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Satirical Chroniclers of Xenophobic Attacks in South Africa

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Abstract: In the months of May 2008 and February 2015, South Africa was plagued with xenophobic attacks that affected migrants from African countries such as Malawi, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. These xenophobic attacks quickly became an ethnic, racial, economic and structural issue. Satirical cartoonists in South Africa reacted to this epidemic by publishing an array of editorial cartoons. This paper focuses on analysing three South African editorial cartoons, which were created by prominent South African cartoonists viz. Zapiro, Reynolds and Nell (Jerm). Bakhtin's theory of the Carnivalesque was employed, together with the elements of cartooning, in the analysis of the selected cartoons. The application of Bakhtin's Carnivalesque to the analysis of the cartoons emphasised how the cartoonist can be likened to the Jester of the medieval carnival, as they mock and debunk the hierarchical structures that exist. The cartoonist is thus revealed as a powerful figure who holds the ability to effect change through cartooning.

Keywords: Bakhtin; carnivalesque; humour; South Africa; xenophobia

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Introduction

Cartoonists have been recognised as being "satirical chroniclers" who have recorded history through their cartoons (Conradie et al., 2012, 39). These "satirical chroniclers" have the ability to highlight the essence of an event through simple yet powerful caricaturing. They also have the skill to stir emotions and affect public outlook on an event. The cartoons produced during the 2008 and 2015 xenophobic attacks in South Africa bears testament to the influential nature of the satirical cartoons and cartoonists, and how they have the potential to highlight the causes and outcomes of the violence with just a few strokes of the pen (Vernon, 2000, 8). Xenophobia is a highly disputed term that carries significant political implications. The commonly accepted definition of xenophobia amongst scholars is "an intense dislike, hatred or fear of those perceived to be strangers" (Tafira, 2011, 114). Boepple and Watts describe xenophobia as an "unreasoned or irrational fear of that which is perceived as being foreign or strange" (1996: 497). Tafira (2017) and Neocosmos (quoted in Navickas, 2015) assert that the violence could be referred to as "new racism" or "modified racism"; this was because the attacks still encompassed discrimination and were organised around issues of difference. Intriguingly, there are presently many studies published

on the presence and manifestations of xenophobia in South Africa, however there is a paucity of research with regards to the representations by South African cartoonists on the xenophobic violence in South Africa. This article attempts to investigate the power of South African cartoonists and the role their cartoons played during periods of xenophobic violence.

One of the xenophobic upsurges of violence in South Africa was during May 2008 when pandemonium broke out, when foreign nationals were attacked. The attacks claimed the lives of 56 people and saw over 342 shops looted and 213 burnt down (South African History Online, 2017). According to Al Jazeera, foreigners were "accused of spreading disease, stealing jobs and sponging off basic government services like electricity, running water and healthcare" (Essa & Patel, 2015). This quickly became an ethnic, racial, economic and structural issue, as not only foreign nationals feared for their lives, but also South Africans from minority groups. February 2015 saw a reprise of malicious xenophobic attacks. Who can forget the grotesque images of Emmanuel Sithole, a Mozambican immigrant, which went viral in the media? He was callously cornered, repeatedly stabbed and left for dead (Swails, 2015). The statements made by Zulu monarch King Goodwill Zwelithini during his address to the Pongola community members allegedly encouraged the 2015 attacks. The King criticised the government for not being able to control the influx of foreigners entering South Africa and stated, "We are requesting those who come from outside to please go back to their countries" (Ndou, 2015). During this volatile period, a powerful voice of reason came from cartoonists from South Africa and abroad, illustrating their point of view on these events. These cartoons criticised the government for not responding effectively and also provoked the 'powers that be' who were accused of sparking the xenophobic attacks. Many of the cartoons that were published in the South African national and local newspapers, like the Sunday Times, Daily Maverick, Mail and Guardian and Weekend Argus initiated dialogue around xenophobia. The cartoons also helped to create an awareness of the attacks using satire.

This paper aims to analyse how South African cartoonists portrayed the xenophobic outbreak and their perspectives on xenophobia and the underlying causes of the attacks. In order to achieve these aims, this paper focuses on three satirical cartoons that were published in South African national newspapers. These cartoons spotlighted the plight of xenophobic violence that occurred in South Africa during the year 2015. These cartoons will be examined through the theoretical lens of the Carnivalesque using Elements of Cartooning.

Literature review

In this section we will discuss the elements of cartooning and Bakhtin's Carnivalesque. Satire, humour and irony are fundamental elements of cartooning, enabling artists to challenge authority and critique social issues. Satire operates through ridicule and wit, humour provides accessibility and relief, and irony sharpens critique by exposing contradictions. Bakhtin's Carnivalesque framework further enriches this understanding by situating cartoons within a tradition of symbolic inversion, grotesque realism and laughter that suspends hierarchies.

Cartoons are shaped by multiple creative elements, but this paper focuses specifically on satire, irony and humour, as these are central to their political and social function. Satire has deep historical roots, with Bal et al. (2009, 231) tracing its origins to ancient Greece, where plays openly mocked political leaders and provoked critical audience responses. In this sense, cartoonists, especially political cartoonists, may be regarded as the modern equivalents of Greek playwrights, using satire to expose injustice and question authority. Satire is a broad concept that incorporates irony, sarcasm and ridicule (Singh, 2012, 65). It is often associated with related forms such as caricature, parody and burlesque. Singh (2012, 65) defines satire as a literary mode in which human vices or follies are ridiculed, typically with a moral or corrective intent. This is echoed by Writing Explained n.d., which describes satire as a literary (form using humour, irony and exaggeration to critique society and politics. Bal et al. (2009, 231) similarly emphasise its derivation from the Greek notion of burlesque, as an artistic composition designed to provoke laughter. From these definitions, satire emerges as a literary and artistic strategy employed to mock or critique events, people or ideas in a humorous way. It is particularly effective when addressing taboo or sensitive topics such as race, religion or gender, as it frames them in a manner that is humorous rather than pretentious (Singh, 2012, 68). Singh also argues that satire is a tool of social awareness, a "weapon" that highlights societal issues by combining wit and critique (2012: 68). In the context of cartoons, satire functions as both entertainment and political commentary.

Closely connected to satire is humour, broadly defined as the quality of being comic or amusing (Branford & Branford, 1991: 363). At its core, humour is the perception of something as funny. Bakhtin (in Bal et al. 2009, 232) noted humour's social role in reducing pressure and tension, making it a vital element in cultural

expression. Humour can manifest in both verbal and non-verbal forms (Singh, 2012, 66), and cartoonists rely on their understanding of audience reception when employing it. Singh (2012, 66) identifies three levels of humour comprehension. The first is universal humour, accessible regardless of cultural or educational background. The second involves humour around topics such as politics, sex or religion, which provide relief from repression. The third is a more sophisticated, intellectual humour that relies on irony, language play and cultural literacy. Singh 2012 distinguishes this final level as 'elitist' but also capable of compassionate or intellectual engagement. While cartoons often employ universal or topical humour, they also rely heavily on irony as a means to achieve sharper critique.

Irony is a key device in satire, often serving as the bridge between critique and humour. Singh (2012, 65) defines irony as the use of words to convey meanings opposite to their literal sense, a method of signalling an intention or attitude contrary to what is stated. Irony thus exposes contradictions within characters, actions or statements, and Singh notes this is one of its defining features. Two dominant forms of irony are common in cartoons: verbal and dramatic irony (Inman, 2016). Verbal irony occurs when a statement implies the opposite of its literal meaning, while dramatic irony arises when the audience understands more about events than the characters depicted. Conradie et al. (2012) argue that irony in cartoons operates as a device that highlights discrepancies between literal and intended meanings. It can echo social expectations, particularly those associated with politicians or religious leaders, functioning as a 'subversive strategy' that critiques authority. Irony also enables cartoonists to accuse their subjects indirectly, spotlighting contradictions by placing them in contexts that undermine their public statements. Through this mechanism, irony becomes a powerful spotlight on hypocrisy, reinforcing the satirical force of cartoons.

The carnivalesque: A world turned upside down

Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque provides a valuable framework for analysing cartoons. Rooted in medieval carnival traditions, the carnivalesque symbolised the temporary reversal of hierarchy, granting the lower classes symbolic liberation from authority. Key features included grotesque imagery, exaggerated bodily functions, satire, parody, and anti-authoritarian themes (University of Arizona, 2008). In Rabelais and His World (1984), Bakhtin positions the carnival both as a historical phenomenon and a literary mode that broke from oppressive cultural norms through humour, exaggeration and inversion. For this paper, the carnivalesque is particularly useful in analysing cartoons that reflect moments of social and political tension, including xenophobic violence in South Africa between 2008 and 2015. By drawing on carnival traditions, cartoonists disrupt power structures and create spaces where criticism of authority can occur more freely.

Bakhtin identifies three components of folk culture central to the carnivalesque: carnival festivities, parodic literature, and the language of the marketplace (Morris, 1994, 95). These modes share what Bakhtin calls grotesque realism, which emphasises bodily excesses and functions such as eating, drinking, sex and comic violence. In folk culture, the body was seen as communal rather than individual, symbolically degraded in order to be reborn (Morris, 1994, 195). Bakhtin (1984, 5) outlines three closely related forms. Ritual spectacles such as pageants, which fostered "carnival laughter." This laughter was festive, collective and ambivalent, ensuring equality as no figure escaped mockery (Bakhtin, 1984, 11–12). Lindahl 1996, 66) observes that such laughter also functioned cathartically. Comic verbal compositions, including parodies, dialogues and debates, which emphasised humour and inversion of serious genres (Bakhtin, 1984, 13–15). Then, billingsgate, or abusive language, which created new communicative forms (Bakhtin, 1984, 16). These insults, though seemingly harsh, were often affectionate and broke conventional speech norms, echoing the satirical function of cartoons.

The parallels with editorial cartooning are evident. Like medieval carnival, cartoons offer humorous but often cutting depictions of authority figures, creating a symbolic reversal of social order. Grotesque realism is central to Bakhtin's theory. He emphasises the "material bodily principle" as positive and universal, representing all people in a festive and utopian sense (Bakhtin, 1984, 19). Degradation is a key principle: the medieval clown, for example, mocked and debased figures of authority, symbolically reducing them to bodily existence (Bakhtin, 1984, 20). In cartoons, this role is assumed by the cartoonist, who uses caricature and exaggeration to humiliate political elites and assert symbolic superiority. The carnival represented a temporary suspension of hierarchical order (Bakhtin, 1984, 10). Laughter enabled the masses to mock their superiors without fear of reprisal, generating a utopian vision of equality. This principle is vividly echoed in editorial cartoons, which similarly suspend deference to authority through comic inversion.

Fiske (1989, 69) highlights how audiences can appropriate cultural commodities for their own purposes, finding pleasure in creating meanings that resist dominant ideologies. He suggests that subordinate groups may use cultural forms to challenge power, even when such forms are provided by the elite. This dual perspective can be applied to carnival: while it could be seen as a tool of elite control, the masses simultaneously used it to assert agency, creating oppositional or subversive meanings. Fiske (1989, 69) also identifies forms of resistance such as evasion and circumvention of social control. Within carnival, participants could temporarily overturn authority and create new identities. This reading supports Bakhtin's view of carnival as a space of freedom and utopian possibility. In the same way, cartoons may be interpreted both as mechanisms of critique allowed by the media system and as genuine sites of resistance where cartoonists and audiences invert dominant ideologies. Like the medieval carnival, cartoons provide a space where power is destabilised and social critique is made possible, offering both entertainment and resistance.

Methodology

We employed Bakhtin's theory of the Carnivalesque together with Elements of cartooning for the analysis of the selected cartoons. This theory provided vital tools to analyse the role that the cartoonists played during these periods of extreme xenophobic violence in South Africa. The analysis also included a discussion on satirical cartoonists being equated to the jester at the carnival and an examination of the use of laughter, tropes and parody in these satirical cartoons. Bakhtin's theory of the Carnivalesque was useful in that it brought all the elements of the cartoons together, allowing us to examine the manner in which the cartoonists use satire as a form of subversion to call out the powers-that-be and in some cases, to demean them. The selected cartoons were also analysed using the elements listed below.

1. Folk culture manifested in ritual spectacles, comic verbal compositions, billingsgate: curses, oaths, and blazons.
2. Grotesque realism: degradation, anarchic, exaggeration, beatings, comic debasement, lowering of the supernatural and death.
3. Material bodily principle with an emphasis on eating, drinking, urination, defecation and sexual intercourse.
4. How humour, satire and irony were used to illustrate: power dynamics, artists' point of view, subject matter and illustrated context.

Cartoons for this paper were collected from two South African newspapers viz. the Sunday Times and Weekly Argus which highlighted the plight of the xenophobic violence that occurred during the years 2008–2015 in South Africa. The cartoonists that were selected, Zapiro, Brandon Reynolds and Jeremy Nell (Jerm) are well known in South Africa. They have published their cartoons on various platforms including national newspapers both printed and online as well as books and have made significant contributions to editorial cartooning in South Africa. They have also used their editorial cartoons as a form of activism speaking out against both national and international social injustices. Ethical clearance for this study was granted by the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (Approval No. HSS/0373/015M).

Discussion and analysis

This section interprets and analyses the selected cartoons through Bakhtin's theory of the Carnivalesque and key elements of cartooning such as satire, irony, and humour. The analysis examines how these visual texts critique xenophobic violence in South Africa, challenge authority, and expose social contradictions. Each cartoon is discussed in terms of its imagery, symbolism, and use of carnivalesque inversion to reveal the cartoonist's role as both social commentator and moral critic.

"The burning man" by Zapiro

The burning man

The above cartoon visibly depicts the xenophobic violence of 2008 and reminds the audience of the infamous image of the "burning man", a clear reference to the murder of Ernesto Alfabeto Nhamuave. Nhamuave was a Mozambican national who was beaten, stabbed and set alight in the township of Ramaphosa, which is located east of Johannesburg (Bevan, 2008). The image of the burning man was one of the most heart wrenching images that emerged from the xenophobic violence of 2008. It exposed the evils of xenophobia and the hardships some

Figure 1. "The Burning Man", by Zapiro, 2008, Sunday Times, Public Domain.

foreign nationals experienced during that time. This image also serves as a stark reminder of apartheid South Africa where the practice of necklacing (placing burning tyres around the victims' necks) was used as a warning to those who would dare rise up to the powers that be. The aforementioned references to South Africa's past together with the illustrations of the burned body, brought about by anarchy, employs Bakhtins grotesque realism degradation, anarchy, comic debasement and death by illustrating bodily degradation in the form of torturous death. The carnivalesque elements in this image compels the audience to view the perpetrators of violence as fools and not those who uphold African values.

When we lost Ubuntu

Attention is drawn to an individual wielding a bush knife, states in a speech bubble "I could tell he was a @#&* foreigner! He didn't know the meaning of Ubuntu". Ubuntu is an African Philosophy and is often translated "I am because we are" (Ramose, 2002). The cartoon employs Bakhtin's parodic literature by highlighting the irony of the statement made by the perpetrator. The cartoonist uses irony to mock these individuals as well as illustrate how their actions are a complete contradiction to their understanding of Ubuntu. The carnivalesque in this statement thus creates a sense of hierarchical inversion between the audience and perpetrators of violence depicted in the cartoon--the audience now given the right by the cartoonist to ridicule those that claim to know what Ubuntu is. The following, "@#&*" also indicate a swear word that was used by one of the characters in the cartoon. The use of billingsgate or abusive speech depicts the individual as highly arrogant and abrasive with language as well as depicting wrath. This expression demonstrates how language can be used to permit, validate, and obscure violence and therefore bears a resemblance to the raw nature that existed at the carnival, by which modern day pleasantries were forsaken, and a rougher approach was taken.

Township crisis and the spectacle of xenophobia

The cartoon displays the height of the xenophobic violence in South Africa. The cartoonist depicts the perpetrators of the xenophobic violence being men. Zapiro denotes that the gang members depicted in the cartoon are of South African nationality by drawing a South African flag on one character's hat and another character's shirt. The background setting of the cartoon suggests that the rural/township areas were highly affected by the violence. This may suggest to the audience the type of people that were involved in the violence, which would have been township dwellers living in close proximity to foreign nationals. Finally, the background setting

gives the impression that the perpetrators of the violence were mostly from lower economic backgrounds. The carnival spectacle and temporary suspension of the rules are displayed in the cartoons by the mob, as an ironic anti-carnivalesque carnival of lawless violence. The cartoonist sets out this scene as a mob that has made a gory spectacle of the foreign national. The mob is a law unto itself and has created its own macabre spectacle. They are wielding axes, knobkerries, machetes and a gallon of petrol which evoke historical memory of township violence, state-sanctioned force and mob justice.

"Xenophobia!!!" by Brandan Reynolds

Figure 2. "Xenophobia!!!", by Reynolds, 2015, Weekend Argus, Public Domain.

The King's *"Goodwill"*

King Goodwill Zwelithini (one of the most prominent Kings in South Africa) is the focal point of this cartoon by Reynolds. The Zulu King is accused by a group of people in the background who are coloured in blue. In front of King Zwelithini is a person lying on the floor who is portrayed as being a dead foreigner. As a King of the Zulus, he holds a very prominent position in society, and he has the ability to persuade those who follow him. His words had tremendous impact amongst the Zulu community as it was reported that men of Zulu ethnicity perpetuated the majority of the attacks (Ndou, 2015). Reynolds drew inspiration for this cartoon by citing what was portrayed in the media during April 2015, when the King was accused of making defamatory remarks against foreign nationals at an imbizo (a gathering/meeting) and was therefore blamed by the mass media for inciting the xenophobic attacks of 2015. He later said that the remarks made were out of context and held another imbizo to speak against xenophobia. The spectacle in this picture is three-fold. Firstly, the King was made a fool by the media. A video was released by the media and was played on national news networks as well as published in newspapers where the King stated the following, "we ask foreign nationals to pack their belongings and go back to their county" (Mail Online, 2017). Secondly, the cartoonist places the King in a position to be accused, therefore is ridiculing him. Thirdly, he is challenged in the cartoon by the other characters that are pointing fingers at him - this reinforces the carnival laughter which aims to suspend the power held by the King. He is pointed out as someone to be mocked and held accountable for his comments. In other words, this is precisely the world of carnival, of social criticism performed by, and in the name of, the powerless social classes.

The jester dethrones the King

Another feature of grotesque realism, comic debasement, can be viewed in the other speech bubble spoken by King Zwelithini as well as can be comprehended in the way the cartoonist caricatured the King. The speech bubble reads, "OK…OK…I'll arrange for an imbizo for Monday…immediately!!!" The manner by which the cartoonist pens this sentence in the Kings' speech bubble articulates the Kings reluctance to address the xenophobic statements he allegedly made. The cartoonist uses comic debasement and parodic literature to underline that the King is only arranging the imbizo because of the mass accusations he received for making xenophobic statements by the media and the public. This creates a comic debasement as it gives grounds for the common folk- the reader- to ridicule the King for his somewhat apathetic and perfunctory response to the cries of the media and the public. The caricature of King Zwelithini also illustrates comic debasement as the cartoonist depicts the King as being a very rounded figure, as depicted by the potbelly. He is caricatured in some traditional Zulu attire, thus, indicating that he is a representative of Zulu ethnicity. The King's facial expression also allows for comic debasement; the cartoonist depicts him with a very arrogant facial expression signifying his reluctance to conduct the imbizo and is angry with the crowd who are accusing him from behind. The last element of grotesque realism, death, is made blatant by the cartoonist with the depiction of a man on the floor with blood oozing out of him; his death is caused by the speech bubble "xenophobia" which has gored him in his back. The cartoonist labels the dead individual with the title "foreign national" which is inscribed on the side of his body. The man is depicted using a blue suit, which is similar to those that are drawn standing in the crowd at the back, demonstrating that this foreign national was also a workingman, in a blue-collar job and contributing to the economy. He does not fit the stereotype (that exists in the minds of the xenophobia offenders) of the foreign national who comes to South Africa to sell drugs and delves in human trafficking.

"Scrambled signal" by Jeremy Nell (JERM)

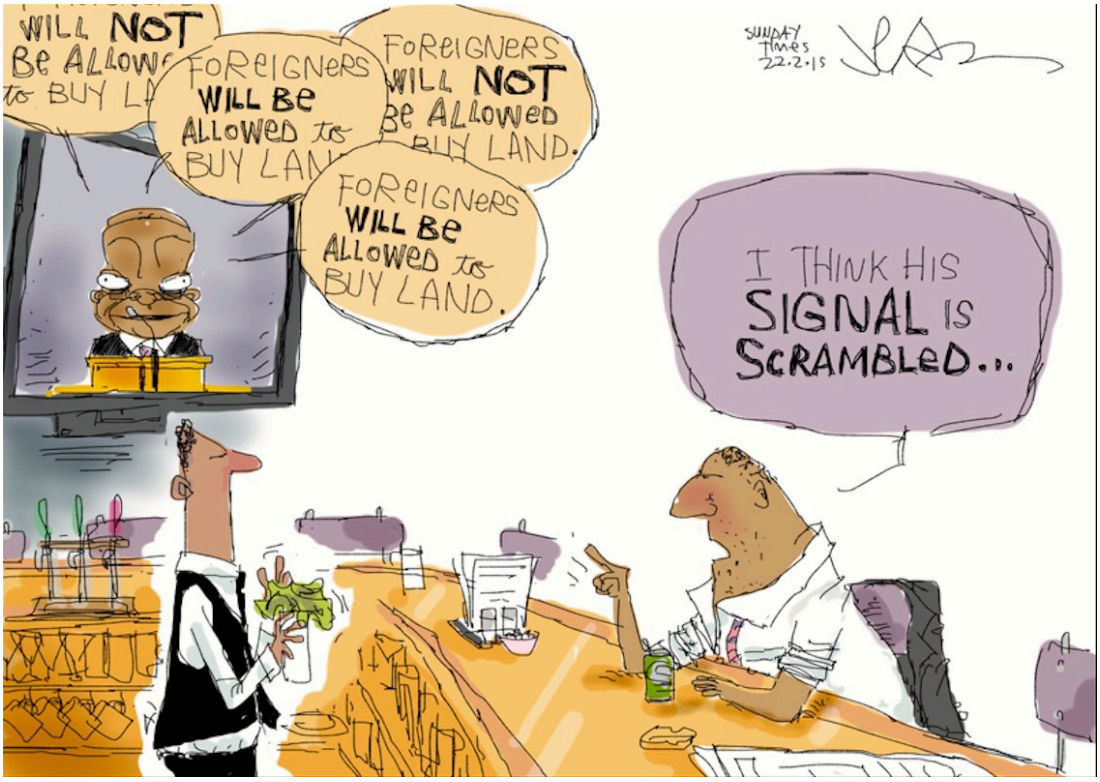

Figure 3. "Scrambled signal", by Jerm, 2015, Sunday Times, Public Domain.

The fools' speech

The cartoon parodies the former President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma's utterances which is indicated by the mixed message when he is televised making conflicting statements. The speech bubbles read, "Foreigners

will be allowed to buy land" and "Foreigners will not be allowed to buy land" - this statement is a deliberate exaggeration and draws attention to confusing and contradictory statements made by the President in the media. The conflicting statements can also be seen as a contributing factor to be blamed for the upsurge of the xenophobic violence in South Africa. The Jester figure*, Jerm,* makes use of parodic literature to poke fun at these conflicted statements by using the 'bar patron' to represent the 'folk world' (the audience) to point out to the bartender that he thinks the television signal is scrambled. By presenting the President in an amusing fashion, *Jerm* incorporates another element of the carnivalesque known as 'Inversion' or 'Uncrowning', thus bringing the President from a place of power to a place of ridicule. Even the average person or 'folk world' can point out that these statements do not make sense, thus the President is brought to a lower status.

It is also apparent that the cartoonist is making a comic spectacle out of the former President Zuma. The above is represented when the bar patron indicates to the bartender that the signal is scrambled. This can give the reader a sense that Zuma is not entirely making sense, therefore the cartoonist could be indicating that the speech is not that of a President who is expected to be eloquent and have a rapport with the audience, but that of a nonsensical fool. The normal role of the wise leader and the ordinary uneducated individual has been inverted in this cartoon. The cartoonist uses the man in the bar to bring to the reader's attention the nonsense that is spoken by the President. The men at the bar can therefore be viewed as wise and the President as stupid - it is a 'world turned upside down'. The carnivalesque elements in the above cartoon aims to degrade or 'lower' the status of the President. By portraying Zuma in this manner, it is reminiscent of festival culture that involved the uncrowning of kings (Rhodes, 2001, 376). The 'uncrowning' of Zuma is symbolic of him being taken from his place of the highest seat of the land, which is the Presidency, and he is now portrayed as a bumbling fool who cannot articulate his ideas.

The clown

Features of grotesque realism as well as the material bodily principle are illustrated in the form of exaggeration in this cartoon, in which the cartoonist exaggerates the features of the President in order to make him look more comical and unattractive. The President has a broader face with a huge bump on his head. *Jerm* achieves 'degradation' and 'inversion' by depicting President Zuma in his cartoons with 'squint eyes', this creates a sense of awkwardness and uneasiness, thus ridiculing a prominent political figure, giving the common folk licence to mock. The Material bodily principle from the carnival can be exemplified by setting the scene of the cartoon in a bar. The bar patron looks like he has had a long day at work and is now coming to wind down and indulge in some alcohol at the local bar. This could display that he is interested in satisfying his carnal desires with a drink.

Conclusion

This paper depicted the politics of irony, which Bakhtin's work on the Carnivalesque helps us to comprehend. For Bakhtin, carnivals were a 'world turned upside down', a temporary inversion of power-relations that served to challenge entrenched social hierarchies and the ideologies that sought to protect them. Similarly, deploying irony in cartoons, by mocking the powerful - their stupidities, their foibles, their humbug - generates an ironic reversal where the erstwhile powerless reader of the cartoon now assumes that mocking subject-position offered by the cartoon and thus becomes (temporarily) powerful: laughing at (down at) the imperfect ruler. The ruler in turn is 'debased' or disempowered, by the cartoon (in this sense the debasement of the powerful by cartoons can be seen as a Brechtian 'alienation device', critically distancing the reader from any sympathetic attachment to those satirised elites). The 'superiority' of the powerful, hallowed by ideologies of awe and reverence and admiration, is suddenly destabilised, and thus ideologies, like the real world in carnivals, are 'suspended' to allow a more critical view of power by ordinary people. Furthermore, this can only happen if cartoons and cartoonists, like carnivals or the court jester, occupy a cultural location autonomous of the interests of the powerful, from which these unrestrained and independent-minded critiques can be launched (which in the modern world is the autonomous space of press freedom central to a democratic polity).

The cartoons used for analysis illustrated that Bakhtin's theory of the Carnivalesque can contribute the cartooning theory. Elements of folk culture and grotesque realism were evident as features of these cartoons. Carnivalesque culture in these cartoons emphasised the power of cartoonists. It was evident that cartoonists were like the Jester of the medieval carnival as they mocked and degraded their subject's using satire. Through the use of satire, cartoonists position themselves as being the voice of reason in society. During the various waves of the xenophobic violence in South Africa, cartoonists held a polemic role in South African society. Cartoonists highlight the contributing causes of the violence such as various socio-economic factors, socio-demographics as

well as political figures that could be dubbed as the instigators of the xenophobic violence. Cartoonists thus help to shape our perceptions of events that occur in our society and evoke emotions in the hope that someone might take a stand for change. A quote that is often attributed to Brecht that "art is not a mirror held up to reality, but a hammer with which to shape it" (Brecht, 1964, 179–205), also reflects the role that the cartoonist plays in the creation of the cartoons analysed in this paper, as one who utilises their craft to encourage transformation in society. With each stroke of their pencil, the cartoonists echo the sentiments of Mbembe (2015, 30) "No African is a foreigner in Africa! No African is a migrant in Africa! Africa is where we all belong, notwithstanding the foolishness of our boundaries. No amount of national-chauvinism will erase this." Cartoonists bring to light, the harsh reality of the xenophobic attacks and implore the reader to think deeply and critically about xenophobia and how utterly senseless these attacks are.

Declarations

Interdisciplinary Scope: This study adopts an interdisciplinary approach, integrating perspectives from cultural studies, media studies, and social psychology to examine how satire and humour in editorial cartoons critique xenophobic violence in South Africa. By combining theoretical insights from Bakhtin's concept of the Carnivalesque with the artistic and sociopolitical dimensions of cartooning, the paper provides a holistic understanding of how visual satire functions as a form of social commentary and resistance.

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