

**CREATIVITY OR CONTROL? A STUDY OF SELECTED XHOSA RADIO  
PLAYS IN THE APARTHEID YEARS**

by

Khaya Michael Gqibitole

**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy in the Department of English – University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2011**

## **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis is my own work. It has not been submitted before for any degree at any other university. Where use has been made of the scholarship of other authors, they have been duly acknowledged in the text.

.....

Khaya Michael Gqibitole  
(942409924)

As the candidate's supervisor I hereby approve the submission of the thesis.

.....

Professor Cheryl Stobie  
(81221)

November 2011

## **Abstract**

Although radio drama is a very popular form of the media, it is largely neglected in scholarship. As a result of this, it has been pushed into the periphery of research, thereby diminishing its value in society at large. The present study attempts to unearth the importance and value of the genre and its role in society, particularly during the apartheid era in South Africa. In this regard, the splendid work done by, among others, K. Tomaselli, R. Teer-Tomaselli, R. Fardon and G. Furniss, L. Gunner, D.A. Spitulnik, D. Sibiya, M. Maphumulo, N.E. Makhosana, N. Satyo and M. Jadezweni is acknowledged and commendable. In my view, its 'omission' in scholarship does not mean that the genre played a minimal role in educating and enlightening society.

In the study I propose that radio drama was more constrained compared to other media genres, even though it was the most accessible. However, its accessibility had both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, it informed and entertained audiences, while on the other it could be and was used for propaganda purposes. It is generally this paradox that the study will probe. My premise is that radio was primarily used by the apartheid government to disseminate propaganda. In order to ensure that the audiences were not exposed to what was happening 'out there', programmes were created to present a falsehood about the country, thereby depriving audiences of reliable information.

It is not surprising, then, that there was some confrontation between the managers and playwrights at the Xhosa language radio station. While the managers tried to influence programmes to propagate government policy, playwrights used the same

communicative space to educate as well as to entertain the audience. The audience *actively* extracted information they needed from the plays. In other words, they played an active role in meaning-making. Throughout the study I will claim that there was a rapport between playwrights and the audience. Among other things, that relationship illustrated the role that the audience played in constituting the plays. Themes such as 'tradition' and 'romance' were used to connect the plays with the audiences' everyday lives. These themes were acceptable at the stations even though they could be manipulated to serve different purposes.

Some of the plays that I will examine in the study are *Buzani Kubawo* (1981), *Nakuba Intliziyo Ithatha Ibeka: Undoqo Sisibindi* (1987), *USomagqabi* (1986), *UHlohlesakhe* (1979), *UThuthula* (1970) and *Apho Sikhala Khona Isakhwatsha* (1981). These plays will be examined to, among other things, establish the nature of the relationship between the managers and playwrights. The study will contend that there was a contestation between managers and playwrights. I will also claim that some of the plays were based on real political and social issues that plagued the period in question. In this regard plays such as *Apho Sikhala Khona Isakhwatsha* will be used to demonstrate that some playwrights dealt with political issues.

I will also explore how women were represented in the plays. In this regard, I will argue that women were depicted as inferior to men. To illustrate this I will discuss plays such as *USomagqabi*, *Lunjalo ke Uthando* and others. I will also deal with the critical issue of the 'voice'. As a blind medium, radio relies on the voice and as such playwrights had to work hard to make their plays not only relevant but also believable to the audiences. The connection between the voice on radio and the ancestral voice

will be examined. Lastly, the study will suggest that radio plays are still relevant in the present dispensation even though they play a different role compared to the apartheid era.

## **Acknowledgements**

Warm thanks to my previous supervisor, Professor Liz Gunner, for her assistance and guidance. I particularly thank her for convincing me to do a study on radio drama. In the initial stages of the study there were those who were doubtful that the study was 'doable', but through her resourcefulness and tenacity the proposal for the study was finally accepted.

There were times when I wanted to give up but she always had a way of lifting me up.

Thanks, Liz.

I would also like to extend a hand of gratitude to my current supervisor, Professor Cheryl Stobie, whose expertise and eye for detail saw the completion of this study. I specially thank her for agreeing to be part of the study at a very difficult and crucial stage. Without her supervision, this study would never have seen the light of day. *Ndiyabulela*, Cheryl.

Many thanks also go to all those who made this thesis possible. Among them, I thank Given 'Oom Givy' Ntlebi for an interesting and insightful interview, the late Augustine 'Xhegolam' Nongauza for agreeing to the interview when he was not feeling well, and Mandla Myeko for his enthusiasm and encouragement. Their time and assistance in the initial stages of the study are deeply appreciated. My gratitude extends to Lizo Gqomfa, Manager of Umhlobo Wenene FM, for giving me an unlimited access to the archives of Umhlobo Wenene FM – Port Elizabeth. Without his understanding, I would never have accessed the plays which form the backbone of the study. The same goes for Babalwa Ramncwana, curator of the National Heritage Archives at Fort Hare. Her time, patience and assistance are warmly appreciated.

Special thanks also go to my wife, Lilitha, and Ntsikelelo 'Tinci' Mahlulo for helping me during the interviews. Others who deserve mentioning are Nontsikelelo Gqibitole (the one who survived Nobiva's brutality!), Faniswa Cishe, Shwayiba and Zondi 'Mhegeba' for

agreeing to be interviewed. Their 'listening' experiences gave me insight into how audiences responded to the plays. My gratitude extends to all the loyal audiences of Radio Xhosa who wrote letters to the station. Their letters were a great help and are an integral part of the study.

I would also like to thank my wife, Lilitha, and our children, Qhama and Wonga, for putting up with me all this time.

Last but not least in love, warm thanks to my family for being there all these years. Without their support, understanding and love I would not have survived the pressures I went through during the study.

I particularly would like to say many thanks to our late mother, Nokhaya 'Manci', who once said '*ndixolele ukunxiba ingxowa ndinifundisa.*' Thank you Ntombi ka 'L' for being there for all of us. May her soul rest in peace!

The financial assistance of the **National Research Fund (NRF)** is hereby acknowledged.

## **Dedication**

This study is dedicated to my late daughter, Anathi 'Nathi', who tragically died on 12 December 2006 at the age of twelve. *Lala kakuhle Matshezi*, we all miss and love you!

## **Table of contents**

<i>Introduction</i>	1
1. Bird's Eye View of the Study	8
2. The Establishment of Radio in South Africa: A Contested Terrain	35
3. Audience, State Control and Contestation of Tradition	51
4. Interplay between Fact and Fiction	123
5. Cultural Representation of Women and Gender in Radio Plays	157
6. Mystical Voices in Radio Plays	188
<i>Conclusion</i>	231
<i>Selected Bibliography</i>	237
<i>Appendices</i>	267

---

---

## Introduction

---

---

The idea to do research on radio drama was first mooted in 1999 by my MA supervisor, Professor Liz Gunner, stemming from my experience in writing radio plays for the Xhosa-language radio station between the late 1980s and the mid 1990s. Central to the idea was the fact that there was very little information on whether radio d countered or assisted the apartheid system, as opposed to other art forms such as poetry, literature and stage drama. What was disturbing was the perception on the part of some people that radio drama playwrights may have been disaffected by the political turmoil in the country that they resorted to self-censorship, instead choosing ‘soft’ themes such as romance and traditional issues for their plays. While it was felt that a study on radio plays was necessary, it was conceded that there would be obstacles such as tracking down playwrights, accessing the scripts, doing a study on radio texts in the English Department and finding a corpus. While these challenges were real and daunting, I was convinced that the study in this area was possible and necessary.

However, financial problems led to delays in the project. Subsequently, the turning point was a chance meeting in 2000 with one of the most popular playwrights and radio announcers of the time, Given Ntlebi, in King William’s Town. After I told him about the project and asked him whether he would avail himself for an interview, he agreed.

In the following year I started reading theories on audience and audience reception, mostly on television. The main problem was that there was very little critical material on radio drama at

that time. While I understood that television and radio audiences differ in the manner in which they consume media texts, the television audience research provided crucial insights into my understanding of radio play audiences. The hypothesis which galvanised me was that playwrights did indeed play a significant role in the demise of apartheid although they would have to camouflage their messages. Radio plays that were overtly critical of the apartheid system were rejected, a fate my own play, *Umntu Akahlwa*, suffered in the 1980s. It was on that score that the idea of studying radio play production in a controlling environment at the South African Broadcasting (SABC) deepened. An interest in the role of radio in the apartheid years then was a precursor to the research. Thereafter theorists on television audience, such as Ien Ang, were read, and thereafter Ruth Tomaselli and Liz Gunner, as well as other theorists on audiences and reception in the media in general. This background reading laid a foundation for the initial stages of the research.

The years 2001 and 2002 were probably the busiest in the research. The needed breakthrough happened on 6 November 2001 when I visited the legendary Xhosa-language radio playwright, Mandla Myeko, at his home in Zwelitsha, outside King William's Town. As the study attests, the interview with him and his work form the backbone of the study. On the following day, 7 November 2001, I visited an equally revered playwright, Augustine 'Xhegolam' Nongauza, who, like Myeko, had worked for the then Radio Bantu for many years and had written numerous radio plays.

On 13 November 2001 I finally managed to have an interview with Given Ntlebi, again meeting him by chance. The insight I gained convinced me that a study in the area of radio drama was not only possible but also long overdue. Meeting the three prolific former employees of Radio Bantu was instructive, informative and an eye-opener on radio drama. I

was left convinced about the conflict that existed between playwrights and the station managers. In all, 15 people were interviewed in King William's Town, Zwelitsha and Kirkwood between the years 2001 and 2004. These included former employees of the Xhosa-language radio and ordinary listeners. Unfortunately, I was unable to track down former managers of the Xhosa language radio, something that handicaps the study somewhat. Some of the interviews have been captured on tape. I also visited the SABC headquarters at Auckland Park, and Umhlobo Wenene FM archives in Port Elizabeth, and accessed some of the scripts and tapes at the National Heritage Archives at the University of Fort Hare.

While the interviews gave me a sense of hope and belief, I still needed the scripts. From what I gathered from Myeko many scripts and tapes had been lost or destroyed as the station moved from Grahamstown to King William's Town and then later to Port Elizabeth where the Xhosa-language radio station is currently located. I was advised to visit Umhlobo Wenene (formerly Radio Xhosa) archives in Port Elizabeth to see whether I could find either scripts or tapes of the plays. On 12 December 2001 I went to Umhlobo Wenene and the station manager, Lizo Gqomfa, gave me an unlimited access to the archive on one condition – no photocopying or taping. The condition of the archive was chaotic, and there was no archivist. Of the nine scripts I had hoped to find, I only managed to find the first three on the list below.

- UThuthula – Mandla Myeko (1981)
- UHlohlesakhe – Mandla Myeko (1979)
- Apho Sikhala Khona Isakhwatsha – Mandla Myeko (1981)
- Uyinkulu Kabani? – W.K. Thamsanqa (1976)
- Umntu Lilahle Elinothuthu – M.Z. Malgas (1988)
- Ityala Lamawele – S.E.K. Mqhayi (1976)

- Ingqumbo yeminyanya – A.C. Jordan (1976)
- USomagqabi – Kheswa (1986)

These are some of the plays that interviewees in Kirkwood, King William's Town and Zwelitsha remembered having listened to. The interviewees remembered these plays either because they had an impact in their lives or simply because some of the plays had been repeated over the years. To a large extent then, the plays were randomly selected depending on their availability and relevance to the main thrust of the study.

I made follow-up visits in January and February 2002. At this stage I became aware of letters from the listeners. As it was the case with the scripts, the letters were not sorted in any particular order, and as a result I collected those I could find. Just like the scripts, the letters were randomly selected although I only took those that dealt with radio plays. In all, I managed to get twenty-two letters, ranging from the mid-1960s to the 1970s. While the letters helped me in understanding the rapport that existed between playwrights and the audience, the sample is not wide enough to be representative of the entire listenership of the Xhosa plays in the period in question. It is, however, interesting that most of the letters use the pronoun 'we', which suggests that the letter writers, who must have been literate, believed themselves to be representative of other listeners. The letters are kept in the archives of Umhlobo Wenene FM in Port Elizabeth. Interestingly, all the letters are written in English which suggests that the letters were written by literate listeners or the letters were translated for the benefit of those who did not understand the Xhosa language.

The study uses the letters from the listeners to understand their reception of radio texts. However, since the archives are not properly managed no particular criterion was used to

sample them. It is also critical to note that the letters were typed and kept in a record book which indicated they were not the original letters from the listeners. This and the fact that all the letters are in English is indicative that the letters were mediated. Thus it would be fallacious to claim that the letters were representative of the general opinion of the listeners because by its nature a letter represents its writer. In fact, the letters only represented the audienceship in as far as the letter writer imagines he or she writes on behalf of others. It is imperative here too to state that I could not find any letters in the Xhosa language. This can be interpreted in two ways: firstly, that due to poor record-keeping at the station these letters were lost; and secondly, since the managers of the station could not easily access written Xhosa (although some managers spoke fluent Xhosa), they would not have encouraged the safe-keeping of the letter written in Xhosa. The manager, Lizo Gqomfa, advised me to visit the National Heritage and Cultural Studies Centre at FortHare for more radio texts. Subsequently, on 13 January 2002 I visited FortHare, but realised they had the same material, although it was better organized.

The hectic gathering of information in 2001 and 2002 culminated in an overseas trip in September 2002 – when my then supervisor, Liz Gunner, Dumisani Sibiyi and I attended a conference at BirminghamUniversity. What was noteworthy about the conference was the enthusiasm with which our papers on radio drama were received. The paper I delivered, ‘Contestations of Tradition in Xhosa Radio Drama’, elicited questions on audience reception, an area I had not yet dealt with at that stage.

It was for that reason that in 2003 I turned my attention to audience research through a series of interviews. Among them, was one of my elder sisters, who recounted a near abduction incident which she associated with one of Mandla Myeko’s plays, *Nangona Intliziyo Ithatha*

*Ibeka, Undoqo Sisibindi*. Among other things, the interview illustrated the blurring of the line between the audience's reality on the ground and the world created in the plays. I also interviewed Faniswa Cishe, who worked for many years employed as a domestic worker. From her I deduced how audiences understood the nuances in the language used in the plays – how one word could have a number of meanings for the speakers of the language. The other interviews that stand out were with Shwayiba and Mhegeba<sup>1</sup>, on 16 and 19 April respectively.

In 2004 I took a part-time lecturing post which presented its own challenges to the study. The study uses a qualitative approach whereby the researcher examines a sample of radio texts such as radio drama scripts, letters from the listeners and interviews. In this regard, the study mainly focuses on and confines itself to radio plays that were broadcast in the 1980s – the height of apartheid – by Radio Xhosa. The study occasionally refers to Zulu-language radio plays to explain a point. The scope of the research is informed by two factors: firstly, I have not only listened to many Xhosa-language radio plays but I have also written a few Xhosa radio plays; and secondly, I am familiar with some playwrights and have access to the Xhosa-language radio audience. Most importantly, as a Xhosa speaker I am able to understand the meaning behind the words which would, otherwise, have been lost in translation or transcription.

The focus of the study is two-fold; the cultural production of the plays and the gender politics that cannot be overlooked. It is for this reason that a chapter is set aside to deal with the issue of women. The study makes the point that a majority of the broadcast plays were written by males from the male perspective. The fact that we see plays through the eyes of males is critical in understanding the power relations at play at the time. In other words, the power

---

<sup>1</sup> These are pseudonyms, as both respondents did not want their real names to be used.

relations were not confined in the public domain where mainly men took part, but also extended to the private domain where many women were entrapped. So, women were oppressed both by the system of apartheid and patriarchy. Their double oppression was put in sharp focus by the plays.

---

---

## **Chapter One:**

### **Bird's Eye View of the Study**

---

---

Radio is by far the most pervasive, widely used and readily available 'modern' technology in the world. While television may claim the centre stage in many affluent societies, radio is often still part of every household. In poor societies, radio is frequently the main (if not the only) source of information and entertainment. Xhosa-speaking communities, in what is now called the Eastern Cape, certainly made use of radio for such purposes. Prior to the electrification of many villages in South Africa after the 1994 general elections, battery-operated radio sets were widely used. Although batteries were relatively cheap, not all households could afford them due to poverty and as a result, only few programmes were listened to in the apartheid era. The most popular programmes were the weather, bereavements, dedications, news and radio dramas. These five programmes held a special interest in society.

As elucidated below<sup>2</sup>, this study acknowledges, interrogates and is informed by the role of radio plays in the period in question. The main argument is that the managers of the station used radio texts, such as radio plays, to promote the ideology of apartheid while playwrights attempted to subvert it through the same plays. In this regard, the centrality of the managers, the playwrights and the audience is of immense importance. Among other things the study acknowledges that as radio is a contested terrain such conflicts among the the central players were inevitable and since apartheid affected all spheres of life, women were also affected.

---

<sup>2</sup> Please see Aims and Arguments of the Present Study section below.

While the major contest was between the managers and the playwrights, the undercurrents of gender exploitation abounded in the plays. On the one hand, the fact that many of the plays were set in patriarchal societies was not accidental but symptomatic of the deep-seated prejudices in the male-authored plays, and, by extension, by males in general. While the study's main focus is the contest between the managers and playwrights, I believe that gender issues should not be treated as subsidiary to issues of race. It is within this understanding, then, that a chapter has been set aside to explore the representation of gender in the plays.

### **Weather Programmes**

Before mass urbanisation, farming formed the spine of rural life and, as a result, the eyes of the farmers were always directed towards the sky for signs of rain. However, not everyone was endowed with the skills to 'read' the sky and those who could were held in high esteem in society. Rainmakers in particular were revered as demigods because of their special skill. However, radio's accessibility and its accuracy in predicting the weather far surpassed the skills of these individuals. This not only challenged local wisdom, it also elevated the standing of radio within these societies.

### **Bereavement and Dedication Programmes**

The bereavement and dedication programmes kept relatives aware of what was happening to their loved ones. Radio played a critical role in ensuring that dispersed people knew about their loved ones' deaths or whereabouts, thereby closing the geographic space between individuals and communities. Crucially, this programme linked those in the cities and those in the villages. Due to dislocation and urbanisation, scores of people lost touch with their

relatives who went to work in the mines and the cities. Some of these unfortunately perished in the political strife in the cities and some died in the mines. Radio then played a critical role in informing relatives as to whether their loved ones were still alive or not.<sup>3</sup>

### **News Programmes**

Although news programmes were mainly for purposes of propaganda in the apartheid era, such programmes were extremely popular with the audiences since they gave the listeners a glimpse of the world 'out there'. Since many African households did not have access to other sources of information, radio acquired a centre stage. As will be noted later in the discussion of the Ntlebi Incident in Chapter Three, the managers of the radio stations ensured that in most cases the news programmes favoured the master ideology of apartheid. Despite the propaganda that riddled newscasts, these programmes remained popular among listeners. Batteries were specifically saved for the news. Spitulnik (1994: 63) makes a similar point when she writes about the Zambian broadcasting experience. Her view is that in rural Africa radio is switched on for certain programmes to preserve the battery. The news broadcast was one of those programmes that families regarded as important.

### **Drama Programmes**

While the five programmes just discussed were popular, it is perhaps radio plays that captured the imagination of the audiences. Radio plays not only held up a mirror to society; they also offered solutions to the mounting problems that were faced by ordinary people.

---

<sup>3</sup> Some of those who spent a long period of time in the cities used 'dedications programmes' first to greet relatives, and indirectly to 'inform' them that they were still alive. Relatives could also use radio to trace the whereabouts of those who ended up living in cities.

From the inception of African language radio in South Africa in 1941,<sup>4</sup> radio drama became a feature that grew in popularity over the decades. As the veteran announcer Given Ntlebi said in one example, radio became popular because it dealt with the ‘language of the ordinary people’.<sup>5</sup> By this he meant both the utilisation of the vernacular and, more importantly, adapting and sometimes reviving certain Xhosa legends and written texts. The broadcast of the radio play *UNongqawuse* is one example<sup>6</sup>. Radio plays used that ‘language of the ordinary people’ to enlighten, educate and entertain the audiences. Importantly, radio was not only popular with the ordinary people as a source of knowledge and entertainment; governments also used it to propagate certain messages, as this study will propose. Writing about an earlier period, Van der Merwe (1995: 341) makes a similar point when he notes:

Behind all the front lines of WW2, radio was the toy of the masters in political propaganda and psychological warfare. Today, few politicians would try to achieve their objectives without an electronic media strategy in their armoury.

What Van der Merwe has to say here sums up the important role that radio played during and long after the Second World War. Van der Merwe makes two important observations for the current study.

---

<sup>4</sup> See Gunner 2000: 216.

<sup>5</sup> Given Ntlebi was interviewed in King William’s Town on November 13, 2001.

<sup>6</sup> The play was based on a true story that involved two Xhosa Kings, Ngqika and Ndlambe, whose clash led to the Battle of Amalinde in 1818. This infamous war will be dealt with later.

## **Radio Used for Propaganda**

Firstly, the use of radio for propaganda purposes was (and is still) widespread not only in South Africa, but also in other parts of the world – putting radio in the middle of political as well as social developments. Radio, as pointed out above, is the most pervasive media in the world. Concurring with this, Ginsberg (2002: 1) points out that ‘we now recognise the socio-cultural significance of ... radio as part of everyday lives in nearly every part of the world’. In today’s world, even the poorest of communities has access to radio because it can afford the battery operated radio sets. Most importantly, as Van der Merwe suggests, no government works without the power of radio. Radio is not only popular for entertainment; it is also a source of ‘valuable’ information. ‘Valuable’ here may mean different things to different people in the listening space, especially within the political landscape in the period in question. Predictably, while everyone clamours to own a radio set for entertainment and information, repressive regimes often use radio for their own political gains. This is aptly illustrated in this study by the Ntlebi incident in Chapter Three.

It is through radio that oppressive regimes not only mislead and brainwash audiences but also attempt to control radio texts. It is not surprising then that those who stage coups seize radio and television stations first so that they can spread their propaganda and influence effectively.<sup>7</sup> Once such groups ascend to power, they ensure that they silence radio stations which are seen to be subversive and that may attempt to counter their agenda. In the South African situation, the SABC became a propaganda tool of the Afrikaner regimes. Its monopoly on the airwaves ensured that the ideology of apartheid was perpetuated. However, the use of radio for repression in South Africa was not as serious as the way radio was used

---

<sup>7</sup>Rosenthal (1974: 27) notes that before the outbreak of the First World War (1914-1918), a German radio station in Windhoek was targeted by the South African troops. This illustrates the power that radio had at the time and the pivotal role it played, politically, culturally and socially.

for these means in Rwanda in 1994. In *Broadcasting Genocide: Censorship, Propaganda and State Sponsored Violence in Rwanda, 1990 – 1994*, Kirschke (1996) recounts chilling accounts of the state-sanctioned killing of about half a million people in Rwanda. The role of radio in fuelling the murders that occurred in Rwanda is unprecedented in Africa. This, largely, is an acknowledgement of the power and influence that radio has.

Because of that power, independent radio stations are seldom allowed to operate in countries where there is oppression, as the current disquiet in Zimbabwe clearly shows. Independent radios tend to give a different view from the one the state endorses. This is true of television also. Recent events in Iraq where the Arab television network, *Al Jazeera*, gives a totally different information from that of international broadcasters such as the BBC or Sky TV, is another example of these conflicting interests. RTLM radio in Rwanda (Kirschke, 1996) and Radio Phoenix in Zambia (Spitulnik, 1994), are just two examples of radio stations that were critical of the repressive regimes in those countries. In almost all such radio stations, the regimes would ‘plant’ people that were sympathetic to their policies to ensure that they were not undermined. To a large extent these radio stations were forced to comply with the dictates of these regimes. Daloz and Verrier-Frechette (quoted in Fardon and Furniss, 2000: 181) concur with this when they say:

While newspapers have proliferated, attempts to establish opposition radio stations have often encountered government resistance. This suggests that opposition voices on radio continue to seem more threatening to political regimes than does dissent in the nascent print forms which are accessible to a smaller proportion of the population.

The limitations frequently imposed on independent radio stations are testimony to fears of their potential political impact.

In the South African context, the SABC was intolerant of any overt subversive texts on radio. As this study maintains, some radio dramas on the Xhosa-language radio station were used to expose apartheid for what it was, although extreme caution had to be taken. There are clear indications that some radio personnel who were anti-apartheid used radio to ‘attack’ the government as well as to enlighten audiences (Tomaselli et al, 1989a). However, such actions came at a price to those individuals who were seen as anti-government, as the discussion of Myeko’s play *Apho Sikhala Khona Isakhwatsha* in Chapter Four demonstrates.

In the apartheid years the SABC was a propaganda tool in the hands of the apartheid regime. As discussed in Chapter Three, the top management of the station (who were also members of the secret society known as the ‘Broederbond’) was really an appendage of the state. Its express duty was to make sure that programming was in line with state policies. In his article, *South African Broadcasting Corporation: An Instrument of Political Power*, Orlik (1978: 3) traces the involvement of the ‘Bond’ at the SABC. Broederbond members were not only deployed at the Corporation to make up numbers; but they also held senior and influential positions, thus ensuring that decisions were compliant with state policy. In an aptly titled book, *The Super Afrikaner*, Wilkins and Strydom (1978) raise the same links between the SABC and the Broederbond. The presence of the organisation at the SABC would determine the clashes that characterised relationships at the Xhosa-language station throughout the apartheid years.

## **Psychological Impact of Radio Texts**

The second point that Van der Merwe raises is that radio can be used as a weapon of domination. The psychological warfare that Van der Merwe writes about happens precisely when the regime wants to ‘misinform’ those whom it wants to control. Most of the time this happens by manipulating programming, whether it is news, songs, current affairs or radio plays. As suggested above, in oppressive states programming is directly controlled by the regime, which makes sure that it censors anything that might be construed as subversive to their policies. In the specific case of the Xhosa-language radio station there were those who were tasked to sieve through all radio texts to safeguard the master ideology of apartheid. This sometimes led to some a conflictual relationship between the managers and the the producers/playwrights. This study will explore how the audiences made meaning out of the plays and how the polysemy of the plays could be used in the ideological warfare in the country. In this regard the thesis will examine how tradition was treated in the plays; the role of romance in the plays; how political issues were handled in the plays; the link between fact and fiction in the plays; the way women were represented in the plays; and the ‘voice’ which could be used to codify messages.

## **Existing Literature on Radio Dramas**

The study is informed by the fact that radio drama is one of the most neglected art forms that have played a crucial role in (a) the production of Xhosa culture, (b) the enlightenment of audiences, (c) entertainment and (d) education. This is, more widely, true of radio in general. Fardon and Furniss are correct in pointing out the lack of interest in the study of radio drama.

Notwithstanding its popularity and its role as an inscriber of culture and at times ideology, radio drama remains undervalued. According to Fardon and Furniss (2000: 8):

Despite the arresting evidence of growing importance and crucial transition, mainstream academic attention to radio has been scanty... many of the major academic Africanist journals have not carried an article on radio in the past decade.

Nevertheless, with regard to studies of radio in South Africa, limited but crucial pioneering work has been done by R. Tomaselli, K.G. Tomaselli and J. Muller (1989a). Although they do not discuss radio drama in any of South Africa's African languages, their insistence on the role of ideology in radio production makes their work germane to this project. The work Liz Gunner has done on Zulu radio drama is also a key source for this study. In 'Resistant Medium: The Voices of Zulu Radio Drama in the 1970s' (2002) and 'Zulu Radio Drama' (2000), Gunner goes to the root of Zulu radio drama and tracks some of the personalities that have played a pivotal role in entrenching the genre.

Also important is the work that has been done on the nature of audience of African language radio drama. In his article, 'Postulating Audiences in isiZulu Radio Drama' (2002), Dumisani Sibiya examines the elusive nature of the audience. To a large extent, Sibiya (2002: 2) questions the proposition that radio drama creates its audiences. He views with suspicion the notion that 'media texts, including radio drama, have some form of addressivity – that is they are structured with an ideal audience in mind.' While his argument is persuasive, the view held in the present study differs with his. The view taken in this thesis is that of an already existing radio drama audience. One of Sibiya's most essential points is the intrinsic

relationship between Zulu novels and Zulu radio plays. His view is that many novels became popular because they 'captured and kept their audiences' (2002: 33) that were first created by listening to radio drama which subsequently became a novel. With the Xhosa-language radio, however, this relationship is not well developed. In fact, it is written texts that are translated into plays, and not the other way round. Examples of this include the novels by A.C. Jordan, *Ingqumbo Yeminyanya* (1940), and S.E.K. Mqhayi's *Ityala Lamawele* (1914), which became popular radio dramas.

Another valuable source of information is the unpublished study by Mandla Maphumulo of three classic and extremely popular Zulu radio dramas, written by the prolific short story writer, D.B.Z. Ntuli. Regarding Xhosa plays in particular, my article, 'Contestations of Tradition in Xhosa Radio Drama under Apartheid' (2002), attempts to outline some aspects of the struggle for control of cultural material disseminated by the Xhosa-language radio. There are a few other forerunners in the study of Xhosa radio drama. One of those who have contributed to the study of the genre is N.E. Makhosana whose Masters dissertation, 'A Comparative Study of Six Xhosa Radio Dramas' (1991), is of great value. In her study, Makhosana mentions J.P. Lubbe's 1968 dissertation, which focused on Sotho radio drama. According to her, 'Lubbe's work was aimed at testing the listener's preference and dislike in the broadcasting of Sotho radio drama' (Makhosana, 1991: 3). Satyo and Jadezwi's article, 'The Portrayal of Characters through Dialogue in Saule's Drama' (2003), also marks the growing interest in the study of Xhosa radio drama. Their argument is that the language that the characters use helped the listener have a mental picture of the character and his/her personality. Their view is similar to the one advanced in this study. They too suggest that playwrights use certain devices such as idioms to capture the attention of the audience. These

studies have not only renewed interest in radio drama, but have also shown that radio dramas can be studied in the same fashion as other literary genres.

Finally, Spitulnik's 1994 PhD thesis, which deals with broadcasting in Zambia, is of immense relevance to this study. Her study of Zambian broadcasting provides the reader with detailed insight into the inner workings of radio in Zambia. To a large extent, her views are akin to those of J.P. Daloz and K. Verrier-Frechette, cited in Fardon and Furniss's (2000) *African Broadcasting Cultures: Radio in Transition*. In the thesis Spitulnik examines the pervasive nature of radio in Zambian society. Daloz and Verrier-Frechette show how a particular radio station, Radio Phoenix, could operate as a means of enlarging 'the arena of debate within Zambian public culture' and assisted in the 'reformulation of Zambian political culture'. While such studies demonstrate that radio has occupied a centre stage in the lives of ordinary people in Africa, as a source of news and as a tool of propaganda, to an extent they are silent on the role of radio drama as a medium that provides commentary on and insight into contemporary life in Africa.

### **Aims and Arguments of the Present Study**

The value of the study by the aforementioned individuals is commendable as it does not only pave the way for future study of radio as a medium, but also places radio texts in the mainstream of scholarship. The present study attempts to advance this groundbreaking work by focusing on Xhosa radio plays and how they were consumed by the audience as well as how women were represented in the plays in the period in question. As pointed out above, radio drama has been neglected in scholarship because focus has largely been on other literary genres such as novels, short stories and stage plays. During the period in question

novelists, poets and playwrights such as E'skia Mphahlele, Mafika Gwala and Athol Fugard became household names because of their work. The same, though, cannot be said about radio drama playwrights who appealed mostly to the rural illiterate majority. To a large extent playwrights were, to rephrase Njabulo Ndebele, 'rediscovering the ordinary' in that they dealt with the lives of ordinary people within the turbulent political climate that prevailed. The study argues that despite the unsavoury political situation that characterised SABC at the time, some Xhosa playwrights were able to enlighten and entertain audiences.

First, then, the study attempts to highlight the equally splendid role that was played by radio drama playwrights during this period. As the study argues, a majority of radio listeners relied solely on radio for news, enlightenment and entertainment, and radio drama played a critical part in this regard. Secondly, the study investigates the response of the audiences to the dramas. The rapport that existed between the playwrights and the audience cannot be underrated and forms an integral part of this study. Radio texts, especially radio drama, are interlocked and cannot be discussed separately. So the study sets out to illustrate the active interaction that characterised the relationship between playwrights and the audience as they wrestled the apartheid system. In addition, the study investigates the contestation between the managers of the station and the producers with regards to the content of the plays. Finally, the study investigates how women and gender issues were handled in the plays. The role of women in the production of culture and their contribution to the struggle are critically important in this study and therefore cannot be overlooked.

Radio drama continues to be popular in the post-independence era. Therefore, understanding the role it played in the past dispensation would help current radio practitioners, especially playwrights and radio managers, gain insight into what role radio drama can still play in

nation building. In addition, the study will work as a reference point for future work in the area of radio drama. It was with this in mind that the then manager of Umhlobo Wenene Radio station, Lizo Gqomfa, suggested that drama scripts can go a long way in supplementing the reading resources in schools that lack books. Radio practitioners should be innovative in making radio plays not only relevant to the present circumstances but also make them appeal in this technological age. eBooks have paved the way in this regard. The study then attempts to highlight the fact that radio drama can still play a pivotal role in the post-independence period, just like any other art form.

This study will therefore examine the impact and the role that were played by radio drama in Xhosa society during the apartheid years, which is here taken to be 1948 to 1990. The thrust of the exploration will be the examination of the role of audiences in making meaning and the way subversive messages were *possibly* transmitted to the audiences through the plays. However, the study does not suggest that all radio plays were political. In fact, a majority of plays dealt with everyday domestic issues that taught audiences about life in general.

Further, the study will explore the question of audiences and how they may have responded to radio plays in general. This study will employ ideas from, among others, R. Alasuutari's *Rethinking Media Audience* (1999), R. Dickinson's *Approaches to Audiences* (1998), and D. McQuail's *Audience Analysis* (1994). The examination will be done on the premise that audiences were in the centre of the clash between the managers of the Xhosa-language radio station and Xhosa playwrights. In this regard, the study will cover the apartheid period with a view to exploring how the apartheid regime may have used radio to further its policies of 'divide and rule' and how some radio plays attempted to undermine these policies. In the

course of this discussion, radio plays, letters and interviews conducted by the author will be analysed.

However, it is acknowledged that the study of audiences is problematic in that individual listeners would ‘read’ the plays differently. This view is decidedly contrary to the one mentioned by Sibiya (2001), who suggests that the role of the narrator in early Zulu plays forced listeners to ‘read’ the play in a particular manner. This point illustrates the conflicting ways audiences are viewed. This study will point out that plays constituted *audiencehood* – a community of audiences who shared aspirations, fears and hopes. The overriding argument will be that plays were broadcast for a specific purpose – whether it was romantic, political or social – depending on the message the text contained. In pursuing the question of audiences, the study will argue that audiences were either viewed as active participants in the making of meaning or as a mass that was ‘told’ what to know (Ettema and Whitney, 1994; see also Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998). In other words, the conflicting parties argue that audiences are either passive or active during the listening activity. McQuail’s (1997) study, *Typologies of Audience*, is a typical example in this regard. In *Audience Reception: The Role of the Viewer in Retelling Romantic Drama* (1991) and *Mass Media and Society* (1996) respectively, Livingstone and Curran examine the question of audiences at length.

Throughout this study, it will be contended that the audience is active and has expectations during the listening process. According to Katz and Wedell (1977: 20), audiences are ‘goal directed’ in that they know what they want from the text, or as Spitulnik suggests, the audiences are ‘interpretive’. Put differently, while the text may constitute an audience as Sibiya (2002) avers about the early Zulu radio drama, individuals who converge around the radio set also play a central role in constituting radio text. This seeming contradiction in

understanding the audience is at the heart of the critique of the role of the audience in the listening, viewing or performance space. The study will also use Scott's (1990) notion of the 'public and hidden transcripts' to understand the way the managers' and playwrights' relationships played out at the Xhosa-language radio station. Consequently, as pointed out above, the study will focus, in particular, on the clash that seemed to exist between the managers of the Xhosa-language radio station and the playwrights/producers in their bid to educate or influence the audiences. The point of departure will be that radio plays, in some instances at least, were performed within the political rivalry that prevailed in the country during the period in question and therefore could not have been uncontaminated to some degree by politics, even though political messages in them may have been covert to evade censorship.<sup>8</sup> In other words, the 'political' plays that were broadcast must have been written in such a way that the political undertones were not readily detected by the managers in some instances. Radio plays such as *UHlohlesakhe* and *Apho Sikhala Khona Isakhwatsha* fall into this category.

The plays that are dealt with in this thesis will be explored with a view to understanding the reason for their popularity and usage, especially in rural communities.<sup>9</sup> The plays that will form the focus of this study include the following:

---

<sup>8</sup> During research, both in the SABC archives in Port Elizabeth and the National Heritage Centre at Fort Hare University, I found very few plays that were overtly political. This fuels the suspicion that political messages, if there were any, were 'hidden' in the plays. Plays such as *UThuthula*, *Apho Sikhala Khona Isakhwatsha* and *UHlohlesakhe* clearly have political messages. However, it must be stated that the managers were directly involved in the production of the plays and as such scripts with a political slant would be detected prior to production unless such subversive messages were 'hidden' in the plays.

<sup>9</sup> Radio plays were not necessarily listened to only by the 'illiterate'. As A.M.S. Sityana suggests in one of the letters, the educated too listened with relish, perhaps for different reasons. While the 'illiterate' may have used plays as the only means to get information, the educated may have used them as a form of escape, or they may have used them to reconstruct images of the 'lost' village.

- *Buzani Kubawo* [Ask Father] – Mandla Myeko (1981).
- *Nakuba Intliziyo Ithatha Ibeka; Undoqo Sisibindi* [Even Though the Heart Doubts, Courage is King] – Mandla Myeko (1987)<sup>10</sup>.
- *UThuthula* [Thuthula] – Mandla Myeko(1970).
- *Apho Sikhala Khona Isakhwatsha* [Where the Go-Away Bird Calls] – Mandla Myeko (1981).
- *USomagqabi* [Somagqabi] – Kheswa (1986).

Among other things, this study will demonstrate that plays are polysemic. For example, on the one hand *Buzani Kubawo* can be ‘read’ as an attack on tradition while on the other hand it can be viewed from a feminist perspective, as chapters Two and Three will demonstrate.

Other plays that the study will deal with are:

- *UHlohlesakhe* [The Greedy One] – Mandla Myeko (1979).
- *Umntu Lilahle Elinothuthu* [Don’t Trust Anyone] – M.Z. Malgas (1988).
- *Ityala Lamawele* [The Case of Twins] – S.E.K. Mqhayi (1976); adaptation of S.E.K. Mqhayi’s novel.
- *Ingqumbo Yeminyanya* [The Wrath of Ancestors] (1976); adaptation of A.C. Jordan’s novel.
- *Uyinkulu Kabani?* [Whose Heir are You?] (1976), adapted from W.K. Thamsanqa’s novel.
- *Akukho Mini Ingenabusuku Bayo* [Change Will Come] – Dambile Tuswa (n.d.).
- *Lunjalo Uthando* [Such is Love] – Given Ntlebi (n.d.).
- *Onje Ngomama* [The One Like Mother] – Barbara Tsotsobe (n.d.).

---

<sup>10</sup>Translated from Zulu to Xhosa by Mandla Myeko (1987).

- *Tarhw'ameva!* [Forgive Me!] – Wiseman Nkuhlu (n.d).<sup>11</sup>

This study will use these plays to answer the following questions: What was the nature of the contestation at the station? How did the audiences access the information in the plays? How did playwrights and the managers use plays to pass messages to the audiences? How was gender and gender issues represented in the plays? What role did the use of the 'voice' play in popularising the plays?

The study will mainly focus on Mandla Myeko's work, as he was probably the most prolific and most creative playwright at the station. Myeko not only authored plays but also produced and rearranged others. He was also a daring playwright who, at the height of apartheid, dared to write subversive plays such as *UHlohlesakhe* and *Apho Sikhala Khona Isakhwatsha*. It is not surprising therefore, that he is the only playwright of the time who is known to have been detained and tortured.

### **Overview of the Chapters**

The focus of the study is on four main areas that are interlinked, namely: the clashes between the managers of the station and the playwrights, the use of the Xhosa language, the representation of women and the use of the mystical voice in the plays. The main thrust of the study concerns the conflictual relationship that existed between the managers and playwrights in their ideological tug-of-war. Since radio is a language medium, both parties used that medium not only to reach the audience but also to try to influence it. To a large extent the audience was caught in the middle of the conflict and, since it was active in decoding the messages in the plays, it could make meaning out of the text. For the playwrights to be able to

---

<sup>11</sup> See Appendix I for photos of some of the employees/playwrights.

appeal to the audience they had to create situations that resembled the 'lived lives' of the audience. Given that radio plays mainly appealed to rural societies which were patriarchal in character, the plays had to follow that mould. It is for this reason that a majority of the plays represented women in the way they did. Most importantly, the gender issue, just like the mystical voice in the plays, was used to hide subversive messages from the managers of the station.

## **Chapter One**

Chapter One gives a bird's eye view of the study. Among other things it briefly looks at how radio was initially used. Central in this chapter is the literature review and the plays that will be examined. Although much can and should be done in the area of radio drama, the Chapter acknowledges people who have done some work in the area. Finally, the chapter lays out the broad aims and arguments of the current study.

## **Chapter Two**

Chapter Two charts a brief history of the establishment of radio broadcasting in South Africa. By giving a brief history of broadcasting, this study aims to situate the circumstances and possible reasons for the extension of radio to Africans, particularly to the Xhosas. Therefore, the chapter will examine the parallels that existed between political developments and the introduction of radio in South Africa in the period in question. Here it will be argued that the introduction of radio throughout South Africa was inevitable as the country was following the trend set by Britain, its former coloniser. While radio was initially a bone of contention between the Afrikaners and the English on cultural grounds, after the Afrikaner assumption

of power in 1948 it was used for propaganda purposes. So, when the Afrikaners assumed power, the stage had already been set for the use of radio to advance the dominant Afrikaner ideology of apartheid. To ensure that they were in total control of the airwaves the Afrikaner government made sure that programming was the sole prerogative of the regime through its agents at the SABC. Programming, therefore, was not only aimed at propagating the policies of the regime but also at controlling what the audience consumed.

When the Afrikaners assumed power in 1948, Xhosa people had already been pushed to the periphery of mainstream politics – as a result they were not part of major policy decisions, including those on broadcasting. As the 1946 report on broadcasting suggests, the extension of broadcasting to black people was delayed. In this chapter it will be argued that when broadcasting was extended to black people, its potential political usage had been realized. For a sense of the establishment of radio in the country this paper will draw on Carel van der Merwe's *Electronic Media Manager* (1995); as well as the *Report of the Task Group on Broadcasting in Southern and South Africa* (1991), which was chaired by Professor C. Viljoen, a Broederbond member. The two accounts complement each other in many ways. While the *Report* sketches the establishment of radio from its inception in the early 1920s, Van der Merwe begins his account in mid-1930 with the Act of Parliament that established the South Africa Broadcasting Authority (SABC). Also covering the same issues is Rosenthal (1974: 32) in *You Have Been Listening...* Another account that deals briefly with the establishment of broadcasting in South Africa is a pamphlet titled '*This is the SABC*' (1989), which was compiled and edited by SABC Publications.

### Chapter Three

The study suggests that there was an ongoing conflict between the managers of the station and the producers/playwrights. Playwrights, just like many other artists at the time tried to speak on behalf of the voiceless – a responsibility they saw as necessary in the fight against oppression. This was not an easy task though since the apartheid system was widespread at the time. In short, playwrights were always in danger of being censored or worse, detained, for discharging their responsibility to the audience. This is crucial in the study as a whole because it presupposes that some playwrights were conscious of their responsibility to the audience. Writing about South African writers in general Nadine Gordimer (1988: 249) sums this up well when she says:

Writers who accept a professional responsibility in the transformation of society are always seeking ways of doing so that their societies could not ever imagine, let alone demand: asking of themselves means that will plunge like a drill to release the great primal spout of creativity, drench the censors, cleanse the statute books of their pornography of racist and sexist laws, hose down religious differences, extinguish napalm bombs and flame-throwers, wash away pollution from land, sea and air, and bring out human beings into the occasional summer fount of naked joy.

This Chapter analyses the clashes that took place between the managers and playwrights by analysing Myeko's play, *Buzani Kubawo* (1981).<sup>12</sup> The chapter will examine the way tradition was used by the managers and playwrights to 'influence' the audience. By examining the play, this study will show the rapport that existed between playwright and audience and how specific playwrights may have used 'tradition' to pass on different messages from those the managers might have 'expected'. In *The Implied Reader*, Wolfgang Iser (1974) suggests that the author can help understanding of the text by leaving out certain information. As the reader engages with the texts he tries to fill the gaps left by the author and thereby construct a meaning. Iser calls this 'gap-filling'. Gap-filling should not be confused with unquestioning absorption of information. By filling the gaps the reader actively interacts with the text on his/her own. Because radio texts are multi-functional (Tannen, 1982: 37), audiences are offered a space to 'reorganise' and reconstitute the message according to their needs. This engagement and 'meaning-making' continues as the audience engages in discussion after the performance. The chapter will also focus on audiences and their involvement in decoding messages and meaning-making in the text. Clashing with this active involvement in meaning-making was the ideological interest of the managers of the Xhosa-language station who had an iron-fist control of the airwaves. To demonstrate this conflict, this thesis will refer to two incidents that involved the managers, playwrights and producers.

This Chapter also explores the role of the Broederbond in the South Africa Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) in forwarding the policies of the Afrikaner regimes. The study will draw from Wilkins and Strydom (1978), *The Super Afrikaner*, which deals extensively with the establishment and role of the Broederbond in South Africa's political landscape during the

---

<sup>12</sup>An adaptation of W.K. Thamsanqa's novel of the same title.

apartheid years. Therefore, it will be noted that there was a conscious and deliberate attempt by the regime to use programming to control both information flow and the audiences.

‘Planting’ its own people at the Corporation and in the different radio stations in particular, was one of the regime’s strategies to consolidate and entrench its policies.

## **Chapter Four**

The study will also examine the use of the Xhosa language in the plays in the period in question. While the use of the vernacular may have created a ‘national community’ (Gellner’s usage cited in Spitulnik, 2000: 13), it could also have been used for other purposes. It is an open secret that the managers were planted at the station to decipher the language that was used and decide whether it was in line with the master ideology of the Afrikaner regime.

Most of those who were given key positions at the station, as Augustine Nongauza claims, were white farmers who grew up with Xhosa people and so understood their language.<sup>13</sup>

Most, if not all of them, were active members of the Afrikaner think-tank – the Broederbond.

It will be maintained that the rapport between playwrights and the audience is one of the key points of the study. The continued popularity of the plays is a testimony to that understanding. However, the fact that there was such an understanding between the audience and the playwrights/producers did not make things any easier. Using the themes of ‘love’, ‘tradition’ and other ‘acceptable’ themes to coat message may have created some problems for the audiences, especially those who were illiterate and hence less analytical compared to trained critics. However, while the latter point may be true, it should also be remembered that the use of the vernacular made these plays accessible to the illiterate too, as Faniswa Cishe,

---

<sup>13</sup> Augustine Nongauza was interviewed on 07 November 2001 in Zwelitsha, King William’s Town. Nongauza, affectionately called ‘Xhegolam,’ was an announcer and playwright at the Xhosa-language radio station.

one of the interviewees suggests. Cundill's account (cited in Tomaselli, 1989b: 132) of 'coated' messages in TV dramas is relevant in this regard. Judging by what Cundill has to say, it would seem that disguising messages might have been widespread in radio plays. The challenge then was that playwrights had to make sure that they used linguistic codes that were comprehensible to the audiences. The Ntlebi incident discussed in Chapter Three, although it is concerned with news and not the plays demonstrates this expert use of language. The incident does not only illustrate the sharing of understanding between radio practitioners such as playwrights and audiences but also highlights the clash that prevailed at the level of language usage between the managers and producers.

Therefore, while the playwrights/producers may have been trying to escape censorship, they would also have been missing their 'intended target' if they were not sensitive to the needs of the audience. Consequently, playwrights had to know Xhosa culture and language as well as the needs of the audience. However, judging by the thousands of letters that reached the station, it is clear that audiences appreciated the plays. Most of the letters give a picture of contented listeners who mainly ask for repeats of the plays. Some applaud the ingenuity of the playwright and the ability of the actors. While these plays may have dealt with a number of issues, the romance theme seemed to dominate. Plays that were camouflaged as romance plays, for instance, may have been plentiful and many of them were rebroadcast, both because they were popular as well as to inculcate a particular message in the minds of the audience. Most importantly though romance plays could easily be used as frames for subversive messages.

## Chapter Five

Chapter Five examines how women were treated in Xhosa plays. The neglect and the abuse of women in the plays are critical and cannot be ignored in the study of radio drama. As the study argues, most of the plays reflected what takes place in the society. Prior to 1994 the South African society was plagued by a perpetual political struggle on all fronts, including the domestic sphere where women were mostly situated. Unfortunately, the women's role in the struggle against apartheid is often seen as supportive of men and as such not important. Wicomb (1996: 47) is correct when she says, 'In South Africa the orthodox position whilst celebrating the political activism of women is that the gender issue ought to be subsumed by the national liberation struggle.' While some texts, including radio plays, recognise the influence women have, women seldom occupy positions of power. As the study argues, even in cases where they do they are destined for failure. In fact women's struggle is relegated to domestic issues which are not regarded as critical in national liberation. Unfortunately, the studies mentioned above do not adequately deal with this issue and therefore the study attempts to highlight women's role in the plays because women's issues and the fight against apartheid should be dealt with simultaneously.

Apart from examining plays such as *Buzani Kubawo*, *USomagqabi* and *Lunjalo ke Uthando*, this study will try to understand the way women are treated in literature by making use of Seenkoro's *The Prostitute in African Literature* (1982); Radway's *Reading the Romance* (1984); and Stratton's *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender* (1994). Although there were a few playwrights who used females as main characters, they failed to challenge patriarchy. In other words, although plays such as *UThuthula*, *Inkomo Enotshoba Ayinqandwa* and others may have been 'revolutionary' in that they challenged the regime,

they fell short in providing any sense of a new role for or representation of women characters. In a sense, while some playwrights may have given women some form of influence, they were denied power, especially power over male characters. If anything, they were depicted as passive, obedient and hardworking. To put it slightly differently, they were represented as appendages of males. This is the point that Satyo and Jadezweni (2003: 3) argue when they look at the dialogue used in the plays they are analysing. The two argue that ‘In all patriarchal societies, males have more power and authority than females and specifically they have power over females.’ The examination of the depiction of women characters is crucial in this study. Paradoxically, while some playwrights may have tried to engage the political system through their plays, it would seem that they were still upholding patriarchy. In other words, in the public sphere they contributed to the resistance, but in the domestic sphere they, perhaps unconsciously, perpetuated the subjugation of women.

## **Chapter Six**

Chapter Six examines how the mystical voice of the ancestors was used in the plays. In this regard it will be maintained that the ‘voice’ was used to invoke certain emotions and memories in the audiences’ common consciousness. Furthermore, the ‘voice’ seems to have been used as a coded message to the listeners. Khwesa’s *USomagqabi* and Myeko’s *Nakuba Intliziyo Ithatha Ibeka: Undoqo Sisibindi* will be used to demonstrate how the voice was used as a weapon of enlightenment.

The use of magic, it will be argued, was a means both to appeal to the audiences and to evade the vigilance of the managers. Two of Myeko’s plays, *Nangona Intliziyo Ithatha Ibeka, Undoqo Sisibindi* (1987), and *UHlohlesakhe* (1979), as well as Kheswa’s *USomagqabi* (1980)

will be analysed with a view to understanding the use of the ‘magic voice’ in some of the plays. The use of the imaginary ‘voice’ was more accessible to the audiences than to the managers of the station. In other words, this thesis maintains that playwrights used their knowledge of the community and that consolidated a rapport between themselves and the audiences.<sup>14</sup> One of the interviewees, Faniswa Cishe, talks of this use of language that was only understood by the speakers of the language and not by the managers. Nevertheless, while the use of the ‘voice’ had a potential to benefit the audiences, it will be made clear that playwrights did not use it extensively, or many plays that were based on the use of the ‘voice’ were not widely broadcast.

### **Outline of Appendices**

Finally, the study has nine appendices. Appendix A gives guidelines for writing radio plays/serials. These are guidelines sent to the author by the Xhosa-language radio. Appendix B is a selection of interviews that were conducted in King William’s Town, Quzini, Zwelitsha and Kirkwood (Port Elizabeth). The interviews are with listeners of the Xhosa-language radio as well as former employees/playwrights of the station. Appendix C contains a selection of letters that were written to the Xhosa-language station by listeners. The letters commented on the plays, most of them commending the playwrights for the ‘educational’ plays. Appendix D is a selected record of Xhosa radio scripts and cassettes that are held at the National Heritage and Cultural Studies Centre at the University of Fort Hare, Alice. Appendix E provides a script evaluation form. Appendix F provides a part of a 30-minute radio play (not broadcast). Appendix G lists former and present SABC radio stations as well as their first dates of broadcast, while Appendix H lists radio stations that are currently

---

<sup>14</sup> Playwrights sometimes used idiomatic expressions that were only accessible to a certain group of people in the community; see page 138.

operating in South Africa and their focus areas. Finally, Appendix I contains photographs of former employees/playwrights at the Xhosa-language radio station.

---

---

## **Chapter Two:**

### **The Establishment of Radio in South Africa: A Contested Terrain**

---

---

This Chapter focuses on the establishment of broadcasting in South Africa with special attention to Radio Bantu.<sup>15</sup> It will be argued that radio for black people was always a deeply contested site, with the policy of successive regimes dominated by considerations of racial, social and political control. In this regard, this study claims that the establishment of the FM signal for black people (South Sotho and Zulu services) on 25 December 1961 was more of a political decision than a natural progression.<sup>16</sup> However, the internal politics that prevailed at the SABC during this period will not be addressed here. The politics and structure of the SABC will be dealt with in the following chapter with the intention of exploring the seeming confrontation that existed between the managers of the Xhosa-language radio station and the playwrights/producers.

#### **The Early Years of Broadcasting in South Africa: The Colonial Connection**

The establishment of broadcasting in South Africa on July 1, 1924 followed that of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in 1922 and its inception is symbiotically linked to that of the latter (Rosenthal, 1974: 32). This link hints at the colonial and imperial networks that were reaching across the world, and most importantly, at the close relationship between the BBC and South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). Subsequently, by 1939 when

---

<sup>15</sup> The Xhosa-language radio station, like all other African languages radio stations, has undergone a number of name changes over the years: 'African Services' (1941); 'Radio Bantu' (1945), initially broadcasting in the Zulu-language on Medium Wave; 'Radio Xhosa' (1966); and presently 'Umhlobo Wenene' (1996).

<sup>16</sup> Since 1945, African Services had been operating on Medium Wave (MW), which had a limited and a localized coverage. The FM transmitter offered a wider coverage in comparison.

the Second World War broke out, the impact of broadcasting and its influence were already recognised in the country (Rosenthal, 1974: 33). For example, on October 25, 1939 the Smuts/Hertzog government instituted a Commission of Enquiry (Union, 1941: 3) into the operations of the SABC. Its brief was clear and among other things it had to ‘inquire into, to report upon and to make recommendations regarding’:

- the manner in which the SABC has conducted its operations to the war [*sic*] in which the Union is involved;
- the question whether the Corporation operations have been and are being conducted and controlled [so] that the interests of the Union as a country involved in the war have been and are adequately safeguarded;
- the relationship between the said Corporation and its servants in respect of matters connected with the war.

From the above it is clear that the SABC was expected to actively support the efforts of the Smuts/Hertzog government, perhaps correctly so. However, this expectation was not an easy one. The role of the SABC in the ‘war effort’ was complicated by, among other things, its staff which had a political allegiance with either the British or the Afrikaner regimes – a polarisation that stems from the Anglo/Boer War. It is this division that the issue of *Sunday Times* of 3 November 1939 captured when it was reported that ‘a section of the staff (Board) is not merely attempting to frustrate the policy of Smuts’ Government, but is actively parading its sympathy with Hitlerism’ (Union, 1941: 12). From the outset then, radio became

a terrain of political contestation and propaganda in the country. It is within this broad framework that radio broadcasting found its place in the socio-political landscape of South Africa.

### **Tensions in the Pre-1948 Years**

The clashes that characterised the relationship between the Afrikaners and black people became pronounced after the Afrikaners' ascendancy to power in 1948 but that by no means suggests that there were no racial tensions prior to this. However, as suggested above, initially the conflict over broadcasting (and cultural suspicion) was between the Afrikaans-speaking and the English-speaking South Africans. For example, the 1948 Commission of Enquiry report refers to a request by English-speaking SABC staff that demanded the dismissal of 'certain Afrikaans-speaking officers'. These clashes between the two white groups were informed by the fact that the English-speaking staff members were more dominant in broadcasting and as such, there were fewer programmes for the Afrikaners. An earlier Commission of Enquiry (Union, 1939: 5-6) had tried – seemingly in vain – to address the issue. In that report, the Commissioners said:

We think that the corporation should have been at pains to improve and extend the provision for broadcasting the 'B' programme even at the cost of depriving English-speaking listeners of some of the facilities afforded them. In particular we are not convinced by the argument used to support the rejection of Mr Marais' proposal that the 2 k.w [*sic*] medium transmitter in Bloemfontein be used for transmission of the 'B' programme instead of the 'A' programme

until the new transmitter ordered for that station has been received and installed.<sup>17</sup>

However, the influence of the English at the SABC waned after a number of its English employees joined the Second World War. According to Orlik (1978: 57-8), the SABC released a number of English-speaking employees and filled their positions with Afrikaners. The Afrikaners not only resented fighting in the war, but they also did not like the alliance with Britain. Echoing the same sentiment, Ryan (2000: 41) points out that; ‘With the onset of WW2, many of the British officials joined the war leaving the SABC to become a more Afrikaans-dominated institution.’

It is clear that the Afrikaners were already in control of the SABC around 1937 (Ryan, 2000: 39), therefore, their 1948 victory in the elections was just a consolidation of their position at the broadcaster. Hence, 1948 marks the heightening of the Afrikaners’ use of the SABC as a means to entrench their political hegemony in South Africa. Ryan (2000: 41) concurs with this when she says:

During the apartheid years the SABC became a propagandist tool of the state, and as the only national broadcaster in South Africa, played a large role in promoting and reinforcing separate development policies pursued by the Nationalist party through its refusal to integrate different language and ethnic groups into one nation.

---

<sup>17</sup> ‘B’ programmes referred to Afrikaans programmes, while ‘A’ programmes referred to English programmes.

The Afrikaners would dominate the corporation for almost five decades. As Ryan points out, during the period leading to 1948 the SABC increasingly became a political tool. The role of the Broederbond, the think-tank of the Afrikaner government, in this regard was immense and unprecedented. It was within such a climate that broadcasting was finally extended to black people.

### **African Services: Tightening Apartheid Screws**

Almost two decades had passed before Africans could listen to 'their own radio stations' in the form of the Zulu-language radio in 1941 and the first transmission was by telephone lines. According to the 1969 Report on Broadcasting (Union 1969: 2-7), the express purpose of Radio Bantu was to 'serve the seven Bantu peoples of the country according to their nature, needs, and character of each, and, by encouraging national consciousness.' After the inception of African Services the spread of broadcasting to Africans was a phenomenon. At the time not many people possessed radio sets but the interest that was generated was overwhelming. The frenzy with which people seem to have tried to listen to the radio must have convinced the Afrikaner regime about the enormous impact radio could have among the 'natives'. The enthusiasm that both ordinary and professional Africans had for radio would be used to control what they listened to, through careful programming. The spread and appeal of radio though were not happening in a vacuum, they were happening in a politically charged atmosphere. Despite the Afrikaners' total control of radio, their propaganda does not seem to have succeeded in controlling Africans as more and more of them became militant and politicised due mostly to the political climate in the neighboring states. Writing about the failure of the Botha regime to influence Black people through the media in general, Tomaselli (1986: 9) argues:

Preferred reading intended by the manufacturers/producers of media technologies and contents were not axiomatic. While generally, it was argued that the media produce a dominant reality through naturalising codes used by the media – that is, they produce apparently ‘natural’ recognitions – it also became clear that oppositional readings could not be prevented.

It must be said that not all the Afrikaners employed at the SABC were willing partners in entrenching the policies of the regime. As such, it is possible that some news items and other subversive material would find their way onto the air.<sup>18</sup> Ryan (2000: 42) makes a similar point when she observes that the then Chief Executive of the SABC, Riaan Eksteen, tried to influence news items but failed. On the one hand, his expulsion in 1988 for tampering with the news attests to the tight grip that the state had on the SABC. On the other hand though, his expulsion aptly illustrates that some Afrikaners at the SABC were ready to challenge the blatant use of the Corporation for narrow political gains. To a large degree this incident offsets the perception that all Afrikaners at the SABC upheld and promoted the policies of the Afrikaner regime. Although this incident occurred much later, one can surmise that such incidents happened throughout the history of the SABC since, like blacks, Afrikaners could not be regarded as homogenous. By the late 1980s though, change was inevitable and such activism by Afrikaners would easily find its way to the public domain.

---

<sup>18</sup> Cf. the incident in Chapter Three in which Ntlebi, a news reader at the Xhosa-language radio station, uses veiled language to attack the regime.

## **Radio Bantu: Creativity under Threat**

The early 1950s to the 1960s saw an escalation in the extension of radio to Africans. Full redistribution services were allowed in Soweto to the predominant language groups; namely Zulu, Xhosa and Northern Sotho. This perhaps was a tacit admission by the Nationalists that Africans were no longer confined to the homelands, but were spread throughout the country. For instance, in August 1952 the Rediffusion Service was established for this purpose. Hamm (1995: 228) offers interesting statistics of this development in broadcasting when he points out that:

The Rediffusion Services had reached an estimated 84,000 persons at its peak in 1956. In 1961, with expanded daily transmissions for Blacks carried on English and Afrikaans services, a survey commissioned from Franklin Research (Pty) Ltd revealed that there are some 5,000,000 “adult Bantu listeners” to these programmes. By 1963, with full-time FM transmission of Radio Bantu in its second year, the audience had doubled to more than a million, and a similar survey showed some 2,300,000 “daily listeners” by the end of the decade. In 1974, a survey commissioned by the SABC from Market Research Africa (Pty) Ltd concluded that Radio Bantu had more or less regular audience of approximately 9,359,000, and that “radio penetration” of the total black population (i.e. those who had access to a radio and listened to it at least sometimes) had reached 97.7 per cent

Broadcasts in three African languages soon spread to the townships in the West of Johannesburg (Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho and Zulu) and Pretoria (in Tswana and Northern Sotho). By 1960 both the spread of broadcasting to Africans and the hold of

Afrikaners on broadcasting in general assumed major proportions. To increase accessibility FM transmitters were installed in December 1961, and broadcasting spread to Southern Sotho. A major development at this stage was the erection of the Zulu section of Radio Bantu in Durban on January 1, 1963 and the Xhosa section of Radio Bantu in Grahamstown, in the Border area, on June 1, 1963. Venda and Tsonga were first catered for in February 1965, transmitting from stations in the Transvaal province.

The pace of the spread of broadcasting for Africans seems to have intensified the more political unrest escalated. This in itself betrays the attendant realisation of the power of radio by the government. For instance, by 1963 broadcasting had not only spread to Cape Town (Xhosa) and Natal (Zulu), but other African languages were also catered for.<sup>19</sup> More language groups were given airtime, thereby not only producing programmes that are suitable for them in the allotted social and geographic spaces but also to paint a propagandist picture of a peaceful, content populace to the outside world.

However, this commendable attempt by the government to cater for the rest of the citizens should not be understood as a generosity or change of heart. If anything, the government might have been attempting to counter 'pirate radios' such as Radio Freedom, which were largely subversive to it. Some of these radio stations operated from outside South Africa and carried news of independence in neighbouring countries. The regime may have hoped that by offering the citizens 'their' own radio broadcasts, they would desist from listening to 'poisonous' radio stations. To ensure that nothing slipped through their fingers, '[i]n 1939 a radio reception facility was erected at Panorama outside Johannesburg to monitor all

---

<sup>19</sup>Instead of Xhosa, Zulu and Northern Sotho only.

“hostile” radio broadcasts (Union 1969: 12).” And to strengthen their stranglehold on other broadcasts, the government passed the Broadcasting Act No. 3 of 1952.

By extending broadcasting at this stage, it would seem that the government was trying to have a ‘voice’ and influence in the African locations. In other words, it wanted to propagate its agenda and policy to the wider indigenous population. Indeed, radio would play a crucial role in the creation of the homelands later (Transkei 1976, Bophuthatswana 1977, Venda 1979 and Ciskei 1981), and these radio stations were used as mouthpieces of the puppet homeland leaders. Apart from dividing blacks according to tribal lines, the homelands served as buffer states in the event the neighbouring independent countries attacked the apartheid regime.

The 1950s - 1960s then can be seen as a decades in which broadcasting spread throughout the country. The move to establish radio in Grahamstown was in tandem with the establishment of African-language stations throughout the country. By the mid 1960s, most African ethnic groups had their ‘own’ radio stations, whose broadcast material was still controlled by the Afrikaner regime. The intention of the regime seems to have been less candid at the time as the ‘new’ radio stations were named after specific ethnic groups such as Radio Xhosa, Radio Zulu, Radio Tswana, and so on.<sup>20</sup>

At the beginning broadcasting time for black people was limited to a few minutes and gradually increased over time. According to Gunner (2000a: 216) ‘air space was first given to programmes in Zulu in April 1941, broadcasting from the Durban studios of the SABC.’ At first the few minutes of broadcast were dedicated to the war effort, perhaps disregarding what the African listeners expected. For instance Fourie (:8-10) notes that during the World War II

---

<sup>20</sup>See Appendix G for the old and the new names of radio stations as well as the dates they were established.

broadcast was only done at night for black people and this was stopped after the war in 1945. In 1949 only half an hour was dedicated to Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho speakers and this was upscaled to 16 hours daily in 1952. Despite this limited exposure to radio, in 1956 there were 14000 subscribers. Judging by listeners' letters to the Xhosa-language radio station people were not satisfied with this since that time was also used to broadcast foreign material such as 'European songs'. In other words, some listeners felt that the playing of 'European songs' further limited their airtime. As early as 1965, a listener from Cape Town, for instance, complained<sup>21</sup>:

May I know what you people are up to? The Europeans did us favour of giving us time to listen to our music. Why do you play English during Xhosa time? Do you think you are doing justice to your people? As a matter of fact I do not understand English. Bear in mind that some of us have AM sets and their listening time is too short for words. Please play Xhosa songs during that time.<sup>22</sup>

African broadcasters may have been aware of this social engineering and deliberately played songs with messages that were meant to enlighten black people about what was happening around them. Coplan (1985: 165) comments that in the 'heyday of passive resistance and anti-pass campaigns ... despite censorship, musicians and African broadcasters used recordings to spread the message of inspiration and protest, and heartened the resistance.' Just like the stage plays at the time, songs could be interpreted in many ways, and so they

---

<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, earlier letters from the SABC archives in Port Elizabeth could not be accessed, since the Xhosa-language station has moved from town to town and a lot of material seems to have been lost in the process. It is also critical at this stage to note that all the letters in this study are original; they are neither translated nor edited by I.

<sup>22</sup> UWAPE L11, 1965. Note: AM sets refer to regionalised transmitters that catered for ethnic-specific areas like the Eastern Cape for Xhosa or KwaZulu for the Zulus etc. FM sets have a far better reach.

could be used to subvert the master ideology of apartheid. Radio plays became very popular as they captured the audience's imagination. All African language radio stations would thrill the audiences with stories that touched on the 'lived life' of the audiences. The Xhosa-language radio audiences were not exempt from this.

The last assertion does not suggest that the Xhosa-language radio listeners were homogenous. What it points to is that at a given time thousands of listeners converged around their radio sets to listen to the plays. Despite the concerted effort to divide blacks on ethnic lines, radio sets were easily and proudly shared among family, friends and even strangers. Radio plays, in particular, seem to have brought people from different socio/cultural groups together. A listener from East London emphasises this point in a letter written to the Xhosa-language radio station in 1960 when she writes:

How thrilling is the play '*Ufikizolo*'! On Tuesdays we run short of space because people from parties rush into our house which is the only one in our area that has an FM set – you know how drunks are! They all praise this play, but complain that the duration is very short.<sup>23</sup>

The fact that some listeners would even leave 'parties' and rush to the house with an FM transmitter in order to listen to the play is telling here. This not only suggests that radio plays were popular, but also that the audiences were both entertained and informed by the plays. A response to the same play by a listener from Cape Town, Eddison T. Dzatyana, further attests to the popularity of the plays when he writes:

---

<sup>23</sup>UWAPE L15, 1960.

I cannot help but say a word about this thrilling story, 'Ufikizolo'. It is really a masterpiece. I never miss it. When the story is introduced even if we were talking on top of our voices, it quietens us. By these words I am trying to encourage the youth who wrote the story. Who is he by the way? Dambile, keep it up Sonny.<sup>24</sup>

### **Xhosa-Language Radio: A Tool of Control?**

By the time the homelands were created in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the power of radio had long been established. It came as no surprise then that each homeland was 'rewarded' with its own radio station. These stations, as expected, served the egos of homeland leaders. Radio Ciskei, for instance, broadcast both in English and Xhosa so that it could appeal to both the urban and the rural black audience. However, Radio Xhosa remained dominant in the area and elsewhere. One of the major differences between the competing stations, and a factor which may have worked in the favour of the Xhosa-language radio, is that Radio Ciskei did not broadcast dramas. In a sense, it marginalised a vast number of audiences who were 'already there.'

While it may have been difficult to wrest the audiences that the Xhosa-language radio had built over the years, the omission of dramas may have made it even more difficult for the new station to cause any major upset. Judging by the letters to the station, it would seem that the Xhosa-language radio station was not only maintaining its old audiences, but was forming new ones as well. On the occasion of the settlement of the station in King William's Town from Grahamstown, for instance, H.M. Mabandla from Carthcart wrote:

---

<sup>24</sup>UWAPE L13, 1965.

On behalf of the listeners in the Carthcart area, I assure you that we are satisfied with your broadcast from the new place and also wish you success in the future and promise you our firm support.<sup>25</sup>

The fact that Mabandla purports to write on behalf of other listeners is significant in this study. As stated above, in spite of everything Radio Xhosa kept its audiences. Its programmes continued to appeal to many, even though it had moved to another town. This illustrates the maintenance of high quality programmes that listeners identified with and liked, regardless of the concerted attempts by the Afrikaners government to rid the programmes of any subversive material. Radio drama would be one of those programmes. In the same vein R.B. Gwente from Grahamstown writes:

I just wish you happiness in King William's Town. Though you have left us, we are still enjoying your programmes and we hope that you will be successful in your new environment.<sup>26</sup>

Another listener from Grahamstown, Nilindile Rita Ndeya, applauds the station for the quality of its programmes. Unlike the other two listeners, Ndeya makes an interesting point in her letter about education. In her letter she writes, 'Keep it up and do not stop educating us.' What Ndeya says here is important for two reasons. Firstly, it appears that listeners of the Xhosa-language radio station turned to the radio to be 'educated'. This may hint at the hunger that listeners had for education. The education they could not get at school could somewhat be gained by listening to the radio.

---

<sup>25</sup>UWAPE L16, 1966.

<sup>26</sup>UWAPE L17, 1966.

Secondly and tied to the first point, it would seem the original intent of the Afrikaner regime to give Africans programmes with a 'conscious educational purpose' was succeeding. 'Educational purpose' in this regard though would be limited to socio-cultural issues as opposed to blatant political messages by the state. Perhaps it would be enough at this stage to suggest that radio was regarded as the reliable opinion-maker among the illiterate and semi-literate listeners. The programmes reached far and wide since the FM transmitter ensured a wider reach and coverage.<sup>27</sup> Prior to that, the government used a far more localised transmitter, MW, which catered for large cities such as Durban, Bloemfontein, Port Elizabeth and Cape Town. In addition to that more and more households acquired radio sets, thus increasing the government's potential to reach more people but audiences managed to avoid any indoctrination.<sup>28</sup> According to Hendy (2000: 220):

Almost four out of every ten black South Africans were avoiding Radio Bantu even by the end of the 1970's – usually tuning in to the American and British pop and rock of a commercial station transmitting from Mozambique. When later on Radio Bantu was divided into different ethnic stations the same attempt to sow division between ethnic groups continued... the SABC 'theorised and programmed in accordance with state ideology' though in its case the intention was to exaggerate ethnic differences rather than neutralize them.

The agenda of total control over mindset that marked the SABC in relation to African language stations can be seen in the way that each ethnic group was targeted for specific

---

<sup>27</sup> The FM transmitter began working in 1961.

<sup>28</sup> See Akwe below for some figures.

information. Hamm (cited in Hendy, 2000: 220; also see Akwe, 1992: 2) believes that Radio Bantu had something specific for each tribe, like music, news items and other programmes. Music, in particular, played a critical role in attracting listeners to the radio. However, that music was always interspersed with programmes that were meant to propagate apartheid, such as the news and current affairs programmes (e.g. *Apha Naphaya* – Here and there). In the letters in the archives of Umhlobo Wenene FM (1996) in Port Elizabeth, many listeners complain about music. As pointed out above, music was ethnic-specific and intended to confine that specific group to its ‘region’. Commenting on the same issue, Akwe (1992: 1) notes:

There are nine different language services and the SABC broadcasts to specific areas; some Zulu hostel dwellers here, a patch of Ndebele speakers there or a settlement of South Sotho-speaking migrants there. Zulu is found on every transmitter in the Zulu heartland of Natal but on only one in the Orange Free State and on only three in Transvaal, apart from Johannesburg. And Radio Xhosa is found all over the Eastern and Western Cape but not at all in Natal, because Xhosas are not meant to be in Natal.

In this regard, Hamm and Akwe offer interesting information. According to Hamm (cited in Hendy, 2000: 220) for instance, ‘As early as 1974 in South Africa, nearly 98% of the black population had access to radio and listened to it sometimes.’ Akwe (1992: 1) adds some interesting statistics. He points out that in a week in 1992, ‘some 82% of urban blacks have listened to radio ... and have radio in their house (compared with a probable 4 million television households – the SABC says it has 2,5 million licensed viewers).’

The following figures confirm the crucial role that radio still plays within the community. According to Akwe (1992: 1) the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) survey of the SABC in 1989 found that:

- 9 out of 10 Black people depended on radio for news.
- 63% believed what they heard on radio.
- 82% media-credibility rate – on the scale of 1-100.
- Radio Zulu – 80% listeners of the station say the station completely satisfies their needs.
- Radio Xhosa – 84% listeners of the station say the station completely satisfies their needs.
- Radio Sotho – 83.3% listeners of the station say the station completely satisfies their needs.
- 76% listeners found radio the easiest to understand.
- 68% felt entertained by radio.
- 71% felt informed.

Chapter Three will examine the audience and the contestation that characterised the relationship between the managers of the Xhosa-language radio station and playwrights. The chapter demonstrates that the contestation was mainly subtle, although there are indications that at times open clashes occurred. Among other things, the chapter will illustrate how Mandla Myeko attempted to tone down political messages in the plays. At the same time though, instances of the managers' intolerance and vigilance will be scrutinized. This will be done with a view to highlighting the perceived clashes that characterised the playwright/managers' relationship at the station.

---

---

### **Chapter Three:**

## **Audience, State Control and Contestations of Tradition in Radio Plays<sup>29</sup>**

---

---

### **Who is the Audience?**

For any performance to be meaningful there has to be a responsive audience.<sup>30</sup> The active relationship between the performer and the audience is immediately noticeable in traditional performances such as *iintsomi* (fables) and *imibongo* (praises). The performers of these traditional performances can, depending on the response of the audience, improvise, thus accommodating the immediate needs of the audiences. The audience knows that they have to show appreciation to get the best out of the performer. Radio audiences are not any different in this regard. The debates that ensued after each episode and, most importantly, the letters sent to the radio station are just two indications of audience participation. This active participation is important for a number of reasons.

Firstly, by appreciating the performance the audience seems to ‘direct’ the proceedings for their own needs. For instance, there are many repeats of the plays owing to the demands of audiences through their letters. This form of interaction not only ensures the repetition of popular plays, but also gives playwrights an idea of what the audiences like. In other words,

---

<sup>29</sup> The first part of this Chapter was presented at the African Studies Association of the United Kingdom Biennial Conference at Birmingham University (09/09/02 – 11/09/02) under the theme ‘What Can We Learn from Africa?’.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Barber (1987: 351), where she makes an example of interactive performance between *Eg’ung’un’ojetravelling* theatre groups and the audiences.

playwrights take their cue from the audience, thus maintaining the rapport between them. Secondly, the feedback that the managers get from the listeners helps in the sustainability of the programme. Unlike other programmes, radio plays have been a feature of African language stations for decades. Recurring themes are partly a result of a positive response from the audiences. It is this 'turn-taking' that traditional performances also relied on. In a word, innovation is predicated by responses from the audience. As Ellis (1954: 154) points out, '[critics] now agree that dramatic art has no other purpose than to stir responses in an audience, that the drama as art form is not truly complete in the absence of an adequate response in an audience.' However, the performer too is in a position of power in so far as s/he can create the necessary mood as well as manipulate the performance space for her/his own ends. In this symbiotic scenario then, performance constitutes audience, and the audience makes the performance possible.

Nevertheless, the relationship between the audience and the electronic media is different from that of traditional performances. Unlike in the traditional performances, the way individuals engage with radio plays varies and is flexible. Unlike *iimbongi* and storytellers who have a direct and physical presence with the audience, radio deals with an abstract and imagined audience. A stark difference is that the radio audience is removed from the performance activity. In other words, it is not present at the time of performance proper. By the time the play is broadcast it has been listened to, modified and packaged by the producers and managers of the station. Thus, not only do audiences become second consumers of the product, but also the product has been prepared for them beforehand. The power relations then, unlike in traditional performances, are dangerously skewed against the audiences because the message is heavily mediated before it reaches the consumer. This, of course, does not take away the primary duty of the audience to interpret and make meaning out of the text.

The power of radio also lies in the fact that radio reaches out to its audience wherever they are. The audiences are attracted to listen through the use of different means such as music, well-known announcers, signal tune and actors. Most importantly, good programmes play an important role in attracting and retaining audiences. All radio stations conduct statistics to determine listenership numbers, but such numbers are not always accurate. Unlike theatre-goers, radio audiences are very 'elusive' and 'independent'. The notion that radio has an already-existing audience does not guarantee that at any given time the audience is listening. As suggested earlier, audiences are diverse and as such have different tastes and needs. These diverse entities (youth, women, the illiterate etc) pose a challenge for radio practitioners who must strive to satisfy them all.

The role of the narrator is critical in this regard. According to Sibiya (2002), 'Early isiZulu radio drama, specifically Joshua Mlaba's *uNdlebekazizwa*, employed the narrator who introduces and links various scenes and also serves as a guide for the audience's interpretation of the play. The narrator explicitly interpellates a specific audience.'<sup>31</sup>

Achieving this may not only be difficult, it may also be impossible. As a result, this diverse audience may be conceived of as a 'unitary collective' of dispersed individuals. Managers of the station target this 'collective' as a known entity or as a mass. In this regard, Spitulnik (1994: 20) quotes Ang as saying, 'the notion of 'audience' as a 'taxonomic collective' plays a crucial instrumental role for media industries, by creating the sense of an object which is fixed, knowable, and ultimately controllable.'

---

<sup>31</sup> The idea of using a narrator in radio plays comes from K.E. Masinga, who was a senior producer of Zulu radio dramas. He was also the director of radio and later television drama *UDeliwe*. Hubert Sishi, who was mentored by Masinga, also uses the narrator in his dramas.

To an extent, radio audiences are controllable in as far as they have little or no say in programming, but they certainly are not 'fixed' and 'knowable'. The managers may target a specific group but they cannot force it to consume the programming. In other words, the power resides with the audience members – they decide to tune in or switch off the radio. However, that choice is minimal in communities where radio is the only source of entertainment and news. To a large extent the managers relied on the fact that they knew that there were audiences out there who listened to their favourite programmes. In a sense, the controllers of the station may have thought that they knew these audiences and consequently attempted to deal with it as a fixed and passive collectivity. However, this may just have been a myth that was propelled by a need to control the audience. In fact, their knowledge of the audiences was based on their research figures and to an extent on the number of radio sets that were purchased by black people.

### **Audience by Numbers: Number of Audiences**

Now let us turn to the elusive question of audiences. This fluid entity, the audience, who possessed radio sets were known to listen to their radios 'sometimes'. As pointed out, the audience at the time listened to few popular programmes to save their batteries and radio practitioners were aware of this. What this view indicates is the fact that media institutions such as radio and television had an abstract view of audiences and could not have known their number with certainty. If anything, the audience was treated as a commodity and not necessarily individuals to interact with. Writing about television audiences Birgitta Hoijer (cited in Alasuutari, 1999: 179) argues that:

Both broadcasting institutions and academic research usually have some abstract collective in mind when studying and theorising audiences. Public service and commercial television broadcasting institutions, for instance, spend large sums of money to obtain daily audience ratings, that is, aggregated quantitative data. Behind this, we find the logic of regarding audiences as commodity more than as experiencing subjects. Basically it is not the audience that is important, but the audience figures... The technique of measuring audiences with people meters sometimes does not even require watching or paying any attention to television. Being present in the room (with the television set on, which is automatically recorded) is sufficient for registering as an audience.

Hoijer's point is true of radio audiences. The view of the audience is of paramount importance when one looks at radio statistics. While statistics collected by the Xhosa-language radio may not be completely accurate determinants of who the audience is, they can nonetheless indicate a very interesting feature about audiences. The manner in which statistics are done seems to look at the possible number of people who 'listen' to the station in a given hour. Although Hoijer registers a very important fact about the ratings, the audience numbers as released by the Xhosa-language radio are important in that they give an indication of the number of those who may have been listening to radio at different times. Some audience statistics have been based on the income while others have been based on age. While these are helpful in determining the target group, they are pure speculation. As will be shown below, age and household income seem to play a crucial role in determining the

audience. Radio plays were broadcast in particular time slots to maximize listenership. For instance there was a broadcast at 8'o clock at night when all the family members are thought to be at home. The episode was repeated at 1'o clock during the day to coincide with workers' lunchtime and housewives. McQuail (1997: 70) makes a similar point about television viewers when he says 'daytime radio soap operas, although often dismissed as superficial and mindless stories to fill time, were often found significant by their [women] listeners. They provide a source of advice and support a role model of housewives and mother, or an occasion for emotional release through laughter or tears.' In the same veinHobson (quoted by Hall, 1980: 105) avers:

The radio, for the most part, is listened to during the day while they [women] are engaged in domestic labour, housework and child care... In some cases, switching on the radio is part of the routine of beginning the day; it is, in fact, the first *boundary* in the working day. In terms of the 'structurelessness' of the experience of housework, the time boundaries provided by radio are important in the women's own division of their time.

These assumptions though are very vague and unreliable. The closest one can get to the number of listeners is by looking at the letters; in as far as radio is concerned. In this regard Hamm offers interesting statistics of the then Radio Bantu. According to Hamm (1995: 228-229), '(t)he count of letters by Radio Bantu studios as program requests or entries in contests, would seem suspect as an indicator of audience size, but in fact these figures match the profile charted by other statistics.' The number of letters does not only show a dramatic

increase in listenership, but also in the ownership of radio sets as it has been pointed out earlier, with the installation of the FM transmitter, more and more black people gained access to broadcast. Hamm points out that ‘Blacks owned some 103,000 radio receivers by 1966, and only two years later there were more than 2,000,000 black owned sets.’ The following figures give a clear picture of that increase:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of letter</b>
1962	332,302
1963	699,433
1964	1274,695
1965	2357,168
1966	3412,694
1967	65000,000

Radio Bantu Audience Letters 1962-1967

The number of letters confirms the expansion of broadcasting Fourie notes in the period 1948 – 1960 and the FM services played a critical role in that expansion (6). With more black people having access to radio, the increase in programmes and airtime, it became more challenging for the government to control the content of radio texts. As a result, 1960 saw the creation of the Bantu Programmes Control Board with, according to Tomaselli et al (1989: 60), thirty five ‘white staff with knowledge of black languages in order to prevent disparaging comments from being made on air regarding government policies’; a point Myeko alluded to in our interview. This control would characterise the contestation that seem to have existed between the managers of the Xhosa language radio station and the producers/managers.

## Anticipation and Expectation

Having looked at the broad structure of the SABC and their 'hidden' policy on African language radio stations, it is not surprising that plays with overtly political themes, such as *Apho Sikhala Khona Isakhwatsha*, had only a short life span on air.<sup>32</sup> In order to ensure that a play stayed on air, the writer/producers created plays that, at face value, adhered to the dictates of the station, while underneath they criticised some of the values they were being coerced to uphold. Many Xhosa plays, for example, seem to denigrate men and women who go and live in town, making them prostitutes, thieves, *shebeen* queens and *tsotsis*, and hence these plays appear to conform to apartheid policy by portraying Africans as naturally suited to staying in homelands and on farms or rural areas.<sup>33</sup> Hamm (1995: 228) puts this succinctly when he says:

Radio Bantu sets itself the task of inducing the majority of black South Africans to accept their "homeland" status and to view it as independence and development, while at the same time socialising a small cadre of the urban population into a work ethic.

In most of the plays, 'rural' was tantamount to 'good life', 'dignity' and 'prosperity'. Sounds of men working on the field, women laughing gleefully on the river banks, boys herding cattle and birds chirping in the trees created the impression of a life of abundance and fulfilment. However, such depictions of traditional life were of course open to different types of interpretation, as an examination of *Buzani Kubawo* (1981) below will illustrate.

---

<sup>32</sup> Many popular plays were re-broadcast by popular demand. *Apho Sikhala Khona Isakhwatsha* was never re-broadcast during the apartheid era, despite its popularity.

<sup>33</sup> Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1948) is often criticised for this.

The main protagonists in the play are Gugulethu and Nomampondomise who are in a love relationship. However, in observance of Xhosa tradition, they have been forced to marry people they do not like. On the one hand, Nomampondomise's parents have already accepted a herd of cattle from Mcunukelwa as *lobola*.<sup>34</sup> After getting word from Gugulethu that he will send his *lobola* soon, Nomampondomise approaches her parents and tells them that she will not marry Mcunukelwa. Although disappointed, her parents relent and send back Mcunukelwa's cattle and wait for Gugulethu's. Gugulethu, on the other hand, has been forced by his parents to marry Thobeka, despite his protests. Even when he tells his father that he has already proposed marriage to Nomampondomise, he is ignored. His father tells him point blank that according to custom and tradition, it is the prerogative of parents to arrange a marriage. Gugulethu is devastated: he knows that he will not be able to fulfil his promise to Nomampondomise. As a result of his father's demands that he marry Thobeka, he temporarily loses his mind.

From then on he refers everything concerning his marriage to Thobeka to his father, hence the title *Buzani Kubawo* ('Ask Father'). Nomampondomise is shocked to read about Gugulethu's marriage and takes him to court for breach of promise. He is sentenced but his father pays his fine to save him from spending time in prison. After embracing Gugulethu in court, Nomampondomise commits suicide. Gugulethu is shattered and leaves home forever, and becomes a police officer in Umtata. Ten years later his father sends 'his wife,' Thobeka, and 'their three children' to visit Gugulethu.<sup>35</sup> Out of rage, Gugulethu kills them all in their sleep before handing himself to the police. Gugulethu is sentenced to hang.

---

<sup>34</sup> *Lobola* is a bride price. According to Xhosa culture, if a girl does not want to marry someone who has already paid a *lobola*, her chosen husband-to-be must pay an equal number of cattle to nullify and stop the proposed marriage.

<sup>35</sup> According to Xhosa culture a wife whose husband is either deceased or infertile has to sleep with someone close to the husband to produce children. The *ukungenwa* custom was invoked in the case of Gugulethu because he had gone away for a long time and did not want to come back home.

The play clearly calls into question some customs and traditions that were still practiced at the time. By the end of the play, staunch traditionalists such as Zwilakhe, Gugulethu's father, realise that their rigid adherence to some antiquated customs have been a mistake. In fact, Zwilakhe asks the judge if he could take his son's place on the gallows. In essence, it is the tradition of forced marriage that would be sent to the gallows. As a custodian of that old-fashioned custom, Zwilakhe represents a custom that should be done away with. However, the judge denies his request. This denial would, undoubtedly, be a talking point among the audience who would debate as to whether Zwilakhe should have died and not Gugulethu, the agent of change. Everyone in court appears disgusted when Gugulethu details how he had killed Thobeka and the children, but when he breaks into a song they join him, indicating that although they do not necessarily condone the deed, they understand and sympathise with him. The play ends with Gugulethu's voice, the voice of youth and change, addressing the court, and by extension, the audiences, thereby upstaging the voice of his father, the arch-traditionalist.

Gugulethu does, however, extend an olive branch to his father who is reduced to tears during the trial. At one point, he addresses his father: *Bawokhululeka andikubeki tyala. Khululeka, le nto ayenziwanga nguwe, yasekwa kwamhla mnene ukuba inqwelo yam yoba yile* ('Father be free; I do not blame you. Be free, you are not to blame for what has happened, it was planned like this from the beginning that I would go like this'). One message that goes out to the audience concerns the belief that if you turn your back on 'outdated' traditions you will anger the ancestors. This play seems to question that proposition and one does not get the impression that Gugulethu has angered the ancestors.

While *Ingqumbo Yeminyanya*, which became one of the greatest radio plays (and was later adapted into a television drama), deals to some degree with the theme of adherence to culture, *Buzani Kubawo* seems to question and dispel some of the dogmas in Xhosa tradition. On balance then, *Buzani Kubawo* is a good example of a play that complicates questions of ‘tradition’ and so interrogates the master plan of homelands as the ‘natural’ destination of Africans. The foregrounding of tradition worked both to entertain audiences as well as to ensure that the play was broadcast. Audiences identified more with the theme of love since their lives centred on tradition. For instance, the fact that the listener sympathises with Gugulethu in the end hints at the need for society to challenge some customs and traditions. Zwilakhe’s repentance and remorse also point to this fact. The play, while it deals with matters that are deep-rooted in Xhosa tradition and culture, also encourages self-criticism on the part of society. Most importantly, it critiques the singular manner of looking at tradition that the managers hoped to uphold.

### **Radio Texts Reception**

Radio drama is a wonderful medium for awakening one’s creativity, thus quickening the spirit of invention. It is one medium particularly dependent on the author’s craft and imagination because of its non-visual nature. The spoken word then is therefore of tremendous significance in radio drama.

Satyo and Jadezweni’s (2003: 1) assertion here is noteworthy because it highlights the craft of the playwright and the power of the spoken word. Since radio ‘is a blind medium’ (Brooke, 1985: 36 as cited by Satyo and Jadezweni, 2003: 1), it heavily relies on the voice,

which crosses all boundaries. The playwright has to use his creativity to bring the imagined world to life in the imagination of the listener. This chapter will explore the use of the ‘invisible voice’ as a vehicle of messages in the three plays: *USomagqabi* (1980), *Nangona Intliziyo Ithatha Ibeka* (1987) and *UHlohlesakhe* (1979). In dealing with this issue, the present chapter will draw on Victoria Lee Erickson’s notion of ‘ethnocommunalism’ to point out that the ‘voice’ was used as a tool to communicate with the audience who shared common values and aspirations with the playwright. In this study, ‘ethnocommunalism’ suggests a community that is drawn together to listen to the enactment of the members’ lives. The ‘voice’ here refers both to the voice the audiences listen to on the radio, as well as the symbolic ancestral voice it invokes in the common consciousness of the audience as they listen. One may contend that the plays were used as tools of entertainment, enlightenment and education, as Dorcas Funani of East London attests in the following letter:<sup>36</sup>

I wish to encourage the Xhosa-speaking announcers in the work they do for us. We always listen to your programmes. The programmes you broadcast are very helpful to us as they enlighten and entertain us. There is no time for ignorance for Xhosas now. Radio Bantu does much to educate its listeners. We wish you good time in your work.

Some of these plays were, in crucial ways, inaccessible to some managers of the station because they did not share the same cultural and linguistic signification with the listeners and the playwright. In a sense there was not only a language barrier between them; they also lacked a deeper understanding of each other’s lifestyles, aspirations, cultural history and more

---

<sup>36</sup>UWAPE L3, 1970.

importantly, the nuanced meaning in the language use. Just like the oppressed people in the Philippines, Xhosa audiences and playwrights used a variety of stratagems to keep their history alive. Writing about the relationship between the oppressed (Katipunans) and the oppressors (Christian friars) in the Philippines, Erickson (1993: 148) suggests that the oppressed used drama or *Pasyon* to 'keep the historical memory alive.' *Pasyon* was similar to plays that used linguistic tools such as *izaci namaqhala* (idioms) that would be unfamiliar to the managers. As the play about Gonondo will reveal, some plays were based on legends that were known to the audiences only. On the whole, it is suggested the supernatural voice that the three dramas used was not only transcendental; it was also beyond the control of the master ideology of apartheid.

Throughout the study, the encode/decode trope suggested by Hall (1980, see also Alasuutari, 1999: 27) has been used. Sometimes radio texts carry coded messages and the reading or listening public decodes such messages. Using radio space in such a fashion was not only confined to those who sympathised with the regime; radio personnel in general used the space for their agendas. As Hall (1980: 14) puts it, 'media messages were encoded from within the dominant frame or dominant global ideology, by media personnel who operated professionally from within the hegemonic order, often reproducing messages associated with the political and economic elite.' One may contend that playwrights would use a language that would not be accessible to the managers of the station, while it would be to the first-language speakers of the Xhosa language. In this way they would be interacting with the audience and not prescribing to them. In this regard, it can be argued that the audience is active in 'extracting wisdom' that they need from texts (Barber, 1997: 8). It should also be noted that at some level audiences listen to plays as individuals, while at the socio-political level they do so as the *affected* group. It is true that the community had been organised in

response to the political oppression to which they were subjected. As an affected group they tended to use any mass medium and any platform to engage the government. Hendy (2000: 120) substantiates this with:

Orality generates a powerful participatory mystique. Because the act of listening simultaneously to spoken words forms hearers into a group (while reading turns people in on themselves), orality fosters a strong collective sensibility. People listen to a common voice, or to the same music, act and react at the same time. They become an aggregate entity – an audience – and whether or not they all agree with or like what they hear, they are unified around that common experience.

In many ways, this paradox is at the heart of the isolation/connectedness dichotomy that is found in any listening space. As Shwayiba stated in our interview, audiences listen to radio drama as individuals sometimes, although they always share their listening experiences.

Unlike spectators of a soccer match or audiences of stage theatre who would converge on a given venue, radio listeners are dispersed and fairly isolated. To an extent, this dispersion may lead to an imagined sense of isolation. This does not discount the fact that in some cases audiences listen as a family or as groups. Even then, as some of the letters suggest, ‘dead silence’ falls in the room during the broadcast of the plays. In other words, even in situations in which audiences converge, they listen as individuals – listening becomes an internal, personal activity.

However, due to the prevailing political situation at the period in question, the Xhosa audiences were united in searching for answers to their socio-political realities. As such, they shared some expectations and would have approached plays and other texts from a common point of view. The discussions that ensued afterwards on buses, in the workplace and in the homes where ordinary people met, attest to this unity. Individual audiences shared their experiences and understanding of the play, thereby decoding and making sense of the messages they may have extracted from the plays. Therefore, some messages could be changed and remoulded for specific social (and sometimes political) purposes. As Barber (2000: 45) comments about Yoruba popular theatre audiences:

The audiences co-constitute the plays, not only by their continual response of laughter and commentary as the show is in progress – responses which encourage the actors to expand, contract, or adapt their set pieces on the spot – but also because they take it upon themselves to convert the narrative into moral lessons which they can take away and apply to their own lives.

For our purposes in the present study, sharing here should be understood to mean that the members of the audience actively engaged with the plays by discussing them among themselves. The audiences took the plays seriously by actually applying the ‘lessons’ learnt in the plays to their own lives. In other words, they were not just engaged in useless discussions that did not lead anywhere, the plays actually impacted on their lives. The letters from the Xhosa-language radio listeners point to the sharing of frameworks of understanding.

The letter by Keke, for instance, illustrates this point clearly.<sup>37</sup> In the letter, Keke points out that everywhere people talk about Dambile Thuswa's play, *Sazela Ndiyeke* (Guilty Conscience – 1970), whose main character is remorseful for treating other characters harshly. As can be expected, many plays were moralistic as the playwrights attempted to deal with social evils such as cheating (*Umtu Lilahle Elinothuthu* – Do not trust anyone), insubordination (*InkomoEnotshoba Ayinqandwa* – Stubbornness) and political domination (*UHlohlesakhe*). This engagement with the play was not only meant to represent the popularity of the plays, but also to the fact that plays had become part of everyday narratives. As a result, in their discussions audiences consciously and deliberately 'live' the plays. They help bring the micro-world of the play to the broader socio-political landscape they occupy and shape. Many audience members view plays as educational tools. By associating plays with education, they elevate their radio sets to the status of being institutions of knowledge. It is not surprising then to note that many audience members demanded the repeat of some of these plays in their letters.

As educational tools, plays opened a dialogue between playwrights (announcers) and the audience – there was always an element of give and take between them. Audiences were fully aware of the role that was played by the African announcers in that 'education'. Although Myeko denied this fact, many announcers were recruited from the teaching profession.<sup>38</sup> Alluding to this, a listener from Grahamstown, quoted previously, writes: 'I am aware that you are all trained teachers. The teachers, therefore, always teach young and old alike.' Thus, the didactic element of plays is emphasised by the listeners. This is a crucial point, as it is indicative of the respect that was accorded playwrights. As a result, one can venture to say that audiences did not expect any negativity from the plays. In other words, they listened for

---

<sup>37</sup>UWAFE L21, 1969.

<sup>38</sup> Myeko was a teacher too before he became an announcer. See our interview in Appendix B.

messages that would not only uplift their spirits, but that would also speak positively about them as a society and educate them about the world ‘out there’. Playwrights knew what their ‘role’ was in the society.

The use of idiomatic expressions in the plays also helps deepen the dialogue between the playwrights and the audience. To a large extent, the use of these idioms would work as a counter-strategy to that of the station’s managers. This expert use of idioms is perhaps best illustrated in L.J. Gqomfa’s play, *Andifanelekanga na mna mama?* In the play Gqomfa uses *ukuhlonipha* (to respect) – words that can only be accessed by older members of the community. *Ukuhlonipha* language is mainly used by *abakhwetha* (initiates), *omakoti* (young women) and older women. In the case of initiates, for instance, a coded language which is different from that of ordinary people is used. People (especially women), food, wood, fire, meat, and so forth are given names that would only be known by the initiates and those who have gone through the ritual. Subsequently, no-one who has not gone through some rites of passage would be familiar with the language, especially outsiders to the Xhosa language. Some of the words Gqomfa uses in the play are as follows (the words in the first column are commonly use by everybody while those in the middle column are only used by married women as a form of respect):

<b>Common term</b>	<b><i>Ukuhlonipha</i></b> <b>(respectful)</b>	<b>English translation</b>
<i>Imali</i>	<i>Tyaliti</i>	money
<i>Umntu</i>	<i>Umdyu</i>	a person
<i>Inja</i>	<i>Ibetha</i>	a dog
<i>Itya</i>	<i>Munda</i>	eat
<i>Thixo</i>	<i>Siwanduwandu</i>	God
<i>Indlu</i>	<i>Ndimba</i>	hut/house
<i>Izinto</i>	<i>Izishi</i>	things
<i>Mntwana</i>	<i>Mdyana</i>	child
<i>Ipolisa</i>	<i>Idyulukudu</i>	the police

Playwrights would use these idioms to communicate certain messages to a select group of audiences. This view is clearly demonstrated in the response of one of the interviewees, Faniswa Cishe, interviewed on 11 April 2003 in Kuwait, King William's Town. Asked whether playwrights mentioned white people in any critical ways in the plays, she answered:

No, in those days they could not do so. They could not say what they wanted to say. Even when they said it they had to put it in such a way that they were safe. They had rules; they did not say anything. Some plays were like *iintsomi*, but we knew what was behind the story. We knew the deep Xhosa that was used. We would know what the plays were about but the whites would not know. For instance, *you could be*

*given one word and we would know its different meanings* [emphasis added].

The last sentence is particularly crucial because it sums up the relationship between the playwrights and the audience, on the one hand. On the other hand, and most critically, it highlights the way audiences engaged with the text. The latter point is significant because it suggests that audiences play an active role in making meaning. The craft of the playwrights, therefore, hinges on their knowledge of the language and the ability of the audience to decode and interpret the text. In other words, the linguistic devices used – such as idioms and other phrases (see *inkathazo* below) – would be carefully chosen in order to transmit particular messages, while taking care not to offend officials at the SABC.

On the reverse side, however, the sharing of frameworks of understanding and interpretation by the audience may have given the managers of the station a sinister idea that *they* could deal with the audiences simplistically as a homogenous, passive group. This belief in audience passivity must have been informed by the fact that no communication existed between the managers and the listeners. Unlike playwrights, who were members of the community, managers dealt with imagined, ‘absent’ audiences. This misconception may have played itself out in the managers not only trying to control the content of the plays, but also by their allowing the repeats of those plays (such as *Buzani Kubawo* and *USomagqabi*<sup>39</sup>) that they thought may have contained messages that would divide and separate the various ethnic groups. According to this view, the broadcasting of the same message over and over again

---

<sup>39</sup>*Buzani Kubawo* was adapted from K. Thamsanqa’s novel by Mandla Myeko (also the producer). The play was broadcast in 1981, ’88, ’93 and ’97. *USomagqabi* was a 30-minute play by Kheswa and was serialised by Myeko. It was broadcast in 1981 only.

had the effect of convincing the audiences of its authenticity and truth.<sup>40</sup> In this regard, the question of agenda setting is crucial in this study as it points to a concerted and well-planned attempt by the managers to deepen apartheid among the audiences using the plays.

However, the plays contained ‘complex and reasonably diverse’ (Abercrombie, 1998: 56) messages, in contrast to what the managers may have believed. Playwrights used local and tribal knowledge to communicate their messages to the audience. So, the rapport between the audiences and the playwright became critical in ensuring that the plays educated the audiences while challenging apartheid ideology at the same time. It will also be argued that the plays that are going to be dealt with used the ‘voice’ as a tool to evade the vigilance of the managers. Left to their devices, there is no doubt that the managers would have – in a far more open manner – used plays to indoctrinate audiences. The understanding between playwrights and audiences may have worked as a bulwark against such indoctrination, as already pointed out. In examining the rapport that characterised the relationship between the playwrights and the audience, this chapter will explore the question of group identity as well as the isolation of audience members. In this chapter it will be claimed that playwrights felt they had a ‘duty’ to the audience. Consequently, the assertion will be put forward that playwrights accepted their role as teachers, and effectively used it to enlighten audiences on their terms, which were very different from the interests of the managers.

Katz (cited in Mcleod, 1991: 286) asks pertinent questions with regard to the text and the viewer. Although these questions refer to television, they are relevant to radio plays as well. He asks:

---

<sup>40</sup> Also see the use of vernacular language above.

What is a text? Where do values inhere? Who is the viewer being addressed by the text? Who is the viewer in fact? What is the role he or she is playing? What is the immediate viewing context? What is the nature of the society within which the viewer is decoding the message?

The question of how the audience makes meaning from the plays is both complex and crucial. One route into this question is to examine some of the thousands of letters written and sent in by listeners in response to Xhosa radio plays.<sup>41</sup> In 1970 alone the station recorded 3 274 688 letters.<sup>42</sup> Unfortunately, there are no letters responding to Myeko's play, but letters sent by listeners in response to other plays will be examined.<sup>43</sup> It may be assumed that letters that contained a political response to or analysis of any play were probably not kept. From the existing letters, however, an attempt can be made to deduce some of the interpretive operations and procedures followed by radio audiences in relation to Xhosa radio drama. The first step in attempting to understand such interpretive procedures is to grasp the extraordinary degree of devotion that listeners demonstrated to the radio plays. A letter writer from Alice says:

I suppose that it'll be a surprise to receive a letter from me.

I made a point to write to you and congratulate you for your contribution of an interesting play, '*Ubom ngamava*', if I remember

---

<sup>41</sup> These letters are taken from the records in the archives of Umhlobo Wenene FM. It seems that most listeners wrote their letters in English but a few of them were written in Afrikaans. Most of these letters were addressed to 'The Announcer' who is always Xhosa. The letters have not been edited in any way; I reproduced them in the way I found them in the archives. There are more letters in Appendix C. They are listed as L.1., L.2., L.3. etc.

<sup>42</sup> Umhlobo Wenene audience research, SABC online.

<sup>43</sup> In interviews people have come up with various reactions to the plays. See Mhegeba and Shwayimba interviews.

well. It was so interesting that even if I had to go out, I had to so arrange my program [*sic*] that by the stipulated time i.e the time of the play I had to be back home. I recall two occasions when I was caught up sixteen miles from home at that time. I dropped into the home of coloured people and requested them to allow me to listen to the Bantu program [*sic*] the particular play acted. We were welcome – after the play we thanked them and off we drove. It was not only interesting in the side of mere fun but also educative to the young. It is a play congruent to modern times. The play at one stage appeared to be a tragedy, but you so dexterously continued thus ultimately it became a comedy. By the time you came to your conclusion everybody was happy.<sup>44</sup>

One aspect of radio drama to which listeners often referred was that of character. One writer responded to a 1969 play, *Benditshilo* ('I Said So'). The play concerns Sibayeni who so loves his wife that, in defiance of Xhosa custom, he ends up living with her parents. Unfortunately he is not well treated by the in-laws but, because he wants to be with his wife, he endures everything. A listener observes:

This play is entertaining. To prove this when it starts, children gather around the radio and dead silence prevails. Whether one is in a bus, at the bus stop, in a train, one hears Sibayeni's name mentioned.

---

<sup>44</sup>UWAPE L4, 1970.

Pardon me for digressing; my wife has visited her people for health reasons. I keep on visiting her and I am always attacked by my friends who label me as a second Sibayeni. Let them say what they wish, I will visit my in-laws. However, I will heed the warning and guard against being captivated by the in-laws. We look forward to further such plays.<sup>45</sup>

While the first paragraph captures the sense of rapt attention which radio plays can demand, the second starts to suggest how listeners use character in radio drama as a template for commenting on their own circumstances. Here the writer uses the character as a way of legitimating his own behaviour that his friends clearly see as eccentric. The letter-writer furthermore invokes the play as a precedent for his 'untraditional' behaviour.

This interest in character is also expressed in letters that comment passionately on particular radio drama characters. An unnamed listener from Cape Town writes:

*Ek wil weet wanneer daardie skurk Zett begrawe gaan word. Watter kerk en watter predikant sal dit waag om 'n begrafnisdiens vir hom te hou?'*

(I want to know when that lousy fellow Zett will be buried. Which church and which minister will dare hold a burial service for him?)<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup>UWAPE L21, 1969.

<sup>46</sup>UWAPE L12, 1965.

In similar vein an unnamed writer from Adelaide in the Eastern Cape writes:

I must say a word of praise, though sometimes our hair stands on end because of the cruelty and merciless behaviour of some of the characters. But we look forward to every Tuesday. Please send Bra Zett and Speedo to me, I want to dip them in petrol and set them alight. I want to know the end of the play.<sup>47</sup>

Character, then, can be used to interpret plays since audiences identify with the characters. If this principle is extended to the play *Buzani Kubawo*, it might be argued that the central character, Gugulethu, forms an important template of interpretation. In the play Gugulethu is a villain, but like King Kong, he is also a tragic hero marked by ambivalence.<sup>48</sup> On the one hand, for example, the audience may judge his actions as justifiable under the circumstances, while on the other hand, his indecision and his inability to stand up to his father as well as his later murder of innocent children may make them judge his actions as unnecessary and cruel.<sup>49</sup> Thus siding with him at the end may point to the fact that they empathise with him and understand his situation. They would understand the cultural pressures that led to Gugulethu's altered mental state, the blind obedience demanded by his father, his unyielding affection for Nomampondomise and his respect for his parents. By focusing on the psychological processes of the protagonist, the writer/producer manages to harness the interest of his listeners. By being psychologically and emotionally involved, the audience

---

<sup>47</sup>UWAPE L14, 1965.

<sup>48</sup> See Mona Glasser's *King Kong* (1960: 1-5) for a brief story about Ezekiel Dhlamini, on whom the story of King Kong is based. In the play, *King Kong*, the famous boxer who is the epitome of black pride, hope, success and ambition, ends up drowning himself. He does this after being sentenced to 12 years in jail for killing his girlfriend, Joyce. In the play Joyce is seen as his downfall. While what he did is disgraceful, by drowning himself out of remorse, he is redeemed, and he becomes even more popular.

<sup>49</sup> Note: the audience and the people who fill up the court may share the same sentiment, thus blurring the line between fact and fiction. .

connect their own experiences with those of the characters. As Livingstone (cited in Curran, 1982: 288) observes:

In order to make these inferences, [listeners] may have to adopt a position of involvement in the narrative happenings – they cannot always stand at a distance. This notion of involvement may take different forms, such as identification or empathy... In other words, [listeners] may interpret events from the perspective either of a character perceived to be similar to themselves or from that of a character recognizable and familiar, as if one of their acquaintances. Empathetic or identification-based inferences are themselves associated with emotional responses.

For such a process to unfold, the writer must use linguistic devices that the audience will understand. Within this context, the audience should have a window into Gugulethu's mental workings. One device for achieving this is Gugulethu's monologues. In these monologues Gugulethu manages to take the listener into his confidence, and even makes him/her an accomplice to the murders. As the story unfolds the listener mentally journeys with the main protagonist.

At this stage, let us examine two monologues that occur after Gugulethu has been forced to marry Thobeka. The first one takes place after Gugulethu's best friend, Mzamo, is stabbed to

death.<sup>50</sup> Gugulethu sees this as an omen of bad things to come. At the sight of his friend he cries out:

*Awu yini na le ngoku ihlayo? Liqalisile! Liqalisile! Liyaduduma!  
Liyaduduma! Yahamb'intangam yandulela abaninzi. Hamba ntangam  
ulungise indawo siyeza. Bantu baseZazulwana musan'ukulila,  
zisuleni iinyembezi kuba akuhlanga bekungalindelekanga. Ezi  
ziintlola nezandulela, kusekude phambili. Alikadluli lisaduduma.  
Ziyintonina ezi zinto zenzeka namhla? Kunganina kusihla ezi zinto  
nje? Nali igazi lentangam litsawula! Bekutheni na kuqala? Yintoni na  
unobangela? Buzani kubawo! Buzani kubawo! Liyaduduma! Li-  
iyadu-du-u-u-ma!* (Transcribed from the play at the Umhlobo Wenene  
FM archives, Port Elizabeth).

(O what is this now? It has begun! It has begun! It's thundering! It's  
thundering! My friend has gone, leaving many behind. Go my friend  
and prepare the place, we are coming. People of Zazulwana don't cry;  
wipe your tears for what has happened had to happen. These are just  
the beginnings; more is yet to come. It is still thundering. What is  
happening today? Why are these things happening? Here is my  
friend's blood! What happened before? What is the reason? Ask  
father! Ask father! It's thundering! It's thu-u-underi-ng!)

---

<sup>50</sup> It is Mzamo who finally helps Gugulethu win Nomampondomise's heart.

The next monologue happens just after Nomampondomise's death while Gugulethu is still in court for breach of promise:

*Awu, yini na le ntombi kaLangeni? Uyandishiya na kweli phakade?  
Bungamyoli na ubomi kum ngaphandle kwakho? Nakanye. Maze  
undikhumbule ndiyeza; ndanga ndingahlala ngasekunene kwakho  
kwelo lizwe lizayo. Liyaduduma! Liyaduduma.. Lidlulanemiphefumlo.  
Buzani kubawo! Buzani kubawo! (Ibid).*

(O what is this, Langeni's child? Are you really leaving me in this world? Can I enjoy life without you? Never. Think about me, I am coming; I wish I could be on your right in that world. It's thundering! It's thundering. It's taking souls with it. Ask father! Ask father!)

In the monologues, one can sense loss, despair, dejection and loneliness. Central to these lamentations is the fact that many people will get hurt, while others will die. Gugulethu paints a gloomy picture of things to come. His anguish, he feels, will lead to disaster if the old traditions are not revisited. His images of thunder suggest that the ugly and unacceptable practices are disturbing even to the heavens. In almost all Xhosa plays, when disaster is about to visit, it is preceded by bad weather. The image of thunder also reflects his mood – his anger, frustration and perhaps guilt. His sense of loneliness and his helplessness call upon the sympathy and understanding of the audience. So, the audience is required to question the strictures and demands of tradition and custom. In taking this position, the play pushes listeners away from, rather than towards the Bantustans and homelands and undercuts the power that the managers assumed that they held.

## **Audience and Public**

The questions that Katz (cited in McLeod, 1981: 286) asks above are pertinent in understanding audiences. While answering them is difficult, it is imperative to make a few points about the 'contract' between the writer and the text as well as between the text and the audience. In doing so, this study will attempt to suggest that the audience is not passive but actively participates in the act of interpreting and making sense out of the text. It should also be pointed out that there is a fine line between the expectation of the writer and the interpretations of the audience. The question of interpretation and expectation is crucial in this study, as shown in *Buzani Kubawo* above, and will be further examined throughout the study. The relationship between the audience and the text is a wide one and as such this argument will be confined to radio, particularly the Xhosa-language radio.

Firstly, at the risk of repetition, the notion that the audience is a mindless and passive mass during the listening process must be discarded. However, it is true that there are some scholars such as Webster and Phalen who are critical of the view that sees the audience as a victim, a consumer or a commodity (Ettema and Whitney, 1994: 22). By looking at the audience in this fashion, one sees the audience as consumers who unquestioningly absorb the text. In this way, the advocates of this model of looking at the audience seem to suggest that one can tell how the audience would react to the media texts. According to Webster (1998: 193):

Unfortunately, the word 'mass' carries a good deal of excess baggage. For many it connotes passivity, susceptibility to influence, fickleness, or indiscriminate taste ... None of these seem essential to defining the

term as it is used here. But even if its meaning is pared back to reflect actual research practice, it is still the subject of considerable criticism. It is faulted for being too behaviorist in orientation, too insensitive to the social context of media use, and at worst, a tool for the repression and colonization of the audience by institutional interests ... All those criticisms have some merit and illustrate the limitations of any one approach to studying audiences.

Those who ascribe to this view, which would include the managers of radio stations, believe that the audience is there to be 'told' and be 'convinced'. Accordingly, the listeners of the Xhosa-language radio, for instance, would be expected to unquestioningly absorb the surface meaning of the text, whether it is news, religion or drama. This kind of thinking is glaringly clear when one looks at the plays that were broadcast. It appears that the managers of the station did not necessarily have a full knowledge of the plays that were broadcast. This does not mean that they did not monitor the process. In fact they ran their own checks to make sure that the plays conformed to the master ideology of apartheid. The suspicion of this was confirmed by what was found at the SABC archives in Port Elizabeth. While the plays had to use impeccable Xhosa in order for them to be considered for broadcast, there were several other criteria they had to meet.

On the one hand, the rules of writing drama for radio stipulate that the script should be accompanied by a summary in English. This stipulation neither considers the level of education of the writer nor does it have any exceptions. The question that arises is: for whose convenience is the summary? Surely, it is not for the playwrights or the producers who were

always Xhosa speakers. On the other hand, when the script reaches the station, the titles of the scripts were translated into Afrikaans.<sup>51</sup> For example, underneath the title of M. Nase's play *Amaphupha Aziqhamo Zincindi Krakra* is written *Drome van Betesing die Bitter Vrugte* and underneath that of M.T. Ntlebi *Umthi Ugotywa Usemtsha* is written *Buig die Boompie Solank dit Jonk is*.<sup>52</sup>

Here too the question stands, for whose benefit? For the benefit of the managers, who had to know what the content of the play was about before it was disseminated. The titles and the synopsis seem to have been the only 'written' checks they could use to ascertain the acceptability of the plays. The need for the use of Afrikaans in these instances attests to the suspicion that the managers were wary of what views the plays might carry. In the interview with Myeko he mentions that knowledge of the Afrikaans language was one of the criteria that were used before one was employed at the station. To a large extent this helped the managers who may have relied on the employees for translation of radio texts, including dramas. This does not disregard the Bantu Programmes Control Board stranglehold on radio text content. The then Minister of Post and Telegram's motivation for the creation of the board is telling here. According to Hamm (1995: 229) the Minister, Albert Hertzog argued:

The broadcast services is something which you cannot force on anybody, you cannot force him to listen. What you can do, though, is to attract listeners to listen to you and it is vitally important that *we should attract those Bantu to listen to those things which the Broadcasting Corporation offer for them* (my emphasis).

---

<sup>51</sup> Almost all the scripts at the SABC archive in Port Elizabeth have their titles translated into Afrikaans.

<sup>52</sup> Ironically, while the managers 'insisted' on the translation of the titles into Afrikaans, *Tsotsitaal* which uses Afrikaans words, is discouraged in the plays, as the rules suggest.

The demand for the use of Afrikaans though was most prevalent in the news items. According to Given Ntlebi, Afrikaans news items were sent from Johannesburg to either Grahamstown or King William's Town. The newsreaders had to translate the news from Afrikaans to Xhosa before reading them. To an extent, this could have given the Xhosa newsreaders leverage in using a language that would be beyond the understanding of Afrikaner 'spies' at the station. However, the Ntlebi incident challenges or even discounts this theory.<sup>53</sup> It is clear from that incident that some of the Afrikaners who were planted at the station were fairly competent in the Xhosa language.

These, however, were not the only ways the plays were judged. The plays went through a rating system after this initial stage. The managers would, for instance, look at:

- The structure of the play.
- The style of the author.
- The plot, idea and theme.
- The technical suitability of the play for radio.<sup>54</sup>

Based on these checks and balances, the managers thought that they could 'give' the listeners what they 'needed'. However, the way they ran their checks shows that they were neither interested in knowing that audience, nor attempted to know what it wanted to hear.

---

<sup>53</sup> See the Ntlebi incident above.

<sup>54</sup> Ratings for plays received from Peter Mahlangu, Ikwewezi FM on 08 April 2002.

It is indisputable at this stage that audiences, both as individuals and as a collective, actively engage with radio text. The following letter demonstrates how emotionally involved the audiences could be in the plays.

I must say a word of praise, though sometimes our hair stand on edge [sic] because of the cruelty and merciless behaviour of some of the characters. But we look forward to every Tuesday. *Please send Brra Zett and Speedo to me, I want to dip them in petrol and set them alight.* I want to know the end of the play [emphasis added].

The audience's active engagement presupposes that before their listening they hold certain expectations that they bring along to the listening activity. Webster (1998: 194) sees this way of viewing the audience as 'audience-as-agent'. In this regard, he points out that:

Rather than seeing people as acted upon by the media, people are conceived of as free agents choosing what media they will consume, bringing their own interpretative skills to the text they encounter, making their own meanings and generally using media to suit themselves.

However, as much as the individual audience member has power in the listening process, s/he is not immune to influence. Contrary to this notion, the managers were of the view that the

audience was helpless in the listening space. However, as Webster (1998: 194) concludes, ‘in the interface between audience and media, it is the individual viewer who has the upper hand. Controlling this engagement is one way in which audiences are thought to exercise power.’

So, irrespective of what the managers of the station thought about the audience, the audience had their own needs and expectations, which would not necessarily be in agreement with those of the managers. As Hendy (2000: 145) argues, ‘As listeners we are co-producers of radio. We all create our own images in listening to radio, and we inhabit domestic worlds which mould our listening in different ways.’ In fact, one can be bold here, and say that the audience and the managers were on a collision course. The two entities were in a conflict relationship. In addition, the playwrights’ anticipation played a big role in fulfilling the audience’s expectations. In most cases the playwright came from the same society and as such understood the needs of the audience. In addition, listeners’ letters played a crucial role in ensuring that playwrights were aware of their needs. As Sibiyi (2001: 35) correctly points out: ‘what is important about letters ... is that various comments and criticisms help develop authors in one way or the other. [They] begin to know who exactly [their] audiences are and what they expect of his writing quill.’ The rapport between the playwrights and the audience ensured that there was always an element of interaction and interpretation in the performance space. The text allowed the individual audience to make his/her meaning out of the text. In most cases, the needs of the members of the audience inter-linked because, by its nature, radio pulls individual listeners together. As Scannell (1992: 113) puts it:

Electronically mediated interactions are no doubt reshaping both social situations and social identities ... ‘Geographic identity’ or

*identity of place*, has been subtly altered by electronic media, resulting in an homogenizing effect on group identities... The media have profoundly changed both social relationships and perceptions of self.

Most importantly, it would seem that audiences not only had an insight into the plays, but they also empathised with the playwright as well. This point is best illustrated by Shwayiba's response when asked what he thought happened to Myeko after the broadcast of *UHlohlesakhe* (19 April, 2003). He responded thus:

Although I do not know who wrote the play, I am sure he was arrested. Those were difficult times. Even in funerals, speakers who talked badly about the regime were jailed. Sometimes we wouldn't know how the regime came to know about a speech in a funeral. It appears the government sent its spies to listen to what was being said. In fact, everywhere there would be intelligence, in weddings, initiation ceremonies. *Imbongi* [praise poets] were targeted too.<sup>55</sup> So there were many attempts by politicians [Shwayiba believes that Myeko was a political activist] to pass on the message wherever people were gathered.

From the above quote it is clear that the listeners not only decoded the message in the plays but also applied them to their everyday lives. They understood that playwrights were trying to

---

<sup>55</sup>*Imbongi* (singular); *imbongi* (plural).

engage with social issues that had an impact on them. It is on this basis then that one would argue that there was an understanding between the listeners and playwrights. This understanding did not imply, however, that listeners unquestioningly absorbed everything playwrights said. Contrary to that, the audience was an integral part of meaning-making.

It is only fair to suggest that the station still attracts a considerable listenership, although statistics from the early years of the station could not be obtained.<sup>56</sup> According to Umhlobo Wenene FM audience research (which was last updated in September 2000), during a 24-hour average day, from Monday to Friday the station attracts 3 144 000 listeners. Of this figure, 2 734 000 or 87% are Xhosas, while 13% is made up of other ethnic groups. Interestingly, the number of female listeners is substantially higher than that of male, at 54% female to 46% male. The table below by Statistics South Africa better illustrates the ratio of male/female in the Eastern Cape in 1996, even though it looks at the first home language spoken by black people in the region.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> The Xhosa-language radio attracts the second largest number of listeners in the country (number one being the Zulu-language radio).

<sup>57</sup> Although the statistics fall outside of the scope of the study, it clearly shows the women were in majority.

Black African			
	Male	Female	Total
Afrikaans	8 901	9 401	18 302
English	3 449	4 782	8 231
Isindebele	451	358	809
IsiXhosa	2 390 250	2 832 663	5 222 913
IsiZulu	11 465	13 655	25 120
Sepedi	1 206	1 340	2 546
Sesotho	62 954	76 054	139 008
Siswati	415	448	863
Setswana	476	366	842
Tshivenda	260	231	491
Xitsonga	158	81	239
Other	3 308	3 317	6 625
Unspecific	10 408	12 098	22 506
<b>Total</b>	<b>2 493 702</b>	<b>2 954 793</b>	<b>5 448 495</b>

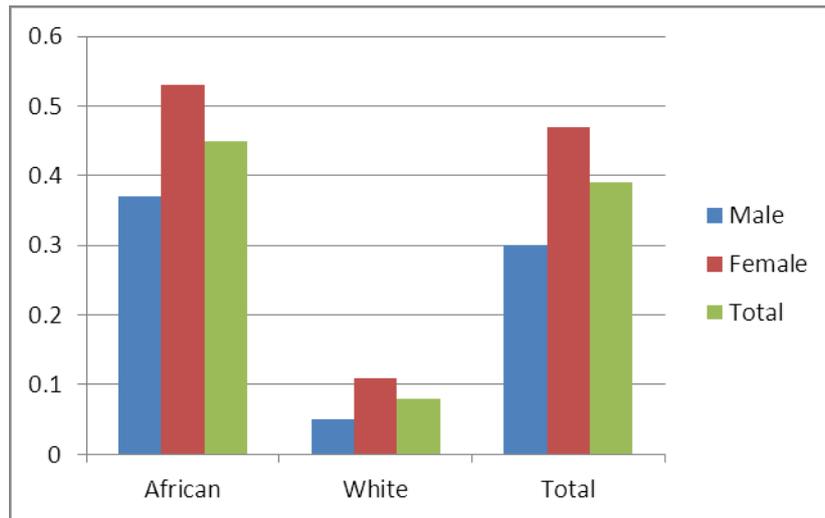
First home language by population group and gender (numbers)

Eastern Cape, 1996<sup>58</sup>

Based on both the Umhlobo Wenene FM audience research and Statistics South Africa statistics, one can surmise that the unemployed women formed a sizeable number of the

<sup>58</sup> Please visit: <http://www.statssa.gov.za/census01/html/ECprimary> – Accessed 14 June 2011.

listenership, as the graph below illustrates. This disproportionate may not only have been caused by the fact that women are in the majority, but it may have been caused by the fact that over the decades, females have mainly been housewives, a situation that may be changing now that more and more women take up employment.<sup>59</sup>



Unemployment Rates in South Africa: Race and Gender<sup>60</sup>

It should be noted here that there has been a shift in programming after 1994. Prior to the general elections radio dramas were broadcast twice – during the day and at night. The day slot, which used to cater for women, now features a music programme called ‘Listeners’ Choice’. This change might have been necessitated by the fact that women who were catered for at that time are a dwindling audience due to the fact that they are now at work at that time. ‘Stay-at-home’ males are either not interested in the plays’ repeats (as they might have listened to the play at night), or they are out looking for jobs.

<sup>59</sup> It would be interesting to see if this figure will change as more and more men are being retrenched due to a number of factors that affect the economy; while on the other hand more and more women get employed through affirmative action and women-empowerment.

<sup>60</sup> Please visit: <http://www.growthcommission.org/storage/cgdev/documents/LaborMarkets/Bhorat.pdf> - Accessed 17 June 2011.

The issue of the target group is a very elusive one, especially when one considers the ages of the listeners. According to the research, there are more young listeners of the station than old. But the main problem here is that one cannot isolate listenership programme by programme. This makes it difficult to tell who listens to what. The table below gives a succinct idea of listenership of the station by age.<sup>61</sup>

<b>AGE</b>	<b>Listenership</b>	<b>%</b>
16 –24	1 008 000	32%
25 – 34	737 000	23%
35 – 49	795 000	25%
50+	605 000	19%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3 145 000</b>	<b>99%</b>

Umhlobo Wenene FM audience research,  
which was conducted in 2000.

All in all, the station has about 41 programmes per day and 205 programmes from Monday to Friday. Of these, only 55 seem to be purely targeted to the youth (16 – 34 years) who make up to 55% of the listenership. The 55 programmes exclude news and other programmes that may be listened to by the whole family, including radio plays.

Household income cannot be overlooked when one examines the question of audiences. In the author's view income plays a very important role in determining listening patterns. In

---

<sup>61</sup> This information comes from Umhlobo Wenene audience research which was conducted in September 2000.

South Africa, the bulk of the citizenship is made up of rural populations who are mainly poor. For this group of potential listeners, access to and maintenance of radio sets may be a challenge. Almost all rural areas in the country do not generate income because there is no economic activity taking place in their villages. As a result, there is minimum investment in basic amenities like electricity in such communities.<sup>62</sup> Reliance on batteries forces them to listen to only a few programmes. On the other side of the continuum is a community of high earners who reside in urban areas and suburbs. This group is part of the emerging black elite class and its daily struggle, generally, is to meet the high standards of Western life.

Unfortunately, in their pursuance of this lifestyle they have to forgo traditional trappings. In some circles this group is called technocrats because of their desire to acquire the latest technology, which includes TVs, DVDs, and computers. This group believes in having only one or two children who would be sent to racially mixed schools and whose time would be spent on TV games and other electronic gadgets that remove them from radio. In between these two groups is the core listenership that dwindles by the day. This shrinkage may be caused by many factors such as retrenchment or upward mobility in the economic ladder. The following table illustrates this varied listenership by household income per month (Umhlobo Wenene FM Audience Research of 2000).

---

<sup>62</sup> Since 1994 South Africa has seen a concerted effort to fast-track installation of basic amenities like water and electricity in rural areas.

Up to R499	552	18%
R500 – R899	983	31%
R900 – R1 399	614	20%
R1 400 – R2 499	458	15%
R2 500 – R3 999	246	08%
R4 000 – R6 999	190	06%
R7 000 – R1 1999	76	02%
R12 000+	24	01%

Key: up to R499 are pensioners; R500 – R899 are low income brackets  
R900 – R2, 499 are the middle income bracket; R2500 – R12, 000 are  
high earners.

The table not only shows disparities between different income brackets, but it also hints at the accessibility of radios to different communities. Those who earn below R499 constitute the rural poor who either do not have radio sets or who cannot afford batteries. This group (R499 – R899) alone comprises 49% of the total population. The low earners, who may include teachers, nurses and others in this bracket, make up 35% of the total. These two groups, one could argue, make up the bulk of the Xhosa-language radio listeners (i.e. about 84%). As suggested, this group is fluid and may move in any direction along the continuum. 17% (R2 500 – R12 000) constitutes urban dwellers who do not, in the main, listen to radio, and radio plays in particular. Their radio sets have two main functions: firstly, they are part of the sitting-room decoration and secondly, they are only used for playing records and CDs (i.e. entertainment). Emergent commercial radio stations, such as Radio Metro, tap into this

market by offering more entertainment compared to community (state) radios.<sup>63</sup> That is why relatively new radio stations such as youth radios attract large audiences in any given week.<sup>64</sup> In many instances they constitute new audiences. For example, in June about 5 661 000 listeners tuned in Radio Metro.<sup>65</sup> It is clear from this that high earners listen more to commercial radios than to state-controlled radios such as the Xhosa-language radio.

### **Audience Formation and Audience Involvement**

As suggested above, an audience's response is paramount to its creation. From the plays examined at Umhlobo Wenene in Port Elizabeth as well as on the radio, it is highly likely that there is a rapport between the playwrights and the audiences. In fact, as pointed out above, playwrights are part of the community and as such know the dreams, needs and aspirations of the community they write for. In the words of McQuail (1997: 25), 'we can consider media as responding to the general needs of a national society, local community, or pre-existing social group. They also respond to the specific preferences actively expressed by particular sets of individuals – for instance, the politically active, or business people, or youth, or followers of sport, and so on.' The operative word here is 'respond'. In the main, plays by Xhosa playwrights responded to the needs on the ground. This view, though, does not preclude the fact that there may have been divergent interpretations of the plays, or that individual listeners may have had different needs and expectations.

---

<sup>63</sup> See Appendix H for different radio stations that are operational in South Africa currently.

<sup>64</sup> Commercial radio (Radio Metro) deals with entertainment, while radio stations such as Umhlobo Wenene FM deal with community matters.

<sup>65</sup> Umhlobo Wenene FM audience research.

However, it must be stressed that Xhosa audiences have always been a collective that has been determined by the politics of oppression and dispossession.<sup>66</sup> Despite the enforced differences between Xhosas of ‘ethnic origins’, the Xhosa nation as a whole has had the same aspirations and dreams for justice and freedom. When it came to traditional productions, such hopes and dreams became apparent, not least of all in songs, dances and radio plays. In general, Xhosas all over the Eastern Cape would identify with some characters, engage in filling the gaps and look for positive signs in the plays.<sup>67</sup> The ‘audience’ is best defined by McQuail (1997: 26), who says that ‘an audience as a group is a collectivity that has an independent existence prior to its identification as an audience.’ However, one should hasten to point out that there are some tensions within same communities, as illustrated in the play *Buzani Kubawo*. Such tensions emphasise the fact that tradition is not static but constantly changes from one generation to the other. In Mqhayi’s *Ityala Lamawele* this tension is captured in an oft-quoted line which reads, *nakumana nisithi amaxesha ngamanye. Ngamanye ntoni kusionakala nje?* (‘You say times have changed. What has changed when things fall apart?’)

While the formation of an audience can be politically or historically explained, it is also true that the plays make and keep their own audience. Playwrights, producers and the text itself play a pivotal role in forming the drama’s own audience through the use of different devices. These devices include the narrator who markets the play, the title of the play, the signature tune and the characters. The narrator is particularly important in a play. Among other roles he plays, he ensures that listenership is sustained throughout the duration of the play, and even beyond. One of the things he does is to briefly preview the next episode, thus enticing

---

<sup>66</sup> Xhosas fought seven Border Wars with the English, and when the Afrikaners took over their territory it was divided into the Cape Colony, Transkei and Ciskei. Up until today there are some hostilities between people from these regions that stem from such domination.

<sup>67</sup> Radio plays have been and are still popular in both the Transkei and Ciskei.

listeners to listen. After each episode he summarises the day's episode and previews the next, while asking open-ended questions that can only be answered after listening to the next episode. This ensures that interest in the play is always maintained. Thus, as McQuail (1997: 26) puts it, '[radio stations] are continually seeking to develop and hold audiences for content, genres, authors, performers [and] particular products. In doing so, they may anticipate what might otherwise be a spontaneous demand or they may identify potential needs and interests that have not yet surfaced.'

The spontaneous demand and potential needs of the audiences are at the core of the audience's active participation in interpreting the message in a play. By nature radio plays carry a multi-layered or polysemic meaning, which demands that the listener unpacks it. Sometimes the dominant message may not be the main storyline that the playwright wants the listener to pick up, as demonstrated in the plays dealt with in this study. So the audience has to 'decode' the message to fit their particular needs and expectations, which may or may not serve them as a collective. Satyo and Jadezweni (2003: 1) point out that 'when listening to radio, an individual listener must translate the sound patterns he hears into his own particular mental language.' This is what Elliot (1974: 65) and other theorists call the 'use and gratification model.' According to this approach, the audience assumes a dominant position. By decoding and filling in the gaps, the audiences are able to make connections with the reality on the ground. The play *Umntu Lilahle Elinothuthu* (Don't Trust Anyone) is a good example here because the title suggests something that is camouflaged. The theme of deceit carries throughout the play. Again, the story is about a cheating lover and how she is caught out. At the same time, however, the audience is given glimpses of how correctional services worked in the country. For instance, audiences may make some connections between the political prisoner who is transported from Lusikisiki (Transkei) to East London (Eastern

Cape) and the political reality on the ground. This would be possible since the 1980s were notorious for the detention political activists. Audiences take the plays seriously because they feel that they reflect or depict certain aspects of their lives. Nolindile Rita Ndeya from Grahamstown hints at this connection when she writes:

I cannot help saying a word about your educative plays. Had our morals gone down so low, everybody would be reformed by the plays. The plots of the plays are so authentic that they seem to relate exactly our way of living. I and my brothers have been victims of local gossip to such an extent that eventually we had to change residence to evade gossip.<sup>68</sup>

This connection is also made by Shwayiba, who suggests that playwrights wrote about what was happening in society. As a result of their political commentary, some of them were arrested. In our interview he mentions a case that involved the playwright Mandla Myeko, and his play, *UHlohlesakhe* (The Greedy One). When asked about the play, he made a link with the politics of the time. His answer too suggests that the plays were indeed a public platform that was used to educate and enlighten the audience, regardless of the pressure playwrights were experiencing.

Asked about the same play *UHlohlesakhe*, Nontsikelelo Gqibitole echoes the same sentiment of audiences in the Xhosa plays. When she was questioned as to whether any plays dealt with

---

<sup>68</sup>UWAPE L22, 1969.

labour issues, Gqibitole indicated the difficulty playwrights encountered, and she also showed the deep emotional involvement of the audience. Her response is strikingly similar to Shwayiba's on the play, perhaps hinting on the shared aspirations and anticipation among audiences. This is crucial if one takes Shwayiba as representative of audiences in the former Transkei homeland and Gqibitole in the former Ciskei Homeland. Despite the geographic dispersion, the audiences seem to share the same sentiments. Her response is telling:

**Khaya Gqibitole:** Did any plays deal with labour issues?

**Nontsikelelo Gqibitole:** No, at that time one could not speak freely.

Things became better after 1994. Even radio plays such as *UHlohlesakhe* got people into trouble.

**KG:** What happened in *UHlohlesakhe*?

**NG:** It was about greed. There were people who did not care about others.

**KG:** You said people got into trouble. Who are those people?

**NG:** No, I wouldn't like to comment on that.

**KG:** Even if you do not mention names, just what happened?

**NG:** No, I think we should not talk about that.

**KG:** But why?

**NG:** (Laughs nervously) No, pass. I cannot answer that question [at this stage Gqibitole was visibly apprehensive and defensive].

**KG:** It seems that there were issues that the play, *UHlohlesakhe*, dealt with which make people feel uncomfortable.

**NG:** I personally do not know. But I hear that there are people who got into trouble because of the play. From what I hear the play was banned and the author detained. I do not know, I just hear about these things. I do not know how the play ended. But as I said earlier, the author might have been passing certain messages through the play. I do not know but that is what I think.

Interestingly, during the interview Gqibitole appeared reluctant to answer the question and was even shaken at times. This is despite the fact that the despots who ruled in the homelands had lost power more than a decade ago. Perhaps this illustrates the potency of the plays and various ways in which they affected the audiences. Most importantly, her responses indicate the fact that audiences are active in meaning-making while listening to the radio plays.

### **Listening Patterns**

However, the question of audience and audience-formation is more complicated than what has been said above. In the first place, pre-existing communities may just be non-existent or be illusory. In as much as Xhosas occupied a politically defined socio-geographic space, they still constituted a diverse and heterogeneous people. A group of people may not constitute an

audience but *a public*.<sup>69</sup> The notion of *a/the public* is a problematic one and cannot be dealt with here in its entirety. Suffice it to say that individuals in a society constitute *apublic*, which may not be *the public*. Individuals who listen to radio drama out of their own volition, for instance, constitute an audience or *the public*. A public and *the public* then may mean two different categories of the same individuals in a given geographic space. As Warner (2002: 51) points out:

Even in blurred usage of the public sphere, a public is never just categories of people, never just a sum of persons who happen to exist. It must first of all have some way of organizing itself as a body and of being addressed in discourse. And not just any way of defining the totality will do. It must be organized by something other than the state.

For the purposes of this study an audience is a sum of individuals who engage in the act of listening to particular radio programmes at given times; for instance, those who listen to radio plays. And *the public*, in the context of this study, refers to individuals who may be listening to radio but not necessarily to the same programme (i.e. radio play) while *a public* constitutes all those who may not even have access to radio sets. Judging by the contestation that prevailed at the Xhosa-language radio station, it would seem that the managers of the Xhosa-language radio station and the playwrights understood the audience differently. On the one hand, it would appear as if the managers of the station viewed Xhosa audiences as a homogeneous collectivity that was ready to unquestioningly absorb anything contained in

---

<sup>69</sup>For a discussion of the difference between *a public* and *the public* read Michael Warner's article 'Publics and Counterpublics' (2002: 49-89).

plays. On the other hand, playwrights seem to have viewed listeners as knowledgeable audiences who actively participated in the negotiation of meaning in the plays.

These different ways of conceptualising the same audience point to two crucial aspects in understanding audience involvement. On the one hand, the issue of agenda-setting by the controllers of the station comes to the fore. The controllers of the station were not, it must be said, interested in knowing Xhosa listeners or the listeners in general, beyond imagining them as a collective. In that way, one could argue, it was easy for them to deal with them, by having a single policy that applied to all. In the main they imagined them as:

... equivalent to each other, and thus to make possible the concept of an audience which is a 'public' in the sense of being in principle an indefinite and extensive horizon of anonymous and interchangeable members to be addressed not as known persons marked by family, rank, class or resident but as persons – not just unknown but in principle not to be known, because individual difference is irrelevant to the purpose for which they have convened. (Barber, 1987: 348-9)

The policy on African language radio plays would apply to all African languages radio stations, first collectively as Radio Bantu and later as ethnic-specific radio stations.

Therefore, to the controllers, the listeners were, as Barber puts it, 'interchangeable and equivalent.' For example, on both Xhosa- and Zulu-language radio stations, for plays to be approved for broadcast they had to deal with customs and tradition. For decades, these

stations churned out one traditional drama after another, as if there were no other themes they could deal with.

Because of this homogenising of Zulu and Xhosa-language radio stations, an interesting development emerged. By treating black audiences as the same, the controllers made it easy for Xhosa- and Zulu-language radio stations to exchange plays. Plays such as *uDeliwe* (*Khumbula Deluwe*) and *Nangona Intliziyo Ithatha Ibeka* (*Umanqoba Sisibindi*) have been broadcast on both stations, drawing sizeable audiences. Ironically then, while the overriding policy of the Afrikaner regime was 'divide and rule', radio plays which were listened to across geographic borders, more in the 1980s and 1990s than in previous decades, pulled audiences together. The managers of the station treated listeners as a monolithic group who should be told how to behave and how to order their lives. Playwrights, on the other hand, may have approached listeners differently. In as far as the plays were meant to 'address' the audience, playwrights were keen on addressing certain concerns in the community. In other words, unlike the managers who would not necessarily mind which custom was dealt with, playwrights would deal with sensitive issues and try to warn against bad practices while at the same time encourage good morals. So, while the play would be dealing with tradition at face value, underneath that it would awaken the audience to immediate pressures that concerned them as a society.

Radio plays have constituted and maintained audiences over the decades. As such, there is always an 'intended' audience out there for each play. It is therefore misleading to say that audiences only exist at the moment of performance. This is true of other performances such

as *imibongo* (praises) and *iintsomi* (fables), although Barber (1987: 233-4) is dismissive of the notion of a pre-existent audience when she argues:

Performances do not just play to ready-made congregations of spectators, which are out there waiting addressing; they convene those congregations and by their mode of address assign them certain positions from which to receive the address. ... This performance, in the act of addressing audiences, constitutes those audiences as a particular form of collectivity.

While performances play a crucial role in fulfilling the expectations of the audience, it is not entirely true that such an audience does not pre-exist the performance itself. The audiences of the Xhosa radio plays had a history of listening to other genres such as *iintsomi/amabalana*. One can then argue that Xhosa audiences have an established culture of listening. Audiences of radio drama pre-exist the emergent genre of radio drama.

It is clear then, that a new play on air always has an avid and eager audience on its first day. The 'knowledgeable audience' makes the first move by assembling in the performance space, and then turning on the radio at a particular time. The issue of the 'knowledgeable audience' is also important in determining the approaches of the playwrights. It is true that while the controllers of the Xhosa-language radio station did not 'want' to know the audience, playwrights and producers treated the 'audience as people who shared knowledge of very local concerns' (Barber, 1987: 354). The rapport that still exists between playwrights,

producers and the audience is ascertained by the communication that takes place through the letters.

The letters are not only a form of communication, but they also indicate the audience's reading and perception of the plays. Interestingly, some of the plays that are rebroadcast are by popular demand.<sup>70</sup> By making these requests, the members of the audience give playwrights/producers a sense of what they would like to listen to – it is feedback that hints at the relevance as well as the centrality of the plays in their everyday lives.<sup>71</sup> Letter writing is akin to the give-and-take or turn-taking of storytelling, which ensures interaction between the audience and the performer. Barber (1987: 358) puts it aptly in asserting that 'production' and 'perception' appear as moments in a circle rather than two poles at opposite ends of a process. What is production is also reception; the act of reception is an act of production.

### **Decoding the Message**

Perhaps Keke's letter<sup>72</sup> illustrates a typical activity at home during the listening process. In the letter, the relationship between the idealised life of the listeners and the play are intertwined. In the first part of the letter, for instance, Keke sketches the activity in the house when the play begins. He says, 'Children gather around the radio set and dead silence prevails.' Notice the contrast between the audience of a radio play and performances like *iintsomi* (fables) or *amabalana* (oral stories). While in *iintsomi/amabalana* the audience would be taking turns with the performer, radio drama audiences mostly keep quiet. The situation Keke describes

---

<sup>70</sup> For the controllers of the station these repeats may be read as 'cost-cutting', but to playwrights/controllers they are an endorsement of the message in the play concerned.

<sup>71</sup> Note: almost all the letters use the plural 'we' to denote that I of the letter feels that s/he speaks for everyone.

<sup>72</sup> See page 89.

here is what would happen in all households, and the general conclusion would be that the radio assumes all power in the performance space. So, one can argue that radio dramas were both powerful as well as popular.

While the 'dead silence' might pay tribute to the power of radio drama, it can also be associated with assimilation of the 'message' in the drama by individual listeners. This assimilation is revealed after the drama when the audience debate about the drama. Almost everyone has something to say afterwards, pointing to the amount of information they absorb from the play. It would seem, then, that response is the best way of conceptualising an audience. In other words, individuals in a community have to respond to a particular text to constitute its audience. In the case of radio drama, that response includes switching on the radio at a particular time, converging around the radio set(s), listening to the play, responding to the play afterwards, and in some cases writing a letter to the station. The point here is that individual listeners do not necessarily constitute an audience; they only do so if and when they are engaged in the same activity (sometimes at the same time). In a word, there may be different audiences in the same community. For example, at eight o'clock in the evening some individuals might be listening to drama on the Xhosa-language radio, while other individuals might be listening to sport on another radio station. These two groups inevitably constitute different audiences.

While the first part of Keke's letter deals with what happens during the broadcast, the second part deals with what happens on the way to work. Keke uses the general pronoun 'one', which gives the impression that the commuters, in general, engage in the conversation about

Sibayeni.<sup>73</sup> This integrated listenership constitutes an audience. Whether one listened to the play or not it seems that everyone engages in the discussion because it has become part of everyday discourse. Being responsive to the play creates a community of listenership, or audience. The issues raised that pertain to the play are so intertwined with everyday experiences that nobody feels left out. In a sense, the play takes on a new life during the commuter engagement.

Interesting too, is that the letter writer integrates the play with his experiences. At first, one does not know that Keke's wife has gone to live with her parents. For some reason, Keke feels compelled to make this news known. Just like the characters in the plays that confess their deepest feelings, Keke also writes in confidence. He feels he is part of a 'family' and by divulging his own secrets he pledges solidarity not only with the characters, but also with those listeners who might be in the same position as he is. His 'confession' reinforces the fact that as the listeners listen to the play they do so as a unit. The play, therefore, creates a general consciousness in the community. Keke, among other things, expresses the general feeling of the public.

In the third part of the letter Keke extricates himself from the general public, and becomes personal. The view he expresses here would be the view he holds when commuters meet and argue about the plays in the mornings. It seems there is a sudden realisation that the play deals with his particular problem as opposed to the views of society. In Xhosa society living with the in-laws is a sign of weakness. The term Sibayeni is a derogatory word used to ridicule those who live with the in-laws. Keke knows this and tries to defend as well as justify his actions by saying 'my wife has visited her people *for health reasons*' [emphasis added].

---

<sup>73</sup> See letter on page 89.

So, there is no reason he should not visit her. One could venture to say that his line of argument in the buses and trains would be that husbands could live with their in-laws. The criticism by friends demonstrates Xhosa socialisation, which is against men living with their in-laws.

Faced with this dilemma, Keke makes his choice known, but with some reservations. He reasons, 'let them [his friends and society] say what they wish, I will visit my in-laws.' It is interesting that Keke shows some stubbornness at this stage. Is it informed by the debates in the buses and trains? Are women winning those debates, and thus is he convinced that there is nothing wrong with visiting his in-laws – irrespective of the taboos attached to such visits? Is he blinded by love for his wife to the detriment of his standing in the society? Or, most importantly, is he defying social dictates? Thus the letter clearly embodies the crucial element of how audiences make meaning out of the plays. Furthermore, it illustrates the reach of the plays, how plays constitute audiences, as well as what takes place both inside and outside the listening space – the home. On another level, as Spitulnik (1994: 19) argues, the listeners of radio drama 'constitute a national public.' She suggests that there is intersubjectivity among radio listeners, especially because they are aware of one another. This is an important point since listening to radio drama is a community activity, as Shwayiba pointed out in the survey conducted on April 16, 2003 in Kirkwood outside Port Elizabeth.

Radio drama is very powerful, especially in rural areas. It is a means to pass on information. If you notice, there are fewer televisions in rural areas because of poor transmitters. So radio is conducive in such areas, radio has a bigger audience.

Members of the community react in various ways to a play, even though they ‘constitute a national public.’ Each individual listener applies what he/she hears to his/her life. In other words, audiences make meaning out of the plays. However, the debates they have on the plays suggest that they deal with the content of the plays as a collective. Because they apply the plays to their different life experiences, the listeners will always have different views on the plays. These differences get integrated in the national discourse; making plays an integral part of everyday life. Having differing understandings or readings of the plays means that listeners are not ‘homogeneous members of a common social type’ (Spiltunik, 1994: 43).

Most crucially perhaps, radio programmers treat or imagine listeners as an audience. Therefore, they package programmes with a particular view of the audience ‘out there’. In the main then, the programmes cut across social stratifications such as gender and class. In the end, each listener feels that s/he is part of a community of listeners although members might be different to one another. In a sense, members of the audience are not homogeneous. While it is true that playwrights may have a target audience in mind when they write their plays, they cannot control the listening activity of the young and the old, males and females and so forth. Because plays are generally educational the plays end up being consumed by the entire family. Concurring with this, a listener from Grahamstown writes:

I wish to express my sincere thanks to the serial *Benditshilo*. I am aware of the fact that you are all trained teachers. The teachers, therefore, always teach young and old alike. We especially thank you

for the moral lessons which characterize your plays ... There is much to be gleaned from the plays, keep it up.<sup>74</sup>

Interestingly, at first the anonymous writer addresses the ‘announcer’ as the subject ‘I’, thus as an individual listener. The ‘I’ in this letter corresponds with the ‘individuals’ that listen in ‘dead silence’ in Keke’s letter on page 89. ‘Dead silence’ here must be understood to mean that the audience does not engage in discussion at this stage. During the ‘silent listening’, each listener interprets the play differently by applying it to his/her own experiences. At the same time, while listening to the play individuals would laugh, cry, yell and so forth. In the play, *Nangona Intliziyo Ithatha Ibeka, Undoqo Sisibindi* [Even Though the Heart Doubts, Courage is King – 1981] for instance the audience would wince and cry when Sigidi decides to sacrifice his wife Mamfene. After approaching the witchdoctor, Gonondo, Sigidi is asked to kill five people – one of them being Mamfene. He attacks her on her way from work; she survives. However, his mind is already made up to kill her. In the monologue he justifies his decision to kill her:

Sigidi: (*ethetha yedwa* [aside]):

*Hayi kufuneka khe ndiyilibale le kaMamfene khe ndikhangele enye ibhokhwe enyawo zimbini. Kambe uMamfene lo yena ade enzakale kangaka uyenzela ntoni into yokundijikela ngasemva? Uyandikhanyela nje mpela kuba wazi yonke inyaniso ngam. Akugqiba ukwenza loo nto undiyele emapoliseni wawaxelela ukuba mawazokuphanda apha ekhaya, ezenza abantu basegaraji. Ube nepasi lam lomfazi hayi ayikho enye into*

---

<sup>74</sup>UWAPE L20, 1969.

*endingayenzayo uzicelele ngokwakhe ukufa kwaye uzakubufumana. Ndiza kumnika le nto ayifunayo.*

(No I must forget about Mamfene for now and look for another goat on two feet. But Mamfene would not be injured like this if she did not betray me. She is selling me out because she knows everything about me. After that she calls in the police to come and investigate here in my house pretending to be mechanics. She even stole my passbook. No, there is nothing I can do, she has asked for it and she will die. I will give her what she wants).

The same play has a hilarious episode where Khulu, Sigidi's mother, explains why she stopped going to church. Talking to Mamfene seven episodes before Sigidi attacks his wife, Khulu relates how smitten she was with Gatyeni, her late husband. While the episode is comical, it is also critical of too much devotion to Western religion. It becomes clear that Khulu prefers love to religion; a slight on those who believe that church comes first.

Lindiwe: (Mamfene):

*Wayekiswa yintoni mama?*

Khulu:

*Unantoni Umamfene? (Ehleka kancinci) Kwavela umfana isigantsontso sakwa Gatyeni ebomini bam. Ngulube yakwabani yona. Yaba iyonakala yonke into. Lathi nokuba liyafika iJamani leNkosi lindimba ngemigqala lifika kulilitye nje. Inggondo yam yayikumfo wakwa Gatyeni imini nobusuku. Ndabona ukuba le nto ithethwa leli Jamani ayisokuze indise ndawo, icawa yam ngulo mfo wakwa Gatyeni.*

Lindiwe:

Why did you stop, Mama?

Khulu:

What now Mamfene? (laughing) A young, strong Gatyeni man got into my life. What a sweet talker. Everything fell apart. The German priest came to encourage me to go back to church but failed. I was thinking of my Gatyeni day and night. I realized that what the German was saying would not take me anywhere. My church was Gatyeni.

As pointed out above this is the major difference between *iintsomi*, *amabalana*, *imibongo* and *ukuxhentsa* in which audiences physically and vocally participate in the performance. Radio plays first challenge the imagination of the individual and then open up a social debate around the play itself. Concurring with this, Myeko points out (perhaps cynically) that, '[r]adio develops imagination. When we wrote we wrote about tradition. Today everybody writes about *The Bold and the Beautiful*.'<sup>75</sup> So, even before the play begins, the listeners have some expectations, which are either confirmed or disappointed by the play. Judging by the letters from the listeners, dramas played a crucial role in the social sphere of the listeners. Among other things they were seen as teaching aids. The relationship that develops between the listener and the text then is that of a teacher and a pupil – in the traditional sense where the teacher was seen as the be all and end-all in class. The play, in other words, demands that it should be listened to.<sup>76</sup> This relationship inevitably locates the power in the hands of the 'announcer', the playwrights, and more importantly, the managers of the station.

---

<sup>75</sup> Personal interview with Mandla Myeko.

<sup>76</sup> See Barber (1987: 348) who writes about the master/pupil relationship in the 1820s.

Clearly, then, the notion of public and audience is a very complex one. Its complexity points to the fluidity and diverse nature of listenership. The contention in this chapter and the study as a whole is that there is a deep understanding between the listeners and playwrights or producer. As mentioned above, listeners or audiences look forward to the plays, which suggest that they pre-exist them. In other words, listening to radio has become a routine to the audience members; a way of life that reflects their everyday experiences. In order for these hopes and aspirations to be communicated in an understandable manner, they had to be made part of their everyday lives, like listening to radio plays. Playwrights and producers then, despite the control by the managers of the station, have a task to *communicate* these messages to the audiences.

### **Contestation of Tradition**

[C]reativity comes from within, it cannot be produced by will or dictate if it is not there, although it can be crushed by it. (Gordimer, 1988: 249)

The term 'tradition' is problematic and is perhaps misused in many instances. In this study it will largely be used in its narrow sense to refer to rural Xhosa lifestyle and beliefs. In a mixed society such as South Africa's, traditions are always mediated, challenged and inter-linked. However, each society still keeps the core of its tradition in an attempt not to find itself overwhelmed by other traditions, or even assimilated into other cultures. In the apartheid years the Afrikaner regime seem to have understood the strong adherence of black people (especially those who resided in rural areas rural) on their culture and what it would mean to control them through manipulating their culture. As indicated in Chapter Two, Afrikaner

regimes extensively used radio, among many strategies, to gain hegemony over other race groups. This chapter will suggest that radio plays were at the centre of the contestation between the managers and playwrights. In this regard, it will be argued that playwrights attempted to use plays to counter the propaganda of the regime. At the heart of the chapter then is the clash that prevailed between the managers and playwrights. Myeko's play, *Buzani Kubawo* (Ask Father), will be used to highlight these differences.<sup>77</sup>

In the discussion of this play, it will be maintained that Xhosa audiences were sophisticated and thus could understand what the plays were about even if the message was somewhat obscure at times. The question of the reception and decoding of the text within the constraints of the master ideology of apartheid will be dealt with. Central to this study's argument is that the audience actively participates in meaning-making, or as Hendy (2000: 118) puts it, 'The radio listener ... is actively participating in the creation of images'. Such images stay longer in the imagination of radio listeners. They not only revisit them and use them in their everyday life; they also reshape them to fit their current situations, as was the case with one respondent, Nontsikelelo Gqibitole. Gqibitole's experience with the feared 'Nobiva' is related in Chapter Six, and illustrates the effects that radio can have on individuals.

### ***Buzani Kubawo* (1981)**

The question of how to understand and decode questions of audience from media texts has long been debated. Liebes and Katz (cited in Seiter, 1989: 204), for example, in their analysis of television audiences phrase the issue as follows:

---

<sup>77</sup>Adapted from a novel by W.K. Thamsanqa.

The status of the viewer has been upgraded regularly during the course of communications research. In the early days, both major schools of research – the dominant, so-called, and the critical – saw the viewer as powerless, and vulnerable to the agencies of commerce and ideology. Gradually, the viewer – and indeed, the reader and the listener – were accorded power. With the rise of gratification research, the viewer began to be seen as more selective and more active than was originally supposed, at least in the sense of exercising choice in the search for satisfaction, and less isolated.

In the apartheid years, the media or those who controlled the media treated the viewers/listeners as people who had to be told what to hear and know. Or as Alasuutari (1999: 106; see also McQuail, 1997) puts it, ‘National broadcasting institutions constituted a ‘paternal system’ ... which aimed at protecting and guiding the majority by transmitting values, habits and tastes deemed desirable by the enlightened minority. The audience of public broadcasters consisted of *citizens* who were to be informed, uplifted and educated. The purpose was to transmit the message to the entire nation – hence the principle of universal service.’ However, most contemporary analyses of audience interaction with media texts assume that audiences are active and sophisticated consumers of media products. Liebes and Katz (cited in Seiter, 1989: 204) point out that listeners/viewers are currently treated ‘as members of interpretative communities that are in active ‘negotiation’ with the text, both aesthetically and ideologically.’ The idea, then, that anyone in the mid- to late-20<sup>th</sup> century could still believe that the audience is mindless and passive seems slightly ridiculous. Yet in apartheid South Africa there were many who held precisely such a view. One category of such persons comprised managers of African-language radio stations. Animated by the view

of audience as suggestible and gullible, these gatekeepers attempted to control the production of radio drama in keeping with apartheid dictates. Opposing them were writers and sometimes producers who tried to inform audiences, or, as one prominent Xhosa radio dramatist, Mandla Myeko, commented: ‘There was a written policy. One could not write about the regime. One had to write about terrorists who must always be defeated. Whites must always win’. Myeko further explained that, messages were deliberately hidden in the plays in order to deceive white members of the regime.

This set of circumstances provides an instructive context within which to debate questions of radio texts and audiences. This chapter attempts this task by examining Myeko’s most popular radio drama, *Buzani Kubawo* (Ask Father) and by outlining the context that surrounded managers and writers on Xhosa-language radio, and the ways in which they mobilised competing definitions of tradition to authorise their positions.<sup>78</sup>

### **The Struggle for Listenership between Managers and Playwrights**

Augustine Nongauza, now retired, served at the Xhosa-language station for a number of years.<sup>79</sup> In our interview at his home in Zwelitsha, he referred to the friction that characterised relationships between employees and managers. He noted that the managers were predominantly white Afrikaners who grew up on farms and so could understand the Xhosa language. Many knew little about broadcasting and were instead there to perform a surveillance function, sometimes on behalf of the Security Branch or the Broederbond.<sup>80</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup> The play was broadcast at least four times, in 1981, ’88, ’93 and ’97. It has 35 episodes.

<sup>79</sup> I interviewed Augustine Nongauza on 09/11/01 in Zwelitsha, near King William’s Town.

<sup>80</sup> It is interesting to note that while the synopsis that had to accompany the plays had to be in English the headings of the plays were translated into Afrikaans and written underneath the Xhosa titles. These gave the managers an idea as to what the plays were all about. However, most titles would be idiomatic, making them very difficult to translate.

Given this ignorance, African writers/producers had to teach them even though the managers would in all likelihood turn against them later. At the same time, there was an illusion of equality between managers and producers: the managers were given Xhosa names, something they enjoyed. According to Nongauza, this was a way of making the managers feel as though they were part of the playwrights.

However, when the group spoke among themselves in the presence of the white managers, they would use an idiomatic language that only the group would understand. This ‘hidden transcript’, as Scott (1990) calls it, helped the playwrights to vent their frustrations. As Scott (1990: 14) puts it, ‘Each hidden transcript, then, is actually elaborated among a restricted ‘public’ that excludes – that is hidden from – certain specified others.’ Tomaselli *et al* (1989a: 95) note that the appointment of managers was instituted as a strategy to maintain rigid control. Unlike the Europeans Achebe writes about in *No Longer at Ease* (1960), among whom Nigerians could speak Ibo and feel safe, Afrikaners were planted at the station to listen to what the employees were talking about as well as to enforce the master plan of apartheid.

In the 1960s, African-language stations were lumped together under one umbrella: Radio Bantu (Tomaselli, 1989b: 94). Given the volatility of the political landscape at the time, the influence of the Afrikaner secret organisation, the Broederbond, was at its peak. Wilkins and Strydom (1978: 11) outline the situation that prevailed throughout the apartheid era:

In South Africa the economy increasingly takes on the look of a socialist State, there are a large number of semi-State corporations, all of which have powerful Broederbond representation in their echelons. In terms of political influence the most important of these is the State-

controlled South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) which holds a jealously-guarded monopoly of radio and television.

The Broederbond ensured that its members occupied the top echelons of many state-linked corporations.<sup>81</sup> For instance, Piet Meyer, a member of the Broederbond and subsequently chairman of the organisation, was elected chairman of the SABC in 1960. Later, he was to head a task team that investigated the establishment of television in South Africa, which subsequently came on air in 1976. In addition to Meyer, there were three other Broeders on the board, Mr Marree, Professor Terreblanche and Professor Monning. Another 49 Broeders were involved in lower levels of the state broadcaster. One of them, Van Heerden, was appointed Director of Bantu and External Services. As Wilkins and Strydom (1978: 12) note, his ‘position indicates that listeners to the SABC African language services, future black television viewers, and people who tune in to the world-wide Radio RSA service, are likely to have only what the Broederbond wants them to see or listen [*sic*]’.

The Broederbond’s commitment to controlling the airwaves was a major strategic objective. One of their documents, *Masterpieces for a White Country: The Strategy* explains the importance of having Broeders in control of the so-called Bantu services. Through its control of the SABC and its Bantu services and the planned black television service, the Broederbond sought to ‘compel compliance with the plan whose main purpose is to see that overwhelmingly members of the black population live and work in their homelands, or Bantustans’ (Wilkins and Strydom, 1978: 12).

---

<sup>81</sup> For further study of the Broederbond and its operations at the SABC see Wilkins and Strydom (1978: 11-13).

It is within this context that the relationship between the managers of the station and the writer/producers is examined. This strained relationship between the managers and the station's employees produced difficult and tense working circumstances for playwrights. Unsurprisingly, many of the plays they produced skirted around issues that dealt with politics, a point that Sibiyi (2001) makes about Joshua Mlaba's play, *uNdlebekazizwa* (Headstrong). According to Sibiyi the play was first broadcast in August 1977, and must have been written in 1976, the year of the Soweto uprising, or early 1977, the year in which Steve Biko was killed by the apartheid regime. The mid- to late-1970s are the epitome of youth activism. As Sibiyi (2001: 15) asserts, 'This era ...is characterised by politics of activism of the youth rather than gender politics.' However Mlaba does not concern himself with politics associated with the youth in the play; he concentrates instead on domestic issues. Writers often created plays that focused on themes of 'tradition' which foregrounded love relationships and were hence apparently in keeping with the Bantustan policies of apartheid which discouraged political commentary.

Myeko blames this on writers who have taken to writing radio plays that are fashioned on the soap operas they watch on television. In our interview he argues that '[s]oaps have destroyed writers. Politics has not been dealt with in radio plays. That space is there and remains unused.' The unused radio space would be enticing to the regime whose preoccupation at the time was political domination. One of the strategies of the government was to use traditional institutions to control the rural population by sometimes using token chiefs. Tomaselli *et al* (1989a: 96), writing in the late 1980s, were correct when they argued that:

Most of the content of Radio Bantu is aimed at the maintenance and, in fact, the renaissance and redefinition of traditional tribal values and

social institutions, especially in the homelands. This has a second dimension in that, by strengthening affiliations to tribal authorities, the State is able to exert control in a disguised manner.

The pressure to avoid political issues characterised the media industry as a whole. It is not surprising that many playwrights would observe the dictates of the station and stay clear of political innuendoes. In some cases playwrights wrote for money and not necessarily for moral or political issues. As a result of this, they would tone down their political rhetoric in order for their plays to be broadcast. In a sense they abdicated what Gordimer (1988: 244) calls 'social responsibility'. This was also true of other media such as television and film. Tomaselli *at al* (1989: 130-1), for instance, quote Edgar Bold as saying:

One of the retarding problems in the local feature film and television industries is that script writers skirt the hardcore issues because they know the market they are writing for, and producers have to tread a careful political path if they want to get their money back.

Due to the stringent policies at the SABC and the Xhosa-language radio in particular, a clash between the managers who acted as gatekeepers at the station and the playwrights could not be averted. Two incidents at Radio Xhosa demonstrate how these tensions played themselves out at the station.

## The Myeko Incident

The first incident concerns a play, *Apho Sikhala Khona Isakhwatsha*<sup>82</sup> (Where the Go-Away Bird Calls – 1981), by the noted playwright Mandla Myeko, that was broadcast at a time when there was considerable political turbulence and bombings in Mdantsane, the second largest township in South Africa near East London. The play initially deals with love and romance but then develops a muted political emphasis in that it mentions guerrilla fighters (or ‘terrorists’ in the parlance of the day) who are however defeated. From the moment the story shifts to politics the conflict between the guerrillas and South African soldiers gains prominence. This aspect of the story interested listeners. One interviewee, for example, said that he thought the play tried to reveal how ill-equipped guerrillas were, compared to the SADF. The listener is given a taste of the ‘real’ battlefield as well as the tactics used by both sides. According to this interviewee, Mhegeba, the play was meant to warn the community against aiding the ‘terrorists’.<sup>83</sup>

Shortly after the play was aired, Myeko was summoned to the Cambridge Police Station in East London for interrogation. The police and, by extension, the managers of the station were of the opinion that messages were being passed through the play to the ‘terrorists’. When Myeko denied any connection between the two, the script was sent to a Xhosa specialist, Dr Cingo (and not to the script readers at the station) at the University of South Africa (UNISA) for further scrutiny.<sup>84</sup> Although Dr Cingo’s findings were never divulged, the actions of both

---

<sup>82</sup> *Isakhwatsha*, the Go-Away Bird or Grey Lourie, is a bird that makes a loud and frightening noise when interrupted. In the play, the bird plays a crucial role in warning Vuyisile, the South African Defence Force (SADF) man. Whenever the ‘terrorists’ disturb the bird, he knows exactly where they are. This happens mostly while he is fighting ‘terrorists’ in Namibia, at the Caprivi Strip.

<sup>83</sup> ‘Mhegeba’ is not the name of the interviewee but his clan name. He asked not to be named precisely because in the interview he mentions names like Matanzima and Sebe, who were homeland leaders for the Transkei and the Ciskei. I interviewed Mhegeba, from Dikeni (Ciskei), on 19/04/03 in Kirkwood, near Port Elizabeth.

<sup>84</sup> I interviewed Myeko on 06/11/01 in Zwelitsha, outside King William’s Town.

the police and the managers of the station demonstrate the contestation that prevailed between them and the playwrights.

Interestingly, the ‘make-believe’ appeared too real for the managers of the station to ignore. To a large extent the play was viewed as a conduit of political commentary that was used to incite the audience. For the audience it was an opportunity to have a keyhole view of the confrontation between the ‘terrorists’ and the Afrikaner regime. Myeko’s detention illustrates, among many things, the fact that creative artists are social commentators or spokespersons for the society. Talking in the context of black South African writers in general Gordimer (1988: 243) puts it well when she says:

[A]t the same time as they are writing, they are political activists in the concrete sense, teaching, proselytizing, organizing. When they are detained without trial it may be for what they have written, but when they are tried and convicted of crimes of conscience it is for what they have done as ‘more than a writer’.

Interestingly, what became obvious through interviews with listeners is the manner in which people from different regions made meaning out of the plays. As noted above, one viewer felt that the play was cautioning against assisting terrorists. Another interviewee, Shwayiba, believed that plays such as *Apho Sikhala Khona Isakhwatsha* were directly criticising the homeland leaders like Sebe and Matanzima.<sup>85</sup> Another interviewee, Mhegeba, told me that although he grew up in the Ciskei, he believes that another Myeko play, *UHlohlesakhe* (‘The Greedy One’ – 1988), was more an attack on Kaizer Matanzima (the Transkei leader) than Lennox Sebe (the Ciskei leader) (Mhegeba interview). He pointed out that, ‘Although I was

---

<sup>85</sup> I interviewed Shwayiba on 19/04/03 in Kirkwood, near Port Elizabeth.

not in the Transkei during the broadcast of the play, everyone believed that the play was about Matanzima. Matanzima was more influential than Sebe. Both did terrible things but there was some good in Sebe...’ A postgraduate student from the University of Witwatersrand I spoke to, who comes from Alice, Eastern Cape, also believes that the story was about Sebe, the late Ciskei homeland ‘life president’. This view of the play as being an allegory about one of the two homeland leaders is widespread. Indeed, almost everyone who was asked about the play *UHlohlesakhe* believes that the story was stopped mid-way, by either Kaizer Matanzima or Sebe.<sup>86</sup>

The author, Myeko, by contrast, denies that the plays are political. In our interview he told me that he was not political and that no one at the station could write about the politics of the day. His listeners however clearly saw matters differently and they formulated a set of interpretive codes in an attempt to read or ‘divine’ the underlying meaning of the play. One of the listeners, Shwayiba, strongly believed that Myeko *was* political. Asked why such a politically charged play would be allowed on air, Shwayiba responded:

I believe, although Radio Bantu in particular was under whites, managers would be black. But that person [author of *UHlohlesakhe*] must have been politically aware. So he wanted people to see that there were greedy people up there. When the Homeland Act was passed, powerful individuals took over the Homeland, and they practised what was being done in the Republic by whites. They were only keen on enriching themselves and their families. So I believe the

---

<sup>86</sup> Both leaders have since died; Sebe in July 1994 and Matanzima in June 2003.

playwright was a politician who was trying to alert people about corruption.

### **The Ntlebi Incident**

The second incident concerns the veteran and widely respected newsreader, Given Ntlebi.<sup>87</sup> On H.F. Verwoerd's death, Ntlebi was reading the breaking news and used the following sentence to explain it, '*UVerwoerd uhlatywe nguTsafendas itshoba lalala umbethe*' (Verwoerd was stabbed to death by Tsafendas).<sup>88</sup> For this exemplary use of the Xhosa language, he was called before the management and interrogated. The contentious and offending words were *itshoba lalala umbethe*. This is a well-known Xhosa idiom, which is a polite way of saying someone died. However, the manager's knowledge was limited to knowing that *itshoba* is a tail of an animal. A direct translation would be 'the tail has collected some dew'. This idiom comes from a belief that when an animal dies, its tail collects dew in the morning. So the managers felt that Ntlebi had likened Verwoerd to an animal.<sup>89</sup>

The managers were always alert to any challenges to the master agenda. Socio-political issues had to be omitted, or, at least, be hidden. Plays with such limitations or silences apparently furthered the aims of the managers and that of the apartheid state. From the managers' point

---

<sup>87</sup> Like Myeko, Ntlebi worked for the Xhosa-language radio station for a long time before retiring, having worked for Radio Ciskei. Ntlebi joined the then Radio Bantu in 1963.

<sup>88</sup> Prime Minister H. F. Verwoerd was stabbed in the House of Assembly on 06/09/66 before he made a major policy speech.

<sup>89</sup> In Chapter Four the use and significance of codes of understanding is alluded to. Note: the use of the word '*itshoba*' has many connotations, and may have been used, consciously or unconsciously, to make audiences view Verwoerd in a particular way.

of view, these plays were meant to exclude rural Xhosas from mainstream politics by focusing them on traditional matters and other themes that would not offend the managers. Tomaselli (1989a: 94) notes, 'the cultural meaning carried in the texts of radio and television broadcasts have brought social experiences into line with the discourse articulated by the dominant groups. This is apparent in such offerings as quiz shows, soap operas and serials, variety, music, sport and so on.' As a result, Xhosa radio plays appear to be monotonous, predictable, and at times even identical. This is because:

So few Xhosa writers of the present day have shown themselves able to evade this obsessional theme that Nkosi ... regards the practice [of writing about tradition] as no more than the reworking of a rather trite theme of what is now called 'the generation gap'. (Makhosana, 1991: 7)

However, even within these limits, radio plays did offer some room for manoeuvre. One terrain for such contestation lay in how one treated the theme of tradition. Again and again, it proved to be a loophole through which a message could reach the public. As Gunner (2000a: 231) argues:

[T]he censorship of overtly political themes has not meant that what was being produced did not engage with the harsh consequences of apartheid, or with the desire of listeners both to find a medium which would express their suffering and their search for a better life.

Chapter Four examines the relationship between the themes dealt with in the plays and what takes place in the socio-political sphere. While it is acknowledged that the managers had

control over the content of radio texts, it is argued here that some playwrights managed to use the radio platform to disseminate subversive messages through their plays.

---

---

## **Chapter Four:**

### **Interplay between Fact and Fiction**

---

---

Ambiguities ... enable us to operate at several levels simultaneously ... By choosing to look at episodes that are on the surface puzzling, we are forced into 'teasing out the meaning of the text'. (Marks, 1986: 42)

Apartheid South Africa did not allow free speech in any of the media, forcing media practitioners either to find covert ways of expressing themselves or, in some cases, to simply toe the line. This was precisely the case at the Xhosa-language radio station, where radio dramas could not be openly critical of the regime. During the research in AucklandPark, for instance, a senior employee at the SABC, Ilse Assmann, said that in the Afrikaans-language radio some playwrights were commissioned to write plays that were in favour of the National Party.<sup>90</sup> Writing about an earlier period, Ruth Tomaselli (1989b: 134) concurs with this when she discusses playwrights who wrote favourable radio plays about the 'war effort' for the English language radio, Radio South Africa (RSA) during the Second World War.

This Chapter examines Mandla Myeko's 1981 play, *Apho Sikhala Khona Isakhwatsha* (Where the Go-Away Bird Calls). The argument advanced is that, despite the harsh media legislation (i.e. Publications Act, No 42 of 1974) during the period in question, some radio practitioners such as Myeko engaged with the regime, although they had to camouflage

---

<sup>90</sup> Source: an informal conversation with Ilse Assmann in April 2002 at the SABC headquarters in Pretoria.

messages that could be deemed subversive. So, in spite of the heavy-handedness of the regime on radio texts, some anti-apartheid messages reached the audience, or as Gunner (2000a: 231) puts it:

The censorship of overtly political themes has not meant that what was being produced did not engage with the harsh consequences of apartheid, or with the desire of listeners both to find a medium which would express their suffering and their search for a better life.

Radio texts such as Myeko's play were either contentious or ambiguous due to censorship. Ambiguity was used as a safeguard against persecution by the officials since, as Marks suggests, the ambiguities ensured different readings of the play. Myeko, for instance, tried to enlighten the listeners while abiding by the rules of the station at the same time. To quote Marks (1986: 56), he was 'torn between his enthusiasm for the history and traditions of his people' and his adherence to the dictates of the station. Hence, although his play deals with political issues, in the interview conducted with him he mentioned the fact that as employees of the station they were forbidden political expression.<sup>91</sup> This contradiction highlights the potential role that could be played by radio texts as well as the reluctance of radio practitioners to overtly use these texts to challenge the regime. This chapter will also examine how Ntlebi uses the theme of love to comment on religious issues. In his play, *Lunjalo ke Uthando* (n.d.), Ntlebi deals with the tensions between the Christians and non-Christians that characterised the introduction of Christianity to South Africa.

---

<sup>91</sup> Myeko was interviewed on 06/11/01 in Zwelitsha, outside King William's Town.

## **‘Hidden Transcripts’ in Radio Plays**

*Apho Sikhala Khona Isakhwatsha* was broadcast over a period of eight weeks, and, save for the weekends, it was broadcast twice daily. The day and night broadcasts, at one-thirty and eight o’clock respectively, ensured that all members of the family had a chance to listen to the plays. This is important as it demonstrates the popularity of the plays and their potential influence in the community. Each of the 40 episodes were 15 minutes long; perhaps long enough to leave an indelible impression on the audience’s mind. It is against this backdrop that Myeko’s play should be understood. The fact that a ‘political’ play was on air for such a long period attests to the claim that certain devices were used to enrich the play so that they appealed not only to audiences but to the managers as well.

The Xhosa language abounds with idiomatic expressions that enrich the language, while at the same time opening a plethora of meanings. These linguistic devices, or ‘hidden transcripts’, were of particular importance in radio texts as they managed to hide the ‘real’ meaning of the text from the managers of the station. According to Scott (1990: 14), ‘Each hidden transcript, then, is actually elaborated among a restricted ‘public’ that excludes – that is hidden from – certain specified others.’ In the case of radio plays the ‘certain specified others’ refers to the managers of the station who were not supposed to know what was being transmitted to the audiences.

In Myeko’s play, the use of ‘hidden transcripts’ is demonstrated by his use of *isakhwatsha* (the Go-Away Bird) both as the title and the signature tune. The haunting call of the bird at the beginning of the play alerts the audience of the commencement of the play and attracts

their attention and also helps set the mood of the play. During the play, the bird's call also alerts the protagonist, Sivuyile, to the dangers he faces while at the same time helping him find the antagonist, Thusile. Those who are not familiar with the different connotations associated with *isakhwatsha* would not understand its significance. On a larger scale, *isakhwatsha* could be used as a metaphor for *askaris*.<sup>92</sup>In the play, for instance, Thusile is an *askari* who has a double agenda. He pretends to be a freedom fighter but at the same time vows to kill innocent people. Clearly then, playwrights could carefully use these linguistic devices for the benefit of the targeted public.

On another level, one can argue that the use of *isakhwatsha* also reflects Myeko's difficult position of being an employee of a government institution and of being a social/political commentator at the same time in that, on the one hand, in the jungle the bird can be a lifesaver by alerting one to hidden dangers. On the other hand it can blow one's cover and expose one to the dangers lurking out there. Myeko had to fashion the play in such a way that it was acceptable to the managers of the station without creating the impression that he was pro-struggle. The question posed is: was he conforming to apartheid or rejecting it in the play? In fact, elements of conformity and rejection run parallel throughout the play. In other words, while he may have been convinced that the apartheid state had to be rejected, as an employee of the SABC Myeko was also aware of the dangers of open hostility.

---

<sup>92</sup> In apartheid South Africa, *askari* was the term given to guerrillas who were captured by the South African army and 'turned' or converted into spies or soldiers for the apartheid regime.

## Dangerous Love Games

Among other devices that Myeko used to ‘coat’ (Tomaselli, 1989b: 123) his political commentary was the theme of love. Romance plays were popular with audiences as they dealt with everyday issues that the audiences related to. While the romance theme in *Apho Sikhala Khona Isakhwatsha* was maintained to the end to frame the political insinuation, it is equally true that it was used to entertain the audience. The play managed to attract and maintain active audiences because it resembled their actual lives. To Myeko’s credit, these themes are well balanced throughout the play. In other words, the play perfectly *conformed* to the dictates of the station – on the surface it was a love story and hence it was not a ‘security threat’.

*Apho Sikhala Khona Isakhwatsha* seems to be a love story on the surface level – a trope of many radio plays at the time. The play starts with a high-school love triangle between Sivuyile, Thusile and Noncedo. Sivuyile is a popular boxer while Thusile is a thug who is feared by everyone in Mdantsane location. While Sivuyile and Thusile engage in military training, Noncedo trains as a nurse. At the hospital a doctor falls in love with her, thereby complicating the love theme. The doctor’s designs on Noncedo are interesting. Even though the doctor does not get what he wants, Myeko manages to keep the romance theme alive. As pointed out earlier, it is clear from the outset that Noncedo loves Sivuyile but, by throwing the doctor into the fray, Myeko tries to achieve two goals. On the one hand he attempts to keep the audience’s interest high by maintaining the love theme. On the other hand and most importantly, the theme of romance has to be kept alive in the play so as to divert the attention of the managers from the political innuendoes Myeko makes. In other words, while Sivuyile

and Thusile are out in the bush fighting, Myeko had to create a distraction for the managers. Many radio plays used romance as a framing device whether the play was critiquing religious practices (e.g.: Given Ntlebi's *Lunjalo ke Uthando* – n.d).or outdated traditions (e.g.: W.K. Thamsanqa's *Buzani Kubawo* – 1981).

It would be misleading to suggest that the romance theme played a minimal role in the drama. The first few episodes of the play, for instance, deal with rivalry between Sivuyile and Thusile over Noncedo. It is clear from the outset that Thusile is jealous of Sivuyile. This obsession for Noncedo makes him hate Sivuyile with passion. His hate is compounded by Sivuyile's popularity as a boxer. After Sivuyile defeats Tiger Makoia the hostility between him and Thusile comes to the fore. Thusile's monologue after the fight gives the audience the extent of his disappointment and anger. He fumes:

*Ya Sivuyile. Ungazigwagwisi mfo wethu ngokuba ubethe uTiger  
Makoia ngempazamo wamoyisa. Loo nto ayindenzi ndikoyike. Ndifuna  
nje ukukuyala. Myeke laa mntwana uNoncedo. Ndithi kuwe  
yahlukana noNoncedo, kungenjalo ndiyakukufaka enkathazweni. Loo  
nkathazo iyakuba ngaphezu kwale yelitye endiligibisele kuloo festile  
yakho.*

(Yes Sivuyile. Don't boast for beating Tiger Makoia by luck. Your win does not scare me. I just want to warn you. Leave Noncedo alone. I say leave Noncedo or you will be in big trouble. That trouble will be more serious than the stone I threw at your window).

## **The Political Subtext**

Myeko deftly uses the incidents that take place after the boxing match as a transition to the political theme. Soon Sivuyile and Thusile's rivalry escalates. After an embarrassing fist-fight, Thusile decides to leave school and vows to avenge himself on Sivuyile. He is jailed for torching his former school but he manages to stage a daring escape. He leaves the country for Botswana, and then flees to Zambia.

His escape route is the first hint of the political theme since this was the route taken by those who wanted to join the ANC and PAC armed wings. This is perhaps the crucial moment in the play in that it is the first direct reference to freedom fighters. Thusile's escape from a roadblock just before he gets to Botswana suggests the dangers associated with freedom fighters. Thusile is a rogue, but mentioning the route he takes and the obstacles on his way go against the grain because joining Umkhonto Wesizwe, the military wing of the ANC, or the PAC's Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA) threatened state security. As a consequence Myeko was forced to tone down the political rhetoric by creating a thug in the form of Thusile. As the following shows, Thusile is the complete opposite of a freedom fighter even though the route he takes after escaping from jail follows that of the young men and women who left the country to join the ANC or PAC. It is when he arrives in Botswana that Thusile's true intentions are exposed.

After his eventful and courageous escape from prison on charges of arson, he arrives in Botswana and is introduced to an unscrupulous instructor, Mkhumbane. In their first encounter Mkhumbane realises that Thusile could be used because he is politically naïve. In

his monologue Mkhumbane depicts himself as anti-communist. By so doing Myeko was talking the language of the managers of the station, hence 40 episodes of the play could be allowed on air. By creating this character Myeko manages to maintain the ambiguity that runs throughout the play. In his monologue Mkhumbane says:

*Khangela zininzi ezingazi ukuba zize kufunani apha. Azazi ukuba zintoni eziqhubekayo phandle. Ha! ha!, ndiza kusebenza kakuhle ngabo. Andibaxeleli mna ngekomanisi. Ikomanisi bona ndizakuyifihla igama le yayo. Bandibayeke bona benze umsebenzi wethu omdaka. Zona zezalapho, thina sifuna ukutya qha. Mazilwe zona sibhaqe thina. Thina sizakuzifundisa zibenze abantu bangonwabi ezidolophini, zibulale nabanye ngaphandle nje. Mazilwe norhulumente waSous Afrika. He? Andisoze nditsho kuzo ubukomanisi. Andisokuze nditsho kuzo ubukomanisi buthi mabenze leyo nto. (Ha! Ha! Ha!)*

(Look, many of them do not know why they are here. They do not know about the outside world. Ha! Ha! I will use them. I will not tell them about communism. I will not mention communism. Let them do our dirty work, and we will benefit. We will teach them how to terrorise the cities and rural areas. They must fight with the South African regime. Heh? I will not say communism is not about that)  
Ha! Ha! Ha!

Thusile becomes an enigmatic figure as the play progresses. It becomes apparent that he is not driven by anything other than revenge on Sivuyile. To a large extent, Myeko prepares the

audience for the atrocities Thusile will commit after his training. In a sense, he subtly ‘tells’ the audience that Thusile is not a typical cadre; rather he is an infiltrator – or even an *askari*. Nevertheless, even that is clouded by the fact that Thusile and his gang will not target only civilians, but will target the regime as well. They are depicted as mercenaries who are only concerned about their own personal gain or interests.

It is clear that Myeko tries to strike a balance by toeing the line on the one hand, and enlightening the audience on the other. It is not surprising then that he maintains that the play is apolitical and it is perhaps for this reason that his two main characters are the direct opposite of each other. For example, while Thusile goes to Zambia to train as a ‘terrorist’, Sivuyile joins the South African Defence Force (SADF) battalion 21 that fights SWAPO in the Caprivi Strip in the 1980s. In that battle, Myeko paints a picture of a well-trained and well-armed SADF, while the terrorists do not even have shoes. To a large extent the difficult situation in which the freedom fighters wage war against the regime is meant to make the community sympathetic towards them. It is perhaps for this reason that many community members harboured the so-called ‘terrorists’, despite the regime’s concerted efforts to stop this. On the surface, however, and for the benefit of the station managers, the fact that the freedom fighters were ill-equipped and wore ill-fitting uniforms may have appeared as a sign of being unprepared. This sharp contrast between the two forces is perhaps meant to soften the subversive message contained in the play. Mhegeba’s observation is useful here because it gives a different reading of the play. His observation may resemble that of the managers at the time. Asked what he thought about the playwright, he answered:

*Lo mntu wayebhala wayehambisana okanye engahambisani  
norhulumente. Zange acacise. Wayediscourager abantu  
bangazibandakanyi nama-cadre.*

(The playwright was either supporting or not supporting the government. He was not clear. He was discouraging people from joining the cadres).

To an extent, then, the two characters reflect Myeko's inner conflict about the socio-political life during the period in question. Further, the two constitute and pronounce the ambiguities presented and maintained in the play. They stand on either end of the continuum and Myeko seems to be stuck between the two positions – the denunciation of the status quo and co-operation with it. This contrast is evident in his reply when asked why he wrote the play in the first place. He replies:

The play was about terrorists. If a story dealt with terrorists, those terrorists must be killed. Just like in the play, *UHlohlesakhe*. *UHlohlesakhewas about what was happening at the time*. Boers from the Free State suspected that there was a message that was passed through the play [*Apho sikhala khona isakhwatsha*]. But, there was no message at all. It was only *fiction* [emphasis added].

The double talk that the play 'was about what was happening at the time' and the claim that it was 'fiction' at the same time, highlights the untenable circumstances in which Myeko found himself. It is such circumstances that forced some radio practitioners to walk the tightrope.

On the one hand they wanted to be part of the bigger struggle, while at the same time they wanted to retain their jobs. In order for them to be able to maintain the balance, they had to hide their messages from their superiors.

Due to the combination of both romantic and political themes, the plot has all the hallmarks of a good soap opera. This diversion is necessary in avoiding censorship. While the play may sound this way to the managers of the station, the haunting warning of the *isakhwatsha* opens a host of interpretive possibilities for the audience. It is evident, therefore, that Myeko uses the local knowledge of the audience about *isakhwatsha* and other linguistic devices in order to make his point. Gunner (2002: 259) asserts that:

Through the multi-accentuated nature of language and the polysemic nature of the plays themselves these plays might appear to endorse or, at least, acquiesce in the dominant apartheid ideology of the era, yet at the same time they offered resistant alternatives to it.

The audience is made to look at a deeper meaning of the plot because of the richness of the language – the hidden transcript that is meant for *their ears only*. A linear reading of the play would not expose the political nuance to the audience. Although romance features to the end of the play, the political subtext takes the audience to the underworld of revenge and terrorism. It is, to an extent, this political implication that captivates the audience members; hence many still remember the play as a political commentary, even though they question Myeko's affiliation.

## **Exposure of Enemy Secrets**

The latter point is particularly significant because it points to the audience's role in the listening space. As noted earlier, for radio texts to escape censorship messages that could be deemed subversive, they must be, to borrow Stuart Hall's term, 'encoded'. It is the duty of the audience members to actively make meaning out of the radio text. As Cishe indicated previously, more often than not the audience would be able to understand the deeper meaning of the language used in the plays. For instance, respondents to questions about Myeko's play such as Mhegeba, are convinced that the play was political. According to Mhegeba, the play depicted both sides of the political divide. Concurring with Myeko's assertion that 'terrorists' had to be killed he is of the opinion that the play was warning those who became activists that they would be killed by the regime. He believes that the play suggested that people should support the regime. So, despite Myeko's attempt to downplay the political impact of the play, audiences thought differently about it. Generally, the stance of the respondents echoes the many letters to the station that view radio plays both as informative and enlightening – meaning that they see the plays as a microcosm of South Africa. Or as Barber (2000: 25) comments on the popular Yoruba plays, audiences "co-constitute the plays ... because they take it upon themselves to convert the narrative into moral lessons which they can take away and apply to their own lives."

The rapport between playwrights and the audiences cannot be underrated. Without a deep sense of Xhosa culture, language and history, Myeko would not have had the necessary tools to reach the audiences' inner world. Apart from the names of the characters that carry certain connotations (e.g. Thusile means 'Shocker'; Sivuyile means 'We are happy'; Maqhaqha

means ‘Uncover’), Myeko also uses words and phrases that have an array of meanings. For instance, in Thusile’s monologue he uses the word *inkathazo* (trouble). The word has some serious connotations. On the one hand, the term is used when someone who has to become an *igqirha* (traditional healer) hears voices in his/her head. S/he is said to be in trouble (*inkathazo*). One of the *igqirha*’s gifts is that of ‘seeing’ or anticipating things before they happen – this would tie in well with the connotations of *isakhwatsha*. In this regard, Turner (1972: 48) is quoted as having said that:

Divination denotes inquiry about future events or matters, hidden or obscure, directed to a deity who, it is believed, will reply through significant tokens.<sup>93</sup>

Unlike *ingxaki* (problem), which is sometimes interchangeable with *inkathazo*, the word *inkathazo* means a *big* trouble. Politically, the word is easily associated with *inkatha* (not the Inkatha Freedom Party)– a group of young men (thought to be Shangaan) who terrorised the community of Zwelitsha township (where Myeko lives) in the Eastern Cape in the 1980s. Thusile uses the word again soon after he had escaped from jail. To the audience, it becomes clear that *he* has become *inkathazo* – a *big* problem. The following monologue bears testimony to this statement:

*Ndifuna ukwenza amalungiselelo okusabela eBotsoana. Ndifika nje ndifuna ukuba ndiqeqeshwe kakuhle kwezobunqolobi. Kunjalo nje ndizakubaxelela bonke ukuba into endiyinqwenelayo ndakufika*

---

<sup>93</sup> Source: <http://www.wits.ac.za/izangoma/part2.asp#top>

*phaya. Ukubuya kwam ndakubafundisa isifundo xa bebonke. Ndifuna ukubeka ibhombu phantsi kwesitulo sika Sajini Maqhaqha nesika Sivuyile ukwenzela ukuba bangakwazi nokubangcwaba xa bebefumene. NdinguThusile mna, baza kundazi. Ndiyeva nje kakuhle ukuba phaya eBotswana azikho iinkathazo[emphasis added]. Ndizakuthi ndakufika phaya ndibaxokise ndithi ndiphethwe kakubi ngamapolisa abe Mzantsi Afrika ndilinyembe eli lizwe ukwenzela ukuba bandamkele. Bakundamkela ndizakubacela ukuba bandithumele eZambia.*

(I want to make preparations to go to Botswana. I want them to train me as a terrorist. I will tell them what I want to do. On my return, I will teach everyone a lesson! I will put a bomb under Sergeant Maqhaqha and Sivuyile's chairs so that they are beyond recognition when they are found. I am Thusile, they will know me. I hear that there are no *troubles* [emphasis added] in Botswana. When I get there I will lie and say I have some problem with the South African police. I will vilify this country so that they accept me. Once they accept me I will ask them to send me to Zambia).

Myeko's use of the term *inkathazo* may have been coincidental, but the audience may have picked up some of the associations mentioned above. Moreover, his understanding of the audience's lifestyle, aspirations, dreams, as well as the political realities on the ground, make it possible for him to intricately weave his political commentary into the love theme. For example, the volatile political situation in Mdantsane – the setting of the play – allowed him to place the main characters on a political collision course camouflaged as jealousy. The

tempo of the play changes as Sivuyile joins the South African Defence Force (SADF) – a step that his father, who fought in the Second World War, is totally against.<sup>94</sup> Myeko seems to deliberately exaggerate the prowess of the SADF in the war zone. For instance, the SADF is depicted as a well-oiled, invincible force while the ‘terrorists’ are in constant retreat. This imbalanced representation of what was taking place in the Caprivi Strip reflects the distorted news that was churned out by the official press, deliberately overlooking the death of scores of SADF operatives. For example, according to the *Weekly Mail* of July 22 to July 28, 1988, ‘between September 1987 to July 4 1988, the South African Defence Force listed the death of 83 SADF and South West African Territorial Force members while the Angolan government put the figure at 450’.<sup>95</sup> These deaths would only be brought to the attention of the world through the efforts of organisations such as the End Conscription Campaign.

In order for the audience to access the needed information from the plays, they had to understand the language that was used. As Hall (1980: 14) puts it in a different context, ‘messages had to be understood through the prism of semiotics.’ Some of the semiotics would be beyond the understanding of the managers of the Xhosa-language station, thereby denying access to central messages or the preferred text of the playwrights. A case in point is Myeko’s play, *Apho Sikhala Khona Isakhwatsha*, where the freedom fighters are called *abanqolobi* (*unqolobi*, singular)(terrorists). In Xhosa, the term, *umnqolobi*, roughly means someone who attacks unexpectedly. According to the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, a terrorist is ‘one who favours or uses terror-inspiring methods of governing or of coercing government or community.’ While the two usages seem similar, the methods used by the Afrikaner

---

<sup>94</sup> It is important to note that mainstream history books often downplay the role played by blacks in the world wars. Again the playwright’s role of enlightening the audience is realised.

<sup>95</sup> Visit: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuba\\_in\\_Angola#Background](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuba_in_Angola#Background) for more information on the strife in Angola.

regime made it *the* terrorist. The community felt terrorized by the regime and needed someone to defend them. So, when people were told that there were terrorists or that they should report terrorists to the police, they defied such instructions. The community knew that those who were dubbed *abanqolobi* were actually sent to defend them. On the one hand, the use of this term may have appealed to the managers as it was in line with their ideology. On the other hand, the audiences were meant to understand that the ‘terrorists’ were actually some of their sons and daughters who were coming back to engage the regime. Naturally, Barber’s idea of the ‘educated audience’ is crucial here for that audience to extract the necessary information from the plays. Put differently, the audience of radio plays blurs the boundaries of age, religion and class; each group of audience picks up what it feels is relevant to their experiences. However, the last assertion does not suggest that the educated audience did not have its weaknesses. If anything, the plays reflected some of the social ills that afflicted the community, such as female subjugation. Thusile’s role as the protagonist is important. Thusile’s persona is not only ambiguous; it is also dynamic in the sense that it may represent both an element that is anti-social and, more importantly, a ‘terrorist’ (*umnqolobi*) – a construction of the regime at the time to alienate freedom fighters. In the propaganda machinery of the regime, ‘terrorists’ or *abanqolobi* were associated with those who were encroaching back into the country to fight with the regime. In other words, to the regime these young men and women were considered terrorists (*abanqolobi*) while to the community they were freedom fighters (*amaqabane*). It is the latter meaning of ‘terrorist’ that may have held sway with the audience. In other words, by showing the ‘terrorist’ in a bad light Myeko may have been trying to elicit sympathy with the audiences. At the same time though, he may have been trying to warn the audience of the rogue elements (*iimpimpi*) who infiltrated liberation organisations. While Thusile may have been an abhorrent character in the play, the SADF was hated more than the ‘terrorist’. Or, put differently, the audience did not

necessarily see 'terrorists' as enemies; their enemies were *iimpimpi* (spies) such as the *askaris*. Scott (1990: 9) is correct when he points out that:

An individual who is affronted may develop a personal fantasy of revenge and confrontation, but when the insult is but a variant of affronts suffered systematically by the whole race, class, or strata, then the fantasy can become a collective cultural product. Whatever form it assumes – offstage parody, dream of violent revenge, millennial vision of a world turned upside down – this collective hidden transcript is essential to any dynamic view of power.

Thus, even though Myeko makes Thusile a terrorist, the audience would be able to engage in 'reverse reading' of the text. Just as Cishe understands that there were certain things that radio practitioners could not say on radio, the audiences of *Apho Sikhala Khona Isakhwatsha* would know that Myeko could not overtly write about freedom fighters (*amaqabane*). They understood an inversion and how it worked.

Radio texts are polysemic and therefore cannot be read in a mono-dimensional fashion. Consequently, for effective results, it is incumbent upon playwrights to 'channel' the audience's way of seeing things (Iser, 1974: 53). Camouflaging the plays alone was not sufficient for the enlightenment and educational roles of radio plays. There had to be a rapport between playwrights and the audience, which would allow the former to use linguistic devices that the latter would relate to. As pointed out earlier, framing radio plays with the theme of romance seems to have been popular. However, its popularity should be understood

within the framework of the stringent publication legislation of the time. In as much as the legislation was debilitating to all writers, playwrights such as Myeko reluctantly, covertly and even unconsciously challenged the status quo. His play, *Apho Sikhala Khona Isakhwatsha*, not only challenged the legislation; it both entertained and enlightened the audience as well. By intertwining fact and fiction, he managed to evade the vigilance of the managers. Even though he kills the *umnqolobi* (terrorist) in the end, the audience would have been reminded of the role that is played by *amaqabane* and the challenges they faced from the SADF and other government operatives.

*Apho Sikhala Khona Isakhwatsha*, like many plays by Myeko, was very popular. Its popularity may lie in the fact that, firstly, it was presented as a romance. Secondly and most importantly, it may have struck a chord with the audiences who were actively involved in the politics of the region. Thus, the play ran parallel to what was happening politically in the period in question. It is difficult to tell how the play managed to escape the vigilance of the managers other than the fact that romance was a central theme. On the one hand, one could argue that, as a long-standing employee at the station, Myeko knew how to bypass censorship. The knowledge of how the station operated must have given employee-cum-playwrights an advantage, not only over other writers from outside, but also over the managers. There might have been a level of trust bestowed on the employees who doubled up as producers of plays at the station. On the other hand, however, the foregrounding of love might have blinded the managers to the underlying message, for a while at least.

As in the story of *UThuthula*, love was a theme that the managers seem to have tolerated in the plays. As a result, many plays used the love formula. The use of romance as a vehicle for

messages is important in understanding the pressures that prevailed on playwrights. Love themes were not only neutral, but also easy to deal with in that the plot is straightforward. People like Myeko, then, must have known that love themes were acceptable to the managers, and thus they could be manipulated to send certain messages. Camouflaging the plays and using their mastery of the Xhosa language, as will be shown, made it possible for playwrights to carry subversive messages in the plays without being detected (in some cases at least) by the managers.

However, the managers seem to have been equally prepared for such opportunism. In the case of Myeko, for instance, even though the play *seems* to have run to its completion, the controllers of the station questioned the play. Some respondents believe that the play was cut short. In the interview with Myeko, he explained that he was interrogated by the police during the broadcast of the play. He was subsequently summoned to the Cambridge Police Station in East London to be probed about the play. The police, as well as the managers of the station, were of the opinion that messages were being passed to the terrorists through the play. When Myeko denied any connection between the two, the script was sent to a Xhosa specialist at the University of South Africa (UNISA) for further scrutiny. It might have been Dr Cingo's report that curtailed the complete run of the play. It would seem that the managers' vigilance in this regard is similar to the one mentioned in the Ntlebi incident.

There is another interesting level on which Myeko's daring should be viewed. His actions were decidedly defiant, as he knew perfectly well that plays with a political line were not acceptable at the station. As a playwright/producer who had acted in the expected manner on numerous occasions it would seem that he became exasperated by 'playing it safe' in the face

of the managers' surveillance. His exasperation can clearly be seen in the fast paced action in the play. According to Scott (1990), this would be the explosion of the hidden transcript into the public. Like George Eliot's Mrs Poyser (Scott, 1990: 9) who explodes against the squire who has been trying to grab her land for a year, Myeko found an outlet to vent his anger by doing exactly what he was not supposed to do. In response to this open defiance, the managers took drastic steps and called in the police. This action, among other things, can be viewed as a weapon used by the managers to assert themselves and also to regain their dominant part in the 'performance'.<sup>96</sup> By displaying their power in this manner, they may also have been sending a warning to anyone who might be thinking of subversion.

It would however be inappropriate to even suggest that all romantic plays had a political twist in them. In fact, many of the romantic plays that were broadcast were specifically dealing with the theme of romance. The fact that many plays that were broadcast dealt with romance, though, does not mean that playwrights did not try to write about socio-political issues. What it may point to, rather, is that plays that were overtly political were censored or not made available for broadcast due to self-censorship. Romantic plays were undoubtedly popular with the audiences. If the popularity of soap operas on television can be used as a yardstick, then the last assertion is substantive. Up to this day, romantic plays are popular at the Xhosa-language radio station.<sup>97</sup> Romantic plays may have been, and still are, popular because they offer escape to the audiences. Although many of the plays mirrored the patriarchal nature of Xhosa society, they nevertheless had a reliable audience, as the thousands of the letters to the station reveal.

---

<sup>96</sup> Scott is of the view that both the dominant and the subordinate 'perform' in public to outwit the other. He calls these performances 'public transcripts'.

<sup>97</sup> Many of the rebroadcast plays are by popular demand and they mostly deal with romance. Many of the letters in the SABC archives request the repeat of some of the plays.

However, 'bad romances', as patriarchal plays may be viewed, may still have had positive results. Radway (1984: 102), writing about 'bad' romance fiction, alludes to potential positive effects on the reader. She says that readers begin to re-evaluate themselves by comparing themselves with the characters or their actions, thereby leading to some change. The play, *Buzani Kubawo*, is a good example of this self-examination by the audiences, which makes them look critically at some of their traditional practices. In many romances women characters are either silent or suicidal. This may reflect real practices in the society where women cannot 'talk back' to their husbands and other males. Romance plays that give women a platform to 'talk back' may give female audiences some satisfaction. Commenting about romance novels, Modleski (1982: 43) puts this point succinctly in stating: 'Since in real life women are not often able to reinterpret male hostility in such a satisfactory way, the novels must somehow provide an outlet for female resentment.' In a sense then, romance plays were useful to both the audiences (especially women) and the playwrights, as they acted as sites of relaxation and purveyors of messages. While romance plays were popular, their predominance at the station may have blinded the managers to their multiple-layered nature, thereby giving employee-playwrights such as Myeko an opportunity to broadcast political plays which placed romance in the foreground.

Barber's assertion (1997: 352) about the Yoruba theatre, that most of the romantic plays 'talked' to both the female and male audiences, is of relevance when one attempts to understand the Xhosa-language radio audience. In fact, male and female audiences deliberated on the plays by taking different sides on the play. Men almost always sided with male characters, and women with females. Although there are other ways of 'reading' the plays, the plays appear to have been gendered as McQuail (1977: 96) suggests. According to him, 'soap operas in general are significantly more preferred and watched by women, even

when they recognize the low status of the genre'. Plays such as *Thuthula* and *Lunjalo ke uthando*, then, would have appealed more to female than to male audiences. However, this position is not absolute, as males too would be able to respond to what gratified them in the play. Unlike romance fiction, which is mostly bought and read by women (Radway, 1984: 159), radio plays are listened to by both males and females because the plays deal with their day-to-day issues. These plays are used for both relaxation and escape, which both men and women need. Since the characters with which the audience identifies are 'believable and real', they offer the audience some answers to their many problems. In some cases they can even project their troubles to the characters while they relax in peace and harmony, as Radway (1984: 90) puts it thus:

Relaxation implies a reduction in the state of tension produced by prior conditions, whereas escape obviously suggests flight from one state of being to another more desirable one.

Writing about the gendered audience, McQuail (1997: 97) asserts that:

The essence of a gendered audience is not the sex ratio of its composition, but the degree to which conscious membership of the audiencehood is given some distinct meaning in terms of specific female or male experience.

It is clear then that no play can be viewed in a one-dimensional manner. Different audience members can read plays that have an overriding romance storyline in different ways, as will be briefly demonstrated in the next section.

### ***Lunjalo ke Uthando (Such is Love)***

Ntlebi's play *Lunjalo ke Uthando* (n.d.), for instance, explores the ups and downs of love, albeit within a volatile religious context. Again, romance is used as a framework for the religious critique in the play. In almost all the plays, apart from acting as a ploy, the romance theme was used to entertain audiences. The play deals with the dilemma of a priest's (Mfundisi Khumalo) daughter, Nomsa, who falls in love with a heathen man, Majongosi. Their relationship develops while there is strife between the converted and the heathen in the village of Qhimngqoshe. Bloody battles ensue, resulting in a number of deaths. Mfundisi Khumalo and the chief lead opposing sides. In the midst of this strife, a love relationship develops between Nomsa and Majongosi. Unfortunately, their affection for each other is made difficult by the enmity between the Christians and the non-Christians, and by the fact that a young priest is interested in Nomsa too. As much as Nomsa loves Majongosi she cannot disclose the news to her parents.

Realising his problem, Majongosi decides to convert to Christianity in order to be able to marry Nomsa. He begins to attend literacy classes so that he will be able to read the Bible. Mfundisi Khumalo is impressed by this and encourages him to study to become a priest, even though he was not aware of Nomsa and Majongosi's affair. In the village, Majongosi becomes a victim of the heathens. Towards the end of the play he is injured and has to stay a

while in hospital. While there, he receives news that he has passed his tests and can become a priest; the only hurdle is that he is still single. When Khumalo learns that Majongosi wants to marry his daughter, he is exhilarated. They marry in hospital and Majongosi joins the war to spread Christianity.

### **Stereotyping Women in Xhosa Radio Plays**

The play revolves around Majongosi's difficulties as he journeys from being a heathen to being a Christian. The clashes between the two groups become a vehicle of the affection between Majongosi and Nomsa. While Nomsa is smitten with him, she has to hide her feelings from her family who would like her to marry a Christian. Her silence is characteristic of women in the plays. Xhosa plays are decidedly patriarchal and as a result women always adopt a *silent protest* (Satyo and Jadezweni, 2003: 3). In almost all the romance plays, with the exception of *USomagqabi*, the girls' parents decide who their daughters will marry. This is similar to romance novels in which 'women are unarguably represented as objects of consumption by men' (Barber, 1997: 120). In both novels and plays the girl gets married away to the man or her father earns money through *ilobola* (bride-price). In both cases it is the man who is awarded. In extreme cases, the girl would be a prostitute and the man would collect the money. In both cases, the girl has little or no say in the transaction. In other words, she becomes a commodity that is sold in the marketplace. Writing in a different context, Modleski (1982: 48) points out that:

While the novels are always about a poor girl finally marrying a rich man, preferably of the nobility, they must be careful to show that the

girl never set out to get him and his goods. This is of course a simple reflection of the double bind imposed upon women in real life: their most important achievement is supposed to be finding a husband; their greatest fault is attempting to do so.

Similarly, in the short story, *Mamlambo*, Bheki Maseko (1994) gives a perfect illustration of the way women are treated in the city, both by black and white men. In the story the main character, Thembisile, is forced to have a relationship with her boss (Roberto) in order to get a better job. Although she hates the relationship she finds herself in a double bind: she wants Roberto to support her after losing her grandmother, but at the same time she hates selling her body to him. To make things worse for her, the relationship stands in the way of a more loving relationship between her and Thomas, her secret lover. Maseko gives a vivid description of this double bind, which not only hurts Thembisile, but makes her an outcast as well. Although the customers in Roberto's shop believe that she likes what she is doing, the reality is different. Maseko (1994: 22) points out that:

There was nothing she hated more than intercourse with Roberto. It was as if she was being forced to do something she hated as he breathed heavily against her cheek. His green eyes were the most unpleasant of his features. The only escape was to imagine that it was Thomas who was parting and hugging her. She was always relieved when it was all over.

As suggested, her woes are not only in the seclusion of the bedroom, but also out in the society that turns against her. Other women are her harshest critics, attacking her for being *skeberesh* (whore). The society that is supposed to come to her rescue sneers at her and even calls her *miesies* (mistress), a label that was driven either by envy or sarcastic disapproval (Maseko, 1994: 24). The way the female customers scrutinise her character is telling here. This judgement not only highlights the way women are depicted in the plays and African literature in general, but it also indicates how low the morals of those women who end up in the city can go. This is the warning that cuts across many Xhosa plays. The heated conversation between MaZungu and MaNgobese who are part of the customers who witness Roberto's treatment of Thembisile serves to warn young women who want to go to the city against doing so. For women the city 'simultaneously becomes a sign of both entrapment and flight' (Sibiya, 2002: 10).

In the play *Lunjalo ke Uthando*, too, women are at the mercy of men as the double bind is maintained. For instance, while Nomsa knows that she loves Majongosi, she has to pretend that she has some affection for the young priest, both for religious and security purposes. Her parents are aware of the attention that the priest gives to her, and are secretly hopeful that he will finally propose marriage. Nomsa also knows that if her parents were to ask her to marry the priest, she would have no option but to satisfy them. This is why the conversion of Majongosi is crucial in the play. It is only when he passes all his tests that Khumalo feels Majongosi is worthy of marrying his daughter. Although the story foregrounds Christianity, it is within the context of romance. Khumalo has to play the patriarchal role of deciding who marries his daughter, although this is not presented as forcefully as in Myeko's *Buzani Kubawo*. As pointed out earlier, these plays became repetitive and monotonous. It is true that women tend to accept what such texts say about them being subordinate to men. Although

radio plays that undermine their positions in society may make them reflect on their lives, in the end they seem to accept the given cultural norms. As Mondleski (1982: 113) concludes:

Thus, while ... [these romance plays] provide outlets for women's dissatisfaction with male-female relationships, they never question the primacy of these relationships. Nor do they overtly question the myth of male superiority or the institutions of marriage and the family. Indeed, patriarchal myths and institutions are, on the manifest level, whole-heartedly embraced, although the anxieties and tensions they give rise to may be said to provoke the need for the texts in the first place.

Other plays also complicate the love plot by immersing it in diametrically opposed contexts such as Christian/non-Christian (*Lunjalo ke Uthando* – N.T. Ntlebi); educated/illiterate (*Engowam nje Ngowam* – N.E. Bokwe); jealousy/trust (*Isono Sakho Siyakukuleqa Sikuleqa de Sikufumane* – L.J. Gqomfa); *Akukho Mini Ingenabusuku Bayo* – D. Tuswa); tradition/modernity (Buzani Kubawo – M. Myeko) and other themes on desire/love. As pointed out earlier, the audience is not expected to look for a hidden meaning in such plays, although one cannot counter the fact that there are multiple ways they can 'view' such plays. In the play *Lunjalo ke Uthando*, some audiences may see Majongosi and Nomsa's relationship as the main plot, while others may look at it from a Christian perspective. In some cases, such as in *Lunjalo ke Uthando*, the plot involves a well-known setting, if only to make the play look 'truthful'. Hostilities between the *amaqaba* (the heathen) and *amagqobhoka* (the converted) among Xhosas are well documented. By inserting romance

into this setting, Ntlebi may have been trying to talk to those who were still holding on to such hostilities. Perhaps the message here was that in spite of religious differences, love triumphs. In a sense, he may have been saying that, through romance, *amaqaba* and *amagqobhoka* are able to understand each other. So, although the religious angle may have appealed to some audiences, the playwright may have been promoting the romance theme.

However, it would be fair to say that the title of the play, *Lunjalo ke Uthando* (Such is Love), suggests how the playwright would like the audience to view the play without necessarily prescribing how to 'read' it. As much as the audience extracted the information they needed from the plays, the duty of the playwright was to use a language as well as situations that were comprehensible to the audience. Other plays, such as *Buzani Kubawo*, would have love as the main storyline and tradition as a secondary theme. Depending on the playwright's intention, the secondary love theme may appear stronger and more challenging than the main storyline. In love plays, however, the love theme dominates while the more subversive messages are hidden in the language used. Whether such plays pointed to escapism by some playwrights is open to argument. One might assume that playwrights understood that the audiences enjoyed and relished love plays, but may sometimes have used them to coat certain messages. However, an analysis of all three plays suggests that, despite the tools the playwrights may use, the audience extracted information that they needed.

The manner in which women were treated in plays needs special attention because it reflects the way women were viewed by society in general. It is true that in some instances women were given a lead role in the plays. However, while some plays created women who were strong and independent, such women were often badly treated in the end. Women have not

always been presented in a positive light in radio plays. In fact, *Usomagqabi*, *Onje Ngomama* (The One like Mother) and a few others are exceptions in this regard. Interestingly, plays authored by women present women as strong characters. However, such characters were only influential on the home front. Barbara Tsotsobe's play, *Onje Ngomama*, is a case in point. The play revolves around the kindness of MaMtolo. Because of her warmth, kindness and skill in managing the house, her daughter Nomsa aspires to emulate her. Despite her education Nomsa gets married. Her son, Fikile searches for and finds a wife who has his mother's good qualities. The story ends with the second generation trying to replicate what has happened before them.

Given the above, one can argue that radio was also used as a space to address gender issues. Unsurprisingly, the bulk of plays that were broadcast were authored and produced by male playwrights. In fact, research for this study revealed that, at the Xhosa radio station, none of the plays were produced by women. This suggests that many plays seemed to promote patriarchy. For instance, plays like *Ikhaya Lentombi Lisemzini* (A Girl's Home is in Wedlock) suggest that a girl is brought up for marriage. Such beliefs are central in many Xhosa customs (*izithethe*). The plays emphasise the belief that a girl who behaves herself will marry young. Those who do not marry or marry old are called by derogatory names, such as *idikazi* (spinster). Every girl is raised to avoid being called *idikazi*. As suggested, many plays perpetuated this indoctrination.

This study contends that plays that have this theme as a central message only serve to perpetuate this perception. The female character is almost never given a choice when it comes to marriage; as if she should be satisfied as long as her father gets *lobola*. This is aptly

illustrated in Myeko's play, *Buzani Kubawo*. In that play Nomampondomise has to make sure that her father does not lose the dowry just because she does not like Mcunukelwa. As a result, she has to make sure that Gugulethu pays *lobola* for her so that Mcunukelwa's cattle can be replaced. In order to waive Nomampondomise's marriage to Mcunukelwa, he has to pay an equal number of cattle. In some instances, plays even suggest that a girl cannot refuse a man. For instance, Morris Qalase's play *Ubuhle Bendoda Zinkomo* (A Man's Beauty is His Cattle – 1978) is a good example of this. What the play suggests is that no matter what the girl thinks of the man, if he has cattle she has to be his wife if he wishes so. In fact, Qalase's play is based on a popular wedding song. During the negotiations for the girl's hand, women are sidelined. Their only role in the 'transaction' is to make sure that the girl is ready for wifehood.

A brief return to *Buzani Kubawo* (1981) is appropriate here as, on another level, the play highlights this gender stereotype. At face value, the story is about love that is denied its fruition by the dictates of culture. This surface reading of the play leads to tragedy precisely because Nomampondomise and Gugulethu do not listen to their parents and, by extension, to culture. A feminist reading of the play would focus on the violation and oppression Nomampondomise and other women go through. While it is true that Gugulethu is a victim of culture, it is equally true that Nomampondomise is a victim of gender stereotyping. She is undoubtedly the tragic heroine of the play. In this regard, one should see Nomampondomise as a strong (rather than stubborn) woman who knows her rights and needs. She not only stands up to her parents; she asserts herself against the repressive dictates of a custom that treats women as commodities. Like Thuthula and Somagqabi, she shows that women should have a say in matters that concern them. However, since the patriarchal world dictates that

men should always win, both Thuthula and Nomampondomise are punished, ridiculed and demonised in the end.

Just as in *Buzani Kubawo*, where a woman who rebels against her father's wishes does not get true love, *Ingqumbo Yeminyanya* (The Wrath of the Ancestors – 1976)<sup>98</sup> portrays the swift punishment of the 'rebellious queen'. The queen, Thembela, is not only punished with unrequited love for disregarding tradition; she also becomes insane. The insanity should be read in two ways. Firstly, it is a warning that whoever challenges tradition will be punished severely by the ancestors. Secondly and most importantly, the message that is sent out is that the queen is not necessarily challenging tradition. An impression is created that she is actually insane. In other words, women are trivialised when they challenge Xhosa 'dogmas'. By default, insane people are seen as misfits in society; as those who should not be taken seriously. Respect for the male at home is the main message that dominates in many plays, because men are closer to the ancestors than women. In fact, only men become ancestors. Interestingly, in *Ingqumbo Yeminyanya* it is the 'educated' young king, Zwelinzima, who insists on marrying a commoner. However, instead of the ancestors punishing him after the queen 'mistakenly' killed the clan's totem *inkwakhwa* (a colourful snake) it is the naïve queen who is punished.

In the play, *Inkomo Enotshoba Ayibotshwa* (A Stubborn Woman – n.d), the playwright also depicts a woman who challenged her husband's rule. In the end, however, she is made to suffer so as to be a lesson to others that disobeying and disrespecting patriarchy results in bad luck. There are many other plays that follow this trend or formula. When bad luck befalls a

---

<sup>98</sup> This is an adaptation of A.C. Jordan's 1940 novel of a similar title. Its adaptation is credited to Mandla Myeko.

community, men are quick to point a finger at women, not least because witches are generally women.<sup>99</sup> It is interesting to note that Zulu-language radio dramas also treated women in the same fashion. Commenting on the same issue, Sibiya (2002: 12) avers:

Women are generally depicted as stubborn and uncomprehending;  
whose heads need 'fixing' by men. The evil side of men is blamed on  
women, who are also scapegoats for social disintegration or the index  
of the state of the nation.

In W. Nkuhlu's play *Tarhw'ameva!* (Please Forgive Me! – 1976), for instance, the author seems to be 'unwittingly' developing a strong woman who is not willing to listen to her husband. Mamqocwa's sin in the play is the unreserved show of affection for her son, Qhayiya. To her husband, Jwara, this show of love would spoil 'his' son and make him a weak man. According to this thinking, a boy-child should grow closer to his father so that he can become a 'real' man; a belief that suggests that women would do the opposite. This is the downfall of both Mamqocwa and Qhayiya. Just because Qhayiya grows closer to his mother, he has to suffer the same fate as his mother – humiliation and failure. When Qhayiya escapes to the city like others, he becomes corrupted and ends up wasted. On coming back, his mother is disappointed that he has not made any money. His father assumes an 'I told you so' attitude. The play ends with Qhayiya screaming for forgiveness, apparently for not listening to his father. Curiously, his screaming runs against the accepted maxim used by men generally that 'tigers don't cry' (*indoda ayikhali, iyaziginya iinyembezi*). In fact, Qhayiya is not seen as a man anymore, he is a 'boy' who did not even want to go to initiation. Plays like

---

<sup>99</sup> It is interesting that in Xhosa society women do not approach the graveside of someone who died tragically. Indirectly, this suggests that the deceased may have been bewitched.

Kabang's *Indoda Ayilili Nokuba Inxange Engxangxasini* (A Man Does Not Cry Even When He is in Trouble – n.d.) portray characters who are direct opposites of what Qhayiya becomes at the end. In such plays, the role and influence of women is stifled. In the end, although Mamqocwa is definitely a strong character, she is made to be submissive. She even pleads with her husband to forgive Qhayiya. In other words, there is, to an extent at least, a linear reading of the play, according to which women must toe the line or else suffer the consequences.

Lizo Gqomfa's play, *Isono Sakho Siyakukuleqa Sikuleqe de Sikufumane* (The Arm of Justice is Long – n.d.) has the same focus. The play revolves around neighbouring well-to-do families. In one family the father, Lavis, is a professor, while in the other the father is a doctor. The doctor, Ntintili, is a heavy drinker whose wife runs the house. His wife, Zodwa, is not only rude and unpleasant to her family; she also causes animosity between the two families. She spoils two of her children: Thulethu, the one daughter, and Vusumzi, the son. Like his father, Vusumzi is a heavy drinker. Thulethu is never at home. The other daughter, Lulama, is unhappy about what is happening at home but her mother will not listen to her. Instead, together with Thulethu, Zodwa accuses Professor Lavis's son, Zola, of impregnating Thulethu. Doctor Ntintili tries to talk sense into his wife but she will not listen. As the plot develops, she sinks deeper into dastardly deeds, with her name even being linked to murder. In the end Zodwa is given a long jail term.

As it can be seen above, female characters seem to have been represented in a bad light and, as the study argues, their depiction was reflective of how women were viewed and treated in patriachal society. The presence of female characters, despite their handling, is crucial and

needs a special treatment in the study if only to further highlight their plight. It is important to note that their use in the plays, albeit in a dehumanizing manner, helped a great deal in camouflaging subversive messages. Chapter Five, therefore, examines two plays for the latter proposition.

---

---

## Chapter Five:

### **Cultural Representation of Women and Gender in Radio Plays**

---

---

I don't want him. I don't want to be his wife ... I don't want to be a wife any more, a mistress yes, with a lover, yes of course, but not a wife. There is something in the word that does not suit me. As a wife, I am never free. I am a shadow of myself. As a wife I am almost impotent. I am in prison, unable to advance in body and soul. Something gets hold of me as a wife and destroys me. (Nwapa, cited in Newell, 1997: 102)

This quote is taken from Nwapa's novel, *One is Enough*, and sets the tone of the present chapter. The character, Amaka, here asserts her right as a woman to decide her destiny. By refusing to remarry, she challenges the dictates of her society that equates a 'good' woman with marriage. Crucially, she identifies and links marriage with bondage and loss of freedom. Her refusal to remarry also reinstates her independence and restores her individuality and identity. To a large extent, she is 'different' from the traditionally stereotypical woman; she is her own person and not her husband's property. Her lament foregrounds the fractious identity of women both in texts and in real life. Romance has been a fixation of many writers throughout the world. In many accounts, the texts represent women as the 'weaker sex', which translates into domination and subjectivity. Xhosa radio drama is no exception in this depiction of the woman character. Romance has always been central in radio plays precisely

because it is easy and perhaps ‘appropriate’ to deal with the binaries of masculinity/femininity, domestic/public, dominant/dominated etc. The popularity of romance, among other things, is an affirmation of its potential to reflect on and to ‘teach’ the community about itself. That plays are didactic is irrefutable; however, it is the bias against women that is problematic and distressing. While playwrights such as Myeko attempted to use the space provided by radio to comment on political issues, the theme of romance always remained central. In plays such as *Apho Sikhala Khona Isakhwatsha* (1981) and *UHlohlesakhe* (1979), for instance, the political theme is clearly demonstrated above the romance. However, such themes were a rarity if not a taboo during the apartheid years in South Africa. Scholarship which ignores the role of women played in the struggle perpetuates gender inequality. Wicomb (1996: 47) expresses a more progressive view: ‘I can think of no reason why black patriarchy should not be challenged alongside the fight against apartheid.’

This chapter analyses two plays, *USomagqabi* (1980) and *Buzani Kubawo* (1981), with a view to examining the ways in which women are represented in Xhosa radio plays – their marginalisation and social construction of their identity. It can be argued that romance plays, even those in which women assume a dominant role, reflected society. In some instances the plays reaffirmed and endorsed social prescriptions that are, from a feminist perspective, detrimental to women in love relationships. It follows that marriage and love relationships are social constructs that are used to *maintain social order*; marriage is the ultimate goal to which those in love aspire. Or more precisely, it is a destination the society expects them to reach. Notably, however, in cases where female characters are strong or show leadership qualities they are ‘tamed’ by being married off. Bound by the dictates of the marriage institution, these women are silenced, as is the case in *USomagqabi*, shunned or killed as happens in *Buzani Kubawo*, or disgraced as shown in *UThuthula* (1970). In many ways, what the plays reinforce

is the notion that *ikhaya lentombi lisemzini* ('a girl is groomed to get married'). Many plays conform to this requirement, if only to reflect the expectations of Xhosa society.

In traditional Xhosa society a girl would go through a ritual called *intonjana*, which is designed to teach adolescents about what is expected of them in wifedom. However, this ritual is deliberately omitted in many plays, surely because the role of married women is already ingrained in the psyche of the audiences. Put differently, the audience enters the listening space with a degree of expectation and, therefore, the play only serves to affirm and validate those expectations. Audience members see themselves reflected in the plays and do not expect the unfolding story to disrupt the 'normality' of their lives. In other words, the play mirrors what they perceive as normal in their lives, and as such, the plays can reinforce their worldview. Radway (1984: 102) notes in another context that as audiences engage with the text, they re-evaluate their lives by comparing themselves with the characters or their actions, thereby imbibing the social norms upheld in the text. It would not be too daring to suggest that many of the plays were directed at women audiences, since the majority of listeners have always been assumed to be female. In part, this perception is informed by the belief that women can mostly be found at home on an everyday basis. Housewives were thus the intended audience for the plays, and therefore themes abounded that encouraged them to stay within the domestic sphere. Predictably then, many of the plays explicitly dealt with domestic tensions. In many instances, the wife is the root cause of the tension as she tries to assert herself. Conveniently, many of the plays are authored by male playwrights whose bias lies with the patriarch; as a result, some of them uphold masculinity, although this may be done in a very subtle manner. Both in the plays and in real life, a majority of women only realise the true meaning of love once they become wives. Writing about the African and Kenyan romance in general, Muhomah (2004: 77) states:

[T]he meaning of love and romance only becomes clear as the couple enters into married life. In the characterisations and interactions between the female and male protagonists before and after the exchange of marriage vows, they find out that romance and marriage may mean *different things* [emphasis added].

‘Different things’ here may refer to the expectations a woman has as she enters marriage. One of the key expectations is that she would retain her independence and individuality. In the ‘man’s world’, however, such expectations are misplaced or just a mirage. A woman has to conform to ‘societal prescriptions of what is appropriately female’ (Davies, 1994: 60). In some plays female protagonists have strong characters compared to their male counterparts. This goes against the norm, though, and therefore these women may be viewed in a bad light; possibly as deviant, mad or witches. To curb their deviance and bring social order, women have to enter the confines of married life. Once they are married, they are *expected* to behave in a scripted fashion. Those who do not conform to this prescription are severely punished by the end of the play.

### **The politics of Exclusion: Deviant Women/Controlling Men**

There is no doubt that radio plays have always been gender specific and gender roles that were depicted in the dramas played out in real life. In other words, there is a strong link between what the audience listened to and what they practised in real life. Put slightly different, radio plays of the Xhosa-language radio were (and are) a microcosm of the society in which males generally dominated their women-folk. In romance games, the man

determines the rules to be applied and controls the outcomes he prefers. The model of romance in Xhosa radio drama follows a predictable path. A virtuous, beautiful woman is pursued by suitors who are mostly prosperous – and therefore acceptable to her father. Usually, the suitors would be total strangers to the woman to create intrigue and allure around her. To the father, this is a good sign, as this means a sizeable *lobola* for his daughter. To worsen the situation, interest in the girl is only negotiated with the father, who seems more interested in making profit than in the welfare and needs of his daughter. The assumption is simple: a bigger *lobola* is a good sign that the daughter will be well looked after. Love is not part of the equation. Put bluntly, negotiations about the woman's destiny are the sole territory of males; women who delve into them are regarded as forward, if not disrespectful. In the end, the daughter has to accept her father's choice even if she does not love the man. As illustrated in the play *BuzaniKubawo* below, such arrangements often end catastrophically.

Therefore, a girl not only faces the dilemma of satisfying her father, but also has to uphold culture. This dilemma is compounded by her own feelings, which she cannot divulge to her father. Even when her mother is aware of her unhappiness, she cannot broach the subject at all. Broadly speaking, the mother knows and has accepted the rules that govern women. She knows it all. If anything, her daughter 'relives' the life she went through with the patriarch; a sort of recycled oppression. In some cases, a daughter secretly has someone she loves and desires to get married to. Unfortunately, such aspirations die in their infancy, as she is not entitled to decide on the marriage issue. She has to accept her father's preference, if only to ensure that she does not challenge cultural norms. Many Xhosa radio plays encouraged this notion. In N.T. Ntlebi's play *Lunjalo ke Uthando* (Such is Love – n.d.), for instance, Martha cannot marry the man of her dreams because his social standing is not good. Majongosi is not only uneducated but also considered a heathen. Her father, who is a priest, wants her to marry

Bubele, a young priest who is a family friend. Bubele too is confident that he will get his ‘prize’ or ‘purchase’; he does not even contemplate the fact that Martha may not like him. Their conversation clearly illustrates Bubele’s arrogance, and perhaps his belief that in the end he will emerge triumphant. Episode 13 begins with Martha daydreaming about her love, Majongosi. While occupied thus, she is disturbed by an intrusive voice that brings her back to the ‘real’ world. This male voice that shatters her world demonstrates the voicelessness of women in the presence of men. Female speech, in general, is subordinate to male speech. As it will be seen in the following conversation, ‘women and their speech have been measured against male standards and found to be deficient and deviant’ (Romaine, 1994: 101):

MARTHA: *Oh! Ngathi andisafiki kuNjongo, oh! uMajongosi wam ... yaz’ukuba ucinge ntoni nandakumshiya, kodwa ubonile ukuba Mna bendingafuni ukumshiyangoluya hlobo, kodwa kwanyanzeleka. Andithandabuzi, uyandibona ukuba NDIYAMTHANDA, Oh! NDIYAMTHANDA KE KHONA!!!*

(Oh! When am I getting to Njongo, oh! My Majongosi ... I wonder what he thought when I left him, but he must have realised that I did not want to leave him, I had to go. I am sure he knows that I LOVE HIM, oh! I LOVE HIM!!!)

ILIZWI (someone calling): Martha!!! Martha!!!

DRAMATIC MUSIC:

*Martha !!! Martha!!! Ubizwa ndim, sondela mntwana.*

(Martha!!! Martha!!! Come here, it’s me, child).

MARTHA: (UYAHLEKA EFIHLA UMSINDO –laughing and hiding anger)

*He!! Hee!!! Undothusile ke noko Mfundisi.*

(He!! Hee!! You surprised me, Father).

BUBELE: *Wothuswa yintoni xa ndikubiza? Kodwa wena Martha undenza ndikuthandabuze, inenekazi alibinayo le nkohlakalo yakho.*

(What surprises you when I call you? You make me suspicious sometimes. A lady is never as cruel as you are).

MARTHA: *MHMM!! Uthi ndikhohlakele ngoku?*

(MHMM!! You say I am cruel?)

BUBELE: *Andinagama linbi, ngaphandle kokuba ndithi ukhohlakele. Ungathini ukuba uzimele ndingakuboni xa ndisimka kokwenu emva kwemini enje?*

(There is no other word for it. Why would you hide when I left your home, after such a lovely day?)

MARTHA: *Eyona nto ubuze ekhaya, wakhutshwa ke nguMama noTata; ingaba ke ibiyintoni enye?*

(You came to visit my parents. Mother and Father saw you out. What more did you want?)

BUBELE: *Khangela Mntwanandini!! Kwangalaa mhla, ndakubona ndakuxelela ukuba ungowam wena.*

(Look here, child!! When I first saw you I told you that you are mine).

MARTHA: *Ubuhlungu ke Mfundisi bulapha, ngokwangoku ndixakeke kakhulu. Mhlawumbi akuqondi ukuba uyandibambezele; ma ndicele uxolo, ndihambe ngokuba kuyahlwa, ubumele ukuyazi into yokuba ndimelwe kukubasekhaya ngeli xesha.*

(Unfortunately I am too busy, Father. Maybe you are not aware that you are wasting my time. Forgive me; you should know I must be at home by now).

BUBELE: *Ingathi akuqondi ukuba ndiyakuthanda, yaye ndifuna ucacelwe Martha ukuba kudala ndihamba, kodwa ndiyaqala ukubona umntu onjengawe ngobuhle, andinakuphoswa nguwe. NGAPHEZULU, ANDIZIMISELE UKWAMKELA UHAYI KUWE. Ndakuxelela zisuka ukuba ungo WAM WENA!!!!*

(You do not seem to realise that I love you. I want you to understand that I have travelled all over; I've never seen anyone as beautiful as you. I must have you. Moreover, I am not taking a NO FROM YOU. I told you from the beginning that YOU ARE MINE!!!)

When Majongosi hears about Bubele's interest in Martha (or Malita, as he calls her) and about her father's wish, he starts attending adult biblical study classes, ending up being a priest too. It is only then that the father accepts him as a suitor – and as a son-in-law later. The play shows both the power that the patriarch wields as well as his daughter's helplessness in determining her own fate. By 'forcing' Majongosi to study, it is presupposed that love alone is not sufficient. Marriage based on love alone would deprive the father of what he should accrue in *lobola*. Ironically, it is education that would help Majongosi gain an upper hand in the competition, while the same education is seen as corruptive and undesirable

for women. While Martha is lucky that she finally marries the man she loves, it is clear that marriage is an institution of the domination and control of women.

Their marginalisation during the negotiations points to their commoditisation. Martha may have waited and preserved herself for Majongosi, but that does not mean that she escapes the constraints of wifehood. Typical of most marriages in the radio plays, she will be objectified. The element of ‘waiting’ on the part of women is crucial here. In almost all romance plays, women are expected to wait and preserve themselves for ‘Mr Right’. In many cases, as indicated above, ‘Mr Right’ would be determined by the father. The only thing the girl needed to ensure was chastity, which would, in turn, ensure that the father received a substantial number of cattle for her. Bluntly put, women are equated with cattle.<sup>100</sup> As Mahomah (2004: 77) notes, ‘female protagonists and their virginity become a site of waiting ‘to be conquered’’. This element is pivotal because it affirms the superior role of the future husband – it is the husband who has to ‘conquer’, and not the other way round. In such an arrangement, women can neither explore their own sexuality nor decide on whom to marry. ‘Waiting’ here also denotes another aspect that takes root after marriage. Once marriage takes place, the woman not only becomes a junior partner; she also loses her identity. Therefore, she has to ‘wait’ for instructions from the husband.

This aspect may seem insignificant because it is not always explicitly expressed in the plays; or because it is viewed as ‘normal’ by the audience. However, in traditional marriages, women accept men as heads of the family. Ezeigbo (Newell, 1997: 97), making the same point, asserts that ‘Gender conflict appears to have been limited in traditional communities by socialization and educational practices, which encouraged an acceptance of men as the

---

<sup>100</sup> The idiom *Iinkomo zivele ngempondo* is referred to adolescent girls who develop breasts, denoting that the girl has reached a marriageable age. The idiom loosely translates as ‘cattle are coming’.

polygamous heads of families, and the perception of women as the property of husbands'. As 'heads', men think and lead, while women follow the injunctions. After she is 'conquered' by her husband she remains subjugated and controlled.

Moreover, the effacement and replacement of their identities is a sign that they are no longer in control of themselves. Their individuality ceases to exist entirely. This is not only the effacement of the person who may have been carefree, independent and self-driven prior to marriage; the names they are given encompass the expectations of the husband, the family and the community as a whole. *Amagama omtshato* (marriage names) such as Nobantu (the one who serves people), Nokhaya (the one who keeps the home warm), Nolulamo (the obedient, silent and respectful one), and Nongenile (one who has entered the house) are examples of this.<sup>101</sup> In the English language, the titles 'Miss' or 'Mrs' may also have negative connotations for women. This naming does not contribute to the woman's self-worth; instead it could be seen to contribute to the male stereotype. This naming, in other words, denotes exploitation as it designates a woman as available for public use or private use. Or more precisely, this naming is 'symbolic of women's position as men's property and represents their status as sex objects, whose availability or non-availability due to ownership by another male has to be marked in a conspicuous way' (Romaine, 1994: 127). By replacing their maiden names (*amagama asekhaya*) with names that have connotations of service and subordination, the women are subtly reminded of their duty to their men and the community. They are expected to 'follow' their new names without failure or begrudging. As pointed out, these plays, among other things, represent women as commodities in the exchange that

---

<sup>101</sup> Today, for women who are increasingly involved in the workplace the prefix 'No' in their 'marriage names' is being left out. It would seem that the prefix is viewed as a negation of the woman's identity. This view may not be widespread, but an increasing number of women (covertly) play an active role in their 'renaming', mainly by convincing their husbands to pick a name that they would prefer. Some even prefer keeping their own names. There is also an increase in the number of women who would rather use both her surname and her husband's. These rather 'inconspicuous' movements may point to the change in the way women are viewed post-independence, in Xhosa society in particular, and in South Africa in general.

happens between males. This translates into ownership where the father gives over the 'control' of his daughter to her husband, sometimes a total stranger to the girl. In real life, this transfer of ownership may lead to abuse as the husband may treat the wife as his 'property'. Subsequently, as property in the hands of men, women do not experience a stable and happy existence after marriage.

However, an important element that should not be overlooked is the influence that women sometimes possess in such arrangements. As the above account of Majongosi shows, women can be agents of change where men are concerned. Without Martha it is probable that Majongosi would not have improved his social standing. In some plays, feared and notorious male protagonists are strangely cowed to timidity by women in their lives. This is displayed best in plays such as *Yiyekeni Inkwenkwe Izonwabele* (n.d). in which wayward characters like Bhonyongo seem to abandon their characteristic bullish behaviour when confronted by some women in the plays. In *Tarhw'ameva* (n.d), Qhayisa breaks down and cries in front of his mother, Mamqocwa. After terrorising the community and being disowned by his father, the only person he can confide in and tell about his repentance is his mother. Again, the influence of the mother figure is pivotal in changing the behaviour of the egocentric and brutal male. However, it would seem that the influence of women is not promoted in the plays. If anything, it is discouraged by using certain social dictates to neutralise their influence. It would seem that such influence is curtailed in case it develops into power. Put differently, female influence is traditionally required to entail service and not power. Any notion that suggests that women can be powerful is undermined by labelling such women or even accusing them of infidelity or witchery. Cultural devices such as marriage are used to manage and control women who may aspire to challenge patriarchy.

Critically, it would seem that fathers in the plays are eager, perhaps too eager, to marry off their daughters. On a surface level this may be viewed as greed for wealth. It is generally accepted that the older the girl, the slimmer are her chances for marriage.<sup>102</sup> In both English and Xhosa cultures (and surely in other cultures too), unmarried women are deliberately labelled in derogatory terms. Again, this labelling is conveniently done by males who occupy a position of power in the social structure. Articulating the same point, Romaine (1994: 106) notes that a spinster is ‘not only unmarried but she is [also] beyond the expected marriage age and therefore seen as rejected and undesirable’. Some radio plays unashamedly promoted this stereotype about women. Given these positions, then, one can surmise that girls are not well treated in radio plays. In almost all romantic plays girls are groomed to get married or risk the ordeal of being called spinsters or *amadikazi*.

Coupled with this obsession of labelling women in derogatory terms is the peculiar notion that educated girls are anti-marriage. As a result of this deeply ingrained belief, in almost all the plays women are depicted as illiterate and dependent on men. According to this view, education is not for them because it gives them power and hence they become undesirable and a menace to the men’s world. Even those who are given a chance to go to college are married off in the end, as is the case in *Umntu Lilahle Elinothuthu* (Don’t Trust Anyone – 1977)<sup>103</sup>. As might be expected, educated women will lurch from one crisis to the other, perhaps to ‘prove’ that education is not for women. Most of them, just like Weziwe in *Umntu Lilahle Elinothuthu*, commit suicide when they cannot get the happiness they hoped for.

Women are only represented as the ‘weaker sex’ who depend on men in order to survive.

---

<sup>102</sup> Unmarried women are sometimes called by derogatory terms such as *idikazi* (plural: *amadikazi*). In many instances these women are viewed with suspicion and may be shunned by some members of society. The phrase, *ududelwe nguJambase* which means ‘one would never marry’, is also a commonly-used phrase to make ‘unattached’ women uncomfortable. In more serious circumstances, they are viewed as ‘man-snatchers’, ‘seducers’ or even suspected of being homosexuals.

<sup>103</sup> This idiom literally means ‘A person is a burning coal covered in ash’, which means the outside can be deceptive. Many playwrights used idioms as titles, perhaps to hide what the plays were about.

Those who attend formal schooling are in the same position as Somagqabi in that they can negotiate and reconstruct their identities while they are in the ‘transit space’. Transit space here refers to the freedom that some of the girls enjoy before they are deemed ‘ready’ to get married. This ‘space’ may constitute a range of pursuits in which women realise their potential such as schooling (as in the play *Umntu Lilahle Elinothuthu*); travelling (as in *USomagqabi*); or working (as in *Ingqumbo Yeminyanya*). Unfortunately, and perhaps predictably, their freedom and participation in the ‘man’s world’ are threats to patriarchal power – so the women need to be dealt with through culture and tradition. In most cases marriage is used to meet these ends. Molara Ogundipe-Leslie (cited in Davies, 1994: 68) asserts that:

A woman as daughter or sister has greater status and more rights in her own lineage. Married, she becomes a possession, voiceless, and often rightless in her husband’s family, except for what accrues to her through her children’. In a sense, female potential is never fully explored in the plays, perhaps for fear that such ideas may ‘rub off’ on the female audience.

### **Normative Adherence to Wedlock**

Arranged marriages are a common feature in Xhosa radio plays, which is indicative of the power relations between males and females. Without fail, such marriages favour males as they dominate the social space. Unfortunately, the consequences of arranged marriages are often tragic, as depicted in *Buzani Kubawo* (1981). In this play, Gugulethu proposes marriage to Nomampondomise, who is already in the process of being married off to someone she does not like. *Lobola* had already been paid, and for Gugulethu to stop the wedding from

happening he has to pay an equal number of cattle to the family to replace Mcunukelwa's. Nomampondomise's educated parents come to accept this arrangement and prepare to accept their daughter's choice of bridegroom. Unknown to them, while Mcunukelwa's cattle are driven back, Gugulethu's parents arrange a marriage for their son. Despite his reasoning that he had already promised himself to someone, they proceed with the wedding, with tragic consequences, as detailed in the previous chapter<sup>104</sup>.

Interestingly, the characters of Nomampondomise and Thobeka can be read as internal conflicts of the same person. Tragic as their ends are, they represent two notions that clash. On the one hand they present an independent, self-driven woman who challenges custom. On the other they show an obedient, 'foolish' woman who adheres to cultural norms. The reading of the persona of a woman is crucial here since it gives us a keyhole view of the psyche of the intended audience. One may contend that even if *Buzani Kubawo* had been intended to question and challenge some cultural stereotypes, it may have actually achieved the reverse. It is, therefore, not dissimilar to a number of plays that 'preached' normative adherence to culture. Nomampondomise represents the educated, independent and freethinking women who choose their husbands. By refusing to marry Mcunukelwa she challenges normative prescriptions, thereby unleashing a number of 'unnecessary' deaths. Her assertiveness disrupts social order, and as a result blood has to be shed. By disrupting the norm she was destined for death. It is interesting and not surprising that many women commit suicide in the plays.

On the one hand, this depicts that women struggle in surviving life pressures. On the other hand, by committing suicide the woman absolves the man who may have been the cause of

---

<sup>104</sup>*Xokisa* is often used by Xhosas to *hlonipha* (to respect) the fact that a young man has decided to find a wife for himself. Traditionally, that is the prerogative of the elders.

the suicide in the first place. He cannot be held responsible. Unlike other tragic heroines who disappear at the end of the play, Nomampondomise dies earlier and as such the audience ‘forgets’ about her. Instead, the audience is supposed to sympathise with Gugulethu, who begs the judge to hang him. This is tantamount to claiming that the two women ‘got what they deserved’ while Gugulethu had no choice but to act brutally. The act of brutality by Gugulethu translates to the possession of power. Man can make life (in as far as he plants the seed in procreation) and he can take life (as in the murder of women in the plays). Writing about Burundian women, Berger (2005: 149) quotes a local proverb which says, ‘Woman is only a passive earth; it is the man who provides the seed’. Such beliefs may have been implicitly, and perhaps unintentionally, suggested in some Xhosa plays.

On the other end of the continuum is Thobeka who represents an obedient, docile and dedicated wife. Such a character might be seen as an example of how a wife should behave. These culturally defined subjective positions reflect not only the world of the play but the real world of the audience as well. Generally, women are culturally constructed to serve the interests of the man – the possessor of power. As a consequence, Thobeka uncomplainingly marries Gugulethu although it is clear that he is not interested in her. Secondly, she blindly accepts the *ukungenwa* tradition. Not surprisingly, this tradition suggests that women are little more than birth machines. In the Xhosa society there is a belief that a woman is not fully married until she bears children (*ukwenda*). Again, women are depicted as bearers of children – a service that would ensure that the name of the patriarch does not die. Birth of male heirs becomes critical for this reason, as the play *Uyinkulu Kabani? (Whose Heir Are You? – 1976)* aptly illustrates. In *Buzani Kubawo* it is crucial that in the end Thobeka is killed in her sleep. What this symbolises is the voicelessness of women who adhere to normative dictates. To a great degree, she represents the notion that women cannot think for themselves; they

must be led by men. Even their voices are subjugated by the male voice. The man always has the last say.

Writing about women's speech in plays, Satyo and Jadezweni (2003: 15) aver: 'several of the male-female conversations fell into a question and answer pattern, with the female asking the male questions'. Their speeches, it must be noted, are almost always about domestic issues – the home that constricts their freedom, as Newell (1997: 89) suggests. It is clear that Thobeka never challenged the males around her; she followed their orders and was voiceless, as expected by the society. Albert's suggestion about Burundian women is appropriate and applicable to women in the plays. Albert (cited in Berger, 2005: 148) argues:

Unlike a man, a Rundikazi (Rundi woman) in public does not speak, nor does she look you in the eyes. To each question she answers *Ndabizi?* How should I know? In public, she lets it be thought that she knows nothing about politics, or where her husband is today, or even the wedding date of her daughter. She is the modest and obedient wife of her husband, the mother of her children, the conscientious mistress of her house, who is always working. Whatever she does, she does within the limits of her various feminine roles.

In the same vein, Lakoff (Holloway, 1999: 132) states that in the man's world women soon discover that they are 'communicative cripples' who are damned if they speak and equally damned if they don't.

## **Wedlock as a Social Construct: Strong Women/Stronger Social Norms**

In Xhosa plays, the institution of marriage dictates that the wife respects and even worships the head of the family – her husband. Any woman who seems to stand up to the man is either shunned by everyone and/or punished by ancestors. In plays such as *Ingqumbo Yeminyanya* (The Wrath of the Ancestors – 1976) and *Inkomo Enotshoba Ayibotshwa* (Headstrong – n.d.) this is aptly illustrated. In the latter, the wife who dares answer back to her husband and generally challenges social norms is treated as a social deviant. Just like Ama Ata Aidoo's Anowa (Davies, 1994: 60), who defies social prescriptions that demand a particular behaviour towards her husband, she 'comes across to those around her as a mad woman'. (This matter will be dealt with presently). Largely, women who are deemed to be influential and powerful are subdued by wedlock to break them and, largely, this forewarns audiences of such deviant behaviour. In extreme instances, such women are accused of witchcraft or defined in masculine terms. In the plays here discussed, the woman who attempts to stand up to her husband is not only on the receiving end of the community's disapproval, but her marriage is threatened with collapse too. The break-up of marriages is one evil that women feel strongly about. To make sure that that does not befall them, women typically abide by and conform to marital dictates or risk being spinsters or *amadikazi*. They have to be obedient, respectful and hardworking; if only to make sure that female audiences realise such standards. This view is supported by the perception that male and female audiences take sides 'with the character type whose social position most closely resembles their own', (Lange, 2002: 10; see also Newell, 1997: 392).

Labelling or representing strong women (otherwise called 'forward') as 'mad' is an interesting categorisation. In the play mentioned above, *Ingqumbo Yeminyanya*, the 'mad

woman' construction is illustrated beautifully. In the play, a commoner falls in love and marries a young prince, much to the bewilderment of a section of his subjects. Due to the marriage, which does not have the blessing of a regent king, the community is split into two, the *amaqaba* (traditionalists) and *amagqobhoka* (the educated). One group (*amaqaba*) favours an arranged marriage while the other (*amagqobhoka*) supports marriage based on love. Because of his Western education, the prince chooses the latter. Subsequently, his wife, the queen, is systematically sidelined and even the women whom she had started teaching how to survive on their own are convinced that she is an evil person. Her 'rebelliousness' leads to isolation, hate, and later, madness. She finally ends her life, and one would assume order is thereafter restored in the kingdom. In other words, the traditional group ultimately succeeds, since the adventurous, 'forward' woman is finally put in her place. The lesson and significance of the play is that, within the kingdom, and indeed the home, a wife has to conform to the dictates of the society. Or, as Davies (1994: 61) argues, the 'home is a place of disorientation and social conformity. It is not a comfortable and safe place ....'

Another interesting area in the study of how women are represented in the plays is that of witchery. In the play *USomagqabi*, for instance, male characters use this element not only to understand Somagqabi, a female protagonist, but also to control her. In fact, all the women who are seen as influential in the play are dubbed witches and hunted down with the intention of killing them. The play deals with the movement of the Nguni people from the Northern parts of Africa to the South – the 'transit space'. Despite the many challenges the people come across, including bloody skirmishes, the play seems to focus on Somagqabi and her prowess in the battlefield. Notably, it is this transit space that presents Somagqabi with the opportunity to explore and realise her potential as a woman. The male characters, including their leaders Xhosa and Zulu, are awed by her fighting abilities. At the centre of her strength

is a spear she was given by an old woman in the forest, which endowed her with supernatural powers: invincibility as well as the powers of a 'seer'. All these combined enable her to defend the tribe in numerous battles.

It is then that male characters become jealous and suspicious of her. A plan is hatched to kill all older women, including Somagqabi, for being witches. However, the plan fails just because one of the leaders, Xhosa, is romantically linked to Somagqabi. Xhosa convinces others to talk to her, rather than fight her. This suggestion goes against the norm where a woman is not allowed to discuss issues with men. In a way, Somagqabi is, perhaps inadvertently, given the stature of a man. Her name is not only mentioned with reverence by other characters; she is also accorded a status equal to that of the two Nguni leaders, Xhosa and Zulu. In everyday Xhosa narrative she would be referred to as *Nongayindoda*, 'the one who is like a man'. By this time she has saved all those who were earmarked for killing and hidden them in caves. When the killing is called off she and Xhosa split away from the group and collect the people Somagqabi had saved in order to form their own kingdom. Although the split was inevitable and had the blessing of the founder of the Nguni tribe, King Nguni, before he died, it is interesting that after the different Nguni clans find their respective 'homes', Somagqabi is 'stripped' of her powers in a rather typical and predictable way.

After Xhosa establishes his kingdom he proposes marriage to Somagqabi, who initially refuses. It is pivotal that her refusal is not based on love or lack thereof. It is based on what the old woman told her. When she gives Somagqabi the spear she warns her never to marry. At first the voice of the 'dead' old woman seems apprehensive regarding marriage. However, in the same breath it becomes evident that marriage is inevitable for Somagqabi. This is the same difficult position of the female character that Thobeka and Nomampondomise represent

in *Buzani Kubawo*. Again, they are damned if they accede to marriage and damned if they reject it. Paradoxically, even though the old woman is not bound by the dictates of the living, she still observes the power of the patriarch as she pleads with Somagqabi:

*Ungaze wende Somagqabi nokuba umfana sele umthanda kangakananina, kuba  
uyakuphulukana nawo la mandlasikunika wona. Mhla lafika ithuba lakho  
lokwenda uyakuva nawe emzimbeni ukuba lifikile, wandule ke wende. Xa  
lingekafiki ungangxami uziphose kuko.*

(Never marry, Somagqabi, even if you are in love, because you will lose the power we give you. When the time comes for you to marry, your body will tell you, and then you can get married. Do not rush into it).

Despite this warning, Somagqabi finally decides to marry Xhosa and becomes *just like any other wife*. This last point suggests that the ‘home’ enforces gender subordination. While they were travelling, Somagqabi fought like ‘a man’ and indeed defeated many men. In a sense, through this transitional space, as Davies (1994: 63) suggests, she is presented as a ‘figure of feminist possibility’. Not only is she a woman; she is also beautiful and powerful.

Unfortunately, these attributes are threatening to the male characters; hence they see her as a witch. Once the tribe settles down she has to observe the rules of her station. In many ways, the institution of marriage redefines Somagqabi’s identity. While outside wedlock she is in control of her own destiny, the institution constricts this independence. Marriage seems to give Xhosa leverage not only to control Somagqabi, but also to dominate her. Articulating a similar view, Davies (1994: 63) suggests that ‘domination installs power relations between

groups and seeks to maintain this domination through a control of the sense-making devices'. Marriage is one of the 'sense-making devices' that were utilised in the plays to bring order. Somagqabi cannot remain a spinster; she has to exchange her power for marriage in order to create normality. As a spinster she represents a 'destructive' power but as a wife she is a servant of peace.

The politics of marriage are essentially economic politics. Women are not only seen as sources of income for the father, as suggested above; they also generate wealth for their husbands. Generally, under patriarchy, women are required to be supportive of their husbands. Andocentric practices prevail in various cultural contexts in Africa. For instance, in *Asante on the Gold Coast*, Jean Allman (cited in Berger, 2005: 201) reports a sinister move by a chief in the 1930s, who decreed that 'unattached spinsters' should be rounded up and jailed unless they pointed out someone who would marry them. Coupled with the arrests, these spinsters, once married, had to buy clothes for their husbands. Similarly in the South African context, using and representing women as 'cash cows' abounds in many radio plays. Writing about the Swahili popular drama, Siri Lange (2002: 9) makes a similar point when she argues that, 'Since the plays are firmly rooted in patriarchal ideology ... the only space left for a 'good' woman is to be supportive of her husband through thick and thin.'

In the play *USomagqabi*, Xhosa benefits from his wife's foresight in ensuring that he has a 'tribe' who in turn would be able and willing to go and raid other tribes' kraals for cattle. The play is perhaps best read intertextually with A.P. Ngani's three-act play, *Umkhonto KaTshiwo* (n.d.), which looks at the foundation of the Xhosa nation. In the novel, a brave warrior also hides people who are meant to be killed, in a cave. Later on, he runs away with them and builds a strong tribe of Amahlubi. In other words, Somagqabi is the re-enactment of the

‘brave warrior’. The wealth she amasses in terms of human capital equals or even surpasses economic wealth that women accumulate for their husbands. In many plays it is made abundantly clear what the husband expects from his wife. In the play, *Uyinkulu Kabani?* (Whose Heir Are You? – 1976), for instance, Madliwa kills his bed-ridden, uneducated wife for being ‘lazy’. This is in spite of the fact that he, as the eldest son, does not want to work and only awaits the death of his father so that he can inherit everything. He is also interested in marrying an educated, urban girl who would bear him a son. One can surmise here that the ‘laziness’ of his wife has nothing to do with her state of health other than that she cannot bear him a son. Again, and ironically, girls are depicted as ‘useless’ and thus ‘unwanted’ in the plays.

While the play offers an alternative to fighting it nonetheless does not resolve the way women are presented in plays in general. This is a crucial point in the study because it further shows how women were generally viewed in plays. Powerful women were not only odd in the eyes of men, but they were also a menace. Therefore, even though the play may have been trying to quell the perceived hostilities, it did so from a patriarchal point of view. In other words, women could not have power; if they did they were seen as disrespectful or even as witches. This is how Somagqabi is initially viewed in the play. It is interesting that men in the play use Somagqabi as a scapegoat for the pending strife. However, instead of being bogged down by such stereotypes, Xhosa and Zulu believe that they can solve the stalemate between them by engaging in a dialogue. Again, Myeko masterfully alludes to the suicidal tendencies of waging wars to solve problems. Even though everyone is sceptical of Somagqabi’s power, Xhosa and Zulu manage to steer them away from violence. It is this clarity of vision in the play that makes one believe that the play was relevant to the period in question. This is in spite of the ill-treatment of women in the play.

Apart from trying to preach peace through the play, Myeko also highlights the role of women in society as a whole. That role became evident in the 1956 anti-pass law demonstrations as well as in the aftermath of the 1976 Soweto uprising. Many women witnessed the 1976 Soweto massacre and not only showed their disgust, but also played a significant and leading role in the ensuing struggle. There is no doubt that women played a crucial role when the leaders of many organisations were imprisoned. The torture and dehumanisation that was suffered by Winnie Mandela, Albertina Sisulu and a host of other unsung heroines is a reference point in this regard. Myeko's choice of making the main character a woman, then, is significant in the play. If anything, this shows recognition for women's role in society. As already mentioned, many male leaders were either exiled or in jail from the 1960s up until the 1990s, leaving a vacuum that was reliably filled by women. Writing about the women who were left alone during this period, Ndebele (2003: 5) points out that 'After 1960, following the banning of major political organisations, women watched their men disappear once more. This time they vanished into exile.' So, in spite of the social and economic challenges the women had to face, it was incumbent upon them to take up the fight in the absence of the men. Magazines such as *Drum*, while often blinkered on the role of women in the public domain at the time, also applauded the role played by women during the struggle years. According to Richman (1998: 188), for instance, *Drum* magazine:

fully supported the fighting stance of the women's involvement in the pass campaigns, and articles like 'The Battle of the Women' ... on the pass demonstrations in Johannesburg, at which two thousand women were detained, show women jubilant but defiant, massed in groups with arms or thumbs raised ('The Women Come to Town') or running from tear gas.

Myeko's Somagqabi was not only a woman; she was also strong, influential and beautiful – attributes that were highly needed at the time. The use of a woman as the main character alone was a brave and courageous move by Myeko. This was a significant breakaway from earlier plays on the Xhosa-language radio station. If anything, women were always inferior, poor and subservient to men. Those who scraped together a living had to be either prostitutes, *shebeen* queens or be attached to powerful men. So, the role that women, as portrayed in earlier plays, played in the struggle was the role that Somagqabi took on in the play. One can only surmise that female audiences who listened to the play were also galvanised to take their rightful position in society.

On a bigger scale, the role and place of women in Xhosa plays is an interesting one as it reflects the way women have been treated in radio plays in particular and African literature in general. It would be in line then to further look at the role of women with a view to highlighting, among other things, the fact that most of the plays that were broadcast at the Xhosa-language radio station were mostly written and produced by men. Whether ill-treating women was also a ploy to 'maintain' old patriarchal norms to avert the attention of the managers from the drama is difficult to tell. The author's view is that Myeko's later plays were still chauvinistic in their outlook and content, in spite of the fact that they were anti-apartheid.

It is clear that women have been marginalised, dominated and even killed in some Xhosa radio plays. While some women like Somaqgabi may have been given lead roles in the plays, by the end of the play they had to be put in 'their place'. As has been argued, among a plethora of constricting elements that have been used against women, a prime one is the

institution of marriage. Writing about women in novels, Newton (1981: 8) puts this point succinctly, contending:

The heroine's power is sometimes renounced and often eliminated at the end of the novel, so that it seems that the work has had nothing to do with power at all. For no matter how much force the heroine is granted at the beginning of the story, ideology, as it governed life and it governed literary form, required that she should marry, and marriage meant relinquishing of power as surely it meant the purchase of wedding clothes.

While girls initially seem to be free, independent and strong, once they wed they are expected to uphold culture and tradition. Those who fail to follow suit are either labelled madwomen or witches, or seen as deviant. Just as Nwapa's novel *One is Enough*, reflects, the plays expose the 'contradictions of a society in which women are considered men's appendages, no matter how successful they are or what they have achieved in life' (Newell, 1997: 98). In the same vein, Siri Lange (2002: 9) points out that 'women are generally portrayed in a sympathetic but highly self-effacing way'. In *Buzani Kubawo*, the internal conflicts that afflict women as they attempt to assert themselves as individuals are illustrated through the characters of Nomampondomise and Thobeka. Nomampondomise, just like Nwapa's Amaka, tries but fails to challenge patriarchy. Thobeka is a typical subaltern whose voice is not heard (Spivak, 1985). The advice given to Somagqabi by the old woman *never to marry*, and yet to marry when she *is ready*, highlights the paradoxical nature of women's identity in the plays.

## Women Characters in Xhosa Plays

In most Xhosa plays, women characters are presented as submissive and powerless. This is the point that Satyo and Jadezweni (2003: 6) make about Saule's radio plays, *Ndixolele* (Forgive Me) and *ULindithuba* (Waiting His Turn). In almost all Xhosa plays male characters have the final say, while female characters cannot disagree with their male counterparts, as that constitutes disrespect and may result in physical punishment. As Sibiya (2003: 23) asserts, in Zulu radio plays, 'most male characters ... are not only stereotypes but also talk in more or less the same way and style, embodying power and rendering women powerless.' In the play, *Ndixolele*, Lulama tries to reason with her husband to accommodate his father who is locked outside on a cold, rainy night. However, her husband, Malibongwe, will not listen to her since she is a woman. Satyo and Jadezwei's (2003: 2) analysis of the male/female relationship in the plays is instructive. They note:

In patriarchal societies, it is usually the more powerful character that wants to exert influence on the less powerful character. The victim tries (but mostly fails) to resist such an unfair treatment.

In light of the above discussion, Myeko's decision to make a woman, Somagqabi, the lead character in the play *USomagqabi* is significant. Myeko is not only breaking away from the norm but also from the stereotype that has prevailed in many plays. Somagqabi not only gives advice to men, but she actually goes out to the battlefield and fights. The supernatural powers that she possesses give her an added value and power over the men. She becomes an enigma to all. The fact that she has a direct communication with the underworld is also significant

because it means that even the ancestors see her as a leader. There are very few plays that have women as leading characters in Xhosa plays. The other play that also has a 'leading' woman is a play by a woman playwright Barbara Tsotsobe (a former employee at the Xhosa-language radio station). Her play, *Onje Ngomama* (The One Like Mother), in a way makes a woman an important and desirable character. Even then, this strong woman's influence only prevails in the domestic domain. Other than that, women seem to play a secondary role in the plays. Writing about the *Pacesetter* series, Martini (Barber, 1997: 119) argues that 'Women, even if they are of the superior kind ... are always objects of male desire.'

By developing a strong female character, Myeko may have been challenging this norm. However, even Myeko could not cleanly break away from the accepted norms which confined women in the house. Despite the fact that he made Somagqabi a strong woman, for instance, he hints at the fact that that power is dependent on how she deals with the question of love and commitment. While in many plays women had to marry, Somagqabi would lose her power if she had done so. As in other plays, after playing a crucial role in uniting the Nguni people, Somagqabi falls in love and agrees to marry Xhosa. In doing so, the political power and influence she had assumed is reduced to the devotion of a doting woman, because: 'to have influence ... meant doing away with self-definition, achievement, and control, meant relinquishing power for effacement of the self in love and sacrifice' (Newton, 1981: 6). To a large extent men always dominate women in the plays. In the same way, although Myeko's approach seems to chart a new path in playwriting, in the end power resides with men irrespective of the role the heroine has played because 'in all patriarchal societies, males have more power and authority than females and specifically they have power over females' (Satyo and Jadezweni, 2003: 3). In other words, while Myeko may have tried to use plays to challenge the regime and some cultural norms, he nevertheless still adhered to some Xhosa

beliefs. In a subtle way, he upheld patriarchy in the end. Arguing on the same point with regard to novels in general, Newton (1981: 8) points out that:

The heroine's power is sometimes renounced and often eliminated at the end of the novel, so that it seems that the work has had nothing to do with power at all. For no matter how much force the heroine is granted at the beginning of the story, ideology, as it governed life and as it governed literary form, required that she should marry, and marriage meant relinquishment of power as surely as it meant the purchase of wedding clothes.

The treatment of women in the plays may have sparked a debate among the audience. As pointed out, the plays reflected the Xhosa society. Just as the new era was bringing many changes to the political field, social changes were also beginning to take root. Independent and free-thinking women were coming to the fore. While it is true that the 'spectacle of apartheid' had subsumed domestic pressures, debates on the new role of women were ongoing. In fact, many women had already assumed the role of 'heading' their families.

Although N.E. Bokwe's play, *Engowam nje Ngowam* (She is Mine), is an exception in that it foregrounds a woman who finally gets the love she wants, societal pressures are discernible in it too. The story takes place in a rural setting, a setting fraught with traditional constraints for women. To a large extent, plays based in the rural area have all the hallmarks of the subjugation of women. As suggested, rural life and the domestic sphere are synonymous with the entrapment of women. The story is a cross between *Buzani Kubawo* and *Lunjalo ke*

*Uthando*. The story begins with a marriage between a doctor and a lawyer, setting the scene for some resistance, because learned brides are always viewed with scepticism in the plays. One of the main characters, Mbathane, is against education for his son, Sisa. Instead, just as in *Buzani Kubawo*, Mbathane wants to take a wife for Sisa. Unfortunately, Sisa is already in love with Nosipho, who is educated. Fortunately for him, unlike the case of Gugulethu in *Buzani Kubawo*, the forced marriage does not materialise. However, there are attempts to set him up with other women, but they fail. The desire of Nosipho's parents to marry her to an educated man, Mphuthumi, also fails. Instead, Sisa and Nosipho decide to elope. However, after some deliberations they decide to go back to their parents out of respect. In order for Sisa's family to accept Nosipho, she has to make sure that she too, just like many women in the plays, conforms to tradition and culture.

Finally, the exploitation of women was not only accepted as natural but made into law in some instances. For example, the following point made by Ruddy (cited by Stratton, 1994: 16) is universal and relevant to the way women were treated both in the plays and in real life. Writing about the old Rhodesia, Ruddy points out that under the South Rhodesian Native Registration Act of 1936, the colonial state attempted to restrict the movement of young women to cities. According to him, 'a pass system for women was instituted to, as the Conference of Native Commission stated, 'put a check on the influx to urban centres of young women who evade parental control and enter all too easily into an immoral life'.' Plays on the Xhosa-language radio seem to have been promoting or reflecting such Acts. Nevertheless, playwrights might not have been aware that they were perpetuating women's exploitation. Or, in the broader scheme of things, possibly they were simply being accurate in their depictions. To an extent, plays could be seen as initiators of certain debates and not necessarily makers of truth. It is the audience that was expected to make that meaning out of

the texts. In other words, plays offered examples from which audiences could learn the truth about themselves and life in general. In the conclusion of the discussion of the Yoruba Popular Theater, Barber (2000: 359) points out that:

Through their particularity, examples enable you to seize upon a phenomenon as if intuitively, with the effect of grasping all at once more than you can analyze ... When people say the plays are 'true,' 'exactly like life,' they are not speaking of fiction's mimetic capacity ... but of its capacity to provide analogies.

In summary, this chapter has analysed how Qalase, Myeko and Ntlebi used their plays to educate the audience and how they possibly managed to escape censorship. In the three plays discussed – *UThuthula* (1970), *Apho Sikhala Khona Isakhwatsha* (1981) and *Lunjalo ke Uthando*(n.d). – it is clear that a trend developed over time, namely the use of the theme of love, both for entertainment and to frame the plays. Romance became a point of contestation between the managers of the station and the playwrights. In some cases playwrights used it to pass subversive messages to the listeners, as is the case in Myeko's *Apho Sikhala Khona Isakhwatsha*. As Saule's 1988 play *Ulindithuba* (Waiting for His Turn) demonstrates, sometimes a play would be about something that touches the audience's emotion, but the impact would be better if framed by romance.<sup>105</sup> With regard to romantic plays, the Xhosa-language radio station broadcast plays dealing with romance largely because they were popular with the audience, and also because the managers wanted playwrights to write about

---

<sup>105</sup>See Satyo and Jadezweni's article (2003: 1-5), as well as Makhosana (1991: 10).

non-political concepts. While romances were supposed to be regarded as such, audiences were free to discern other messages as well, depending on their active interpretation.

The following chapter explores how Myeko used the 'voice' as a tool of subversion. Three plays, *USomagqabi* (1980), *Nangona Intliziyo Ithatha Ibeka*, *Undoqo Sisibindi* (1981) and *UHlohlesakhe* (1979), will be examined to provide an analysis of ways in which Myeko began to use the imaginative 'voice' as a means of passing on his messages. Although this style of using the 'voice' was not followed by the majority of playwrights, it promised an alternative to the use of the love theme as an organising tool. The use of the 'voice' played a pivotal role in making it possible for the message to pass on to the audiences in spite of the managers' vigilance. Imaginative 'voice' here denotes ancestral voices as well as the voices of the traditional healers that are at the heart of Xhosa belief. It is contended that by using the mystical voice playwrights were able to better communicate with the audiences without overtly offending the managers of the station.

---

---

## Chapter Six:

### **Mystical Voices in Xhosa Radio Plays**

---

---

#### **‘You Have Been Listening...’: The Voice of the People**

Many Xhosas believe in the existence of the mystical creature that stays in the water, *Unomathotholo*.<sup>106</sup> It is perhaps from the idea of *Unomathotholo* that Myeko decided to write plays, which utilised the ‘voice’ from the underworld. The use of this voice is important for two reasons. On the one hand, by using the ‘voice’ and putting it in the centre of the developing play, Myeko was using a linguistic code that was well known to the ordinary people. The ‘voice’ in the plays was used to provoke imagination and form links with the lost past. On the other hand, and most crucially, the ‘voice’ sought to alienate the managers who could not identify with the belief system it emerged from. As a result, the plays could escape scrutiny as they used idioms that were foreign to the managers. The three plays that are examined in this chapter use this strategy, albeit in different situations. In the plays Myeko seems to have been experimenting with this style and no other playwright has managed to emulate him in using the ‘voice’ to the extent he did. So whether or not this strategy worked in evading the managers’ vigilance, it was neither developed nor used extensively.

---

<sup>106</sup> See Shwayiba interview in Appendix B.

There is no doubt that plays with subversive messages would not be broadcast at the station unless those messages were carefully hidden in the idiomatic expressions used. Many listeners may not have been aware of the seeming clashes between the white managers and the playwrights. Nevertheless, the audiences were perceptive and aware of the state propaganda in the period in question. As has been suggested, playwrights knew of their 'duty' to the public. From what was seen in plays such as *Buzani Kubawo* and *Apho SikhalaKhona Isakhwatsha*, different strategies were employed both to enlighten the audiences and to escape censorship. Ironically, the actions of the managers of the station might have helped in the growing creativity and innovation of the playwrights. Due to the political pressures on the ground, playwrights had to come up with ways of 'dealing' with the regime, using the plays.

Although playwrights within as well as outside the SABC may have tried to use 'new' subversive strategies to thwart the managers, none was as successful as Myeko. As was seen in the play *Apho Sikhala Khona Isakhwatsha*, Myeko was not only daring but also able to use what was 'acceptable' to the managers to achieve his own ends. In other words, he managed to communicate certain messages that may have been subversive. One of his contributions to Xhosa plays was ensuring that the audience 'owned' the plays by using linguistic codes they understood. This section looks at how Myeko drew from Xhosa norms, beliefs and superstitions to ensure that audiences were enlightened in *USomagqabi* (1980), *UHlohlesakhe* (1979) and *Nangona Intliziyo Ithatha Ibeka: Undoqo Sisibindi* (1981). The plays are similar in that they all use the mysterious or 'ancestral voice' that, in the author's view, could not be censored by the managers.

## **Voices from Below: When Ancestors Speak**

In the three plays, Myeko deliberately invokes the ‘voice’ that Xhosas strongly relate to in their superstitions and rituals. The belief in ancestral and mythical voices had been at the centre of confrontation between the ‘Europeans’, especially the missionaries, and Xhosas from their first encounter in the 1800s. In their concerted efforts to break the power of Xhosas, the missionaries and the colonial administration realised that beliefs and superstition played a crucial role in Xhosa staying power. Xhosas’ belief in ancestral spirits was viewed as an obstacle in their Christianisation. Subsequently, over time, the labelling of those who held steadfastly to traditional beliefs became a standard norm. Running battles between the converted and the heathen characterised this period.<sup>107</sup> This concerted drive to convert Xhosas ultimately resulted in the Great Cattle Killing (1856-7).

According to legend, a fifteen-year-old girl, Nongqawuse, heard a ‘voice’ in the Xarha River that instructed her to tell her people to kill all the cattle and burn their fields. Convinced by the prophecy, Nongqawuse’s father Mhlakaza, who was a traditional healer, in turn convinced King Sarhili and his subjects. There are many conflicting versions of the incident just like popular narrative of *Imfecane* which Cobbing (1988) believes was a distortion of history<sup>108</sup>. Some versions of the story, for instance, suggest that the Governor of the Cape at the time, Sir George Grey, was behind the disaster. In fact, some believe that it was his ‘voice’ that Nongqawuse heard. Of the many versions Peires, *The Dead Will Arise* (1989), is the most instructive. In all these versions though, it would seem that Sir George Grey was

---

<sup>107</sup> The novel *Ingqumbo Yeminyanya* by A.C. Jordan deals beautifully with this clash.

<sup>108</sup> For another version of the story read A.C. Jordan’s *Towards an African Literature*, 1940. HIE Dlomo has also written about the catastrophe although his play, ‘The Girl Who Killed to Save’, is often seen as not only distortion but also trivialization of the otherwise catastrophic event.

guilty by implication. The catastrophe though would have given him an upper-hand over the resilient Xhosa warriors the colonial government had fought with in many Border War.

As is the case with many oral accounts of history, the reality of Sir George Grey's involvement in the 'genocide' keeps shifting. There would be those then who believe that, having been among the Xhosas for a long time, he would have come to know the superstitions of the Xhosa people and the importance of the ancestors' voice to them. Just like the managers at the station later, he also would have learned the Xhosa language and used that knowledge to intrude into their belief system. He then ostensibly manipulated this knowledge to 'make' the Xhosas kill their cattle, which were believed to be bewitched. He had also realised that without the cattle, Xhosas would be at the mercy of the colonialists.

The story of Nongqawuse illustrates the power that was accorded to the 'voice' among the Xhosas – that is – in as far as it is believed Nongqawuse heard 'ancestors' voice. The tragedy of the Xhosas at the time was that they believed that the 'voice' would help them drive the 'Europeans' to the sea.<sup>109</sup> Ironically, it is that same 'voice' that Myeko turns to in his plays, perhaps in his attempt to exploit the Xhosas superstitious adherence on and reverence of the 'voice'.

### **Rewriting History: The 'Voice' of Reason in *USomagqabi* (1980)**

*USomagqabi* was a historical play that explored the history of the Nguni people. In many ways Myeko's account seems to complement some of those that are found in many history

---

<sup>109</sup> Interestingly, on 28/08/03 and 04/09/03 SABC 1 TV broadcast a play, *Saints, Sinners and Settlers*, based on Nongqawuse. The play put Nongqawuse and Sir George Grey on trial in a present-day court. After the trial, the audiences are asked to draw their own conclusions based on the 'facts' put across in the play.

books that have tried to trace the origin and perhaps the lineage of black people in the country. As deliberated below, these accounts suggest a strong connection between different tribes that form the Nguni people, a point Wylie (2006: 13 – 16) strongly disputes as a myth. That as it may though, in his ‘research’ Myeko must have used the sources that that were available to him at the time to recreate the ‘Bantu migration’. The operative word here is ‘recreate’ and suggests that radio plays were created for a purpose and historical plays in particular would have been used for those specific purposes such as nation reconciliation and nation-building.

Therefore Myeko takes the events that might have taken place some 3000 year ago (Wylie, 2006: 13) and refashion it for the current dispensation. What is fascinating about his work is how he brings to life what could have happened centuries earlier.<sup>110</sup> Myeko is a firm believer in dramatisation. In the 1980s, he ran a workshop on radio plays. His emphasis was on the quality and projection of the voice to send the required message to the audience. The voice had to be accompanied by appropriate sound effects that would be able to create a mental picture of the ‘action’ (Satyo and Jadezwi, 2003: 1). Talking about Khepe, a performer whose voice has left an indelible picture in his mind, Shwayiba points out, ‘I remember on Radio Transkei there was a boy from Grahamstown, called Lunga Khepe. He had a great voice. He could play any role and be believable. He was versatile... He made you have a mental picture of sadness, happiness, anger. He was a natural.’<sup>111</sup> Myeko’s use of sound is particularly impressive in *USomagqabi*. All the action takes place in the wilderness as the Nguni trek down from the Great Lakes region, crossing the NileRiver, to the Eastern part of South Africa. The listener is not only given a keyhole glimpse of what happened centuries

---

<sup>110</sup> In our interview Myeko points out that he researched the issue of the Nguni after receiving Kheswa’s script which was scanty on the detail of the Nguni history. The play then may be more factual than fiction.

<sup>111</sup> Shwayiba was interviewed on 16/04/03.

ago, but is also emotionally transported to that era. Unlike many plays of the 1980s that avoided politics, *USomagqabi* seemed to capture the spirit of the time. As already mentioned, the 1980s were an era of political and social confusion, turmoil and uncertainty in South Africa. In many instances, as the TRC evidence has shown, the violence was largely fomented by Afrikaners, whose policy was to divide black people along tribal lines<sup>112</sup>. As will be argued below, *USomagqabi* attempted to bridge the gap between black nations by pointing out that they have the same origin. The unity that seems to be preached in the play counters the master ideology of apartheid. While the ‘voice’ is not used in *USomagqabi* in the same way as it is used in *UHlohlesakhe* and *Apho Sikhala Khona Isakhwatsha*, it is interesting to note that the ‘action’ in the play is still controlled by Somagqabi, whose power emanates from a *voice*. It would seem that Somagqabi’s actions, thoughts and triumphs are the embodiment of the voice of the Xhosa nation’s matriarch. The long-dead matriarch who ‘talks’ and acts through Somagqabi manages to reorganise the Nguni tribe that begins to self-destruct after the death of its king.

Plays such as *USomagqabi*, then, may have been a means of forewarning Africans about the dangers of disunity. Just like *UThuthula* in the 1970s, the play tried to ‘remind’ Africans that they come from the same tree. However, unlike *UThuthula*, which looked at regional history and politics, *USomagqabi* dealt with national (and to an extent, continental) issues. While the Xhosas on the one hand found themselves having to live in the homelands of the Transkei and Ciskei (now jointly known as the Eastern Cape), Zulus were accorded a ‘self-governing state’ status in Zululand (presently known as KwaZulu-Natal). Other African ‘tribes’ also found themselves in homelands and self-governing states. Ironically, all of these regions were symbiotically attached to the Republic of South Africa, with their budgets determined and

---

<sup>112</sup> Visit: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truth\\_and\\_reconciliation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truth_and_reconciliation)

controlled by the Afrikaners. In a number of ways, then, they were still linked together by oppression, even though the regime had managed to create suspicion and animosity between them. Interestingly though, the conflict between the Xhosas and the Zulus ‘appeared’ to be a tribal clash or so some of the media presented it, thereby hiding the role of the regime. So, the conflict ceased being a political question, it became a cultural war.<sup>113</sup> This tension and violence, it is clear, had been brewing since the mid-to late-1970s. As pointed out above, Myeko’s play seems to have been trying to prevent further conflict by accurately ‘reading’ the political landscape and devising a tool against the pending division.

Briefly, the play begins with the Nguni nation ‘trekking’ south from the Great Lakes region with King Nguni’s sons, Xhosa, Zulu, Bhaca, Mpondo, Mthembu, and others. On the way, King Nguni dies and his sons continue the journey. Among the people there is a beautiful and powerful woman called Somagqabi, who is endowed with magical powers. Because of these powers, Somagqabi helps the Ngunis defeat all the tribes they come across on the way, perhaps in the same manner as the outdated accounts of the *Imfecane* in the 1800s. Unlike what the radio play seems to have hoped to achieve (i.e. reconciliation), these accounts paint a brutal picture of Shaka Zulu whose marauding *amabutho* (warriors) leave mayhem and destruction in their wake – a version that Julian Cobbing discounts in his groundbreaking article, ‘The Mfecane as Ilibi’. According to Wylie (2006: 437 – 8), ‘Cobbing argued that blaming Shaka for the violence was empirically wrong: the main cause of the violence was slave trade.’ Therefore, it is clear that in many early accounts of *Imfecane* Shaka was just used as a cover up for the excesses of the colonialists, the missionaries and the Europeans.

---

<sup>113</sup> There are many accounts of people who got killed or escaped death after they were asked to name body parts in the Zulu-language. For instance, if someone could not tell that in Zulu the elbow is called *indololwane* s/he would be killed.

After Nguni dies in the radio play, leadership rivalry develops between Xhosa and Zulu, which deepens as they travel south. Somagqabi, though, manages to quell any physical encounter between the two. However, it is clear that Somagqabi is closer to Xhosa, romantically, than she is to others. This seems to further worsen the relationship between Zulu and Xhosa. Along the way, the other sons break away with their respective followers (similar to the tribal separation forced by the government). By the time they reach south-eastern Africa, the rivalry between Xhosa and Zulu is so unbearable that Xhosa decides to break away and treks further to the south-west, taking Somagqabi with him.

Scene One opens with the narrator giving this brief but telling history of the Nguni. What strikes the listener is the rivalry that erupts at this stage of the play. After their King Nguni commanded them to collect and head the stock south, for instance, Zulu complains:

*Kulungile Bawo. Kodwa akukho nto izakulunga uXhosa ehambela  
kude phaya thina sixakene nemfuyo apha. Ngabatheni aba bantu  
bahamba noXhosa le nto bona bengazi kutyhala infuyo nje?*

(Yes Father. But nothing will go well with Xhosa not helping, while we are working hard. Who are the people who are with him?)

This complaint sets the mood between Nguni's other sons, who take sides between Xhosa and Zulu. Also, this registers the suspicion that still exists between the two nations. Despite the differences between Nguni's sons they fight as a unit as they encounter other tribes. Xhosa and Zulu are clearly senior to the others but not necessarily favoured over the others.

By Scene Three, for instance, Nguni makes it clear that he views his sons as equal. As Nguni and his wife, Masiduko, are about to die, Xhosa asks:

*Bawo ngowuphi ke unyana apha kuthi ozakuba ngumphathi wabanye? Sahlulele Bawo ukuze sihambe ngokwelizwi lakho.*

(Father, which of us is going to lead? Tell us so that we may follow your word).

NGUNI – *Hambani ninjalo bantwana bam. Akukho kuni oyakuba mkhulu kunabanye. Elowo makazimele isizwe sakhe. Zulu mfo wam, ukusukela ngoku uyakuba yinkosi kwisizwe sakho amaZulu, wena Xhosa uyakuba yintloko kwesakho amaXhosa, Mpondo uyakuba yintloko kwesakho samaMpondo, nawe Bhaca uzube yintloko kwesakho samaBhaca. Ze ningamdeleli uMthembu kuba emncinane yinkosi naye kwesakhe sabaThembu. Kodwa ke okwangoku hambani niyihlanganisile imikhosi yethu(emphasis added) ze nakufumana umhlaba othe gabalala nabelane kuhle elowo azithathele eyakhe indlela. Yenza njalo ke indoda.*

(Go as united as you are my children. Each one will create his own kingdom later. Zulu my son, from today you are the head of your own kingdom, the Zulus; you Xhosa, you are the head of the Xhosas; Mpondo, you are the head of Mpondos; you too Bhaca, you will head Bhacas. Do not look down on Thembu just because he is the youngest, he is a king too. *However, for now you must stand as a unit*

*until you find a good place to settle in* (emphasis added). Once you get there divide everything among yourselves and each should take his direction. That is how a man conducts himself).

This scene is pivotal in the play and crucial to the audiences who are beset with the political strife that had divided them according to tribal lines at the time. Among other things, King Nguni implores his sons to work as a unit in order to defeat their enemies. This may have been a direct appeal to the audience who were forced into small, arid areas to fight their common enemy – the apartheid system. King Nguni seems to be aware that his sons will need to live separately, but that they should do so only after they triumph over their foes. In a word, the king fosters the idea of unity and sharing among his sons, and by extension, their different nations. (It is interesting that the ‘New South Africa’ espouses such ideals. The coat of arms, for instance, encourages and upholds ‘unity in diversity’ in recognition of the inherent differences in the country). Later on, when Mpondo claims that Masiduko is his mother only, Xhosa emphasises that they belong together as brothers.<sup>114</sup> Xhosa argues:

*Mpondo mfo kaBawo, yilibale into yokuba umha ngumha kuwe  
wedwa; Nokuba akasizelanga, indlela asikhulise ngayo bengasekho  
abetu omama isenza ukuba sazi yena kuphela ukuba ngumha wethu.*

(Mpondo, my father’s son, forget that mother is a mother to you only.

Even if she did not give birth to us, the way she brought us up after our mothers passed away makes us think of her as our own mother).

---

<sup>114</sup> Each of them had a different mother.

What these insinuations and suggestions point to is that the play went counter to the master discourse of apartheid of 'divide and rule' in so far as it tried to 'relive' the past. Through the language that is used, the audience is made aware of the kinship between Zulus and Xhosas. Again, the importance of dialogue in the dramas, a fact emphasised by Satyo and Jadezweni (2003), plays a critical role in 'educating' the audience. Through their dialogue, the characters not only converse among themselves, but also give 'instructions' to the audience. Playwrights indirectly conscientise the audiences through what the characters say - hence the importance of dialogue. According to the latter point, the play seemed to try to rewrite the history of Africans (especially Zulus and Xhosas), emphasising and highlighting their kinship rather than their differences. In our interview, Myeko suggests as much when he says the play 'talked about the origin of black people'. It would seem that Myeko believed that the story was good. According to him the story was short and, crucially, he had to research it because it talked about the 'origin of Nguni people'. There is no doubt then that the play was meant to be educational and reconciliatory. This happened at a time when insinuations abounded in the pro-regime press that the Inkatha Freedom Party and ANC were exclusively Zulu and Xhosa organisations respectively, fuelling ethnic animosity. However, to the managers, the fact that the play seemed to talk about the 'differences' between the Nguni tribes would be enough to endorse the airing of the play. For them the play would be an affirmation of the split between Africans, especially Zulus and Xhosas.

It must be remembered that the history of the Nguni as sketched by Kheswa and Myeko was not studied in schools. As such, it was a closed book to many, especially to those who had been brainwashed to look down on traditional storytelling. In addition, that history had been erased from the national consciousness of Africans, through its not being given space to

flourish in plays and other performances. Therefore, those who were financing the 'black-on-black violence' did not want relationships between Africans to be revived and restored. While the events of the 1976 Soweto uprising may have united Africans behind the same cause, that unity was not based on cultural lineage, but rather on pure politics. It was easier for the apartheid regime to manipulate tribal differences in the 1980s to perpetuate its agenda. Myeko's play seemed to have been attempting to fill these gaps in the common consciousness of ordinary South Africans.

The characters of Xhosa and Zulu in the play are pivotal because they assume a joint leadership role. Perhaps this was deliberately done to dispel the myth that one group was superior to the other. The treatment of the characters of Xhosa and Zulu is important in this regard. As pointed out, after Nguni and Masiduko die, personality clashes develop between their sons. For instance, all the sons except Xhosa and Zulu want to kill old men and women because they are accused of witchcraft. Xhosa and Zulu are against the killing and plan to dissuade the others from perpetrating such crimes. Symbolically, the killing of the old people was in actual fact the killing of knowledge, wisdom and experience. Just like the Great Cattle Killing of 1856-7, the killing of old people would leave the Nguni nation vulnerable and exposed to foreign influence.

To a large extent, however, the killings are more ritualistic than cold-blooded, as they are based on the belief that when someone dies, especially a leader or father, others should die with him so that they can keep him company. Interestingly, the ritual (*ukukhapha*, meaning 'to accompany'), is only conducted for heads of families. Women are excluded. This was an oppressive custom that led to the killing of innocent people. Most importantly, the killings

showed how women were disregarded in traditional societies. This is an important part in the play as Xhosa and Zulu conspire to challenge and change this custom. They plan to suggest to others that a bull should be used instead of a human sacrifice. Up to this day, *ukukhapha* and *ukubuyisa* ('to bring back') are done with a bull. Perhaps by this episode Myeko was trying to show that Zulus and Xhosas even share customs and traditions. Despite the personality clashes that flare up at times, the camaraderie between Xhosa and Zulu continues throughout the play. In fact, their fiancées Somagqabi and Nontlahla were inseparable, making bonding between Zulu and Xhosa inevitable. It is this bonding that makes it possible for them to dissuade others from killing the old men and women. In fact, Somagqabi manages to hide many of those marked for ritual death in a cave until peace returned to the region. Thus, the play depicts Xhosa and Zulu as peacemakers, not as the destructive forces that were ready to destroy one another in the political arena in the 1980s.

The dialogue between Xhosa and Zulu in the play is profound and instructive. For instance, in the dialogue, it is clear that Xhosa and Zulu condemn revenge and ritual killings. Their reference to accompanying someone who had died with a favourite bull instead of a human is in many ways an attempt to discard irrelevant customs. As in *Buzani Kubawo*, Myeko uses the platform of the play to challenge outdated customs. The idea of using a bull instead has symbolic importance in that slaughtering a bull is a form of appeasement. It is an offering to the ancestors for cleansing and good luck. Interestingly, cleansing ceremonies are now held in heritage sites around the country to remember those who died during the apartheid years; perhaps a direct parallel with what Myeko suggested in the play. The use of culture to communicate with the audience is crucial here in that the message would be hidden from the managers.

## **Invading the Homeland: The Voice in *UHlohlesakhe* (1979)**

*UHlohlesakhe* follows a similar pattern where a mysterious voice is used as a narrative device. This is one of the plays that had a major impact on the audience. As will be shown below, audiences thought the play was attacking homeland leaders. The play uses the magic voice of a powerful traditional healer as the main narrative tool. Interestingly, the sequel to the play (1979) begins with a disclaimer, which runs: ‘*Eli bali alisekelwanga nakwesinye isiganeko esakha sehla, namagama asetyenzisiweyo aqotyolwe*’.<sup>115</sup> (The play is not based on any real event that had ever happened. The names used are fictitious). The disclaimer alone raises suspicions. Why does Myeko feel that this disclaimer is necessary? Who is the disclaimer addressed to? Does the play resemble any real life events? Is the play provocative, or is the disclaimer a precaution against possible prosecution or censorship?

As suggested above, many people believe that the play was curtailed before its end by the leader of the Ciskei homeland, L.L. Sebe, a claim Myeko refutes.<sup>116</sup> Two interviewees, from King William’s Town and Port Elizabeth, believe that the play was curtailed since it was attacking the homeland leaders. Their suggestion points to the gap-filling that takes place during listening. In other words, during the broadcast audiences draw associations between the play and their own lives. ‘This is why the character suddenly comes to life in the text – he is creating instead of merely observing. Therefore, the deliberate gaps left in the narrative are the means by which the [audience] is enabled to bring both scenes and characters to life’

(Iser, 1974: 38-9). In the case of *UHlohlesakhe* and other plays that may have been cut short,

---

<sup>115</sup> The two plays are intertwined and as such could be treated as one. It is interesting that the main protagonist, Hlohlesakhe, is beheaded in the first play, while at the beginning of the second one he is found hiding in the forest. In the end he simply disappears. This to an extent may have been a plan by Myeko to make a third play. Therefore, by keeping Hlohlesakhe (and Gonondo) alive he was keeping the ‘voice’ alive for later plays.

<sup>116</sup> Note: those who listened to the story in the Transkei, like Shwayiba, believe that the play was stopped by Matanzima (instead of Sebe). This might suggest that plays like *UHlohlesakhe* were universal, and not necessarily targeted to specific individuals.

the audiences may have done some gap-filling that fulfilled their own needs. Just like *Apho Sikhala Khona Isakhwatsha*, the play was broadcast over five weeks. Again, this proves the playwrights' ability to hide messages by using certain devices. In this case, it would seem that the use of the traditional 'voice' helped disguise the subversive messages in the play. So, playwrights had a 'plan' in their dramas. Even though the plays would have multifaceted messages, playwrights tried to convey something specific to the audience. Makhosana (1991: 6) puts it well when she notes:

The themes conveyed by playwrights to the audience may be different in kind. There are those that may be merely informative; the playwright wishes to enlighten his audience about the world they live in. In this way he may satisfy the audience's ignorance or uncertainty concerning reality. On the other hand, it may solely be for entertainment, serving as a kind of escape to forget the worries of life, as most radio plays seem to do. The playwright may even go further than that and try to convert the listener to his own view or he may try to receive some kind of reaction, positive or negative, from the listener. Finally, the sole purpose that a committed playwright has in mind is to make his audience think and act in a particular manner.

*UHlohlesakhe* is a story of deceit and power-mongering between Hlohlesakhe and King Maqhankqa.<sup>117</sup> As the title suggests, the despot Hlohlesakhe tries to usurp Maqhankqa's power by turning his subjects against him. However, Thandisizwe, a traditional healer and Maqhankqa's lackey, thwarts his plans. Both Hlohlesakhe and Thandisizwe are endowed

---

<sup>117</sup> There are two Maqhankqas in the play: the king and his son.

with magical powers. Both know what the other is planning, even though they do not have to be 'physically' present in each other's territory. In fact, they talk with each other over distance by using their omnipresence. Using dreams, Hlohlesakhe manages to turn some of Maqhankqa's subjects against him. The revolt results in his overthrow, after which his son is made king. The token king is used by Hlohlesakhe to kill Maqhankqa's supporters and plunder his riches. Hlohlesakhe's brutality comes to a head when he asks the new king to kill his wife and son to make sure that there will be no heir to the throne. This resonates with *Nangona Intliziyo Ithatha Ibeka*, when Sgidi is asked by Gonondo to kill his wife.

Fortunately, Hlohlesakhe is defeated when some of his followers defect to Maqhankqa and bring him information on Hlohlesakhe. As always, forces of evil must be defeated. Unlike any other play though, the protagonists operate as voices. In *Nangona Intliziyo Ithatha Ibeka* and *USomagqabi* the only voices are Gonondo and Xhegokazi (the old woman) respectively. In other words, *UHlohlesakhe* is a conflict that takes place largely in the spirit world, whereas Hlohlesakhe seems to have inhabited both the spirit and real worlds. *UHlohlesakhe*, for instance, ends with Hlohlesakhe being decapitated.

The play resonates with the power hunger of some of the homeland leaders. By episode six, this power-mongering is shown by the use of deadly snakes. Snakes symbolise deceit and underhand operation. After the new King Maqhankqa is installed, many of his subjects rise against him. Fortunately for him, one of his lackeys, Tshakovu, attempts to win them over to their side. When this fails Hlohlesakhe sends the deadly snakes to attack them. Only Tshakovu is immune to the snakes. In this way people are coerced into accepting the new king. Meanwhile, Thandisizwe and Makwenkwe (Thandisizwe's adviser) plan to abduct Maqhankqa so that they can save the people from suffering under him. They form allies with

Phikeni, king of Mpumalanga. Phikeni was once Hlohlesakhe's friend but there was a falling out.

In a similar fashion as in *Apho Sikhala Khona Isakhwatsha*, Myeko uses a technique that was popular with the apartheid regime: infiltration. Thandisizwe and one of his counsellors, Ngalitye, disguise themselves as Phikeni's subjects and go to Hlohlesakhe's land for sanctuary. They manage to kill and capture some of Hlohlesakhe's supporters, one of whom helps them source information regarding Hlohlesakhe's strength. Unfortunately, Thandisizwe is captured and Hlohlesakhe tries to win him over by promising him a prominent position. He declines this and a war ensues. In the first play (1977) Hlohlesakhe is defeated and forced to hide in the forest. In the sequel, however, he manages to wield power through the puppet, Maqhankqa. This camaraderie between them comes to an end when Hlohlesakhe begins to order indiscriminate killing. When drought descends on Hlohlesakhe's land, he is forced to invade Maqhankqa's land. There is a falling out and Hlohlesakhe is defeated although he manages to disappear, just like Gonondo.

Just as *Apho Sikhala Khona Isakhwatsha* reflected the politics in the country, *UHlohlesakhe* echoed what was taking place in the Ciskei homeland. Clashes between state-appointed and bona fide chiefs were rife during the period in question. Most of the state-appointed chiefs were seen as 'oHlohlesakhe' (self-enriching) and as such, extensions of the state. Just as the mine bosses who were seen as the reincarnated chiefs (Coplan cited in Barber, 1997: 29), the chiefs endured the attack in the plays. According to Coplan, Xhosa praise poetry changed from praising the chiefs to vilifying them since they were seen as government operatives. In the mines, the mine bosses were vilified as they were viewed as representatives of the chiefs who were despised. The use of the plays by playwrights, perhaps, should be seen in this light.

The oral genre, which had transformed into radio plays, was used to ‘attack’ the system within the Corporation. In our interview, for instance, Myeko suggested that one of his plays was suspected of being subversive. Asked what *UHlohlesakhe* was about he answered: ‘*UHlohlesakhe* was about what was happening at the time. Boers from the Free State suspected that there was a message that was passed through the play’. It is interesting that it was the ‘Boers from the Free State’ who suspected the play since the Xhosa-language radio station was not broadcasting in the Free State at the time. This can only point to the fact that there were people who monitored the content of the broadcaster.

The by-line that became popular in the play is, ‘*Niyakubulala, nibulale, de nibulalane*’ (You will kill and kill until you kill each other). This line, just like the one in *Nangona Intliziyo Ithatha Ibeka*, attracted audiences to the listening space.<sup>118</sup> The words warn the evildoers that their cruelty will come back to haunt them. When Hlohlesakhe appears in dreams to the youth, encouraging them to burn the fields and disregard the livestock, a link is made with the Nongqawuse legend. While many Xhosas would be reminded of the legend, the managers would not associate the two. To the Xhosa audience this is a reminder of how they were driven out of their land and how their livelihood was taken away. The fact that the play deals with the land issue is crucial. The homeland system saw scores of people removed from the Republic to small arid areas. In turn, homeland leaders seized farmlands from the inhabitants of the homelands, sometimes on the pretext that a national road would be built across the farm. In many senses then, Hlohlesakhe represented both the homeland leaders and the apartheid regime, both of which were poised to grab productive land from blacks. Many respondents correctly believed that the play was directed to the homeland leaders. Indeed, it is interesting that the sequel to the play carried the disclaimer mentioned previously, hinting

---

<sup>118</sup> In *Nangona* the line was ‘*Mthathe Sgidi! Mkhothe Bham!*’ (Take him, Sgidi! Lick him, Bham!) which words Dube uses in his song, a point made later on in this chapter.

at the seriousness of the play and perhaps the playwright's determination. The use of the youth in acts of arson is also interesting. The youth at the time was very political and militant. Although many of the youth were anti-chiefs, some were used by corrupted chiefs to intimidate their opponents. In the Ciskei, for instance, the youth was used for a door-to-door campaign to check if people had CINP cards. This was meant to intimidate people to taking up membership of the ruling party.

A notable clash is that which developed between Lennox Sebe (Ciskei 'president for life') and his brother Charles. Many skirmishes ensued between the two as Charles tried to wrest power from Lennox. The argument is that the play may have been a direct reference to this clash. However, the use of magic and the 'voice' may have been used to camouflage this fact, given that the use of the voice makes the play seem less political and perhaps more traditional. The fact that some members of the audience associated the play with the dispute between Lennox and Charles Sebe is important. The audience, it would seem, was always ready and able to understand the context in which the plays were broadcast. The connection between the known 'voice' of the ancestors and the voice on radio helped the audiences make the connection between the real and the imagined worlds. The voice symbolises power. In *USomagqabi* the voice bestows power to individual characters. For instance, it is the voice of the old woman that comes back to guide Somagqabi and not that of King Nguni. Although in *USomagqabi* Myeko uses the voice to give power to women, it is clear that the voice could be used to challenge stereotypes as well as to expose political excesses.

Women are conspicuous by their absence in *UHlohlesakhe*. The only woman who is mentioned is Noluthando, Prince Maqhankqa's intended wife. Typical of the depiction of women, Hlohlesakhe influences Maqhankqa to kill her. In spite of the fact that Myeko tried

to give power and influence to women characters in some plays, it seems it was not easy to break away from the female stereotypes that were attendant on black art in general. Typically, Myeko uses the voice of the old woman to assert the values of the society. The word of the old woman assumes the role of the ancestors to guide society in matters of maintaining order.

As can be seen, the 'voice' was omniscient in the plays. No matter where Sgidi, Makhasi (Hlohlesakhe's side-kick), and all of those who went to Hlohlesakhe to *thwasa* (become witchdoctors) ended up, the voice always found them. Throughout the play it is an uncontrollable and destructive force. It was not only the characters that could not control it; the audience and, most importantly, the managers were also rendered helpless in its presence. In all plays that use the 'voice', the main characters are invisible to other characters, creating a veil of mystery around them. They are the all-seeing and perpetual voices that cannot be destroyed either by magic or modern technology. The use of this powerful 'voice' is significant in that it touches on the Xhosa belief in ancestral as well as evil voices. In other words, the Xhosa audiences would identify with the idea of the 'voice' as it plays a significant part in their own belief system. By using the 'voice', Myeko uses a tool that can be manipulated in many different ways. The 'voice' is not only central to their belief system; it also identifies the audience as people whose culture is still intact. As was asserted at the beginning, the pervasive 'voice' connects audiences to one another, thereby creating a sense of community. In addition, playwrights such as Myeko could use that voice to educate audiences, while at the same time they managed to evade the managers' vigilance.

## **Voices from the Deep: *Nangona Intliziyo Ithatha Ibeka: Undoqo Sisibindi* (1987)**

*Nakuba Intliziyo Ithatha Ibeka: Undoqo Sisibindi* was adapted from Bhengu's Zulu play, *Umanqoba Yisibindi*. The Zulu play seems to have left an indelible impression on the Zulu-language radio audiences. According to Sibiya (2002), many Zulu-language radio audiences still remember the play, with some people even being named after some of the characters.<sup>119</sup> It is not surprising then that Myeko's version was as successful among Xhosa audiences. All the people interviewed vividly remembered the play, or the main characters.<sup>120</sup> One interviewee, Nontsikelelo Gqibitole, particularly remembered an incident that happened to her during the running of the play.<sup>121</sup> When asked about the play, she recalled an incident that happened to her while she was hitchhiking from Stutterheim to King William's Town. During the journey, she noticed that the driver of the car was the feared and notorious Nobiva, from Zwelitsha, a township near King William's Town. Nobiva, it was generally believed, gave lifts to unsuspecting women whom he decapitated on the way. Nobiva's reputed behaviour closely resembled that of Sgidi, the protagonist in the play *Nakuba Intliziyo Ithatha Ibeka, Undoqo Sisibindi* (or simply *Undoqo*). The fact that Nobiva's notoriety spread during the broadcast of the play seemed to unnerve her. As will be shown below, Sgidi, just like Nobiva, preyed on unsuspecting victims.

The Zulu and Xhosa versions of the play have some differences, although they deal with the same issues. When Myeko was interviewed in November 2001, he said that he had changed the play to suit the Xhosa audiences. This is important because it means that the play was not just 'transplanted' within the Xhosa listening space without consideration for their tradition

---

<sup>119</sup> Dumusani Sibiya makes this claim in a paper that was given at the 'African Studies Association of the UK Biennial Conference' at Birmingham University in 2002.

<sup>120</sup> The interviews were conducted between 2001 and 2003 in the Eastern Cape.

<sup>121</sup> Nontsikelelo Gqibitole was interviewed on 11/04/03 in King William's Town.

and belief-systems. This also confirms what was suggested earlier; namely that playwrights anticipated what audiences needed, and always tried to use coded language that was understandable to them. Most crucially, if playwrights hid their messages in coded language that was only accessible to the audiences, managers would not be able to censor it. As indicated in Chapter Two, the use of a proverb or an idiom opens a world of meanings for individual audiences. Audiences not only enter that world unhindered, but they can also rearrange it to suit their particular needs and aspirations. In many ways, the managers were sidelined in this communication, because, as Criswold (2000: 127) puts it,

These proverbs serve two functions. They indicate how members of an oral culture pass on stored wisdom and direct behavior; and they represent that oral culture to readers who are, by definition, removed from it. In this latter capacity, since many proverbs are highly context-based, they exert a distancing effect [in this case, between the audiences and managers of the Xhosa-language station].

*Undoqo Sisibindi* begins with Myeko exploring everyday family matters. The main protagonist, Sgidi, has just lost his job and cannot make ends meet at home. His mother criticises him for relying on a woman and not taking care of his own family. Therefore, from the beginning the play brings forth the problems that African men experience when they lose their jobs. Most importantly, the play raises the dreaded fact of unemployment and the ‘impotence’ that accompanies it. As heads of families, African men always try to provide for their families. So, from the outset Myeko raises social, economic and political issues, albeit in a covert manner. He then offers a solution through Sgidi – self-reliance. After being taunted by his mother and humiliated by his wife’s assumption of a man’s duty, he decides to use his

retrenchment package to buy a second-hand van. He then begins a vegetable selling business. However, a local businessman is jealous and tries to stop him from operating his business by spreading rumours that Sgidi is selling stolen goods. His business suffers as a result of this as people run away from him. This frustrates Sgidi, more so when he cannot meet his family's needs.

Faced with this economic dilemma, he decides on a new plan, a plan that sees him turning to his Xhosa traditional beliefs. When Xhosas hit hard times, they sometimes seek cleansing from some magical powers. Most of the time they go to an *igqira* who chases away the evil spirits that bring bad luck and gives them either a love or wealth charm, depending on the needs of the individual. Sgidi goes beyond that: he not only needs cleansing and prosperity, he also needs revenge on the other businessman. Therefore, although reluctant, he decides to go to a famous and powerful traditional healer in Northern KwaZulu-Natal, Gonondo, for *ukuthwala*.<sup>122</sup> After endurance and bravery tests at Gonondo's abode in a cave, which include being licked by a snake called Bham and having to face lions, he qualifies. Nevertheless, the biggest challenge that would make the magic work is that from time to time he has to cut people's little fingers off as a sacrifice to the ancestors.

In episode eighteen of the play, Myeko gives the audience a keyhole view of what happens at *Kwamhlabuyalingana*, the area in KwaZulu-Natal where most *ukuthwala* is believed to take place. The episode is significant for two reasons. On the one hand, the audience is shown the brutality that accompanies *ukuthwala*. In the episode Sgidi is asked which body part he would like to sacrifice to the ancestors. Gonondo makes it clear that Sgidi must make a human

---

<sup>122</sup> When one *thwalas* one is given an animal or a potion (and undergoes endurance tests) by a traditional healer. The person who *thwalas* must sacrifice for and worship the potion or animal in a particular way in order for it to make him rich. *Ukuthwala* is practised by people who seek to be rich quickly buy using black magic and should not be mistaken for forceful marriage which is also called *ukuthwala*.

sacrifice from time to time if he wants his charm to work. This ‘demand’ is very pivotal in the play. The sacrifice that one has to make not only makes him (only men *thwala*) fearsome; it also makes him rich. Nevertheless, in spite of the rewards, very few people ‘brave’ *ukuthwala* because of the tests that they have to go through and the ‘punishment’ that is unleashed in the event that one fails.

On the other hand, for the managers the play as a whole shows the brutality and barbarism of the Xhosas. Gonondo is not only a fearsome *igqira*; he is also representative of what is negative about Xhosas (although he comes across as a Zulu). He is a destructive force who is not giving anyone financial freedom but rather a life of misery. Even today, a wealthy but uneducated man is labelled as having *thwala*. By allowing such plays, the managers may have been trying to discredit entrepreneurship by blacks in general. This assertion does not in any way suggest that *amagqira* such as Gonondo never existed. In fact, the legend of the Eastern Cape *igqira*, Khotso, is still strong in the region, as is that of Gonondo in KwaZulu-Natal. So, Sgidi is instructed to cut off the little finger from his victims and offer those to his ancestors. Sgidi is not given a choice here as Gonondo makes it clear that it is the ancestors who demand the little finger. Again, this point suggests the esteem to which the ancestors should be held. Throughout the play, Gonondo appears to Sgidi as a ‘voice’, suggesting that, just like the ancestors, he is indestructible and invincible.

Following the killing of the first person in Gonondo’s cave, Sgidi has to find some more people to kill. Throughout the killing spree, it is the ‘voice’ that commands Sgidi. Although he tries to resist at times, he realises that the ‘voice’ has to be obeyed. There is a direct contrast here between those who stayed in towns and those who remained in the village. Plays that are based in the city depict people who challenge the powers, whether through the

gangs and subgroups or those who open their own businesses such as prostitutes and *shebeen* queens. The voice of the ancestors, powerful as it is, never enters the city space. Rural audiences are not only depicted as passive; but also as perpetually controlled by the ‘voice’. As with Sgidi, no matter how much resistance one mounts, the ‘voice’ prevails in the end. Against his will, for instance, Sgidi is commanded to kill five people before his wish to be rich could be fulfilled. At the command of Gonondo’s voice, he would have to find a victim. One of his first victims is the rival businessman. After this there are a number of cases in which people are pursued by an invisible being.<sup>123</sup> Gonondo’s voice would reach Sgidi wherever he is, and he would obey it. Although Sgidi is unsettled by having to cut off people’s fingers, he is happy that he can provide for his family.

Matters come to a head when the ‘voice’ commands Sgidi to kill his wife and cut her finger off as a final test for his bravery and commitment to Gonondo. He is against this but he finds it difficult to disobey Gonondo or his voice. Although reluctant, he finally waylays his wife, Mamfene, as she returns from work, but she manages to escape. By this time Mamfene suspects that he is involved in the killings. When Sgidi realises that she is aware of his activities, he determines to kill her. After attacking and injuring her he muses:

SGIDI: *Hayi kufuneka khe ndiyilibale le kaMamfene khe ndikhangele  
enye ibhokhwe enyawo mbini. Kambe uMamfene lo yena ade  
enzakale kangaka uyenzela ntoni into yokundijikela ngasemva?  
Uyandikhanyela ngempela kuba wazi yonke inyaniso ngam. Akugqiba*

---

<sup>123</sup> Whenever Sgidi performs his finger-cutting duty he is invisible to the victim. This makes it difficult for the police to find a suspect. It is only after his wife discovers the rotting fingers that the identity of the killer is known.

*ukwenza loo nto undiyele emapoliseni wawaxelela ukuba  
mawazokuphanda apha ekhaya, ezenza abantu basegaraji. Ube  
nepasi lam lo mfazi. Hayi ayikho enye into endingayenzayo uzicelele  
ngokwakhe ukufa kwaye uzakukufumana. Ndiza kumnika le nto  
ayifunayo.*

(No, I must forget about Mamfene for now and find another two-  
legged goat. Mamfene deserves to get hurt because she betrayed me.  
She turns against me and she knows too much. After disappointing  
me she turns to the police who pretend to be mechanics. She stole my  
passbook. There is nothing I can do. She asked to be killed and she is  
going to die. I will give her what she asks for).

The police get wind of what Sgidi has been doing and monitor his activities. Sgidi is followed to Gonondo's hideout but Gonondo manages to disappear. Even Makhasi and Sgidi believe that he has burnt to death. Taking advantage of this, Makhasi decides to carry on Gonondo's legacy. He suggests to Sgidi that he, Makhasi, will take Gonondo's place, while Sgidi will take over from Makhasi and Sgidi's son will take over from Sgidi. Sgidi is furious to hear this. All he wants are the millions that Gonondo has left behind. He is also totally against his son becoming involved with Gonondo. Things come to a breaking point when Makhasi tells him that Gonondo has left him nothing. Sgidi, commanded by Gonondo's voice, kills him. Police, hovering over Gonondo's hideout in their helicopter, witness the killing and arrest Sgidi. The play ends with Gonondo's 'voice' still laughing.

The 'voice' is undoubtedly the main narrative vehicle in the play. The issue of the 'voice' raises a number of pertinent questions. What does it represent? Is it a voice outside of Sgidi or a voice within him? Who is Gonondo? Is he living or an imagined being? And, most importantly, where does the 'voice' place the listeners? Does it come to them the way it does to Sgidi? Does the 'voice' stay with them long after the play has run? Answers to these questions can only be speculative, as reading a play would differ from one person to the other. In the first place, the 'voice' seems akin to *amafufunyana*.<sup>124</sup> Whether Myeko was consciously trying to make this connection is difficult to tell, but throughout the play, the 'voice' is in Zulu instead of Xhosa. As already mentioned, another element that is introduced in the play is the practice of *ukuthwala*. Throughout the Eastern Cape, people believe that *ukuthwala* is done mostly in the place known as *KwaMhlabuyalingana*, in KwaZulu-Natal. Sgidi also goes to *KwaMhlabuyalingana* for *ukuthwala*. The issue of the 'voice' and the use of the Zulu-language is interesting, particularly when one looks at Shwayiba's comments. For him the use of the Zulu-language seems to have been unavoidable. Our conversation in this regard needs to be recounted in full:

**Shwayiba:** The first thing that counts is belief. When you believe in something, it will make sense to you. When we were growing up there were no TVs. There was wireless, so we believed in the voice. Even if we did not see the action, the voice was enough. We believed in the voice. Some Xhosas still believe in dreams where you talk to someone in your dreams and wake up in the morning and be able to explain the dream. And be able to tell people that you had been

---

<sup>124</sup>*Amafufunyana* are bad spirits that enter and possess someone. The possessed, when in a trance, speaks incoherent Zulu and needs the intervention of a traditional healer to rid him/her of the bad spirit. Most of the time *amafufunyana* are destructive to the possessed and those around him/her.

visited by your ancestors. We believe in those things. It is, therefore, not surprising that people believed in Gonondo's voice. I grew up at a place where people believed that you could be bewitched by being given *amafufunyana*. A lady who is possessed by *amafufunyana* would be in a trance. When she spoke, she spoke in a man's voice.

**Khaya Gqibitole:** In which language would *amafufunyana* speak? In Xhosa or Zulu?

**S:** In Zulu. A majority of *amafufunyana* spoke in Zulu.

**KG:** Can we make a connection here? Did Gonondo use Xhosa?

**S:** No, it was Zulu.

**KG:** What is it about this voice? Why does it have to be Zulu? Why would Xhosas believe a voice in Zulu?

**S:** Xhosa and Zulu are closely related, although there are some differences. The other thing is Zulus have more powerful magic than Xhosas as far as *iyeza (umuthi)* is concerned. Even our witchdoctors, when they have to *thwasa* and graduate, they need a Zulu witchdoctor as their teacher.

By having this Zulu voice then, the connection with the Gonondo legend becomes stronger. The voice the listener hears is supposed to be the authentic voice of the famous, if feared, traditional healer from KwaZulu-Natal. Although the audience would recognise the voice of the character playing Gonondo as that of Mbulelo Sibhidla, one of the well-known

announcers and playwrights of the station, that knowledge would be subsumed by Gonondo's legend. They would want to believe that they are listening to the genuine voice of Gonondo and not the familiar Sibhidla.

In other words, the play appeals not only to the audience's beliefs, but also to some shared memories. In fact, not a single respondent even suggested that they knew Sibhidla as the man behind the voice. The voice was Gonondo's. By using legends and myths that are highly regarded by the audience, playwrights managed to appeal to that common past. In doing so, the managers of the station were left in the dark because they were not familiar with the legend, nor could they form an association between the legend and the prevailing political climate. This is an important point because Xhosa audiences are inherently used to listening to past accounts. Their familiarity with the genre of storytelling, which gets its strength from such legends, cannot be underestimated in this regard.

The use of well-known actors may have been one of the stratagems that were used by playwrights to attract audiences. Audiences believed in the announcers and some characters, and so by using known voices playwrights could subtly channel them into a particular way of understanding the play. According to Iser (1974), the meaning should not be left to the discretion of the subject, or the audience in our case. The subject, 'must, rather, be gently guided by indications in the text, though he must never have the feeling that the author wants to lead him by the nose' (Iser, 1974: 37). By 'forgetting' that the 'voice' is that of Sibhidla, the audience members cease to be spectators; they become part of the play. In other words, they not only believe the characters, but also enter the world of the play. They partake in the unfolding drama by offering their views, suggesting solutions and generally taking sides in the play.

The other main character, Sgidi, is played by Thobile Makhhalima, a traffic officer in the Ciskei homeland at the time. Just like Sbhidla, Makhhalima's voice was familiar to audiences since he ran a traffic safety show at the station. By fusing his daily job and that of his character in the play *Myeko*, as a producer, must have been trying to erase the distance between the audience and the play. The interplay between reality and fiction would limit any scepticism that may have arisen. So it is interesting that most of Sgidi's killing is done while he is driving his second-hand car, evading the traffic police. The parallels between Sgidi and Nobiva are striking, pointing to the fact that local beliefs and stories may have been used to make the plays more believable.<sup>125</sup> Sgidi is a rounded character, who has the same financial and family problems as the audience. What he represents is hope in a time of hopelessness. He does not sit down but tries very hard to make life better for his family. However, his business fails to take off because of jealousy. All these are societal problems that affect many families. During and after the completion of *ukuthwala*, Gonondo's voice takes centre stage. The Nobiva incident only helps to heighten the audience's belief in the play, especially those listeners in the Zwelitsha/King William's Town region. It must be remembered that it was their own members who were being lost in a similar manner as in the play. In other words, what took place in the world of fiction was transposed into the real world and vice versa.

Since the audience strongly identifies with the 'voice', it becomes a part of their everyday life. The 'voice', in other words, can be located inside the audiences. The killings that take place disgust and frighten them, but those who empathise with Sgidi's motives would blame Gonondo for the crimes. Those who are attracted to the character would shift the blame to outside influence. Sgidi becomes an abused and helpless victim who is under Gonondo's

---

<sup>125</sup> See Nontsikelelo Gqibitole interview (11/04/03) in Appendix B.

influence.<sup>126</sup> However, if the voice is located within Sgidi, then *he* has to take all the blame. If the voice represents his conscience, then it would mean that his conscience is corrupted throughout the play. Although he resists killing people, he always falls into temptation; he even attempts to kill his own wife. Within him, there are two voices: one wants him to kill in order to make more money (*izigidi*), while the other is against this. The voice of reason seems to be stronger at the end of the play when he tells Makhasi directly that he does not want his son to be involved. He seems remorseful at this stage; he wants to limit the lure of money (greed) and evil to himself.

Therefore, Gonondo as a ‘voice’ can represent the evil spirit, which leads people to go to great lengths to gain wealth. Sgidi’s invisibility to other characters when he executes the commands of the ‘voice’ may point to the fact that as a person he is reduced to nothing. He is neither a father of his children, a husband, nor a struggling businessman. He is a destructive ‘voice’ that kills its victims so that its family lives. The powerful symbolism of Gonondo’s burning and the perpetual voice that remains with both Sgidi and the listener attest to the fact that the ‘voice’ may indeed be inside the listener as s/he becomes part of the play. The voice of Gonondo has stayed with the audience up to this day.<sup>127</sup> In fact, the play became part of the popular songs in the 1980s. For instance, the reggae musician Lucky Dube may have played a big role in imprinting the play in people’s minds. In his song, ‘There is No Peace in the World’, he uses Gonondo’s now famous line, ‘*Mthathe Sgidi! Mkhothe Bham!*’ (Take him Sgidi, lick him Bham!). It is interesting to see that musicians like Lucky Dube used these famous plays to advertise their music.

---

<sup>126</sup> Both characters have become household names. In fact the play itself is either called Gonondo or Sgidi; its title, like that of the play *Benditshilo (Sibayeni)* has been subsumed by the names of the characters.

<sup>127</sup> The play was last rebroadcast in October 2002.

Bham was a snake that had to lick those who wanted to *ukuthwala*. The idea of *Unomathotholo*, the legendary river snake, is also reflected here. *Unomathotholo*, as a centrepiece in traditional Xhosa belief, and as a Xhosa name for radio, is significant in conceptualising the ‘voice’ in the play.<sup>128</sup> Gonondo’s voice is not only associated with the mysterious voice of the river snake (*Unomathotholo*) or the evil spirits (*amafufunyana*) but also with the radio set that brings the voice to the audiences. On radio, as in the play, the voice does not seem to have a source. In other words, the source and the voice are displaced, allowing for the elements of magic and mystery that are central to Xhosa culture and belief. By using the ‘voice’ as a narrative tool, Myeko was not only able to evade censorship; he also managed to touch the common consciousness of the audience.

The ‘voice’ in the play is both pervasive and defiant. It is a voice that could not be controlled by the managers of the station. At the same time, it is also a dissenting voice. As with the voice of Gonondo, it is a voice that the authorities attempt to silence without success. As mentioned previously, in the Zulu version of *Undoqo Sisibindi*, the play ends with the helicopter hovering over Gonondo’s abode. The symbolism of the helicopter is significant for two reasons. On the one hand, it signifies the clash between modern technology and traditional black magic. Throughout the play, Gonondo mystifies the audience with his power. The audience is made to believe that he is invincible and untouchable. When Sgidi addresses him, he extols him as ‘*Gonondo omkhulu! Gonondo ongajongwayo! Ntanga yookhokho!*’ (Great Gonondo! The one you may not look at! The one who is as old as our ancestors!). This invocation creates mystery around Gonondo. The aura created by Gonondo’s invisibility is important here. No one is allowed to see him. He is neither human

---

<sup>128</sup> Xhosa names will be dealt with shortly.

nor animal. He is a spirit, an indomitable spirit that could be 'felt' by the audience. Most importantly, he is a spirit that cannot even be defeated by modern technology.

The helicopter scene also signifies the spirit of the time. According to Masango and Gunner (2002), who have worked on the play, the Zulu version of the play parallels the political strife in KwaZulu-Natal. Gonondo is like the warlords, or the warlords are like Gonondo. Looked at this way, the 'voice' becomes both an alternative voice to the normal political rhetoric and a bad influence. On the whole, the play may have been used to challenge the state, just as *UHlohlesakhe* was used.

### **Hearing Strange Voices in the Xhosa Radio Plays**

Unlike other performances, radio depends solely on the 'voice' to communicate with the listeners. That 'voice', irrespective of the ideology it may carry, is critical for traditional societies whose belief system is still intact. While the 'voices' in the plays were regarded as educational, they were also associated with the spirit world. There is no doubt then that the announcers and the playwrights had a big influence in society. They were viewed as teachers, and their voices were often associated with wisdom. Average listeners could not divorce the voices of the announcers and the 'voices' in the plays. In fact, plays became a microcosm of the society, seen in the way the character talked, the way they solved their problems and how they responded to ancestral demands.

It can be argued that the owner of the 'voice' on radio was as important as the radio set itself. To say the least, the 'voice' inside the radio became a mystery to many listeners. There is a

joke that while listening to his radio an old man heard Mahlathini, a renowned *Mbaqanga* musician, singing one of his powerful songs. The lyrics were ‘*Sengiyakhala ngiyabaleka*’ (I am crying and running away). On hearing this, the old man snatched the radio and tied it to a tree so that it would not run away. What this joke illustrates is the fact that the old man could not separate the voice from the radio. To him they represented the same source, which had to be closely guarded and protected. By restraining the radio set, he was actually claiming ownership of, and perhaps holding on to, the voice. Viewing radio as a spirit is not exclusive to Xhosas, though; black societies throughout the continent seem to believe in it. The Shona of Zimbabwe, for instance, call radio *dzimudzangara*, which means ‘a talking spirit from the box’.<sup>129</sup> Identifying the voice on the radio as a spirit makes it possible for the audiences to understand it as something they already know and as something whose message they can interpret and own.

Because Xhosas audiences were revered and believed in the ancestral voice, they tried hard to understand the ‘voice’ on radio, to tame it and make it their own. As a result, although they were relatively newer to the radio medium than their white counterparts, they appropriated it as their own by naming it. As with the labelling that the apartheid regime was fond of, naming offers one a sense of control and power. Apart from calling the radio simply ‘*iradio*’ or ‘*iwayilesi*’ (wireless), the Xhosas named radio ‘*Unomathotholo*’, as pointed out earlier. This is an interesting name because *Unomathotholo* is central to traditional Xhosa belief. *Unomathotholo* refers to a mythical snake that is invoked by *amagqira* when they perform their healing rituals. In the traditional sense, *Unomathotholo* comes as a ‘voice’ that speaks through *igqira* or someone who is being healed. Subsequently, many Xhosa clans sing about *Unomathotholo* when they perform their rituals, thereby invoking ancestral spirits. The

---

<sup>129</sup> In a conversation with a Zimbabwean, he noted how popular radio is in rural areas. Just as in South Africa, radio has become a part of life for many Zimbabweans.

'voice' of *Unomathotholo* transcends the dead and talks to the living. By giving radio the name *Unomathotholo*, some Xhosas not only accept the fact that radio comes to them through the 'voice' only, but they also elevate radio to the status of the 'revered', the ancestors. All in all, the voice of the radio is directly associated with the spirit world. The voice connects audiences with the netherworld in the language they understand. The 'voice' and the 'language' cannot be divorced in radio plays. To a large extent, they are the two pillars of the genre and as a result, a note on language is relevant.

### **The Role of Language Use in the Plays**

The value and power of language in plays cannot be overemphasised. Language, as a discursive medium in radio, goes a long way in the propagation of ideology. By its nature, ideology can be 'swallowed' in small doses or portions but it can cause a lasting impairment. For instance, ideas that seem honest and true at face value constantly mentioned in plays can change how people think and how they conceptualise the world around them. In other words, a subtle idea can be used to control the thinking of the audience. Associating the city with moral degeneration is one example of this. This, of course, does not discount the fact that audiences mostly make their own meaning from the text. The point being made here is that language could be and was used to propagate certain messages. The apartheid regime wanted to use the Xhosa language as a medium by which to control audiences' thinking and their view of the world. In a sense, language was in the centre of the clash at the station. Playwrights could be seen as the gatekeepers of Xhosa culture and values at the station. For them, the themes that were chosen had to develop and not destroy the fabric of Xhosa society. Plays such as *Buzani Kubawo*, for example, were countering cultural-corrupting practices that

may have been subtly promoted by the managers. The ideology that permeates through one's language, it is argued, is more potent than the one that is explicitly enforced, as the students' protest of 1976 indicated. Writing about how ideology manifests itself, Thompson (1984: 63) points out that:

ideology operates, not so much as a coherent system of statements imposed on the population from above, but rather through a complex series of mechanisms whereby meaning is mobilized, in the discursive practices of everyday life, for the maintenance of relations of domination.

Therefore, using language and situations that were familiar to the audience could easily influence them positively or negatively. The metaphors used can be so powerful and believable that the audience would understand the text and its context. The use of the rich idiomatic expression *umntu lilahle elinothuthuas* a title by M.Z. Malgas, for instance, invokes a plethora of meanings. A direct translation of the expression would be 'a man is a burning coal covered in ash'. In other words, deep down a man is dangerous although he might appear friendly and honest outside. It was at the level of metaphor, coded messages and deep Xhosa that playwrights could interact with the audience. Carefully selected metaphors can link the past to the present, while shaping the future as well. Alasuutari (1999: 87) is correct when he says:

The images we habitually use in discussing a topic such as the media are in many ways powerful, because the parallel drawn between an

image and the present object of attention highlights aspects that could otherwise be missed, but such metaphors also guide perception. The imagery normally used may reflect old sensibilities, and might not speak to present experiences and problematics. Yet, in their clearness and concreteness key metaphors are often so powerful that they tend to lead to new discussions in such a direction that they fit the old images.

The discussions that ensued after the listening activity are significant here. During the discussions audiences could discover other meanings that may have been 'hidden' during broadcast. Although the discussions were informal, their outcomes could be far-reaching and instructive. On the one hand, the discussions were a form of feedback to playwrights. Asked about whether the play, *Undoqo* Sisibindi, was scary or informative Nontsikelelo Gqibitole suggested that it was both but also mentioned the dangers they, as workers, were subjected to because of long-working hours<sup>130</sup>. She put it thus, 'It scared me but at the same time it was informative. What would I have done if I had been picked up by those people (in the play). I couldn't fight them. At the same time it was warning me about the dangers around. If only my employees knew of the dangers.' The letters that were sent to the station flowed from discussions among the audience.

As pointed out earlier, the debates that ensued after the broadcast brought listeners together and helped them develop a common understanding of the plays. On the other hand, the informal nature of the discussions made it possible for everyone in the society to partake in

---

<sup>130</sup> Nontsikelelo Gqibitole was interviewed on 11/04/03 in King William's Town.

the deliberations. Unlike conferences that are largely exclusive to specialists and academics, informal 'sharing' at bus-stops and workplaces made plays the most accessible genre. Unlike many genres that require specialist analysis, plays spoke the language of the ordinary. The 'voice' they employed appealed both to the learned and the illiterate. Furthermore, unlike books, radio plays were not divisive; they brought individuals across the cultural and class divisions to the listening space. Xhosa plays were not only listened to by Xhosas; they were listened to by Coloured audiences and the managers as well. However, in the entire listening public, Xhosas would have the upper hand since they were familiar with and understood the life the plays were based on.

In the end, the audiences are not only *au fait* with the culture and customs used in the plays, but they also even identify with some of the performers, irrespective of the fact that they are just 'voices'. For instance, the 'voice' of the old woman who speaks to Somagqabi is a voice of wisdom and a voice that saves the entire Nguni tribe. In other words, audiences are linked to that past through the voice of the old woman. Indeed, a conversation develops between the audience and the characters. While some characters are moral leaders, others have deviant behaviour. So, as individuals listen to plays they are resolving their internal conflicts as well. Three letters by listeners of the Xhosa-language radio attest to this connection between the audience and the characters when they respond to the plays *Sazela Ndiyeke* (1970) by Mr Mcinga and *Si Bendiba Ndiyalungisa* (1970). Fenny and Keke of Gugulethu write:

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the announcer for  
entertaining us with their radio plays. I always wish to write but many

a time I have failed to do so. You cannot imagine how I wish to see Nontando. Where did Mr Mcinga get that character Nontando.

Dr Jongi was just like a doctor, he spoke softly as a sophisticated man. Mr Tuswa drew a nice picture of his play *Sazela Ndiyeke*. I am still keeping the picture. We would like to see all these characters. Your play was quite good. Thank you.<sup>131</sup>

Rilliard Mkhele of Hankey writes:

I wish to encourage Mr Mcinga, his play was very interesting. We are still puzzled about Nontando. We cannot make out what kind of character she was. We often wondered when she banged the doors in great fury. Her name, however, sounds nice.

Do you still remember when she refused to give her father-in-law tea? Later she asked the same Khumalo to help her. This proves that one should treat others well. The play was interesting, but the time was short. Thank you.<sup>132</sup>

---

<sup>131</sup>UWAPE L6, 1970.

<sup>132</sup>UWAPE L7, 1970.

Lastly, Mirriam Mbena from New Brighton, Port Elizabeth, writes:

I thank all the characters which took part in the play *Si Ndandiba Ndiyalungisa*. I thank in particular Linda Msikinya who acted Nontando. I wish even the programmes were [as] interesting as the plays. Thank you.<sup>133</sup>

The letters are not only an extension of the dialogue between the audience and playwrights; they also point to the sense of closeness between audiences and the radio. In many households radio is accorded a central role and is treated almost like a demigod. This closeness sometimes translates to privacy, where the ‘voice’ on the radio engages individual listeners. To an extent, the ‘voice’ seems to confess everything to the listener, thereby lessening the distance between them.<sup>134</sup> The pervasive voice is not just a voice in the listening space; it becomes the life of the listener. In other words, radio or the ‘voice’ on the radio becomes a friend. To a great extent, listeners live for radio as they adjust their daily lives according to radio programmes. Or, as Alasuutari (1999: 94) argues: ‘Adjusting one’s activity to the preferred level [or radio station] may also mean that radio is a surrogate friend, a companion during one’s lonely moments.’ In a sense, the act of listening became therapeutic.

However, the pervasive nature of the voice also means the inevitability of listening. To an extent, closeness also means lack of choice as audiences may feel that they do not have a choice but to listen to the voice. In many ways, the ‘voice’ inhabits their consciousness about

---

<sup>133</sup>UWAPE L8, 1970.

<sup>134</sup> See Gugulethu in Chapter Two.

the world 'out there'. While it is true that audiences can decide which channel to tune to, in traditional societies audiences listened to one channel only – the one in their vernacular. In a sense then, the 'voice' is not only addictive; it is also familial and inevitable. Alasuutari (1999: 93) aptly points out that 'when listening to or hearing a radio broadcast we seldom conceive of ourselves as doing anything else than 'staying tuned' to events in other places, places that closely resemble ours. We do not think that we are being 'exposed' to influences, although we may not like some of the music 'they' play out there.'

On another level, although not known to the listener, the closeness between the voice and the listener symbolises the closeness that is created between individual audiences. The 'voice' acts as a catalyst that binds all the members of the society to an imaginary world of the play. This mass communication, then, could also be a mass manipulation, depending on the message that is transmitted or how the audience interprets the play. The use of the supernatural 'voice' is crucial in this regard. As suggested above, the 'voice' was used as a counter to the agenda of the managers. Playwrights understood the needs and aspirations of the audience. At the same time they were conscious of the forces they were working against, namely the managers. Therefore, they could manipulate the 'voice' to serve their purpose. In the same way television texts do, radio texts influence the beliefs and behaviour of the listeners. In other words, there is a direct relationship between exposure and the way the listeners behave. While it is true that audiences mostly listen as individuals, the 'voice' has a 'power' to bind them together as a community. As Thompson (1984: 30) argues,

The most banal programmes on radio ... become sanctums in the society, intimate, where the sense of distance and adversity has been

abolished. There lies the imaginary dimension of communication: it provides the constant assurance of social bond, attests to the permanent presence of the 'between-us' (entrenous) and thereby effaces the intolerant fact of social division.

Or more precisely, as Hall (1999: 14) notes above, 'audiences share certain frameworks of understanding and interpretation.' By sharing their 'understanding and interpretation' of the text the audience becomes an entity, united against the agenda of the managers. The 'subversive voice', then, plays a crucial role in ensuring that the audience accesses the 'intended' message. In many ways, then, the 'voice' was used to counter apartheid.

Thompson finally points to the fact that the supernatural 'voice' could be used for 'ethnocommunalism' and as a tool to subvert apartheid. The 'voice' draws from the deep reserve of Xhosa myth, belief and superstition. The use of the voice, while it grounded the audiences in their culture, also worked as a weapon of resistance. The transcendental voice, it would seem, has no political or social boundaries – it comments on both the politics as well as the socio-cultural excesses of the time. In many plays in which the ethnocommunal voice is used, it is decidedly more powerful than that of the chiefs and male characters in the plays, as illustrated in *UHlohlesakhe*, *USomagqabi*, *Nakuba Intliziyo Ithatha Ibeka*, and *Uyinkulu Kabani*. Put differently, the 'voice' is more powerful than the socio-political dictates of the apartheid and homeland governments. Even the laws of the country cannot restrain its power, as shown in *Nangona*. In that play, Gonondo disappears into thin air as the police move in to arrest him. His laughter mocks the system that tries but fails to control and neutralise it. As it were, the voice triumphs in the end.

The question of the ‘voice’ as a tool to subvert the apartheid system should be understood in its broad sense to include the polysmic nature of language. As pointed out in Chapter Three, the managers of the station did not fully understand the messages contained in some of the plays because ‘they (the managers) did not share the same cultural and linguistic signification with the listeners and the playwright’. It is within this context that the concepts ‘ethnolinguism’ and ‘polysemy’ should be understood. According to Raphael Johnson, ‘Ethno-nationalism or ethno-communalism concern the idea that human beings are defined, modelled and shaped by institutions and ideas having developed in a specific cultural, that is, ethno-linguistic, context’.<sup>135</sup> Just like any other audience in other homelands at the time, audiences of the Xhosa language radio in then Ciskei, in particular, shared not only the same language, but also the same political and social pressures. Radio plays, then, attempted to address those concerns without being overtly political – hence the use of language that would have multiple meanings. The Ntlebi incident and what Ciskei says about one word having many meanings are at the heart of ethno-lingualism/ethno-communalism. Since radio solely relies on language, the idea of the mystical voice played a critical role in not only concealing subversive messages from the managers of the station but also in disseminating information to the audiences.

---

<sup>135</sup> Please visit: <http://www.freespeechproject.com/806.html> - accessed 06 June 2011.

---

## Conclusion

---

From what has been discussed above, it is clear that the policies of the apartheid regime frustrated many playwrights. Just like any other state-owned institution, the SABC was used to disseminate information that promoted the apartheid system. Such attempts could clearly be seen in the entertainment programmes on radio. For instance, no music genres with political messages were tolerated on air. As pointed out earlier, music was ethnic-specific, in accordance with the 'divide and rule' maxim. Coplan (cited in Bozzoli, 1979: 194) concurs with this when he writes:

In reference to the entertainment industry, the important outlets of the recording and broadcasting have largely denied song of even a covert political character, since the SABC exercises strict censorship and employs a staff of linguistic experts to search out even the most oblique and idiomatic reference to political issues. This in turn has led to systematic self-censorship on the part of the recording studios themselves.

The same can be said about radio plays in so far as they were expected to conform to the dictates of apartheid. It would be fair to claim that programmes that glorified village life abounded in the period in question. In a number of plays urban areas were almost always painted as disruptive and degenerative, a trope that was popular in African literature in general. Arguably, this representation of rural life was clearer in programmes such as the

radio plays, a theme Makhosana (1991: 7) calls '[t]he corruption of urban life compared to rural life.' Due to this disinformation many people were sceptical of some programmes, leading many to listen to foreign radio stations. Others, though, listened to radio for entertainment. To an extent the presentation of rural life as backward (and ironically 'safe') led to some urbanites viewing rural life in a bad light. Writing about urbanites and their rejection of 'tribal offerings', Gready (cited in Newell, 2002b: 146), for instance, cites a complainant at the Black Men's Social Club as having said:

Ag, why do you dish that stuff man? ... Tribal Music! Tribal History!  
Chiefs! ... Give us jazz and film stars, man! ... Yes brother, anything  
American. You can cut out this junk about kraals and folk tales and  
Basutos in blankets.

It is within this context that radio texts, especially radio plays should be examined. On the one hand, the managers of black radio stations (who were always Afrikaners) saw to it that the broader apartheid agenda was upheld all the time. On the other, playwrights (who were mostly black) tried to use radio space to educate audiences. To a great extent, the introduction of radio in South Africa ushered in a period of contestation between the managers of the station and black playwrights. As a result, playwrights not only managed to appropriate radio as a platform from which to launch an attack on the system; they also managed to enlighten the audience through it. Radio plays invoked almost forgotten folk tales and legends such as the story of Thuthula and Lwaganda. While the managers attempted to use radio to control and brainwash the 'masses', playwrights liberated the minds of the audiences through the use of messages that were embedded in the language. Makhosana concurs with this sentiment when he writes (1991: 8):

[Playwrights] are experiencing stagnation as far as the themes of radio plays are concerned. Innovations as far as the radio drama is concerned may be hindered by censorship. It has to be remembered that radio stations are state-controlled monopolies, thus playwrights face a common problem when they have to transmit plays; the plays which appeal to and please a certain group might cause offence to or be misunderstood by another. In order to express sensitive themes, radio playwrights opt for allegorical plays.

Audiences played a crucial role in making meaning out of the plays. In other words, playwrights did not dictate what the audiences needed to extract from the plays. As Barber (2000) argues, the Yoruba Popular Theater audiences constituted the text and the text equally constituted the audience, a two-way process that has sustained audienceship up to this day.

Serial dramas played a crucial role in educating and enlightening audiences, albeit in a clandestine manner. Radio plays such as *Buzani Kubawo* were significant in this regard. While it is true that some of the plays were used as purveyors of culture, others were used to question and challenge some political and cultural norms. The plays that have been examined here revealed that managers might have tried to force playwrights/producers to write plays that promoted culture and tradition. By doing so they hoped that the majority of listeners in the 'homelands' would not know what was happening in the cities, the site of economic activity and 'moral degeneration'. In the same vein, this meant that they would not be exposed to the socio-political activities that were taking place in cities, the boiling pot of

political clashes at the time. This was characterised and highlighted by depicting cities as corrupting in some radio plays. However, playwrights may have wanted to enlighten the audiences about what was happening ‘out there’. Since they were in a position of *powerlessness*, playwrights had to ‘pretend’ that they were adhering to the dictates of the regime by ‘coating’ their messages with themes that were acceptable to the managers.

This thesis has highlighted the conflict between the managers and the playwrights/producers by recalling two incidents, the Ntlebi and Myeko incidents. The two incidents show that the conflict was not only psychological; it was physical and verbal as well. The incidents pointed to two important issues within the station. The first incident confirms the claim that there were playwrights who, despite the odds against them, tried to challenge the regime through the plays. The Ntlebi incident demonstrates how vigilant the managers of the station were. Those who were planted to monitor the language that was used seemed to have been trained or tasked not to tolerate any notion that undermined the master ideology of apartheid.

The study further examined the themes that were used by playwrights to camouflage their messages by exploring various plays. The theme of love/romance seemed to have been popular with playwrights and audiences. In this regard, it was suggested that in most of the plays playwrights might have over-stepped the mark by stereotyping women in general. In almost all the plays the patriarchal position seemed to be protected. This study also highlighted the fact that the love/romance themes could be used by playwrights to forward their own agenda. In this regard, *Apho Sikhala Khona Isakhwatsha*, *USomagqabi* and other plays were examined to illustrate this. Still on the question of the theme, Myeko’s pioneering work on the use of the ‘voice’ was also pointed out. In this regard, the importance of the understanding between the playwrights/producers and the audiences was noted. Plays such as

*Nangona Intliziyo Ithatha Ibeka*, *USomagqabi*, and *UHlohlesakhe* were explored. By using this rapport the managers could be left in the dark about what the plays were about.

The emphasis that needs to be made here is that playwrights seem to have developed a way of ‘dealing’ with the managers. In other words, in their attempt to thwart the managers’ plans, playwrights became very creative. Playwrights who were non-employees of the station though must have found it difficult to challenge the regime through their plays. At face value, plays seemed to deal with particular themes. This might have led to self-censorship on the part of those who were not familiar with the way the Xhosa-language radio station operated. However, there must have been some collaboration between playwrights within and outside the station. As *USomagqabi* aptly indicates, some of the plays were heavily edited by producers for certain reasons. The collaboration between Mandla Myeko and Douglas Kheswa on the play *USomagqabi* highlights this. The use of the themes of love, romance and tradition not only became fashionable, but were also a means to hide information. Therefore, as much as there was direct and deliberate control by the managers, playwrights/producers developed strategies of making sure that they ‘educated’ the audience. By being creative in their approach, playwrights/producers managed to both thwart the managers of the station and enlighten the audience at the same time.

Finally, the express purpose of the study was to examine the value of and indeed how radio plays were used in the period in question. In this regard, it is clear that some playwrights attempted to use radio to address the cultural and political situation in the country. However, it should be stated that a majority of radio plays were specifically designed for entertainment. This surely explains why the dramas were and are still popular because such entertainment reflected everyday life. While some radio plays could be used for political ends, broadcasting

such contents was a challenge. This last assertion is indicative of the versatility of the genre.

The relevance of radio plays, therefore, is still as strong as it was in the apartheid era. In the post-1994 period, too, plays can be used and are used for reasons other than entertainment. For example, some address issues such as AIDS, road safety and elections. A new development is that of commissioning radio plays to deal with such delicate social issues. This is a big shift from the purposes for which some radio programmes were commissioned in the apartheid era. Lastly, it is only fair to assume that radio plays will remain the main programme on the Xhosa-language radio station for many years to come. As long as the rapport between playwrights and audiences is maintained, radio plays will continue making an impact on society.

---

## Bibliography

---

### Primary Sources

Bhengu, M. *Nakuba Intliziyo Ithatha Ibeka, Undoqo* Sisibindi. SABC archives, Port Elizabeth – Parsons Hill, Umhlobo Wenene FM (radio play sound cassette), 1987.

Cishe, F. Interviewed by author, tape recording, Kuwait, King William's Town, 11 April 2003.

Gqibitole, N. Interviewed by author, tape recording, Quzini, King William's Town, 11 April 2003.

Malgas, M.Z. *Umntu Lilahle* Elinothuthu. SABC archives, Port Elizabeth– Parsons Hill, Umhlobo Wenene FM (radio play sound cassette), 1988.

Myeko, M. *Apho Sikhala Khona Isakhwatsha*.SABC archives, Port Elizabeth – Parsons Hill, Umhlobo Wenene FM (radio play sound cassette), 1981.

----- *UHlohlesakhe*. SABC archives, Port Elizabeth– Parsons Hill, Umhlobo Wenene FM (radio play sound cassette), 1979.

----- *USomagqabi*. SABC archives, Port Elizabeth – Parsons Hill, Umhlobo Wenene FM (radio play sound cassette), 1986.

----- Interviewed by author, tape recording, Zwelitsha, King William's Town, 6 November 2001.

Nkuhlu, W. *Tarh'ameva!!!* SABC archives, Port Elizabeth – Parsons Hill, Umhlobo Wenene FM (radio play sound cassette), (n.d).

Nongauza, A. Interviewed by author, tape recording, Zwelitsha, King William's Town, 9 November 2001.

Ntlebi, G. Interviewed by author, tape recording, King Central, King William's Town, 13 November 2001.

----- *Lunjalo ke Uthando*. Port Elizabeth – Parsons Hill, Umhlobo Wenene FM (radio play sound cassette), (n.d).

Qalase, M. UThuthula. SABC archives, Port Elizabeth– Parsons Hill, Umhlobo Wenene FM (radio play sound cassette), 1970.

Shwayiba. Interviewed by author, tape recording, Kirkwood, Port Elizabeth, 16 April 2003.

Thamsanqa, W.K. *Buzani Kubawo*. SABC archives, Port Elizabeth– Parsons Hill, Umhlobo Wenene FM (radio play sound cassette), 1981.

----- *Uyinkulu Kabani*. Port Elizabeth – Parsons Hill, Umhlobo Wenene FM (radio play sound cassette), 1976.

Tsotsobe, B. *Onje Ngomama*. SABC archives, Port Elizabeth – Parsons Hill, Umhlobo Wenene FM (radio play sound cassette), (n.d).

Zondi (Mhegeba). Interviewed by author, tape recording. Kirkwood, Port Elizabeth, 19 April 2003.

## Secondary Sources

Abercrombie, N. and B. Longhurst. *Audiences: A Sociological Theory of Performance and Imagination*. London: Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1998.

Adeleye-Fayemi, B. 'Either One or the Other.' In: K. Barber (ed). *Readings in African Popular Culture*. Oxford: James Currey Press, 1997.

Akwe, A. *Media: New Routes for Radio*. Idasa: Idasa Publishers, 1992.

Alasuutari, P. (ed) *Rethinking the Media Audience*. London: Sage, 1999.

Allen, R.C. *To Be Continued ... Soap Opera Around the World*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Allman, J. 'Rounding up Spinsters: Gender Chaos and Unmarried Women in Colonial Asante.' In: Andrea Cornwell (ed). *Readings in Gender in Africa*. Oxford: James Currey, 2005.

Allor, M. 'Relocating the Site of the Audience.' *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 5, 3 (1988): 217-233.

Andrzejewski, B.W., S Pilaszewicz and W. Tyloch (eds) *Literature in African Languages: Theoretical Issues and Sample survey*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Ang, I. *Desperately Seeking the Audience*. London: Routledge, 1983.

Anyidoho, K. *The Pan African Ideal in Literatures of the Black World*. Accra: Ghana University Press, 1989.

- Apthorpe, R.J. *From Tribal Rule to Modern Government*. Lusaka: Lusaka Publishers, 1990.
- Attwell, D. 'Reprisals of Modernity in Black South African 'Mission' Writing.'  
*Journal of Southern African Studies* 25, 2 (1999): 267-285.
- Barber, J.P. *South Africa in the Twentieth Century: A Political History*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999.
- Barber, K. *I Could Speak Until Tomorrow*. London: Edinburgh University Press, 1991.
- (ed) *Readings in African Popular Literature*. London: James Currey, 1997.
- The Generation of Plays: Yoruba Popular Life in Theater*.  
Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000.
- Barber, K., J. Collins, and A. Richard (eds). *West African Popular Theatre*.  
Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997.
- Barber, K., and F. Moraes (eds). *Discourse and its Disguises*. Birmingham: Centre of West African Studies, 1989.
- Barnow, E. (ed). *International Encyclopedia of Communication*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Basson, C.J.J., and J.J. Smith (eds). *Educational Management*. Hartfield: Unibook Publishers, 1991.
- Bauman, R. *Story, Performance and Event: Contextual Studies of Oral Narratives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Bellwood, W.A. *Whither the Transkei?* Cape Town: Timmins, 1964.

Ben-Amos, D. 'Towards a Definition of Folklore in Context.' In: A. Paredes and R. Bauman (eds). *Towards New Perspectives in Folklore*. Austin: University of Texas, 1972.

Bennet, T. *Outside Literature*. London: Routledge, 1990a.

-----*Popular Fiction: Technology, Ideology, Production, Reading*. London: Routledge, 1990b.

-----'Media, Reality and Signification.' In: M.Gurevitch, T. Bennet, J. Curran and J. Woollacott (eds). *Culture, Society and the Media*. London: Routledge, 1982a.

-----'Theories of the Media, Theories of Society.' In: M.Gurevitch, T. Bennet, J. Curran and J. Woollacott (eds). *Culture, Society and the Media*. London: Routledge, 1982b.

Berger, A.A. *Media Analysis Techniques*. London: Sage, 1991.

Berger, I. 'Transforming Traditions: Gender, Religion and Culture.' In: A.Cornwell (ed). *Readings in Gender in Africa*. Oxford: James Currey, 2005.

Beuchat, P.D. *Do the Bantu have a Literature?* Johannesburg: ISMA Publication, 1967.

Billington, R. *Exploring Self and Society*. Hong Kong: Macmillan, 1998.

Blondell, R., and M.K. Gamel (eds). *Women on the Edge: Four Plays by Euripides*. London: Routledge, 1999.

- Blumenfeld, J. *South Africa in Crisis*. London: Croom Helm, 1987.
- Blumber, J.G., and M. Gurevitch. 'The Political Effects of Mass Communication.'  
In: M. Gurevitch (ed). *Culture, Society and the Media*. London: Routledge, 1982.
- Boeren, A. and K. Epskamp. *The Empowerment of Culture: Development  
Communication and Popular Media*. Netherlands: Ceso Press, 1986.
- Bonner, F. *Imagining Women: Cultural Representations of Gender*. Cambridge: Polity  
Press, 1992.
- Bozzoli, B. *Labour, Townships and Protest: Studies in the Social History of the  
Witwatersrand*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1979.
- Brooke, P. *Communicating Through Story Characters: Radio Social Drama*. New  
York: University Press of America, 1985.
- Brown, D.J.B. 'Orality, Textuality and History: Issues in South African Oral Poetry and  
Performance.' (PhD) Durban: University of Natal, 1995.
- Bryce, J. 'Women and Modern African Popular Fiction.' In: K.Barber (ed).  
*Readings in African Popular Culture*. London: Currey, 1997.
- Burns, T. *The BBC: Public Institution and Private World*. London and  
Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1977.
- Cancel, R. 'Broadcasting Oral Traditions: The Logic of Narrative Variants: The Problem of  
Message.' *African Studies Review* 29, 1 (1986): 60 -70.
- Chapman, M. *The Drum Decade*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2001.

-----'South Africa in the Global Neighbourhood: Towards a Method of Cultural Analysis.' In: *Critical Arts* 11, 1-2 (1997): 17 - 27.

Chinweizu. *Decolonizing the African Mind*. Lagos: Pero Press, 1987.

Cardiff, D., and P. Scannell. 'Broadcasting and National Unity.' In: J. Curran, A. Smith and P. Wingate (eds). *Impacts and Influences: Essays on Media Power in the Twentieth Century*. London: Methuen, 1987.

Carrol, R. *I Know What the Red Clay Looks Like: The Voices and Vision of Black Women Writers*. New York: Crown Trade Press, 1994.

Cobbing, J. 'The Mfecane as Alibi: Thoughts on Dithakong and Mbolompo'. *Journal of African History* 29, 1988: 487 – 519.

Coetzee, J.M. *Age of Iron*. London: Penguin Press, 1991.

Collins, R. E., P. Drickey and D. Ornish (eds). *Media Culture and Society*. London: Sage, 1986.

Coplan, D.B. *Township Tonight*. London: Longman Press, 1985.

-----*In the Time of Cannibals: The Word Music of South Africa's Basotho Migrants*. London: Chicago University Press, 1994.

Cowart, D. *Literary Symbiosis*. London: University of Georgia Press, 1993.

Crisell, A. *Understanding Radio*. London: Methuen, 1986.

- Criswold, W. *Bearing Witness*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Curran, J.M. *Mass Communication and Society*. London: Arnold, 1977.
- Curran, J.M., and J. Woollacott. 'The Study of the Media: Theoretical Approaches.' In: M. Gurevitch, T. Bennet, J. Curran and J. Woollacott (eds). *Culture, Society and the Media*. London and New York: Routledge, 1982.
- Curran, J. and M. Gurevitch (eds). *Mass Media and Society*. London: Edward Arnold, 1996.
- Daloz, J.P., and K. Verrier-Frechette. 'Is Radio Pluralism an Instrument of Political Change? Insights from Zambia'. In: R. Fardon and G. Furniss (eds) *African Broadcasting Cultures*. Oxford: James Currey, 2000.
- Dathorne, O.R. *African Literature in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. London: Heinemann, 1974.
- Davenport, T.R.H. *South Africa: A Modern History*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991.
- Davies, C.B. 'Deconstructing African Female Subjectivity: Anowa's Borderlands.' In: *Black Women, Writing and Identity*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- 'Other Tongues: Gender, Language, Sexuality and Politics of Location.' In: *Black Women, Writing and Identity*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Dayan, D., and E. Katz. 'Performing Media Events.' In: J. Curran, A. Smith, and P. Wingate (eds). *Impacts and Influences: Essays on the Media Power in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. London and New York: Methuen, 1987.

Daymond, M.J. (ed). *South African Feminisms: Writing, Theory and Criticism 1990-1994*. Garland Publishers: New York, 1996.

De Lange, M. *The Muzzled Muse*. Amsterdam: John Benjamin, 1997.

Denis, F. *Orality, Memory and the Past: Listening to the Voices of Black Clergy under Colonialism and Apartheid*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2000.

Denoon, D., and B. Nyeko. 'South Africa Since 1800.' In: P.Denis (ed). *Orality, Memory and the Past: Listening to the Voices of Black Clergy under Colonialism and Apartheid*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2000.

Dhlomo, H.I.E. 'Nature and Variety of Tribal Drama.' In: *Bantu Studies* xiii, 1939.

Dickinson, R. *Approaches to Audiences*. London: Arnold, 1998.

Dikeni, S. *Soul Fire: Writing Transition*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal, 2002.

Dorson, R.M. 'Current Folklore Theories.' In: *Current Anthropology* 4 (1963): 93-112.

----- *African Folklore*. Bloomington: IndianaUniversity Press, 1972.

Du Pre, R.H. *The Making of Racial Conflict in South Africa*. Johannesburg: Scotaville Educational Division, 1990.

Dundes, A. 'The American Concept of Folklore.' In: *Journal of Folklore Institute* Bloomington: IndianaUniversity 3 (1966): 226-249.

Eagleton, T. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1983.

Einhorn, E. *Xhosa: A Concise Manual*. Cape Town: College of Careers Press, 1993.

Eisenstein, E.L. *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

Elliott, A. *The Magic World of the Xhosa*. London: Collins, 1970.

-----*The Xhosa: Their Traditional Way of Life*. Cape Town: Struik Publishers, 1995.

Elliot, P. 'Uses of Gratification Research: A Critique and a Sociological Alternative.' In: J.G. Blumber and E. Katz (eds). *The Uses of Mass Communication*. London: Sage, 1974.

Ellis, B. *Creative Relationship between Dramatic Actor and Audience in the Acted Play*. Michigan: Ann Arbor, 1954.

Elphick, R. 'African and Christian Campaign in South Africa.' In: H. Lamar, and L. Thomson (eds). *The Frontiers in History: North America and South Africa Compared*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.

Erickson, V.L. *Where Silence Speaks*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.

Esslin, M. *Mediation: Essays on Brecht, Beckett and the Media*. London: Abachus Press, 1980.

- Ettema, J.S., and C.D. Whitney. *Audiencemaking: How the Media Creates the Audience*. London: Sage, 1994.
- Ezeigbo, T.A. 'Gender Conflicts in Flora Nwapa's Novels.' In: Stephanie Newell (ed). *Writing African Women: Gender, Popular Culture and Literature in West Africa*. London: Zed, 1997.
- Fardon, R., and G. Furniss. (eds). *African Broadcasting Cultures*. Oxford: James Currey, 2000.
- Fine, E.C. *The Folklore Text: From Performance to Print*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.
- Finnegan, R. *Literacy and Orality: Studies in the Technology of Communication*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1988.
- *Oral Literature in Africa*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970.
- Fischer, J.L. 'Moments of Television: Neither the Text nor the Audience.' In: E. Seiter, H. Borchers, and G. Kreutzner (eds). *Remote Control: Television, Audience and Cultural Power*. London: Routledge, 1989.
- 'The Sociopsychological Analysis of Folklore.' *Current Anthropology* 4 (1963): 235-273.
- Fiske, J. *Understanding Popular Culture*. London: Routledge, 1989.
- Fourie, P.J. *Media Studies: Institutions, Theories and Issues*. Lansdowne: Juta, 2001.
- Fraenkel, P. *Wayaleshi (Wireless)*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1959.

- Franklin, H. *Report on the Development of Broadcasting to Africans in Central Africa*. Lusaka: Government Printers, 1949.
- Furniss, G., and E. Gunner. *Power, Marginality and African Oral Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Gal, S. 'Language and Political Economy.' *Annual Review of Anthropology* 18 (1989): 345-367.
- Gemma, C.R. *Public Service Broadcasting in South Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal, 2000.
- Gersie, A. *Earth Tales: Storytelling in Times of Change*. London: Green Print, 1992.
- Gerard, A.S. *African Language Literatures*. London: Longman, 1981.
- Four African Literatures: Xhosa, Sotho, Zulu, Amharic*. Berkley: University of California, 1971.
- Giliomee, H. *Spotlight: Surrender Without Defeat: Afrikaners and the South African Miracle*. Braamfontein: SAIR, 1997.
- Ginsberg, F. D. L., A. Lughod and B. Larkin (eds). *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain*. Berkley: University of California Press, 2002.
- Gluckman, M. *Order and Rebellion in Tribal Africa*. London: Cohen, 1963.
- Goffman, E. *Forms of Talk*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981.

- 'The Radio Drama Frame.' In: J. Corner and J. Hawthorn (eds).*Communication Studies*.London: E. Arnold, 1980.
- Golding, P. 'Media Professionalism in the Third World: The Transfer of an Ideology.'In: J. Curran (ed).*Mass Communication and Society*. London: Arnold, 1977.
- Goody, J. *The Interface between the Written and the Oral*.Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1987.
- The Domestication of the Savage Mind*. Cambridge: CambridgeUniversity, 1977.
- Gordimer, N. *The Black Interpreters: Notes on African Writing*. Johannesburg: Sprocas, 1973.
- *The Essential Gesture: Writing, Politics and Places*. Taurus: Johannesburg, 1988.
- Gqiba, V.T. *Uvimba KaXhosa*. Manzini: Macmillan, 1995.
- Gqibitole, K.M. 'Dancing to the Master's Voice or Singing a New Song? Tragic Love in Three Xhosa Plays.' Unpublished paper presented at the African Studies Association of the UK Biennial Conference (2002a): 'What Can We Learn from Africa?'
- 'Contestations of Tradition in Xhosa Radio Drama under Apartheid.' In: *English Studies in Africa* 45, 2 (2002b): 33-46.
- 'The Politics of Identity, Self, Community and Nation: Autobiographies by Three South Africans.'(Masters Thesis).Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal, 1998.

- Graaf, H. *The Literacy Myth: Literacy and Social Structure in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century City*. New York: Academy Press, 1979.
- Graham, A. *Intertextuality*. London: Routledge, 2000.
- Granquist, R., and J. Stotesbury. *African Voices: Interviews with 13 African Writers*. Australia: Dangaroo, 1989.
- Graver, D. *Drama for a New South Africa*. Indiana: Indianapolis, 1999.
- Gray, L. *Discovery of the Witwatersrand Goldfields*. Johannesburg: Sholto Douglas and Company, 1940.
- Grossberg, L. 'Wandering Audiences: Nomadic Critics.' *Cultural Studies* 2,3 (1988): 377-391.
- Gunner, L. 'Resistant Medium: The Voices of Zulu Radio Drama in the 1970s.' *Theatre Research International* 27, 3 (2000a): 259-274.
- 'Wrestling with the Present, Beckoning the Past: Contemporary Zulu Radio.' *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26, 2 (2000b): 223-237.
- 'Zulu Radio Drama.' In: S. Nuttall and C.A. Michael (eds). *Senses of Culture: South African Cultural Studies*. Oxford: OxfordUniversity Press, (2000c): 216-230.
- Hall, S.W. *Broadcasting in Africa*. Philadelphia: TempleUniversity Press, 1974.
- (ed). *Culture, Media, Language*. London: Hutchison, 1980.

-----'Encoding/Decoding.' In: S.Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe and P. Willis (eds). *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies*. London: Hutchinson, 1980.

Hamm Charles, *Putting Popular Music in its Place*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Hendy, D. *Radio in the Global Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000.

Hilliard, R.L. (ed). *Radio Broadcasting: An Introduction to the Sound Medium*. New York: Hastings House, 1972.

Hobsbawm, E., and T. Ranger (eds). *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Hobson, D. *Crossroads: The Drama of Soap Opera*. London: Pluto Press, 1982.

Hofmeyr, I. *We Spend Our Years as a Tale that is Told: Oral Historical Narrative in a South African Chiefdom*. London: James Currey, 1994.

Horstman, R. *Writing for Radio*. London: A. and C. Black, 1985.

Hubbard, T.K. *The Mask of Comedy*. London: Cornell, 1991.

Huskisson, Y. *The Bantu Composers of Southern Africa*. Johannesburg: South African Broadcasting Corporation, 1969.

Hybels, S.K. *News and Editorial Bias in the South African Corporation*. Michigan: Ann Arbor, 1971.

- Iser, W. *The Implied Reader*. Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1974.
- Jafta, D.N. *The Impact and Development of literature on the Xhosa People: Xhosa Literature: Its Past and Future*. Alice: Lovedale Press, 1971.
- Johnson, M.R. 'Ethnicity, Will and The State'. <http://www.freespeechproject.com/806.html>. Accessed: 06 June 2011.
- Jordan, A.C. *Towards an African Literature*. Berkeley: University of California, 1940a.
- Ingqumbo Yeminyanya*. Lovedale: Lovedale, 1940b.
- Karis, T.G., and G.M. Gerhart. *From Protest to Challenge* (5). Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1997.
- Katz, E. 'On Conceptualizing Media Effects: Another Look.' In: S. Oskamp (Ed). *Television as a Social Issue*. NewburyPark: Sage, 1988.
- Katz, E., and G. Wedell. *Broadcasting in the Third World*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977.
- Kirschke, L. *Broadcasting Genocide: Censorship, Propaganda and State-Sponsored Violence in Rwanda 1990-1994*. London: Article 19, 1996.
- Klapper, J. *The Effects of Mass Communication*. New York: Free Press, 1960.
- Kuzwayo, E. *Call me Woman*. Johannesburg: Picador Press, 2004.
- Kuhn, R. (ed) *The Politics of Broadcasting*. London: Croom Helm, 1985.

- Langa, M. *The Naked Song and Other Stories*. Cape Town: David Philip, 1996.
- Lange, S. 'Gender Discourse in Swahili Popular Drama: Negotiating Official and Popular Ideologies.' A paper (unpublished) presented at the ASAUS Conference in Birmingham, 9-11 September 2002.
- Laitin, D.D. *Language Repertoires and State Construction in Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Laurence, P. 'Reading between the Lines of those Sparse Angola Dispatches.' *Weekly Mail* 22 – 28 Jul. 1988: 5.
- Lestrade, G. *The Bantu Speaking Tribes of South Africa: An Anthropological Survey*. London: Miller, 1959.
- Lewis, B. *Creative Relationship between Dramatist, Actor and Audience in the Acted Play*. Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 1954.
- Lewis, J. *Ideological Octopus*. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Lewis, P.M., and J. Booth. *The Invisible Medium: Public, Commercial and Community Radio*. Houndsmills: Macmillan Press, 1989.
- Livingstone, S. *Popular Music and Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1981.
- 'Audience Reception: The Role of the Viewer in Telling Romantic Drama.' In: J. Curran and M. Gurevitch (eds). *Mass Media and Society*. London: Arnold, 1991.
- Lull, J. *Media, Communication and Culture*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995.

- MacAloon, J.J. (ed). *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle: Rehearsals Towards a Theory of Cultural Performance*. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1984.
- MacBride, T.M. *The Domestic Revolution*. London: Croom Helm, 1976.
- Magona, S. *Forced to Grow*. New York: Interlink Books, 1998.
- Makhosana, N.E. 'Comparative Study of Six Xhosa Radio Dramas.' Masters dissertation. University of Stellenbosch, 1991.
- Manyase, L.T. *Umthetho Ngumthetho*. Pietermaritzburg: Shuter and Shooter, 1995.
- Marks, S. *The Ambiguities of Dependence in South Africa: Class, Nationalism and the State*. Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1986.
- Maseko, B. 'Mamlambo.' In: R. Gray and S. Finn (eds) *Sounding Wings: Stories from South Africa*. Pinelands: Maskew Miller Longman, 1994.
- Mayer, P. *Townsmen and Tribesmen: Conservation and the Process of Urbanization in the South African City*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1961.
- McCabe, C., and O. Stewart (eds). *The BBC and Public Service Broadcasting*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986.
- McCracken, G.D. *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988.

- Mcimeli, R.F. *Siqhawula Amatyalala*. Pietermaritzburg: NatalUniversity Press, 1995.
- McLeod, T.M. 'On Understanding and Misunderstanding Media Effects.' In: J. Curran and M. Gurevitch (eds). *Mass Media and Society*. London: Edward Arnold, 1991.
- McLuhan, M. *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964.
- McQuail, D. *Audience Analysis*. London: Sage, 1997.
- Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction*. London: Sage, 1994.
- McQuail, D., and S. Windahl. *Communication Models*. London: Longman, 1981.
- McWhinnie, D. *The Art of Radio*. London: Faber and Faber, 1959.
- Mda, Z. *Ways of Dying*. Cape Town: OxfordUniversity Press, 1997.
- Metrowich, F.C. *Frontier Flames*. Cape Town: Book of Africa, 1968.
- Meyer, P. *Report of the Commission of Enquiry into Matters Relating to Television*. Pretoria: Government Printers, 1971.
- The Spiritual Crisis of the West: A Four Part Series*. Johannesburg: South African Broadcasting Corporation, 1966.
- Some Unusual Aspects of SABC Second Channel* (unpublished paper). Johannesburg: South African Broadcasting Corporation, (n.d.).

- Meyrowitz, J. *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behaviour*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Minnie, J. 'The Growth of Independent Broadcasting in South Africa: Lessons for Africa.' In: R. Fardon and G. Furniss (eds). *African Broadcasting Cultures*, Oxford: James Currey, 2000.
- Mkhatshwa, E.J. *Sexism in Naming Practices* (unpublished paper). University of Zululand: KwaDlangezwa, 2005.
- Modisane, B. *Blame Me on History*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1963.
- 'The Dignity of Begging.' In: O. Nadez (ed). *African Rhapsody: Short Stories of the Contemporary African Experience*. New York: Anchor Books, 1994.
- Modleski, T. 'The Search for Tomorrow in Today's Soap Operas.' In: T. Bennet, *Popular Fiction*. London: Routledge, 1982.
- Loving with a Vengeance: Mass-Produced Fantasies for Women*. New York: Methuen, 1982.
- Moeketsi, R.H. 'Radio Drama with Critical Reference to Three Broadcasts by Radio Sesotho.' *South African Journal of African Languages* 11, 1 (1991): 25-35.
- Moorcraft, P.L. *Contact II: Struggle for Peace*. Johannesburg: Sygma Books, 1981.
- Moore, D. 'Changing Paradigms in Audience Studies.' *Remote Control*. London: Routledge, 1989.

-----*The Nationwide Audience: Structure and Decoding*. British Institute Television  
Monograph No 11. London: British Film Institute, 1980a.

-----*Family Television: Cultural Power and Domestic Leisure*. London: Comedia Press,  
1980b.

Morgan, M., and N. Signorelli. 'Cultivation Analysis, Conceptualization and Methodology.'  
In: N. Signorelli and M. Morgan (eds). *Cultivation Analysis: New Directions in Media  
Effects Research*. London: Sage, 1990.

Morley, D. *The 'National' Audience*. London: British Film Institute, 1980.

Moropa, C.K. *Okubhaliweyo NgesiXhosa*. Pietermaritzburg: The Natal Witness Printing and  
Publishing Company, 1991.

Mphahlele, E. *The African Image*. London: Faber and Faber, 1974.

Mqhayi, S.E.K. *Ityala Lamawele*. Lovedale: Lovedale Press, 1914.

Msimang, R.W. *Native Land Act 1913: Specific Cases of Evictions and Hardship,  
etc.* Cape Town: Friends of South African Library, 1996.

Msiska, M., and P. Hyland (eds). *Writing and Africa*. London: Longman, 1997.

Nachbar, J., and K. Lause (eds). *Popular Culture*. Ohio: Bowling Green State  
University of Popular Culture, 1992.

Ndebele, N. *The Cry of Winnie Mandela*. Claremont: David Philip, 2003.

-----*Rediscovery of the Ordinary: Essays on South African Literature and Culture.*  
Johannesburg: Cosaw, 1991.

-----*Fools and Other Stories.*Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983.

Ndungane, T.A. *Ubungcambu Bobuzwe.*Umtata: Shuter and Shooter, 1992.

Newell, S. *Literary Culture in Colonial Ghana.* Manchester: ManchesterUniversity  
Press, 2002a.

-----*(ed). Reading African Popular Fiction.* London: James Currey, 2002b.

-----*(ed).Writing African Literature: Gender, Popular Culture and  
Literature in West Africa.*London: Zed Publishers, 1997.

Newton, L.J. *Women, Power and Subversion.*New York: Methuen, 1981.

Ngcongwane, S.D.*The Novel and Life in South Africa.* KwaDlangezwa: University of  
Zululand, 1987.

Ntantala, P.P. *The Writer and His Social Responsibility.* Berkley: Denver Press, 1987.

Nuttall, S., and C. Coetzee (eds). *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South  
Africa.* Cape Town: OxfordUniversity Press, 1998.

Omodela, O. *Traditional and Contemporary African Drama: Historical Perspective.* Los  
Angeles: Umi Press, 1988.

Opland, J. *Words that Circle Words: A Choice of South African Poetry.* Parklands:  
A.D. Donker, 1992.

-----*Xhosa Oral Poetry*. Combs: OxfordUniversity Press, 1994.

Opland, J. and P.Mtuze (eds) *Izwi Labantu*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Orlik, P.B. *South African Broadcasting Corporation: An Instrument of Power*.  
Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1978.

Parkin, F. *Class Inequalities and Political Order: Social Stratification inCapitalist Societies*.London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1971.

Pauw, J. *Into the Heart of Darkness*. Jeppestown: Jonathan Ball, 1997.

Peires, J.B. *The Dead Will Arise*. London: James Currey, 1989.

----- *The House of Phalo*.Johannesburg: Ravan, 1981.

Peteni, R.L. *Kwazidenge*.Cape Town: David Philip, 1980.

Peters, J.A. *A Dance of Masks: Senghor, Achebe, Soyinka*.USA: Three Continent Books Press, 1978.

Peterson, B. *Monarchs, Missionaries, and African Intellectuals*.New Jersey: African World Press, 2000.

Phelan, J.M. *Apartheid Media*.WestPort: Lawrence Hill, 1987.

Phillip, R.E. *The Bantu in the City*.New York: AMS Press, 1977.

- Plaatje, S. *Native Life in South Africa*. London: P.S. King and Son Ltd, 1917.
- Potholm, C.P. *Southern Africa in Perspective: Essays in Regional Politics*. New York: Free Press, 1972.
- Radway, J.A. *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*. Chapel Hill: University of Carolina Press, 1984.
- Richman, H.L. 'The Oppositional Imagination: A Study of South African Writing, Gender and Identity in Bessie Head and Nadine Gordimer' (PhD Thesis). University of Leeds, 1998.
- Rodenburg, P. *Working with the Voice*. London: Methuen, 1992.
- Romaine, S. *Language and Society: An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Rosenthal, E. *You Have Been Listening... The Early History of Radio in South Africa*. Cape Town: Purnell, 1974.
- Ryan, G.C. 'Public Service Broadcasting in South Africa: An Analysis of the SABC Fulfillment of a Public Service Mandate' (Masters Thesis). Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal, 2000.
- Ruth, D.E. *Broadcast Writing*. New York: Longman, 1980.
- Sanders, C.R. (ed). *Popular Cultures, Mass Media and Social Deviance*. Ohio: Bowling Green State University of Popular Culture Press, 1990.
- Satyo, S.C. *Traditional Concepts and Literary Conventions in Sinxo's Works*. Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 1977.

Satyo, N.P. 'The Art and Craft of Sound Effects in Two Radio IsiXhosa Dramas.' *South African Journal of African Languages* 21(2001): 176-185.

-----'The Woman as a Character in D.T. Mtywaku's Xhosa Drama, *Ufeziwe okanye Inkohlakalo*.' *South African Journal of African Languages* 21(2001): 6-8.

Satyo, N.P. and M.W. Jadezweni. 'The Art and craft of Sound Effects in Two Radio IsiXhosa Dramas.' *South African Journal of African Languages* 21, 2 (2001): 176-185.

-----'The Portrayal of Character through Dialogue in Saule's Drama.' *South African Journal of African Languages* 23, 1 (2003): 1-10.

Saule, N. *Amaciko: Imidlalo Endimanye Yeradio*. Arcadia: Bard Press, 1988.

Saville-Troike, M. *The Ethnography of Communication An Introduction*: Malden: Blackwell, 1993.

Scanell, P., L. Quine and D.J. Chesham (eds). *Culture and Power: A Media, Culture and Social Reader*. London: Sage, 1992.

Scanell, P. 'Public Service Broadcasting and Modern Public Life.' *Media, Culture and Society* 11(1989): 135-166.

-----'Radio Times.' In: P. Drummond and R. Paterson (eds). *Television and its Audiences: International Research Perspectives*. London: British Film Institute (1988): 15-31.

Scheub, H. *Story*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998.

-----*The Story is Fire: African Storytellers and Apartheid*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977.

-----*The Xhosa Ntsomi*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975.

Schiffer, M.B. *The Portable Radio in American Life*. Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 1991.

Schlesinger, P. *Media, State and Nation: Political Violence and Collective Identities*. London: Sage, 1991.

Scott, J.C. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. London: Yale University Press, 1990.

Seenkoro, F.E.M.K. *The Prostitute in African Literature*. Dar Es Salaam: Dar Es Salaam University Press, 1982.

Seiter, E. *Remote Control: Television, Audience and Cultural Power*. London: Routledge, 1989.

Serfontein, J.H.P. *Brotherhood of Power*. London: Rex Press, 1979.

Shepherd, R.H.W. *Lovedale and Literature for the Bantu: A Brief History and Forecast*. Lovedale: Lovedale Press, 1945.

-----*Literatures for the South African Bantu*. Pretoria: Carnegie Corporation, 1936.

Sibiya, D. 'Postulating Audiences in isiZulu Radio Drama: Narration, Characterization and Theme in Mlaba's *uNdlebekazizwa*' – a paper delivered at the African Studies Association of the UK Biennial Conference (2002) under the theme 'What Can We Learn from Africa?'

-----'Media and the Development and Promotion of African-Language Literature: Ukhozi FM and Ilanga' (Masters Dissertation). University of the Witwatersrand, 2001.

Signorielli, N. and Morgan M. *Cultivation Analysis*. London: Sage, 1990.

Soga, J.H. *The AmaXhosa: Life and Customs*. Alice: Lovedale Press, 1931.

Spitulnik, D.A. 'Radio Culture in Zambia: Audience, Public Words and Nation State' (PhD thesis). Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

Spivak, G. 'Can the Subaltern Speak? Speculation on the Widow Sacrifice.' *Wedge* 7/8 (1985): 120-130.

Stevenson, N. *Understanding Media Cultures: Theory and Communication*. London: Sage, 1995.

Steenbergen, B. *The Condition of Citizenship*. London: Sage, 1994.

Storey, J. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*. New York: Harvester, 1993.

Stratton, F. *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Strydom, G.S. *The Establishment and Expansion of the School Radio Service of Radio Bantu: HSRC Report*. Pretoria: HSRC, 1976.

Styan, J.L. *Drama, Stage and Audience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.

- Switzer, L. 'Media and Dependency in South Africa, Athens, Ohio: Monographs.'  
*International Studies, African Series* 47 (1990): 53-75.
- Tannen, D. *Coherence in Spoken and Written Discourse*. New York: Ablex, 1984.
- Spoken and Written Language: Exploring Orality and Literacy*. New Jersey: Ablex, 1982.
- Tester, K. *Media, Culture and Morality*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- This is the SABC*. Pretoria: SABC Publications, 1989
- Thompson, J.B. *Ideology and Modern Culture*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990.
- *Studies in the Theory of Ideology*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984.
- Tlali, M. *Muriel at the Metropolitan: A Novel*. London: Longman, 1979.
- Tomaselli, K., and E. Louw. *The Alternative Press in South Africa*. Belville: Athropolis, 1991.
- Tomaselli, K.G. 'Change and Continuity at the SABC.' *Political Monitor, Indicator*, 3, 3 (1986): 18-20.
- A Contested Terrain: Struggle through Culture*. Pietermaritzburg: Natal University Press, 1987.
- Tomaselli, R. 'Public Service Broadcasting in the Age of Information Capitalism.'  
*Communicare* 8 (1989a): 27-37.

Tomaselli, R., K.G. Tomaselli and J. Muller (eds). *Currents of Power*. Cape Town:

Anthropos, 1989b.

----- *Narrating the Crisis: Hegemony and the South African Press*. Johannesburg: Richard Lyon and Co, 1987.

----- (eds). *Broadcasting in South Africa*. London: James Currey, 1989.

*Union of South Africa: Report of the Commission of Enquiry into Broadcasting Services*. Pretoria: Government Printers, 1948.

----- *of South Africa: Report of the Commission of Enquiry into Broadcasting Services*. Pretoria: Government Printers, 1969.

----- *of South Africa: Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Operations of the SABC*. Pretoria: Government Printers, 1939.

----- *of South Africa: Task Group on Broadcasting*. Pretoria: Government Printers, 1939.

----- *of South Africa: Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Operations of the SABC*. Pretoria: Government Printers, 1941.

Van der Merwe, C. *Electronic Media Manager*. Excom: AGM Publication, 1995.

Vilakazi, B.W. *The Oral and Written Literature in Nguni*. Johannesburg: (PhD) University of the Witwatersrand, 1946.

Viljoen, C. *Report of the Task Group on Broadcasting in South and Southern Africa*. Pretoria: Government Printers, 1991.

- Wade, M., and E. Wade. *Modern African Writers*. London: Evans Brothers, 1978.
- Wanta, W. 'Agenda Setting and Spanish Cable News.' *Journal of Broadcasting* 2,1 (2001): 280-281.
- Warner, M. *Publics and Counterpublics*. New York: Zone Books, 2002.
- Warren, A. *The Nature and Mode of Narrative Fiction*. California: Chandler Publishing Co, 1966.
- Webster, J.G. 'The Audience.' *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 42 (1998): 190-203.
- Wicomb, Z. 'To Hear the Variety of Discourses.' In: M.J. Daymond (ed). *South African Feminisms: Writing, Theory and Criticism 1990-1994*. Garland Publishers: New York, 1996.
- Wilkins, L. and Strydom, H. *The Super Afrikaner: Inside the Broederbond*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1978.
- Wylie, D. *Myth of Iron: Shaka in History*. Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2006.
- Zamora, L.P., and W.B. Faris. *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1995.
- Zenani, N.M. (H. Scheub ed. and trans). *The World and the Word: Tales and Observations from the Xhosa Oral Tradition*. Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 1992.
- Zipes, J. *Creative Storytelling: Building Community, Changing Lives*. New York: Routledge, 1995.

## **Appendices:**

### **Appendix A:**

(Guidelines for writing radio plays/serials<sup>136</sup>)

1. The work should be original and not an adaptation of a book or a story published in a magazine.
2. Plays should preferably be typewritten in duplicate.
3. A 30-minute play should be 12 A4 size pages, typed in double line spacing. If the play is handwritten, it should fill 20 to 24 pages. As far as serials are concerned, each episode should be five-and-a-half pages to six A4 size pages typewritten in double spacing, or 12 A4 pages, legibly and neatly written – preferably printed and in block letters.
4. Good Xhosa should be used – avoid slang and abusive language and English and Afrikaans.
5. The characters should be kept to a minimum, preferably not more than six for a short play and not more than ten for a serial.
6. A short play should be about an incident rather than the portrayal of a lifetime.
7. The play should have conflict.
8. The scenes should be few and clearly demarcated by means of a PAUSE or BRIDGE MUSIC.
9. The story should have a good moral lesson.
10. Suitable sound effects (SFX) must be applied where necessary.
11. Always indicate the place of action, i.e. location and acoustics.

---

<sup>136</sup> SABC archives, Port Elizabeth, 2001.

12. Particular attention must be paid to punctuation, neatness of scripts and the duration.

If the play is to your satisfaction, write a short summary in English and send it to:

Manager: Education, Language & Drama Programmes

Radio Xhosa

P.O. Box 1119

PORT ELIZABETH

6000

Also send a copy of the play for scrutiny. We will then in due course advise you whether or not it is suitable for broadcast.

## **Appendix B:**

### **Selected Interviews:**

1. (Interview with Mandla Myeko on 06 November 2001 (16:00 – 17:00) in Zwelitsha, near King William's Town).

**Khaya Gqibitole:** What kinds of radio dramas were broadcast at the beginning of the Xhosa-language radio?

**Mandla Myeko:** Sketches. Sketches that were very short; about two minutes long.

**KG:** Who controlled the production of radio plays?

**MM:** Whites. There was no direction. These sketches were just comedies. One sketch I still remember, featuring Thanda who plays in *Emzini Wezinsizwa*, was about a man who wanted to see the British Queen. The sketch is about him trying to get to England on bicycle.

**KG:** Are there any changes now?

**MM:** No, the plays still show the illiteracy and backwardness of black people.

**KG:** But the whites did not listen to the plays. How did they know what the plays were about?

**MM:** They had Xhosa translators. Some of these whites were farmers who knew the Xhosa language.

**KG:** Who was Sgidi?

**MM:** Sgidi does not exist. He is in the mind or imagination of the character.

**KG:** How rife was the control at the station? (Xhosa-language radio)

**MM:** A message had to be hidden in the plays. When you hide message then the whites would be deceived.

**KG:** What about the play *USomagqabi*? Was there any message in the play?

**MM:** The story was written by an old man from Rayi village. It was very short. But the story was interesting; it talked about the origin of black people. So I researched the story and made it longer.

**KG:** Was there any message in *USomagqabi*? Why was the main character a woman?

**MM:** Somagqabi stood for the Amazizi clan.

**KG:** Did the play have anything to do with other areas in the country?

**MM:** It had something to do with other places. But there were gaps in the story.

**KG:** Why did you decide to write the play, *Apho Sikhala Khona Isakhwatsha*?

**MM:** The play was about terrorists. If a story dealt with terrorists, those terrorists must be killed. As in the play, *UHlohlesakhe*. *UHlohlesakhe* was about what was happening at the time. Boers from the Free State suspected that there was a message that was passed through the play. But, there was no message at all. It was only fiction.

**KG:** Were you involved in politics in any way?

**MM:** Never! Not at the SABC.

**KG:** Why did the station mainly employ teachers?

**MM:** Not only teachers were employed. If you knew Afrikaans you stood a chance to be employed. You had to love Afrikaans. That meant a lot to the Afrikaners.

**KG:** How did you get to the SABC?

**MM:** As a teacher I was not good with administration. I was good with students though.

**KG:** Would you have written anything if you did not join the radio station?

**MM:** I had to take a special course on how to write radio plays. I found radio plays a very interesting genre.

**KG:** You wrote a lot of radio plays. Why did you choose this genre?

**MM:** I have written volumes and volumes of radio drama. I like dramatisation.

**KG:** Do you think radio television has taken over from radio?

**MM:** Radio develops your imagination. When we wrote we wrote about tradition. Today everybody writes about *The Bold and the Beautiful*.

**KG:** Was there any policy regarding radio plays?

**MM:** There was a written policy. You were not allowed to write anything about the regime. You could write about terrorists, who must always be defeated. Whites must always win.

**KG:** Why did you have to write about tradition all the time? Why did you not write about the Border Wars?

**MM:** You could not write about wars in which blacks win.

**KG:** I believe that there was a message in *UHlohlesakhe*. Did the Afrikaners manage to decode it? What actually happened?

**MM:** The Afrikaners believed that there was a message in the play. So it was sent to a Dr Cingo at UNISA for scrutiny. I was asked to kill the character Hlohlesakhe.

**KG:** Is radio drama imaginative?

**MM:** Yes, like in the plays *UHlohlesakhe* and *Sgidi (Undoqo Sisibindi)*.

**KG:** You know Professor Ncedile Saule. Why do you think he wrote a book of plays and not radio plays?

**MM:** The book is a collection of radio plays. He is not the first one to do this. Tshabe also collected our plays and made them into a book.

**KG:** Do you know any books that have been adapted to radio plays?

**MM:** No, it was the other way round. Siwisa's book *Uyinkulu Kabani*, for instance, is an adaptation of a serial. He is the one person who took the episodes as they were and made them into a book.

**KG:** Do you think young writers have a future?

**MM:** Soaps have destroyed writers. Politics has not been dealt with in radio plays. That

space is there and remains unused.

**KG:** When one sends a play to the Xhosa-language station, one has to write a summary in English. Why is this important?

**MM:** To satisfy white people at the station. They always want to know what we are doing so that they can advise us. They even want to advise us on how to do initiation!

**KG:** Why do you think politics was not dealt with in plays?

**MM:** Producers are to blame. Producers undermine writers they do not know. That is the problem.

**KG:** How can radio plays be used in the classroom?

**MM:** I would like the youth to write radio plays. There is a new genre where TV and radio plays are compiled into books. But the problem is that only five percent of our people read. Acting should be promoted. Unfortunately, new plays are not taken because of financial constraints. I am now writing a television drama on Aids. I want to see a lot of dramatisation in the drama. But then again, I know they will not broadcast the drama. What will happen is, I will see a new drama, which looks exactly like mine on television.

**KG:** How do you think young writers should be groomed?

**MM:** You must make more and more examples. I have been advising Mahlaba who plays in *Isidingo* on how to go about his acting. So, you must give them examples.

**KG:** Do you see any future for radio plays?

**MM:** Absolutely! Television will lose its appeal once people see through its lies. When that happens, radio drama will still be going strong.

2. (Interview with Shwayiba on 16 April 2003 (20:30 – 21:00) in Kirkwood, near Port Elizabeth).

**Khaya Gqibitole:** When did you first listen to radio plays?

**Shwayiba:** When I was still at school. I used to act in dramas. Novels like *BuzaniKubawo*.

And when I began work at Ntabankulu, Pondoland, I organised a drama group comprised of local people and school children. By then I had been listening to a lot of radio plays on Radio Xhosa.

**KG:** What impact did radio plays have in your own dramas?

**S:** They played a big role.

**KG:** How did you listen to radio plays? What used to happen and at what time did you listen to them?

**S:** They played at eight in the evening, and at three in the afternoon.

**KG:** You said your interest in Radio Xhosa plays began when you were still at school. Did you ever listen to the plays as a group of students?

**S:** You either listened on your own or with your family. But we used to advise one another in the group to listen to the plays so that we could hear how the characters [in the radio plays] acted.

**KG:** Do you remember any particular character from the plays you listened to? A particular voice you identified with?

**S:** I don't remember. But I remember on Radio Transkei there was a boy from Grahamstown, called Lunga Khepe. He had a great voice. He could play any role and be believable. He was very versatile.

**KG:** Did it happen that when he played he reminded you of a particular person in your village?

**S:** Yes. He made you have a mental picture of sadness, happiness and anger. He was a natural.

**KG:** So you would forget that you were listening to a play. It would feel as though what you were listening to was real?

**S:** Yes. It would feel like a stage play. You would have that mental picture. This encouraged us a lot because we loved acting.

**KG:** What themes did these plays deal with?

**S:** Most of the time it was love. Courting, betrayal, *lobola*. The other play we like is *Gonond'omkhulu*. *Gonond'omkhulu* was all about magic and witchcraft. Even the person who worked for *Gonond'omkhulu* did not know him. He never saw him. But what he heard from *Gonond'omkhulu* was the voice. In response to the voice he would say, '*Gonond'omkhulu. Gonond'osabekayo.*' But you would find out that he had never seen *Gonondo*, but he respected and obeyed him.

**KG:** What does this thing of the 'voice' mean? Coming from someone who had been an actor, is the voice more powerful than its owner? In other words, since radio uses the 'voice', would you say radio is more powerful than TV?

**S:** The first thing that counts is belief. When you believe in something, it will make sense to you. When we were growing up there were no TVs. There was wireless, so we believed in the voice. Even if we did not see the action, the voice was enough. We believed in the voice. Some Xhosas still believe in dreams where you talk to someone in your dreams and wake up in the morning and are able to explain the dream. And are able to tell people that you had been visited by your ancestors. We believe in those things. It is, therefore, not surprising that people believed in *Gonondo's* voice. I grew up in a place where people believed that you could be bewitched by being given *amafufunyana*. A lady who is possessed by *amafufunyana* would be in a trance. When she spoke, she spoke in a man's voice.

**KG:** In which language would the *fufunyana* speak? In Xhosa or Zulu?

**S:** In Zulu. A majority of *amafufunyana* spoke in Zulu.

**KG:** Can we make a connection here? Did Gonondo use Xhosa?

**S:** No, it was Zulu.

**KG:** What is it about this voice? Why does it have to be Zulu? Why would Xhosas believe a voice in Zulu?

**S:** Xhosa and Zulu are closely related, although there are some differences. The other thing is Zulus have more powerful magic than Xhosas as far as *iyeza (umuthi)* is concerned. Even our witchdoctors, when they have to *thwasa* and graduate, they need a Zulu witchdoctor as their teacher.

**KG:** Before we move on from Gonondo, does the story of Gonondo remind you of Khotso?

**S:** Khotso was a man who gave people wealth. If one wanted wealth one would go to see Khotso for *ukuthwala*. If one followed his instructions, one would be very rich. I remember seeing his house in the Transkei, Lusikisiki. His house is decorated with statues of lions, owls and vultures. He was a very powerful man. I doubt that he was Xhosa. He was another tribe. He was not Mpondo from Lusikisiki.

**KG:** Let us move on. I do not know whether this play ran in the Transkei. Do you know *UHlohlesakhe*?

**S:** Yes. *UHlohlesakhe* was broadcast in the Transkei while the Xhosa-language radio was still Radio Xhosa. But it was banned by the Matanzima government. Matanzima and others thought that the play was directed at them. They believed that the play was telling people that they were greedy, while the majority was starving.

**KG:** So, the play *was* directed at somebody?

**S:** Yes. Yes, it was directed at somebody.

**KG:** When it was discontinued, did people know beforehand that it was going to be banned or it was simply stopped?

**S:** Yes, people were told.

**KG:** There was actually an announcement, which said that it was going to be discontinued?

**S:** Yes. People were told. Radio Transkei was initiated by staff from Radio Xhosa. So these guys came with material that they either stole or negotiated for from Radio Xhosa. So, they had plays like *Hlohlesakhe* and *Gonond'omkhulu*. So, this one was banned.

**KG:** Who were the managers of the station at the time? Radio Transkei for instance. Radio Bantu before that? Who allowed such plays to be broadcast?

**S:** I believe, although Radio Bantu in particular was under whites, managers would be black. But that person [author of *UHlohlesakhe*] must have been politically aware. So he wanted people to see that there were greedy people up there. When the Homeland Act was passed, powerful individuals took over the homeland, and they practised what was being done in the Republic of South Africa by whites. They were only keen on enriching themselves and their families. So I believe the playwright was a politician, who was trying to alert people to the corruption.

**KG:** As far as you are concerned, do you think radio drama was the correct platform to address the issue of corruption? How powerful is radio drama?

**S:** Radio drama is very powerful, especially in rural areas. It is a means to pass on information. If you notice, there are fewer televisions in rural areas because of poor transmitters. So radio is conducive in such areas, radio has a bigger audience. If you were to conduct a survey, you would come up with the same result.

**KG:** When you look at the message in *UHlohlesakhe*, it is clear that people were being alerted to corruption. Are there any other plays like *UHlohlesakhe*, which are critical of people on top?

**S:** I do not remember any other play like that. But politicians would pass on the message in funerals and churches. That is the platform that was used. There was an old man called

Xokololo, who used to say we would not get freedom because we are kept in pigsties. He was open, but every Christmas he was jailed.

**KG:** So people like old Xokololo and plays such as *UHlohlesakhe* shared the same fate? They were silenced. Is it possible the author of *UHlohlesakhe* was jailed too?

**S:** Although I do not know who wrote the play, I am sure he was arrested. Those were difficult times. Even in funerals, speakers who talked badly about the regime were jailed. Sometimes we wouldn't know how the regime came to know about a speech in a funeral. It appears the government sent its spies to listen to what was being said. In fact, everywhere there would be intelligence, in weddings, initiation ceremonies. *Iimbongi* [praise poets] were targeted too. So there were many attempts by politicians to pass on the message wherever people were gathered.

**KG:** Let us talk about *BuzaniKubawo*, a book, which you read and performed. What is happening there?

**S:** It is about parents who force their son to marry a girl of their choice [Thobeka] even though the son had someone else he had promised to marry....

**KG:** What is the message in *BuzaniKubawo*?

**S:** Freedom of choice. People should be allowed to choose what they want and not be forced by the powerful.

**KG:** Do you think *BuzaniKubawo* was different from the plays of the time? Was the play trying to break away from other plays?

**S:** Yes. *BuzaniKubawo* questions certain traditions. It was breaking with the past.

**KG:** Lastly, do you think radio drama has any future?

**S:** Radio drama is very important, especially to rural children. Urban youth do not listen to radio. Urban people like television.

**KG:** Do you think radio drama can be used in schools?

**S:** Yes, I believe so. I have just heard young girls phoning each other saying they should listen to an educational play on the radio.

3. (Interview with Faniswa Cishe on 11 April 2003 (11:00 – 13:30) in Kuwait, near King William's Town.).

**Khaya Gqibitole:** Most of the time you were working as a domestic worker. Did you get time to listen to radio plays?

**Faniswa Cishe:** Yes, I did find time because plays were broadcast at eight at night. But I am forgetful.

**KG:** Why did you listen to plays at that time?

**FC:** That is the only time I was free. At that time I was resting my mind. So plays helped me relax.

**KG:** Are you saying plays helped you relax your mind?

**FC:** Plays helped me forget about what happened during the day. They made me laugh.

**KG:** You mentioned something important, that plays helped you forget about what happened during the day. Did it happen that plays reminded you about your home in the rural areas while you were in the white man's place?

**FC:** Yes, yes.

**KG:** Did you talk about these plays with other domestic workers?

**FC:** Yes.

**KG:** Did the plays say anything about the white homes you worked in?

**FC:** No, in those days they could not do so. They could not say what they wanted to say. Even when they said it they had to put it in such a way that they were safe. They had rules; they did not say anything. Some plays were like *iintsomi*, but we knew what was behind the

story. We knew the deep Xhosa that was used. We would know what the plays were about but the whites would not know. For instance, you could give us one word and we would know its different meanings.

**KG:** Do you think there is still a need for radio drama?

**FC:** This is the right time for plays. Plays are good for our children. They can help one because they have morals. For instance, there are things we cannot mention to our children. But plays talk directly and openly. They are much better than television. In our times we listened to *iintsomi*. Not this time. Our children need to listen to plays.

**KG:** What were the main teachings in the plays?

**FC:** They taught us about black life. The way we should live and experiences we would go through.

4. (Interview with Nontsikelelo Gqibitole on 11 April 2003 (14:45 – 16:15) in Kuwait, near King William's Town.

**Khaya Gqibitole:** When did you first get interested in plays and why?

**Nontsikelelo Gqibitole:** Very early in life. But I think I began liking them when I was working at Pick 'n' Pay [Bisho in 1984]. When we were at Pick 'n' Pay we were told by the late L.L. Sebe [Ciskei leader] that we should not expect payment for overtime. So I wanted to write a play about the way we were treated so that others, especially the youth, would know where we come from.

**KG:** Given what you went through, why do you think plays were the right platform to use?

**NG:** You see, when you talk to one or two people your message may not spread. But many people like radio plays. So many would hear what you have to say.

**KG:** Which play would you say you enjoyed the most? And did that play make you realise that plays can be used to spread messages?

**NG:** *UHlohlesakhe* is the play that comes to mind. And also the play, *Ugonondo* [listeners simply referred to *Undoqo Sisibindi* as *Ugonondo*, after the main character]. *Ugonondo* played when I was at Pick 'n' Pay. Then we would knock off at ten from work. There would be no transport home at that time and one had to hitchhike. I used to be scared as if I would be picked up by Sgidi's car.

**KG:** So, was the play scary or informative?

**NG:** It scared me but at the same time it was informative. What would I have done if I had been picked up by those people? I couldn't fight them. At the same time it was warning me about the dangers around. If only my employees knew of the dangers.

**KG:** Were you afraid before the play was broadcast or you became more scared when it was played?

**NG:** I was afraid but became more so after it was played.

**KG:** You once told me about someone who cut off people's heads.

**NG:** That was before I was at Pick 'n' Pay. The incident I remember is when I was still looking for a job. Someone told me there were some jobs in Stutterheim so I went there. On my way back to Stutterheim it was already late and I had to hitchhike. In the car that picked me up there was the driver and a lady passenger. For some reason I was afraid but I managed to get home safely. When I described the car I hitchhiked in, I was told that I was lucky to be alive. Even when I was at Pick 'n' Pay people were still talking about the driver of the car.<sup>137</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The respondent was afraid to name the driver. She was visibly afraid.

In fact someone told me that their home was behind his house and at night they would hear digging.

**KG:** How does this involve *Gonondo*?

**NG:** As I said *Gonondo* was broadcast when I was still at Pick 'n' Pay.

**KG:** Is it possible that *Gonondo* reminded you of that incident?

**NG:** It is possible.

**KG:** From what you have just said, would you say plays deal with real events?

**NG:** Yes, I can say so. I am sure there are very few plays that do not deal with reality.

**KG:** How do radio plays compare with TV plays?

**NG:** TV is not informative. *The Bold and the Beautiful*, for instance, does not teach anything, although more people watch TV than listen to radio.

**KG:** How do radio plays deal with reality?

**NG:** In radio plays you do not see anything. Television gives you everything. You do not have to think.

**KG:** Are there plays that you know that are based on books?

**NG:** Yes, *Inqombo Yeminyanya* and *Ityala Lamawele*.

**KG:** Which one did you like, the book or the play?

**NG:** I like them when they are made to plays. Even school children would not forget them if they listened to the plays.

**KG:** Would you enjoy books that are based on plays, say *Gonondo*?

**NG:** I wouldn't enjoy it. At least when I am listening to a play I can do other things. Reading can delay you. Plus, many people cannot read.

**KG:** If we can go back to the time you were at Pick 'n' Pay. Did any radio play deal with labour issues?

**NG:** No, at that time one could not speak freely. Things became better after 1994. Even plays like *UHlohlesakhe* got people into trouble.

**KG:** What happened in *UHlohlesakhe*?

**NG:** It was about greed. There were people who did not care about others.

**KG:** You said some people got into trouble. Who are those people?

**NG:** No, I wouldn't like to comment on that.

**KG:** Even if you do not mention names, just what happened?

**NG:** No, I think we should not talk about that.

**KG:** But why?

**NG:** (Laughs). No, pass, I cannot answer that question. [At this stage the respondent looked apprehensive and defensive.]

**KG:** It is clear that there are things that *UHlohlesakhe* dealt with, which make people feel uncomfortable.

**NG:** I personally do not know. But I hear that there are people who got into trouble because of that play. From what I hear the play was banned and the author detained. I do not know, I just hear about these things. I do not know how the play ended. But as I was saying earlier, the author might have been passing certain messages through the play. I do not know but that is what I think.

**KG:** Could people write freely at the time?

**NG:** No, like in politics, no one was free at the time. It is only now that people can write freely.

**Appendix C:**

(Selected letters from the SABC archives, Port Elizabeth)

UWAPE, L1. 1970.

Dear Sir

I am hereby instructed by the Holy Society, on trial measures draw your attention to the truth considering the advertisement of alcohol and tobacco in your commercial service, under any circumstances, a violation of peace and safety, based on devine civilization or development. Since we know that alcohol and tobacco are guilty products it is therefore an offence to deal with any encouragement by public advertisement of any kind even though consumption may continue not obstructed.

I am therefore instructed to make it clear to you dear sir, that anything against peoples' safety and peace is the people enemy, and no shepard has the wright to strike against the flocks safety under any circumstances anywhere and anytime.

I am furthermore looking forward to your discontinue dear sir not later than 10.2.70.

I am

Yours in peace

'N. Mbombo.'

107 Location, Cathcart'

UWAPE, L2. 1970.

Dear Sir

Quite recently, I enjoyed listening to a religious service over air. The word of God we frequently listen to will surely stop drunkenness and evil plans of thieves.

Further, it does much in bringing our sons to Christianity. Their excessive drinking of Jabulani is discouraged by the word of God.

Nosamani Vellem

UWAPE, L3. 1970.

Dear Sir

I wish to encourage the Xhosa-speaking announcers in the work they do for us. We always listen to your programmes. The programmes you broadcast are very helpful to us as they enlighten and entertain us.

There is no time for ignorance for Xhosas now. Radio Bantu does much to educate its listeners. We wish you a good time in your work.

Mrs Dorcas Funani

6 Warwick Road

East London

UWAPE, L4. 1970.

Dear Mr Manona

I suppose that it'll be a pleasant surprise to receive a letter from me.

I made a point to write to you and congratulate you for your contribution of an interesting play. 'Ubom Ngamava' if I remember well. It was so interesting that even if I had to go out, I had to arrange my programme that by the stipulated time ie the time of the play I had to be back home. I recall two occasions when I was caught up sixteen miles from at that time. I dropped into the home of coloured people and requested them to allow me to listen to the Bantu programme the particular play acted. We were welcome – after the play we thanked them and off we drove.

It was not only interesting in the side of mere fun but also educative to the young. It is a play congruent to modern times. The play at one stage appeared to be a tragedy, but you so dexterously continued thus ultimately it became a comedy. By the stage you came to your conclusion everybody was happy.

I've known you as a man of ability and enthusiasm. May God the Almighty direct you to achieve greater works stil.

Greetings

Yours sincerely

'A.E. Mothlabane'

UWAPE, L5. 1970.

You enable us to know world affairs. Some of us cannot read newspapers, but the radio is there to help us. It is the radio which enables us to know about heart transplants, space flights, wars in the Middle East, politics, and developments in our homelands. It also helps us with weather forecast.

Beulla Tshakweni

King William's Town

UWAPE, L6. August 1970.

Aunt Fenny / S.D. Keke. N.Y. 12 Gugulathu, writes:

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the announcers for entertaining us with their radio plays. I always wish to write but many a time I have failed to do so. You cannot imagine how I wish to see Nontando. Where did Mr Mcinga get that character Nontando?

Dr Jongi was just like a doctor, he spoke softly as a sophisticated man. Mr Tuswa drew a nice picture of his play 'Sazela Ndiyeye'. I am still keeping the picture. We would like to see all these characters. Your play was quite good. Thank You.

UWAPE, L7. 1970.

Rilliard Mkhele of Bodker Skod, Hankey, writes:

I wish to encourage Mr Mcinga, his play was very interesting. We are still puzzled about Nontando. We cannot make out what kind of character she was. We often wondered when she banged the door in great fury. Her name, however, sounds quite nice.

Do you still remember when she refused to give her father in law tea? This proves that one should treat others well. The play was interesting, but the time was short. Thank you.

UWAPE, L8. 1970.

Miriam Mbena, 29 Teya Street, New Brighton, Port Elizabeth writes:

I thank all the characters which took part in the play 'Si! Ndandiba Ndiyalungisa'. I thank in particular Linda Msikinya who acted Nontando. I wish even the programmes were interesting as this play was. Thank you.

UWAPE, L9. August 1975.

A.M.S Sityana, a writer, playwright, translator of Xhosa dictionary, traditionalist and culturalist responds thus to the play *Ubom Asindlwana Iyanetha* by Linda Gqomfa:

I listened to every episode of this educative radio work and was highly impressed. Right through the play the writer kept to her subject and her characters were true to life, especially 'Umfundisi'. This character was portrayed very well. The writer's language and style was very good and she tactfully succeeded in making her listeners aware of the evil that men do.

By skilful handling of her subject she succeeded in bringing home the message that those who trust in God cannot be disappointed.

With my experience as an examiner I would have awarded a mark of 95% if it had been an exam script.

UWAPE, L10. 1965.

A 'disgusted radio enthusiast' from Grahamstown, writes:

I would suggest that you rename our Bantu Programmes. This is the most suitable name 'English Bantu Programme'. Sir, anytime, during our limited time, switch on the Bantu Programme you will hear an English record playing, one after another. One won't be sure if it is an English Programme until the record stops, then you are suddenly sure because you hear someone speaking Xhosa. This is puzzling really, I never hear Bantu records being played in the English Programmes except once in the blue moon one of Mirriam Makeba's.

This does not only represent my 'foolish idea' but that is the popular remark of everyday life. Please sir, let us feel that we are listening to a Bantu Programme during limited time, if one wants to listen to a better English record, he or she switches to the English Programme which continues throughout the day until 12 midnight.

Sir, please, let me not be misunderstood I like English records, but we also have good Bantu records and we have a lot of them too, please let's hear them.

UWAPE, L11. 1965.

A listener from Nyanga, Cape Town, writes:

May I know what you people are up to? The Europeans did us favour of giving us time to listen to our music. Why do you play English during Xhosa programme time? Do you think you are doing justice to your people? As a matter of fact I do not even understand English. Bear in mind that some of us have A.M. sets and their listening time is too short for words. Please play Xhosa songs during that time.

UWAPE, L12. 1965.

A listener from CapeTown is furious after listening to a play. He writes:

Ek wil weet wanneer daardie skurk Zett begrawe sal word. Watter kerk en watter predikant sal waag om 'n begrafnisdiens vir hom te hou?

UWAPE, L13. 1965.

Eddison T. Ndzatyana, Langa, Cape Town:

I cannot help but say a word about this thrilling story, 'Ufikizolo'. It is really a masterpiece. I never miss it. When the story is introduced even if we were talking on top of our voices, it quietens us. By these words I am trying to encourage the youth who wrote the story. Who is he by the way? Dambile, keep it up Sonny.

UWAPE, L14. 1965.

A listener from Adelaide writes:

I must say a word of praise, though sometimes our hair stands on edge because of the cruelty and merciless behaviour of some of the characters. But we look forward to every Tuesday. Please send Bra Zett and Speedo to me, I want to dip them in petrol and set them alight. I want to know the end of the play.

UWAPE, L15. 1960.

A listener from East London writes:

How thrilling is the play 'Ufikizolo'! On Tuesdays we run short of space because people from parties rush into our house which is the only one in our area that has an F.M. set – you know how drunks are! They all praise this play, but complain that the duration is very short.

UWAPE, L16. 1966.

On the occasion of Radio Bantu settling in King William's Town H.S. Mabandla from Dunkye B.C. School, Cathcart; writes:

On behalf of the listeners in the Cathcart area, I assure you that we are satisfied with your broadcasts from the new place and also wish you success in the future and promise you our firm support.

UWAPE, L17. 1966.

R.B. Gwente of 1117B King's Flats, Grahamstown, on the same occasion writes:

I just wish you happiness at King William's Town. Though you have left us, we are still enjoying your programmes and we hope that you will be successful in your new environment.

UWAPE, L18. 1966.

Mrs M.M. Maneli of Nobantu Store, P.O. Box 31, FortBeaufort, writes:

Congratulations on your successful opening at King William's Town. May you all serve the nation there with God's blessings.

UWAPE, L19. 1966.

Pat Matshikiza of 1060, Location, Queenstown; writes:

Thank you for the letter congratulating me on my on-coming birthday on the 10<sup>th</sup> November 1966. I appreciate the Radio Bantu broadcasts and hope that King William's Town will welcome Radio Bantu. I received the birthday wish from Dr Y. Huskisson, organising the programmes.

UWAPE, L20. 1969.

A writer from Grahamstown writes:

I wish to express my sincere thanks to the serial *Benditshilo*. I am aware of the fact that you are all trained teachers. The teachers, therefore, always teach young and old alike. We especially thank you for the moral lessons which characterize your plays ... There is much to be gleaned from the plays, keep it up.

UWAPE, L21. 1969.

F.S.P.Z. Keke writes:

This play is entertaining. To prove this when it starts, children gather around the radio and dead silence prevails. Whether one is in a bus, at the bus stop, in a train, one hears Sibayeni's name mentioned.

Pardon me for digressing, my wife has visited her people for health reasons. I keep on visiting her and I am always attacked by my friends who label me as a second Sibayeni. Let them say what they wish, I will visit my in-laws. However, I will heed the warning and guard against being captivated by the in-laws. We look forward to further such plays.

UWAPE, L22. 1969.

I cannot help saying a word about your educative plays. Had our morals gone down so low, everybody would be reformed by the plays. The plots of the plays are so authentic that they seem to relate exactly our way of living. I and my brothers have been victims of local gossip to such an extent that eventually we had to change residence to evade gossip.

It would appear that the standard of radio plays is higher in King William's Town than it was in Grahamstown. Keep it up and do not stop educating us.

## **Appendix D:**

(Selected record of Xhosa radio drama scripts and cassettes held at the National Heritage and Cultural Studies Centre, University of Fort Hare – alphabetically ordered).

- Bokwe, G.D. *Ukwanda Kwaliwa Ngumthakathi* – 15 episodes, 3 tapes.
- Gabela, H.S. *Ikhaya* – 50 episodes, 9 tapes.
- Gabela, H.S. *Inxaxheba Yabazali* – 25 episodes, 5 tapes.
- Gabela, H.S. *Ndoyicel'ivuthiwe* – 40 episodes, 7 tapes.
- Gabela, H.S. *Umfunzelo Awuhluphezi* – 50 episodes, 9 tapes.
- Gqomfa, J.N. *Kwavela Ukukhanya* – 50 episodes, 9 tapes.
- Gqomfa, J.S. *Isono Sakho Siyakukuleqa Sikuleqe De Sikufumane* – 40 episodes, 7 tapes.
- Gqomfa, L.J. *Andifanelekanga Na Mna Mama?* – 35 episodes, 6 tapes.
- Hlophe, H.M. *Amahla Ndinyuka* – 40 episodes, 7 tapes.
- Jojozi, N. *Ingalo Yomthetho Inde* – 49 episodes, 9 tapes.
- Jordan, A.C. *Ingqumbo Yeminyanya* – 80 episodes, 14 tapes.
- Kabang, T.I. *Indoda Ayilili Nokuba Ingxange Engxangxasini* – 40 episodes, 7 tapes.
- Mahlaba, G. *Uyakulileqa Ulileqe De Ulincame* – 20 episodes, 4 tapes.
- Malgas, M.Z. *Umntu Lilahle Elinothuthu* – 25 episodes, 5 tapes.
- Mantanga, L. *Isala Kutylwa Sibona Ngolophu* – 45 episodes, 8 tapes.
- Matyila, A.N. *Qiqha Phambi Kokuba Wenze* – 45 episodes, 8 tapes.
- Mdazane, C.V. *Guga Sithebe Kudala Usophulela* – 25 episodes, 5 tapes.
- Mdazane, C.V. *Imihla Ayifani* – 45 episodes, 8 tapes.
- Mdazane, C.V. *Ngoku Siyabona* – 40 episodes, 7 tapes.

- Mgabadeli, N. *Kusa Kusihlwa* – 35 episodes, 6 tapes.
- Mgabadeli, N. *Sasingazi* – 25 episodes, 5 tapes.
- Mgabadeli, N. *Sokhe Sibone* – 30 episodes, 5 tapes.
- Mqhayi, S.E.K. *Ityala Lamawele* – 40 episodes, 7 tapes.
- Mthana, D. *Akukho Ndlela Mbini* – 20 episodes, 4 tapes.
- Myeko, C.M. *Apho Sikhala Khona Isakhwatsha* – 48 episodes, 8 tapes.
- Myeko, C.M. *Igongqongqo* – 12 episodes, 2 tapes.
- Nase, D. *Amaphupha Aziqhamo Zincindi Krakra* – 30 episodes, 5 tapes.
- Nkuhlu, W. *Lijonge Uligqibelise* – 50 episodes, 9 tapes.
- Nkuhlu, W. *Tarh'ameva!* – 40 episodes, 7 tapes.
- Ntlebi, N.T. *Lunjalo Uthando* – 25 episodes, 5 tapes.
- Petros, E. *Kodwa Yeyethu* – 29 episodes, 5 tapes.
- Qalase, M.Z. *Ndokhe Ndithethe* – 51 episodes, 9 tapes.
- Radebe, M.E. *Ingqeqesho Iqala Ekhaya* – 35 episodes, 6 tapes.
- Sidayiya, D.P. *Yiyekeni Inkwenkwe Izonwabele* – 40 episodes, 7 tapes.
- Silimela, P. *Thoba I-emele Kuloo Ndawo Ukuyo* – 42 episodes, 7 tapes.
- Siwisa, L.L. *Ufuzo Luyegqithisa* – 40 episodes, 7 tapes.
- Siwisa, L.L. *Uyinkulu Kabani?* – 50 episodes, 9 tapes.
- Tamsanqa, W.K. *Buzani Kubawo* – 35 episodes, 6 tapes.
- Tshungu, J. *Umazibulo* – 20 episodes, 4 tapes.
- Tsotsobe, B. *Ibheka Phi Loo Ndlela* – 45 episodes, 8 tapes.
- Tsotsobe, B. *Ingaba Yindlela Le?* – 25 episodes, 5 tapes.
- Tsotsobe, B. *Nok'phiwa Mntanam!* – 35 episodes, 6 tapes.
- Tuswa, D. *Akukho Mini Ingenabusuku Bayo* – 50 episodes, 9 tapes.
- Zita, C.N. *Andizange Ndazi* – 65 episodes, 11 tapes.

- Zita, C.N. *Asikokwethu Ukugweba* – 25 episodes, 5 tapes.

**Appendix E:**

A. (Script evaluation forms from the executive producer of Ikwewezi FM – Peter Mahlangu)

81 – 100: Excellent in all respects; masterpiece.

71 – 80: Exceptional idea, talented writer.

61 – 70: A good, strong drama; highly recommended.

51 – 60: Above average; recommended for broadcast.

50: Acceptable but average; producer can rectify minor technical points.

40 – 49: Below average; to be rectified by author.

30 – 49: Below standard; rewrite and resubmit. Author does not understand the medium.

20 – 29: Dull theme and plot – poorly written.

0 – 19: Not acceptable at all – very poor.

---

**B. MARK THE APPROPRIATE SQUARE WITH A TICK:**

	Structure of play	Style of author	Plot/Idea/Theme	Technical suitability for radio
Exceptional 81 – 100				
Very Good 71 – 80				
Good 61 – 70				

Above Average 51 – 60				
Average 50				
Below Average 40 – 49				
Below Standard, Redo 30 – 39				
Poor 20 – 29				
Very poor, Reject 0 – 19				

C. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE PLAYWRIGHT:

-----

-----

-----

-----

-----

-----

-----  
-----

NAME: -----

ADDRESS: -----  
-----  
-----

DATE: -----

SIGNATURE: -----

D. LITERARY EVALUATION OF RADIO DRAMAS:

TITLE: -----

AUTHOR: -----

CATEGORY: (i.e. Comedy, Tragedy, Allegory etc). -----  
-----  
-----

(a) What is the theme of this drama?

-----  
-----  
-----

(b) How well is the theme portrayed in the script?

-----  
-----  
-----

(c) How successful was the playwright with his characterisation?

-----  
-----  
-----

(d) Comment on the structure of the play with specific reference to:

(d1) Build-up of suspense to a logical and striking climax (i.e. the introduction, the exposition, the complication, development, the crisis, the climax and the conclusion of the plot).

-----  
-----  
-----

(d2) The desirability, necessity and acceptability of the plot.

---

---

---

(e) Comment briefly on the following:

(e1) The dialogue.

---

---

---

(e2) Language.

---

---

---

(e3) Usage of sound effects.

---

---

---

(e4) General success of the drama as a radio play.

---

---

---

---

**Appendix F:** [A 30-minute radio drama (not broadcast)]

THE GENERATION IN-BETWEEN<sup>138</sup>:

SCENE ONE:

SFX: INSIDE THE ROOM. SOUND OF PARAFFIN STOVE.

SIPHO: Mama, you called me. Do you need some help?

ADELAIDE: (COUGHING) Did I call you? Yes, I did. I remember now. But I cannot remember what I wanted to say to you. Have you eaten?

SIPHO: (ALMOST PLEADING) Ma, I told you, that bread is yours. Forget about me, I will be fine. If you are okay, I will run to MaJola for a cup of sugar. Are you sure you do not need anything?

ADE: (COUGH AGAIN) Children of today. You forget that we are old. We forget easily.  
Just go, I will remember what I wanted to say to you. Give me my walking stick, I want to sit outside.

SIPHO: (LAUGHING) But Ma, you were outside just now. Don't you think it is too hot now? I think you should lie down and rest.

ADE: (LAUGHING TOO) That is silly Sipho. When we were on the farm we dare not sleep during the day. We had to work very hard.

SIPHO: Ma, I know, once you talk about the farm you never stop. I will never be able to get to MaJola. I will see you when I come back. Lie down I will be back now.

PAUSE: INSIDE ROOM, QUIET.

---

<sup>138</sup>This play was originally a Xhosa radio drama titled *Umntu Akahlwa*. The play was sent to the then Radio Xhosa and I never received feedback on it. I's conclusion was that it was not broadcast because of its slightly political theme, although my initial intention was to show that love conquers all. In this case, the friendship between the two boys transcended the racial divide.

ADE: (To herself) Oh, I do not know how I will say this to this child. How can I tell him something that happened while he was still a baby? But I am old now, he must know about his father. Where do I begin? Is it not going to kill him in the end? God, give me strength and wisdom to face this. (COUGHING) I can feel that I will not recover from this coughing. If only they had given me my pension. At least I would be able to see the doctor. I can see that Siphso is concerned about my condition. I *am* concerned about him. I pray that he gets a job. At least I would die happy knowing he has something to eat. But where are the jobs? (SOBBING) If they did not kill his father things would be better now. There he comes. He must not see me crying.

SFX: DOG BARKING OUTSIDE.

SIPHO: (APPROACHING) I am back Ma! I will make you a cup of tea; you must be thirsty.

ADE: (COUGHING) Do not worry about the tea. Sit down, let us talk.

SIPHO: Talk about what Ma? There are a few things that I need to do before it becomes too hot. You know how hot it can be here.

ADE: Siphso, we must talk, my child. I think it is time you knew.

SIPHO: (SUSPICIOUS) Knew what Ma? Is there anything wrong?

ADE: Sit down Siphso and listen. And listen very carefully. I want to tell you about your father, my child.

SIPHO: (FURIOUS) My father! I do not have a father! How can we waste time talking about someone who left us starving? Ma, I do not want to hear about him. Nothing!

SFX: STEPS FAST RETREATING.

ADE: Siphso! Come back here. Come; come. Sit down. You are going to hear me out. Sit here. Listen to me carefully. Your father did not desert us. He was killed!

SIPHO: (ASTONISHED) Killed! But Ma, you told me that my father left us. Did you not say so? Ma, let us not talk about this. You are forgetful. You must rest.

ADE: (SOBBING) I may be forgetful, Siphon, but as long as I live I will never forget what they did to Duma. I lied to you to save you from the pain I was feeling. Now I think you are old enough to know. You know I am not well, my child. I do not want to die with this truth.

SIPHON: (DISTRAUGHT) Ma, what are you talking about? Are you telling me that you have been hiding something from me for 28 years? 28 years! Why Ma? Why?

ADE: I was trying to save you, my child. I did not want to hurt you. Now, I do not want to live you in the dark. Your father, Siphon, was a good man. He loved you and wanted to see you become a man.

SIPHON: Why should I worry? I am a man without him. What is the difference?

ADE: Siphon, I am sure, if your father was alive we would not be living like this. We would not owe money to everyone. We would have something to eat without begging. Our electricity would not be cut by now. Above all, you would be at school. But because they worked him like a donkey, even when he was dying of TB, they killed him. All he needed was medical attention, and not a flogging.

SIPHON: (DOUBTFUL) Who are you talking about, Ma? Who are *they*? Why are you telling me this now?

ADE: (SORROWFUL) It is a long story, Siphon. I will just tell you what you need to know now. I am telling you this because someone brought a letter here some five days ago. I am afraid, we are being evicted again. I know that is going to kill me.

SIPHON: Where is that letter, Ma? You did not show me.

ADE: I have been thinking of a way out of this. But I have given up. That is why I want to tell you everything.

SIPHON: (AGITATED) Ma, where is the letter? Who read the letter for you?

ADE: I did not have to read it Siphon. I have been waiting for it. Now that it is here there is nothing more we can do. We are going out on the street.

SIPHO: (DEMANDING) Mama, where is the letter? I want to see the letter!

ADE: Listen to what I am going to tell you first. I will not be able to tell you the entire story. I do not have that energy. As you may remember, we were living on a farm before we came here. Our family had been on the farm for 67 years, working for the Francke family. On the farm I was everything: a cook, washerwoman, gardener, cleaner and even mistress.

SIPHO: What do you mean by mistress, Ma?

ADE: (HESITATING) Uhm. That is a story for another day, child. (PAUSE) When you were about eight years your father was killed.

SIPHO: (SHOCKED) Killed? Who killed him? Why would anyone want to kill my father?

ADE: Listen carefully, Siphho. When you were about eight your father suffered from severe TB and, when he died Baas Francke would not allow us to bury him on the farm. Following that there was unrest on the farm, which finally forced him to relent. However, two days after that we were evicted from the farm. All these years we couldn't even visit his grave.

SIPHO: Why did he hate him so much?

ADE: Well, I think he was driven more by jealousy. But I will not get to that now. One day you will know what I mean. When your father was dying Baas Franscke would not even allow me to visit him. Your father died a lonely and painful death, Siphho. (STILL SOBBING) That is the story I wanted to tell you, my child.

SIPHO: Why would he be jealous, Ma? For what I know my father was poor. Why would

he be jealous? (SOB) But Ma, you should have told me about this. All these years I blamed my father for our misfortunes. (ANGRY) These bastards! Ma, we must do something about this! We have to see father's grave! Where is the letter?

ADE: Look in that jug.

SFX: CUTLERY SOUND. PAUSE.

SIPHO: (INCREDULOUS) Ma! Why did you not give me this letter?

ADE: Of what good is the letter now, Siphho?

SIPHO: Ma, this letter has nothing to do with eviction or the farm. This is a reply to my application for a job. Oh Ma! I was supposed to have gone for an interview two days ago.

PAUSE: INSIDE ROOM. SILENCE.

ADE: (SLOWLY) I am sorry, my child. I did not know. I never thought we could have good news. I always thought the worst for us. Forgive me, my child. Forgive me.

SIPHO: I understand you Ma. I understand. I am thinking of going to this address. Just to try my luck.

BRIDGE UP AND FADE.

SCENE TWO:

SFX: TOWN NOISES: OFFICE NOISES.

SIPHO: Good afternoon, Ma'am. Can I see Mr Francke, please?

RECEPTIONIST: Do you have an appointment with him, sir?

SIPHO: No Ma'am. I received this letter but I could not come earlier.

REC: Can you wait here, please? I will find out if he can see you. But he is too busy.

PAUSE.

SFX: OFFICE NOISES.

FRANCKE: I see. How old are you, Mr Duma?

SIPHO: I am 28 years, sir.

FRANCKE: Do you have brothers and sisters?

SIPHO: No sir. I stay with my mother.

FRANCKE: How old is she?

SIPHO: She turns 71 in June, sir.

FRANCKE: Mr Duma, I think you understand that you came too late for the interview. I do not think there is anything I can do. But I will see what I can do. I want you to come here with your mother at 4:30 this afternoon.

SIPHO: My mother?

FRANCKE: Yes please.

SIPHO: But my...

FRANCKE: Here is money for transport. Make sure you are here at 4:30, please.

PAUSE.

SFX: INSIDE ROOM: SILENCE.

ADE: Siphon, I do not understand this. Why am I here? Where is this man?

SIPHO: Let us wait a bit, Ma. I too am puzzled why he wants to see you.

ADE: I do not trust white people. Is this not a trick? I worked for white people all my life.

Look at me now. I have no life and no money. All they want from you is your blood, after that they discard you. You may think you are free now in this country, but never trust a white man.

SIPHO: But Ma some of them are better.

ADE: You know nothing, my child. Your education has blinded you to a number of things.

We grew up under the yoke of the white man; we understand him. We know him more than he knows himself. As long as you work and do not question him he will be less harsh to you.

When you smile and laugh he thinks you are happy. How can you be happy when you do not have a shelter, food or even dignity?

SIPHO: But Ma...

ADE: There are no buts here, Siphon. What I am saying to you is as true as it was hundred years ago.

SIPHO: Ma, things are changing. We are living in a new country. It may be that your generation was sceptical of each other. A lot has changed since 1994.

ADE: Changed? Yet you still sleep on an empty stomach? What has changed there? Do you know what has changed? You have become familiar with the yoke. Living a life lower than anyone has become a norm, it is so natural that you do not see yourself in a better position. *Your* generation is living in a dream, Sipho. By the time you wake up you would have lost everything.

SIPHO: (LAUGHING) Ma, since when did you become a politician?

ADE: That is the problem with your generation. You do not ask anything from us. You think you know all. Do you? No. You are just lost. When we were working on the farm the white man thought we were cut off from the country. He tried to keep us inside the farm so that we did not get a *bad* influence. Little did he know that we were abreast of him. He did not know that. You do not know that. A lot happened on those farms, but no one is prepared to talk to us. We die with all that knowledge because we are invisible. I may be old, but I have seen and heard a lot in my life, my child.

SIPHO: Sssh Ma. Here he comes.

SFX: APPROACHING STEPS.

FRANCKE: I am sorry to make you wait. I thought my mother would be able to come here.

Ma, how are you?

ADE: I am fine, Sir.

FRANCKE: Just call me Francke, please. Please come this way.

BRIDGE-UP AND FADE.

SCENE THREE:

FX: CUPS AND SAUCERS.

FRANCKE: You must be wondering why I brought you here. Mama Duma and Siphho, I want you to help me with something very important. Deep down I feel that you will be able to help. I know that when people are summoned to the lawyers they feel uncomfortable. I do not blame them. I certainly do not blame you. I will be brief because it is getting late. I want you to help me trace some people.

SIPHO: Trace people? We cannot do that! You want us to be spies? No sir, forget it.

FRANCKE: Siphho, do not be suspicious of all white people. As a lawyer I have seen how blacks in this country have suffered. But, do we have to live in that past? You are only 28 and I am 26; I do not think we are tarnished by that past. Yes, we are our father's sons but we are also fathers of the future. We are living in a country in which we young people can and should chart a new path, a path of mutual respect and mutual understanding. We cannot wish the past away, but also, we cannot be prisoners of that past. We must move on.

SIPHO: I do not see where this talk is taking us.

FRANCKE: I was just answering your question. I have been longing to see you and your mother for many years. When I saw your name in the application letter I knew I had finally found you.

SIPHO: I do not understand you, sir.

FRANCKE: Ma-Duma understands. For your information, I grew up on a farm until I was 10 years old. I was raised by a black mother whose child was my only true friend and brother. I do not know what happened but when I woke up one day they were gone. I was about six at the time and did not understand what was happening. My parents would not tell me what happened to them. I was lonely and confused. For the past 20 years I have been trying to understand why they would simply leave me like that. All these years I have been living with that hollowness inside me. Ever since, I have been trying to find them. When I received your letter I knew that the search was over. That is why I called you here.

SIPHO: (STILL LOST) But...? Ma, do you understand all this?

ADE: Yes Sipho, I do understand. This is Frans Francke, your white brother!

SIPHO: What? Frans? Ma, is this the son of the man who killed my father? How can you?

ADE: Sipho, I want you to listen to Francke very carefully. You yourself said some whites are better than others. I am as shocked as you are. All these years I have been silently angry. But, my children, you are the building blocks of this country. You are the generation in between. You are couched between the ugly past and the brighter tomorrow. The world is ready for your voices, voices that are not laden with any baggage. This short journey from my house here has opened my eyes to a lot about this country. We are relics of the past; we should give you a chance to heal this land. Even then, there is a lot we can offer still.

SIPHO: But they killed my father, Ma!

FRANCKE: Sipho, I am glad you know what happened on the farm. That makes things easier for me. Ma has just said we are the building blocks. If we do not stick together there is no way we will be able to build this country. My family violated your family. That I know. But there is something you do not know. My family has been living in hell for the part they played in the past. Forget about the public face they always present; they are miserable inside. My father died a miserable man. At the time of his death he could not even speak due to a major stroke. He died with everything I wanted to know. As for mother, things are different. I have tried to talk to her about a number of issues but she would not speak. All she does these days is cry. She could not even face you. She does not want to talk about the past, but at the same time she wants to bring closure to that past. It is going to be a long journey for her. We must be part of that journey with her.

ADE: I am sorry to hear that. I know what she is going through. We went through torture together, although of a different kind. The same hand that forced me down was the same hand that squeezed her heart. We could not do anything. We were both victims of the

circumstances. We women suffer in silence most of the time. We cannot defend ourselves and cannot talk about what happens to us and around us. That has been our fate, my children.

SIPHO: Ma, you did not tell me about these things until today.

ADE: Today, Siphon, is always before tomorrow. There is no right time to do or say things.

That is why you have to act today to realize your tomorrow. If we had the chances you have today, we would have made this country a better place. But you have that chance.

Themba, your mother and I should meet to bring closure to our past.

FRANCKE: (SURPRISED) Themba! No one ever called me by that name since you left the farm, Ma-Duma!

SIPHO: Is this the Themba you once told me about, Ma?

ADE: (SAD AND THOUGHTFULLY) The same, Siphon. The same. Siphon and Themba – my little boys.

BRIDGE-UP AND FADE.

**Appendix G:** (source: SABC archives, Port Elizabeth):

	<b>SABC RADIO STATIONS (FORMER AND PRESENT)</b>	<b>1<sup>ST</sup> BROADCAST DATE</b>
1	B Programmes or Afrikaans Diens ... became Radio Suid-Afrika ... became Afrikaans Stereo ... became Radio Sonder Grense (RSG)	1937 1986 1992 1996
2	A Programme or English Service ... became Radio South Africa ... became Safm ...	1/8/1936 1986 1/3/1995
3	Radio 5 ... became 5FM	13/10/1975 1992
4	Radio Highveld ... became Highveld stereo ...	1/9/1964 1/4/1988
5	Radio Good Hope ... became Good Hope FM ...	1/7/1965 1992
6	RadioPortNatal ... became RPN Stereo ... became East Coast Radio ...	1/5/1967 1980 1996 (sold in 1996)
7	Radio Jacaranda ... became Jacaranda Stereo ...	1/7/1985 1/6/1990 (sold in 1996)
8	Radio Oranje ...	1/6/1985 (sold in 1996)
9	Radio Algoa ...	1/1/1986 (sold in 1996)
10	Radio Kontrei ... became Kfm ...	1990 1991 (sold in 1996)
11	Radio Metro ... became Metro FM ...	1/9/1986 1998
12	Radio Lotus ...	8/1/1983
13	Radio Bob ...	5/12/1978
14	Radio 2000 ...	1/1/1987
15	Radio Sunshine ...	2/2/1992
16	LM Radio ...	1935 – 9/10/1975
17	Springbok Radio ...	1/5/1950 – 1985
18	School Radio Service ...	1964
19	Radio RSA ... became Channel Africa ...	1966 1996
20	Radio Bantu ...	1945 (first on MW in Zulu)
21	Radio Sesotho ... became Lesedi FM ...	1/1/1962 1996
22	Radio Zulu ... became Ukhozi ...	1/1/1962 1996

23	Radio Setswana ... became Motseleding FM ...	1/6/1962 1996
24	Radio Lebowa ... became Thobela FM ...	1/6/1962 1996
25	Radio Tsonga ... became Mhungana Lonene ...	1/2/1965 1996
26	Radio Venda ... became Phala Phala ...	1/2/1965 1996
27	Radio Swazi ... became Ligwalagwala FM ...	1982 1996
28	Radio Ndebele ... became Ikwewezi ...	16/3/1983 1996
29	Radio Xhosa ... became Umhlobo Wenene ...	1966 1996

**Appendix H:** (source: <http://www.olderadio.com/archives/international/safrica.html>)

**Public Commercial Services (owned by SABC – target young audiences):**

- Metro FM – (hip-hop/urban).
- Five FM – (alternative/dance/urban)

**Public Broadcast Services (owned by the SABC – focus on the indigenous languages spoken in certain areas of the country):**

- SAFM (based at SABC Johannesburg) – National English Programme.
- RSG (in Afrikaans Radio Sonder Grense) – National Afrikaans Programme.
- Ukhozi FM (at SABC Durban) – Regional Zulu Programme.
- Umhlobo Wenene FM (at SABC Port Elizabeth) – National Xhosa Programme.
- Radio 2000 (in Johannesburg) – National music and entertainment station.
- Ligwalagwala FM (at SABC Nelspruit) – Regional Swazi Programme.
- Munghana Lonene (at SABC Polokwane) – Regional Tsonga Programme.
- Thobela FM (same as above) – Regional Venda Programme.
- Lotus FM (at SABC Durban) – National Indian Programme.

**Private Commercial Radio (privately owned – adult contemporary and variations thereof):**

- 94.7 Highveld Stereo (Johannesburg).
- East Coast Radio (Durban/KwaZulu - Natal).
- KFM 94.5 (Cape Town/Western Cape).
- Radio Oranje (Bloemfontein/Free State/Northern Cape)
- Jacaranda 94.2 (Port Elizabeth/Eastern Cape)
- Radio Algoa (Port Elizabeth/Eastern Cape).

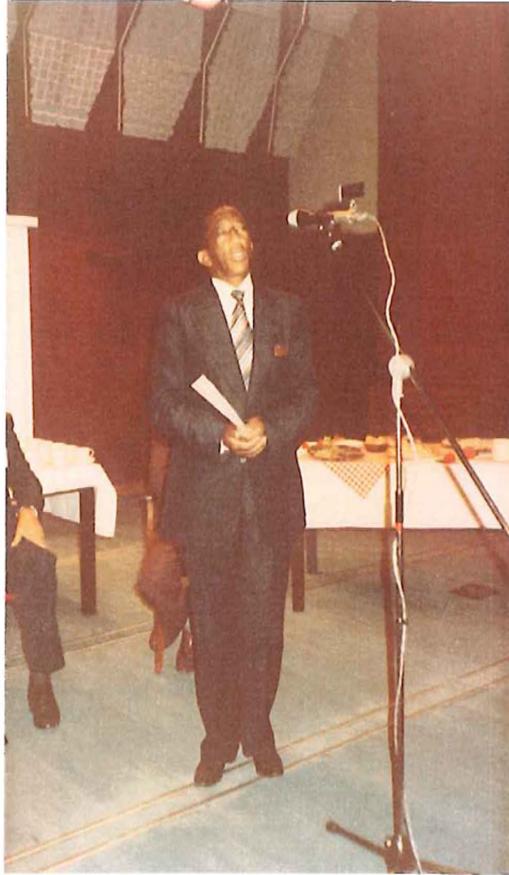
**New Stations:**

- Kaya FM 95.9 (Johannesburg) – Jazz-orientated.
- YFM 99.2 (Johannesburg) – R&B/hip-hop formats.
- Classic FM (Johannesburg) – Classic.
- P4 Radio (Durban) – Jazz.
- P4 Radio (Cape Town) – Jazz.

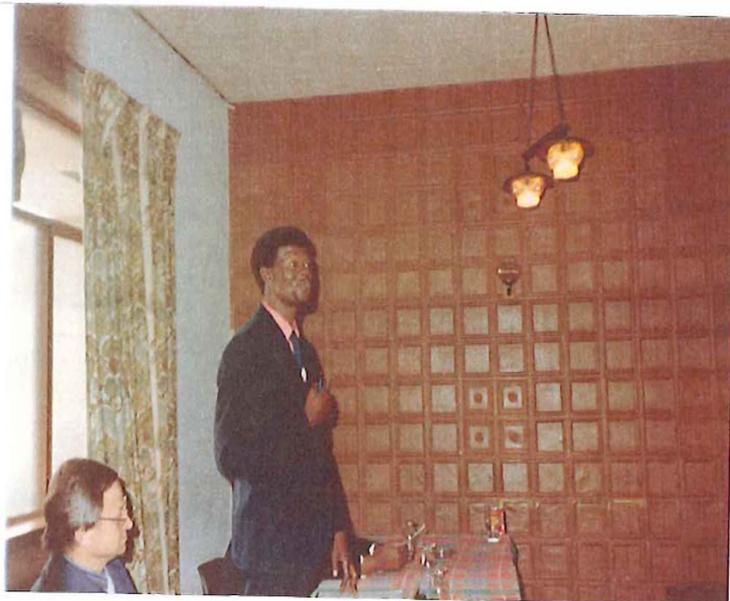
Appendix I: Letter, employees and playwrights of the Xhosa-language radio station



(fig i) Some of the letters from the audience.



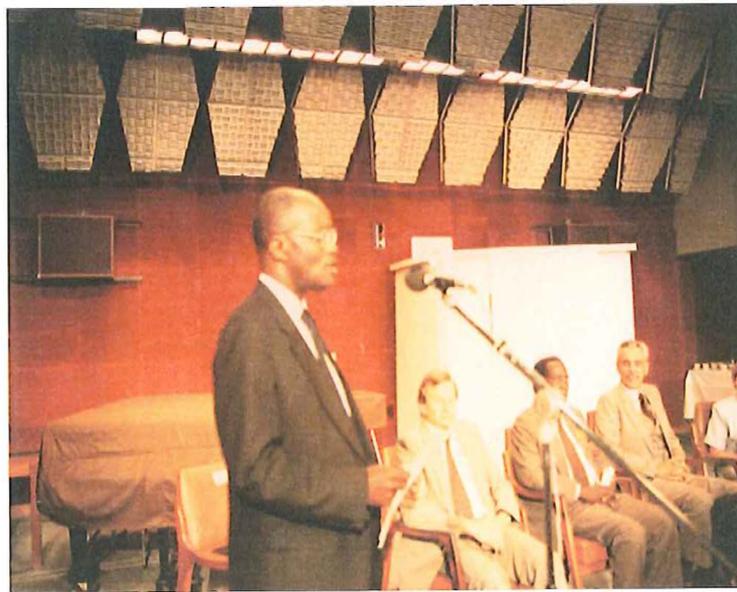
(fig ii) Mr Given Ntlebi addressing winners at the Radio Play Competition Prize giving.



(fig iii) Mr Mandla Myeko giving a speech



(fig iv) Mr Mncedi Rhadebe, Radio Xhosa *imbingi*.



(fig v) Mr Augustine 'Xhegolam' Nongauza giving a speech.

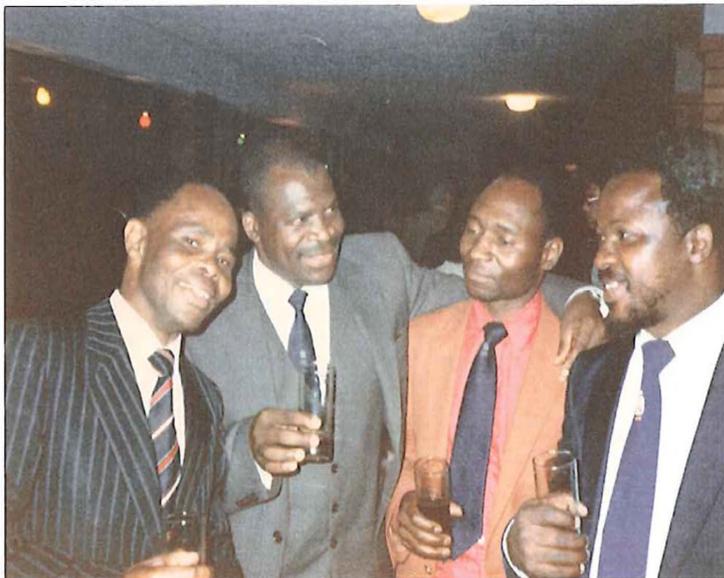


(fig vi) Former Radio Xhosa announcers.

Behind: Peter Bacela, Reggie Magenuka, Augustine Nongauza, Gidion Rotile.

Middle: Dumezweni Bokwe, Lizo Gqomfa, Patrick Silimela, Dawie Joubert.

Front: Ndyebo Nkosi, Jannie du Toit, Fezeka Matiyase, Thembela Mhlengi.



(fig vii) Dumezweni Bokwe, Reggie Magenuka, Gidion Rotile and Lizo Gqomfa.

