Beyond The Humour: a Newspaper Cartoon as Socio-Politico-Economic Commentary: The Case of 'Wasu'of the Manica Post in Zimbabwe

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Research Article

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ABSTRACT

The research looks at the role of a newspaper cartoon ('Wasu' of The Manica Post in Zimbabwe) in the socio-economic and political landscape of Zimbabwe. Up to one hundred cartoons were collected from the period 2004 to 2010 and from these a few were selected for thorough scrutiny. Besides analyzing the cartoons collected, the researchers also interviewed Blessing Mukuze, the cartoonist and creator of the cartoon character 'Wasu' to provide an illumination on the background of the persona. The analysis reveals that although cartoons are perceived by the ordinary reader as primarily meant to tickle them into laughter, on a more serious level they are meant to comment on goings-on in a particular society with the aim of a better and improved society.

Keywords: Newspaper cartoon, Social, Political and Economic Commentary

INTRODUCTION AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A cartoon can be defined as 'a humorous drawing, pictorial sketch or caricature, by implication humorous or satirical and usually published in a newspaper magazine or periodical' http://www.google.co.zw/search (accessed 12.12.10).

Before the introduction of the term 'cartoon' in its modern sense in the nineteenth century, satirical and humorous drawings of all kinds were referred to as caricatures. Today the term 'caricature' is used mainly to refer to distorted portraiture that emphasizes the characteristic traits of an individual. The term 'cartoon' has also been applied to comics, television and film animation, multiframe jokes published in newspapers, continuity strips and graphic novels, humorous book, magazine illustrations and satirical puppetry. The term 'cartoon' in its modern sense of a humorous or satirical drawing was first used in Punch magazine in 1843 when the magazine applied the term to satirical drawings in its pages. (Punch.co.uk. “History of the cartoon” http://punch.co.uk/cartoon history.oz.html (accessed 12.12.10).

Although cartoons are perceived by the ordinary reader as primarily meant to tickle them into laughter, the cartoon should be seen as very serious art. They have often landed their creators into real trouble. Ramezam, an Iranian cartoonist was reported to have been in exile in France according to France 24 news of 16 July 2010. In an article entitled 'Cartoonist Saved', The Sunday Mail of 3-9 January 2010 reports that:

Danish police shot and arrested an axe wielding Somali who attacked a cartoonist reviled by Moslems for a controversial drawing of their prophet Mohammed...Kurt Westergaard, who has faced several death threats since his cartoon nearly five years ago, set off protests across the Moslem world, hid in a safe room.

A cartoon in Moto magazine of 1969 with the caption 'The proposed new constitution will ensure that government will be retained in responsible hands... led to its editor, Father Traber's deportation. The then Minister of Law and Order D.W. Lardner-Burke requested the House of Assembly to impose a total ban on Moto declaring:
The government cannot permit the prized ideal of press freedom to be used for spreading subversion when all are engaged in fighting a cruel and relentless enemy…” (cited in Frederikse, 1982: 27).

The South African cartoonist, Zapiro has been criticized and received death threats for his cartoons perhaps the most famous one in the not-so-distant past being his Sunday Times cartoon, dated 11 January 2009, based on the attack by Israel on Palestine during the Christmas period of 2008. That cartoon is divided into two: on one side is Gaza which he describes as a HUMANITARIAN CRISIS and Israel's attack is described as a INHUMANITY CRISIS. In fact one Israeli soldier, in the cartoon, happily quips to his colleague that 'school, aid convoy and refugee centre successfully targeted'. The colleague driving the tanker however regrets all this wondering, inwardly, what they as a people have become, that is, deliberately inflicting pain and rejoicing at the suffering of defenseless fellow human beings).

In an interview with one of the researchers, Mukuze, the cartoonist, revealed that in 2004 he had a nasty confrontation with some people who purported to be Zimbabwe war veterans. Apparently there was a demonstration which took several days against the Movement for Democratic Change dominated Mutare City Council for raising service charges. What irked the demonstrators is the insinuation in the cartoon that Gooseberry was sleeping with Wasu's wife while the latter was camped at the City Council as well as the used condoms strewn all over the grounds, reflected badly on the demonstrators. The cartoonist revealed that he was summoned to Mutare from his workplace in Masvingo to 'explain' his cartoon. Asked to shed light on the 'explanation' he said that he felt that some rogue elements had hijacked the original agenda of the demonstrations and that he wanted to alert the well meaning participants of such bad apples who were bent on tarnishing their image.

In literature books have been banned because of their content and their authors; killed or threatened similarly. What quickly comes to mind is Salmon Rashdie's going into hiding after his publication of Satanic Verses. Cartoons, like any other piece of art should be taken very seriously in terms of their communicative impact. In fact because of one of their lethal weapons, exaggeration, they tend to be viewed as quite provocative.

In modern times cartoons are used in many books on different subjects such as Psychology, Psycholinguistics, Science and History to 'liven up' the otherwise dry facts as well as provide some insights into certain issues. Such cartoons may originally have been newspaper cartoons.

About the Cartoonist

The late Blessing Mukuze (1952-2009) was born and got his early education in Manicaland. At the time of his death in 2009 he was a lecturer in Art in The Faculty of Education at Great Zimbabwe University. His background had some influence on the work he produced. For instance, the fact that he was an Art lecturer may explain the artistic nature of the cartoons he drew. The issues he tackles in his cartoons are quite varied and intellectually handled by someone who was obviously well read. His walking on the delicate and highly inflammable tight rope of Zimbabwean politics, obviously highly assisted by his above average education, is enviable. The researchers are indebted to the late cartoonist, who was a colleague and friend, for giving them unlimited access to his cartoons as well as illuminating certain grey areas in our interrogation of Wasu through the interview we had with him. Most importantly, we cherished the unpacking of each cartoon each week and unraveling the surprise awaiting us with each installment he offered the Zimbabweans.

Who is Wasu?

In the interview already alluded to Mukuze revealed that after reading about the Borrowdale bestiality scandalous stories in which some white foreigners lured some black women to have sex with dogs while they filmed them in exchange for money, he expressed his disgust on paper in the form of a cartoon which he submitted to The Manica Post newspaper editor who was so impressed that he put it on the front page. He then suggested that the cartoonist create a cartoon character for the weekly newspaper upon which Mukuze created 'Wasu'. Wasu is a word from the Manyika dialect of Shona which means roughly 'bosom friend'. The Manyika dialect is spoken in Manicaland Province which is in the East of Zimbabwe from where the cartoonist came. In fact the name 'Manicaland' is a corruption of Manyika. The corruption extends to the newspaper name which publishes Wasu as it is called the Manica Post. Wasu is not just a friend but a very special friend. One might have a dozen or a score of friends but just one 'wasu'. As a special friend, a 'wasu' has the license to advise and criticize his or her friend-he/she has no sacred issues to avoid in his quest to better the life of the friend. Often 'wasu' (or sahwira in the Zezuru dialect) divulges the contents of his friend's unwritten will upon the death of the friend which is often uncontroverted. We should view Wasu as the friend to Zimbabwe who is always available to advise on social, economic and political matters.

Wasu is quite mature judging from his appearance. One could put his age at about seventy. In fact in the interview the cartoonist said that Wasu was a pensioner having worked as a messenger in the public service; hence the remnants of the uniform which he is always clad in which also reflect on the level of poverty the people whom
Wasu represents are subjected to. Old age is perceived positively in Africa. At Wasu’s age one is viewed as an encyclopedia of wisdom: the logic is that the longer one lives, the more experience and wisdom one acquires and the more dependable one should be. On the other hand, old age is also associated with conservatism.

Wasu is always depicted carrying his favorite Manicaland brewed opaque beer. Like the name Wasu, the choice of the beer identifies the cartoon with Manicaland. Pungwe is a river from which Mutare, the Manicaland capital, gets its water and Pungwe Breweries which is based in the town sponsored the cartoon initially for about four years. Pungwe means ‘all night long’. As a river, Pungwe, is perennial, flows even through the drought (night) periods. There is therefore the element of dependability on the part of the river and the brands associated with it.

Wasu is always wielding his favorite beer creating an impression of a drunk. Drunks are associated with ‘freedom of speech’ and many do not take them seriously. If one is mildly hurt by a drunk's utterances, one normally waits until the morrow for an explanation which is not forthcoming-the sobered up drunk normally claims that he remembers nothing of that sort. Perhaps this explains why in spite of his often politically very sensitive utterances, Wasu only managed to create trouble for his author just once. The unsophisticated dismisses the Pungwe wielding Wasu's utterances as rumblings of someone who has had one too many. In Waiting for the Rain, which was published in 1975 during colonialism in Zimbabwe, Charles Mungoshi unleashes the most critical diatribe against the colonial establishment through Kuruku, a drunken person ostensibly to avoid censorship and incarceration. This is part of what he says:

They have given us enough hell-a few more years of waiting won't make the slightest difference from what we have seen of them…You see this ngundu? They have given out orders to arrest anyone seen wearing ngundu. But I wear it as I wear this skin...It's only a skin-hat to them but to me it is ngundu as much as this is my skin. I am not afraid of them. I was once. But you get to a point where you can even face fire, no longer afraid... (Mungoshi, 1975: 63-65).

In the story, The Slave Trade, found in his short story collection, Walking Still, Mungoshi again uses a drunken character, Marara, to give a scathing attack on the so-called ‘Friends of Africa’ who like their slave hunter predecessors, their relationship with Africa is really exploitative not symbiotic. Ironically it is their (Marara and his wife's) hosts Tim Green and his live-in companion, Joan Jones, who supply him with a steady flow of beer so that he would open up about the newly independent Zimbabwe’s power relations so that they would know the who is who in their area of interest. He does not disappoint—he did not only open up but also opened them up to expose them as the new slave drivers. Perhaps the same could be said about the society Wasu hails from which forces him to drink so much that he assumes the role of a fearless voice of the ordinary people-their collective conscience. At the rate that he drinks the traditional brew, it now has not a significant impact on his behavior so he can still operate near normally even with the alcohol in his system which has become used to it. In a way the ‘drunkenness’ is only a protective sheath especially for the cartoonist against intolerant elements in Zimbabwe. We should stress that in African society there is nothing sinister in Wasu enjoying his brew. What is an issue is the 'handling ' of the beer-what behavior is exhibited after partaking of it. In traditional settings, beer was brewed and responsibly drunk at homes among toddlers as well as at work parties where people would work with dangerous instruments such as the thrashing logs, knives, sickles and axes with no incidents. Yet in a 45/04* installment Wasu is forced to jump over a dural with two of his three Pungwe beers to avoid being caught and arrested for public drinking. The young police officer on bicycle Western cowboy stylelike throws a rope with a lasso in an effort to trap Wasu by the neck like some wild animal.
The Zimbabwe Republic Police has been accused of spending too much of their energy 'harassing' 'harmless' vendors and peaceful public drinkers when hardcore criminals are prowling the streets. There is no evidence of impaired judgment on Wasu's part in as far as the beer drinking is concerned. Shakespeare used clowns in his plays in order to offer some comic relief but also to tackle some important societal issues 'in jest'. What the clowns say, which resembles speeches by drunken people at surface level, has far reaching philosophical implications. Touchstone in As You Like It, for instance, is described by Duke Senior thus: 'He uses his folly as a stalking-horse, and under the presentation of that, he shoots his wit.(Act V, Scene IV Line 102-103).

Wasu is not a superhuman character. Like the Greek drama heroes he is like us, not too good nor too evil, as a result we identify with him.

Analysis of selected cartoons

The political

In 2005 the Zimbabwean government initiated what was referred to as Operation Murambatsvina and Restore Order which was supposed to bring sanity to the urban areas where a lot of illegal structures had been built. This was implemented in the thick of winter with little or warning leaving many homeless. The following paragraph from the United Nations Special Envoy on Human Settlements Issues in Zimbabwe, Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka's report after she physically came to Zimbabwe to assess the situation summarizes her findings:

Popularly referred to as “Operation Tsunami” because of its speed and ferocity it resulted in the destruction of homes, business premises and vending sites. It is estimated that some 700,000 people in cities across the country have lost either their homes, their source of livelihood or both. Indirectly, a further 2.4 million people have been affected in varying degrees. Hundreds of thousands of women, men and children were made homeless, without access to food, water and sanitation, or health care. Education for thousands of school age children has been
disrupted. Many of the sick, including those with HIV and AIDS, no longer have access to care. The vast majority of those directly and indirectly affected are the poor and disadvantaged segments of the population.


This experience is encapsulated in a number of cartoons. In the 24/05 cartoon Wasu advises a distraught pastor ‘you may as well start the sermon with those few! Most worshippers have moved after the clean up’. The enterprising pastor had constructed some shed for the worshippers presumably drawn from the illegal settlers who had been moved unfortunately. This cartoon shows how the supposed clean up affected many facets of urban life including religion. The 26/05 cartoon depicts a tuck-shop almost razed to the ground after the clean up. One wall, the front one with the words: TUCKSHOP OPEN TILL LATE remains. Wasu and a friend sit among the clean up rubble enjoying the Pungwe beer and remarks: ‘It's now open till amen’. The tuck-shop has been 'opened up' by 'Operation' Murambatsvina and will ,according to Wasu, remain like that .In this cartoon Wasu bemoans the destruction of tuck shops mainly built on residential properties and which had become a source of livelihood for many families. In a 22/05 cartoon Wasu's house made up of planks and some roofing sheets is destroyed by an enthusiastic police officer while Wasu is asleep only to find himself immersed up to the neck in rubble. On the one defiant wall which remains standing is a wall hanging which has the message: ‘God bless this house’. A distraught Wasu contemplates ,still in the rubble: ‘if this is God's wish then let it be but…’which is an allusion to the bible but the 'but' leaves the reader in suspense as to what Wasu wanted to say further. The cartoon shows the plight of the marginalized in urban areas. Wasu had built a structure which he called a house using planks which are quite abundant in the Eastern Highlands where Mutare is located. The construction of wooden cabins, which is quite prevalent among the urban poor in the town, reflects on high levels of poverty. It is even more worrisome when an urbanite reaches retirement without a roof over one's head—it is a silent commentary on the policies in place on worker welfare. Some politician without providing an alternative decides to destroy even the temporary structures the desperate poor people had decided to construct. In another incident captured in the 34/05 installment, Gooseberry and Wasu are shown standing near some three boards with the following messages: OPERATION MURAMBATSVINA, OPERATION GARIKAI/HLALANI KUHLE and OPERATION INTEGRITY. Government intended to clean up the illegal structures, build alternative accommodation and have people stay there but this required lots of financial injection which the cash strapped government could not afford especially after its relations with many of its erstwhile friends had gone sour. Gooseberry asks his friend Wasu: ‘What disease are these doctors treating?’ in apparent exasperation. A surgeon operates on a patient when there is a problem diagnosed and when he or she is certain that the operation is going to solve the problem. In other words the surgeon operates after a thorough analysis and after talking to the patient about the extent of the problem and his/her intended remedies. Before this happens the patient has to be physically and psychologically prepared for the operation. Gooseberry does not seem to see all these. This shows that there is nothing visible which has been done to alleviate the situation. The 'doctors' Gooseberry is talking about are the technocrats in government—the intellectuals who are the brains behind the policies. Like Lawino in Song of Lawino, Gooseberry and Wasu interrogate the ways of the so-called educated among us.

In a 11/05 cartoon Wasu announces to fellow revelers: 'There is no going back! I've made up my mind, I'll vote for...' Before he reveals his choice in the bar his caring friend Gooseberry closes his mouth telling him that his vote is his secret. Apparently there are two revelers in party regalia, one MDC and the other ZANU (PF).
Gooseberry is afraid that Wasu's revelation may not go down well with some of the people in the bar. In a related incident depicted in the 12/05 strip two drinkers, one wearing a ZANU (PF) and the other an MDC campaign T-shirts converse thus:

ZANU (PF): Easter should have come after elections…
MDC: To wash away the evils that comes with political elections?
Wasu: (from a bench a distance away from the two) The discussion should end there!

The artist gives a situation where two people from the two main rival political parties discuss the political situation in the country which is fraught with intolerance. What they are discussing is a 'taboo' subject as reflected in Wasu's swift response. The issue of political violence has been topical in Zimbabwe with the pugilists being the said political parties. Currently the country has an Organ on National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration which was originally co-chaired by senior members from the three main parties namely: Sekai Holland (from the main Movement for Democratic Change led by the current Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai), John Nkomo (ZANU PF) and the late Gibson Sibanda (the smaller faction of the Movement for Democratic Change led by Prof. Welshman Ncube) which is an acknowledgement, at the highest level, of the reality of political violence. Part of the said organ's mandate is 'to promote sustainable peace and transitional justice in the wake of election violence that left scores of people dead, hundreds injured and thousands internally displaced' (The Financial Gazette, 30 July 2010).

Wasu on the economy

In an effort to arrest hyperinflation, the Reserve Bank Governor introduced more and more higher denomination notes then bearer's cheques which went up to trillions of dollars before the economy was dollarized. Because of the galloping inflation new bearer's cheques would be introduced now and again to replace the obsolete ones and the Reserve Bank would come up with another family of bearer's cheques with new colors and leaner in terms of the number of zeroes which would be chopped off in order to enable machines and people to manage the numbers. All this experience could not escape the watchful eye of Wasu. After all he also wallowed in the murky inflation waters like all Zimbabweans. Joromiya, Wasu's son, asks the father to assist him complete the saying: 'As stubborn as...'upon which Wasu responds: 'as the zeroes! They are back again' (17/07).

An agitated Wasu takes a megaphone to announce: 'The prices in this shop are not for persons of a nervous disposition...Accompaniment by first aid providers is therefore recommended!' (16/07). During the period the cartoon was generated some shops were adjusting prices as frequently as twice a day and the goods had become out of...
reach to most Zimbabweans. In a 26/07 cartoon Wasu goes to a beer outlet to buy beer which according to the displayed price list cost $80000.

According to the Government Taskforce on prices retailers and service providers were overcharging consumers and should halve their prices. Wasu was of the opinion that he would pay half of the $80 000 for the two liter opaque beer only to be told that the prices had already been halved. Frustrated, shocked and desperate, Wasu shouts: 'Taskforce! Taskforce!' Through this cartoon, Mukuze shows the futility of price controls especially in hyperinflationary environments. The Taskforce could not be omnipresent to enforce the prices. Government, through these taskforces, was playing a cat and mouse game with business. For instance many managers were arrested for overcharging/profiteering, with some getting into hiding to avoid the price blitz.

In a 36/05 cartoon the consumer bread basket with bread, sugar, soap and rice worth $6 000 000 is depicted flying vertically (an indication that there was no immediate indication that it will lend soon). Wasu, surrounded by his wife and children as well as Gooseberry who are all looking pensively and helplessly at the out-of-reach basket, comments: 'Since people have learnt to shoot without missing, the consumer basket has learnt to fly without perching...' an allusion to Nwakibie's speech to Okonkwo in Things Fall Apart when the latter had come to ask for seed yams: 'Eneke the bird says that since men have learnt to shoot without missing, he has learnt to fly without perching...' (Achebe, 1958:15-16)

**Wasu on service delivery**

A subject close to the cartoonist's heart is service delivery. In a 15/04 installment Wasu goes to the Vehicle Inspection Department of the police with a chief after it was announced that chiefs would be issued out with vehicles.
Wasu offers the officer a huge brick of money (most probably bearers’ cheques) imploring him: ‘Take...organize a drivers’ license for my chief here’. The chief is in his complete colonial regalia: a dome-shaped hat, the brass quarter moon hung around his neck and the ceremonial gown. To emphasize on his frailty the chief has two walking sticks and spectacles with very thick lenses.

In the cartoon the artist is commenting on the level of corruption of public service providers. The V.I.D. is always in the news accused of receiving bribes in order to issue licenses to undeserving people. The cartoon also offers commentary on the policy by government, seen by some as populist, of issuing vehicles to chiefs who are in most cases very old people since chieftainship is through seniority in age at family level. How are these geriatrics expected to go through the rigors of acquiring licenses, Wasu seems to be asking and again seems to suggest that only through acquiring them fraudulently can they be successful. This fraudulent route is now so commonplace that one can openly offer the money described by Zimbabweans as *imali yedrink* (*mari yedrink*) which literally means money to buy a drink which costs on average R5 or two for US$1. This is however only euphemistic since *imali yedrink* can be anything up to millions of dollars depending on the amount of thanking one has to do which is related to the amount of favor one could have done for the payee. The cartoon also mocks the continued use of the colonial regalia chiefs were required to put on which ironically are still being won today about three decades after independence.

The 34/07 cartoon portrays Wasu on a huge mobile phone reporting a ‘fault’ to Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority, a government shareholding company. The fault is that they had electricity in their area throughout the weekend. Zimbabweans consider it abnormal or an electric fault to have electricity for a day or two uninterrupted.

People often joke that the person tasked with switching power on and off during the load shedding regimes could be on strike or drunk if they get electricity for sustained periods. Ironically ZESA was reported to be planning to sell electricity to ESKOM of S.Africa during the 2010 soccer world cup as lamented by Wasu in the 21/10 cartoon. To make matters worse many have lost houses through electrical faults—when electricity is finally restored it sometimes exceeds the normal voltage resulting in electric fires.

A 42/07 cartoon shows a house on fire and a group of people...
rushing to extinguish it with tree branches and water (Where on earth was the Fire Brigade?). Wasu stops them telling them not to worry as the occupant is a ZESA employee. Wasu seems to be thinking that if the fire is a result of ZESA incompetence and occurs at a ZESA building to a ZESA incompetent worker whose incompetence has caused severe suffering to the generality of the population, should the people chip in to extinguish such a fire? In a 43/05 cartoon Wasu is seen standing on an empty fuel drum with a tin of paint. After having cancelled the 'No Smoking' sign he writes: You may now smoke here' Apparently there is a 'Sorry, no fuel' sign under the 'blend' label whose price is pegged at $23 000 per liter. The cartoon is a comment on the economic meltdown which the country is currently only slowly coming out of. There was virtually no fuel in the country-the little which dripped in was exorbitant but was quickly sipped off by the few lucky birds who would have reached the filling station early enough. In fact most vehicles no longer relied on established filling stations but on the black market. As a result filling stations were no longer no smoking zones hence Wasu's notice done in paint to show the seriousness of the problem-if it was not that grave, chalk, which can easily be erased, could have been used. The fuel price of $23 000 per liter is an indication on the level of inflation people had to endure.

Wasu on the Chiadzwa diamonds

The discovery of the diamonds in Chiadzwa in 2006 in the cartoonist's home area occupied quite a significant space in his work. Prior to the diamond discovery Bocha or Marange was 'notorious' for the apostolic sects which dominate Christian worship. These were well known for, among other things: polygamous relationships which some argue help in the spreading of AIDS; Very basic or no education for the girl children who are married off very early; Resistance to conventional medicines, contraception and immunization of their children, arguing that their faith is enough protection.

Hence we find that when the newspapers report that Zimbabwe's Birth Rate has fallen (10/06), Wasu has a ready solution-he approaches one of the sect leaders and appeals to him thus: 'I know you have the capacity to reverse this situation' upon which the leader (apparently possessed) proclaims: 'GR-R-R Yes! I shall face this challenge head on...this I promise! Bethsaida-a!! Rabi-i! His solution is to marry more wives and have lots of children and of course to tell his male members to do the same. It should be pointed out that the picture of 'amapostori' (apostles) painted above has changed for the better for some. In a 41/06 cartoon Wasu is reacting to the newspaper headline 'Diamonds Rush in Marange-Bocha' when he says to his friend, Gooseberry '...suddenly, it's now fashionable to come from Bocha!'

Wasu (45/06) puts up a notice to let out his dilapidated house. On the notice he gives the reason for his migration as 'owner leaving for Chiadzwa'. This cartoon shows the impact of the discovery of diamonds on population migrating patterns as well as the hope the people had for a sudden change in their material condition. The wrongly shaped letters reflect on Wasu's modest level of education.

A 39/07 cartoon depicts a queue of travelers being subjected to a thorough body search. Wasu's trademark coat is opened to reveal the morphology of his old body which is a taboo in the African setting. With his arms raised he is subjected to the search (which Wasu describes as bordering on sodomy) by three officers, one of whom is wielding an AK47. Through this cartoon, and the other discussed earlier, the cartoonist is tackling the issue of mixed blessings in as far as diamond discovery in Marange is concerned: the economic windfalls which are expected to change the people's lives hence the rush as well as the positive perception of the once despised region on one hand and the harassment by security officers -the price the province has to pay for hosting the precious stones and the hunters of fortune, on the other. On many of his cartoons, which are not directly on the diamonds, one will find either on T-shirts or graffiti in public places such as toilets and sign posts the words 'ngoda' or 'ngoda imhenyu' (meaning diamonds and diamonds are alive respectively). A premier soccer team, Eastern Lions, which was based in Mutare, was nicknamed 'Ngoda Boys' because of its link with Manicaland. In a 36/07 cartoon we see Gooseberry clad in the Ngoda Boys T-shirt. The 'body search' cartoon is no exception as shown by the notice at the intersection between the Chimanimani and Chiadzwa roads where the roadblock is. It reads:

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All Travelers Are subject To body search.
By Order
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Immediately below the notice are the words 'ngoda ngoda' apparently from some frustrated traveler. They are being subjected to the searches courtesy of the diamonds. The stones, their resource, now control their
movement and life. They have become, in a way a curse especially since nothing tangible seems to have accrued on the part of the ordinary citizens.

Gooseberry, clad in a T-shirt with the words (in capital letters): NGODA IMHENYU and a pair of trousers with three big patches of different colors (sure signs of poverty) is depicted having a box of day old chicks. Wasu asks him whether it is not better to feed himself and his family (since he looks famished) instead of the chicks. The cartoonist may be commenting on the ironical situation where the area is endowed with diamonds yet the inhabitants have not seen any marked change in their lives. If diamonds are real alive as claimed by the loud message on Gooseberry's T-shirt there should be a corresponding turn around in people's lives. The recurrence of the 'ngoda motif' should be seen as the cartoonist's subtle message to the powers that be to ensure that the proceeds from one of the world's richest alluvial diamond deposits filter down to the grassroots.

Wasu on Social issues

Wasu also tackles social issues that affect society especially in the negative. He shows his abhorrence of these social evils veiling them in his humorous way. In the 14/06 cartoon, a number of newspaper headlines show how rampant cases of rape have become in our society: 'Reverend rapes maid', '20 year old rapes 73 year old grandmother,' '21 year old rapes 55 year old' and 'Man rapes minor'. The one that bamboozles Wasu is the rape of the 73- year -old granny and he goes: 'After 73 years of life, what's left in her to attract a rapist?' The rhetoric question is loaded and implies that our society is sick. The old have to be protected by the young while the minors have to be protected by adults. However it seems no one can be trusted any longer as the spectrum of rape cases referred to in newspaper headlines on vendors' banners reflect. When a disabled church elder is caught pants down having raped (20/07), Wasu comments to his friend Gooseberry that 'disability is not inability or incapability'. This comment shows that even some of the physically challenged can be a threat to society-he seems to be saying that there is so much evil in our society that even those traditionally ascribed permanent objects- of- pity- roles are now 'challenging' them.

Criminal activity is another social ill that Wasu does not condone hence the celebratory tone in the cartoon 21/07 which depicts a bewitched criminal in the Gutaurare area in the east of Mutare town. After stealing a cow and slaughtering it, the hapless thief is captured mooing like a cow. Wasu believes that Mr. Chikambiro, the owner of the stolen beast and the activator of the juju has a rare asset which could be harnessed and used on a larger scale to nab even international criminals. The situation depicted in the cartoon is a common phenomenon in Zimbabwe where the aggrieved, with the assistance of the n'anga, use 'black magic' to fix perpetrators of the injustice. Wasu is of the opinion that instead of keeping such skills under the bushel, persons endowed with them should use them on a grand scale for the service of humanity and monetarily benefit from them. The cartoon may be questioning the real existence of such power especially when it is kept under lock and key. This comes in the wake of serious cross border crimes experienced by people in Manicaland as a border province where criminals commit crimes either in Zimbabwe or Mozambique or even South Africa and lie low in one of the countries.

Wasu, the fallible

Wasu who represents the ordinary Zimbabwean, is given agricultural inputs through the Grain Market Board by government but abuses this facility. For quite some time the Zimbabwean government has been giving agricultural inputs such as fuel, seeds and fertilizers to farmers. When the members of the inspectorate come to check on the progress of the farming venture, Wasu tells them that his farm is beyond the lion and leopard infested forest in front of them and therefore he advises them to view from where they were (11/06).
The cartoon can be seen as a commentary on corruption by the grassroots. Often the ordinary person accuses the powerful of corruption yet he/she does not see the 'small scale' corruption he/she is involved in which cumulatively affects the country's progress. The cartoon also takes a swipe at the practice by government of dishing out farming implements indiscriminately resulting in these sometimes falling into the wrong hands. The inspectors do not seem to have information about the recipients of the implements hence the ease by which Wasu convinces them that he has a thriving farm beyond the wilderness which they cannot verify.

In another incident captured on 38/06, Wasu plans to go to a musical gala (the Mzee Gala held in honour of the late Vice President S.Muzenda) with a much younger woman after telling his wife that he was going to their rural home. He is however beaten up by the woman's boyfriend and helped home by his friend Gooseberry (39/06). The cartoons on the live musical galas which were government sponsored are meant to comment on how some people abused such national events and Wasu is no exception.

A newspaper article on condemned condoms brings shock waves down Wasu and Gooseberry's spines (35/07). From the cartoon one can conclude that:

- The ordinary Zimbabwean is now very much aware of the pandemic and how condoms can assist in its prevention. The message on Gooseberry's T-shirt which quotes Oliver Mtukudzi's song on AIDS may be seen as reflecting his (Gooseberry's) level of awareness of the disease.
- Promiscuity is rife as represented by Wasu and Gooseberry's panicking. These two are family men and use the condoms with other women other than their wives.
The cartoon is also an indictment on shoddy service delivery-condemning condoms after they have been used and therefore having exposed users to various infections is not just incompetence but culpable homicide. The cartoonist seems to be wondering how many people die or are exposed to fatal danger as a result of the negligence by those they would have entrusted with their lives.

CONCLUSION

The preceding analysis has shown that cartoons, often taken by the cursory reader as mere trifles of humor should be taken as very important socio-politico-economic commentaries. Like any other artists, cartoonists should be seen as the eyes and ears of society-the insiders who remind us, often in an unforgettable and 'cruel' manner, our glaring shortcomings. The analysis has shown that Wasu, like a typical 'wasu', does not have sacred cow topics or matters to tackle-he comments on policies which hurt the ordinary people, political intolerance, and corruption at all levels of society and the social malaise which threatens the social fabric of Zimbabwean society from an ordinary person's point of view.

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