term 'ontology' simply with the word 'conception' without making any difference to the force of the argument.

A more serious problem is that this appeal to 'ontology' is part of a broader tendency towards a totalising and functionalist analysis. Although she often acknowledges that the truth regimes she describes are contested, her analysis leaves little real space for social agency and comes very close, time and time again, to suggesting that the discourse of land governance is *inherently* geared towards the interests of corporates and big capital; that the language of 'rights' and of good governance is characterised by an ineluctable internal neoliberal rationality, a 'logic' that *inevitably* imposes certain political agendas or outcomes. The sweeping generalisations of World Bank discourse are replaced with an equally sweeping narrative: a static confrontation between two completely distinct and incommensurable ontologies.

This does not help us to get a grip on the considerable empirical complexity of the contests around land as they unfold in particular historically and socially delimited contexts. Clearly, changing land governance produces winners and losers. But how this happens is not the simple outcome of an underlying 'logic.' Rather, political analysis requires a concrete investigation that explores the specificity of gendered realities of power and vulnerability, advantage and disadvantage, as emergent and located realities in a complex field of play. That this field of play is tilted, is self-evident. But the sources of that imbalance of power do not lie in ontology, however conceptualised. German's analysis ignores the contingency of the ways in which specific shifts and changes are achieved in actual struggles. Instead of focusing on historically located social agents and their particular agendas (which are never those of 'capital' in the abstract, but always specific and local) she produces a reading in which corporate interests and neoliberal agendas are always-already successful. And the people they impact are understood in essentialist terms, as 'communities' destined at best to 'prosper in place,' outside of history and time.

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Mugabe's Legacy: coups, conspiracies, and the conceits of power in Zimbabwe

by David B. Moore London: Hurst, 2023. Pp. 304. £22 (pb). ISBN: 9781787387713.

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When General Constantino Chiwenga announced the reason for the November 2017 coup in Zimbabwe, he defined the role of the military as 'in defense of the

gains of the liberation struggle'. Chiwenga further said that 'our revolution is "being hijacked by agents of our erstwhile enemies who are now at the brink of returning our country to foreign domination"' (p. 178). David B. Moore has given readers a valuable analysis of the machinations, the doublespeak and the much longer historical context needed to understand what happened to Mugabe, the man, and his legacy. The key meaning of the book is reflected in Chiwenga's reference to history, to the liberation struggle of the 1970s that brought Mugabe and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) to power. Moore provides the necessary context needed to understand why, some 37 years of independence and ZANU-PF rule, it was still possible for Chiwenga to claim the military was defending 'our revolution' from 'our erstwhile enemies' by removing Robert Mugabe from office. Moore shows how the coup by the generals was forced into action through the attempt by Robert Mugabe's wife, Grace Mugabe, alongside the 'G40' faction in ZANU-PF – in reference to their Generation 40's comparative youthfulness – to take control of the ruling party. The generals succeeded through the coup in securing their control of the party, and the access to vast resources that goes with it. The old guard, including current President Emmerson Mnangagwa, outmanoeuvred a 'younger' generation who had impatiently tried to move against the liberation war generation.

What makes Moore's book much more than simply a narrative of the coup and its setting is his deep engagement with the history of ZANU and with the attempts since the 1990s of the oppositional Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) to try and overturn Mugabe's hold on power through the ballot box. Both phases, as Moore details, represent a long and violent road in terms of violence against 'sell-outs' and rivals during the liberation war, and then again after Independence, with the details given of the deaths, tortures and silencing of the opposition. Moore contrasts ZANU's legacy with that of the Zimbabwe People's Army (ZIPA), a movement led by then young radical leaders who controlled the liberation forces briefly in the mid-1970s, only to end up imprisoned in Mozambique for the duration of the war. Making use of extensive archival research and interviews, Moore shows how the more radical voices in ZANU were silenced, while the British and Americans focused their Cold War preferences around Robert Mugabe and his movement. Mugabe's main rival, Joshua Nkomo, was seen as too close to the Soviets, and Mugabe was quite accommodating to gestures big and small from the British and Americans. The story of Sally Mugabe's (Robert Mugabe's first wife) attempts to remain in the UK in the early 1970s is particularly well told by Moore, who did interviews with Dennis Grennan, the British diplomat who helped Sally Mugabe at the time. Later, when Sally Mugabe needed medical treatments, the British again assisted. This may seem like a small gesture, but it is indicative of how Robert Mugabe played the Cold War well. His rhetoric was bombastically anti-Anglo-American, but his personal life was very anglophile and pro-American when needed.

Some of the best sections of this book deal with the dramatic political setting of the coup, when Grace Mugabe (Mugabe's second wife) decided she could lead the party. The details are outlandish, but important in terms of just how

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brazen Zimbabwean politics had become by 2017. This is where Moore is at his best, combining a journalistic flair for the outrageous with a scholar's attention to larger questions. I have had the good fortune of discussing Zimbabwean politics and history with Moore for more than two decades now, and I can say that there is much to gain here for scholars working on other African political landscapes, as Moore deconstructs theories of African development and authoritarian rule. He also paints a pessimistic portrait of the Zimbabwean political opposition. Moore's frustrations are on full display over the intellectual and scholarly debates around what has transpired over the last 40 years in Zimbabwe. Given this history, his cynicism would seem warranted.

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