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BOOK REVIEWS


Christian missionaries have a long history in Zimbabwe, some of them, such as Gonçalo da Silveira and Robert Moffat, having lived and worked in the country long before the country became a British colony in 1890. Colonial occupation opened the door for greater missionary involvement in the life and society of the indigenous people of the country. Indeed, throughout the colonial period to 1980, Christian missionaries established numerous mission stations and schools and converted thousands of Africans to Christianity. For much of this period, the major denominations represented in the country were the well-known traditional ones, such as the Anglicans, Roman Catholics, and Methodists, among others.

In the past two decades, however, Zimbabwe has seen an explosion of churches or denominations going under a confusing variety of names, such as the New Life Centre, the Faith World Ministries, the Rhema Church, the House of Prayer Ministries, and the King’s Church, among many others. Indeed, according to Verstraelen, there were no less than 220 different denominations in the country by the mid-1980s, clustered in four main groupings under the Zimbabwe Christian Council (ZCC), the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops’ Conference (ZCBC), and the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ), and what Verstraelen refers to as the New Religious Movements (NRMs). It is this confusing proliferation of Christian churches that Zimbabwean Realities and Christian Responses analyses and documents in its eight chapters, which are grouped in three parts.

Chapter 1, entitled “Diversity of the Christian Presence” lays the foundation for the book’s subsequent documentation and analysis of Christian Churches in Zimbabwe by providing a detailed audit of the varieties of Christian churches in the country and the umbrella organisations which represent them. Among the umbrella organisations are the ZCC, ZCBC, EFZ, and NRMs. The ZCC, the biggest of the groupings, boasts a membership of twenty churches, “seventeen of which belong to Protestant ‘established’ churches”, while three belong to “African Independent Churches”. In its turn, the ZCBC, an all-Catholic organisation, comprises member groups that represent the diverse constituencies of the Catholic Church, such as the Zimbabwean Association of Diocesan Clergy, the National Council of Priests, the Conference of Major Religious Superiors of Men, and the Conference of Major Superiors of Women. Meanwhile, the EFZ, “a fellowship of church-related organisations and...
individuals . . . of evangelical persuasion", has a total membership of 86 churches and groups, including the Assemblies of God, Africa, Brethren in Christ Church, United Apostolic Faith Church, Living Bible International, and Youth with a Mission, Zimbabwe, among others.

Lastly, mostly of American origin and espousing a fundamentalist religious theology and openly antagonistic to older established churches, NRMs exploded on the Zimbabwean religious scene since the early 1980s. They include the Jimmy Swaggart Ministries, World Vision International, Rhema Bible Church, also known as "Hearing the Word" church, and the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International. While, sometimes, African Independent Churches are classified under the NRMs category, Verstraelen points out that the main difference between the two is that African independent Churches "sprouted through African initiative", while the "New Movements have been imported from abroad with a pre-packaged mission and message". Moreover, as Verstraelen points out, these New Movements, "with their strong foreign orientation and foreign control, represent a rather neo-colonial type of mission which seems to be anachronistic in the post-Independence era in Africa", yet paradoxically, they seem to appeal to "a good number of people who feel insecure in the context of socio-economic and cultural changes taking place in the country".

Chapter 2 and 3 explore the visions and programmes of the various Christian groups and their inter-group relationships, respectively, while Chapter 4 analyses how Christian Churches have addressed "the issue of [the Zimbabwean people's] socio-economic context and . . . culture" in the context of a deteriorating economic environment in the 1990s, the growing controversy over the issue of homosexuality in Zimbabwean society, the role of African traditional religion and religious practices, witchcraft, and sexuality, marriage and the family.

Part II, containing Chapter 5, focuses on "Church-State Relations in Pre- and Post-Independent Zimbabwe", beginning with an in-depth analysis of the tensions between Church and State in Africa, followed by an examination of "some general principles and practices of Church involvement in politics", and concluding with a description and evaluation of "Church-State relations in Zimbabwe, from historical and missio-theological points of view". The Chapter ends with a very insightful observation that, in Zimbabwe, Churches have not always lived up to their ideals, which are "to exercise, when needed, a prophetic mission of denouncing policies of injustices supported by governments and standing up for the poor or marginalised in society, even at the risk of being persecuted". In Zimbabwe, past and present, "instead of taking a prophetic stance, . . . several church leaders and/or church members chose to remain neutral, or were co-opted, or accepted unworthy compromises,
or tried to mediate between ‘good and evil’ when they should have taken sides”.

Under the heading “Missio-theological Reflections from Zimbabwe”, Part III examines three issues in three separate chapters as follows: Chapter 6 discusses how Africans in general and Zimbabweans in particular have appropriated and interpreted the Bible to speak to their everyday lives and their society. Chapter 7 focuses on questions of socio-economic justice, particularly with respect to the land question in the context of traditional and Christian mores and concerns for the environment, while Chapter 8 analyses “how religious studies are conducted in the major institution of higher learning in Zimbabwe, the University of Zimbabwe”, focusing particularly on dissertations and theses produced in the Department of Religious Studies, Classics and Philosophy in recent years and their relevance to Zimbabwean society. Finally, in the “Postscript”, which concludes the study, Verstraelen traces recent developments in Zimbabwe’s socio-political experience and celebrates the rise and growth of civic society movements and organisations, and the increasing engagement of the churches in civil rights and justice issues. It concludes with the encouraging message that:

There are also joys and hopes as regards people and churches in Zimbabwe, notwithstanding the problems and obstacles hindering the church’s effective response to these problems. But problems can be solved and obstacles removed (p. 136).

At this point in Zimbabwe’s history when the country is faced with seemingly insurmountable political, economic, and social problems, this is a timely message of hope which suggests that the traditional Zimbabwean people’s good sense will prevail so that all the people in the country will live in harmony and prosperity.

_Zimbabwean Realities and Christian Responses_ is an insightful, informative, and well-researched book which contains a wealth of information on Christian churches in Zimbabwe, their programmes and missions, the historical, political, and cultural context in which they work and the constraints under which they operate. It is highly recommended to all members of various Christian churches in Zimbabwe, students of Zimbabwe’s religious, political, and cultural history and policymakers.

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Kaplan’s (1966) work suggested that Anglo-European expository essays follow a linear development. In contrast, paragraph development in Semitic languages is based on a series of parallel coordinate clauses. Essays written in Oriental languages use an indirect approach and come to the point only at the end. In Romance languages and in Russian, essays are permitted a degree of digressiveness and extraneous material that would seem excessive to a writer of English.¹

From the above quotation, it can be deduced that language and writing are expressions of, and are themselves influenced by the particular culture of a given society. Given this fact, there is bound to be mother tongue interference when non-native speakers learn to write in a foreign language such as English. This is the main theme of Thondhlana’s book, Contrastive Rhetoric in Shona and English Argumentative Essays. Contrastive rhetoric (CR) is used in the book as a way of studying language that looks at textual products of language learners, both in the first or source language, as well as in the second or target language (p. xii). This is in addition to the other sense of rhetoric as an art of persuasive communication.

Chapter 1 of the book lays the foundation of the study by providing a concise socio-linguistic background of the language situation in Zimbabwe. It discusses issues of bilingualism and the absence of a language policy in Zimbabwe, among others, pointing out the urgent need for the country to develop a coherent and meaningful language policy in order to redress the problems inherited from the colonial era. In Chapter 2, Thondhlana traces the origin and development of CR, taking the reader back to 1966 when American applied linguist Robert Kaplan initiated the contrastive rhetoric model to explain pedagogical problems encountered in the writing of English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL), while Chapter 3 explains the research methods used in collecting data for the book. In their turn, Chapters 5 and 6 focus on the book’s analytical approaches, which are described as “argument structure analysis and the persuasive appeals analysis”. Chapter 7 sums up the findings of the study.

Using data collected from O-level argumentative compositions, the author clearly demonstrates that Shona-speaking students of English as a second language (ESL) transfer rhetorical patterns that are appropriate

in Shona but which are considered inappropriate in English. The author attributes the transfer of rhetorical patterns from Shona to English to the influence of Shona culture and argues that the problem of rhetorical transfer cuts across all education levels in Zimbabwe. To demonstrate this point, she quotes from the O-level English Language examiners' report for the 1990 Examination, which documents awkward and ridiculous expressions used by students which arose out of literal translations of various expressions from Shona to English. Examples include: “the rain was raining hard” an English rendition of Shona’s *Mvura yainaya chaizvo*; “he rang a phone” from *Akaridza runhare*, and “the money was eaten by the headmaster” from *Mari yakadyiwa nahedhimasita* (p. xiii). Although the levels of rhetorical transfer differ from level to level, college and university students, like school pupils, are also susceptible to problems of rhetorical transfer. On the basis of this finding and from her own wide experience as a teacher of both Shona and English, Tondhlana has produced a book, which is not only lucid and insightful but which also makes a very welcome and important contribution to the field of Applied Linguistics.

*Contrastive Rhetoric in Shona and English Argumentative Essays* is a well-written, well-packaged and professionally-edited book, which is highly recommended to English teachers at all levels, student teachers, lecturers, language and education policy makers, and all those involved with rhetoric as persuasive communication.

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Although labour and labour movements have long played an important role in the political and economic history of Zimbabwe, as demonstrated by the Shamva Mine Strike of 1928, the ICU, the 1945 and 1948 strikes and the involvement of labour activists in the birth and development of Zimbabwe’s nationalist struggle against colonialism, they have not always been accorded the importance they deserve in Zimbabwean historiography and have, especially in the post-independence retelling of the country’s accounts of the struggle for independence, been relegated to the margins of history. In their 1997 publication, *Keep on Knocking: A History of the Labour Movement in Zimbabwe, 1900-97*, Brian Raftopoulos and Ian Phimister demonstrated that, not only does the labour movement have a rich history of organisation, mobilisation, and agitation for better
working conditions in colonial Rhodesia, but it also played a central and important role in the anti-colonial struggle.

The marginalisation of labour’s contribution to the struggle for justice in Zimbabwe was the result of a number of factors; not least the fact that the locus of the nationalist struggle from the 1960s onwards shifted from the urban areas, where it had first taken root and grown, to the rural areas of Zimbabwe, where the armed struggle was, mostly, located. Labour’s continued marginalisation after independence in 1980 was due to the fact that, for most of the early post-colonial years, labour was, essentially, an arm of the ruling party. Its agenda was, thus, generally set by the government whose overriding concern was to ensure that workers remained loyal to the socialist, nationalist, one-party project that the government then subscribed to. Thus, the Zimbabwe Confederation of Trade Unions (ZCTU) had little room to act independently of the government and the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF).

From the late 1980s onwards, however, the ZANU-PF/labour alliance began to unravel, as labour became increasingly more assertive and critical of the government, particularly in the years of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) and the Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation (ZIMPREST) in the 1990s. The chasm widened with the worsening economic situation as the decade unfolded, resulting in increasing incidents of direct confrontation between the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions and the government, while labour progressively allied itself with several civic groups which were increasingly becoming dissatisfied with the way the country was being run, culminating in the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999. Striking Back: The Labour Movement and the Post-Colonial State in Zimbabwe 1980-2000 documents and analyses these developments in the labour movement and what role it has played in the economic and political life of post-colonial Zimbabwe. This is a particularly timely and topical issue given the critical roles that labour movements, such as the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), have played in bringing about political change in Zambia and South Africa, respectively.

The book is organised into ten chapters, each dealing with a specific aspect of the history and experience of the labour movement and workers in Zimbabwe. Raftopoulos sets the foundation for subsequent discussion in Chapter 1 by providing a historical analysis of the post-colonial labour movement and the rise of opposition politics in Zimbabwe. He traces how colonial restrictions and the “ruralisation” of the nationalist anti-colonial struggle in the late colonial period resulted in a relatively weak labour movement at independence in 1980; how in the 1980s, labour was relegated
to the status of a supporting act to the ruling party, and how, eventually, it freed itself from the clutches of the state and found its own separate voice. Raftopoulos proceeds to show how labour increasingly established alliances with other groups that were critical of government policies in order to establish the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and how this created new tensions in Zimbabwean society and led government to resort to what Raftopoulos calls a “radical rhetoric for repressive politics”.

The strength of Chapter 1 lies not only in the comprehensive historical analysis of the labour movement in the Zimbabwean context that it so ably provides, but also in the fact that it is able to situate the discussion in the broader global context in which neo-liberal economic prescriptions both challenge the strategies and rhetoric and limits the operational scope of labour movements in Southern Africa.

Chapters 2 and 3 by Patrick Bond and Paris Yeros, respectively, take the issues raised in Raftopoulos in the first chapter further by analysing the problems facing the ZCTU and MDC as they are compelled by the need to appear respectable in a world of neo-liberalism by adopting both the rhetoric and the economic practices emanating from the West in the post-Cold War era. Thus, Yeros observes critically that the ZCTU has shed some of its earlier radical rhetoric and has adopted “a more ‘legitimate’ social democratic vision” in line with Western-based international labour movements. In Chapter 4, Sachikonye traces the organisational changes that the labour movement has already undergone and the organisational and developmental challenges that face it in the future. Challenges include “the need for greater self-sufficiency in financial resources, building up the capacity of union affiliates, and gender equity in union structures”. The legal framework governing labour activities are expertly documented and analysed by Lovemore Madhuku, while the history of labour’s use of the strike weapon since 1980 is the focus of Richard Saunders’ contribution in Chapters 5 and 6, respectively.

Following up the issue raised in Sachikonye’s chapter relating to the need for trade unions to strive for gender equity, the next chapter by Naira Khan and Niki Jadowska explores the theme of “Women, Workers and Discrimination in Zimbabwe”. Pointing out that, although women “constitute a significant proportion of the workforce in the commercial agriculture, agro-processing, textile and service sectors, they are under-represented in union structures and workers committees”, the authors attribute this to the persistence of “patriarchal attitudes” in Zimbabwean society in general and in workers’ movements in particular. This accounts for the fact that women continue to hold poorly paid low-skill jobs and to be subjected to sexual harassment in the workplace.

Chapters 8 and 9, by Blair Rutherford and Yash Tandon respectively, focus on workers in the agricultural sector, showing that these workers
remained some of the most exploited and under-represented workers in post-colonial Zimbabwe. Meanwhile, the farm invasions that began in 2000 further marginalised and brutalised farm workers, as they were beaten up, driven off the occupied farms, and excluded from the controversial land distribution exercise. Lastly, in Chapter 10, Suzanne Dansereau traces the experiences of mine workers in Zimbabwe since 1980 and demonstrates that, while mine workers recorded some significant gains in the post-colonial period, they continue to earn meagre wages.

*Striking Back* is, unquestionably, one of the most significant books on labour struggles and labour history in Zimbabwe in recent years, which taps on the expertise of various scholars, who are specialists in their fields who have already made their mark as respected scholars of Zimbabwe’s social and economic history. Of particular note are Patrick Bond, Brian Raftopoulos, Blair Rutherford, and Yash Tandon whose works on Zimbabwe’s socio-political and economic experience have contributed much to Zimbabwean historiography and socio-political analysis. Not surprisingly, therefore, the individual contributions to the book are well-researched, well-supported, and well-written pieces that are as informative as they are enjoyable to read.

The one chapter that could have been improved is the chapter on women workers whose organisation and coverage could have been handled differently. Because it is, in the words of the authors, a “thumbnail sketch”, it does not provide the type of authoritative and insightful detail on the situation of women in Zimbabwe that would have been possible with solid on-the-ground research. In addition, the chapter is weakened by the fact that it attempts to cover too much ground by examining three distinct topics, each of which would sustain an entire paper on its own, in one chapter. The three areas are “the general overview of the current situation facing women workers in Zimbabwe”; “the effect sexual harassment in the work place has on women’s development” and the “gender sensitivity of labour laws”. Arguably, more original research and greater focus would have improved the chapter considerably.

This weakness notwithstanding, *Striking Back* is an invaluable contribution to Zimbabwean historiography in general and labour history in particular. The contributors, editors, and publishers are to be congratulated for producing such a well-packaged and professionally edited book. The book is highly recommended to local and international workers and labour activists who are interested in understanding the history of the struggle of labour in Zimbabwe, policy makers, students of labour history, scholars of Zimbabwean history, university students, particularly in the humanities and social sciences, NGOs working with labour movements and labour-related issues, and anyone who has an interest in understanding the forces that have helped shape Zimbabwe’s
historical experience and current developments in the country. In conclusion, it is highly recommended that, if possible, Striking Back should share a deserved position on one's bookshelf with two other books, which, together with it, form a very useful trilogy of studies on labour struggles in Zimbabwe. These are: Brian Raftopoulos and Ian Phimister, Keep on Knocking: A History of the Labour Movement in Zimbabwe (Harare, Weaver Press, 1997), and Brian Raftopoulos and Tsuneo Yoshikuni, Sites of Struggles: Essays in Zimbabwe's Urban History (Harare, Weaver Press, 1999).

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