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Cartoons can talk? Visual analysis of cartoons on the 2007/2008 post-election violence in Kenya: A visual argumentation approach

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Abstract

The growing influence of the visual media in contemporary society is quite alarming; hence, learning to explicate them is inevitable. This is a paradigm shift from verbal argumentation to visual argumentation. The aim of this article is to contribute to the understanding of visual analysis and visual literacy, a part of discourse analysis. Visuals employ a number of rhetorical devices; however, understanding the effectiveness of these devices is still a challenge. Adopting Visual Argumentation Theory, the article analyzes argumentation in cartoons on the post-election violence that rocked Kenya in 2007/2008. From the analyses, it is concluded that visuals can argue as simply and forcefully as their verbal counterparts. The blending of caricature and portraiture makes them even more explicit as portraiture denotes the characters so that we can recognize who they are; caricature ridicules them, analogy attributes actions to them in a satirical or sarcastic way, and cultural memory is needed to access the reference to the analogies. Visuals are designed to make the reader think not only about the event or the people being portrayed but also about the message being communicated. This means visuals have the ability to stretch the truth beyond caricature or mere amusement.

Keywords

Caricature, cartoons, cultural memory, emotional memory, portraiture, visual analogy, visual analysis, visual arguments

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Introduction

Advances in technology pose a challenge to the traditional media of communication. Contemporary society has been held hostage by myriad visual images such as magazines, television programs, the internet and many other visual communications which have become part of everyday discourse. Images are now a powerful influence on attitudes and beliefs. The world and particularly developing nations such as Kenya are faced with the challenge of understanding the influence of visual communication.

A lot of research has been done on rhetoric in general; however, little has been done on visual rhetoric. This study will hence be a contribution to the efforts to liberate visuals from their verbal counterparts. The use of visual-only discourse is becoming dominant in most modern cartoons and so for a cartoonist to move with this paradigm shift he or she has to embrace visual argumentation in order to understand better how visuals can be made powerful tools of argumentation.

The article unravels the visual arguments in cartoons on post-election violence in Kenya in 2007/2008. Following the disruptive post-election violence that rocked Kenya after the 27 December general elections, KATUNI, the Friedrich Ebert-Stiftung (FES) and Goethe Institute Kenya, hosted an exhibition of cartoons on the elections and its aftermath. The theme of the exhibition was 'picking up pieces' (see KATUNI et al., 2010). Both the cartoons and exhibition were an invitation to soul searching and dialogue on what had gone wrong with Kenya. What were the roots of the violence and the attendant ethnic animosity? They wanted to find out whether the country would come to terms with the national journey it had made to this tragic moment and also whether it could pluck up courage to stare the truth in the eye and deal with it. What lessons had been taken from the events leading up to the elections, the poll itself and the aftermath of them both? The exhibition sought to make a special contribution to this dialogue in a very special way, by offering Kenyans an opportunity not just to talk to one another but also to tell the truth humorously through cartoons.

In this article, therefore, we push the dialogue further by adopting a scholarly approach to discourse analysis of visual-only cartoons. The best overall cartoon in the exhibition was a visual-only (a cartoon which is not accompanied by verbal modes at all), thus this article adopts a Visual Argument Theory devised by Birdsell and Groarke (1996) in exploring visual argumentation in the cartoons with the view of showing how the visual tropes of caricature, portraiture and analogy work with cultural and emotional memory to enhance the argumentation power in cartoons.

Visual Argumentation Theory

Visual Argumentation Theory (henceforth VAT) has its origin in rhetoric and argumentation. Rhetoric is the persuasive use of language. Argumentation, on the other hand, is the process of presenting premises, followed by support of these premises and finally arriving at a logical conclusion. Whereas rhetoric and argumentation have had a strong leaning towards the verbal mode of communication, VAT advocates for the fact that visuals or images can argue or persuade as forcefully as their verbal counterparts. VAT was propounded by Birdsell and Groarke (1996) who extended Barthe's (1977) arguments in

the *Rhetoric of Images*. Barthe provides a useful starting point for VAT. He proposed three strategies to unravel the rhetoric of images:

1) Textual analysis studies the relationship of the image to its caption.
2) Denotation reads the image literally.
3) Connotation reads the image mythically and ideologically.

The last two strategies are crucial in this study because for one to unravel the meaning in the visuals, a careful analysis of the tropes or literary devices has to be done. Moreover, visuals have a social critique on issues of concern in society. Scholarship of VAT contends that images are intentional, have a purpose and are able to advance arguments. Birdsell and Groarke (1996) posit that visuals have meaning, whether explicit or implicit, and that they can advance premises just like the verbal mode. The advancement of premises is the interplay between the visual itself and the visual's context. In advancing the premises that lead to a conclusion, the concept of frame captures how visual arguments may incorporate given sub-arguments just as verbal arguments may do. A frame is an image into which another is incorporated, with the effect of placing the smaller image in a context of new objects and visual relationships and so it can provide additional premises needed for the larger argument to work.

Any analysis in discourse analysis has to be in a context, and this means in the analysis of both the verbal and the visual modes context has to play its part. Three contexts are proposed in VAT: *immediate visual context*, *immediate verbal context* and *the visual culture.* Context, an umbrella term that unites the ideas of common language and argument fields, is important to visual argumentation because of the process of decoding. As visual argumentation operates by way of a symbolic code that is more abstract than language, context plays a crucial role in enhancing meaning. Kennedy et al. (1993) observe that the most troublesome of the three contexts is the visual culture. This is because it is transient, it changes significantly over time, and also most readers of visuals lack visual literacy. According to VAT, therefore, the reader should focus on what makes up a visual and how the visual functions within the context of its usage. This interpretation is rhetorical in the sense that it considers the ingredients, and how and why they function as they do.

Visuals can not only advance arguments but can also counter opposing arguments. Lake and Pickering (1998) state two ways by which visuals can advance refutation of the opposing views: first, through *substitution*, in which one image is replaced with a larger visual frame by a different image with an opposing polarity; second, through *transformation* in which an image is re-contextualized in a new visual frame, such that its polarity is modified or reversed through association with different images. In this article, however, we advocate for *visual blending* rather than substitution. Visual blending entails having more than one visual in the same frame. When visuals are blended it is easier for the reader to see the congruence and the incongruence in them. In such a situation, Shelley (1996) suggests two modes, namely the *rhetorical mode* and the *demonstrative mode* of interpretation. In the former, an image supports conclusions by activating the viewer's concepts in roughly the same manner as an informed, verbal argument whereas in the latter, an image supports a conclusion by appealing to the viewers' visual competence. In demonstrative mode, the visuals are construed iconically as if they were a

representation of a real process that a viewer can see in action. Each figure/image in the blend appears to be apt in this action. The similarity in the action of key figures, for instance, Mr Raila and Mr Kibaki in this article's corpus, leaves the impression that they form a coherent group in virtue of Gestalt's Law of similarity and difference. The actions in visuals suggested demonstratively are explained by the concept of progress activated rhetorically. This is better captured in a blended visual than one in which substitution is done. One of the strong arguments of VAT is that claims and grounds are not separate elements rather are fused together in a holistic, inseparable unit in which both are argued and answered in the seeing experience that the visual argument structures.

Visual argumentation has been criticized for being fundamentally emotional and distinct from words and sentences. This is, however, an exaggerated critique. Advocates for verbal arguments should not ignore that verbal claims are characterized by vagueness, ambiguity and emotional overtones. In contrast, the meaning of many visual images can be precise, definite and unemotional. Second, the implicitness which we associate with verbal persuasion has an analogue in hidden premises and conclusions that accompany many verbal claims. Lastly, visual argumentation can contain a premise-conclusion structure which is amenable to standard forms of argument analysis. Visual argumentation can, therefore, be judged by common standards of reasoned co-convincing and in this way transcend the bounds of mere persuasion.

VAT concerns visual components that are able to convince, prove and persuade. These visual components pervade everyday discourse, in both print and audio-visuals, and therefore VAT is an important tool in exploring and harnessing the argumentative power of these visual images in society.

Visual metaphor

Metaphors are arguments in the sense that the level of cognition, even before linguistic or visual expression takes place, is fundamentally metaphoric. This means that a metaphorical expression does not merely represent the outcome of a transformation of literal into figurative language rather, cognition, and therefore its expression in language, is inherently metaphoric (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 1981). Lakoff and Johnson argue that the conceptual system that forms the basis of everyday discourse, both linguistic and non-linguistic, is metaphoric in nature. The concept of visual metaphor stems from Lakoff's (1993) comments that metaphors can be realized in imaginative products such as cartoons, literary works, dreams, visions and myths. This means that metaphors are not limited to the verbal mode. Visual metaphor (what El Refaie, 2003, calls Image Metaphor), being an aspect of the broader Conceptual Metaphor Theory, holds the view that readers understand abstract or unfamiliar visual concepts via structural conceptual mappings from more specific and familiar concepts.

According to Lakoff (1993), visual metaphors belong to a special class of metaphor that maps one conventional mental image onto another. He describes visual metaphor as 'one-shot metaphor' because it maps a single image onto another, as opposed to mapping a domain of concepts onto another domain as is the case of verbal mode. This is what this article calls blending. Blending is hereby taken not simply as the composition of one

image onto another, rather they are fully conceptual metaphors prompted and guided by the composition of two images.

How are metaphors arguments in Visual Argumentation Theory? According to Lakoff and Turner (1989), conceptual metaphor can exercise persuasive power over participants in communication. They claim that we are predisposed to accept the validity of conceptual metaphors used by ourselves and other people because we rely on them constantly, unconsciously and automatically to the extent that they are hard to resist or even notice. Lakoff and Turner (1989) describe five sources of the power of metaphors, namely, the power to structure, the power of options, the power of reason, the power of evaluation and the power of being there.

The power to structure concerns the observation that metaphorical mappings allow us to impart to a concept structure which is not there independent of the metaphor (Lakoff, 1993). This means the part of our understanding of a concept that is metaphorically structured is fully informed by the metaphor. One has therefore to understand that a concept is given by the metaphor used to structure it. Metaphor, thus, has the power to structure our understanding in different ways.

The power of options, on the other hand, holds the view that since cognitive schemas are general in nature, they allow a wide range of choices as to how they are filled in; for instance, the images of Public Service Vehicle and a sports car in cartoons in Figures 3 and 4 have different implications for how the reader understands the target domain. Each has its own features, slots and relations that it brings into interpretation (see Fowler and Kress, 1979).

The power of reason contends that as metaphorical mappings map not only slots and features but also knowledge and relations, metaphors provide us with a way of thinking about a target domain in terms of logic of source domain. We can base our reasoning, decision-making and therefore also our actions on the logic imposed by the metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson, 1981). This power is influential in advancing propositions, raising support of them and drawing conclusions. This is the concern of argumentation.

The power of evaluation observes the emotive aspect of human behavior. We not only map logic reasoning from the source domain onto the target domain, but also subjective evaluations and feelings, which are called connotations. For instance, when cartoonists depict the visual of the two presidential contestants (Mr Raila and Mr Kibaki) in various visual modalities, they are trying to attribute the satirical connotations of these images. This eventually influences the readers' perception or feelings towards the two. Metaphors, therefore, have the power to create evaluations of things based on implicit connotations.

The power of being there is one of the sources of power in metaphors. Most of the time, we accept metaphors without realizing that we are speaking about or understanding a situation metaphorically. According to Lakoff and Turner (1989), this can make it difficult to question these metaphoric constructions of reality, or even to notice them in the first place, yet keen questioning of metaphors is the only way they can be studied. As observed earlier, the visual context is the most challenging of the three contexts since most readers lack visual literacy. These sources together give visuals the power to argue just like the verbal counterparts.

Literature review of visual argumentation

Rhetorical works have a social relevance and produce knowledge about people's lives as they investigate the communicative phenomena that surround us. In the latter half of the 1990s, scholars began a major effort to examine the role of visual in argumentation (Birdsell and Groarke, 1996; Blair, 1996; Fleming, 1996; LaWare, 1998; Shelley, 1996). These works were inspired by the visual orientation of contemporary society and the need to boost proficiency in assessing visual modes of reasoning and persuasion. Foss (2004), for instance, observes that visual symbols are pervasive and our ignorance of them inhibits understanding of much of the world around us.

At the onset of this inclination towards visual argumentation, some scholars rejected the view that visual images are as argumentative as their verbal counterparts. Fleming (1996) argued that visuals are inherently ambiguous. Blair (1996) and Foss (2004) contend that visual arguments should be propositional, and this is only possible when verbal arguments are in play. This view was later countered, especially with reference to O'Keefe's (1982) approach to argumentation, which claims that argumentation need not actually be expressed in language but potentially could be expressed in language. Since then, attempts to delink visual from verbal arguments have been made. This prompted the theory of Visual Argumentation.

As it was noted earlier, VAT has its origin in argumentation and thus fits very well within the traditional rhetorical paradigm which acknowledges three enthymemes: logic (*logos*), character (*ethos*) and emotions (*pathos*) (Barbatsis, 1996; Blair, 1996; Medhurst and DeSousa, 1981). All these studies agree to the fact that the formal structure of enthymemes incorporates or embodies the three modes of proof and therefore one must seek out sources to convince not only the rational explanation of the subject (*pragma*) but also the emotive elements in the subject (*ethos* and *pathos*). This is the view adopted by this study. We agree to Blair's (1996) concept of argument as a property of visual argument. The concept of argument has two implications of importance to this study:

a) The first implication is that arguments are propositional. In other words, reasons and claims that make up arguments have propositional content which carries proposition's value judgments and actions.
b) Second, arguments are not necessarily linguistic or verbal. All that is required for something to qualify as an argument is that reasons be overtly expressed and that reasons and claims be linguistically explicable.

It stands to reason that since logic or reasoning, emotions and character are closely related, viewers or readers must be in a position to make judgment in order to come into the state of feeling. Arguments are propositional because they contain claims and reasons which can be affirmed or rejected. This is the same thing in verbal claims. If not properly constructed it becomes debatable. This applies too in visual arguments. For a visual to be persuasive, enthymemes must identify with the common opinions of their intended audiences. This is against the backdrop of context and culture, incorporating them into their images. Birdsell and Groarke (1996) identify three kinds of contexts in the evaluation of visual arguments: immediate visual context, immediate verbal context and visual culture.

As this study analyses mainly visual-only cartoons, the verbal context will only be mentioned in passing. However, the visual context and the cultural context (cultural memory) are fully explored, showing how they enhance the evaluation of visuals.

The second implication supports the view taken by this article that visuals are as powerfully argumentative as their verbal counterparts and that they have rhetorical elements which are linguistically explicable. In addressing this implication, the study explores three rhetorical devices – caricature, portraiture and analogy – from the perspective of visual metaphor discussed earlier.

The two implications above, however, only deal with the propositional or logical aspect of the visual argument yet, as noted earlier, the most effective visual should create both emotional (persuasive) and rational (argumentation) argument that strike a responsible chord with audiences (Wekesa, 2005; Schwartz, 1973). The emotional aspect of visuals will be discussed under emotional memory in this article. We now turn to the first context of visual argumentation: the visual context.

Visual context

Cartoons are only meaningful to those who understand the large discourse within which they are constructed and read. This discourse includes a visual language of signs, conventions and rhetorical devices used to convey and interpret meanings. According to Hou and Hou (1998), rhetorical devices include caricature, portraiture, analogy, color, background, and so on. Due to lack of space, we only discuss the first three of the devices, showing how they serve as tools of argumentation.

Caricature and portraiture

A caricature is a picture or other representation that exaggerates the particular physical features, dress or mannerisms of an individual to produce a ludicrous effect. Caricature is commonly used to ridicule political, social or religious situations and institutions, or actions by various groups or classes of a society. Such type of caricature is usually done with satirical rather than humorous intent in order to encourage political or social change. According to Press (1981), caricature is employed to make social commentary beyond the boundaries of the written word. The theme of ritual humiliation of leaders is common in caricature. Ridicule and humiliation of powerful leaders have been persistent features of political cartoons since the 18th century (Morris, 1994). As Press (1981) puts it, 'a political cartoon is worth looking at just because it is enjoyable to stick pins into fools and villains or to watch others do it' (p. 11). Caricature is employed in the following cartoons that form the corpus of this article.

Analysis of cartoon 1. In the cartoon by Kirore Mwaura in Figure 1, the two presidential aspirants, Mr Mwai Kibaki and Mr Raila Odinga, are caricatured and subjected to humiliation and shame, perhaps in view of what they are doing vis-a-vis the nation's situation. Their humiliation is deeply rooted in guilt and overindulgence in the eyes of the nation's suffering. Mr Kibaki, for instance, is depicted as a hardliner who, even after losing the election, wants to hang on to the leadership. Demonstratively, this is seen in his being in

Figure 1. Cartoon 1.

possession of the ball (presidency) and trying to obstruct Mr Odinga from reaching it. Mr Raila, on the other hand, is also ridiculed for his attempting to grab the ball. This is clearly seen in the gestures of his hands. One wonders why such respectable and honorable figures, as can be seen in visual modes of dressing, should ignore people's suffering and fight over a ragged ball. If it were in speech, the rhetor's ethos would include visual aspects such as appearance and manner of delivery. In visual arguments, the rhetor's ethos sometimes may be inferred from the visual work itself or from the rhetor's oeuvre. The visual modalities of the two leaders imply their status and power, hence one would expect them to adopt a rational way of handling a crisis, yet they chose to do it the ugly way. This demeans them as honorable leaders.

One would still see another form of ridicule in the visual. They have been foregrounded, or rather overly positioned, in the ongoing chaos. This implies that they are directly responsible for what is going on. One could still interpret it differently, that is, the positioning of the two figures may also imply that they are not concerned at all with what is happening around them. The power of option in visual metaphors can generate varying interpretations of the image in question.

Analysis of cartoon 2. In the cartoon in Figure 2, there are three caricatures: Mr Kibaki, Mr Odinga and Mr Koffi Anan. The two presidential figures have their heads exaggerated in size perhaps as a form of ridicule to their hardliner attitudes. Their sitting posture implies how indifferent they are and unwilling for dialogue. The caricature of Mr Koffi Anan is symbolized by Cupid, the Roman god of love. The cupid is shown as a baby boy with wings and a bow and arrow. Mr Anan symbolizes peace and reconciliation. This is after Mr Kibaki and Mr Odinga failed to reach an agreement over the disputed election results. One can also see other visual modalities in the cartoon such as a looming heavy

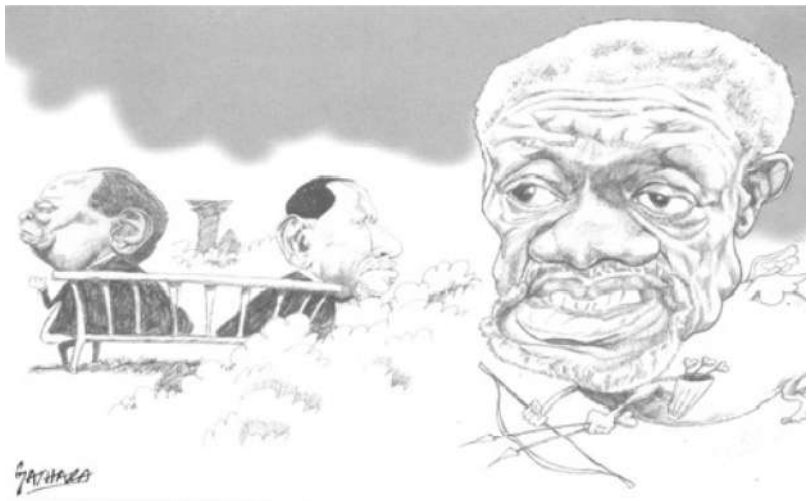

Figure 2. Cartoon 2.

dark cloud, a sign of an impending heavy downpour. The heavy rain implies the chaos that resulted in the massive loss of life.

Analysis of cartoon 3. The cartoon in Figure 3 by Alex Kirui employs the caricature of Mr Kibaki and Mr Raila fighting over the steering wheel (implying leadership) of a passenger service vehicle that operates on route 254. The vehicle symbolizes a nation that accommodates all citizens. A keen look at the passengers, however, is shocking as they are represented by human skulls. This implies that many people have lost their lives during the stalemate. The two leaders again are ridiculed for fighting over the steering wheel of a vehicle full of human skulls instead of live passengers. They seem unperturbed by the loss of human life. They are only interested in the presidency and therefore one wonders who they would lead if almost all the passengers have lost their lives. Mr Kibaki shares the biggest share of ridicule for being behind the leadership of a nation full of corruption, tribalism and ethnicity as can be seen in the label. Mr Odinga is not spared the ridicule for attempting to use force to gain the leadership and forgetting how they were endangering the lives of passengers and themselves. This cartoon employs many more rhetorical devices such as color. Red symbolizes bloodshed. The crude weapons, spear and panga, are stained with blood. The colors for the two political parties PNU and ODM are also employed to show power play. The vehicle is green in color to symbolize that the ruling party was the PNU led by Mr Kibaki. He is also identified by his golf stick which can be seen tucked behind his seat. A member of the PNU, as seen in the color of the shirt, is seen as a passenger brandishing a panga stained with blood. Mr Odinga is dressed in orange, the color of the ODM party. He holds a hammer, which was a symbol of the ODM at some point in time. The vehicle seems to be traveling at high speed. Labeling and color are employed here to enhance the power of argumentation in the visual.

Figure 3. Cartoon 3.

Analysis of cartoon 4. The cartoon in Figure 4 by Maish is another good example of a visual-only cartoon that caricaturizes the two political leaders. They are fighting over a steering wheel of a luxurious car whose number plate is labeled 'KENYA'. We also see caricatures of a woman and a boy dashing off the road for their safety. The woman and the young boy look stern shocked at what they are seeing. They represent the citizens' shock at their leaders and also the vulnerability of women and children whenever there is civil strife in the country. The two leaders again are subjected to humiliation because of their overindulgence. They don't care how they are endangering the lives of the people in their nation and their own. The type of vehicle has more to communicate than meets the eye. One would be right to see it as a reflection of the leaders' perception of the leadership position in most developing countries. Most of them see their positions cozy and luxurious. This is implied in the depiction of the luxurious car though it looks dilapidated due to careless driving. Once in power, most leaders forget all about the electorate's suffering and woes. When the street lights and the head lamps of the vehicle are spoilt and hanging loosely, it refers to society and the vehicle can't turn on the lights. When there is lack of light, everything is reduced to a dependent object as is the moon to the sun. Perhaps that is what Kenya as a country had turned to, economically and politically. Kenya was unable to end the stalemate over the election results until mediators had to come in to alleviate the situation. Of note here again is that Mr Kibaki who had so carelessly driven the car (country) to such a pathetic condition bares the biggest share of the blame.

From the above analyses, one can see how caricature employs ritual humiliation to those who are deemed villains in society. All the cartoons were able to front a proposition that the overindulgence and hardliner attitude of the two political leaders was the cause of the poll chaos that rocked the country.

Figure 4. Cartoon 4.

Portraiture

The blending of caricature and portraiture is a skill worthy of noting in the cartoons, especially in the cartoon in Figure 1. Portraiture is a visual representation of individual people, distinguished by references to the subject's character, social position, wealth or profession. Portraiture often strives for exact visual likeness, although the viewer's correct identification of the sitter is of primary importance. The rhetor may intentionally alter the appearance of their subjects by embellishing or refining their images to emphasize or minimize particular qualities such as the physical or social side of the subject. The portraits employed here capture the subjects in the activities. For instance, the cartoon in Figure 1 uses the portraits of Mr Kibaki and Mr Odinga. Their heads are exact representation of the images of the two leaders. This enables the reader to identify the persons much more easily. The rhetor also employs background and caricatures of the fighting citizens to provide information about the two leaders' characters or places in society. Portraiture mostly conveys status and acknowledges power, wealth and patronage. In the cartoon in Figure 2, the portrait of Mr Anan's head is employed. These portraitures are all subjects of their own class and power. Portraiture is one powerful rhetorical tool in visual argumentation. It is precise in capturing the image of the person(s) in question, like a short and clear sentence whose meaning is not convoluted.

Visuals have meaning and therefore have several signifiers working together in a code to achieve the intended meaning. The signifiers belong to different semiotic codes such as the garment system, the color system, the body language system, etc. The relations between a signifier and its meaning (the signified) may be iconic, that is, one of resemblance; indexical, that is, one of cause–effect; or symbolic. The cartoons analyzed seem to employ all three relations. This is discussed in the next section. Visuals exhibit all these semio-pragma-linguistic features. This is expressed in the order of the signifiers,

what Shelley (1996) calls demonstrative modes. The positioning of the subjects to one another is an implication of the syntagmatic relation and paradigmatic relation. One could get a relation of both similarity and of contrast in the visuals. For instance, the viewer can see both leaders as overindulging and as hardliners, both fighting over the presidency, but at the same time one can see a contrast in their behavior towards society's expectations and the national interest. This implies syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations respectively.

Analogy

This article tries to explain how analogy works to encourage and constrain meaning and also explains some of the accompanying issues of social inclusion or exclusion in analogy. Analogy is a form of comparison of two things which are similar. Most rhetors use images or events that are common and familiar to the viewer to depict a more abstract phenomenon. Visual analogies animate thoughts and emotions in cartoons (Burack, 1994). Analogies consist of simplified situations, characters and objects designed to represent more complex issues. Rather than making a literal statement about an issue, the rhetor likens it to something else, and through this comparison invites interpretation. The interpretation of meaning arises as each viewer sees a comparison between the portrayed scene and the larger issue or frame.

According to Werner (2004), analogies make use of three sources, namely: a) mundane situations and everyday objects that most viewers have experienced; b) contemporary popular culture such as national sports with which viewers have some acquaintance; c) historical events and personages and past literary and aesthetic texts that many viewers recognize.

Analysis. The cartoons employ known and popular cultural activities: soccer (cartoon 1) and driving, or more precisely, safari rally driving, a very popular pastime event in Kenyan history (cartoons 3 and 4). A popular metaphor in the Kenyan politics is *politics is a dirty game.* Soccer has become a popular game not only in Kenya but the world over. Most politicians in Kenya, particularly Mr Odinga, like using the analogy of soccer in their political discourse. This could possibly be the motivation behind the use of this analogy. However, of note, soccer has rules and any player who does not abide by the rules of the game is penalized. Second, soccer is always rocked with emotions, especially among the ardent fans. If the rules of the game were applied in reference to the cartoons analyzed, then the players in cartoon 1 are to be penalized, first, for not putting on the right attire. Stylistically, this rule was flouted to show that this is not really a soccer match but an analogy of what happens in the political arena. In addition, Mr Kibaki would be penalized for obstructing the opponent player, Mr Odinga, from reaching the ball. Again it defeats logic to see the players racing after a ragged or fiery ball. One would still say the fans are enraged by the unfair play going on. This could be the reason why they resorted to violence. This analogy is quite effective and precise in that it only captures the two key players in the hotly contested presidential elections and as the ball (the presidency) seems to be fiery. Then it can easily be associated with the poll chaos going on in the background.

In cartoon 2, Mr Koffi Anan is analogized as Cupid, a god of love. This again reminds us of the role that he played in mediating between the two warring parties. As the Cupid portrayal suggests, his mediation resulted in a political marriage dubbed 'Coalition Government' which is still in place to date.

In cartoon 3 the analogy of a public service vehicle (PSV) as commonly known in the Kenyan context is employed. The color of the yellow strip and the label of the route depict this. However, the names of destinations, the number plate tag and the driver allude to politics. One, therefore, compares leadership of the nation to driving a passenger vehicle. The PSVs still have regulations to be followed. For instance, the driver is not supposed to over-speed because the vehicle carries human life. Second, nobody, whether it is the driver or the passengers on board, is allowed to carry dangerous weapons like a spear, a hammer or a panga on the vehicle. Third, it is absurd to see two drivers attempting to drive the same vehicle at the same time. This tells the reader that though it is a mere analogy it has a lot of implied meaning regarding what culminated after the polls in Kenya. The driver of the vehicle was liable for imprisonment for committing a traffic offence. The attacker of the driver is also acting not only against the law of the land but also against the traffic rules and for endangering the lives of passengers as well as his own. It resembles an attempted suicide.

In cartoon 4 the same impression is created. The analogy of a safari rally competition is depicted here. The traffic rules are again flouted and so the driver and the attacker would be liable for imprisonment. There is implied damage to public property – the street lights – and endangering of the lives of innocent road users – the citizens. The destruction of street lights will in turn encourage crime and deny people peace and freedom. There is one related imagery to the light: the headlamps of the car are damaged and hanging loosely. This as explained earlier has a strong implied meaning to the nation.

Although there are numerous strategies for constructing analogies from the simplest to the complex (Walker and Chaplin, 1997; Werner, 2003), insightful interpretation of these strategies is only possible if a viewer recognizes the analogy and is able to think with it. This lies in the power of metaphors discussed above. The correct interpretation of visuals depends on the viewer's cultural memory.

Cultural memory

Cultural memory refers to the store of background knowledge that one calls upon when interpreting the everyday commonsense world (Werner, 2004). Cartoons are part of that mundane world as long as viewers share four areas of understanding as illustrated below:

a) most obvious is the contextual knowledge of what the cartoonist is commenting upon, whether an immediate social problem or a specific news item;
b) there is the knowledge of how the cartoon works, including its visual language of signs and other rhetorical devices;
c) allusions to historical events and personage or to past cultural texts are only successful as the viewer is able to access the illusionary base from which the analogies are drawn;
d) there is some understanding of the broader discourse itself that distinguishes one cartoon, for example, an editorial cartoon from a gag cartoon.

Lack of any aspect of this assumed memory might render an image opaque. Difficulty in cartoon interpretation arises from lack of shared schemata. The cartoons that inform this article are all based on the post-election violence that rocked Kenya; therefore, anybody who witnessed this will find it easy to make correct interpretations of the cartoons. Most of the weapons commonly used among different cultural groups are well depicted in the cartoons. For instance, a mention of bows and arrows, quickly tells you that these are weapons common among the Kalenjin culture. This matches up very well in the same cartoon with the image of a church on fire, an incident which happened in Kiambaa, in Eldoret, in the Rift Valley County in Kenya, a county largely occupied by the Kalenjin ethnic group. The image of a panga used in cartoon 3 and the inscriptions on the vehicle imply the city of Nairobi and also create a mental picture of the Mungiki sect which is known for beheading non-committals. The terror group is widespread in central Kenya, Nairobi and part of the Rift Valley.

It is also noted that cartoons aspire for immediacy. They, like news reports, must be newsworthy. Cartoons inspired by now-obscure situations are difficult to analyze because imagery and symbols presented may not still be familiar for the viewers. While the memory of what happened is still fresh, and with cultural knowledge, the reader of visuals is able to assign meaning and character traits to the persons involved in the visual frame.

Emotional memory

As noted elsewhere in this article, cartoons do not only appeal to logic but also to emotions. Cartoons depict caricature that appeals to readers' embodied emotional memories. In verbal argumentation, the choice of loaded words will appeal to the reader's emotions. The depiction of images through the exaggeration of their features is meant to touch the viewer's emotions and feelings. The suffering of the people and the indiscriminate killing of innocent citizens in cartoon 1 evokes feelings of fear, pity and regret. The cartoons in general capture the swings in the national mood. Cartoons in Figures 3 and 4 explicitly tell of the disappointment in the people about the then leadership. The label on the PSV in cartoon 3 expresses the people's feelings. They are tired of the corruption, tribalism and ethnicity that characterize the then government and they wish to have a change in leadership as is seen in the signpost leading to or inscribed *prosperity*. The people's feelings are vividly expressed through the ritual humiliation and stern ridicule of the then president who is not willing to relinquish leadership.

A close analysis of the cartoons reveals the themes of shame, indulgence, fear and death as prominently part of the emotional symbolism or memory. This confirms the fact that emotional symbolism gives political cartoons much of their importance. The hardliner attitude of the two leaders plunges the nation into anarchy and the abyss. It is the interplay between logic and emotion that pushes one to take action, such as becoming violent or brutal. When the viewers share the rhetor's feelings, it confirms the important role of cartoons in communicating mass conscience. Indeed, visuals are able to penetrate the conscience of the masses, depicting their inner fears and feelings and reflecting their emotional reactions by displaying the end-result of their disappointment: violence and arson.

Conclusion

From the analysis, this article demonstrates the fact that visuals have the power and ability to argue even more simply and forcefully than their verbal counterparts as they employ the literary techniques in such a way that premises on social, economic, political issues are elicited and debated. They become even more explicit by blending caricature and portraiture. It can be noted that the three tropes, portraiture, caricature and analogy, are different aspects of cartoons that are closely related. Portraiture denotes the characters, so that we can recognize who they are; caricature ridicules them; and analogy attributes actions to them in a humorous way. Cultural memory is needed to access the references for the analogies. It is, however, unrealistic to define cartoons in terms of humor since all the analyzed cartoons seem to be addressing serious sociopolitical issues rather than merely to entertain. They are designed to make the viewer think not only about the event or the people being portrayed but also about the message the rhetor is trying to communicate. One can also see that the cartoons convey some truth through the visual, demonstrating a mood around the problem in question: post-election violence. They utilize pre-existing symbolism, a visual analogy, to make their point. Readers of these cartoons are provided with an ethical-political opinion that may or may not be attractive to them. Cartoons, therefore, have an ethical imperative which lifts mere journalism into transcending art. Their method of affecting public opinion for the better course of human events qualifies them to make statements in pictures that would be considered false and too sensitive if they were verbal statements or in print. This means visuals have the ability to stretch the truth beyond caricature that obscures truth in the world of cartoons.

It is hoped that this article will encourage academic research into the medium of cartoons and comics as a serious and powerful tool of communication that provides mechanisms not available in the realm of entertainment and into the richer realm of critical public discourse, especially in Africa.

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