

Wendy Willems

Comic strips and “the crisis”: postcolonial laughter and coping with everyday life in Zimbabwe

**Article (Accepted version)
(Refereed)**

Original citation:

Willems, Wendy (2011) *Comic strips and “the crisis”: postcolonial laughter and coping with everyday life in Zimbabwe*. [Popular communication](#), 9 (2). pp. 126-145. ISSN 1540-5710

DOI: [10.1080/15405702.2011.562099](https://doi.org/10.1080/15405702.2011.562099)

© 2011 [Taylor & Francis Group, LLC](#)

This version available at: <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/49241/>

Available in LSE Research Online: July 2013

LSE has developed LSE Research Online so that users may access research output of the School. Copyright © and Moral Rights for the papers on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. Users may download and/or print one copy of any article(s) in LSE Research Online to facilitate their private study or for non-commercial research. You may not engage in further distribution of the material or use it for any profit-making activities or any commercial gain. You may freely distribute the URL (<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk>) of the LSE Research Online website.

This document is the author’s final accepted version of the journal article. There may be differences between this version and the published version. You are advised to consult the publisher’s version if you wish to cite from it.

Comic strips and 'the crisis': postcolonial laughter and coping with everyday life in Zimbabwe

Wendy Willems

Department of Media Studies, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Original citation:

Willems, W. (2011). Comic strips and 'the crisis': Postcolonial laughter and coping with everyday life in Zimbabwe. In: *Popular Communication* 9(2): 126-145.

Abstract:

In African Studies, political cartoons and comic strips have frequently been analyzed in relation to concepts of power and resistance and considered as ways in which those subject to power challenge the rulers (Mason, 2002; Mbembe, 2001; Nyamnjoh, 2009). To a certain extent, these studies have reflected the wider debate on the role of humor in the relation between rulers and ruled in the postcolony. In media and cultural studies, scholars have analyzed comics primarily as ideological texts which offer a particular framing of reality. Drawing on the Zimbabwean comic strip Chikwama, which was published in the Zimbabwean privately owned newspaper The Daily News in the early 2000s, this article argues that postcolonial laughter does not always address those in power, but humor may also point fingers at those subject to power in an attempt to make readers cope with the tragic events unfolding around them. Laughter frequently adopts a self-reflexive mode through which those subject to power mock their own powerlessness and lack of agency in the face of a system that they perceive as immutable. Furthermore, the strip Chikwama also highlights how media discourse came to reflect the way in which politics slowly invaded the lives of ordinary Zimbabweans, hereby reinforcing the importance of treating media texts as embedded in broader social discourses. The comic strip Chikwama did not only replicate the particular institutional ideology of The Daily News but also mirrored the way in which ordinary Zimbabweans negotiated the social and economic impact of the crisis on an everyday basis.

In African Studies, political cartoons and comic strips have frequently been analysed in relation to concepts of power and resistance (cf. Mbembe 2001, Mason 2002, Nyamnjoh 2009, Arntsen 2010). To a certain extent, these studies have reflected the wider debate on the role of humor in the relation between rulers and ruled in the postcolony.¹ A number of scholars have placed the emergence of comics and cartoons in the broader context of shifts in political power in Africa as a result of processes of political liberalisation and democratisation. It is in this particular environment that cartoons and comics began to hold the newly installed governments to account and emerged as vigorous critiques of the actions of political elites. Focusing on political cartoons in Senegal, Cameroon, Burkina Faso and Kenya, Eko (2007: 225) for example analyses cartoons as resistant forms of satirical subversion that mock the excesses of Africa's political leaders:

Indeed, communication in Africa in the post-Cold War era has become a gigantic struggle of images. Political leaders who had a monopoly over media content during the 1960s and 1970s, now face stiff competition from private, independent media outlets. Cartoons are at the forefront

¹ This debate was partly initiated by the publication of Mbembe's 2001 book *On the postcolony*.

of this battle of images. They take the animal mascots and other images that African leaders had created for themselves, turn them up-side-down and transform them into a caustic critique of the abuse of power.

The debate has not only focused on the way in which cartoons ridiculed those in power but has also reflected on the implications of cartoons for those in power. Eko (2007: 235) for instance has attributed agency to cartoons and points out that “cartoons and caricature are politically sensitive, even dangerous texts. This is because cartoons are addressed mostly to urban dwellers who were at the forefront of agitation for democratization and liberalization in the 1990s”. Writing about the role of cartooning in South Africa, Mason (2002: 388) has argued that “it would be an exaggeration to claim that it was a major factor in the overthrow of apartheid” but he still maintains that “cartooning in its various forms nevertheless played an important role in crystallising issues of allegiance and identity, introducing revolutionary concepts into public discourse, undermining the ideological hegemony of the state and valorising the political struggle”.

However, in his analysis of political cartoons in Cameroon, Mbembe (2001) is less convinced about the effectiveness of political cartoons as forms of resistance. He argues that the very act of making the autocrat visible in cartoons in fact reproduces its power. The representation of the autocrat as an ordinary human being does not serve to strip him of his power but:

[...] far from signing the ‘thing’ [the autocrat] in death, [the cartooning of the autocrat] rather intensifies its presence by enclosing the subject in a mixture of fascination and dread, a sort of consciousness whose peculiar feature is to be hallucinated – not in the Lacanian sense of hallucination as ‘objectless perception’, but to the extent that it is the autocrat who offers speech, commands what is listened to and what is written and fills space to the point where he is still being talked of even as the act of creation is claiming to debase him (Mbembe 2001: 160).

Nyamnjoh (2009: 107) disagrees with Mbembe’s analysis and argues that “Mbembe seems to imply that [the autocrat’s] power diminishes if the public were less preoccupied with him in this way. But I think it is also important to see in what light he is presented: he is generally talked of in very negative terms, which obviously has a greater effect than if the press were simply to ignore him as if he did not exist”. Nyamnjoh (2009: 97) encourages us to be “critical of any suggestion that such cartooning has little impact simply because it has failed to bring about a revolution or revolt against the status quo” and he proposes instead to “on effects that may be gradual, cumulative, and in the long term, than on effectiveness that stresses immediate outcomes to the detriment of that which takes time to unfold”. These scholars have thus focused on the role of cartoons in offering spaces for resistance – whether effective or not - and the way in which they have functioned as what Scott (1990) would call ‘hidden scripts’.

Engaging with this debate, this article discusses how and whether comics in Zimbabwe can be positioned in relation to the question of power and resistance. I will focus on the strip Chikwama which appeared in the private Zimbabwean daily newspaper *The Daily News* in the early 2000s. Chikwama is a strip about an ‘ordinary’ Zimbabwean struggling with all the economic and political changes around him. In the strip, we see Chikwama, or Chiki as he is known to his friends, socialising with a variety of people, frequenting beer halls, hanging out drinking and joking with his friends. The article posits that the comic strip Chikwama both reflects the particular institutional ideology of *The Daily News* and the way in which ordinary Zimbabweans negotiated the social and economic impact of the crisis. It argues that the

particular kind of laughter part of Chikwama cannot be treated as resistance against those in power but instead fulfils a self-reflexive role in which those subject to power reflect on their own powerlessness and lack of agency.

Cartoons and comics as ‘hidden scripts’?

In the case of Zimbabwe, one can question the extent to which cartoons and comics have come to fulfil the role of ‘hidden scripts’, i.e. subtle, implicit forms of critique against those in power. It is certainly tempting to view them in this light, given the widely reported range of legal and extra-legal restrictions which the government imposed on press freedom. Arrests of journalists and acts of intimidation were common in Zimbabwe in the 2000s. Pieces of legislation such as the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) and the Public Order and Security Act (POSA), which were both introduced in early 2002, did have a serious impact on journalistic practices. Journalists and editors reported to be cautious in what could be published and what might attract persecution from government. Reports in global media and alerts from press freedom institutions often painted the picture of a strong, ‘Big Brother’ police state. But looking in more detail at the reporting in private newspapers such as *The Zimbabwe Independent*, *The Zimbabwe Standard*, *The Financial Gazette* and *The Daily News*, one could find numerous examples of frank reporting on the crisis and articles which pointed to the complicity of government forces in this regard.

Therefore, while political cartoons in Zimbabwe certainly could be seen as forms of political resistance and opened up alternative communicative spaces, as Arntsen (2010) has argued, it remains questionable to what extent cartoons were unique in offering opportunities for political dissent. Political cartoons therefore did not necessarily constitute a space which regular news articles in private newspapers could not occupy. Like news articles, columns and editorials, cartoonists openly criticised politicians, ministers and even the President. Minister of Information, Professor Jonathan Moyo, was a favourite target of ridicule as well as Dr Tafataona Mahoso, an important ZANU-PF ‘regime intellectual’. The long, exaggerated forehead in caricatures of Moyo poked fun at his most obvious asset: his brain power evidenced by his use of ‘big English’ and wordy sentences.

However, cartoonists probably did take extra care in the way they represented Robert Mugabe to avoid being charged by newly implemented legislation as the Public Order and Security Act (POSA). This Act was gazetted into law on 22 January 2002 and imposed severe restrictions on the publication or communication of false statements prejudicial to the state and of undermining the authority of, or insulting, the President.² Rarely did the Zimbabwe government express its concern over cartoons with the exception of one cartoon published in *The Daily News* on 16 May 2003 in an advert of the opposition party, Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), which caricatured President Robert Mugabe as a thief (see Figure 1).

² While POSA was supposed to repeal the repressive Law and Order (Maintenance) Act (LOMA) which dated back from the colonial regime, POSA did not significantly differ in content from LOMA. The text of POSA can be downloaded from Kubatana, a NGO network alliance project. Check: http://www.kubatana.net/html/archive/legisl/020122posa.asp?orgcode=par001&year=2002&range_start=1 (last accessed: 2 November).

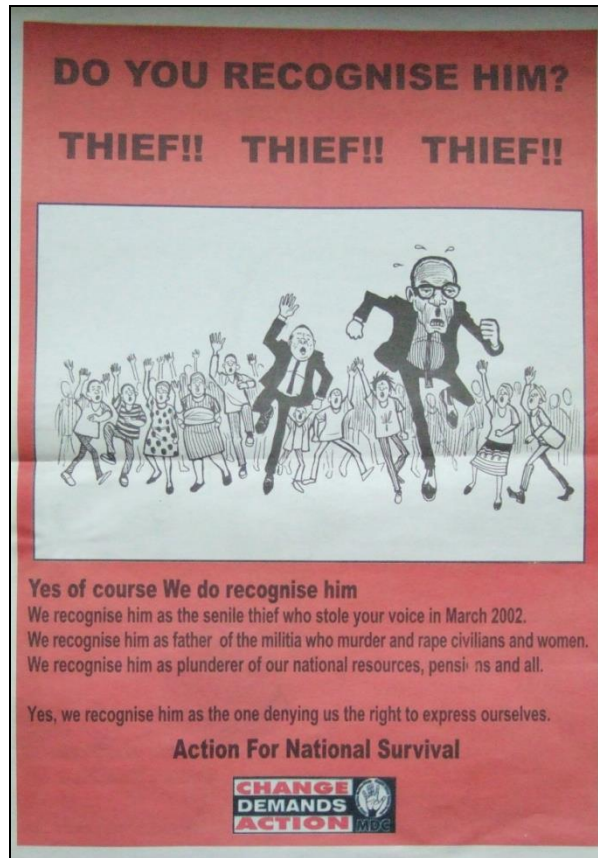


FIGURE 1: MDC cartoon advert in *The Daily News*. May 16, 2003.

Subsequent to the publication of this advert, *The Daily News*' editor, Nqobile Nyathi, was arrested and charged under POSA for allegedly insulting the President.³

In the case of Zimbabwe, treating cartoons as forms of resistance primarily would perhaps attribute too much weight to them, given the role of other forms of dissent in private newspapers. Hence, in this article, I am less interested in the way in which cartoons may provoke social and political change – which they rarely do – but more concerned with the way in which they reflect and work out social change. Partly responding to Mbembe's argument, Schneider (2004: 79) has argued that “[t]he value of comics may not so much lie in its potential to provoke (instant) political change but in the way comics keep track and record actual and historical reality. As such they form an important part of the public memory”. Focusing on what a controversial cartoon of President Jacob Zuma by well-known South African cartoonist Zapiro might tell us about constitutional debates in South Africa, Hammett (2010: 89) has also argued that cartoons “capture elements of a nation's zeitgeist that can be utilised to explore a wide range of inter-connected issues within complex contexts”.

A treatment of media discourse as reflective of social change could also contribute to wider debates in the field of media studies. As Allan (1999: 64-65) has argued, “[i]n discussing the day-to-day activities of reporting, journalists and their critics alike often draw upon the

³ See: ‘Third editor charged under Public Order and Security Act in two weeks’, alert of the International Freedom of Expression eXchange (IFEX), 27 June 2003, available from: http://www.ifex.org/zimbabwe/2003/06/27/third_editor_charged_under_public/ (last accessed: 1 November 2010).

metaphor of a 'mirror' to describe how the social world is 'reflected' in news accounts". These journalistic accounts of media discourse stand in stark contrast with dominant academic analyses of media texts which conventionally highlight the way in which news is socially constructed and shapes 'reality' (Fowler 1991, Hall 1997). In these interpretations which predominantly focus on the genre of 'hard news', news is not simply that what happens in society but that which is regarded as important by media institutions. The events that a certain newspaper reports on do not simply reflect the significance of those events but rather reveal the selection criteria of a newspaper. Events are not newsworthy in themselves but only become "news" when they are selected for inclusion in news reports. Academic analyses that emphasise the role of media in constituting versions of reality also tend to attribute certain powers to media institutions in terms of influencing audiences or shaping worldviews.

While the role of 'the media' cannot and should not be denied, there is, however, a danger that the analytical focus on media discourse prevents us from understanding the reflective role of media. The emphasis on the constitutive elements of media discourse may lead us to ignore the way in which media texts are ultimately part and parcel of broader social and cultural discourses. As Couldry (2006: 182) has argued, by virtue of its object of study, media studies has adopted a form of 'centrism' which he defines as "the automatic assumption that media are central to explaining the dynamics of contemporary societies". By adopting media texts, media production or media consumption as central object of study, media scholars have closed "down the field of media we analyse and (in so doing) reinforces its own validity in an endless self-fulfilling prophecy" (Couldry 2006: 182)

In practicing media-centrism, media scholars have presented media as analytically separable from society. For example, positivist-oriented scholars in the media effects tradition have been interested in studying the way in which media affect or change the attitudes, values and behaviour of viewers, readers or listeners. The underlying assumption here is that media can be isolated from society, or that it is possible to separate media messages from other texts, and then describe the impact these have on audiences. As Allan (1999: 2-3) has argued, the dichotomy between media and society

[i]s placing severe limits on what sorts of questions can be asked about the news media in our society [...]. Should the news media be removed, in analytical terms, from the social, economic and political contexts within which they operate, we run the risk of exaggerating their power and influence. [...] It is important that we take sufficient care to avoid losing sight of how the news media are embedded in specific relations of power and control while, at the same time, recognizing the ways in which they are working to reflect, transform and, if only infrequently, challenge these same relations over time.

Echoing Couldry and Allen, scholars more recently have proposed cultural interpretations of news media and journalism (Zelizer 2004: 175-203, Rao 2010, Bird 2010, Berkowitz 2010). These calls are intimately linked to perspectives from the field of media anthropology which propagates a society-centred approach to media and emphasises the way in which media are embedded in broader contexts (cf. Dickey 1997; Askew and Wilk 2002; Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod and Larkin 2002; Peterson 2003; Rothenbuhler and Coman 2005). For example, Spitulnik (1993: 296) has argued that media studies' "preoccupation with the political and cultural power of mass media and the drive to quantify media's effects on audiences has perpetuated the focus on *isolatable* media" [emphasis added by author]. In an influential article on anthropology's contribution to studies of mass media, Dickey (1997: 415) put it as follows:

Anthropologists, as it turns out, are entering media studies at a time when the field has posted the kinds of questions that our methods and theoretical approaches are especially well equipped to answer. In particular, we can and should ask how different people create and use different media, and how those media are *embedded* in social, political and economic systems [emphasis added by author].

The embeddedness of media in society is precisely the entry point that this article departs from. Comic strips circulated through newspapers are here understood not primarily as ideological vehicles but more importantly as cultural narratives that reflect – as much as construct – social change. In her work on witchcraft in the Nigerian popular press, Bastian (1993: 155) looked at newspaper editorials because these “offer insight into how Igbo people consolidate their everyday life experiences and make sense of a world that contains both witchcraft and international capitalism”. In another article, she discussed “how Nigerian [popular press] representations of witchcraft, modernity and development necessarily speak to the recent history of the Nigerian state and to the separate cultures that inhibit it” (Bastian 2001: 72).

Comic strips and institutional ideologies in Zimbabwe

As opposed to political cartoons, the genre of comic strips does not necessarily touch on topics of a political nature. While in 1970s Rhodesia, “the comic strip was frequently used to influence opinions on both sides of the Liberation war” (McLoughlin 1989: 217), this changed at independence when comic strips mainly fulfilled an entertaining or educational role. While cartoons could be described as an image in a singular frame, a comic strip comprises a sequence of images which tell a particular story. In the 1980s and 1990s, newspaper editors in Zimbabwe often used syndicated international comic strips from outside the country such as *Hagar the Horrible*, *Andy Capp* and *Fred Bassett* for publication in their newspapers. Although magazines such as *Parade*, *Moto* and *Prize* had local comic strips, the main daily national, government-supported newspaper *The Herald* relied on imports. This seems congruent with broader patterns on the continent. As Lent (2009: 4) has pointed out, comic strips in Africa have often been “foreign-originated and tied to former colonial masters”:

The pattern was much the same throughout colonized Africa, with the press initially carrying cartoons and strips that emanated from the mother country, followed by a few created by resident colonialists (including missionaries) and gradually those by indigenous artists featuring local topics and characters (Lent 2009: 7).

However, the second daily newspaper, *The Chronicle*, which was also government-supported and published from Zimbabwe’s second biggest city Bulawayo, carried a comic strip called Nyati between 1984 and 1988 (Nyarota and Namate 1997: 1). Nyati revolved around the lives of three friends: Nyati, an indigenous businessman who owns an import-export business; Professor, a highly educated but unemployed returnee from abroad; and Mupeta, a resourceful commuter omnibus driver.

But local comic strips began to thrive with the launch of the private newspaper *The Daily News* in March 1999 which offered Zimbabwean cartoonists a full page of comic strips to publish their work in a new paper that rapidly gained popularity among Zimbabweans. This can to a large extent be attributed to the enthusiasm for cartoons and comic strips on the part of Geoff Nyarota, *The Daily News*’ editor who previously was the editor of *The Chronicle* and had worked with Boyd Maliki on the Nyati strip. Initially, *The Daily News* had three comic strips but

from March 2002, the paper carried four: a revived Nyati by Watson Mukutirwa, Samson by Noah Pomo and City Life by Boyd Maliki and Chikwama by Tony Namate (see Figure 2).



FIGURE 2: The local comics page in *The Daily News*. July 22, 2002.

The focus in this article is on the comic strip Chikwama which appeared at the top of the comic strip page in *The Daily News*. Chikwama is drawn by Tony Namate, who is the most well-known cartoonist in Zimbabwe and who has received several awards for his work.

Of course, it is problematic to treat comic strips, which are forms of popular art, exclusively as direct reflections of public opinion as this would let us to ignore the way in which Chikwama could also be treated as a cultural commodity part of the broader product of the private newspaper *The Daily News* in which it is published. Chikwama, of course, partly reflects the broader institutional ideology that *The Daily News* came to mediate. The newspaper was established in 1999 and could be considered as the first serious challenge to the monopoly long held by the main government-sponsored daily newspaper *The Herald*. In order to compete with the broadsheet format of *The Herald*, *The Daily News* opted for a tabloid size newspaper which it felt would appeal to commuters (Nyarota 2006: 238).

But in terms of content, the newspaper also sought to differentiate itself from state-sponsored media such as *The Herald* and the monopoly broadcaster the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation which relied to a large extent on the official voice of government elites and represented the spectacle of the state. Their reporting could be classified as development journalism which can be defined as “a notion of journalism according to which reporting events of national and international significance should be constructive in the sense that it contributes positively to the development of the country concerned” (Kunczik 1988: 83, quoted in Musa and Domatob 2007: 316). In the development journalism model, media are not expected to be antagonistic to the state but considered as partners in the development process and as extensions of the state. Those practising development journalism are expected to “critically examine, evaluate and report the relevance of a development project to national and local needs, the difference between a planned scheme and its actual implementation, and the differences between its impact on people as claimed by government officials and as it actually is” (Aggarwala 1979: 181, quoted in Thussu 2000: 328). Furthermore, the media are seen as important allies in the process of nation building and development.

Both ZBC and *The Herald* offered upbeat stories about the accomplishments of the state and readers were addressed as willing subjects of development and as beneficiaries of the state’s accomplishments. Political elites played a central role in ZBC’s televised music gala which emerged in the 2000s as a popular alternative to the official commemoration of national days such as Independence Day, Heroes’ Day and Unity Day (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems 2009). In these official broadcasts, ordinary Zimbabweans were shown as legitimising, applauding, supporting and condoning the rituals of the state. Similarly, *The Herald* reflected the voice of the state and often used literal press statements of government departments and uncritically published these, or accompanied the president on his/her official state visits. Both ZBC and *The Herald*, therefore, primarily sought to attribute legitimacy to the state and the ruling party ZANU-PF.

In response to these, *The Daily News* sought to be a paper for the common man in the street. As a journalist for *The Daily News* described it “We are writing for Zimbabweans who want the truth. Not for anyone. For Zimbabweans who want the truth”.⁴ This is concomitant with the paper’s slogan which was “telling it like it is”. The paper’s political editor, Sandra Nyaira, further described the mission of the newspaper as “to give the ordinary Zimbabwean a chance to know the truth about the political violence going on in the country, the corruption, the nepotism

⁴ Interview with Precious Shumba, Senior Reporter of *The Daily News*, Harare, 21 August 2003.

and related issues and policies that were bringing Zimbabwe down slowly but surely”.⁵ Instead of relying on the views of experts and politicians, *The Daily News* believed ordinary Zimbabweans had important opinions which were worth recording.

Especially in the run-up to the 2000 parliamentary elections, the paper rapidly increased its popularity. In this period, *The Daily News* tripled its average sales from 35,000 to 90,000.⁶ According to its editor, the circulation of *The Herald* in the same period dropped from around 90,000 to little more than 60,000 a day.⁷ As Table 1 indicates, *The Daily News* and *The Herald* were predominantly available in urban areas in Zimbabwe, with well-off urban residents of low-density suburbs as the most likely readers of daily newspapers, followed by township dwellers (high-density urban residents). In rural areas, radio continues to be the most accessible medium. For example, in 2001, 52 percent of rural residents noted that they had listened to ZBC’s Radio 2 (in the past seven days), which primarily broadcasts in ChiShona and siNdebele.⁸ This figure is substantially higher than the proportion of rural residents reading a newspaper.

TABLE 1: Proportion of residents (in percentage) who read a daily publication in the last six months, 2000-2003⁹

	2000		2001		2002		2003	
	<i>Daily News</i>	<i>Herald</i>	<i>Daily News</i>	<i>Herald</i>	<i>Daily News</i>	<i>Herald</i>	<i>Daily News</i>	<i>Herald</i>
Rural residents	15%	27%	26%	30%	11%	16%	20%	18%
High-density urban residents	47%	63%	58%	44%	62%	50%	61%	44%
Low-density urban residents	73%	79%	72%	53%	78%	60%	77%	49%

Sources: Zimbabwe Advertising Research Foundation (2000). *Zimbabwe All Media Products Survey (ZAMPS)*. Harare: Zimbabwe Advertising Research Foundation; Zimbabwe Advertising Research Foundation (2001). *Zimbabwe All Media Products Survey (ZAMPS)*. Harare: Zimbabwe Advertising Research Foundation; Zimbabwe Advertising Research Foundation (2002). *Zimbabwe All Media Products Survey (ZAMPS)*. Harare: Zimbabwe Advertising Research Foundation; Zimbabwe Advertising Research Foundation (2003). *Zimbabwe All Media Products Survey (ZAMPS)*. Harare: Zimbabwe Advertising Research Foundation.

It is important to note that the establishment of *The Daily News* in March 1999 coincided with the foundation of a new opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in

⁵ Special edition of *The Daily News* in exile, 3 May 2007, p. 3, available from: http://www.zimbabwejournalists.com/uploaddocs/Daily_News_in_Exile_2007_for_websites.pdf (last accessed: 2 November 2010).

⁶ For detailed data on both the print run and net sales of *The Daily News*, please refer to Table 2.

⁷ Chakaodza tells Herald secrets, *The Daily News*, 21 May 2001.

⁸ Zimbabwe Advertising Research Foundation (2001). *Zimbabwe All Media Products Survey (ZAMPS)*. Harare: Zimbabwe Advertising Research Foundation.

⁹ Sources: Zimbabwe Advertising Research Foundation (2000). *Zimbabwe All Media Products Survey (ZAMPS)*. Harare: Zimbabwe Advertising Research Foundation; Zimbabwe Advertising Research Foundation (2001). *Zimbabwe All Media Products Survey (ZAMPS)*. Harare: Zimbabwe Advertising Research Foundation; Zimbabwe Advertising Research Foundation (2002). *Zimbabwe All Media Products Survey (ZAMPS)*. Harare: Zimbabwe Advertising Research Foundation; Zimbabwe Advertising Research Foundation (2003). *Zimbabwe All Media Products Survey (ZAMPS)*. Harare: Zimbabwe Advertising Research Foundation.

September 1999. The MDC was the first opposition party after independence in 1980 that managed to win a significant amount of seats (57 out of 120) during the June 2000 parliamentary elections. In an increasingly polarised political environment where ZANU-PF and MDC were battling for power, the government began to label independent newspapers as ‘enemies of the state’ or ‘opposition’ or ‘white’ mouthpieces. *The Daily News*, which to a certain degree indeed reflected the concerns of the opposition and growing number of civil society organisations, in particular became a target of the government. In April 2000, a bomb explosion destroyed a shop next to *The Daily News* offices. The incident was widely interpreted as a government-sponsored attempt to intimidate the outspoken paper. In January 2001, another explosion destroyed the company’s printing press, barely forty-eight hours after the Minister of Information and Publicity, Jonathan Moyo, had threatened to silence *The Daily News*, saying that “it was only a matter of time before Zimbabweans put a stop to the newspaper’s madness” (BBC Africa News, cited in Waldahl 2004: 137). The newspaper was eventually forced to close down on 21 September 2003 after it lost a court case in which *The Daily News* challenged the forced registration of newspaper houses with a government-appointed Media and Information Commission (MIC). Hence, it is within the broader institutional ideology of *The Daily News* that Chikwama should be understood.

Chikwama and everyday talk on the crisis

In an interview with the creator of Chikwama, Tony Namate argued that the strip is about the lives of ordinary people, hereby clearly appealing to the paper’s intended readership.¹⁰ Namate frequently draws inspiration from everyday life. For example, he recalled how he went shopping one day, witnessing the constant price increases of commodities, and began to think that the supermarket must have employed someone to change the prices on a daily basis. The thought subsequently inspired a comic strip. Namate considers it as his task to create awareness about social and political issues, hereby reflecting the conscientising role that comic strips often have played in the wider Southern African region.¹¹ Namate seeks to draw ‘simple cartoons’ which are relatively easy to understand to readers. He recalls with horror an incident in which a reader phoned what one of his cartoons meant. Living a relatively modest life in the high-density satellite town Chitungwiza, situated approximately 30 kilometers from the capital Harare, Namate’s life in many ways resembled the lives of the intended readership of *The Daily News*. Namate does not like to be overexposed and prefers to be in the background; this perhaps in contrast to the celebrity status that South African cartoonist Zapiro has achieved.¹² Partly this was motivated by fear of political intimidation and partly it might reflect Namate’s modest personality.

While Chikwama might target ‘ordinary’ Zimbabweans, the very format of both the newspaper in which it is published as well as the type of comic strips that Chikwama represents,

¹⁰ Interview with Tony Namate, Harare, Zimbabwe, December 2001.

¹¹ See for more on this topic, Kruger and Shariff 2000; Toroyan and Reddy 2005; Beck 2006 and Petersen, Mason et al 2006.

¹² Zapiro’s global success could further be explained by the fact that he is a member of South Africa’s privileged minority and could hereby count on interest from the British and American market which has tended to identify with the experiences of white South Africans. Furthermore, in the late 1980s, Zapiro had the opportunity to study at the School of Visual Art in New York under the famous American comics artist, Art Spiegelman. This broadened his international network extensively and could explain some of his subsequent achievements (see also Zapiro 2009). I am grateful to Sean Jacobs for pointing this out.

means that is primarily accessible to a certain segment of the population. While Chikwama is a combination of image and text, the text is often crucial to fully grasp the meaning of the strip. The image often merely represents a dialogue between two or more characters and the gist of the strip frequently lies in the text. As Olaniyan (2000: 4-5) has argued with regard to Nigerian cartoons, this has broader ideological implications:

Picture-driven cartoons are fully keeping in line with the popular conception of the cartoon as primarily a visual art; and to give primacy to the visual over the verbal is to privilege the more mass-oriented and easily accessible of the two languages. There is a clear ideological implication here, though it need not be consciously chosen; but it is always there, embedded in the aesthetic choices [...]. Word-driven cartoonists violate the common idea of visuality as the essence of cartoons; their privileging of words over pictures often makes their works overly cerebral, highbrow or elitist.

Chikwama therefore is primarily accessible to urban, literate and relatively educated Zimbabweans, e.g. office workers, teachers, secretaries, civil servants, which also meant its readership in many ways coincided with the supporter base of the opposition MDC. While the MDC drew its support mainly from urban residents in the country's major cities Harare and Bulawayo, the ruling party ZANU-PF continued to have a stronghold in Zimbabwe's rural provinces, with the exception of Matabeleland which has been supportive of the opposition (see table 2).¹³

TABLE 2: Provincial results of elections in Zimbabwe, 2000-2008¹⁴

	2000 Parliamentary elections		2002 Presidential elections		2005 Parliamentary elections		2008 Parliamentary elections		2008 Presidential elections	
	ZPF	MDC	ZPF	MDC	ZPF	MDC	ZPF	MDC	ZPF	MDC
Bulawayo	13 %	84 %	18 %	81 %	21 %	78 %	0 %	100 %	12 %	51 %
Harare	22 %	76 %	24 %	75 %	32 %	66 %	3 %	97 %	20 %	72 %
Manicaland	42 %	45 %	48 %	48 %	55 %	42 %	23 %	77 %	38 %	57 %
Mashonaland Central	79 %	20 %	82 %	15 %	82 %	15 %	89 %	11 %	65 %	31 %
Mashonaland East	72 %	24 %	75 %	22 %	75 %	22 %	83 %	17 %	55 %	41 %

¹³ During the 1970s liberation war, ZANU's guerrilla tactics were based on mobilising peasant support for the struggle against the Rhodesian regime. The movement's strategy was premised on creating a rural revolutionary vanguard. In the post-independence period, the rural areas continue to be an important constituency for ZANU-PF. ZANU's major recruitment base during the liberation struggle was in the Eastern part of the country, primarily in Mashonaland provinces and Manicaland. The other liberation movement, Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), was active in the Western part of the country, known as Matabeleland. In the early 1980s, ZANU accused ZAPU of 'dissidence' and sent the Fifth Brigade army to part of Matabeleland and Midlands. This resulted in an estimated 20,000 victims, many of whom were civilians, hereby questioning ZANU's accusation of 'dissidence'. These events explain the low support among rural Matabeleland citizens for ZANU-PF.

¹⁴ Source 2000 Parliamentary results: <http://www.eisa.org.za/WEP/zimelectarchive.htm>; source 2002 Presidential results: http://www.kubatana.net/html/archive/elec/020313presres.asp?sector=ELEC&year=2002&range_start=31; source 2005 Parliamentary results: <http://www.kubatana.net/html/archive/elec/050331parlres.asp?sector=ELEC>; source 2008 Presidential results: http://www.kubatana.net/html/archive/elec/080329kubres.asp?sector=ELEC&year=2008&range_start=871; source 2008 Parliamentary results: <http://www.eisa.org.za/WEP/zim2008results2.htm> (all websites were last accessed on 8 November 2010).

Mashonaland West	64 %	33 %	70 %	27 %	70 %	27 %	73 %	27 %	53 %	42 %
Masvingo	59 %	33 %	67 %	28 %	66 %	31 %	46 %	54 %	50 %	46 %
Matabeleland North	21 %	74 %	34 %	61 %	37 %	54 %	31 %	62 % ¹⁵	28 %	47 %
Matabeleland South	37 %	60 %	44 %	50 %	49 %	48 %	25 %	75 % ¹⁶	39 %	29 %
Midlands	57 %	37 %	61 %	36 %	62 %	34 %	74 %	26 %	49 %	45 %

Because the dialogues in Chikwama are most crucial, the analysis in this article focuses primarily on the verbal aspects of the comic at the expense of the images, which then also enabled me to discuss a larger number of comics.

While the strip certainly reflects the ideologies of the newspaper in which it was circulated, the fact that Chikwama mainly represents talk or dialogues between people strongly connected it to forms of public speech, recognisable from everyday - predominantly urban - life conversations in Zimbabwe and based on Namate's observations from his base in Chitungwiza. In many ways, Chikwama reflected what has become known as 'radio trottoir' in Francophone Africa or 'pavement radio' in Anglophone Africa', defined as "the popular and unofficial discussion of current affairs in Africa, particularly in town" (Ellis 1989: 321). As Nyamnjoh (2000: 99) has argued, the genre of political cartoons and 'radio trottoir' are intimately connected:

As the most distinctive feature of Radio Trottoir, rumour defines itself in opposition to official discourse, which it challenges and seeks to replace. The same is true for political cartooning in general, which could be described as the sketched or caricatured version of rumour about the high and mighty in society. Both political rumour and cartooning, it could be argued, are ways of cushioning the hardness of the crushing and stifling official discourse that monopolised the public sphere, often claiming to be the sole bearer of truth.

However, in this case, Chikwama did not necessarily reflect conversations about political elites but its primary concern was the everyday impact of the crisis. Chikwama and his friends were portrayed as sarcastically joking about the pain and misery inflicted by the crisis, hereby mirroring the broader culture of joking that emerged in the face of the crisis (Willems 2010). Recurring themes in Chikwama's dialogues with his friends included the eroding value of salaries as a result of the hyperinflation; the rising commodity prices; the shortage of commodities and resultant long queues; the nostalgia and longing for a pre-crisis Zimbabwe; and the diaspora and growing number of emigrants.¹⁷

Money is a recurring motif in the strip and this also links to the meaning of the word *chikwama*. In Zimbabwe's major local language ChiShona, *chikwama* literally means wallet or purse, an object that was no longer very useful in Zimbabwe in the 2000s because of the hyperinflation. But in the urban slang that is spoken in the capital Harare, *chikwama* also refers more generally to money. At the time during which the Chikwama strip appeared in *The Daily*

¹⁵ This result is the total of votes for the two MDC factions led by Morgan Tsvangirai (known as MDC-T) and Arthur Mutambara (MDC-M). The two factions came into being after a split in 2005.

¹⁶ This result is the total of votes for the two MDC factions led by Morgan Tsvangirai (known as MDC-T) and Arthur Mutambara (MDC-M). The two factions came into being after a split in 2005.

¹⁷ The sample analysed in this article focused on Chikwama strips that were published in *The Daily News* between 1 May 2001 and 4 April 2003 when Chikwama was replaced with the strip 'Comrade Never' drawn by Knowleh Mushohwe.

News, the annual rate of consumer price inflation increased from 56% in 2000, 77% in 2001, 140% in 2002 to 432% in 2003 but by 2007 it had reached an astonishing 24,411 %.¹⁸ In this climate of hyperinflation, the purse or wallet had lost its purpose as the stacks and stacks of notes that Zimbabweans carried around needed to be kept in something that is bigger than a wallet, a small bag perhaps. And indeed, reflecting these changes, a range of figurative metaphors emerged in ChiShona that began to describe a large sum of money such as *chidhina* (literally brick), *chibhegi* (literally huge bag) and *chihomwe* (literally huge pocket) (Kadenge and Mavunga 2009: 177). But apart from these meanings of *chikwama*, the word can also in an informal sense refer to someone who is difficult to shrug off, someone who always sticks with you wherever you go, someone who puts pressure on friends to borrow money.

Chikwama is presented as an average, urban Zimbabwean; not particularly wealthy but who was able to afford going to the beerhall and had a decent life but the crisis changed all of this in a major way. In the strip, Chikwama is pictured as discussing the growing magnitude of the crisis with his friends. For example, he notes to his friend “Prices now increase every day” to which his friend responds “No, they don’t. They now increase every hour!”¹⁹ Other dialogues demonstrate the various ways in which the crisis has impacted on social issues or events such as marriage, love, relationships, family life and funerals.

I had hoped everything would go well with the lobola. Until your parents demanded five bags of scarce mealie-meal (see Figure 3).²⁰

Love has become a very expensive commodity these days. My girlfriend says I don’t love her the way I used to. What she means is that I no longer can afford to buy her things I used to.²¹

Things are really tough these days Chiki. I know. I can hardly afford to visit relatives in Mutare. I can hardly afford to visit relatives in Chitungwiza.²²

Funerals are no longer exciting these days. It’s either the people give you warm beer... Or the beer itself runs out before you arrive!²³

Instead of commiserating about the situation, Chikwama and his friends are shown as laughing at the crisis and as making attempts to subvert its negative impact into a humorous situation, hereby pretending to ignore the pain and hardship that has come with the crisis. For example, a strip pictures the following dialogue: “There’s one good reason why you should stop smoking, Chiki.. What’s that good reason? Cigarettes have become unaffordable!”²⁴ Another strip highlights a rare positive outcome of the crisis on employment: “Chiki, I’ve found a new job as pricing manager. Pricing manager? Yes, my job is to calculate new prices for products at the end of each day...”²⁵

¹⁸ World Bank country indicators, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/FP.CPI.TOTL.ZG> (last accessed: 2 November 2010).

¹⁹ The word ‘lobola’ refers to bride price. Mealie-meal, also known as sadza, refers to the staple food in Zimbabwe. Chikwama strip, *The Daily News*, 17 September 2001.

²⁰ Chikwama strip, *The Daily News*, 12 April 2002.

²¹ Chikwama strip, *The Daily News*, 24 July 2001.

²² Mutare refers to the capital of Manicaland Province in Eastern Zimbabwe. Chitungwiza refers to a satellite town 30 kilometres out of the capital Harare. Chikwama strip, *The Daily News*, 4 September 2002.

²³ Chikwama strip, *The Daily News*, 1 April 2002.

²⁴ Chikwama strip, *The Daily News*, 4 September 2001.

²⁵ Chikwama strip, *The Daily News*, 28 September 2001.

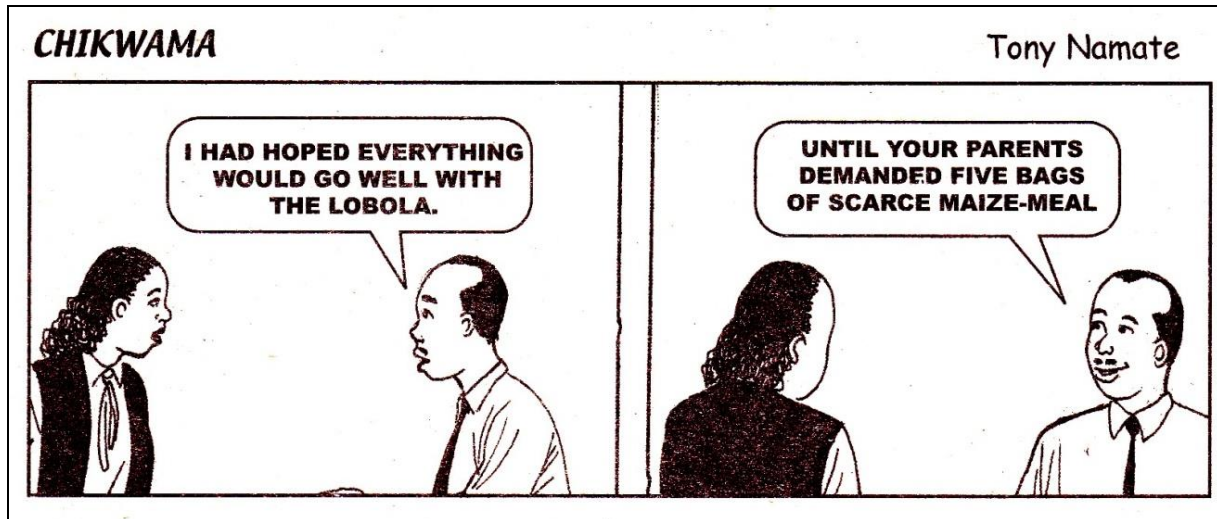


FIGURE 3: *The Daily News*, 12 April 2002.

Rather than mocking the state as political cartoons do conventionally, Chikwama displays a certain degree of self-criticism. For example, a recurrent theme in the strip is the longing for a pre-crisis Zimbabwe, hereby implicitly mocking the level of crisis which the country has reached: “A few years ago a family could buy enough meat for only five dollars. Now a family of five needs one hundred dollars worth of meat for just one meal. There was a time when we could hunt meat without paying a cent!”²⁶ Other strips similarly ridicule the nation:

Zimbabwe has become a major exporter... You're wrong our exports have actually dwindled. Yes, but we're a major exporter of labour... remember?²⁷

There's no beef in the butcheries, but only pork products! What does that mean, Chiki? It means we've become a nation of pigs (see Figure 4).²⁸

What is remarkable about Chikwama is that the sarcasm and criticism offered in the strip is not directed at politicians or the state as such. Without clearly naming the agent that caused Zimbabweans' deprivation, Namate leaves it to *The Daily News* readers to interpret the reasons for their misery. Now and then, Chikwama is shown as discussing politicians in broader terms with friends:

I'm thinking of becoming a politician, Chiki. If you become a politician, you will lie, cheat and use political muscle to gain wealth. That's why I want to become a politician! (see Figure 5)²⁹

I'm thinking of becoming a politician... But I have one problem... I find it difficult to tell lies or steal!³⁰

I've often wondered why so many politicians like to form opposition parties. The answer is there for all to see. It is a quick way of making money!³¹

²⁶ Chikwama strip, *The Daily News*, 12 August 2001.

²⁷ Chikwama strip, *The Daily News*, 8 July 2002.

²⁸ Chikwama strip, *The Daily News*, 3 January 2003.

²⁹ Chikwama strip, *The Daily News*, 19 September 2001.

³⁰ Chikwama strip, *The Daily News*, 24 April 2002.

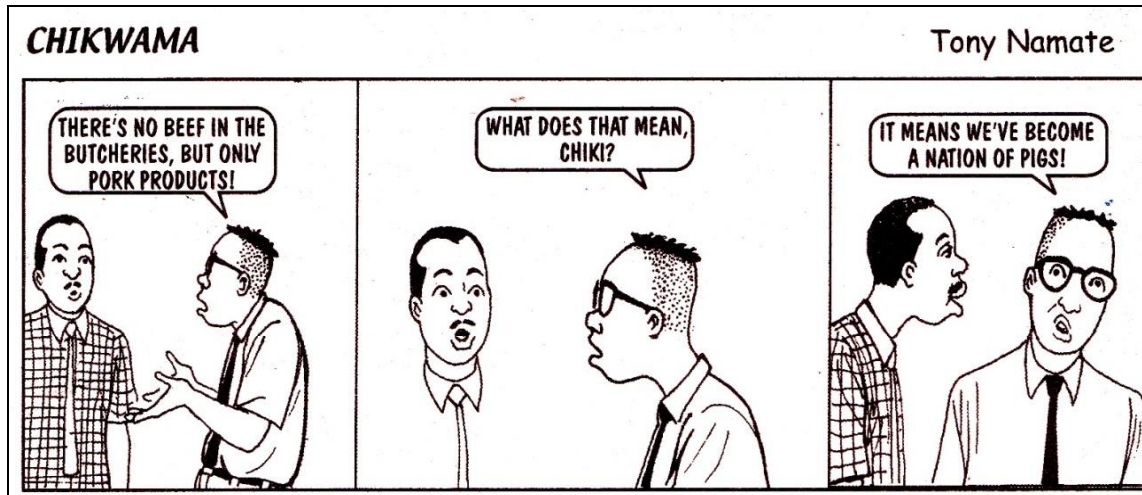


FIGURE 4: *The Daily News*, 3 January 2003.

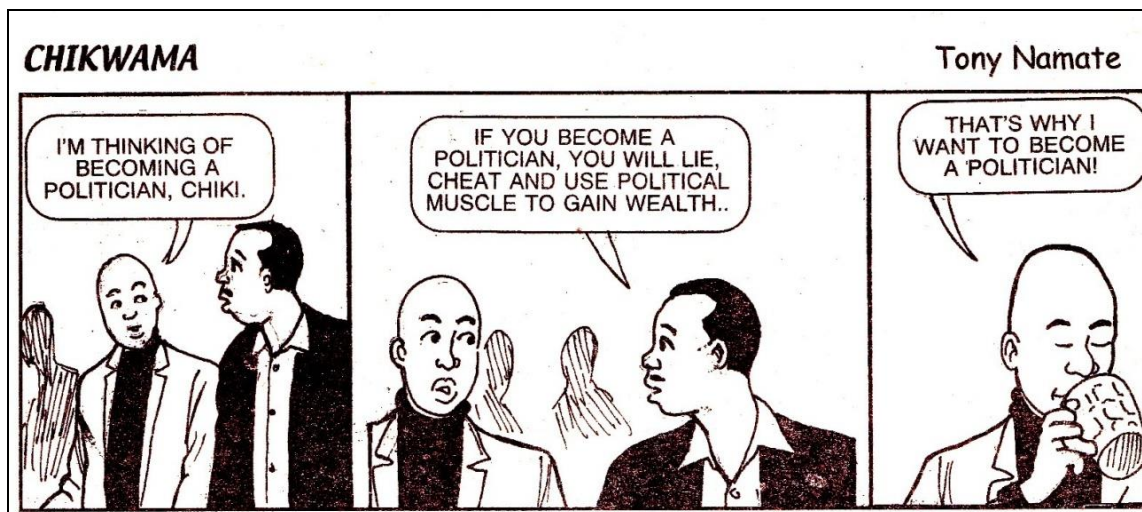


FIGURE 5: *The Daily News*, 19 September 2001.

While politicians are not portrayed in a very favourable light (but instead as hypocrites and corrupt officials), no direct causal links are made between the state of politics and the state of the nation. Rather than mocking the state as political cartoons do conventionally, Chikwama reflects on the powerlessness of ordinary Zimbabweans in the face of the crisis and the immutability of the system in which they are caught up.

One could argue that the absence of the ‘perpetrators’ of the crisis was an attempt on the part of Namate to avoid any potential charges against him. As in the conventional explanation offered in African Studies, Chikwama could function as a ‘hidden script’ that served to pragmatically critique politics without explicitly mentioning political elites. But I would like to offer an alternative explanation here by arguing that the absence of ‘hard politics’ in Chikwama reflects broader patterns of public speech in Zimbabwe. The enormous impact of the crisis on

³¹ Chikwama strip, *The Daily News*, 12 February 2002.

people's everyday lives made 'hard politics' almost banal and overbearing. The complicity of the government in the crisis was obvious to all, particularly to urban dwellers who mostly supported the opposition MDC. The state's 'exhausted nationalism' mediated by ZBC and *The Herald* became surreal and absurd in the eyes of many readers of *The Daily News*.

The emphasis in Chikwama on symptoms at the expense of roots and causes could further be linked to the emergence in ChiShona of a range of metaphors that began to refer to challenges people faced as a result of the crisis and the coping mechanisms people adopted to survive the crisis. Discussing linguistic innovation during the crisis, Kadenge and Mavunga (2009: 169) argue that metaphors could be seen as "one of the basic human strategies for dealing with our environment" and in this process, people tend to "utilize existing physical and natural concepts in our environment to conceptualise more abstract concepts such as the pain and confusion that characterize difficult situations". They make reference to a range of terms that began to describe the pain and hardship faced during the crisis such as *zvakadzvanya* (literal meaning: being hard-pressed), *pakona* (literal meaning: being in a corner) and *zvapakuresa* (literal meaning: things are pressing) (Kadenge and Mavunga 2009: 175).

With reference to the final days of socialism in the former Soviet Union, Yurchak (1997: 162) has argued that "the late socialist subject experienced official ideological representation of social reality as largely false and at the same time as immutable and omnipresent". Instead of actively countering the state, citizens then began to ignore it. There was no need to point to an agent as it became too obvious who was the main causal link in the crisis. As Yurchak (1997: 165) points out, "[a] subjective recognition of ideology does not have to lead to its contestation, to an empowerment of the oppressed or to their resistance against the official representation of the social world". The futile defence of the state against any allegations of complicity in the crisis resulted in a realisation that the system continued to be omnipresent and immutable:

The perception of the social world's immutability was based on the personal experiences of the Soviet citizen that nearly all mechanisms of representation in the official sphere were centrally controlled. Under these conditions, the official reality was uncontested not because its representation was taken for granted as truthful, or because people were afraid to contest it, but, first and foremost, because it was apparent that no other public representation of reality within the official sphere could occur (Yurchak 1997: 166).

Hence, the realisation on the part of Zimbabweans that the ruling party's ideological defence was false did not necessarily lead to resistance. Instead, it resulted into a lack of interest in the state which might explain the silence on the causes of the crisis in both Chikwama and the metaphors mentioned above.

Conclusion

This article sought to discuss how and whether comics in Zimbabwe can be positioned in relation to the question of power and resistance. Focusing on the particular case of Chikwama, it was demonstrated that the lack of attribution to any agent in discourses on the crisis should be seen as a mocking of the powerlessness of the self. While previous literature on humor in the postcolony has predominantly discussed the ridiculing of political elites, the strip Chikwama demonstrated that humor does not always address those in power and can therefore not always be treated as a form of resistance. Instead, humor as mediated by comics may also point fingers at those subject to power in an attempt to make readers cope with the tragic events unfolding around them.

Laughter frequently adopts a self-reflexive mode through which those subject to power mock their own powerlessness and lack of agency in the face of a system that they perceive as immutable.

This article hereby contributes to recent work by other scholars who have pointed towards the self-reflexive nature of laughter in the post-colony (Ogola 2005; Obadare 2009; Musila 2010). Discussing satirical columns in a popular Kenyan newspaper, Ogola (2005: 147) has argued that “[n]ot only do the columns satirize the empty pomp of dictatorial politics, they also enact the ambiguities of popular participation in these processes”. Analysing the Kenyan comedian group Redykyulass, Musila (2010: 286) notes that the group’s satire could be seen as a form of “self-reflexive laughter” which “is the kind of humor that entails laughing at ourselves, at our various weaknesses, vices and flaws”, hereby “forcing Kenyans to pause and ask themselves some thought provoking questions about their role in the continued entrenchment of the repressive regime” (Musila 2010: 286). Focusing on jokes in Nigeria, Obadare (2009: 250) argues that the focus of these jokes is not just the state but “the sheer absurdity of life as currently lived in the country” which means that “jokes are often targeted at official vulgarity, and are also a means through which the ‘powerless’ hold a mirror to themselves”.

Furthermore, the strip Chikwama has demonstrated how media discourse came to reflect the way in which politics slowly invaded the lives of ordinary Zimbabweans, hereby reinforcing the importance of treating media as embedded in broader social discourses. Initially, comic strips in Zimbabwe only tangentially referred to what could be called ‘hard politics’, i.e. the actions of politicians conventionally mocked in political cartoons. Instead, they focused more on social issues such as relationships, gender and morality. But because of the growing impact of ‘hard politics’ on people’s everyday lives, cartoonists were compelled to address the growing interference of the crisis with social life in general. Popular culture could then be seen as the space where “issues central to the everyday life of the majority of population are being articulated and debated, and new modes of life are made visible, audible, thinkable” (Folke Frederiksen 1997: 94). The analysis of Chikwama shows that “cultural expressions [...] demonstrate how perceptions, experiences and problems are being ‘worked out’ in an open, never-ending process” (Fabian 1997: 25).

An analysis of the Chikwama comic strip could therefore potentially tell us more about how ‘ordinary’ Zimbabweans experienced the state and the ‘crisis’ of the 2000s on an everyday basis. An examination of popular culture could contribute to Chabal’s (2009: xi) recent call for an examination of African politics from below:

[M]y intention has been to bring back people into politics. There is nothing wrong with big questions and the study of causalities, but we tend easily to forget human beings in our sociological enquiries and regression analyses. I want here to fix my camera at eye level and engage with politics as it is played out in everyday life. I have eschewed the macro for the micro, the high for the low, and the elite for the ordinary. Ideally, I would like to answer the question of what politics means for people who are not political actors.

Despite the abundance of academic analyses on the roots and symptoms of the ‘Zimbabwe crisis’, few studies have focused on the way in which ordinary Zimbabweans experienced and negotiated the events unfolding from 2000 onwards.³² This could be due to the fact that intensive

³² An exception might be the papers presented at a multi-disciplinary conference entitled ‘Exploring hidden dimensions of the Zimbabwe crises’ which was held on 1-2 July 2009 at the University of the Witwatersrand. A selected number of papers were published in a special September 2010 edition of *Communicare: Journal for*

fieldwork became difficult during the crisis as a result of the cash and fuel shortages as well as the political sensitivities around doing research. But it could also be because politics continues to be conceptualised as the actions of ‘big men’, with Robert Mugabe most frequently being attributed a leading role in the events unfolding from 2000 onwards in both media accounts and some academic analyses.³³ Through an analysis of a genre of popular culture, this article has demonstrated how ordinary Zimbabweans worked out the arrival of the economic and political crisis in their everyday lives.

References

- Allan, S. (1999). *News culture*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Arntsen, H. (2010). Committing journalism? A view of the Zimbabwean 2008 general elections as interpreted by Internet news cartoons. *Communicare: Journal of Communication Sciences in Southern Africa*, 29, Special Edition, September 2010: 18-41.
- Askew, K. and R. Wilk (2002). *The anthropology of media: a reader*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Auret, M. (2009). *From liberator to dictator: An insider's account of Robert Mugabe's descent into tyranny*. Cape Town: David Philip.
- Bastian, M. (1993). ‘Bloodhounds who have no friends’: witchcraft and locality in the Nigerian popular press (pp. 129-66). In J. Comaroff and J. Comaroff (eds.), *Modernity and its malcontents: ritual and power in postcolonial Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bastian, M. (2001). Vulture men, campus cultists and teenaged witches: Modern magics in the Nigerian popular press (pp. 71-96). In: H. L. Moore and T. Sanders (eds.), *Magical interpretations, material realities: Modernity, witchcraft and the occult in postcolonial Africa*. London: Routledge.
- Beck, R. M. (2006). Popular media for HIV/AIDS prevention?: comparing two comics: ‘Kingo’ and the ‘Sara’ Communication Initiative. *Journal of Modern African Studies* 44(4): 513-541.
- Berkowitz, D. A. (2010). *Cultural meanings of news: a text-reader*. London: Sage.
- Bird, S. E. (2010). *Anthropology of news and journalism: global perspectives*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Blair, D. (2003). *Degrees in violence: Robert Mugabe and the struggle for power in Zimbabwe*. London: Continuum.
- Bolt, M. (2010). Camaraderie and its discontents: class consciousness, ethnicity and divergent masculinities among Zimbabwean migrant farm workers in South Africa. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 36(2): 377-393.
- Chabal, P. (2009). *Africa: the politics of suffering and smiling*: London: Zed Books.
- Chan, S. (2003). *Robert Mugabe: a life of power and violence*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Communication Sciences in Southern Africa (volume 29). Other very recent exceptions to this rule are: Bolt 2010; Duri 2010; Jones 2010; Hammar 2010; Magaramombe 2010; Mawowa and Matongo 2010; McGregor 2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2009; Morreira 2010a, 2010b; Musoni 2010; Parsons 2005, 2010; Rutherford and Addison 2007; Rutherford 2008; Worby 2010; Primorac and McGregor 2010.

³³ This is also evidenced by the avalanche of (popular) analyses of the ‘Zimbabwe crisis’ which featured Robert Mugabe as the main ‘architect’ of the crisis. See for example Meredith 2002a, 2002b; Blair 2003; Chan 2003; Hope 2003; Norman 2003, 2008; Hill 2005; Gavin 2007; Moyo and Ashhurst 2007; Holland 2008; Auret 2009; Godwin 2010. On the predominant focus on Mugabe in global media discourse, please see Willems 2005.

- Couldry, N. (2006). Transvaluing media studies: or, beyond the myth of the mediated centre (pp. 177-194). In: J. Curran and D. Morley (eds.), *Media and cultural theory*. London: Routledge.
- Dickey, S. (1997). Anthropology and its contributions to studies of mass media. *International Social Science Journal* 49(153): 413-427.
- Duri, F. P. T. (2010). Informal negotiation of the Zimbabwe--Mozambique border for survival by Mutare's marginalized people. *Journal of Developing Societies* 26(2): 125-163.
- Eko, L. (2007). It's a political jungle out there: how four African newspaper cartoons dehumanized and 'deterritorialized' African political leaders in the post-Cold War era. *International Communication Gazette* 69(3): 219-238.
- Ellis, S. (1989). Tuning into pavement radio. *African Affairs* 88(352): 321-330.
- Fabian, J. (1997). Popular culture in Africa. Finding and conjectures (pp. 18-28). In K. Barber (ed.), *Readings in African popular culture*. Oxford: James Currey.
- Folke Frederiksen, B. (1997). Joe, the sweetest reading in Africa: documentation and discussion of a popular magazine in Kenya (pp. 95-102). In K. Barber (ed.), *Readings in African popular culture*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press
- Fowler, R. (1991). *Language in the news: discourse and ideology in the press*. London: Routledge.
- Gavin, M. D. (2007). *Planning for post-Mugabe Zimbabwe*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations.
- Ginsburg, F.D., L. Abu-Lughod and B. Larkin (2002) (eds.), *Media worlds: anthropology on new terrain*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Godwin, P. (2010). *The fear: the last days of Robert Mugabe*. New York: Picador.
- Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: cultural representations and signifying practices*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Hammar, A. (2010). Ambivalent mobilities: Zimbabwean commercial farmers in Mozambique. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 36(2): 395-416.
- Hammett, D. (2010). Zapiro and Zuma: A symptom of an emerging constitutional crisis in South Africa? *Political Geography* 29(2): 88-96.
- Hill, G. (2005). *What happens after Mugabe?* Cape Town: Zebra Press.
- Holland, H. (2008). *Dinner with Mugabe: the untold story of a freedom fighter who became a tyrant*. Johannesburg: Penguin.
- Hope, C. (2003). *Brothers under the skin: travels in tyranny*. London: Picador.
- Jones, J. L. (2010). 'Nothing is straight in Zimbabwe': the rise of the Kukiya-kiya economy 2000-2008. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 36(2): 285-299.
- Kadenge, M. and G. Mavunga (2009). Linguistic innovation during a national crisis: an analysis of selected Shona metaphors created during the Zimbabwe crisis. *South African Journal of African Languages* 29(2): 169-184.
- Kruger, L. and P. W. Shariff (2001). 'Shoo--this book makes me to think!' Education, entertainment, and 'life-skills' comics in South Africa. *Poetics Today* 22(2): 475-513.
- Lent, J. A. (2009). African cartooning: an overview of historical and contemporary issues (pp. 1-39). In: J. A. Lent (ed.), *Cartooning in Africa*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Magaramombe, G. (2010). 'Displaced in place': agrarian displacements, replacements and resettlement among farm workers in Mazowe District. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 36(2): 361-375.
- Mason, A. (2002). Black and white in ink: discourses of resistance in South African cartooning.

- African & Asian Studies* 1(4), 385-406.
- Mawowa, S., & Matongo, A. (2010). Inside Zimbabwe's roadside currency trade: the 'World Bank' of Bulawayo. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 36(2): 319-337.
- Mbembe, A. (2001). *On the postcolony*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- McGregor, J. & Primorac, R. (2010). *Zimbabwe's new diaspora: displacement and the cultural politics of survival*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- McGregor, J. (2007). 'Joining the BBC (British Bottom Cleaners)': Zimbabwean migrants and the UK care industry. *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies* 33(5): 801-824.
- McGregor, J. (2008a). Abject spaces, transnational calculations: Zimbabweans in Britain navigating work, class and the law. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 33(4): 466-482.
- McGregor, J. (2008b). Children and 'African values': Zimbabwean professionals in Britain reconfiguring family life. *Environment & Planning* 40(3): 596-614.
- McGregor, J. (2009). Associational links with home among Zimbabweans in the UK: reflections on long-distance nationalisms. *Global Networks* 9(2): 185-208.
- McLoughlin, T. O. (1989). Reading Zimbabwean comic strips. *Research in African Literatures* 20(2): 217-241.
- Meredith, M. (2002a). *Mugabe: power and plunder in Zimbabwe*. New York: Public Affairs.
- Meredith, M. (2002b). *Our votes, our guns: Robert Mugabe and the tragedy of Zimbabwe*. New York: Public Affairs.
- Morreira, S. (2010a). Living with uncertainty: disappearing modernities and polluted urbanity in post-2000 Harare, Zimbabwe. *Social Dynamics*, 36(2), 352-365.
- Morreira, S. (2010b). Seeking solidarity: Zimbabwean undocumented migrants in Cape Town, 2007. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 36(2): 433-448.
- Moyo, G. and M. Ashhurst (2007). *The day after Mugabe: prospects for change in Zimbabwe*. London: Africa Research Institute.
- Musa, B.A. & J.K. Domatob (2007). Who is a development journalist? Perspectives on media ethics and professionalism in post-colonial societies. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 22(4): 315-331.
- Musila, G. A. (2010). The 'Redykyulass Generation's' intellectual interventions in Kenyan public life. *Young: Nordic Journal of Youth Research* 18(3): 279-299.
- Musoni, F. (2010). Operation Murambatsvina and the politics of street vendors in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 36(2): 301-317.
- Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. and Willems, W. (2009). Making sense of cultural nationalism and the politics of commemoration under the Third Chimurenga in Zimbabwe. In: *Journal of Southern African Studies* 35(4): 945-65.
- Norman, A. (2003). *Robert Mugabe and the betrayal of Zimbabwe*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.
- Norman, A. (2008). *Mugabe: teacher, revolutionary, tyrant*. Gloucestershire: History Press.
- Nyamnjoh, F. (2009). Press cartoons and politics: the case of Cameroon (pp. 97-111). In: J. A. Lent (ed), *Cartooning in Africa*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Nyarota, G. (2006). *Against the grain: memoirs of a Zimbabwean newsman*. Cape Town: Zebra Press.
- Nyarota, G. and T. Namate (1997). *Nyati*. Harare: Landmark Publications.
- Obadare E. (2009). The uses of ridicule: humour, 'infrapolitics' and civil society in Nigeria. *African Affairs* 108(431): 241-261.
- Ogola, G. (2005). Popular culture and politics: whispers and the dramaturgy of power in Kenya.

- Social Identities* 11(2): 147-160.
- Olaniyan, T. (2000). Cartooning in Nigeria: paradigmatic traditions. *Ijele: Art eJournal of the African World* 1(1), available from: <http://www.africaresource.com/ijele/vol1.1/olaniyan.html> (last accessed: 3 November 2010).
- Parsons, R. (2005). Grief-stricken: Zimbabwean children in everyday extremity and the ethics of research. *Anthropology Southern Africa* 28(3/4): 73-77.
- Parsons, R. (2010). Eating in mouthfuls while facing the door: some notes on childhoods and their displacements in Eastern Zimbabwe. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 36(2): 449-463.
- Petersen, I., A. Mason, et al. (2006). Mediating social representations using a cartoon narrative in the context of HIV/AIDS: The AmaQhawe Family Project in South Africa. *Journal of Health Psychology* 11(2): 197-208.
- Peterson, M. A. (2003). *Anthropology & mass communication: media and myth in the new millennium*: Berghahn Books.
- Rao, U. (2010). *News as culture: journalistic practices and the remaking of Indian leadership tradition*. Oxford: Bergahn Publishers.
- Rothenbuhler, E. W. and Coman, M. (2005). *Media anthropology*. London: Sage.
- Rutherford, B. and Addison, L. (2007). Zimbabwean farm workers in northern South Africa. *Review of African Political Economy* 34(114): 619-635.
- Rutherford, B. (2008). Conditional belonging: farm workers and the cultural politics of recognition in Zimbabwe. *Development & Change*, 39(1), 73-99.
- Schneider, J. (2004). Speaking in bubbles. Press cartoons and comics in cameroon (pp. 59-81). In: F. Wittmann and R.-M. Beck (eds), *African media cultures – transdisciplinary perspectives*. Cologne: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag.
- Scott, J.C. (1990). *Domination and the art of resistance: hidden transcripts*. New Haven, NJ: Yale University Press.
- Spitulnik, D (1993). Anthropology and mass media. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 22(1): 293-315.
- Thussu, D.K. (2000). Development news versus globalized infotainment (pp. 332-342). In: A. Malek & A. Kavoori (Eds.), *The global dynamics of news: Studies in international news coverage and news agendas*. Stamford, CT: Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- Toroyan, T. and Reddy, P. S. (2005). Participation of South African youth in the design and development of AIDS photocomics. 1997-98. *International Quarterly of Community Health Education* 25(1/2): 149-163.
- Waldahl, R. (2004). *Politics and persuasion. Media coverage of Zimbabwe's 2000 election*. London: Weaver Press.
- Willems, W. (2005). Remnants of empire? British media reporting on Zimbabwe. In: *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, Special Issue on Zimbabwe, October 2005: 91-108.
- Willems, W. (2010). Political jokes in Zimbabwe. In: J. Downing (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of social movement media*. London: Sage.
- Worby, E. (2010). Address unknown: the temporality of displacement and the ethics of disconnection among Zimbabwean migrants in Johannesburg. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 36(2): 417-431.
- Yurchak, A. (1997). The cynical reason of late socialism: power, pretence, and the anecdote.

Public Culture 9(2): 161-188.
Zelizer, B. (2004). *Taking journalism seriously: news and the academy*. London: Sage.
Zapiro (2009). *The Mandela files*. Cape Town: Juta Press.