zimbabwe:

They spoke for a long time about our taking every day for our use more of the land which had belonged to them for all ages, and on which they were accustomed to pasture their cattle. They also asked, whether, if they were to come to Holland, they would be permitted to act in a similar manner saying, it would not matter if you stayed at the Fort, but you come into the interior, selecting the best land for yourselves, and never once asking whether it will put us to any inconvenience(cited in Nyawo-Viriri-Shava,2012:14)

Land was taken forcibly from the indigenous people and, in spite of concessions, they tried to seal with the powerful invader in an effort to appease him and, hopefully, ward off more dispossessions, they continued to be pushed to the ropes.

There is arrogance displayed in the thinking reflected in the utterance: ‘You can’t just grab other people’s private property without adequate compensation!’ where the robber is expecting to be compensated when the owners take back their stolen and found possessions. The irony is that the farmer, who might be descendant from the pioneer land grabbers, now accuses the same black victims of ‘land grabbing’. Unfortunately, this ‘voice of reason’ from the boy, though accessible to the reader as an ‘aside’, is only happening in the child’s mind, making it to be, to a large extent, muzzled because the cartoonist chooses to allot it, not only to a child character, but also inters it in the child’s psyche. However, the fact that it is interred in the child’s who represents the future may be significant as it makes the supposed ‘interring’, burying of the revolutionary seed in the right soil to germinate.

The long whip, which cracks in the face of the white commercial farmer, instead of the oxen, is symbolic of the fact that the whip is really targeted at the activities of the former colonizer. The cartoon has stock characters representing two sides of the coin-the status quo advocate and those representing the revolutionary stance.

There is juxtaposition and contrast between the white commercial farmer and the black ‘new’ farmers in terms of underlying philosophy and technology. In terms of philosophy, the farmer wishes the status quo, which favours the white farmers would remain intact. The latter is driven by the need to correct historical land imbalances and reduce the gap between the rich and the poor. In an article entitled ‘Unity, One-party State, Land-Catholic Bishops Speak

Out', the bishops' communiqué is quoted as saying: "A war was fought and blood was spilt over the ownership of land. Lasting peace and prosperity can only be achieved if the land is shared out equitably." The aforementioned communiqué goes further to proclaim that

This country was given to all of us by God...it does not belong to one particular class or privileged group. Our leaders and public servants know this. They should continually remind themselves of this so as to avoid the danger of becoming a merely self-serving caste (cited in *Moto*, Issue 84).

The colonisers took away land from the indigenous people whom they moved en masse to hostile environments since they were an obstacle to their imperialist mission. There was certainly no sharing of our 'God given resource' then. The bible is awash with formerly dispossessed people repossessing their heritage without compensating the usurper. It is no accident that the communiqué was issued after the expiry of the 10 year Lancaster House imposed honey moon on land with an obvious worry on the implications of this on the erstwhile land owners. In a 10 March 2000 *The Daily News* article entitled 'Redistribution of Land must be done in an orderly fashion', Father Wermter of the Catholic Church and, arguably, *the* voice of this church which owned *Moto* argues that

Farmers who are productive and contribute to the economic well-being of the nation, could be said to have earned the right to their land, even if the original occupation of the land by their great grandfathers was morally and legally defective.

The argument above can be said to be quite defective because the clergyman seems to think that if one dispossesses one of his/her belongings, but uses them 'responsibly', the thieving party should be left to keep them!

The above cartoon also frames the 'new farmer' as lagging behind technologically. However, not all black farmers given land use ox-drawn ploughs. The aim of the cartoonist is to portray a picture of an ill-conceived and ill-funded programme. Ploughing across the 'normal' path that the tractor is taking, though indicating a symbolic stop to the coloniser's machinations, may also suggest that the 'new farmers' are deviating from the proven path and nothing good is expected to come out of that. A commercial farmer decides to plough in a certain way after consulting many factors. These new farmers are simply clueless when it comes to farming, according to the cartoonist. The lack of resources and the supposed lack of

agricultural knowledge by the new farmers are used as ammunition to justify the continued marginalisation of the black people. What is implied is that with ox-drawn ploughs, the country's food security is threatened. Post-independence agricultural production statistics have a different story to tell, however, since about 50% of produce has been coming from marginalised communities, mainly in ecological regions 4 and 5. With adequate rain, the same farmers, now in agriculturally friendly ecological regions which the colonial administrations denied them, even with the same meagre resources, are expected to perform better. The Zimbabwe Rural Household Dynamic Study (ZRHDS), led by Bill Kinsey, showed how

resettled farmers' real income had more than doubled over the period between 1982-3 and 1994-5...resettlement had been much more successful across a variety of criteria than many pessimists had predicted (Scoones et al., 2010: 18).

It is important to note that the black farmers were not mechanised at all—they used ox-drawn ploughs, but significantly contributed to the country's GDP.

The analysis of the few selected cartoons reflects reductionist interpretations of the contentious issue. The different stables characterise it differently, the first one sees it as a legitimate decolonisation land repossession issue, another one sees it as land grab while the third one perceives it as shambolic. The first and second views may be said to be tangential to each other while the third seems to be insinuating that there is an anomaly that needs addressing but the modus operandi is defective. The renditions by the three media houses are really competing for converts at the top of their artistic voices seemingly unprepared to listen to the merits from the other perception. What they seem to achieve by doing that is to preach to their converted in their cults that are not always prepared to listen to other voices on the matter. In doing this, however, readers often detect gaps they fill in often with the unsaid. In short, readers often read through what can be viewed as propagandist party manifesto-like renditions in the name of journalism. To avoid an information deficiency syndrome, readers need to sift through and sample the renditions on offer in their environment to come up with a balanced and nutritious menu since in essence the renditions are incomplete in their completeness of the coverage of the contentious issue.

Conclusion

This study critically examined framing of the Zimbabwe land issue through cartoons in *The Herald*, *The Sunday Mail*, *The Daily News*, *The Zimbabwe Independent* and *Moto*. *The Herald* and *The Sunday Mail*, it was shown, assume a pro-government stance in their approach to the land issue, defending it as a legitimate decolonisation issue. The study revealed that *The Daily News*, *The Zimbabwe Independent* and *Moto*, contrary to the state-owned newspaper, *The Herald*, frame land repossession embarked on by the Zimbabwean government after 1998 as 'land grab' or 'land invasion'. This formulation is very important because it dismisses and delegitimises what has been called land reform by government. This study concludes that the one Zimbabwean story has various renditions depending on who the narrator is. The study concludes that the different papers can be divided into two main camps: those that support the Fast Track Land Reform Programme who view it as a long overdue legitimate decolonisation issue and the second group that views it as anarchical. One can borrow Ngugi (1981)'s accurate observation and also conclude that every cartoonist is a cartoonist in politics. The study notes therefore that the papers conveniently select those aspects that feed into their particular media houses' agendas bracketing all others which may be perceived as tangential to the construction of their particular frame. To get a balanced media diet of contentious issues such as land, it is recommended that skimmers need to sample a buffet of news products and by-products on the media menu with a pinch of salt.

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