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Radio Theatre: the moral play and its mediation of socio-cultural realities in Kenya

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Chapter one

"Bringing Radio Drama Home": [1] An Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Radio drama in Kenya has always been produced for the state broadcaster. Consequently, its production has been informed by 'official' discourse, as opposed to popular discourse, a field that has attracted a lot of academic work in Africa (Newell 2000, 2002; Barber 1987, 1997, 2000; Nyairo 2004; Ogola 2004; Odhiambo 2004; Fabian 2000). And yet, the subject matter of radio drama is drawn from everyday life, reflective of the issues, anxieties and joys of those who consume them (Gunner 2000). Is it then possible to analyze radio drama, produced for the state broadcaster, as a popular cultural product? In what ways can one go about such a research, given the complication created by radio drama's production for a state broadcaster? Taking an interdisciplinary approach, this thesis will draw from various disciplines including literature, media, theatre, popular culture and history to analyze the kinds of texts that have been produced as radio drama in Kenya. In the event, we will constantly attempt to problematize the relationship between the radio drama programme under analysis, and the state broadcaster, for which it is produced.

The aim of the study is to examine the dramatized narratives of *Radio Theatre* that represent moral, educational and developmental themes in Kenya. *Radio Theatre* is the longest running radio drama programme in the English language in Kenya. It is a

[1] This is the narrator's welcome note to the audience as part of the opening sequel of *Radio Theatre* play. It immediately places the drama programme within the terrain of this study, where *Radio Theatre* is read within the domestic sphere.

programme that features one-act plays that run for about 30 minutes each week on the state-controlled Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC). The plays are aired every Sunday at 9:30 p.m. with repeats on Thursdays at 10:00 a.m.[2] *Radio Theatre* was first aired in 1982[3] for Voice of Kenya (VOK) in a period when Kenyan theatre and other cultural productions such as music, faced immense government interference including censorship (Kariuki 1996, Ogot 1995; Ochieng and Karimi 1982, Odhiambo 1987; 2004, Odhiambo 2002, Ngugi wa Thiongo 1997).

We are particularly interested in exploring the nature of the *Radio Theatre* plays and their preoccupation with moral narratives set in the domestic sphere, which we argue was a result of a culture of censorship that defined President Daniel arap Moi, Kenya's second president's state and its censorship policies especially from 1982 (Odhiambo 2002). In looking at the plays and their themes of marriage, love, sex and romance, we attempt to show that beyond being staged for purposes of light entertainment, these plays were presented as educational in order to fulfil certain requirements that the state had of the broadcasting house. However, as we argue in chapter two, the choice to air these plays as moral worked in favour of *Radio Theatre*'s script-writers and producers. It was safely removed from the prying eyes of the state, but it still allowed the script-writers to experiment with topics that did not show any overt concern with state politics. Instead,

[2] This information is based on the production of the programme up to 2006. There have been several changes in KBC since, including the appointment of a new producer, Alex Mbathi who may have brought changes that the researcher may not have taken into consideration. The researcher has however, remained in contact with the former producer, Nzau Kalulu, producer of *Radio Theatre* from early 1995 to 2006.

[3] As will be made clear in the study, 1982 is the date that will be used as the official date for two reasons: it is the date given by one of *Radio Theatre's* longest serving producers Nzau Kalulu; it is also a significant year in Kenya's history that informed the policies on censorship which inevitably affected all public creative productions in Kenya. However, there is evidence that the programme existed before this date, including the fact that there was a Kiswahili version of the same, called *Mchezo wa Wiki* (*Play of the Week*) (Heath 1986).

script-writers were able to draw from the large pool of everyday life, which touched base with the experiences of listeners, and in doing so, became a space that listeners could relate to.

The study has focused on recurring themes in the programme that have over the years been used to produce different storylines for various plays.[4] One of the most common themes is national unity. While Kenya is made up of 42 or more ethnic groups, one of the agendas of the state is to create the idea of a unified nation anxious to unite its different ethnic groups (Ogude 1999; Simatei 2001). As such, we look at how broadcasting has been used as an instrument to this end. The play that is analyzed shows a restructuring of Kenyan history in order to reflect a nation united in its difference. The play uses a narrative of marriage to encourage a parallel reading of Kenya's national history. In reviewing this play, we attempt to locate the role of KBC as a means through which the current Kibaki government (which inherited some of Moi's ideologies) has attempted to create an impression of a united nation by rewriting historical narratives and projecting a nation that embraces difference positively. In doing so, we look at the manner in which the play presents itself as an avenue for educating listeners about such differences, but also look at the spaces that the play presents for questioning such state agendas.

Another common theme that runs through several plays is that of sexual morality. In the study, we focus on how this theme has been used to review intimate relationships of romance and marriage in the Kenyan society. The *Radio Theatre* plays analyzed

[4] *Radio Theatre* has a tendency of recycling plays. Plays such as *Not Now* and *Immoral Network* analysed in this thesis, have been produced more than once. Thus, even though the sample of plays analysed is small, the recurring themes become useful in showing an established pattern in the production of the plays.

demonstrate dominant views of sexual morality that emphasize proper moral behaviour within relationships while highlighting the punishment of immoral behaviour. We attempt to read these plays against KBC's self-imposed role of agenda setting, where as an agent 'of change… [KBC aids in] social mobilization - raising social ideas that promote desirable health and environment to the level of people's desire… [and] ethicize on important issues and show the way…' (Mudhai 1998: 124). We also read the plays in the context of the alternative popular moralities and general attitudes towards representations of sexuality in the Kenyan media. In our analyses, we are interested in how selected plays problematize any simplistic representation of dominant sexual moral narratives.

The last theme that is analyzed is that of development. We analyse the contents of a number of plays and argue that *Radio Theatre* provides different possibilities for listeners to consume its plays as developmental at individual levels. The sub-themes analyzed range from those that deal with HIV/AIDs to those that focus on infertility and forced marriage. Using theories of development communication and Entertainment-Education (EE) to analyse plays that deal with development issues and how these are communicated to listeners, we attempt to argue that the selected plays mirror the work that is being done elsewhere by NGO groups in Kenya. Kimani Njogu (2005) in analyzing the role of developmental soap operas in Kenya discusses at length the link between the media and reproductive health, as well as traditional practices affecting development in Kenya today. In his words,

> Media efforts are critical in health promotion and there are numerous initiatives in Africa that are using media outlets to improve the quality of life for people…some of these initiatives address gender equity, HIV and AIDs, poverty, maternal-child health, malaria, environmental conservation, and access to food, shelter and education. The mediums for these interventions range from spot advertisements to music videos, magazine programmes, cartoon strips, folk performances, sports and radio and television soap operas. Popular culture is being viewed as a vital way of dealing with serious issues through community involvement and participation (Njogu 2005:1).

As can be seen above, developmental themes are specifically targeted at various groups to promote particular agendas. The thesis therefore considers such themes as possibly being influenced by NGO based concerns, signalling possible collaborative work between KBC and other organizations to promote developmental agendas in Kenya (Njogu 2005).

In this chapter, we attempt to rationalize the choice of radio drama as an area of study. Through a literature review, the study attempts to locate the current existing gaps in the study of radio drama in Africa. The chapter then provides a context for reading *Radio Theatre*'s production in Kenya under Moi's dictatorial rule and methods of censorship that affected the content, quality and message of the radio plays produced. This is followed by a brief synopsis of *Radio Theatre* plays before exploring the theoretical framework and methodology that will be used to read them.

1.2 Locating the gaps in radio drama studies in Africa

Radio drama is a genre that operates within the sociology of everyday life, and yet it has received little academic attention (McLeish 1994; Hilmes and Loviglio 2002; Lewis 1981). This is largely because it operates within the radio medium, which has been allocated a marginal space both in academia as well as outside it. In the words of Peter M. Lewis 'radio is everybody's private possession, yet nobody recognizes it in public' (2000:161). This lack of recognition, Lewis goes on to explain, is partly due to the deficiency of a theoretical language with which to relate radio to cultural discussions. According to scholars of radio such as Michelle Hilmes, one reason for this lack is the entry of television into the world of broadcasting, where it has taken centre stage in theoretical and industrial discussions at the expense of radio, especially in most Western societies (Hilmes 2000).

However, in Africa, television and other forms of new media such as the Internet do not play as significant a role as the radio medium (Fardon and Furniss 2000; Mushengyezi 2003). While other forms of mass media communication are expensive and inaccessible to many Africans, radio remains an affordable means for receiving information and entertainment both in the rural as well as the urban areas. Radio also plays a significant dual role as an audio medium one of which is that it relates to the oral nature of most African cultures (Hofmeyr 1993). According to Hofmeyr, radio is one of the 'form[s] of leisure that competed powerfully with [oral] storytelling' in the advent of modern African societies (1993:58). Radio also bridges the illiteracy gap that exists in several African

countries. Sub-Saharan Africa mostly consists of developing countries whose access to formal education is minimal due to insufficient infrastructure. As such, a large number of Africans have basic reading and writing skills and they mainly access their information through radio. In this way, radio penetrates the borders of public life and enters into the private spaces of everyday life, maintaining contact with the social realities that frame African cultures. This aspect has been of interest to sociological and developmental theorists of radio who have explored its different social functions in Africa (Spitulnik 2000; Myers 2000).

Given this background, it is then curious that one of the most consumed forms of radio, the radio drama genre, has received little academic attention in Africa. Most existing scholarship is concentrated in South Africa, which has the longest history of radio drama in Africa (Gunner 2000). Liz Gunner (2000) for instance, has done considerable amount of work on Zulu radio drama, tracing its origins to the years of white supremacy and how it survived censorship against the odds. Khaya Gqibitole (2002) also traces the role that Xhosa radio drama played during the apartheid era. For both Gunner and Gqibitole, radio drama survived because it hid 'in the thicket of language' where expressions and dialogues that addressed the oppressive situation of the black people were wrapped in various aspects of language including proverbs, sayings and moral axioms (Gunner 2000:228). Other theorists have also focused on South African plays written in local languages and have explained how the tactic of using language creatively helped to define radio drama in South Africa (Sibiya 2001; Tshamano 1993). This body of work however mainly focuses on radio drama produced in specific African languages rather

than those produced in the English language as is the case with the plays being analysed in this study.

Very few critical works of radio drama in the English language in Africa exist. Current works include *Textures* a journal that was produced in the 80s and 90s by the University of the Orange Free State in South Africa.[5] In this journal, various critics responded to the lack of academic interest in radio drama in the English language in South Africa (Brooks 1994; Ullyatt 1994; Heale 1988). Elsewhere in Africa, Ernst Wendland's work on Nyanja radio drama presented by a popular Zambian radio dramatist Julius Chongo is of interest because although he analyses vernacular radio drama, he manages to translate the plays making them accessible to the researcher while still retaining the rich cultural texture that makes the plays particularly Zambian (2006). His work is useful because it provides a methodology for reading the language of radio drama in relation to its imagined listeners.

In Kenya, work on radio drama, and even more generally on radio broadcasting is almost non-existent. Most of the work that exists on the media in Kenya is focused on the press, mostly on leading Kenyan newspapers such as *The Nation* and *The East African Standard* (Odhiambo 2002, Ochieng 1992, Muriungi 2004, Mbeke 2008). Such works have interrogated the position of the press in relation to the state's lack of democratic policies, and focused on the role of the law and constitution in the protection of the press. Broadcasting has remained marooned with the state, with little attention being paid to the violations of freedom of expression that have accompanied its existence since the

[5] The University of the Orange Free State is currently known as The University of the Free State. *Textures* is a journal that mainly focuses on creative writing; first produced in 1985 by the Department of English.

colonial years. And yet, broadcasting, particularly radio, constitutes an important juncture through which media's relationship with the state can be studied (Heath 1992). In order to understand the context in which radio drama in Kenya operated therefore, it is imperative to analyze the historical and social conditions that defined broadcasting in the country. Apart from the immense work done by Carla Heath (1986, 1993), few works pay close attention to radio broadcasting and the relationship that the KBC has had with state.

The critical works that specifically focus on radio drama in Kenya are even fewer. Kimani Njogu's recently edited book on the developmental function of soap operas in Africa (2005) and Singhal and Rogers' analysis of developmental radio dramas in East Africa (2003), form part of the current existing literatures. Njogu discusses the role of radio drama soap operas in Kenya in enhancing health, and shaping behaviours in Kenya. Singhal and Rogers also look at the developmental aspects of East African soap operas combining television and radio serials and their role in development without necessarily prioritising radio drama as a form. While these works are important, they fail to locate radio drama in the context of its production in Kenya. In the following section, we look at the context of censorship in which *Radio Theatre* was produced. We argue that its focus on moral themes drawn from the everyday life was a result of censorship and self-censorship imposed on and by scriptwriters and producers who were operating within Moi's repressive regime.

1.3 'Paramoia': the politics of censorship in Kenya, and the production of *Radio Theatre*

1.3.1 Background

Radio Theatre was first produced in 1982, a critical year in Kenya's history. This was the year when Moi began to solidify his repressive tactics of leadership in order to tighten control of the nation (Heath 1992, Kariuki 1996). In June 1982, a section of the constitution (Section 2A) was revised, and Kenya became a *de jure* one party state, whereas from 1963, it had been a *de facto* one party state. Later in that year, a branch of the Kenya Air Force dissatisfied with Moi's tactics, attempted a coup, which did not succeed. The coup led Moi to tighten power around him, and to weed out his 'enemies'. According to James Kariuki (1996), Moi's political strategy for survival as a president was to 'imagine enemies' who had to be 'sought and destroyed' (69-70). Such enemies had been 'in existence' from the time that Moi became president in August, 1978, upon the death of Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, Kenya's first president until 1992, when both internal and external pressures forced him to contend with the idea of a multi-party state. Even then, Moi continued to rule Kenya as if it were a one party state until 2002, when Mwai Kibaki, Kenya's third president was voted in.

In order to understand Moi's machinery of censorship in Kenya, one has to understand how it played itself out. While there was no established law that actually censored any kinds of dissidence or outspokenness against the government (Odhiambo 2002), other tactics were used to silence these kinds of 'excesses'. Moi was faced with various kinds

of dissidents, including intellectuals, university students and politicians in the late 70s and early 80s in Kenya (Ogot 1995). There were intellectuals who consisted of university lecturers, as well as students of the University of Nairobi and later Kenyatta University, who were often dealt with harshly, in the event of a demonstration (Ogot 1995, Kariuki 1996, Odhiambo 2004). To provide a few examples, in 1979, University academics, including Atieno Odhiambo, Shadrack Guto, Micere Mugo, Michael Chege, Mukaru Ng'ang'a and others, were harassed for allegedly teaching subversive literature at the Universities, and all their passports were confiscated. Several arrests were to follow, during which most lecturers were detained without trial (Atieno Odhiambo 2004, Kariuki 1996, Ogot 1995). Tito Adungosi, a student leader and chairman of the Students' Organization of Nairobi University (SONU), was arrested for leading a celebration following the attempted coup in August of 1982. Adungosi was sentenced harshly on 24 September 1982, and died in prison on 27 December 1988, under mysterious circumstances (Ogot 1995). By 1988, very few dissidents remained in the universities, with most lecturers and academics, and in some cases students, having fled the country to save their lives (Atieno Odhiambo 2004). Dissident groups such as *Mwakenya* were also uncovered in the 1980s. *Mwakenya* was an underground organization whose membership included farmers, intellectuals, clerks, bankers, politicians and bureaucrats - in other words, people who Moi thought he could count on for loyalty. Several members of the organization were detained or sentenced to long jail terms, and Moi gave his security forces even more power to deal with dissent (Kariuki 1996).

Another method of censorship involved Moi's political methods of humiliating his opponents in public and later in assassinations. For instance, in 1983, Moi publicly accused one of his long standing political allies, Charles Njonjo, of treason. Njonjo, who was at the time the Minister of Constitutional Affairs and MP for Kikuyu constituency, was smoked out as one of the core organizers of the attempted coup in 1982. According to the Moi, he had tried to position himself in such a way that he would be elected as Kenya's next president. A commission of inquiry that was set to investigate Njonjo, later found him guilty of all his crimes except that of treason. In 1984, Moi publicly pardoned Njonjo, but Njonjo's political career was effectively finished in Kenya (Kariuki 1996, Ogot 1995).

In terms of assassinations, two prominent ones can be cited. In February 1990, Dr. Robert Ouko was brutally murdered near his home in Kisumu in Nyanza province. Moi saw Ouko as a threat to his presidency, and decided to 'take him out'.[6] In August 1990, Bishop Andrew Muge, a church official who had been very vocal about Moi's undemocratic style of leadership was suspiciously killed in a road crash, on his way from a gathering in Western Kenya. At the time of his death, the church had become the most vocal voice against Moi's regime. According to James Kariuki,

[6] Ouko's death was a blow to the Luo people of Kenya, who had held high hopes that Ouko would one day become president. The Luo, who form the third largest tribe in Kenya, have been marginalized from Kenyan politics since independence in spite of the key political roles that members of this tribe have played in Kenya (Odhiambo 2004, Ogot 1995). A lot of unrest was therefore reported, and several Luos were shot and killed by security officers on Moi's orders.

> At the time the church was indeed the only institution capable of providing an effective and vocal challenge to Moi. Since gatherings of more that three people in Kenya [were] proscribed, the church was the only forum where public meetings could take place without fear of arrest or political reprisals. In addition sermons are privileged speech and they are less subject to official censorship than other modes of public communication (Kariuki 1996: 78).

Because Moi was afraid to attack the church upfront, he selected individuals who became the brunt of his political allies' attacks. Prominent among these were Bishop Henry Okullu of Maseno South in Nyanza Province who was supported by members of the Law Society of Kenya, in their demand for a multi-party system in Kenya and a more democratic government.

1.3.2 Theatre: an obvious trouble spot

One of the most obvious trouble spots in such a repressive regime was theatre. Theatre had, even before Moi's regime, been targeted through the arrest of Ngugi wa Thiong'o. Ngugi, who at the time of his arrest was a leading novelist and the Chairman of the Department of Literature of the University of Nairobi, had established a community based theatre group at Kamiriithu Village in Limuru. The Kamiriithu Community Education and Cultural Centre was started in 1976-77, and it attracted poor peasants, factory workers and primary school teachers, who through theatre learnt of the various ways in which they could empower themselves and gain consciousness about their conditions (Bjorkman 1989). Importantly, over two-thirds of those who participated were

women, a fact that Ngugi celebrates, especially given the double oppression women suffer in patriarchal societies (Ngugi 1997). The first play that Ngugi wrote in 1977, together with Ngugi wa Mirii was called *Ngahika Ndeeda* (I will Marry When I Want), directed by Kimani Gecau. It was a direct attack on Kenyatta's government on their treatment of the working class or peasants. For Ngugi it was important to underline the involvement of the peasants, and he says 'although the script was drafted by Ngugi wa Mirii and me, the peasants and workers added to it, making the end product a far cry from the original draft' (Ngugi 1997:133). In January 1978, Ngugi was arrested, and Ngugi wa Mirii had to flee the country. Ngugi 'became the first Kenyan intellectual to be detained because of his works' (Ogot 1995:198). Clearly, academic freedom was already being curtailed by the time of Moi's entry into presidency.

However, the event of Ngugi's arrest set precedence, and in later years, literature and theatre were placed under close scrutiny. For instance, although Ngugi was to be released after Moi came to power in October 1978; his other play *Maitu Njugira* (Mother, Sing for Me) was banned even before it was ever shown publicly in 1982. To which, Ngugi responded (1997:136),

> In view of President Moi's recent public statements, attacking the theatre of Kamiriithu, one can now definitely say that the whole cultural repression was not an accident nor an isolated mistake by some over-zealous philistines in the provincial administration, but the deliberate, thought-out action of a *nervous regime* (Emphasis mine.)

The Kamiriithu centre, where Ngugi directed his plays was shut down, and in its place, a technical centre was built (Bjorkman 1989, Ngugi 1997). The government also banned other public performances of plays such as Joe de Graft's *Kilio* (Cry). This was a period marked by arrests and detentions of university lecturers and students as has already been discussed above. During this period, foreign shows such as Elspeth Huxley's *Flame Trees of Thika*, which depicted Africans as servants and animals were viewed positively (Bjorkan 1989, Ngugi 1997). As Ngugi argues, 'foreign theatre can freely thrive in Kenyan soil. But there is no room for Kenyan theatre on Kenyan soil' (136). In a personal conversation I had with James Ogude who had actually been involved in the production of one of KBC's oldest programmes in the English language station, *Books and Bookmen*, it was clear that any literary, theatrical or cultural production that targeted the masses during both the Kenyatta and Moi eras, were seen as a threat to the regimes. They were 'safe' for as long as they were directed at the elites (Personal conversation, 2008).

1.3.3 KBC, censorship and *Radio Theatre*

It is in light of this background that we approach *Radio Theatre*'s production. It was obviously produced in a repressive climate, where theatre and other public forms of expression were viewed with suspicion. *Radio Theatre*, being produced for a state broadcaster was therefore, inadvertently, under constant surveillance. In an interview with Nzau Kalulu, one of the long standing producers, this surveillance was demonstrated through the presence of the Kenyan Army, which aside from protecting the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation offices, also become the visual reminder of the government's

watchful eyes. Kalulu who mentioned the uniformed army members more than once during the interview, reminding the researcher constantly, that their presence was felt by each employee at KBC. The Kenyan Army had been present at the KBC gates since 1982, after the attempted coup. During the attempted coup, the Air Force's first destination had been the broadcasting house. Fardon and Furniss (2000) mention in the introduction to *African Broadcast Cultures*, that this was one way through which coups were executed.

However, the producer also mentions that even though he was never directly censored, as no actual censorship law existed (see Odhiambo 2002; Heath 1986), he knew there were themes he was never allowed to produce (Interview 2004). For him, the worst experience 'was to be called in by the bosses, and asked to account for something that had been said in the plays' (Interview 2004). As such, together with the scriptwriters, Kalulu was careful to avoid 'the controversial topics'. In fact he even dismissed 'political' themes altogether, arguing that

> Political themes in the Moi era were redundant and caused unnecessary disruption. There were other more interesting themes to research on (Interview, 2004).

According to Nzau, it was only after 1998, that *Radio Theatre* was able to freely engage in political subjects. This is because unlike the press, broadcasting was slow in its uptake

of multiple broadcasting stations after the media was liberalized in 1991. As Okoth Mudhai (1998) has shown, while

> Press freedom [was elevated] to a new plane …[that] saw an unprecedented explosion…characterised by a plethora of new magazines publishing 'taboo issues' for instance, the government maintained tight control on the broadcasting media, terming the airwaves a scarce resource amid accusations that broadcast licences [were] being unfairly dished out to only politically correct applicants… (119).

It is only in 1998 that radio stations like Capitol FM, Kiss FM and dozens of other smaller FM stations were able to start operating, and even then, these operations were restricted to the Nairobi area (Odhiambo 2007). This new competition forced KBC out of its shell to start experimenting with new ideas. Even then, the political themes explored in *Radio Theatre* were tame and right wing. For instance, the play *Jamhuri Day Special*, which is analyzed in chapter three, was produced in 2004. It engages with national political themes, although it involves a domestic narrative storyline, and supports the government's call for national unity.

In an interview between Nzau Kalulu and some of the actors and scriptwriters of *Radio Theatre* (2005),[7] it became apparent that politics and censorship were not important aspects of their engagements with *Radio Theatre*. For instance, one 'new' scriptwriter,

[7] The interviews were aired on KBC during the *Radio Theatre* slots. The special episode titled 'Profiles of Actors and Scriptwriters' were aired on 9 January 2005 and 16 January 2005, during which Nzau Kalulu interviewed various actors and scriptwriters about their contributions and experiences in *Radio Theatre*.

Selina Njoki speaks about her 'biggest challenge in *Radio Theatre* [which] is to satisfy people with the right kinds of scripts' (Interview with Nzau 2005). She speaks of a play she wrote, titled *A Man is still a Man* (2004) which was a play about sexual abuse of children by family members. For Njoki, the story was inspired by a story told to her by a friend, and which she says is relevant to million of Kenyans (Interview with Nzau 2005). Most of these actors and scriptwriters are products of University of Nairobi's School of Journalism, or the Kenya Institute of Mass Communication (KIMC). As such, their anxieties are more on the quality of production, and how *Radio Theatre* enhances their own acting abilities. Constantly, they mention the connection that *Radio Theatre* has with everyday realities.

The two most popular scriptwriters, Steve Mattias and Michael Kyalo, who have written the most number of scripts for *Radio Theatre* over the years, also constantly rely on a crop of stories drawn from their own experiences or the experiences of people around them (Interview 2005). Sometimes, these stories are even drawn from popular fictional works, as we see in the play *Whatever it Takes* analyzed later in this study. *Whatever it Takes* was moulded around Frederick Forsyth's short story 'No Comebacks' (1982), which featured in a collection of short stories by the same name. While one may want to argue with the obvious ways in which these scriptwriters, actors and producer avoid political themes, it is possible to argue that *Radio Theatre* was actually using an alternative method of production, in which rather than be confrontational with KBC and government policies and restrictions, it followed a different path, borrowing themes from everyday life.

Wolfram Frommlet (1991) has asserted that most radio plays in Africa are actually 'based on problems and aspects of contemporary African societies, rural traditions and values contrasting urban behaviours and ideas; the search for cultural identity in times of rapid change; socio-economic problems, emancipation of women in predominantly male oriented society' among a host of other themes (7). For Frommlet, these radio dramas are useful 'in making a radio audience aware about problems, conflicts and possible solutions within society' (1991:7) and that there are people from all over Africa 'who can provide the content for radio programmes with their experiences, with their life-stories…' (1991:8). To study *Radio Theatre* is to acknowledge the relationship it has with its audience, without ignoring the over-bearing presence of KBC as a state broadcaster and the influence this has on the production of the plays.

1.4 *Radio Theatre*: The one-act play

This thesis intends to cover the existing gaps in radio drama studies by reading one of Kenya's longest running programmes, *Radio Theatre* as a cultural form. What is interesting and unique about *Radio Theatre* is that it is also the only one-act radio drama programme in English in Kenya. It produces an average of 50 plays a year, providing a large space for exploring as many themes as possible that speak to various aspects of Kenyan everyday realities. *Radio Theatre* plays are enacted using the English language, making them accessible to the 45 or so ethnic groups in Kenya. They deal with themes that cut across these cultures, and that inform the lived experiences of their imagined listeners. The universality of themes such as romance, love, marriage and sex is

punctuated by experiences that are very local. As Michel de Certeau has argued, 'analyses that an author would fain believe universal are traced back to nothing more than the expression of the local' (de Certeau 1984:ix). The themes in *Radio Theatre* are expressed through local themes, language, register, plot, settings and characterization.

Although there are several radio drama programmes that can be studied, including *Ushikwapo Shikamana*, *Matatizo*, *A Better Tomorrow*, and *Twende na Wakati,*[8] *Radio Theatre* was chosen for this research because it is the longest running one-act radio drama programme in the English language in Kenya. The producer Nzau Kalulu claims that it first began in 1982, though there are indications that it could have existed before this date (2006). Programme line-ups from as early as 1954 show the existence of a *Radio Theatre* programme which was aired for a white audience (Heath 1986). There was also a Kiswahili 'version' of *Radio Theatre* called *Mchezo wa Wiki* (play of the week) in the late 1970s and early 1980s. There is little evidence to connect the various 'versions' of *Radio Theatre*. Nevertheless, one can argue that *Radio Theatre* is an umbrella title for plays that deal with themes that mainly circulate around the moral dramas of everyday lives and as such, focusing on the programme allows one to gain insight into how radio drama has functioned in Kenya over the years. Because of its format of airing one-act plays, it is possible to analyse as many storylines as possible compared to the continuous format of most serialized dramas.

[8] *Twende na Wakati* is actually a radio soap opera produced in Tanzania but is often reviewed together with the Kenyan radio drama programmes such as *Ushikwapo Shikamana* because they are both concerned with health and development as key themes. See both Njogu 2005, and Singhal and Rogers 2003. The other programmes constitute short radio plays that have featured sporadically throughout Kenyan radio stations. For instance *A Better Tomorrow* was featured for a specific period of time in KBC English Service before it went off air.

The use of one-act plays as opposed to the continuous storyline format of other radio drama programmes in Kenya ensures that *Radio Theatre* plays can offer immediate solutions and moral lessons their imagined listeners. Unlike *Radio Theatre*, most radio plays in Kenya such as *Ushikwapo Shikamana* use serialized narrative formats that span long periods, normally with over one hundred episodes.[9] Serialized plays 'are segmented and produce an interruption' in the listening process (Allen 1994:1). Understandably, serialized narratives are meant to create 'regular audiences' by making them 'hooked' onto narratives that could however end up 'dragging on, as if nothing ever happens' (Ang 1993:87). *Radio Theatre* plays, however, are once-off dramas that have moral endings to different plays each week, in which they constantly create solutions to different issues raised in each play.[10]

1.4.1 The selection of plays

Radio Theatre plays are aired every week, including public holidays, and it is possible to roughly estimate a production of 50 plays a year.[11] Most of these plays deal with plots of everyday life in order to comment on various moral, educational and developmental issues based on themes in the domestic space. Although there is an impressive number of plays produced every year, and even though *Radio Theatre* has been running for decades,

[9] By 2004, *Ushikwapo Shikamana* had aired over 206 episodes.
[10] Even for those plays that are spread out over more than a week, such as *3 Times a Lady* (which appears in three parts), analysed in this thesis, each week's part of the play holds out a moral lesson, and has an ending which allows for the play to be self-contained and not necessarily dependent on the rest of its parts.
[11] While it is true that *Radio Theatre* is produced even during public holidays, sometimes the producer uses its time-slots to produce other material besides the plays. For instance, on December 18 and 25, 2006, Nzau Kalulu aired pre-recorded interviews of various actors who have participated in the programme over the years, asking them general questions about their ambitions within and outside of *Radio Theatre*.

this study will only focus on ten plays that represent the main thematic concerns of the programme. One play is drawn from the 1980s. The rest were produced post-2000.

One reason for this selection method is that it has been difficult to access older plays from KBC. The chief librarian of KBC, Joseph Kirui, explained the difficulty of storing older plays in the archives because of their bulky nature (Kirui 2006).[12] In cases where older plays were actually available on tape, strict security measures made it difficult for the researcher to access them.[13] Nevertheless, the researcher has been able to access plays through direct recording of the plays from KBC during airing time on Thursdays and Sundays. Also, the researcher received audio CDs of recent plays (2000-2003) from former producer Nzau Kalulu (2004) although according to him, copying material from tapes to CDs proved to be an expensive and tedious affair. As such, the cost of acquiring these CDs was high, making it impossible to access many plays.[14] Thus the play produced in 1987 was only accessible in written form. This poses the difficulty of analyzing it as 'audio' because the researcher has to read the script as opposed to listening to it. However, in this study the play enables us to reflect on the consistency that *Radio Theatre* has shown since its inception in 1982 in terms of thematic concerns.

[12] KBC has been slow in upgrading its systems with the result that a lot of material produced was still not able to be stored in CDs until very recently. Personal interview: December 2006.
[13] Although the researcher has attempted to get hold of older copies, it has been difficult to access anything produced for the broadcasting house because of the bureaucracy of the KBC system. KBC is also considered a high risk security zone particularly after the 1982 attempted coup. See discussion in chapter two.
[14] Buying one CD (which contained six plays) cost the researcher Ksh 10,000 (approx. R 1000), which is expensive given that there are hundreds of plays still available in the archives.

1.4.2 The plots of *Radio Theatre plays*

The plays analysed in this thesis are as follows:

Jamhuri Day Special (2004), set around Kenya's Independence Day and aired on 12 December, is about Gakuo and Njambi, two young people seeking to get married. However, Gakuo's grandfather, a former Mau Mau freedom fighter, prevents the marriage from taking place because Njambi's grandfather, a former colonial home guard, betrayed the country during the fight for independence in the 1950s. In the end, the narrative of love and marriage prevails over Gakuo's grandfather's argument about betrayal and war. The play uses a love relationship to comment on Kenya's independence.

Whatever it Takes (2004) and *3 Times a Lady* (2002) are both plays around love, desire and romance as men and women struggle to forge lasting relationships with each other. *Whatever it Takes* revolves around a rich businessman, Benson Mutia, who is interested in a meek, religious rural teacher, called Joy Mbote whom, however, he is unable to marry because she is married to someone else. Importantly, this is a play that draws from Frederick Forsyth's (1982) short story *No Comebacks* although its plotline is structured to suit both a Kenyan setting and an audio form as opposed to the written form. It is a tragic play that ends with the death of Joy, her husband and Benson. *3 Times a Lady* focuses on the virtues of a rural female teacher Tabitha who waits for her fiancé James for five years, despite the fact that since he left home to look for a job, he has never corresponded with

her. The play is spread across three episodes that dramatize the trials that Tabitha faces while waiting for James, and how she is eventually 'rewarded' for her patience.

In the Name of the Holy Spirit (2004) and *Nothing at Last* (2004) are both plays about men who cheat on their wives and suffer the consequences of desertion in the end. The first play involves a church pastor who wins money from a beer drinking competition. The irony of the situation is heightened when it emerges that he has been keeping a mistress, despite the fact that he is married. He is punished for his arrogance and infidelity. *Nothing at Last* is about a man who has an affair with a money-hungry woman in the city, despite the fact that his wife and children need his financial help in the rural area. He is exposed and he loses everything.

Infertility (2002) and *My Aunty Weds* (2002) both deal with dramas of infertility. *Infertility* is a play centred on a married couple Tracy and Mark who have been unable to have children. 'Naturally', it becomes Tracy's fault, showing how stereotypes of childlessness automatically question a woman's fertility. The play ends with Mark proven infertile by the clinical doctor, shifting the blame from Tracy. Infertility is treated differently in *My Aunty Weds*, a depiction of the Akamba cultural practice of same-sex marriages. Syokia, an elderly childless woman marries Katoko, a poor village woman with four children who become Syokia's too according to Akamba tradition. This play draws attention to how the Akamba culture deals with the problem of infertility in marriage upon the death of the male spouse.

Two plays, *Bottoms Up* (2004) and *Immoral Network* (1987) both focus on the issue of HIV/AIDS, melodramatically engaging with the consequences of immoral behaviour. *Bottoms Up* is about a wife who leaves her husband because he has been diagnosed with HIV. She leaves with their only son and moves in with her husband's best friend, but as fate would have it, it turns out that there had been a mistake with the HIV test results, and that it is in fact the man's best friend who has HIV. The wife is punished for her lack of trust and her 'infidelity'. *Immoral Network* is about the tradition of wife inheritance in the era of HIV/AIDS. In the play, Otieno, a lawyer, decides to marry his dead brother's wife Akinyi to honour an age-old practice of wife inheritance among the Luos. He contracts HIV, spreads it to his wife, who in turn spreads it to her lover, the family doctor. Otieno has also been having sex with the housemaid. Unfortunately, Peter, his only son, has been getting sexual favours from the same maid, and as it turns out, he also contracts the disease. The play ends on a note of doom.

Not Now (2003) is a narrative about forced/early marriage, a traditional practice in some societies in Kenya, which is still being carried out, interfering with the growth and development of young children, especially young girls. The protagonist, Sophia narrates a story about an attempt by her parents to marry her off to an old man. In a dramatic monologue, she narrates how, at the age of 13, her parents and the rest of the village members had tried to marry her off to a rich old man, Mzee Makosa and how she escaped this ordeal when the village Chief, Chief Muita, saved her. Years later, she is portrayed as a successful business executive who exemplifies success against a larger matrix of traditional practices bent on destroying the lives of young girls.

From the different synopses, it is clear that the plays centre on domestic dramas to comment on various aspects of socio-cultural life in Kenya.

1.5 Theoretical constructs

1.5.1 The theory of the moral story

Theoretically, this study uses the concept of the moral story as a useful tool for understanding how *Radio Theatre* functions as moral, educational and developmental. The genre of the moral story in Africa has its cultural base in oral traditions, where narratives had specific functions in society, and were used to create and maintain social order. However, we read *Radio Theatre*'s moral themes within popular cultural theories in Africa which have emphasized the cultures that emerged in post-colonial African societies and which signified new ways of life in the transitioning societies. These were cultures initiated by working class people, who found themselves in new urban spaces and who had to invent new social orders in order to survive (Newell 2000). Of interest to our study are those theories that look at popular culture as a source of self-improvement or consciousness, so that the texts that are produced are seen as useful in everyday life.

Within this thesis, the moral story is read as a text that is able to influence the behavioural patterns of perceived listeners. These listeners are supposed to learn from these stories and use them as examples against which they can reflect on their own life experiences. The thesis thus uses theories that connect the moral story to behaviour change in society

(Bennett 1993). According to William Bennett, moral stories are extremely important in societies undergoing change, especially for children and young people who need guidance and linkages to moral values that hold society together. Bennett argues that moral stories are necessary texts for educating such readers (audiences) by providing them with moral heroes and actions that inspire good behaviour choices in society. However, Bennett and others assume that the audience of the moral story is a passive audience waiting patiently to be reformed by the story. In this study, we use Darcia Narvaez's (2002) reading of the moral story in which she argues that moral texts must be read as sites of active reading. Those who read them benefit most from them because of their ability to connect the texts to their real life experiences. She also argues that readers do not normally consume moral stories whole, but consume them in bits, sometimes re-interpreting the messages to suit their needs. Narvaez's work allows one to understand how the moral story works at individual levels, where people are 'given space' to apply these lessons, sometimes years after they are first exposed to them. The recognition of the audience's independence from the 'preferred readings' of these texts enables us to read the moral story as multifaceted rather than a singular text that strives towards one meaning.

This is an important aspect that connects moral stories to the life experiences of *Radio Theatre* perceived listeners. Theoretically, the moral story can only teach if what it enacts touches the experiences of its audience directly. In responding to critics who dismiss moral stories that embrace stereotypical characters in popular fiction as baseless, Stephanie Newell (2002:5) says,

> [Those] who are disappointed with typecasting in African popular fiction [do not consider that it] relates to the function of these character types and plots, and the way in which they are designed to inspire particular modes of moral commentary amongst readers. Characters such as the good time girl, the barren woman and the gangster surface recurrently in African popular fiction and comic strips throughout the continent. The characters take the form of 'old familiars', being ethical figures which readers will recognize and judge using existing repertoires of knowledge.

For moral stories to function, its perceived audience must be able to understand its intentions. This process of activation involves the application of lessons learnt from the play to ordinary events. Sometimes this application takes place immediately, where the imagined audience see direct links between a story and its experiences. Other times, this application takes place at the level of example where this audience's point of view is that of an observer rather than a participant in the story. Albert Bandura (1977) theorizes that sometimes those who look at such narratives as useful, see them as avenues for the observation of behaviour enabling them to identify behaviours that are acceptable and those that are not. Therefore, the moral story can only make sense to the imagined listener if it enacts reality which he/she understands. These popular plays often deal with themes borrowed from everyday experiences, including marital and familial relationships, friendships, love, romance and other common experiences.

The idea of example mentioned above becomes useful in understanding how popular theatre plays lend themselves to being applied to the reading of events beyond the domestic space. Events that occur at the ordinary spaces of everyday life, such as the home, are regulated using common moral ethics. These moral ethics can then be borrowed and applied to other situations, whether political, social or cultural. This is because the moral ethics enacted in the plays are often defined by cultural beliefs and forms which are rooted in traditional forms of authority that inform the experiences of everyday life. For her, even political issues are at the very basic level, subject to scrutiny using common moral ethics. The moral play is defined around the moral ethics that arrange its narrative to produce moral lessons.

Clearly, the possibility of reading popular cultural forms as moral is pegged on their ability to produce useful lessons for audiences. Emmanuel Obiechina's *Onitsha Market Literature* (1972) provides a key point of entry into this discussion where he addresses the role that market pamphlets played in educating readers. While he emphasizes this role, he makes a distinction between what he terms 'the purely educational pamphlets' and the creative ones which 'combine entertainment with an improving purpose' (1972:13). The latter category of the market literature 'does not concentrate on regaling the reader with knowledge but on reforming his morals and attitudes and preparing him to face the social, economic, and emotional problems of the present day' (1972:14). Donatus Nwoga (2002) also identifies the market pamphlets as useful sources of education in which he argues that their authors were 'trying to teach people to live a more moral life' (2002:38). In reading *Radio Theatre*, we apply the second reading of educational plays,

which speaks directly to the idea of reformation and influence of morals and attitudes of audiences. As such, we explore themes that present themselves as educational and look at how they can be read as moral stories.

The common educational themes dealt with in *Radio Theatre* include sexual morality that defines marital and romantic relationships in various plays. As has already been identified, *Radio Theatre* plays are read as moral because they aim to teach. Specifically, the various plays deal with themes that enhance ideas about acceptable moral values of the Kenyan society. It suggests that certain moral values must define people's understandings and behaviours towards sexuality in order to establish a sense of decency in society. These ideologies operate within common spaces of everyday life, eventually becoming common knowledges. Existing ideologies enable the state to use the broadcasting machinery to maintain the status quo.

Another set of thematic concern is that of development. *Radio Theatre* plays present themselves as developmental themes that engage with several societal problems. The thesis specifically uses the theme of development communication, which has been used to understand the role of the development genre in society. Development communication refers to the kind of communication that is specifically geared towards advancing, initiating or encouraging change in a society. Normally, this kind of communication targets existing problems in society and aims to provide solutions. The centrality of development communication lies in community development and as such, it is a theory that has been applied in Theatre for Development (TfD) and community radio (see Mda

1993; Banda 2003). In this thesis, while we recognize the theoretical role of development communication, we realise its limitations in the way that it has been used to advance community development at the expense of mass media forms. Mass media forms, often criticized for their lack of face to face communication, cannot use the theory of development communication as has been embraced in TfD and community radio programmes. It uses an aspect of development communication that is applied in Entertainment-Education, a theory that identifies soap operas as forms that can be used to advance notions of personal development (Singhal and Rogers 2003). This theory enables us to apply the idea of self-development to radio drama plays.

The presentation of the moral story in *Radio Theatre* involves the use of mass media forms that enhance the moral lessons that the play seeks to address. With the awareness that the play is produced within a sound medium, and that it is a dramatic form, this thesis uses the mass media forms of melodrama and soap opera to analyse the way in which different plays have engaged with the moral story form. Though the soap opera and melodrama forms were for a long time identified as 'an over-dramatic, under-rehearsed presentation of trivial dramas blown out of all proportion to their importance' (Geraghty 1991:1), several scholars of the genres have shown that they can be read as realistic because they draw from occurrences and experiences which audiences are able to consume as real (Ang 1985; McCarthy 2001; Abu-Lughod 2002; Andersson 2002; Allen 1994; Brown 1994; Flockemann 2000; Geraghty 1991; Njogu 2005). For instance, the genre's formal features includes what Ien Ang (1985:45) has termed 'emotional realism', that is the ability of the form to portray true to life psychological situations that enable

audiences to experience them as real. In her words, 'what is recognized as real is not knowledge of the world, but a subjective experience of the world: a structure of feeling' (1985:45). McCarthy (2001) who has argued that soap opera plotlines and settings may sometimes appear far-fetched also reflects this view but adds that because of the emotional, social and political realities that they express, audiences are able to relate to them easily.

In the African context, the relevance of melodramatic forms has been questioned and some critics have argued that they do not relate to everyday life. Maurice Amutabi (2007) argues that the 'reality' depicted in the American programme *The Bold and the Beautiful* is unreal and 'unattractive' to several viewers in Kenya because it does not sit well with the existing moral order. However, as a form, melodrama has existed in theatre for a long period and was always used to present morality plays that sought to emphasize specific values in society (Brooks 1976). Anna McCarthy (2001) shows that soap operas and melodramas are able to present various levels of 'realities' based on the contexts of their production and should therefore not be dismissed. Lila Abu-Lughod (2002) has pointed out the importance of melodramatic forms in Egypt by analysing how people find refuge in story lines, which they use to understand dilemmas in their own lives. According to Abu-Lughod, these forms speak of social realities and are useful measures and guidelines through which members of a society can read their lives and tolerate conditions of their existence. One way in which these forms maintain a link with the real world is through what Andersson (2002) has called the TX (transmission day) memory devices. This is where 'a soap opera is tied to contemporaneous events via inserts filmed at the last

moment so that the soap can tie in with current affairs' (Ligaga 2005:132). In addition, as has been emphasized by Brown (1994) and Geraghty (1991), the escapism in soap operas offers a crucial space for audiences to review their own lives, so that in the very act of escape, they realize alternative ways in which they can imagine their experiences.

However, the way in which the soap opera format is used in serialized narratives differs from how they are understood in one-act radio plays. In *Radio Theatre*, the soap opera and melodramatic formats help one to understand the emotional link that the perceived audience retains with the text and provide a useful methodology for reading the plays. Its general self-contained format presents many opportunities the plays' perceived listeners to explore the plays' dramatic contents and moral lessons.

Both the soap opera and melodrama become spaces for understanding the way in which texts imagine audiences who can be in dialogue with the text, rather than those who consume the text passively (Ogola 2004). Such perceived audiences identify patterns and occurrences similar to those of their own lives, or as is the case argued by Geraghty and others, they see the soap as fantasy narratives, in which case the escapism that occurs thereafter becomes a way in which they find refuge away from their personal realities. *Radio Theatre* deals with themes of everyday life. Its imagined audience is supposed to consume it as real, sieving through its entertainment features such as its melodramatic presentations of issues, to get to the core of what the plays are speaking to. Therefore, as Ang (1985) states, most television soap operas often seem redundant because they seem to go on forever. This characteristic lends them the inability to provide lessons

immediately. Radio drama's uniqueness falls within its ability to resolve issues, which differentiates it from most television soap operas that thrive on creating several crises in the lives of their characters without immediate resolution (Gunner 2000). *Radio Theatre* always resolves issues at the end of each play because of its one-act format, making it relevant to the everyday lives of listeners.

1.5.2 The imagined audiences of *Radio Theatre*

In this thesis, *Radio Theatre* audiences are imagined as active participants of radio drama plays, rather than as 'obedient subjects to the text' (Ogola 2002:47). Following Barber's assertion that 'performances do not just play to ready–made congregations of spectators which are out there awaiting address', we read radio drama audiences as those convened by the radio plays and assigned 'a certain position from which to receive the address' (Barber 1997:357). *Radio Theatre* addresses itself to audiences who are specifically looking for moral lessons, while enjoying the creativity through which the plays are presented. We argue that the imagined audiences are supposed to consume *Radio Theatre*'s narratives as 'real' because these narratives are drawn from familiar local spaces, and are renditions of issues that occur in the spaces of everyday life.

The study uses Michael Warner's idea of a public that 'comes into being in relation to texts and their circulation' (2000: 51). The audience organizes itself as a body being addressed through shared meanings and discourses. The texts imagine users who come together by virtue of being addressed, and manipulate them towards a way of receiving their meaning (Ogola 2002; 2004). This is done through a number of strategies that the

text adopts to draw the audience into receiving it in a particular way. As has been observed by Mikhail Bakhtin, 'each epoch, each literary trend and its artistic style, each literary genre within an epoch or trend, is typified by its own special concepts of the addressee of the literary work, a special sense and understanding of its reader, listener, public or people' (quoted in Barber 2000: 354). Radio drama operates within the medium of sound and has its own modes of addressivity for attracting the attention of its listeners who consume it as a product of sound. In *Radio Theatre*, the title, the voice of the narrator, the music and other paratextual features in the opening sequence speak directly to the listener. The tagline, 'bringing radio drama home' can be read as an invitation for the listeners to relate the programme to different ideas of home.

Although the *Radio Theatre* perceived audience is dispersed throughout the country, it is nonetheless perceived as a homogenous group through the radio play's form of address which assigns the audience a certain position from which to receive the text, thus seeing the audience as a collectivity. Of importance in this thesis then is how the text of radio drama addresses its public. The opening sequence of *Radio Theatre* provides an example of how this collective public is created as a national audience. The play opens with the music from traditional instruments from the coastal region of Kenya, the chivoti, a coastal musical flute accompanied by the kiringongo, kayamba and sengenya.[15] Arguing for the significance of sound in the genre of radio drama, we look at the use of these instruments as one of the strategies through which the play invites the listener to consume it as a local

[15] The chivoti is a wind instrument used at the coast. It is made of wood (bamboo) and has six finger holes and a main blowing hole. Kiringongo looks like the marimba and is played using two sticks, which hit across a number of wooden bars of different lengths. Sengenya consists of a group of drums tied together by strings and placed on a wooded stand.

play. The use of coastal instruments can be explained in the context of Kenya's national history. Contextually, the local tunes of the opening sequence draw a link between the programme and its producer, KBC. From the days when it was still VOK, KBC always showed preference for coastal music which celebrated indigenousness in Kenya. Kenya does not have a national cultural image that represents it as a nation and the language that holds it together is Kiswahili. The coastal people whose native language is Swahili provide the government with ideas for creating a national cultural image.[16] The Kenyan national anthem was designed around a lullaby from the Pokomo community who come from the coast province of Kenya.[17] The music of the chivoti is a favourite of KBC and was for a long time used as the tune for 'announcing' the opening of the station.[18] To use this tune to introduce *Radio Theatre* is therefore to evoke certain memories in the minds of the audience, especially those who listened or watched KBC in the 1980s. Significantly, this tune is placed at the beginning of the programme, ensuring that the listener can relate this code with the idea of the Kenyan nation as captured in other media representations of Kenya.

That the imagined audiences of *Radio Theatre* are meant to use the lessons for their own purposes is of interest because they are supposed to interpret cultural products based on

[16] Although Swahili is not an ethnic language, it has been used to define the people of the coast in Kenya, who have used this language and its dialects to communiticate since the 13th century, when the Arabs first came to the Indian Ocean coast.
[17] The National Anthem was assembled by Professor George Senoga-Zake alongside an 'Anthem Commission', which also included Graham Hyslop, Peter Kibukosya, Thomas Kalume and Washington Omondi, each of whom is a musicologist in Kenya. Refer to Senoga-Zake, 1986.
[18] This was especially visible in the 1980s when television and radio had 'opening hours' and 'closing hours'. For instance, television 'opened' at five o'clock every evening and 'closed' at midnight every night. The sound that made viewers aware that television was about to 'open' was the chivoti tune, which was followed by an opening structure that included a presenter announcing the programmes of the day. Between midnight and five in the evening, the television was often 'blank' unlike the present day when it is filled with news bites, and other forms of entertainment that 'fills' in the airspace.

their social everyday realities. However, because this audience is imagined by the text, this study attempts to understand how radio drama texts make it possible for listeners to grasp the lessons, and how they invite the listeners to apply the lessons to reality. One of the ways in which radio drama imagines its listeners is by using narrative that reflects social reality in Kenya. The *Radio Theatre* plays are presented as stories that dramatize different aspects of everyday human relationships. These stories do not exist in a void but are drawn from people's experiences in real life. As has been pointed out earlier, according to the producer of *Radio Theatre*, some of the stories are drawn from 'true' stories narrated by real people (Interview 2004; 2006). These stories are then moulded in the format of a radio play before being enacted. To give an example, *Bottoms Up* and *The Story of My Life* are renditions of 'actual' events that happened. *Bottoms Up* is a story of a man who lived with the false knowledge that he was HIV positive for almost a month before finding out that the initial test results had been wrong while *The Story of my Life* (which we do not discuss in this study because it is a re-enactment of street life as opposed to life in the domestic sphere) is the narrative of a young man arrested for murder that he did not commit. Such narratives work their way into genres such as radio dramas where they are enacted and represented, fortifying narratives that then can be consumed as real. From such enactments, it becomes possible to argue that these stories are arranged in a systematic manner so that the moral action and consequent moral lessons are clear and available to be picked up by *Radio Theatre*'s perceived audience.

In order to imagine its audiences, radio drama has to be performed. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) have engaged in a detailed discussion of what performance means in the space of mass media. According to them,

> Critical to what it means to be a member of an audience is the idea of performance. Audiences are a group of people before whom a performance of one kind or another takes place. Performance, in turn, is a kind of activity in which the person performing accentuates his or her behaviour under the scrutiny of others…performance involves a relationship between performer and audience in which a liminal space is opened up (1998:40).

For Abercrombie and Longhurst, the audience's relationship with the performance is tangible in that it opens up a discourse between the two, so that the text (radio drama) must always be conscious that it is delivering to an audience that intends to consume it actively. The audience on its part is also conscious of entering the performative space knowing even as they enter it that reality is being reflected upon. Since we are dealing with an imagined audience, this performance can only be considered partially, by imagining the audience's role in the consumption of such plays. The performance then becomes the space in which the audience's world is reflected upon. This performance takes place through the sound medium, in which the different dramas are presented.

Performance is even more visible in a dramatic form like *Radio Theatre*. Ezekiel Alembi's definition of drama as 'a literary work of art created by a dramatist or

playwright for the purpose of performance by actors' (2000:1), emphasizes its performative aspect that combines 'movement' and 'active speech'. Martin Esslin (1977:14) also describes drama as the 'mimetic action … in imitation or representation of human behaviour […].' Like Alembi, Esslin underlines the significance of action in the dramatic mode of presentation. He argues that 'what makes drama drama is precisely the element which lies outside and beyond the words and which has to be seen as action-or *acted*-to give the author's concept its full value' (1977:14)(emphasis original).

Drama consists of the elements of movement and direct speech which create intimacy in any dramatic art form. Manfred Pfister (1988) portrays this intimacy within the communication model when he argues that drama differs from other narrative forms such as the novel or poem because of the direct contact between the text (work of art) and the addressee (audience) in drama. He states that 'drama, by being a concrete representation of action as it actually takes place, is able to show us several aspects of that action simultaneously and also to convey several levels of action and emotion at the same time' (1977:17). While *Radio Theatre* functions within the dramatic form, it is however produced in a sound medium. As such, its imagined audience relates to it at the level of sound rather than visually, as envisaged in the stage theatre that Pfister, Esslin and Alembi discuss above.

1.5.3 Theorizing sound and mediating meaning in radio drama

While reading *Radio Theatre* as real, one must therefore take into account that the plays are performed and mediated through the sound medium of radio. This inevitably means

that one needs to understand how meaning is created and performed within the medium of sound and how consequently these performances are made available to the perceived audience.

Radio drama is a genre that uses auditory signs and codes which operate in the semiotic language of sound. According to Andrew Crisell (1994) for meaning to be processed in radio, signs are used and made available to the imagined audience through specific codes. Crisell outlines the three signs for generating meaning as theorized by American philosopher Charles S. Peirce. Peirce builds on the ideas of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure who looked at language as a system of signs consisting of the signifier (form) and the signified (idea or concept). While de Saussure restricted his ideas to language and its immediate meaning, Peirce extended the meaning of language to its referents (Hall 1997; Crisell 1994). Peirce identified three parts of the sign: the icon, the index and the symbol. The icon, he identified as the sign that resembles 'the object it represents' such as a picture/photograph, the index as the sign directly linked to its object usually in a sequential or causal way for instance smoke and fire, and the symbol as the sign totally unrelated to its object of reference, yet acting as a common and known representative of the object (Crisell 1994:42).

These signs operate in radio through the codes of words/dialogue, sound effects, music and silence. These are perceived variously as symbolic, indexical or iconic in order to project meaning to the intended listener. Words for instance, are considered symbolic because they do not resemble that which they represent, while the voice of the speaker

becomes indexical because it is directly related to the personality of the speaker or character that it represents. Music can be symbolic when its lyrics are referred to in relation to dramatic action. It is indexical when considered for its aesthetic function, although it may create the mood of the play, or transpose the intended listener's memory to a certain time and space in which case it can be both indexical and symbolic. Sound effects which directly reflect 'natural sounds' are indexical because they directly link sound to what it represents in the real world. Arguably, they could be considered iconic when recorded, in the sense that they resemble a sound outside them. Generally though, in radio drama, they act as extended signifiers, creating mood, setting, defining characters and so on. Silence is indexical in nature because it signifies an absence, a feeling, an emotion or a reaction to something. The listener has to be contextually placed to understand the meaning of silence, otherwise it may be interpreted as 'dead air' which according to Crisell (1994) indicates a dysfunction in the studio.

The codes in radio drama have to be decoded by the imagined listener who according to Tim Crook (1999:62) does this through the 'imaginative spectacle'. Maintaining that radio drama does not operate in a blind medium, he describes the imaginative spectacle as 'the video or film camera of the listener which is also a sound recorder and production house and personal movie theatre … it has visual spatialization in the imagination of the listener'. As Crook argues,

> Radio's imaginative spectacle presents a powerful dynamic … by giving the listener the opportunity to create an individual filmic narrative and experience.

> [T]hrough the imaginative spectacle, the listener becomes an active participant and dramaturgist in the process of communication and listening. This participation is physical, intellectual and emotional (Crook 1999: 66).

The view of the perceived listener of radio drama as an active participant is linked to Michel de Certeau's idea of listening as 'poaching' because such a listener has space to navigate and create his own alternative meanings of the drama being enacted (de Certeau 1984). The meaning-making process is completed by the radio drama text, which aspires towards visualization of the experiences of the radio drama to the listener. This involves the use of signposts which according to Crook create 'visual familiarity', 'communication based on words,' and creates meaning through pointers such as the title of the play (Crook 1999:54).

A clearer example of how visual spatialization occurs in radio drama is evidenced in Ernst Wendland's work on Zambian radio drama where he argues that the radio drama narrator extends the dramatic narrative through what he terms 'verbal visualization techniques' (2006:99). Wendland sees the radio dramatist as centrally placed to create visualization for the 'invisible radio audience' (2006:98). His analysis of a radio drama script is based on the theories of Umberto Eco who argues that in his novels he attempts to render his words visual through a process called hypotyposis. Quoted in Wendland, Eco defines hypotyposis as 'the rhetorical effect by which words succeed in rendering a visual scene' and the 'different techniques by which a writer, using sounds, brings images, so to speak, to the reader's eyes' (Wendland 2006: 98-99). Wendland's ideas are

used in this thesis to demonstrate how visualization of dramatic events is made possible in *Radio Theatre*. In the opening sequence, a technique that creates images in the listener's mind is the idea of using well-known words and sound effects. When the narrator says, "Just like the movies", the sounds of a horse whinnying, and hoof beating the ground are used to indicate the movement of a horse/s and these sounds are linked to the word, 'movies'. The programme expects the listener to link the sounds and words to the genre of the American Western. Clearly, *Radio Theatre*'s use of these sound clips draws on the awareness that its audience consumes foreign movies and would know what a foreign movie sounds like, and that the listener can apply these sounds both denotatively and connotatively. At the denotative level, the listener is supposed to deduce that the radio plays are as exciting as the movies. However, an extended meaning could imply that the plays are moral narratives of good and evil in which good always wins. The use of sound codes based on a foreign movie shows that the scriptwriter is aware that the listener is not a static, solitary figure who consumes only one genre, but one who is multidimensional in his/her consumption. This reading of radio drama plays also applies to the rest of the plays in which the characters, plot, setting and language can be connected to the listener's imagination to create a particular kind of understanding.

1.6 Methodology

This thesis aims to use methodologies that can assist in the reading of a dramatic sound genre that attempts to present moral lessons to its imagined or perceived listeners. It therefore pays close attention to three key issues: how *Radio Theatre* plays address their

audiences, how moral stories are presented and how this presentation is emphasized through the medium of sound.

In order to analyse how *Radio Theatre* plays address their audiences, the thesis argues that these plays are presented in spaces that are familiar and drawn from local reality. As such, methodologically, the analysis of the plays begins with an investigation of the setting. Normally, the first scene or two introduce the listener to the play, creating a mental visualization of the setting to allow the perceived listener time to understand the locality of the play. A setting normally includes a description of the space, which is presented to the listener through dialogue or sound effects that clearly define the space of the action. A common way of identifying space for instance, is the use of codified sound effects. Rural spaces will often have cows mooing, birds chirping and chicken clucking to allow the listener to visualize the space. The setting can also be identified through the use of languages which locate the play within a specific location. While *Radio Theatre* plays are produced in the English language, they are normally infused with local words that give them a 'natural' sound. Another way in which the setting is presented is through the use of local names of people, objects and places. For instance, most of the *Radio Theatre* plays use local names for characters. In the plays that will be analysed later, names such as Gakuo, Njambi, Mutua and so on, locating the space of the action. In a play such as *My Aunty Weds*, which aims to present a particular Akamba culture, it is necessary to stress the names of the characters. Characters such as Katoko, Syokia and Mutua are identified as belonging to a particular ethnic tribe. The drama itself takes place in a place called Makueni, in the Eastern part of Kenya, occupied by the Akamba. The

identification of these local settings enables the plays to gain a particular currency with the perceived listeners who are able to consume them as realistic representations of familiar experiences rather than fantastical melodramas that fail to speak to their realities. Audiences are thus congregated by the text through references of experiences that are local and familiar.

The manner in which the plays are arranged allows the listener to understand them as moral plays. The understanding of a plot is based on theories that look at the narrative as 'a way of organizing spatial and temporal data into a cause-effect chain of events with a beginning, a middle and an end that embodies a judgment about the nature of events' (Branigan 1992:3). The plot refers to 'those highly selected parts that the narrative puts before us' (Branston and Stafford 2006). *Radio Theatre* plays are moral stories that aim to teach. To be successful, the moral actions and lessons of the plays have to be as clear as possible. The plays thus use melodramatic presentations, those 'heightened dramatizations' that emphasize, exaggerate and selectively present polarized aspects of good and evil (Brooks 1976: ix). The plot normally follows character voices that represent evil and virtue, each of which represents certain moral values. For instance, a play like *Jamhuri Day Special* presents Gakuo as a hero who loves Kenya enough to want to build a future with his fiancée Njambi in the country. However, his grandfather, Mzee Gakuo prevents this marriage from taking place. The plot unravels sequentially presenting different aspects of these two characters and in the end, creating space that could allow a listener to decide on what character to reflect upon. The moral action is centred on the notion of heightened drama. This is normally made available through

exaggeration, which emphasizes the moral climax of the play and which forces the story towards a particular direction. Only then can one begin to look at the resolutions arrived at in the plays. Listeners are supposed to be able to pick lessons by following the main characters and observing how evil is punished and good is rewarded, or if they follow the movement of the story, to arrive at specific conclusions way before the final moral axiom of the play is arrived at.

The presentation of these plays is through sound. Using Ernst Wendland's visualization technique, the analysis focuses on applying specific sound codes into the reading of the different meanings of the plays. This makes it possible to understand the manner in which the listeners could receive different dramatic actions taking place in the plays. Techniques such as the 'selective citation of graphic details' evoke a picture of the type of object or person in question (Wendland 2006: 99). For instance a statement like 'That car is big and beautiful, I love its metallic green colour' could give a listener an idea of the type of car and what it looks like. Other techniques include 'precise spatial information' such as when a character says "I come from Kitui", is a clue to the character's background. Another technique that Wendland lists is radio drama's ability link to a reader's/listener's '*personal experience*, whether primary (actually lived) or secondary (derived from other sources e.g. reading, telling)'. This technique is supposed to conjure up memories and experiences in listeners' minds 'either by means of some type of citation or indirectly through allusion' (Wendland 2006:99).

The literariness of the radio plays is read within the medium of sound. Still using Wendland's techniques, the study analyses the use of 'figurative language such as simile/metaphor, metonymy or descriptive appellation' and other descriptive sound codes that are useful in the analysis of the various sounds used in *Radio Theatre* plays (Wendland 2006: 99). The above elements help one to understand the various techniques that go into any analysis of radio drama, techniques that are unique to the sound genre.

Within this thesis, the site that will be explored to analyse everyday life is the domestic space of home. Tony Bennett has identified the home as one of the sites of everyday life, seen as an 'archetype' of domestic life, in terms of habits, repetitive behaviour and cyclical relations that exist within what he terms 'everyday time' (Bennett and Watson 2002: xix). The home is read as a contested space because the relationships therein are always rife with tensions that require resolution at the end of the radio plays. The practices of romance, sex and marriage define human relationships within the home, and ensuing social and cultural influences that impact upon these relationships, sometimes at the expense of individuals living in the private space of home. In the study, social and cultural influences such as traditional practices and social beliefs and practices based on stereotypical representations, common narratives, shared beliefs and common expressions of language will be considered as gaining entry into the domestic space of the home.

1.7 Chapter breakdown

Chapter two of this thesis examines the context of *Radio Theatre*'s production. By looking at various political and social factors that contributed to the definition of the

programme, we argue that its focus on issues of the domestic space must never be seen as purely apolitical. Rather, the chapter shows how this programme was developed in a highly contested terrain, but that it used the resulting focus on everyday life to escape the censorship that other dramatic performances were experiencing. We also look at the kinds of programmes that were being produced for KBC alongside *Radio Theatre* that focused on the comic aspects of everyday life, especially on KBC television.

Chapter three interrogates the structure of *Radio Theatre*'s plays, examining these plays as educational in nature. By reading a play, *Jamhuri Day Special* which focuses on the theme of national unity, but which is designed around the domestic sub-theme of marriage, the chapter attempts to look at the relevance of KBC as a government instrument that can be used to teach, but also to push for particular agendas. The chapter explores the tensions created by the role that the radio play performs in its attempt to deliver lessons about Kenya's nationhood through a popular theme such as marriage.

Chapter four interrogates the theme of sexual morality in four *Radio Theatre* plays. The chapter argues that *Radio Theatre* plays, act as 'agents' of change for KBC, and present themselves as models of sexual moral order, but that listeners often have a chance to read beyond the given narratives to extract their own 'surplus' readings of morality from these plays. The plays interrogated include *3 Times a Lady, Whatever it Takes, In the Name of the Holy Spirit,* and *Nothing at Last.*

Using the theory of development communication, Chapter five shows how *Radio Theatre* plays can be read in the context of development. While starting from the point that *Radio Theatre*'s engagement with particular themes of development is not an isolated effort, but part of KBC's engagements with themes that NGO organizations pursue in Kenya, the chapter attempts to understand how such themes are presented, and the manner in which they can be used to bring about potential behaviour and attitude change. Having previously been dismissed from discussions of development communication which have centred on TfD and community radio, the chapter looks at how radio drama uses Entertainment-Education and argues that soap operas can be read as useful contributions to development. Five *Radio Theatre* plays are interrogated.

The concluding chapter summarizes the issues discussed in the study and looks at its contributions to radio drama studies.

Chapter two

The State, Broadcasting and the Cultural Policy in Kenya

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the context in which radio drama was produced in Kenya. By focusing on *Radio Theatre*, the chapter investigates the political conditions that defined, and eventually dictated the kinds of programmes that were produced for the state broadcaster Voice of Kenya (VOK), later renamed KBC. In the chapter, we argue that *Radio Theatre*'s focus on moral themes in the domestic domain was not accidental but was a result of several related political pressures that the programme, by virtue of being produced for VOK, was receiving. In order to exist in such a constrained environment, *Radio Theatre* developed strategies for survival. We explore the political context of its production, focusing mainly on the period after independence, although making crucial references to colonial historical factors that shaped the state's use of broadcasting in Kenya. We also examine the general attitude of the independent Kenyan state towards culture, especially theatrical productions, and how this inadvertently or otherwise affected the way in which *Radio Theatre* defined itself. We interrogate the state of the media during Moi's regime and attempt to understand how broadcasting was manipulated, both during and after the media was liberalized in the early 1990s. Only then do we focus on *Radio Theatre* and its perceived audiences by locating it within other VOK productions that had 'similar' programme structures/strategies and that have continued to be aired in Kenyan broadcasting stations (both television and radio) for

decades. We attempt to use this as a basis for understanding *Radio Theatre*'s focus on moral narratives.

2.2 The State, VOK and KBC: The development of broadcasting policies in Kenya

Any study of radio drama in Kenya must begin from the understanding that the genre has always been produced for the state broadcaster.[19] Whether one considers the colonially controlled Kenyaradio, African Information Service (AIS), the Kenya Broadcasting Services (KBS)[20] (Heath 1986; Armour 1984) or the national Kenyan state-run Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) which was renamed Voice of Kenya (VOK) in July 1964, and later changed back to KBC in 1989, radio drama is a genre that cannot be read outside of the institutional confines of broadcasting in Kenya. As such, to understand it, one must first analyse the State's attitude and position on broadcasting, in terms of how it saw broadcasting as a useful tool of administration and mass education in Kenya as well as a tool for political propaganda (Heath 1986).

VOK and KBC were moulded around colonial structures which defined and dictated the way that broadcasting could be used by the State. For instance, Kenyaradio which was the first radio broadcasting station in Kenya, introduced in 1928, was directed towards English-speaking white settlers, rather than African Kenyans or Asian railway workers, as one of the 'attractive' packages used to lure them to settle in Kenya. At the time,

[19] Radio drama was used outside of VOK premises by the Ministry of Education for educational purposes from 1965 in Kenya, in which case it was not being produced by the state broadcaster. However, the Ministry of Education worked in collaboration with the Ministry of Information, and broadcasting for educational purposes was considered better handled in the education ministry. As such, the Ministry of Education, through the Educational Media Service (EMS) at the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE), produced these programmes.

[20] These radio stations were introduced in different periods: KenyaRadio (1928); AIS (1949), KBS (1959).

broadcasting ‘was primarily intended to entertain its listeners and to provide a cultural link between widely scattered European homesteads and missions and [with] Britain’ (Heath 1986:51). It was only during World War II that broadcasts in African and Asian languages were introduced ‘in response to British demands to rally support for the war effort’ (Heath 1986: 87). In 1940, a plan to extend broadcasting services for Africans and Asians was established ‘to meet post-war demands for economic growth and development posed by Britain and by the colony itself and to deal with pressures for political power and socio-economic advancement of African Kenyans’ (Heath 1986:87). As Leonard Doob (quoted in Heath 1986: 87) recorded, the mass media ‘was being employed to accelerate the process of acculturation’ of Africans. The British government explained its decision to introduce and maintain broadcasting for Africans by arguing that there was a need for development and mass education to help Africans cope with changing social, economic and political circumstances (Heath 1986: 129).

The colonial government thus used broadcasting as a tool for propaganda, education and administration. As such, by the time of independence in 1963, the Kenyan government, alongside other government institutions, adopted existing structures put in place by the colonial officers and continued to use them as they had been used in the pre-independent era. Heath succinctly points out that

> Broadcasting policies were shaped by [colonial] government officials and by members of the legislative council, who interpreted and adapted colonial office directives, BBC recommendations and contemporary theories regarding the role

> of information in modern society - in particular the double sided function of broadcasting as a propaganda weapon and an instrument of mass education - in light of local conditions and exigencies (1986:87).

Heath has thus argued rightly that 'the assumptions regarding the role of broadcasting in a changing society, the relationship of broadcasting to government, and the character of African Information Service programs were to be key elements in the Republic of Kenya's broadcasting heritage' (1986:127).

By 1961, as independence loomed for Kenya, the British pushed for the establishment and operation of KBC, which was to constitute a number of independent broadcasting stations, set apart from the day-to-day running of the State. The idea of KBC as independent from the State worked in favour of the British colonial officers because it ensured a continued relationship with Kenya. KBC also ensured that African leaders would not be able to 'misuse' the powers of broadcasting for purposes of propaganda and personal agendas.

The idea of an independent broadcasting station was not popular with the new African government. Achieng Oneko, who was Kenya's first Minister of Information and Broadcasting after independence, argued that broadcasting, provided the new state with a useful tool for preaching and maintaining nationalism and pride that Kenya needed at the time. He argued that 'national unity cannot be achieved by a neutral approach. The KBC's purpose is to help in bringing about national unity, to help us exploit and conserve

our economic resources and inspire our people to have greater self-respect' (cited in Heath 1986:191).

At the time of Kenya's independence, there was an urgent need to create a sense of national unity. President Jomo Kenyatta, in one of his initial speeches, captured this need when he said, 'let us agree that we shall never refer to the past. Let us instead unite; in all utterances and activities, in concern for the reconstruction of our country and the vitality of Kenya's future' (Kenyatta 1964:2). Kenyatta's leadership was thus defined around the philosophy of *harambee* (let us work together) which urged Kenyans to unite and work towards creating a sense of national unity (Cox 1965; Ogot and Ochieng 1995).

Although the Kenyan press and television existed in Kenya at the time of independence, radio broadcasting was the only means by which all Kenyans could be reached. While newspapers were consumed within urban circles and television was considered too expensive for the majority of the Kenyan population, radio enabled Kenyatta to spread his ideologies of nationalism faster and across vast spaces of Kenya (Cox 1965:185).

In July 1964, KBC was dissolved and in its place, a national broadcaster, owned and run by the State, VOK was introduced. VOK, which existed under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) was supposed to support government's efforts to move away from colonial influence and to create a national spirit in the country. Radio was seen as the best possible tool for cementing the idea of Africanization within the public psyche of Kenyans (Cox 1965). Wanting to inspire the confidence of its new

citizens, Kenyatta's government made the significant decision to move broadcasting away from the hands of the colonialists. As a result, VOK was formed in 1964 by an act of parliament, replacing KBC which was associated with the colonial government. The name change ensured that the government would have total control of broadcasting without risking colonial interference. According to Richard Cox (1965), the then Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Achieng Oneko, even ensured that the remaining white employees of VOK in managerial positions were replaced by Africans.

Clearly, VOK had a role that was in line with what Kenyatta at the time envisioned as a strategy for Kenya's social and economic development. As outlined in the official VOK brochure of 1986, VOK's objective was to educate, inform and entertain the public. This role included a service to the whole nation rather than a source of regional and ethnic address, a fact that would have encouraged division among Kenyans. VOK had two main language stations, General Service, which used English as the language of communication, and National Service, which used Kiswahili. VOK was expected to increase 'understanding among the people of the theory and practice of government development strategies, impart a body of common knowledge on the process of effective communication … and promote [an] effective approach to the use of radio and television as tools for national development' (VOK Brochure 1983:3). Later analyses of *Radio Theatre* plays will show this strong characteristic, as the plays are specifically used to spread dominant government ideologies.

While official discourses argue that KBC was changed into VOK because there was a need to create a locally owned broadcasting station whose aim was to develop the country and create unity among citizens of Kenya, other arguments state that in fact, Kenyatta's government had ulterior motives for the name change and ownership of the broadcasting station. Nixon Kariithi has stated that 'between 1964 and 1990 … several attempts were made to move away from the [former] broadcasting system set up [in which] the drive for commercial self-sustenance was replaced by a politically-inspired initiative for increased local content and a sharper nationalistic outlook'. However he argues that 'television and radio were owned and controlled by the state [and hence they] exercised great caution in reporting politically-sensitive news' (Kariithi 2007).

Kariithi's questioning of the motive behind the Kenyatta government's idea to nationalize broadcasting forms a basis for arguing that the state placed pressure on the kinds of programmes that were produced for VOK. This criticism can be contextually located within other political discourses that criticized Kenyatta's nationalistic agenda vis-à-vis his agenda for broadcasting. For instance, a lot of his critics felt that he had failed to live up to the vision clearly set out in his speeches of 1963-1964, when he was Prime Minister of Kenya and which in many ways influenced his election as president (Kenyatta 1964). William Ochieng and Atieno Odhiambo (1995: xiii) have observed that although Kenya had gained independence through its nationalist initiatives, it was debatable 'whether the long-term goals of the nationalists which included complete Africanization of the country's politics, economy and culture' had been realized. Jaramogi Oginga Odinga (1967), who was the vice-president of Kenya between 1964 and 1966, in his

autobiography *Not Yet Uhuru*, was one of those nationalists who criticized Kenyatta for failing to live up to the pan-African dream that the nationalists had envisioned for Kenya. According to Odinga and his supporters who later moved away from Kenyatta's party Kenya African National Union (KANU) to form their own more nationalistic Kenya People's Union (KPU), Kenya was far from being the African socialist nation that Kenyatta had promised to make it, but that it in fact continued to keep alliances with capitalist nations such as America and Britain (see also Cox 1965; Ochieng and Odhiambo 1995; Barkan 1994).

The divisions that existed within Kenyatta's government opened up space for criticism on how radio broadcasting was being used within this government. While radio broadcasting, like other government owned institutions was meant to support the government's ideology of Africanization and national development, it became a site of division within the government. The opposition party was not allowed to air its views on VOK because the government felt that they would incite people. In reality, the government was afraid of giving the opposition space to criticize its leadership (Cox 1965).

The above historical preview helps one to understand the basis of VOK's allegiance with the government, and creates a context for understanding *Radio Theatre*'s reluctance to engage in politics. *Radio Theatre* which was first produced in 1982, during Kenya's second president's reign, suffered from predetermined censorship because of its production for VOK, although this was not the only factor affecting it. As a theatrical

genre, one cannot escape reading *Radio Theatre* within the context of other theatrical productions outside broadcasting that were suffering from intense censorship during the period of its production. This censorship led to self-censorship, eventually leading to *Radio Theatre*'s involvement with themes dealing with social and cultural issues in everyday life a fact that remains true to date, years after media liberalization and deregulation in a democratic state.

2.3 Censorship, self-censorship and the rule of fear in Kenya

While VOK suffered under the manipulative demands of the Kenyatta government, this was compounded by the high levels of censorship on all cultural productions, including radio drama, during the rule of Daniel Arap Moi, Kenya's second president. Moi became the president of Kenya in 1978, sworn in just days after Kenyatta's death. Moi's rule was paradoxical in that while on the one hand he sought to uphold Kenyatta's rhetoric of peace, love and unity by laying the foundations of the *Nyayo* Era,[21] on the other hand, his leadership was marked by high levels of suspicion and paranoia. As has already been sketched out in chapter one, it is clear that Moi's incessant 'paramoia'[22] about 'threats' to his leadership throughout the 1980s and 1990s as well as how he reacted to these threats affected the manner in which institutions such as broadcasting were operated (Kariuki

[21] *Nyayo* (footsteps). This was a show by the president that he was following in the footsteps of Kenyatta.
[22] 'Paramoia' is a word that Kariuki uses to summarize Moi's paranoid state during his period of rule, especially from 1982 after a major attempted coup that made Moi realize that his leadership was under threat. Moi's 'reaction' to threats included the removal of Charles Njonjo, an MP in the Moi government, from active politics after he was accused of engineering the 1982 coup; the assassination of Robert Ouko, who at the time of his death in 1990 was Kenya's Foreign Minister, and so on. Kariuki outlines several reasons for this paranoia, including the fact that Moi found an enemy in the Kikuyu who wanted to take over power from Kenyatta after his death through what was called the 'Change-the-constitution group' of 1967.

1996; Haugerud 1995; Ochieng and Kirimi 1980; Heath 1986; Schatzberg and Khadiagala 1987).

The repercussions of Moi's paranoid tendencies were felt in several areas of Kenya's public sphere. One of the areas that suffered was the cultural sphere in which the contents of cultural productions were scrutinized through structures that had been put in place specifically for this. One example involves the Presidential Press Unit's boss Lee Njiru's duties to scrutinize and censor VOK's announcements and messages before they were released to the public. Njiru was Moi's spokesperson throughout his presidency. There was a pointed lack of freedom of speech and expression which accompanied most cultural productions in Kenya. The cultural policy that was developed under Moi's rule demanded a more stringent hold over cultural productions, as opposed to what had been in place both during Kenyatta's government and the colonial state. According to Bethwell Ogot and William Ochieng (1995), independence had meant that Kenya would turn towards its local cultures to nurture its growth as part of its wider nationalistic goals. However, this cultural policy was never fully developed by the Kenyatta government. Ogot notes that

> Culture was not accorded a central place, either as a goal or as an instrumentality. It was still believed that traditional values and institutions were incompatible with modernity. Economic growth and development were of such paramount importance that tradition and social institutions that stood in the way of attainment of these objectives had to give way (1995:214).

Theatre, one of the most important cultural fields in Kenya, was affected by this lack of a definitive cultural policy in the Kenyatta era, and later, by the stringent rules of the Moi era. Stage theatre was one of the more visible kinds of performances in Kenya during the 1970s and early 1980s, a fact that enables one to argue that its censorship became a model for analysing how other kinds of theatrical productions were treated at the time.

One significant theatrical performance that has marked and defined Kenyan theatre is the schools drama festivals developed during the colonial period then later advanced in postcolonial Kenya. This festival is staged every year and has been in existence since 1958 when it was first introduced as the European Schools Festival (Heath 1986). The festivals eventually opened up to include countrywide competitions as opposed to the initial motive for entertaining Europeans. The one notable thing about these competitions was that they were being held at the national level, and that they could be controlled directly by the government, and kept in check in case they showed signs of dissidence. Osotsi (1990) for instance argues that after a while, schools began gaining the competitive edge and exploring their winning options by staging controversial themes that were mostly a direct criticism of the government. Because of this, Osotsi argues that by 1980, the national drama festivals had to be toned down, especially because of their involvement with politics. [23] New rules required that they did not touch on politics. Both

[23] Osotsi points out the major differences between drama festivals in the colonial era, in the independent Kenya and in Moi's era. According to him, as competition became fiercer, schools began experimenting with new ideas. One of the most common themes in these dramas was criticism of the government and the way in which things were being run after independence. In 1981, however, Moi put a stop to these kinds of dramas. There was also censorship in terms of sexual content in the plays. One of the ways in which this is dealt with is by asking people to dress appropriately during performances, and use proper *kangas* or *lessos* for their performances.

Ingrid Bjorkman (1989) and Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1997) have also points out that other performances, including the Free Travelling Theatre where University of Nairobi students toured villages, markets, schools and gave performances, were banned by 1978 because they were considered 'controversial'.

The one significant theatrical space that remained almost untouched by censorship was the Kenya National Theatre (KNT). KNT was formed in 1952 by the colonial government to provide entertainment for Europeans settlers, and later became recognized as the destination for the 'Nairobi elite, foreigners and the new domestic bourgeoisie' (Bjorkman 1989:45). KNT, though a government subsidized institution, rarely hosted local productions, and according to Bjorkman, the only known performances in the 1970s included Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Micere Mugo's *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* and Francis Imbuga's *Betrayal in the City* in 1976. This is ironic, especially because a play like *Betrayal in the City* is highly critical of the postcolonial government, attacking the corruption and abuse of power as seen in the way leadership in Africa has been carried out. However, as was mentioned briefly in chapter one, the government rarely had issues with performances and productions that were aimed at an elitist audience. It was the masses, and the idea that such performances could create new consciousness that bothered them, as we see in the actions that were taken against the Kamiriithu productions and so on. While the National Schools drama festivals allowed for a rich exploration of cultural, social and often political themes, the KNT maintained its preference for European performances way into the 1980s and failed to capture the attention of most Kenyans (Outa 2002; Heath 1986; Bjorkman 1989).

In order to understand the extent of censorship of theatre in Kenya therefore, one cannot ignore the theatrical works of one of Kenya's most controversial playwrights, Ngugi wa Thiongo. Although he had already previously written plays such as the *Black Hermit* (1968), Ngugi's plays in the 1970s and early 1980s became markers through which several critics studied the government's attitude towards theatre. Ingrid Bjorkman (1989) critically looks at one of his plays, *Mother Sing for Me*, which on the surface is about a colonial narrative that has nothing to do with the government of the time. It was so popular that people travelled from far to come and watch the rehearsals, weeks before it was to officially open at the Univeristy of Nairobi. In Bjorkman's words,

> The anticipated musical aroused enthusiasm and expectations throughout Kenya. Journalists wrote admiring articles about the progress of the play and about the cultural centre in Kamiriithu. At last, they wrote, Kenyan culture would gain artistic recognition after having been suppressed throughout the 20th century. Thousands of spectators gathered from all over the country to watch rehearsals […] before the opening night […] at the University of Nairobi (1989:vii).

However, in spite of its apparent popularity, *Mother Sing for me* was never allowed on stage. As Bjorkman describes, 'armed police tore down [the Kamiriithu] cultural centre, and a technical school was built on the site' (Bjorkman 1989:viii). Questions arose regarding the rushed closure of the play and why the government felt it necessary to destroy the Kamiriithu Cultural Centre. The government was clearly threatened by a

production that directly dealt with the masses, and as Ngugi explains, the performances created hope for most of the peasants who participated in it, because it helped them to understand the conditions in which they were living (Ngugi wa Thiong'o 1997).

Mother Sing for me was part of a larger project by Ngugi in Kamiriithu in central Kenya. As has been mentioned in chapter one, in 1977, Ngugi co-directed a play, *Ngahika Ndeenda* (*I will marry when I want*), that was performed by amateur actors from the Kamiriithu area, a project that Bjorkman argues was part of an adult education initiative by Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Ngugi wa Miiri. It was the first truly local play in Kenya to gain international attention. In it, workers suffering from exploitation and oppression by powerful landowners, some government officials, rise up in arms and rebel against the rich owners. It raised controversies because it spoke directly about the inequalities that marked Kenyan society. It was seen as a critique of the government and banned, Ngugi wa Thiong'o was arrested for his role in the project while Ngugi wa Miiri went into exile in Zimbabwe. Ngugi suffered extensive censorship for his creative initiatives, even after he had been released from prison. While he argues that he wrote *Mother Sing for me* as a way of celebrating oral forms and involving Kenyans in issues that were affecting their lives in an accessible manner (Bjorkman 1989; Ngugi 1986), it was interpreted as a critique of the government. The dismantling of the Kamiriithu Centre in 1982 just before the play was performed was a symbolic attempt by the government to erase any kind of 'radical' theatre in Kenya.

From this standpoint, we read the entry of *Radio Theatre* into the cultural scene in Kenya in 1982. It was produced in a year that most defined Moi's paranoid tendencies. One significant 'enemy' of the State was the Kenyan Air Force that had attempted to overthrow his government in August 1982. The first institution that the Air Force took over was the broadcasting house, VOK. Hilary Ng'weno, the editor of one of Kenya's most popular magazines in the 70s and 80s *The Weekly Review* notes that VOK radio was the first target because it was the only means through which the coup plotters could reach an entire nation within a short time. Further, radio has been noted as a handy instrument used by coup plotters in other areas of Africa (Fardon and Furniss 2000). With the help of the Kenya Armed Forces however, the coup was stopped. Moi's wrath was such that almost 80 of the coup plotters were hanged for their crime, and over 200 given long jail sentences.

2.4 The media environment in Kenya: The Moi years

While a rough sketch of the historical factors that affected cultural productions such as theatre in Kenya is useful in understanding how Moi's regime affected *Radio Theatre*'s production, perhaps a closer look at the relationship between the media and the state during Moi's tenure, and after, would provide a more useful entry into understanding the position of broadcasting in Kenya and how this affected its productions. Research on the media in Kenya has been highly focused on the press and its relations to the state and democracy (Ochieng 1992; Muriungi 2005; Odhiambo 2002; Mbeke 2008). Very little research exclusively focuses on broadcasting, and yet, broadcasting's relationship with the state is an opening for understanding how the state manipulated the media, especially

in the repressive years of Moi's rule. Apart from the in-depth analyses done by Carla Heath (1986; 1992), for instance, several studies use the state's relation with the press to understand the media environment in the country (see for instance, Odhiambo 2002). Part of the reason for the exclusion of broadcasting in critical discussion is explained by Okoth Mudhai (1998) who argues that the press, which had always been more or less independent of the state, benefited more from the media liberalization in 1991 in Kenya, than broadcasting which continued to be controlled very tightly by the state. The press exploited the new found spaces after 1991, penetrating every facet of social, political and cultural spaces in the country. To understand the media's relationship with the state, we therefore will have to draw very generally but carefully from work that has dealt with both broadcasting and the press in Kenya.

Until the late 1980s, broadcasting was defined primarily in political terms, as an instrument of administration and a powerful political weapon, making its primary role political (Heath 1986). It was seen as an 'essential instrument in the government's programme of building a prosperous and united nation' (Heath 1986: 344). Unlike broadcasting, the press acted more independently (Ochieng 1992). The government had little control over the press because most of the ownership was centred outside the state (Ochieng 1992). As such, it was possible to see how broadcasting became a strong tool for political propaganda in Kenya, while the press retained partial independence. In fact, as Heath in a separate paper asserts, broadcasting was part and parcel of Moi's authoritarian regime in the 1980s (Heath 1992). While throughout the early and mid-1980s, VOK was used to serve the regime in the same manner in which it had been used

to serve Kenyatta's government, the later years of the 1980s and early 1990s saw a change in broadcasting. It is to these years that the following discussion will focus.

According to Heath (1992), Moi, who had until 1988 ruled the nation with an iron fist (see earlier discussion in chapter one), desperately wanted to change the face of his regime, in order to attract foreign investment and present his government as a democratic regime. The repression of the media and other forms of expression in Kenya marked Moi's repressive regime. As such, by 1989, new reforms in the state of broadcasting in Kenya were introduced. As Heath explains,

> Early in 1989, the Kenya government transferred responsibility for its broadcasting services, the Voice of Kenya (VOK) from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) to a semi-autonomous commercial entity, the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC). The following year, the Kenya Times Media Trust (KTMT), a joint venture of the ruling party, the Kenya National African Union (KANU) and Maxwell Communication, launched the Kenya Television Network (KTN), making Kenya only the third African nation to permit the operation of a privately owned television station (Heath 1992:37).

The question then became, 'why did the regime of President Daniel Arap Moi, which was known for silencing public debate and proscribing publications it found objectionable, institute measures that appeared to make for a more open and less tightly controlled environment?' (Heath 1992:37-8).

To answer this question, one needs to engage with issues in the late 1980s and early 1990s in Kenya that marked a new tone in Kenya's politics. Internationally, political liberalization was replacing single-party politics. In Kenya, alternative voices began opposing Moi's regime. For example, the church, which had hitherto shied away from politics, began 'to speak out openly against official corruption and human rights abuses' (Kariuki 1996:78). The Law Society of Kenya became part of the unofficial opposition, 'drawn into political activism in 1986 by the government's attempt to replace the secret ballot with the queuing system' (Kariuki 1996:79). Both the church and the Law Society had international connections which posed a serious threat to Moi's leadership. In 1990, following the murder of Foreign Minister Robert Ouko (discussed in chapter one) sparked off a series of protests, opening up a new forum for debate regarding multi-partism in Kenya. Pressure from human rights groups and the international community opposed to the violent inter-ethnic conflicts and massive loss of life in Kenya, also contributed to Moi's new strategies of introducing multiple voices in the broadcasting scene. He desperately needed to 'improve Kenya's tarnished reputation abroad' (Heath 1992: 38). Moi's regime had reached a point where it could no longer ignore the rising opposition, and through a series of activities, it paved way for a multi-party state.

These changes were seen in the introduction of new policies which allowed for media liberalization. In terms of broadcasting the 'liberalization of the airwaves is a reference to a process that led to the emergence of private broadcasters and to a much less extent and in … very few countries, 'community' broadcasters' (Article 19 2003:2). The

liberalization of broadcasting occurred in a context of political change from one party state governments into multi-party governments, enhancing the process of democracy in such countries. As mentioned in Article 19,

> The relevance of these changes to broadcasting is that pluralistic politics is now linked to the existence of pluralistic and diverse media systems as opposed to government and state monopolies. Freedoms of expression and the media especially with regards to editorial and programming independence have become central issues linked to the provision of alternative sources of information (2003:3).

Did the opening up of the media spaces mean direct changes in broadcasting in Kenya? If so, what kinds of changes? How did this affect the standing of KBC, which, though now a semi-autonomous outfit, was still regarded as the government mouthpiece (Muriungi 2005)? Heath has argued very forcefully that Moi, in introducing a second broadcasting station and in making KBC independent of the government, was not in fact keen to relinquish control of the media. If anything, he now had more control, while giving the impression that the media had been liberalized. The establishment of KBC and KTN was a move to increase the confidence of foreign investors while retaining control of broadcasting.

For instance, while KBC was not under the government directly, it was actually 'subject to more direct oversight by the executive than was the old VOK' (Heath 1992: 43). The

chair of the KBC board was appointed by the president, and its members were either ministerial appointees or senior bureaucrats (Heath 1992, Odhiambo 1992). The Managing Director, though in charge of staff appointments, programming, capital development and so on, had to answer directly to the board and the Minister concerned with information and broadcasting (Heath 1992). Also, the KBC Act of 1988 demanded that broadcasting still be used for purposes of national development, allowing space for ministerial and presidential interference. Broadcasting was now even more vulnerable to presidential and ministerial control, having been removed from the direct glare of the parliament.

The introduction of KTN was highly welcomed by the public, who saw this as an opportunity to create spaces for alternative voices for talented but frustrated producers, artistes and news anchors (Ngwiri in Heath 1992). Its introduction was welcome as timely and important in the coverage of political events that were considered 'too sensitive' to be broadcast by KBC (Heath 1992).

However, by 1992, certain changes in KTN spooked the public into believing that in fact, the government still had a tight control over broadcasting. In January 1992, Rose Lukalo, a news editor was fired for 'flashing news of former vice-President Kibaki's resignation from government', also, coverage of the launching of the Democratic Party was described as 'timid', and Jared Kangwana, Chairman of the Kenya Times Media Trust (KTMT), began paying close attention to the day to day running of KTN (Heath 1992:47). These were signs that little democratic changes had been activated in broadcasting.

In the wider media circles, while the liberalization provided for increased involvement of the media in politics, several obstacles existed to restrain media freedom (Odhiambo 2002). Inclusive were the lack of constitutional protection of the media from harassment by the state; the protection of politically connected individuals from exposure by the media and other obstacles which generally frustrated the media's effort to practice freely (Odhiambo 2002). In broadcasting, the law provided freedom of operation for KBC, while restricting the operation of over twenty-four new FM stations that had been licensed by the mid-1990s. KBC had its own act, the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation Act of 1988, which granted it 'oversight powers over its competitors' and charged it with the responsibility of 'advising the government on all matters relating to broadcasting' (Odhiambo 2002: 312). The private broadcasters that sprung after 1991 were regulated by the Kenya Communications Act of 1998 which requires that licences be renewed every year. KBC had control of the licence renewal process. Odhiambo concludes that 'even though the broadcast sector in Kenya has been liberalized, regulatory instruments are seriously biased and retain elements of monopolistic advantages to the public broadcaster who cannot be said to be independent of government manipulation and control' (Odhiambo 2002:312).

2.5 A product of censorship?

It is from this premise that we read *Radio Theatre*'s preoccupation with moral plays. In an interview Nzau Kalulu (2005) confirmed that *Radio Theatre* occupies itself with moral themes of everyday life in order to avoid censorship and victimization by the government. VOK and later KBC remained fiercely loyal to the State. In 2001, KBC suspended and in some cases sacked its employees based on their 'political opinions' during the campaign months that led to the opposition take over from the ruling party KANU. Some of the more famous examples include the suspension of a KBC English Service presenter Bill Odidi after he aired the controversial song *Nchi ya Kitu Kidogo* (Trans. the country of corruption) that was sung by the Kora award winner Eric Wainaina. Another presenter, Elizabeth Obege was fired from the KBC Swahili service after she played Gidi Gidi Maji Maji's song *Who Can Bwogo Me*. The phrase 'I am Unbwogable' became popular in Kenya for its meaning, which was derived from the Luo word 'bwogo' (to scare). The prefix 'un' creates the image of indestructibility (Nyairo and Ogude 2003:375). Even in the new era of Mwai Kibaki's presidency, KBC and other broadcasters are still seen to be under the control of the government. In 2008, following a botched election, for instance, Kibaki was able to place a ban on all broadcasting, to prevent the transmission of details of the violence that followed his re-entry into office.

In order to avoid trouble while still maintaining high levels of creativity, *Radio Theatre* we argue that worked on themes that affected the ordinary person in his/her everyday life. It strove to remain relevant to its audiences and provide moral lessons, while staying away from controversial topics.

Carla Heath (1986) explains clearly why programmes such as *Radio Theatre*, produced for VOK showed reluctance to engage with politics. According to her, cumbersome bureaucratic procedures and constant interference by government officials, who

> Seriously hamper VOK staff in their efforts to provide the nation with timely information about matters of public concern and to encourage artistic excellence […] Furthermore, obsessive concern with proper political messages in music and drama, as well as in news and information programmes, has made it difficult for VOK producers to explore the possibilities of using a wide range of artistic talent and modes of expression (379-380).

Working within VOK has therefore made it difficult for *Radio Theatre* producers to expand the programme beyond certain levels. As Kalulu (2005) succinctly puts it, 'Nobody ever tells you, "Do not." You just know'.

However, *Radio Theatre*'s preoccupation with themes of ordinary occurrences in the domestic space has worked to its advantage because it operates away from the direct gaze of the government. Its routine engagements with everyday experiences lend it the ability to appear unproblematic thus ensuring continued funding and support from the government. Yet radio drama is a genre that provides many spaces through which these plays can be read in alternative ways. As already indicated, Liz Gunner (2000) and Khaya Gqibitole (2002) demonstrate how Zulu and Xhosa radio dramas were able to survive the

apartheid regime because they hid in the 'thicket of language', where room for several readings and interpretations of the plays resided. Radio drama though in constant scrutiny by white managers and the government, survived through hidden messages within language.

However, in the case of *Radio Theatre*, there are no 'hidden transcripts' that are politically laden, 'encoding the "real," politically subversive message[s] within an apparently innocent tale' (Scott in Barber 2000: 300). These plays are moral plays, in which 'messages about the government, regime or political party are not uniquely privileged or even especially salient themes' (2000:300). Within the realm of the moral play, what is of utmost importance is the moral lesson which the plays intend to deliver at the end of the play. As argued by Karin Barber, in reference to Yoruba plays which she has extensively analysed, 'what seems important is the larger and more generalized moral framework which encompasses them' (2000:300). Therefore, inasmuch as *Radio Theatre* operates within stringent VOK/KBC policies, and despite the fact that it operates in a genre whose creative potential is under continuous scrutiny from the government, it is able to survive any interference from the State. As a survival strategy, *Radio Theatre* like several other VOK programmes affiliated itself with the government, in order to 'minimize the element of uncertainty' within which it could operate (Heath 1986: 346).

Contextually, *Radio Theatre* was not the only dramatic programme that dealt with and continues to deal with moral and educational themes. Within KBC, 'politics and issues pertaining to it are a no-go area and we (producers) all know that. You do not want to be

called and told you are breaking policy rules' (Kalulu 2005). *Radio Theatre* can thus be located within the different kinds of dramatic productions that dominated the Kenyan television and radio in the 1980s. It is argued that *Radio Theatre* straddled several of these productions, borrowing from the content and style of presentation of other programmes, although managing to remain distinctly different from the rest of the productions.

The most popular structure used by many dramatic productions from the 1980s was comedy. Swahili programmes such as *Vitimbi* (Happenings), *Vioja Mahakamani* (Dramas in the Courtroom), and *Vituko* (Drama) were among the most popular. These are programmes that were and continue to be celebrated because they are comic renditions of everyday realities in Kenya. *Vitimbi* for instance, is a situational comedy that presents different crises in the everyday lives of characters such as Ojwang, Mama Kayai, Maliwaza, Masaku, Masanduku and Othorong'ong'o, characters that became household names in Kenya during the 1970s and 1980s and who still remain popular to date.[24] Like several contemporary comic genres in Africa today, *Vitimbi* represents society's attempt to resolve problems that affect everyday lives through laughter. *Vioja Mahakamani* is a courtroom drama also based on comic relief. Like *Vitimbi*, several characters from *Vioja Mahakamani* became household names in the 1980s, including Tamaa bin Tamaa, Otoyo and Ondiek Nyuka Kwota. *Vituko*, likewise, brought to life characters such as Kerekani

[24] Characters such as Mzee Ojwang, Othorongongo and Masanduku arap Smiti were defined by their parodying of various ethnic groups by imitating their accents. What made this imitation of accents even funnier was the fact that some of these actors did not belong to the ethnic groups whose accents they imitated. For instance, Mzee Ojwang plays a harsh stern man, constructed around circulating discourses of Luo men. While people watching Mzee Ojwang would laugh at his Luo accent, they laugh even harder at the fact that the actor who plays the character of Mzee Ojwang is actually played by Benson Wanjau who is of Kikuyu decent. Most of the actors who played these characters are now deceased for instance Tamaa bin Tamaa, Othorongongo, Otoyo, Mayasa, Masanduku, and several others.

and Mzee Mombasa. Each of these dramas dealt with realities of everyday life and had resolutions at the end of the play. Their function as social commentaries with moral resolutions at the end is reflective of the kind of dramatic narrative style used in *Radio Theatre*. These programmes are still being aired in KBC to date.

The other type of drama that defined the Kenyan dramatic scene in broadcasting in the 1980s was the educational soap opera. These dramas were moulded around real life issues, such as wife inheritance, teenage pregnancies and forced marriages. Three of the most prominent of these were *Tushauriane* (Let us consult each other) and *Usiniharakishe* (Do not rush me), both produced for VOK television, and *Ushikwapo Shikamana* (If assisted, assisted yourself) which was being produced for VOK Swahili radio Service (Njogu 2005; Ligaga 2005). Unlike *Radio Theatre*, these plays are well researched, and in most cases well funded plays that adopt a theoretical model for effectively reaching communities and changing behaviour through the Educational-Entertainment model. According to Kimani Njogu (2005:25), these serial dramas are used to entertain and educate, and the implementers adopt an entertainment-education strategy used for 'increasing levels of knowledge, changing attitudes, increasing dialogue in families and communities and influencing the behaviour of individuals'. As explained in chapter one however, the presentation of these plays differs from *Radio Theatre* whose narratives are not predetermined by NGOs or other kinds of sponsored organizations. Their educational content is in line with the general VOK/KBC broadcasting policies.

2.5.1 The production of *Radio Theatre*

Radio Theatre dramas are first and foremost educational. In an interview with the former producer Nzau Kalulu (2005), it emerges that one of the requirements of KBC is that its programmes maintain an educative content in line with the general institutional policy. The fact that *Radio Theatre* is a paid programme (a programme whose budget is fully covered by KBC) often makes it difficult for the producers to play around with themes that fall outside of the policy requirements. However, as Kalulu argues, this gives them leeway to experiment with several other more interesting topics that define the Kenyan culture.

Although *Radio Theatre* has been produced by several producers, including famous names like Micky Ndichu, Tim Nderitu and Richard Wafula, Nzau Kalulu, who was its producer between 1995 and 2006, remains one of its most enthusiastic and resourceful producers. During the period when he was the producer, *Radio Theatre* was voted the best under the drama section in 2002 by the Union of Radio and Television Networks in Africa (URTNA), an organization committed to a pan-Africanist development of broadcasting in Africa. In 2003, *Immoral Network*, a play about the spread of HIV/AIDS within a small knit community won the URTNA Map award. Kalulu has pitched several ideas to other organizations in the hope of getting sustained funding for parallel drama productions beside *Radio Theatre*. For instance in 2003, he wrote a proposal to the UNHCR to fund a series of plays that would educate Kenyans about the plight of refugees in the country. One programme that was aired in 2003 was titled *Innocent Appeal*, a play that dwelt on the pain of victims of war, involving rape of children and

women and the senseless murder of innocent men. Although the play is not situated in any country, its message is clear, refugees are people who have stories to tell and they had normal lives prior to their war situations.

The idea behind *Innocent Appeal* also motivated Kalulu to try out a project called 'The Story of my Life.' According to Kalulu, 'everybody has a story to tell. It is this story that we are trying to capture and rewrite so that they can see the idea behind our production' (Kalulu 2005). One such story, also titled *The Story of my Life* is the narrative of a young man who is mistakenly jailed for a crime he did not commit. In the play, the young boy is tricked into a criminal act by an old classmate. The young man, not knowing that he is driving a stolen car, drives into a police blockade. He is shocked when his friend begins firing at a policeman, in the process killing one of them. A gunfire exchange ensues, and the young man finds himself in the middle of it. All his friends are killed and he, the sole survivor, is arrested for murder and armed robbery. According to Kalulu, the story was true and the young man was still in hospital at the time of being interviewed, because a bullet was lodged in his spine. Other plays such as *Bottoms Up* fall within this 'true story' category.

2.5.2 The *Radio Theatre* audience

In this thesis, rather than deal with actual audiences, we looked at how such audiences are imagined by the text. The research was more interested in looking at *Radio Theatre* plays as texts that interact with the social and political spaces in Kenya. As an important historical artefact, looking at *Radio Theatre* provides us with a chance to look at the

relationship that the state has with broadcasting and its consumers. An actual audience research is then out of the scope of this research. What in fact is of interest to us is the manner in which *Radio Theatre* plays signalled an imagined audience. Hopefully, the audience that is imagined by the text is reflective of a section of Kenyan listeners. How then does *Radio Theatre* perceive its audiences?

To answer this question requires one to frame it in the larger picture of KBC. First, one has to understand that *Radio Theatre* was produced to address a national audience. David Morley (2004) in an article 'Broadcasting and the construction of the national family' underlines the function that radio and television in Britain played in creating a context where 'all citizens of a nation [could] talk to each other like a family sitting and chatting around the domestic hearth' (2004:418). As such, programmes strove to be consumed as 'family' programmes that created a sense of a 'National Family'. Stuart Hall argues that this 'National Family' was engineered, 'an instrument, an apparatus, a "machine" through which the nation could be constituted' (Hall in Morley 2004). *Radio Theatre* was part of a bigger ideological strategy of creating a sense of nationalism. Produced by the national broadcaster, *Radio Theatre* addresses the nation rather than specific sections of Kenya. As such, it strives to bring together local sounds that are recognizable to all Kenyans, and that have been used in the nationalizing project. Through semiotics, it is possible then to see how *Radio Theatre* 'brands' itself, almost in the same way as commercial products, as a national programme that can be consumed in the home, by the family.

As already mentioned above, *Radio Theatre* envisioned a national audience. This is deduced partly from the fact that VOK was the only broadcasting station, and thus attracted a large audience that preferred local programmes to foreign ones. Ingrid Bjorkman (1989:47) mentions that 'in numerous official reports the regime professes to support indigenous culture and exhorts the people to safeguard their customs; yet all forms of indigenous creative expression are repressed while Western Culture, as in the colonial era, is subsidized'. She gives an example of the programme *The Flame Trees of Thika* based on the autobiographical novel by Elspeth Huxley which was serialized on television for seven weeks in 1982. She contrasts this with the government's banning of *Mother Sing for Me* at around the same period, a fact that viewers took as a statement by the government regarding local productions. One viewer actually complains about the serialized production of *The Flame Trees of Thika*:

> The programme stinks. That it is being shown on national television is more the pity, since we are denied the chance to judge for ourselves works like *Maitu Njugira*, yet *Flame Trees* with all its distortions is brought into our homes (Bjorkman 1989:47).

However, local programmes like *Vitimbi, Vioja Mahakamani* and *Vituko* were very popular. They were watched with a keenness that allowed them to be topics of public discussions in newspapers and other media. For instance, when a programme, *Usiniharakishe* dared to screen a 'sexually explicit' scene, several viewers wrote letters to the newspapers demanding its withdrawal from national television (see a detailed

discussion of this in chapter four of this thesis). If one reads *Radio Theatre* within this framework, one is able to understand the kind of listenership that *Radio Theatre* addressed throughout the 1980s and early 1990s.

One of the ways in which *Radio Theatre* has managed to speak to this 'captive' audience is through its scheduling. It always been aired on Sunday evening at 9:30 pm. As Winston Mano (2005) has argued in his analysis of the importance of scheduling, it creates and maintains a public that a programme wants to target. Sunday evenings meant that the whole family was together and was as one narrator of *Radio Theatre* says, a 'day of rest as people anticipate going to work the following day' (opening sequence, *Radio Theatre*).

Radio Theatre has been consistent in airing since it began airing in 1982. According to Kalulu (2006), 'while other radio drama programmes in Swahili were constantly being rested [taken off air], where after four years a programme cannot go on for one reason or the other, *Radio Theatre* has maintained the kind of consistency that has enabled it to remain on air, despite all odds' (Kalulu 2006). In terms of its audience, Kalulu argues that it targets the age group of 18-35, a group which comprises of people who 'appreciate English as a best language … this audience may be urban or rural' (Kalulu 2006). His observation confirms that *Radio Theatre* is aimed at people from all walks of life in Kenya who have access to radio. The manner of its address shows that the programme is intended to address a wide audience, especially given its use of English.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter set out to explore the context in which *Radio Theatre* was produced. It looked at two main contextual frameworks that defined and affected the product of *Radio Theatre*. First, the chapter looked at VOK and KBC, both state-run broadcasting institutions that were manipulated and controlled to produce programmes that were pro-government. Although broadcasting was a necessary tool for advancing the idea of nationalism that the government was keen to project, it also became misused as a source of power and manipulation. The chapter also analysed the cultural policy in Kenya that defined and affected the production of cultural forms in Kenya. Focusing on theatrical productions, which have been identified as the most visible cultural form, the chapter examined how censorship laws prevented the expansion of creativity. Moi's government, with which the censorship laws are most identified, created a framework that made it difficult for forms such as radio drama to operate freely. The chapter also explored the media environment in the Moi regime and argued that the continued control and manipulation of broadcasting, even post-liberalization, meant that *Radio Theatre* continued to operate in difficult conditions.

However, the chapter has shown that *Radio Theatre* adopted survival strategies, by keeping away from political talk and focusing on everyday realities from which it obtained its themes. The chapter also pointed out the context of the programme's production in terms of other programmes that were being produced at the time, concluding that *Radio Theatre* was not operating in isolation but that there were other

programmes that took a similar route of non-political content and which became popular in Kenya especially in the 1980s. In that way, it was possible to explore the kinds of audiences that *Radio Theatre* addresses itself to. This audience is a national, captive audience that enjoys and is in turn affected by the kinds of issues that are picked up in the various dramatic productions of both VOK and KBC. While this audience might only be partially representative of an actual audience, the way that the text imagines it enables us to deduce the manner in which this audience is supposed to respond to the kinds of plays produced for *Radio Theatre*.

Chapter three

"Teaching in a Clever Way": The Moral Play and the Educational Function of *Radio Theatre*

3.1 Introduction

It is clear by now that broadcasting in Kenya was viewed as a powerful tool for propaganda. It was also viewed as a tool for education and nation-building. The latter aspect of broadcasting was adopted at independence by the Kenyatta government, in order to set in motion a number of strategies for the Africanization of the newly independent nation, as explained in the previous chapter. Two separate pronouncements by different Ministers, one in Kenyatta's regime and another, in Moi's regime, confirm the role that broadcasting was expected to play in the process of national integration and education. On 24 June 1964, Tom Mboya, then Minister for Justice and Constitutional Affairs said of the VOK,

> The government intends to use the Voice of Kenya for the purpose of building, strengthening, [and] consolidating the new nation of Kenya and educating its citizens, to understand their duties, their responsibilities, their privileges, their opportunities and the role they can play in making that nation what all of us want it to be (Heath 1986: 344).

In 1980, Peter Oloo-Aringo, then Minister for Information and Broadcasting emphasized the importance of broadcasting as a 'vehicle for the promotion of national unity, integration and socio-economic development of the people' (Heath 1986: 344).

This chapter engages with these roles of broadcasting in educating listeners and creating a sense of national unity. The chapter looks at a play, *Jamhuri Day Special*, which was aired in December 2005, during the tenure of democratic president Kibaki. The chapter analyzes the context in which *Jamhuri Day Special* was aired, and the role it was supposed to play in relation to its intended audience. *Jamhuri Day Special*, which was set on the 12 of December 2005, Kenya's Independence Day, was intended to teach, remind and re-insert the significance of national unity vis-à-vis Kenya's history. Through a careful analysis of the play, this chapter engages with the layered meanings of the narrative presented, and the manner in which listeners are expected to consume it. Overall, the chapter intends to look at the educational role that KBC plays today, which still upholds pro-government agendas. *Radio Theatre* is seen to be contributing to this agenda. However, as has already been argued, radio drama, is a performance that allows for several parallel readings, including the reading of gaps that are left out of the actual script.

3.2 Education and broadcasting in Kenya

Katz and Wedell (1977) have pointed out that at independence broadcasting played a significant role in most developing countries, especially to advance the nation-building project of postcolonial governments. Broadcasting was used by these governments to

disseminate ideological and political propaganda to the masses because, as has been discussed in chapter two, most of these stations were state-owned. One context in which the State used broadcasting was in education. Broadcasting was seen as a key tool for educating the public, and often these educational programmes were those that supported the dominant state ideologies. According to Katz and Wedell (1977), most radio broadcasting programmes were either specifically designed to be received in pre-determined spaces such as in classrooms at primary, secondary and adult literacy levels or were geared towards a larger undefined population to be received as general educational programmes.

In Kenya, programmes produced for VOK existed within these two main educational structures. In the instance of programmes produced for audiences in specified locations, VOK worked in collaboration with the Ministry of Education in Kenya to provide educational material to students in primary and secondary school. It was also successful in using radio to encourage adult literacy. In her analysis of broadcasting in Kenya, Carla Heath (1986) demonstrates the effort and commitment of the Ministry of Education in spreading literacy through broadcasting, especially radio. She records that (1986:288-289)

> Since 1965 broadcasts to schools have been the responsibility of the Ministry of Education which pays the VOK to transmit its programmes. Broadcasts to schools which are regarded as teaching aids are produced by the EMS (Educational Media Services) at the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) where all curriculum planning

> and development takes place […]. The Institute of Adult Studies also has its own studios and producers. Its broadcasts to adult educators can be heard [during] week days around the noon hour on the General Service.

Not all educational programmes were necessarily geared towards a specific audience. The second category of educational programmes fell under the rubric 'extensive educational broadcasting' which included 'all types of broadcasting that are intended in one way or another to encourage greater understanding or a change in attitude among sections of the general audience' (Katz and Wedell 1977:121). The government's effort to educate through broadcasting spread beyond the classroom into the production of other educational programmes. These programmes included those that advised farmers on useful farming strategies, others that focused on health problems, educational sitcoms and cooking demonstration shows. Often these programmes were a means through which the government 'communicated' with the people and expressed its ideas on issues that affected the lived experiences of its citizens.

Radio Theatre operates within the latter category, addressing a wider undefined public by combining aesthetic and social elements to present itself as educational. While several radio drama studies have focused on its aesthetic value (Lewis 1981; Beck 1997; Crook 1999), radio drama in Africa is important in the way it can be used for educational purposes. The existing body of work generally has focused on radio drama as a product of sound by emphasizing its formal elements. However, there is a growing interest in radio drama's ability to teach, persuade and change behaviour and attitudes especially in

Africa (Njogu 2005; and Rogers 2003; Singhal et al 2004). These studies focus on the social role of radio drama. *Radio Theatre* locates itself within such studies, attempting to use the genre's formal structure to educate its listeners. However, while several studies on didactic literature have emphasized community-based educational projects, *Radio Theatre* emphasizes self-development. It focuses on the general moral values that define individual behaviour and provide examples against which listeners can possibly read their lives. It presents itself as intimate and familiar, qualities that can enable audiences to relate to the realities that it represents.

Taking Gerard Genette's definition of paratexts as 'the liminal devices ... that mediate the relations between the text and reader …' (1997:xi), it becomes possible to argue that *Radio Theatre* invites and positions its listeners to receive it as a moral narrative through its opening sequence. It does this by presenting familiar elements and extending moral lessons. When the programme opens, the narrator announces, '*Radio Theatre* … bringing radio drama home'. The tagline emphasizes the domestic space which captures the larger context of the play's setting. It gestures to the private space of home which becomes the defining space for conveying moral lessons. This is highlighted through the presentation of 'a family' after the narrator announces, 'some laughter'. The idea of a family is demonstrated through 'laughter sounds', first through a deep male voice, followed by a woman's and lastly by a child's. The familiarity is also presented through the use of local traditional music instruments, and other familiar codes. When the narrator says 'just like the movies', it is to signal to the listener's previous knowledge of other genres, providing a basis for intertextual comparisons.

In *Jamhuri Day Special*, this familiarity introduces the moral centre of the play, captured in a sound-clip from the main play that highlights one of its dramatic moments. The clip, transcribed below, follows the narrator's announcement, "before our main feature, the play of the week":

> First voice: I will climb this Mukuyu tree to meet my death here! Dad … it's not my wish, but I can't just live without Njambi I can't!
>
> Second voice: Ah! Please …

Through melodrama, the clip presents the dramatic climax of *Jamhuri Day Special*. It is of a man trying to commit suicide because he cannot live without a woman who obviously means a lot to him. Through reference, we know that the man is speaking to his father. The clip also hints at the setting of the play established through the reference to the Mukuyu tree (a sacred life symbol in Gikuyu mythology). One can read this clip as an invitation to the listener to consume the play as moral. The melodramatic event hinted at emphasizes the idea of injustice which is explored in the main play.

Such kinds of melodramatic presentations are often summarized through the title of the play. Titles such as *3 Times a Lady*, *Whatever it Takes*, *Nothing at Last*, *Bottoms Up*, and *Not Now* often allude to the moral focus of the play. The title *3 Times a Lady* for instance, is a reference to the moral behaviour of a female character. However, as is the case with *Jamhuri Day Special*, sometimes the title refers to the subject of the play without

providing an indication of its moral contents. The listener enters into the play with little knowledge about what is to come, which is clarified in the main play.

Apart from the title, the narrator assists the listener in understanding the content of the play through a summary at the beginning and of the lessons at the end. These summaries act as guides in reading the play. While this aspect is not explored in *Jamhuri Day Special*, one can examine the opening synopsis of another play, *3 Times a Lady*:

> Narrator: And now what you have been waiting for … James, a young graduate doctor fresh from the university. Just like any other graduate, he is burning to put his acquired knowledge in medicine into practice. He is yet to get a satisfying and rewarding job as a doctor. But first things first, job or no job, he has to get married to the love of his life, Tabitha, the young graduate teacher from his village whom he met at the university. But unlike James, Tabitha is lucky that she has already secured a job at the local secondary school as an Arts teacher. Just when the wedding bells are about to ring for the two, the call comes, the call of profession, probably the big break for James. He receives a letter, answer to the forgotten job application from the flying doctors, so James has to leave immediately to report to his new masters in Nairobi before coming back home for the wedding. Enough for introduction, the rest is for your own digestion. Welcome to part one of *3 Times a Lady*.

The moral play engages with the moral behaviour of different characters whose dilemmas are drawn from familiar realities. The summary above encourages listeners to identify with James, who faces the dilemma of choosing between taking up a job he badly needs, and staying behind to get married to Tabitha. It also presents the listener with Tabitha's dilemma because she has to wait for James to come back before they can get married. While the opening summary acts as a guide into the play, lessons can only be derived from the actual performance. In the case of *3 Times a Lady*, patience is emphasized as Tabitha waits for James for five years. During this time, her faithfulness is tested, and it is from such instances that listeners are invited to draw lessons. Often, the moral play polarizes its characters, making it possible for listeners to identify which behaviour traits they are being encouraged to imitate or learn. The introduction of villains, helpers and other character forms emphasize intended lessons for these listeners. In the play, the villain, Mbolu attempts to convince Tabitha to forget about James (who has not been heard from) and marry him. However, James comes back and Mbolu's plans are thwarted. The narrator wraps up the play's lessons as follows: "Life is sometimes cruel, and it is sometimes good. For Tabitha, she finally got what she wanted, James. For Mbolu, it was a sad ending … that's life". A listener who has been following the play will understand the role that the characters played. It emerges that Mbolu already had another family and had wanted to marry Tabitha as a second wife. James has an excuse for why he has been away. In addition, Tabitha is rewarded for having been patient. Within the play, different lessons become available to the listener, who is encouraged to learn by example, by choosing the character who most embraces the idea of a moral behaviour.

Lastly, the use of poems read out to the listeners by the narrator at the beginning of the play is an important aspect to consider. A listener, Maureen Ngetich, sent in the poem that is read just before *Jamhuri Day Special* begins. It is about perseverance against harsh realities. Listening to the actual play enables the listener to relate its meaning to that of the poem. The opening sequence therefore constantly demands that comparisons are made between the main text and its paratexts. The use of a text by a listener provides an additional point of identification for the listener.

In the following analysis, we engage with the play, *Jamhuri Day Special* and attempt to analyse the levels at which it can be read as educational. The play was aired during a national holiday. National or international holidays such as Easter, Christmas, are normally recognized in *Radio Theatre* productions. The programme uses the space to teach audiences about different issues related to the day being celebrated.[25] Kalulu (2007) has pointed out that lessons in the plays have to be 'inserted cleverly, so that listeners do not feel that the plays are too preachy'. The producers of *Radio Theatre* are aware that audiences are bound to lose interest in programmes that are overtly educational. One of the strategies used in *Radio Theatre* is therefore to present its plays through a dramatic rendition of a domestic situation in which facts about a specific holiday are creatively and 'cleverly' inserted into the play through character utterances, actions and setting, in a way that encourages the listeners to remain interested in the play until the end.

[25] For instance, the play *The Last Courtroom* aired during the 2003 Easter Holidays passes off strongly as a play aimed at educating and sensitizing listeners towards the meaning of Easter and the necessity to take the day seriously. In an intricate narrative of a courtroom drama in heaven, the play demonstrates the meaning of judgment day as presented in the Christian Bible. Kenya is a predominantly Christian society and the play's method is to appeal to people's senses of right and wrong, sin and salvation. It however, uses 'Kenyan' voices, dramatic actions based on local scenes, and examples that listeners can relate to.

3.3 *Jamhuri Day Special* and the rewriting of Kenyan history

Jamhuri Day Special follows the character of Gakuo, a young man whose intentions are to marry Njambi, the woman that he loves. Gakuo intends to have his wedding coincide with Jamhuri Day celebrations, a day that embodies his love for Kenya. He visits his grandfather, Mzee Gakuo to find out if he can have his wedding reception under a Mukuyu tree that was planted on the day that Kenya gained its independence. Mzee Gakuo is a Mau Mau war veteran who fought for Kenya's independence. When Mzee Gakuo learns that Gakuo's fiancée is the granddaughter to a former colonial home guard, Tobiko, he refuses to allow the wedding to take place, arguing that Tobiko had betrayed the cause for freedom by working with the enemy. Gakuo seeks his father's advice on the matter, but although his father disagrees with Mzee Gakuo, he is not able to help. He is a hopeless drunkard who blames all his problems on Kenya which he argues, never presented him with any opportunities to grow economically. Gakuo is unable to imagine a life without Njambi and attempts to commit suicide by jumping from the Mukuyu tree. Njambi, on hearing that the wedding has been cancelled, goes into a coma.

Jamhuri Day Special is clearly a play that addresses the history of Kenya's independence struggle and the subsequent years that mapped its growth as a country. Kenya's independence story has been a point of critical engagement at various levels (Ogot and Ochieng 1995; Lonsdale 2004; Furedi 1990; Ogude 1999). In this section, we are interested in how the Mau Mau was treated after independence and the way in which their radicalism was dealt with at independence.

The Mau Mau was a militant group that was formed in the 1940s, an offshoot of the Kikuyu squatter community that had revolted against settlers in the White Highlands in Kenya. It was an underground movement that was defined through a radical oathing campaign that 'was designed to cement the Kikuyu community behind as yet undefined radical action' (Furedi 1990: 105). It consisted of young members who felt that their grievances as squatters in settler communities were being ignored. These grievances, had failed to be addressed in the early 1940s under political movements such as Kenya African Union (KAU). By 1952, the Mau Mau movement had entered a phase of armed resistance. A state of emergency was declared in October of 1952, following the assassinations of prominent colonial collaborators such as Tom Mbotela and Senior Chief Waruhiu. The colonial government initiated the 'Operation Jock Scott', and prominent Kikuyu throughout Kenya were arrested and detained (Furedi 1990: 118). Most members of the Mau Mau evaded arrests, ran into the forests and became outlaws. Leaders such as Dedan Kimathi, who were among the first to disappear into the forest, led a series of attacks on the white settlers and assassinations of collaborators. The Mau Mau was eventually defeated through a number of tactics applied by the settler community.

At independence, however, the government was reluctant to engage with the Mau Mau movement and the role it played towards Kenya's independence. According to Frank Furedi, 'the Kenyatta regime, composed of politicians hostile to Mau Mau, tried to portray the revolt as a relatively minor incident…Kenyatta himself took the lead by emphasizing the theme of "forgive and forget"' (1990:4). James Ogude also argues that at independence, 'the majority of the Kenyan elite, chiefly represented by Kenyatta, saw the

Mau Mau as a discredited organization whose role in the struggle for independence had to be repressed' (Ogude 1999: 128). The KANU government at independence, was 'openly calling for people to forget the past, eschew violence and rally behind Kenyatta, who was increasingly beginning to replace the Mau Mau as the central force behind Kenya's independence' (Ogude 1999:128). In fact, in his book, *Suffering without Bitterness*, Kenyatta expressly says, 'Mau Mau was a disease which had to be eradicated, and must never be remembered again' (1968:189).

It is with this background that we analyze *Jamhuri Day Special*. Clearly, the narrative of the Mau Mau ran counter to the narrative of national unity that the Kenyatta, Moi and presently Kibaki governments were keen to promote. The play, *Jamhuri Day Special* is thus an attempt to understand how the history of the Mau Mau and by extension, Kenya's history of ethnic difference is reconfigured through radio broadcasting. In it, we engage with competing narratives of history, and look at the multiple ways of interpreting them.

3.4 The presentation of *Jamhuri Day Special* as a moral play

Jamhuri Day Special is a moral play constructed around the theme of marriage. The domestic drama of marriage has been identified by Emmanuel Obiechina (1972) as a popular narrative that was used in Onitsha market pamphlets in Nigeria before the Biafran civil war. Among the many ways in which it was presented, marriage was often used to demonstrate the tension between parents and their children over the choice of suitable marriage partners. According to Obiechina,

> Marriage is a popular theme in the market pamphlets. In its treatment we see one of the major areas of conflict resulting from the collision of Western and traditional African cultures and their attendant values. The source of conflict often centres on the determination of parents to impose marriage partners on their children while their children stringently resist what they regard as an unwarranted interference in a matter which touches them intimately. The parents invoke the old family traditions whereby they have a right to select their children's future partners while their children invoke Western marriage traditions which allows the intending couples a final say in the affair (1972:16).

Several elements stand out in Obiechina's explanations about the theme of marriage in popular literature. Among them is the tension that exists between parents and their children concerning who has the final say on the selection of marriage partners. This tension was often explained within the conflict between traditional and western cultures, in which most narratives always favoured the Western form of marriages. Traditional ideology was frowned upon as backward, rigid and authoritarian while Western ideology was embraced because it represented change, individualism and progress that encouraged positive thought in society. As such, the plays deliberately moulded parents as villainous characters whose rigid decisions interfered with the freedom and growth of their children. The children were seen as victims of these parents. In the struggle over right and wrong, the children always won against their parents, establishing their right to become free individuals.

The presentation of the moral narrative using the theme of marriage in *Jamhuri Day Special* functions in more or less the same structure. The drama that unfolds involves Gakuo and his grandfather and the tension that arises when Mzee Gakuo refuses to allow his grandson to marry Njambi. The plot of the story demonstrates this tension, encouraging the listener to identify with Gakuo who is presented as a heroic figure while his grandfather becomes the villain in the play. However, unlike the usual plotlines that centre this interference on the tension of traditional and western views towards marriage, *Jamhuri Day Special* focuses on narratives of Kenya's independence struggle and their relevance in the present Kenya. As has been argued above, the presentation of the different characters encourages a particular reading of the play's dominant message. In *Jamhuri Day Special*, Mzee Gakuo is cast as an unfavourable character who is bent on creating division between two young people for reasons that are not immediately relevant to them. He represents the same traditional rigidity explored above, only, his reasons have been woven into a specific narrative of Kenya's independence struggle. Gakuo is presented as a good character who becomes a victim of his grandfather's stubbornness.

The presentation of characters in polarized forms becomes a strategy that the play uses to encourage the listener to identify positively and negatively with different characters. For instance, Gakuo is presented to the listener as both victim and hero of the play. Within the moral play, his victimhood is explored through Mzee Gakuo's refusal to allow him to marry Njambi. Their engagement is presented in the first scene, which ends dramatically with his grandfather's adamant refusal to allow the marriage to take place:

Gakuo: I want to tie the knot under this very tree.

Mzee Gakuo: Who is my daughter?

Gakuo: Her name is Sylvia Njambi.

Mzee Gakuo: Njambi.

Gakuo: From the famous Tobiko family.

Mzee Gakuo: Tobiko wa Gachania? No, never, never, don't talk beyond that, no marriage, no! We of the Gakuo family will never marry with the Tobikos.

Gakuo: But what is wrong with the Tobikos.

Mzee Gakuo: T-t-the former colonial chief? Never!

Unlike the storylines which base the parents' reasons for rejection on one traditional culture or the other, Mzee Gakuo's reasons are contained in a specific historical narrative. A former Mau Mau fighter, Mzee Gakuo feels passionately about allowing one of his grandsons to marry into a family of somebody that betrayed him in the past. However, by following the common strand in such storylines, the listener is encouraged to question this decision.

This is explored in the scene where Gakuo consults with his father, and it emerges that Mzee Gakuo is just being stubborn, selfish and old fashioned:

Gakuo: Grandpa has opposed my intentions to get married to Njambi … You see, what he says, *ati* Njambi comes from the Tobiko family, and the Tobikos were the home guards, and that the Gakuos were the freedom fighters.

Gakuo's Father: And so?

Gakuo: And so, *ati* freedom fighters and home guards are enemies, never to see eye to eye.

Gakuo's Father: Rubbish! Rubbish! This *mzee* can be stubborn.

Gakuo: Oh, grandpa is so stubborn!

Gakuo's Father: These things happened many years ago! And what relevance do they have in our lives today? Eh? We can't afford to carry grudges from our …

Gakuo: Exactly!

Gakuo's father: That *mzee* still lives in the darkest part of yesterday … Your fiancée didn't choose to be born in a home guard family. Neither were you born into a freedom fighter's family by choice.

In the dialogue, the listener's questioning position, and eventual sympathy towards Gakuo is embraced through the technique of internal audiences. According to Andersson (2002:16) one of the ways in which popular texts speak with audiences, and consequently address audiences' questions, is through the use of an 'internal audience'. The internal audience refers to the characters (who pose as an audience to another character) within the text who are able to ask questions that the actual audience seeks to ask, and who is able to draw suitable answers. If one looks at Gakuo's father as an internal audience, then his reactions become a representation of the listener's reaction to the absurdity of Mzee Gakuo's decision. The listener is encouraged to look at Mzee Gakuo as selfish and backward. Through dialogue, Mzee Gakuo is portrayed as a stubborn old man who seeks

to create divisions in the family by using past events that have no relevance to the present.

In order to encourage the reading of Gakuo and Njambi as victims of Mzee Gakuo's selfishness, the play presents the listener with scenes that further draw sympathy from the listener. For instance, in one scene, Njambi is heard talking excitedly with her friend Sophie, providing her with detailed information about the wedding. Once again, the strategy used is such that the listener is able to understand how much preparation has gone into the wedding, and thus sympathize further with both Njambi and Gakuo. It is therefore not surprising when Njambi reacts to the news of the cancelled marriage by going into a coma and Gakuo attempts to commit suicide by jumping off a tree.

The play uses the strategy of melodrama to enhance the dramatic action that forces the listener to understand the enormity of the damage that Mzee Gakuo has caused. By using central characters who represent villainy and virtue, the play demonstrates the position that the listener is expected to take. Through what Peter Brooks (1976) has termed 'heightened dramatization' the helplessness of the victim is rendered visible with clear tragic elements. The excessiveness of this drama is demonstrated through Njambi's coma. This is accompanied with a lot of screaming and the panicking voices of both Sophie and Njambi's mother. Njambi's mother's voice embodies the action: "Oh my God, Njambi is falling down, oh my God. Njambi! Go bring some water please …". In a different scene, the listener learns that Njambi's condition has taken a turn for the worse, and that she may die:

Sophie: How's Njambi doing?

Njambi's mother: Njambi has shown no sign of improvement. She is still not talking Sophie, her eyes are just staring but no communication.

Sophie: Oh dear!

Njambi's mother: Go into the ward and see her.

Sophie: Has the doctor seen her?

Njambi's mother: The doctor says that if she remains in this condition until tomorrow she may not make it.

Sophie: Oh my lord!

Njambi's mother: [Crying] Ohh …

Sophie: Oh don't worry, God is on our side, I can't lose her. I can't lose my friend.

Like Njambi, Gakuo also faces death. In his case, he climbs on top of his grandfather's tree, the very tree that he wanted to get married under. In a rather dramatic scene, Gakuo's father attempts to persuade Gakuo to get down from the tree, while Gakuo's high-pitched voice expresses his agitation, anger and dejection:

Gakuo's father: [Footsteps] Oh my! Is -- that's my son. Gakuo, Gakuo! Gakuo!

Gakuo: Y-yes dad.

Gakuo's father: Gakuo, what the hell are you doing up in that tree? Its dangerous!

Gakuo: Dad, what danger is there, what danger is there? Should I feel anything from falling from this height of this Mukuyu tree? I have lost all I have ever lived for, you people have stopped me from marrying Njambi, my love.

Father: Gakuo my son, please listen, eh heed my words and climb down.

Gakuo: No, no way, no way I am coming down, I am not climbing down there, am jumping down.

Father: No Gakuo my son, don't jump!

Gakuo: I am jumping down, I am here to die.

Father: No, no!

Gakuo: I climbed this Mukuyu tree to meet my death here it's not my wish. But I can't just live without Njambi, I can't … I can't … I can't!

In the face of such melodramatic performance, the play seeks to find a suitable solution. As Brook (1976) argues, the solution only comes from a confrontation with the villain, in which the villain is expunged from society and order is restored. In the case of *Jamhuri Day Special*, the villain is not expelled but reformed. He realizes his mistakes and is remorseful. Mzee Gakuo goes to the hospital to see Njambi, and pleads with her mother to allow him to take her to Gakuo, whose life is also in danger. Although Sophie and Njambi's mother are both too upset to accept his apology, the fact that he shows remorse and seeks forgiveness is crucial. Mzee Gakuo accepts that he was wrong and is ready to be forgiven.

The moral play often provides more than one solution to the problem. This is done through a dramatic monologue in which Gakuo reflects on his life with Njambi, remembering how much fun it was for them as a couple and eventually decides against giving up and dying. It is important that the listener understands that the monologue takes place as Gakuo lies unconscious after his fall. It is a demonstration of his will to continue fighting for Njambi, whose life is also in danger.

3.5 Applying the moral lessons: The educative narrative of national unity

Jamhuri Day Special was aired on 12 December 2003 to celebrate forty years of independence in Kenya. Discourses of national unity have encouraged a view of the nation as a site which brings together people of diverse backgrounds to coexist as one. It is a view that was embraced by several new leaders in the African postcolony. As was shown in chapter two, Kenyatta, Kenya's first prime minister who later became its first president, represented this point of view. In his speech addressing the Kenyan nation, he urges Kenyans to forget their differences and any past issues that may create division among them, and to unite and forge a way forward in which all Kenyans existed as a united front (Kenyatta 1964).[26] *Jamhuri Day Special* was aired in 2003, a year after Kenyans voted in President Mwai Kibaki's government, toppling former president Moi's twenty four years of dictatorship. In many ways, the play was a reflection of the general optimism that the country felt. More importantly, it captured the philosophy of Mwai

[26] The call for national unity in Kenya has been severely hampered by ethnic tensions in Kenya. In a recent Kenyan election that took place on 27 of December 2007, the ethnic tension contributed to the first and worst civilian conflict that Kenya has ever known. Kenya has had previous experiences of ethnic tensions and killings, like the 1992 ethnic clashes in Molo, but never to a national level in which hundreds of people have lost their homes and lives. Part of this conflict has been blamed on unresolved ethnic tensions in the political set-up in Kenya (see Odhiambo, 2004).

Kibaki, 'Uhuru na kazi' (freedom and work) a philosophy that echoes that of Mzee Jomo Kenyatta several years before. This shared philosophy encourages Kenyans to work hard in a country that has opportunities waiting to be discovered. It is a philosophy informed by an economic ideal that can only be sustained through a peaceful and unified front. The play pushes this official narrative forward to encourage Kenyans to forget the past and begin looking at a unified nation in which Kenyans coexist as one nation.

It is this forgetting that enables Kenyans to reflect on the possibilities that Kenya has in store for them. This is embodied in the character of Gakuo. In a dialogue between Njambi, his fiancée and her friend Sophie, Gakuo is presented to the listener as a patriotic Kenyan:

> Njambi: The reception [laughs], listen it will be under a tree, [laughs again]. I know it's funny, you think I am cheating you? Okay you see, there is this huge and beautiful tree, at the home of my fiancé's granddad, he calls it the Mu-the Mukuyu tree, because he loves it so much you see? This tree was planted on the 12 of December 1963, you see the connection?
>
> Sophie: Well (laughs) … all things you do will be attached to this historical day
>
> Njambi: Yeah, yeah, I know. You see, my guy loves this country so much and everything that goes with it. Mind you this guy he is the one who turned down an offer to go and study in the States [USA]. Instead he opted to stay and study here in Kenya.
>
> Njambi: He bought his car on Jamhuri day. He bought it purely for our wedding.

The radio play uses Njambi to describe Gakuo's character. Through dialogue, Njambi makes it clear to Sophie and by extension to the listener that Gakuo is a man who believes in his country. It reflects on his 'sacrifice' to stay in Kenya and study at a local university instead of grabbing the opportunity to study in the United States of America, which is clearly viewed as a better choice. This kind of sacrifice underlines the amount of hope Gakuo has for Kenya, and how much he is willing to sacrifice to be a part of it.

Gakuo's attitude towards Kenya is captured more clearly in a dramatic monologue in which he reveals his thoughts about Kenya and its relevance to his personal life with Njambi. In the scene following his jump from the Mukuyu tree. Gakuo is unconscious and struggling to find a reason to live. He reflects on a trip he took to the Coast Province of Kenya with Njambi a year before.

> Njambi: Ahh ... It's so much fun lying on this beach. I see now why people love it here.
>
> Gakuo: You see there's nothing like race here, you see there are whites lying over there.
>
> Njambi: It's fun. Look at the beach … No wonder tourists keep flocking this. Sides … look at those ships. Are they bringing cargo?
>
> Gakuo: Oh yeah … yeah.
>
> Njambi: Oh God, this is so much fun, I know how they feel when they come here.
>
> Gakuo: Do you know why these people are coming to Kenya?

Njambi: Why?

Gakuo: Because Kenya is a land full of plenty.

Njambi: Oh yea.

Gakuo: Africa is so beautiful, this land is so marvelous. I don't think I want to move out.

Njambi: You are not supposed to do that, darling.

Gakuo: Sincerely speaking Africa is so beautiful. But not all countries enjoy this kind of fun by the way. This kind of pleasure is only here, because Kenya is a peaceful country.

Presented through an echo chamber that indicates the movement of time-space, what Tim Crook (1999) termed the 'time transitional lintel', the flashback creates a mental picture that captures the beauty of the ocean, and the joy of relaxing in the sun with foreign tourists, reminiscent of the popular Kenyan tourist slogan, 'Hakuna Matata' (no problems). Gakuo emphasizes the beauty and peacefulness of Kenya, a fact that has attracted several tourists to the country. Gakuo contrasts this beauty with the disruption of peace when he recounts an actual bombing that took place in Kitengela in which three Israelis and twelve Kenyans lost their lives, while over two hundred people were injured. The play's ability to quote actual events lends it authority because it connects to the real world of the listener. This is an example of some of the strategies that Andersson (2002) argues lends soap opera its realness.

The presentation of Gakuo as a hero is strongly contrasted with the presentation of Mzee Gakuo as an old man who still holds on to the struggle of colonialism that took place forty years before. However, Mzee Gakuo's character does not exist in a vacuum, but it is located in a historical continuum. He represents Kenyan war veterans who were disappointed after the struggle for independence was over. Tirop Simatei (2001: 35) describes these Kenyans as 'the architects of Uhuru ... the tragic victims of the historical moment they [had] helped to create'. Mzee Gakuo's inability to let go of the past and the effort and risk that the struggle entailed is embraced in the fact that at independence, these struggles were never publicly acknowledged. They were shelved as the elite Kenyans went on to lead prosperous lives. To understand Mzee Gakuo as a total villain would therefore be wrong, as his bitterness arises from what he sees as the government's failure to deal with 'traitors' who were presently benefiting from the new Kenya just as much as those who fought for it. His solution is to declare the Tobiko family enemies of the Gakuo's. His rejection of the marriage is rooted in this hatred. This point of view is discouraged, and Mzee Gakuo's apology at the end of the play shows his acceptance of the new vision for Kenya and his disbanding of past angers and memories.

Gakuo's father is also a different kind of villain who represents failure and irresponsible behaviour. Within the context of the play, Gakuo's father represents Kenyans who were disillusioned after independence and who were unable to work hard and reap their share of the '*matunda ya uhuru'* (fruits of independence). This disillusionment eventually led to cynicism among citizens who felt that their hard work would never be rewarded. Gakuo's father falls into this category. Gakuo's father is presented as a lazy drunkard who has

been unable to accumulate wealth and who constantly blames his failures on Kenya's inability to live up to the dream of independence.

However, like Mzee Gakuo, Gakuo's father comes to the realization that perhaps Kenya has given him opportunities, he is the one who has missed them. Through a dramatic monologue, these thoughts become apparent:

> I have seen Kenya through years of independence. It has been an experience worth celebrating. And my son's Gakuo's wedding was to be the befitting gift of this. I think Gakuo was right to say that Kenya has offered me enough. I would be rich now. Look at civil servants like Wafula, who invested in sugarcane and maize farming and made it. *Pombe ni kitu ovyo sana* (alcohol is such a useless thing). There's been plenty of opportunity like in farming or even *jua kali* sector; a guy like Mutiso just started with little carvings, now, now he is a major exporter of curios. I shouldn't blame Kenya. For the last 40 years, Kenya has built a fairly good infrastructure which has seen many industries mushrooming. [Music] Our literacy levels are now higher, we have enjoyed reasonable democracy. The other day Kenya proved to be the most peaceful and democratic nation by having a peaceful and smooth transition of power hardly ever seen in the continent.

Like in Mzee Gakuo's case, Gakuo's father's realization of the fruits of independent Kenya comes after the attempted suicide. We hear him condemning beer, and identifying with his peers who have done well for themselves. By enumerating the number of

successful Kenyans, Gakuo's father is recognizing the opportunities that are available to him, and that he can still use them. These successful Kenyans are all from different ethnic groups following stereotypical trades. Wafula, for instance is a Luhya, and his sugarcane/maize plantations are typical features in Luhya land in Western Kenya. Mutiso, a Kamba is connected to the soap stone trade, one which Kambas have been identified with for many years. The play uses these stereotypical representations to connect to the world of listeners, but also to create an avenue for the listeners to understand the vastness of the national project in Kenya. One must read this play as an enunciation of a clear government agenda that wishes to advise Kenyans to work hard. This can be framed around Kenya's president Kibaki's motto of 'Uhuru na kazi' which Kibaki has used as a rhetoric that has defined his leadership in the last five years.

3.6 Ambiguous lessons, alternative readings: recognizing the narrative of independence struggle

While the play has shown Mzee Gakuo emerging as a villain in the narrative, it is possible to excavate another side of his character which is more positive. He is presented as a man with cultural authority and memories that form part of a useful archive for the Kenyan listener. This is established in the play which opens in his rural home, a space represented as a repository of memories and symbols of Kenya's past. The rural space emerges through dialogue, using a technique called 'selective citation' in which Gakuo calls his grandfather a 'rural' folk and his grandfather refers to him as a 'city' person. Ernst Wendland (2006) has identified this technique in radio drama as a useful way of introducing the listener to the space of action in the play.

Mzee Gakuo's home creates a link between the rural space and Mzee Gakuo's age, which acts as a code for the listener to identify him as a respected member of society. His old age establishes his authority and attaches his character to the cultural beliefs and customs of his people. It validates his position of authority in commenting and eventually refusing to permit Gakuo's marriage to Njambi on account that she is 'unsuitable' for him.

If the rural space represents traditionalism, often a code on radio that creates a strong link to cultural beliefs and attachments to the past, then the use of language and cultural idioms used in the play becomes a way of affirming this cultural authority. In the case of *Jamhuri Day Special*, this is projected through Mzee Gakuo's use of proverbs. For instance, Mzee Gakuo uses a proverb, "a child who has not traveled [sic] much thinks that his mother is the best cook" to respond to Gakuo's dismissal of rural people as 'backward'. Mzee Gakuo's proverb is a translation of an actual proverb in Gikuyu, 'Mundu utathiaga oi no nyina urugaga', which literally means 'he who does not travel knows only his mother's cooking' (See Barra 1939:63).

In the wider context of the play, the proverb shows the irony of the relationship between rural and urban knowledges. Gakuo, who represents the modern, progressive and self-sufficient urban man, travels to the rural area, often dismissed as backward and irrelevant, to seek his grandfather's advice and knowledge about his coming marriage. Mzee Gakuo is presented to the listener as the custodian of customary knowledge through his use of proverbs. His voice also becomes a marker of age and wisdom. Against his grandson's

sleek, urban accent, Mzee Gakuo speaks slowly and hesitantly, his voice 'gruff' with age. The slowness of his speech signifies his thoughtfulness and wisdom, which the listener uses to identify his character.

The rural space thus becomes a site of local knowledges and expression. While Gakuo's use of English throughout the dialogue may be interpreted as a code for identifying his youth and attempt at sounding modern, Mzee Gakuo is presented as a man whose language habitually 'slips' into local languages such as Gikuyu and Kiswahili. This strategy roots Mzee Gakuo's language in the local context which authenticates him as a custodian of Gikuyu traditional culture. It also presents him with the authority to narrate the story of the independence struggle. For instance, in a habitual speech pattern, Mzee Gakuo drifts into a narration of his past experiences as a Mau Mau fighter. He constantly slips in Gikuyu and Kiswahili:

> Mzee Gakuo: You city people think that *mashambani* [rural] people are good for nothing … *tanengereria mai macio* [pass me that water].
>
> Gakuo: Really, this food is so delicious grandpa …
>
> Mzee Gakuo: […] I remember those days, we were in the forest, sitting down, telling stories, let me show you how I used to hold the gun, we used to hold it like this … and we used to wait for the *beberu* (colonialist) to come, *ukarathaba tia* [You shoot!].When Kenya became independent, *I kwani mweri cigana*- what was the date?
>
> Gakuo: 12 December.

Mzee Gakuo: *Mwaka wa* 63, I remember that year of '63 … we said goodbye to the white man's oppression. *Ciaigana ni ciaigana* – enough is enough! You see my child, I had to mark that day in style. So I got Ndegwa, my late son … *Ngwonie mbica ya Ndegwa* – Can I show you Ndegwa's photo?

Gakuo: Grandfather, I have seen it many times before.

The language enables one to look at the play in a larger context. The play unfolds in a rural part of central Kenya, confirmed through the use of Gikuyu and the location of the play in a rural space as already discussed above. The play uses existing popular assumptions about the Mau Mau to link it to discourses of Kenya's independence struggle. According to these discourses, the Mau Mau fighters from the Gikuyu ethnic group in Kenya played a major part in accelerating Kenya's statehood. As such, the selection and placement of *Jamhuri Day Special* in a setting where characters are Gikuyu becomes a 'shortcut' code for locating the play in a familiar space which listeners can immediately identify with.

Through language and setting, it becomes possible for the listener to understand the role of Mzee Gakuo as a war veteran whose memories of Kenya are as crucial in the present moment as they were at the time of independence. His narration of the war becomes a critical point at which listeners are invited to counter-read the narrative of national unity. One of the criticisms against narratives of national unity has always been targeted at the fact that in reality, it is difficult to suppress memory and the past. As such, one of the key projects of critics has been to analyse these cracks, and to establish counter-narratives to

such discourses. Andersson (2002) in her analysis of a South African soap opera, *Isidingo*, argues that while the soap opera attempted to create a united rainbow nation that represented post-apartheid South Africa, its very nature as a multi-stranded narrative allowed several gaps and cracks to appear in its otherwise smooth surface. According to her, the soap opera was a useful way of ensuring that the nation healed by catching glimpses of a past that was being hushed up. In her argument, memory was one of the key tools for ensuring that the post-apartheid healing took place, and that it was therefore a necessary exercise to look beyond the surface of the narrative.

As part of the strategy to present these memories, the play uses the oral narrative in which Mzee Gakuo recounts versions of Kenyan history to Gakuo. As a former war veteran, Mzee Gakuo becomes the ideal person to speak about this past. His story becomes a strategy for the play to compress the narrative of independence. However, this past is presented to the listener with the assumption that the listener is aware of the facts and details pertaining to Kenyan independence. As such, Mzee Gakuo's narration sounds nostalgic and habitual. It is clear that this is a topic that he has spoken about time and again with his grandson. For instance, when he asks Gakuo, "Can I show you Ndegwa's photo?", Gakuo's responds, "No. I have seen it many times before". The play invites the listener to consume the facts of the independence struggle as part of a story being told to Gakuo, rather than as spontaneous imposing of facts and specific details about the struggle for independence.

The play's setting enables the listener to understand the significance of the Mukuyu tree planted in the middle of Mzee Gakuo's yard. In the play, the tree becomes a symbol for narrating Kenya's national story:

> Mzee Gakuo: You see my child; I had to mark that day in style. I got my eldest son, the late Ndegwa. I told him to plant this tree on Independence Day, and so this tree my son is the same age as Independence Day.
>
> Gakuo: So … That is to say that this tree is the same age as independent Kenya?
>
> Mzee Gakuo: Mmm *negwo* [that is true]. Eh, how many branches can you see?
>
> Gakuo: I can see four.
>
> Mzee Gakuo: *Negwo*. That is right. They are four. And do you know what the four branches represents, my son?
>
> Gakuo: No?
>
> Mzee Gakuo: No you don't know. Do you see that place, where you can see the nests?
>
> Gakuo: Over there?
>
> Mzee Gakuo: Yes. Those represent the two decades of the sixties and the seventies, when Kenya enjoyed economic stability. Now, those two other branches on the other side represent the eighties and the nineties, when corruption and mismanagement was at its peak level, bringing our economy to its knees *kabisa* [completely].

In this national allegory, the reference to the branches assumes a specific meaning. Mzee Gakuo is referring to the leadership of Mzee Jomo Kenyatta as successful while Moi's government is being referred to as a period of economic failure. Listeners at such points are able to decide for themselves whether Kenya can be seen in such clear cut terms or if in fact, the play is bearing dominant ideologies of the present government that seek to create stark differences between Moi's dictatorial regime and the present democratic state.

Another character that opens up a gap in the narrative is Gakuo's father. While he is presented as a failure who comes to the realization that Kenya has several opportunities for him at the end of the play, he also represents a reality of unemployment and the failure of the government schemes of retrenchment which has left several Kenyans jobless. Gakuo's father himself has been retrenched and can only educate one of his children. He speaks about what is wrong with Kenya.

3.7 Conclusion

The role of the moral play is to generate lessons which the listener must then apply to the reading of other issues in society. In this chapter, we have looked at how *Radio Theatre* has used the moral narrative to introduce the narrative of Kenya's independence to the listener. Through a reading of a moral story on marriage, the play equipped listeners with tools for engaging with the villain or virtuous characters who represent specific ideas of nationalism that the play sought to teach.

The play introduces a new role of the moral narrative. It shows the many ways in which the moral narrative becomes useful in a society's political, social and cultural history. It also underlines the fact that society's values are inherently domestically based, and that issues at levels beyond the domestic space can be dealt with by applying basic moral logic generated from such a space. To recognize the value of the moral story in this way allows the play to explore the many avenues it offers for listeners to interpret issues according to their relevance in these listeners' lives.

In the case of *Jamhuri Day Special*, the moral story has been used for educational purposes. It has been used to underline the values of a specific national holiday by stressing preferred ways of reading the national story. The fact that the play uses the moral play to engage with the national story shows the significance accorded to the domestic space as a source of moral authority. It also shows that the play is more interested in relating to listeners' realities which are immersed in everyday life, but which can be extended to the reading of other social and political realities that mirror dominant social order. *Jamhuri Day Special* must therefore be read as a narrative of Kenya's history that is introduced to the listener through a moral schema.

Chapter four

Radio Theatre, KBC and the Representation of Sexual Morality in Romantic and Marital Plays

4.1 Introduction

Radio Theatre is produced in a state-owned radio station where the general presentation of moral narratives falls within the policy that defines KBC radio broadcasting in Kenya as a family and educational station. As such, narratives of romance and intimacy are presented within a context of sexual moralities that aim to emphasize acceptable moral behaviour in relationships. As Benjamin Shepard (2006:426) has pointed out, the 'patriarchal state' has, through broadcasting appointed itself the role of stepping in to 'punish, regulate and preserve the nuclear family'.

This chapter looks at the plays of *Radio Theatre* that represent romantic and marital relationships. The chapter is interested in the manner in which these themes are presented using moral dichotomies that promote particular behaviour in such relationships. However, in reading the texts as radio drama, it becomes possible to analyse 'gaps' in the dramatic narratives that allow one to understand the multiple spaces through which listeners are encouraged to engage with romantic and marital narratives that address issues of gender, morality and sexuality in present day Kenya. This is done through engaging with the plays' presentation of realistic settings, characters and plotlines that mirror the social realities that define such relationships. The chapter analyses four plays, *3 Times a Lady*, *Whatever it Takes*, *Nothing at Last* and *In the Name of the Holy Spirit*.

The first narrative emphasizes the virtues of good moral behaviour in romantic relationships and how this is rewarded. The other three plays focus on the idea of punishment in both romantic and marital relationships. We attempt to analyse the reasons for the reward-punishment structures in the plays, and argue that the plays monitor, control and represent preferred moral behaviour in romantic and marital relationships.

4.2 Sexual moral economies in Kenya and the framing of a moral ideology in KBC

Radio Theatre plays that deal with romance operate within a specific moral economy that is defined by Christian and traditional moralities which have influenced the way citizens have seen themselves in relation to society in Kenya (Odhiambo 2004). Christianity and tradition are seen as valid moral frameworks in Kenya, a society that is still very conservative in its approach to issues of morality. Contextually, Christianity is seen as concomitant to nationalism. President Moi's regime, for instance, had a big impact on popular morality during the 24 years that he ruled the nation. Moi's philosophy of 'peace, love and unity' was rooted on principles of Christianity, which he used to propagate a national agenda (Ogot 1995). Such Christian values were deliberately appropriated by the regime to hide its repressive tendencies and to sustain the idea of the nation. This was deliberately projected to Kenyans using the media, which religiously aired Moi's regular church attendance on Sundays on KBC television.[27] Christianity, which is the religion of more than 75% of Kenyans, has therefore been domesticated into the ordinary lives of Kenyans. Cultural traditions have also accompanied and dictated the lives and moral realities of most Kenyans. After independence, an influx of Kenyans in the urban centres

[27] These insights emerge from a personal communication I had with Prof. James Ogude at the university of the Witwatersrand, 2008.

saw the breakdown of traditional norms usually observed in the rural areas. Several Kenyan popular writers pick this breakdown in traditional norms in their narrations of the urban life. For most of these writers, a return to the rural life becomes a clear antidote to the decomposition of moral life that takes place in the urban centres (see Kurtz 1998). To read KBC's restorative agenda in this framework is then a useful and necessary effort into understanding how *Radio Theatre* plays function.

Our reading of selected *Radio Theatre* plays is informed by existing literature that looks at sexuality in an era of HIV/AIDS, which has created a need for narratives that promote positive behaviour in intimate relationships. In her analysis of the Kenyan moral economy in the context of HIV/AIDS, Agnes Muriungi (2007) argues that one can only understand this mindset by acknowledging the dominant structures of Christianity and tradition, which she argues, have affected the general understanding of morality in Kenya. According to her, these structures have tried to 'ascertain their relevance or otherwise in regulating sexuality and helping control the spread of HIV/AIDS' (2007:291). She defines traditional, Christian and secular sexual moralities thus:

> Traditional sexual morality is taken to mean people's understanding of the rules that governed sex and sexuality before the advent of Christianity and the introduction of scientific injunctions around sexuality. In this sense, traditional morality will encompass a residual moral logic. On the other hand, Christian sexual morality is that which is informed by Christian teachings and values

> whereas secular morality is taken to mean sexual morality informed by biomedicine and scientific understandings of living sexuality (2007:291).

Christianity and tradition provide the values that have been used to shape moral behaviour. KBC, a state broadcaster, and a classic ideological state apparatus in Althusserian terms, has embraced these views and has attempted to use them to 'regulate' and 'control' moral behaviour in Kenya (Althusser 1977).

Moral plays in Kenya that enact the themes of romance and marriage exist in the context of 'controlled sexuality'. The presentation of moral plays in Kenya must hence be read within the context in which sexuality has been presented in Kenya. Alexie Tcheuyap (2005) argues that in most African countries, the presentation of sexuality has been through a strategy of ellipsis. According to Tcheuyap, sexuality is often represented through 'hidden' codes or ellipses, where images and sound codes are not explicitly presented to the audience, but done in such a way that the audience has to fill in the gaps and decide that an intimate/sexual scene has just taken place in order to avoid direct engagement with actual aspects of sex and sexuality. Sex and sexuality are represented through carefully selected visual/audio codes that the audience is expected to interpret and understand as sexual codes, in a way denying the audience the viewing/listening of the actual sexual act, or in some cases intimate acts (like kissing) but leaving the audience in no doubt that the scene is insinuating intimacy or a build-up to sexual act. In her analysis of a Kenyan film *Dangerous Affair* for instance, Florence Sipalla (2004) interrogates a sexual scene in which the camera pans across a room that shows pieces of

clothing strewn on the floor, and a condom wrapper, and eventually two people in bed, apparently asleep but also quite obviously having had sex. Sipalla's reading of the film can be applied to several other media representations of sexuality in Kenya. [28]

In many ways, one can look at this representation as a form of a collective subconscious will to underplay sexual intimacy and bodily contact, for purposes of stressing the moral relevance of the plays. In 1986, one programme *Usiniharakishe* (Don't Rush Me) was banned because of a visual scene that went 'a little too far' in its presentation of sex. This programme was produced for KBC by Hilary Ng'weno and was aimed at adolescents to stop them from engaging in unprotected sex. In the first episode, the programme featured a scene in which a young man, Kombo, played by Mohamed Omar, attempts to have sex with Raha (Rehema Said) after luring her to his house where he corners her in his bedroom and pushes her on to the bed. Raha slaps him in shock. The scene cuts off and the programme ends. This scene caused a national furore. According to Joseph Ngujiri (2005), the banning of *Usiniharakishe* typified the hypocrisy that defined the Kenyan moral space. Comments that were written to the editor in chief of *Nation* newspapers, Joseph Odindo, included those such as '[t]his play has brought shame to the families that have watched it', 'the play has introduced prostitution to our children,' and from one Kenyan MP, Mathew Adams Karauri, the programme had shown 'rape and violence,

[28] Our reading of representations of sexuality is mainly informed by the way in which the subject has been treated in KBC. However, we are aware that the same station has embraced foreign programming that often demonstrates matters pertaining to sex more openly. Among the many programmes are the soap operas such as *The Bold and the Beautiful*, and a host of Latino telenovellas and soap operas. We also agree with Rachel Spronk's reading of romance and its representation in Kenyan media in which she identifies several avenues in which sexuality has been represented openly such as magazines and newspaper pullouts, radio and television talk shows and television music videos among others (Spronk 2006). However, our argument is centered on the fact that within KBC's local productions, there is still heavy censorship that defines the manner in which these programmes are produced and presented to the audiences.

which is embarrassing to both parents and children, and should not be allowed [to continue airing]. The ministry (of Information) should withdraw the programme because it is embarrassing.' The then assistant Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Omar Soba announced in parliament that the programme was 'disgraceful and was likely to mislead youngsters.' He added that the programme was 'supposed to warn children aged between nine and twenty years on the danger of adolescent sex but as it is now, it is encouraging them to indulge in sex.'

To provide a slightly different example, in 2003, a group of parents under the Catholic Church in Kenya congregated to demand the withdrawal of Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* from the high school syllabus claiming that it was spreading immorality among young students.[29] They were referring to a particular section of the novel where Odili Samalu, having been invited to Chief Nanga's home, witnesses a sexual scene. According to one report,

> Those pushing for a ban on the book […] pick excerpts from *A Man of the People*, which they say are clearly explicit and are likely to excite the students' imagination and stir their sexual desires. "It is astounding the kind of literature we are exposing our children to in classrooms," says one parent.' (Banning Chinua Achebe in Kenya 2007).

[29] The act of 'editing' books meant for Kenyan high school students is a common practice, but has over the years taken a sharper focus. For instance, in October 2007, the announcement that Ngugi wa Thiongo's *The River Between* would be the chosen school text for next year was accompanied by the serious editing of some sections of the book, including the part where Muthoni and Waiyaki 'have sex' by the river, and where Muthoni is circumcised. Refer to Tom Odhiambo's article in the *Sunday Standard*, December 1, 2007.

The presentation of sexuality is therefore heavily influenced by existing attitudes towards morality in Kenya. *Radio Theatre* emphasizes moral behaviours that help to create stronger relationships that define successful romantic and marital encounters while immoral behaviours are frowned upon and punished through failed romances and marriages.

4.3 Exploring the successful romantic narrative

In the following analysis, we look at *3 Times a Lady*, which exemplifies a successful romantic relationship that is rewarded with marriage. *3 Times a Lady* is a narrative that focuses on the character of Tabitha who is presented as a morally upright woman, hence the title, '3 Times a Lady'. The storyline focuses on Tabitha and James who are engaged to be married. The play is presented in three episodes, spread over a period of three weeks. In the first episode, James, a qualified but jobless doctor, gets a chance to work for an NGO and has to leave immediately, forcing Tabitha to postpone their wedding. He plans to return in a few weeks to marry her, but the beginning of episode two reveals that a year has passed since he was last heard from. Tabitha is faced with several moral dilemmas as she attempts to understand the meaning of James' disappearance. In the fifth year of James' absence, she begins to pay attention to Mbolu, a potential suitor who has been trying to convince her that she is wasting her time waiting for James. By episode three, Tabitha agrees to marry Mbolu, even though her heart still yearns for James. Two weeks before they marry James comes back and explains where he has been. Tabitha accepts his explanation and marriage offer, but an angry Mbolu tries to stop the wedding

from taking place. However, in the timely fashion of melodrama, Mbolu's wife arrives and accuses him of deserting his family. Tabitha is rewarded for her patience, dedication and chastity when she marries James, while Mbolu is punished for his evil ways.

3 Times a Lady seeks to encourage the idea that a woman can be considered a lady if she practices certain admirable traits in difficult situations. In the play, Tabitha is commended for the patience she exercises during the period that James disappears. Following the formulaic nature of the romance genre in which the separation of lovers forms a core element (Berger 1992), James disappears after he leaves for Nairobi to report to his new job and is not heard from for five years. The fact that she waits for all this time is commendable, especially given the several anxieties and tests she faces during this period. In the characteristic manner of melodramatic plays, the virtuous character must be tested and he/she must overcome these trials in order to be rewarded (Brooks 1976). This must be played out so that the listener is able to fully learn how Tabitha manages to go through the difficult period after James leaves.

In the play, the arrival of Mbolu creates difficulties for Tabitha who has been battling with doubts and anxieties about James. Mbolu is Tabitha's fellow teacher in the school where she teaches. He confesses to her that he has been interested in her for a while. His role is that of a villain who attempts to divert Tabitha's attention from James by preying on her worries so that she can marry him. At the time of his introduction into the play, Tabitha has already expressed anxieties about her age, and the fact that she thinks James might be living with another woman. Her distress is played out during her meeting with

James' mother at the beginning of episode two of the play, in which her weepy, high pitched voice betrays her anxiety, anger and disappointment, while James' mother's calm, soothing voice attempts to be the voice of reason:

> Tabitha: I was twenty four year old when he left and promised to return and marry me the following month. Now look, look at me Mama James, I will soon turn twenty-six, I am getting old and James might be … Oh God forbid!
>
> Mama James: Say it Tabitha! I know what you are thinking. I know that you think that James might be somewhere enjoying life with another woman, but you are wrong my dear, you are quite wrong.
>
> Tabitha: Mama James.
>
> Mama James: Yeah.
>
> Tabitha: [Crying] I want you to put yourself in my situation. Just think about it. If you were in my shoes what would you do if Baba James deserted you the way James deserted me? What would you do?
>
> Mama James: Tabitha my daughter, to be honest enough with you, I would do nothing until I find out the reason for his disappearance. I know what you are going through. If there was a button I could switch off in your body to stop you from growing old believe me I would, because I am sure James' disappearance has nothing to do with you, nothing completely. That young man loves you wherever he is. Just be fair to him. Don't be so rough on a man you - you are not even sure is alive or not. Just thinking of it, oh my God … my son might be dead [crying]

The demonstration of Tabitha's worries is a significant site for engaging with her anxieties as a young woman who has been deserted by her fiancé. The listener is supposed to consider the various anxieties that Tabitha expresses as useful avenues for understanding her dilemma. Mbolu is presented as the villain who preys on these anxieties and attempts to use them to his own advantage:

> Mbolu: Time will never wait for you Tabitha, you hear me? Every sun that sets registers a day gone and gone forever, never to be seen again. It goes on and on and on until one day no man will be romantically attracted to you. Even if James would come back today, he would go for somebody younger, not you.

The presentation of Mbolu as a villain is captured in his voice, which is high pitched and nervous (captured in the erratic yet fast paced speech) creating a vivid picture of his craftiness in the listener's mind. It is clear that his intentions are not good. The manner in which he preys on Tabitha's fears is undignified, and he is insensitive when he tells her that James could either be dead or married to somebody else. However, Tabitha fails to see this evil side of Mbolu. Although she continues to wait for James, doubt begins to cloud her mind, and Mbolu becomes an attractive option.

One of the ways that one can analyse the character of Tabitha, is to admire the fact that she attempts to get advice from a variety of people, and is not selfish or foolish enough to do something that will reflect badly on her. She visits her friend Jane, a recently married

young mother. During this visit, Jane advises Tabitha to marry Mbolu and forget about James. Jane's advice is in good faith, because she has witnessed the suffering that Tabitha has gone through waiting for James to come back. Another person that Tabitha relies on for advice is James' mother. One way of looking at this relationship is by arguing that Tabitha loves James enough to feel like a part of his family. The absence of her own family underlines the fact that in the play, she is already considered as part of James family, and that her life revolves around his. It is James' mother who finally sympathizes with her and advises her to move on with her life, convinced that James is dead. James' mother's approval can be read as society's approval of Tabitha's waiting period, and the fact that she is now allowed to become involved with another man.

The moral dilemmas that Tabitha faces are presented to the listener in the melodramatic fashion characteristic of moral plays. This is done for purposes of emphasizing the moral narrative. In order to highlight her character of patience, the play has to explore the several possible thoughts that take place in her mind as she wonders where James might be. Her sense of betrayal and disappointment at James is emphasized within these worries. For instance, she worries that James might have married somebody else and abandoned her. As such, her dilemma lies in whether she should move on with her life or wait for him. The possibility that he might be dead also creates tension because it makes her wonder what she would do without him. While she eventually agrees to marry Mbolu, what is underlined is that she only does so after waiting for five years. Within this time, she does not get involved with any other man, and remains a virgin, a sign of chastity and commitment to James.

Her virginity therefore becomes another marker of her behaviour and a central moral lesson. In the play, the repeated reference to her virginity is used to explore the nature of her relationship with James. Within a romantic relationship, sex is usually a way of expressing intimacy. However, in this radio play premarital sex is discouraged and virginity becomes a positive attribute to be celebrated in a romantic relationship. The presentation of virginity as a way of defining Tabitha's character becomes an important factor that helps the listener to understand its value in the relationship. In the following example Tabitha presents her virginity with pride:

> Tabitha: James, I was serious when I told you I have a special present for you that neither a Vasco da Gama nor a Dr. Livingstone will discover, it's just waiting for you to discover.
>
> James: Oh that? We can take care of it now.
>
> Tabitha: Mmm?
>
> James: Yes, I will be very happy to receive the present.
>
> Tabitha: Not until the wedding night. It will be a present from me to you.
>
> James: C'mon, I will be so happy to receive it.
>
> Tabitha: On the wedding night.

In the dialogue, the value of Tabitha's virginity is placed a notch higher than the colonial discoveries of early explorers like Vasco da Gama and Dr Livingstone. Following an earlier discussion, one can read this discourse of virginity as the play's way of embracing

and presenting Christian qualities and values that encourage young people to wait until marriage before having sex. In order to emphasize its moral function, virginity is presented using metaphoric language that detaches its meaning from the sexual act, which is considered 'immoral' outside of marriage. Tabitha refers to virginity as a 'special present' which she can only give to James on their wedding night. This metaphoric language dresses the term and makes it desirable, countering existing popular thought that being a virgin at a certain age is a sign of backwardness and lack of sophistication. Later, when James comes back, he also refers to her virginity in metaphoric language when he says, "I do hope that no one has dug out my *treasure* …" The use of metaphors encourages the rereading of virginity as a positive trait in a young woman. Within the play, her virginity becomes the physical mark of her dedication to James, being the only way that he can prove that she has not been with another man. Tabitha's value as a good woman is tripled (3 Times a Lady) in James' eyes because of her virginity.

The climax of the play demonstrates the punishment of evil and the rewarding of virtue. Mbolu is punished for his attempt to 'destroy' virtue. Just when he is about to get married to Tabitha, James comes back and Mbolu is unable to get what he wanted. It emerges that he is actually a married man who had abandoned his family and was on the verge of destroying Tabitha's life. Tabitha on the other hand, is paid for her patience during all the years of James' absence. Although she was on the verge of marrying another man, it becomes apparent that had she lost her patience much earlier, she would have regretted not waiting for James. James' explanation that he had been held hostage in a foreign land for three years by rebel soldiers, and that it is only in the fourth year that he is rescued by

government soldiers, and even then, he had been injured and in a coma for nine months, sounds melodramatic and far-fetched. However, its melodramatic elements are used in the play to emphasize the core of the narrative whose aim was to test Tabitha's patience. Tabitha's eventual marriage to him becomes the most suitable reward for this romantic story.

The play highlights the negative attitude towards men like Mbolu who abandon their children to satisfy their own greed and desires. It underlines the lack of responsibility that he exercises. Abandoning a family is highly frowned upon in a patriarchal society such as Kenya. As shall be explored in another play *Nothing at Last*, infidelity and desire for another woman apart from one's wife is considered punishable through rejection and failed marriage.

4.3.1 The social realities that define *3 Times a Lady* as a romantic narrative

To read *3 Times a Lady* as a romantic melodrama allows one to highlight the main lessons within the moral dichotomies of good and evil, reward and punishment. However, as has been discussed in this study, moral narratives must be presented in realistic ways if they are to be consumed as real by listeners. These realistic presentations may not always sit well with the main moral narrative, but they aid the narrative by creating a world that is familiar to the listener, and which creates a possibility for the listener to engage with the play beyond its overt presentations of moral lessons. One of the ways in which *3 Times a Lady* succeeds in this endeavour involves the manner in which it is steeped in a

realistic context, in which different sound codes are used to emphasize the love story between Tabitha and James.

The play explores the possibilities of the radio drama genre, which allows for the exploration and presentation of intimacy as an intense form of expression of love, without necessarily violating the moral values which define the play. The play opens in James' house, with the theme song '3 Times a Lady', by a popular American band, The Commodores. This song frames the play, and its lyrics capture the kind of intensity that cannot possibly be presented in the play without violating the main moral story. However, it acts as a way through which the listener can identify with the feelings that the two characters share. Music in radio drama, as has been explored in depth by Walter Tshamano (1993) plays various functions, one of which is to create the mood of the play, but also to act as a way of compressing intense feelings. In *3 Times a Lady*, the lyrics of the song perform both a symbolic as well as an indexical role by attaching different meanings to the play. The play also features other popular songs such as Luther Vandross' 'So amazing', Vanessa Williams' 'Save the Best for Last', Peter Setera's 'Glory of Love' and Seal's 'Kissed by a Rose' to further emphasize the love that Tabitha and James share. [30] The use of popular love songs not only introduces the mood of the play to the listeners, but attracts the listeners to the play. While the songs present to the listener the fact that the love between Tabitha and James is real, their dialogue anchors this meaning for the listener:

[30] The various love songs each by popular American musicians capture intimate feelings between lovers and create the necessary mood for consuming the play as a romantic narrative.

James: Ok. Tabitha, look … I love you so much and I can't live without you darling .

Tabitha: Oh James. And I love you too.

James: [kissing] I normally feel on top of everything when I hear those words [kissing again].

Tabitha: [Giggling] I feel electrified when you hold me like that.

Here intimacy is sanctioned because the two of them are engaged, and Tabitha is a virgin and by implication, not engaging in premarital sex. These two facts 'allow' them to express their feelings. The listener must therefore always understand that romance is only allowed if it is acting within given moral values which as demonstrated by Tabitha and James, cannot be ignored.

Also, the play uses local languages and cultures which underline the reality of the play. In Kenya, *Matatus* (public service mini taxis) are strong markers of its local cultures and have attracted the attention of several cultural scholars (Mbugua 2007; Graebner 1992). In the play, when James is leaving, the scene is played out at a *matatu* rank, and the accompanying sounds help to create a familiar image. As James is saying goodbye to Tabitha, the shouts of the tout create a realistic scene. Words like "*haya beba beba beba*" (literally okay, carry carry carry- or load load load); *Unaenda? Harakisha basi* (are you going? Then hurry); *Haraka! Haraka*! (Hurry!) *Ora Dere* (Sheng for "move driver" or "go driver"), capture the local setting of the *matatu* culture.[31]

[31] Sheng is a street lingo commonly used in urban centers. It is a mixture of Swahili, English and ethnic languages.

The play is practical in its approach to romance, and engages with the realities of money which affect couples in real life. At the beginning of the play, it is revealed that Tabitha is the only one with formal employment. James works as a volunteer doctor at the village clinic, and does not earn an income. This affects the decisions they make regarding the wedding. For instance, when James suggests that they hire a local television comedian, Ondiek Nyuka Kwota from the programme *Vioja Mahakamani* to entertain their guests at the wedding, Tabitha is hesitant:

> James: C'mon, no really, I mean it … look at me … and that reminds me, there's a friend of mine in Nairobi [Peter Setera's 'For the Glory of Love'] who talked of Ondiek Nyuka Kwota's … relative. He is Ondiek Nyuka Kwota's relative.
>
> Tabitha: Ondiek Nyuka Kwota? The KBC TV comedian?
>
> James: That's right. How about hiring this guy to entertain our guests at the wedding?
>
> Tabitha: Oh James, that's impossible. You think that TV star can entertain guests in this remote place of ours?
>
> James: Why not? We will pay him.
>
> Tabitha: With what James?
>
> James: Money.
>
> Tabitha: Where will we get the money to pay him? Ah- I am the only one who is working. You have no job [James laughs]. Let's do this, let's just organize a small cheap wedding, I'll be fine with it.

Radio Theatre plays present real issues that face couples in life, such as planning their future and the practical decisions that they have to make in order to be comfortable in life. Importantly, the play highlights this process as a dialogic one, where Tabitha and James both have a say in such decisions. The play also relates to the idea of the modern working woman and the new possibilities created by this, where the man is not always the breadwinner. From the dialogue, it is also evident that James does not feel intimidated by Tabitha's money, and is willing to allow her to carry most of the burden of the wedding. When James announces his job offer however, this position is changed completely. James' job as a doctor is clearly viewed as better than Tabitha's. It brings in more money, and it is more prestigious. Tabitha is excited that James will be paid in American dollars rather than Kenyan shillings. The responsibility of the wedding and their future therefore shifts to James, completely removing Tabitha's income from the picture. Such imbalances, though not highlighted in the play, become some of the possible ways in which listeners can engage with the realities of romantic relationships in the play.

Apart from taking care of Tabitha, James also has the responsibility of providing for his family. At the *matatu* rank, just as he is about to leave, James' mother takes it upon herself to give him some advice, which stresses that James should not get lost in the city and leave his family in poverty. James' mother's concerns can be read within the theme of 'the lost son' a common theme in popular culture that tackles the problem of young

men who leave home and never come back (Nyairo 2004; Gunner 2000). James' mother uses an example to emphasize this fact:

> Mother: When you get to where you are going, please remember us, please remember home, eeh? When you get anything, remember us, we are a family. Don't run away from problems you have left here at home [cars hooting in the background].
>
> James: Mother you don't have to worry about anything, I know what is expected of me.
>
> Mother: No, no, am only reminding you, just like a mother, ei?
>
> James: Yes.
>
> Mother: Do you remember Mgonza's son?
>
> James: Yes.
>
> Mother: I know he went to that big school, just as you have.
>
> James: Yes
>
> Mother: And people say that he has a very good job in the city.
>
> James: [laughs].
>
> Mother: Look at his parents, just imagine, look at them, they have nothing, nothing completely.

Examples used in the play become extended lessons for the audience. James' mother has the authority to advise her son, and by using another person's son as an example of 'failure', she instils what his responsibilities are. It is also within this space that she is

able to advise him about marriage. According to his mother, “you cannot stand to be counted as a man when you do not have a wife”. James’ mother represents the societal views that put pressure on romantic relationships. His mother tells him that “a wife will take care of you, and give you sons”, underlining the gender roles that define such relationships. She recognizes Tabitha as “a good woman” giving James the approval he needs to go ahead with his marriage plans. The role of the society in romantic relationships can therefore not be gainsaid.

The role of the church in the relationship is also made apparent through Tabitha’s relationship with Pastor Alloys who represents a pillar of advice for Tabitha and provides guidance for her. Her attitude towards premarital sex is clearly influenced by the church’s position. Severally, throughout the first episode, Tabitha refers to Pastor Alloys in relation to their wedding plans, and his role as their marriage counsellor. It also becomes apparent that she is a dedicated churchgoer, a fact that makes her chide James for not taking church as seriously. The listener is able to use this information to understand Tabitha’s moral behaviour.

The presentation of *3 Times a Lady* is therefore defined around a positivist approach to morality, in which the character traits of the heroine are highlighted as good, but it also explores various social realities that define romantic relationships and that provide the listener with opportunities for engaging with them.

4.4 The narratives of failed romances and marriages

While *3 times a Lady* emphasizes a positive reading of romance, other *Radio Theatre* plays that deal with romantic and marital relationships have stressed punishment by death or desertion for characters that go against accepted moral behaviours in such relationships.

4.4.1 *Whatever it Takes*

In the play *Whatever it Takes*, the main character is punished because he attempts to disrupt the sacred space of marriage. Benson is a rich businessman who falls in love with a rural teacher, Joy Mbote, whom he meets at a five-star hotel. Joy, who is at the hotel with a group of women for a fundraising project, is at first flattered by the attention that Mutia is giving to her until she realises that he has fallen in love with her. She reveals that she is married, but Mutia, who refuses to give up, decides to use his money to get her. He hires a hit man to kill Joy's husband, but unfortunately, Joy is killed too as she tries to save her husband. Benson, distraught, kills the hit man before turning the gun on himself.

Although *Whatever it Takes* may be read as a tragic narrative of unrequited love, it is a moral story that aims to highlight the fact that Benson Mutia is not morally upright, and encourages the listener to consume the failed romance a result of his immorality. This immorality is not based on sexual drama but rather it is his personal character which projects him as a corrupt, calculating man who tries to use money to buy love. He does not respect the sacred marriage space when he attempts to make Joy his wife at whatever cost.

It is therefore crucial to focus on how Benson Mutia is introduced to the listener. In his first meeting with her, he pays a waiter to give him information about Joy. The payment is established through various sound codes, the ruffling of paper and jingle of coins. During his first meeting with her, Benson writes Joy a cheque for one million Kenya shillings to impress her with his riches. Joy however, refuses to accept the cheque in her name, arguing that any money that she raises is for the benefit of her women's group, which is involved in a development project back at the village where she comes from. He then invites her to his home. The fact that his house is impressive is established through Joy's reaction when she visits him:

> Benson: Oh … Joy [laughs]. Come in, come in. Just make yourself comfortable
>
> Joy: Thank you … [Pause] Oh my God!
>
> Benson: Welcome.
>
> Joy: Thank you … eh let me ask you something?
>
> Benson: Mmm?
>
> Joy: Is this one man's house?
>
> Benson: [Modestly] Ah well, I don't know how many people can comfortably live in it, I own it and I stay alone.
>
> Joy: [Laughs] It's huge!

Benson summons all his servants and introduces them to Joy. Joy, though impressed, is shocked to learn that Benson has been generous to her because he is in love with her. She

quickly offers to return the cheque, but Benson refuses to take it back. He however asks her to give him a picture which she took with her husband years ago as newly weds. Benson uses this picture for identification which enables Bosco, the hit man, to kill James, Joy's husband.

The calculating trait in Benson is emphasized during his meeting with Finze, his friend and co-dealer of imported cars. This meeting provides the listener with a chance to engage with Benson's real character. It emerges that he is a corrupt businessman who has made his millions through bribing policemen.

> Benson: Look I have a problem, Finze.
>
> Finze: A problem?
>
> Benson: Mmm?
>
> Finze: The police again?
>
> Benson: No not the police … you know since I hired that man to … you know since you hired that man.
>
> Finze: Yes.
>
> Benson: That policeman under the ground, you know I have never really had problems with my cars entering this country, bought or stolen.
>
> [They both laugh].

The idea that Benson's money and power are created through criminal ways is evident in the mischievous laugh that he shares with Finze when stolen cars are mentioned. This

dialogue prepares the listener to understand the kind of person Benson is. When Benson tells Finze about Joy, Finze is at first surprised that Benson, who normally can get any woman he wants, is fixated on one woman. In Finze's words, "we have seen all sorts of women, black, yellow, white well … how come you are now crazy about a woman from the village?" Finze is also shocked that Joy is not impressed by Benson's money. He therefore suggests that Benson hire a hit man to kill her husband, based on the fact that she is a Christian who believes that only death can separate from her husband. Benson makes the death plot coincide with his trip abroad, to prevent the trail from ever leading back to him.

Against Benson's schemes, Joy is presented as the innocent victim of his plans. Joy Mbote is a schoolteacher who is involved with a local women's group that fundraises money for development projects in their drought stricken village. At the time of her meeting with Benson, she, together with the other members of the women's group, is in Nairobi trying to raise funds for a water project in Makueni, a town in Eastern Kenya. Her selflessness is based on the fact that she is a staunch Christian whose desire is to help her community. The listener is also introduced to her relationship with her husband. In this scene, Joy tells her husband about the money that Benson donated to the women's group. Like her, James is excited because it means that somebody is interested in helping the community. The play is therefore seen as tragic because it involves the death of these two innocent people who fall prey to the selfish desires of an evil, rich man.

4.4.1.1 The social realities of *Whatever it Takes*

Whatever it Takes is a reproduction of a popular story that was written by one of the world's popular fiction writers, Frederick Forsyth. The story, titled *No Comebacks*, published in an anthology under the same title, was written in 1982, and involves the same storyline as the play. While the producer of the play, Nzau Kalulu (2007), denies that *Whatever it Takes* was a reproduction of Forsyth's story, the similarities of the storylines requires one to look at how the scriptwriter, Michael Kyalo, was able to use a popular story about money and romance and turn it into a morality play. *No Comebacks* is a short story about Mark Sanderson, a rich and successful American businessman who realises that he has everything he had ever wanted, except a woman he wanted to spend the rest of his life with. During one of the many charity events he attends annually, he meets Angela Summers, and is drawn to her immediately. Angela is married, but 'Sanderson could not have cared less; married women were as easy as any others' (Forsyth 1982:3). He falls in love with her, and for the rest of the summer, they spend time together. Eventually, she has to go back home to her husband. When Mark suggests that she leaves her husband, she answers, "Until death do us part". Mark becomes obsessed with Angela's memory and in his obsession, weaves a plot in which he hires one of the world's best hit men. The hit man, after elaborate planning, manages to find and kill Colonel Summers, Angela's husband. During the shooting however, Angela walks in and the hit man kills her as well. He returns to his boss and explains that he had killed Angela because his boss had asked that there be 'no comebacks' that would trace the murders back to him.

While *Whatever it Takes* draws on Forsyth, in keeping with popular cultural forms (Newell 2000), it inflects the story with local concerns. For instance, the presentation of Benson Mutia as a multimillionaire in a Kenyan space has to be explained, as he is located in a Third World country. Benson has managed to import stolen vehicles for a number of years, and has evaded the law by using corrupt policemen. The play calls attention to the problem of crime and corruption in Kenya, and becomes a critic of this.

Also, while Angela Summers, a teacher like Joy, indulges Mark Sanderson and even has sex with him (despite the fact that she is married), Joy Mbote has to be presented as a morally conscious woman for the listener to understand that she was a victim of Benson's schemes. This involves the reconstruction of the setting of the play which has to accommodate the idea of meeting between a simple village woman and a multimillionaire. As the play wants the listener to understand that she was a good woman, her reason for being in the hotel is explained by the fact that she is trying to raise money to solve the problems of drought in her area.

Whatever it Takes must therefore be read as a realistic presentation of romance in which the moral axiom that 'money cannot buy love' is played out. However, it is important to look at the gaps within the play, which create potential spaces for questions for the listeners. For instance, although the play struggles to present Joy as an innocent victim of Benson's charms, she in fact collaborates with him in some ways. She allows him to buy her a drink, receives his money, even though at this point of their dialogue it is clear that Benson is interested in her as a person. Eventually she goes to his house to visit. Benson

was at no point during their meeting forceful or insistent. He actually is presented as a generous gentleman while Joy allows herself to fall for his charms. Later, when he finally finds out that Joy is married, she says lamely, “You didn’t ask”.

In reading the play, one is forced to look at the realistic presentation of it, beyond the moral of the play. The characters are presented as ambiguous, rather than in clear-cut terms, allowing the listeners to select their preferred moral lessons from the plays. While Joy is presented as the good character who cares about her community and puts in efforts to improve its well-being, she is also the woman who ‘encourages’ Benson to ‘fall in love’ with her. In the same way, while Benson is the spoilt and evil millionaire, he is also genuinely in love with Joy. The fact that he contributes a lot of his money towards a charity effort for the women’s project, can be seen as a way in which the play intends to encourage rich Kenyans to get into the habit of donating to charity for those who need the money. While Benson’s motives are ulterior, it is clear that he is willing to do anything for love. This angle gives him a level of humanity. Bruno, the murderer is painted as a gruesome murderer and yet, the fact that he is allowed to ‘speak’, makes him human. Speech reduces him, from the ‘quite’ mechanical character he is moulded on (in the Frederick Forsyth story mentioned above), to a human being. He takes time to explain to Joy’s husband what he is about to do. While this might be arguably a radio drama technique of directing the listener’s eye towards the action, it can also be read as an effort to show that Bruno has a level of humanity. The character of James, Joy’s husband is also complicated. The play is keen to portray him as a loving, supportive husband, and yet, when Joy first tells him that a stranger, a man, had given her a cheque of one million

shillings, James stammers in surprise, indicating a level of jealousy. It is only after Joy explains the circumstances, in which the cheque was given to her, carefully leaving out the details of her flirting with Benson that James relaxes. In some ways then, the play presents the listener with spaces to question the clear-cut presentations of characters and situations in the play. While characters like Finze are clearly card-board characters, most of the characters are moulded around real people, whose emotions affect the way that they are portrayed.

4.4.2 *Nothing at Last* and *In the Name of the Holy Spirit*

It is impossible to read narratives of reward and punishment and not include the narrative of marital infidelity. In this next section, we briefly look at two plays, which represent this theme and embrace a similar moral logic of punishment. We are specifically interested in exploring the different characters of these moral stories, the cheating husband, the obnoxious and greedy mistress and the innocent and victimized wife. These three character types define the nature of these moral narratives that frame the idea of reward and punishment in a society that does not condone men who are unfaithful to their wives.

Nothing at Last centres on a man who feigns his wife's death so that he can get money from his place of work to pay for his mistress' comforts in the city. Musya lies to his boss, first by claiming that Rhoda his wife is sick and later, that she is dead. On both occasions, Musya gets a lot of money from the company as the boss strives to give him the support that he needs. He is having difficultly keeping up with Terry, his mistress

who is demanding large amounts of money. Unfortunately, his wife arrives at the office one day, claiming that Musya has not been home for two years, and that their seven children are starving. When she finds out about Musya's lies, she is outraged, and leaves him. Terry, on learning that Musya is jobless, throws him out of the house. His boss at work also fires him when he finds out that Musya has been conning the company. Musya is left with nothing.

Nothing at Last excoriates the unfaithful husband. In this world marriage is sacred and the fact that Musya takes a mistress whom he keeps in the city is unforgivable. Negative character traits are piled up and contrasted with the 'good' characters. Both Charles, Musya's co-worker and the boss, are people who are sympathetic to the claims that Musya's wife is sick. When they learn of her death, they bend over backwards to help him raise funds and take care of the funeral. Charles is also cast as a religious man, whose benevolent character Musya takes advantage of. It is Charles who goes to the boss and pleads with him to lend Musya money. Later, Musya laughs at his boss and Charles for their stupidity and the fact that they were easily convinced about his lies.

Unsurprisingly, the play emphasizes the idea of punishment for the unfaithful husband. This comes in the form of Musya's ungrateful mistress. Terry is a woman who is mainly interested in money. Other than the money, she has absolutely no respect for him:

> Terry: Just a Minute, Musya, where are you going to?
>
> Musya: Our bed, I mean, your bed is also mine and mine is also yours I mean …

Terry: Says who? … I told you not to enter this house without twenty thousand shillings!

Musya: Aah?

Terry: I have waited for you to bring me the money but it is now clear that you don't have it!

Musya: Terry I said, I may bring the money today.

Terry: I don't stay with people of "I may, I may". I needed that money to pay for the chairs that I took yesterday from the *fundi*!

Musya: You … you mean you have not paid for the chairs? But I gave you money two weeks ago to pay for the same chairs! How come you haven't paid for the chairs, how come you still want money?

Terry: I didn't pay for the chairs because I took myself out.

Musya: You went out with the money Terry? All that money Terry?

Terry: Yeah, *kwani* how much was it? Sometimes you make your money sound so much! Urgh!

Terry is cast as 'the wicked city woman', a 'powerful and pervasive stereotype in many [popular] novels' (Nelson 2002:109). She is a woman who just loves 'the high life of town and drink and dance in bars' (2002:109). She is seen as the cause of the disorganization in Musya's life, a character type that has been explored in several Kenyan popular texts (Nelson 2002). That she loves money is underlined by the fact that she keeps several men in her house, and is unhappy with the fact that Musya moves into her house, barring other men from coming in. One of the reasons that she has for throwing

him out is that he is stopping men who have money from gaining access to her. Often, Terry's character type is emphasized through the presentation of a faithful wife, normally residing in the rural area, and who, for effect, is often abandoned and helpless. Rhoda, Musya's wife lives in the rural area with their seven children. From the dialogue between her and Musya's boss, it emerges that Musya has not been to see her since he moved her there two years before. The listener immediately sympathizes with her position. When she comes to Musya's office, it is to demand that he gives her some money to take care of her children. However, she finds out that her husband has faked her death and is using it to get money from the company. In reading her against Terry, she emerges as a woman who has become victimized because of her role as a poor jobless wife living in the rural area.

Terry represents the stereotypical woman in the city who sells sex for a living and Musya is myopic in his approach to this relationship. While several studies have been done to correct these kinds of stereotypes (White 1990; Muriungi 2003), it must be noted that for the purposes of the moral story, the presentation of the mistress can only be done in this way. The play is a warning, confirmed in the closing comments of the narrator at the end of the play:

> Narrator: Well, our very good friend ended up with nothing. His wife left him, he lost his job without any benefits because of the money he had borrowed from the company, and his girlfriend left him because she could not live with a jobless

man. So if there are other men out there, who have fallen prey to such women, beware.

The other play, *In the Name of the Holy Spirit* follows a similar storyline. The main character, Reverend Kanji leaves his wife and resigns from his job when he finds out that he is the winner of a beer drinking competition. Kanji has been keeping a mistress, Alice, for a while and when he learns of his five million shillings win, he moves into Alice's apartment. However, one of his disgruntled former friends who tried to get some money out of him and failed goes to the organizers of the competition and reveals that Kanji is related to one of the company's employees, a fact that goes against the rules of the competition. In the end, Kanji loses his wife, his job and his money. His mistress, on learning that he no longer has any money, throws him out of her apartment.

Like Musya, Kanji is presented as a negative role model. Ironically, he is also a church reverend, normally considered the custodian of good morals. His character can be read against that of Pastor Alloys in *3 Times a Lady* whose role is that of offering guidance and advice to church members. To have a church pastor who not only has a mistress but who drinks beer, is the height of hypocrisy in the play. When Kanji first discovers that he has won a prize from a beer drinking competition, his reacts by trying to hide the fact from becoming public, aware that it will affect his reputation. His wife Mary sarcastically tells him to stop pretending, as his winnings have already been announced on the radio and on television. Later, when a relative of his comes to try and borrow some money from him, he throws him out disgracefully, telling him never to come back to his home

again. Such traits are normally not compatible with the character of a church pastor. However, this behaviour underlines his immorality which is explained through the fact that he has been pretending all these years to be a good person yet as regards his behaviour, he is evil.

Like Terry in *Nothing at Last*, Alice is mostly concerned with the good life that Kanji offers her. For instance, he is with her in a pub when he enters the draw for the five million shilling competition. Also, later she accompanies him to the award ceremony held in a bar. As Nelson (2002) has argued, the stereotypical representation of such women often embraces both sex and beer, and the sex is also associated with her. The play begins with sounds of a man and a woman moaning with pleasure, followed by aimless dialogue that expresses the action taking place between Alice and Kanji, when the phone begins to ring and somebody knocks on the door. Kanji panics and asks for his clothes which he runs to wear in the next room (again established through their hushed conversation), reveals that he is naked at the time the play begins.

Unlike Alice, Mary, Kanji's wife, is a staunch Christian woman who sees through her husband's hypocrisy. She already knows that her husband is seeing another woman. She confirms this when he comes home wearing Alice's blouse:

> Mary: And where have you been? Whose blouse is this you are wearing?
>
> Kanji: Blouse? Ah … I know what happened.
>
> Mary: Can you answer my question whose blouse is this you are wearing?

Kanji: I can explain.

Mary: Go ahead.

In this rather humorous encounter, she confronts him with his lies and warns him that he will not come to a good end. However, she is distraught when Kanji leaves her, and the listener witnesses this trauma through the sound of her pleadings, and the insensitive manner in which Kanji shuts the door behind him, not offering her any explanations as to where he is going. Kanji on the other hand, does not waste time moving in with Alice. Given the money he has won, he imagines that he can now have everything he always wanted.

While both plays are different in terms of the details, they both embrace basic characteristics. The idea of the unfaithful husband is underlined by the fact that he tends to want to run away from responsibility. In the first play, Musya has a wife and seven children, and yet he prefers to live with a stubborn greedy woman who treats him badly. In the second case, Kanji runs away from his wife and settles down with Alice, a good-time woman. In both cases, they break away from the confines and responsibilities of their marriages and they are punished for this. Both men lose their wives, mistresses and jobs.

In looking at these two plays, one is able to read the underlying message against infidelity in which punishment is always levied against the man who cheats on his wife. However, this punishment is not always targeted at the man who cheats. It is also targeted at the

unfaithful wife, as is shown in another play, *Bottoms Up*, which we discuss fully in chapter three, in which the woman who cheats on her husband is punished when she is diagnosed with HIV/AIDS.

4.4.2.1 Economic and social realities that define *Nothing at Last* and *In the Name of the Holy Spirit* beyond the moral structure

Both plays include social and economic realities that allow the listeners an opportunity to read beyond such dichotomous representations of good and evil. As Tom Odhiambo (2004) has argued, the reality of the modern life may not always be adequately represented in such texts. In the case of *Nothing at Last*, one almost feels sorry for Musya in the way that he struggles to keep up with his mistress' demands even to the point of 'killing' his wife. It forces one to think about the kinds of social conditions that would drive a man to such a position when he has family responsibilities. Although these conditions are not explained in the play, this offers a good avenue for listeners to explore the reasons behind his actions. Also, although his wife is presented to the listener as a helpless woman, this is countered in her confrontation of Musya in the office, where she accuses him of abandoning his family. She then tells him with finality:

> Rhoda: Let me tell you something. From today, you are not my husband! I am here to tell you I have got a better man for now. *Soma lebo*. Useless. [Banging of the door].

Far from being a helpless woman, we see Rhoda emerging as someone who can take care of herself. It is also evident that she has either been unfaithful or been toying with the idea of being unfaithful when she tells Musya that she has a better man than him. The economic reality in which she lives has forced her to look for alternative means of upkeep from another man. The expression 'soma lebo' is a sheng phrase that is used to 'show off' to another person'. It literally means 'read the label' and is an expression that was appropriated in light of brand names such as *Adidas* and *Nike* which were considered fashionable and attractive. In other words, Rhoda lets Musya know that she has a more attractive man in her life and does not need him anymore.

In the Name of the Holy Spirit also displays such uncertainties. It highlights the role that money plays in the modern Kenyan society. In the play, money is demonstrated as a powerful agent that can change the social life of a man. When Kanji finds out that he has money, his true self emerges and he displays a side of him that he has managed to suppress for years. Rather than the kindly pastor who had an 'open door policy' according to his wife, Kanji turns into a cursing, mean man whose sense of self-importance supersedes any form of reason. The play is an extension of a critique of the church, especially the many evangelical churches that have sprung up in recent years, some of which have clearly become moneymaking ventures. Reverend Kanji casts doubt on the image of these churches, asking listeners to engage with the authenticity of such churches. However, the underlying lesson is that if a pastor is holding the position for reasons other than the purposes of serving God and other Christians, then sooner or later, he or she will be discovered. Evil behaviour cannot be hidden from the public eye for too

long. In the case of Kanji, his position is discovered when he wins the beer drinking competition, bringing to light what he has been doing away from the gaze of the church members.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have looked at a number of didactic plays that seek to emphasize certain behaviour traits that are deemed acceptable. In the case of one play, we have analysed the manner in which romance is read within the structure of accepted behaviour. Stressing the behaviour of one woman, we look at how she presents herself as a respectable woman whose patience is eventually rewarded. We then look at a man who is punished when he attempts to have a woman that he imagines he is in love with, without paying any heed to the fact that she is married. He kills her and her husband, and then himself, a demonstration that he cannot be allowed to live in the 'abnormal' world order that he attempts to create. In the case of marriage, infidelity is frowned upon, and often, the men are punished by having to put up with ungrateful mistresses who are only interested in them for money.

In these analyses, we have also established that the realistic portrayals of these plays may not always be read within the moral dichotomies in which they are presented. Often, these plays are set in realistic contexts which explain some of the character behaviours that enable listeners to have alternative readings. In looking at the representation of sexual morality, it becomes clear that one also has to pay attention to the manner in which the radio plays create spaces for reading beyond the dichotomies provided.

Chapter five

HIV/AIDS, Infertility and Forced Marriage: Narrativising Development in *Radio Theatre*

5.1 Introduction

In this last chapter, we consider the role of *Radio Theatre* in propagating development messages in Kenya. The assumption made in this chapter is that KBC sometimes collaborates with several alternative media and organizations to promote health and the social well-being of Kenyans. Such collaborations, a number of them mentioned in the interviews the researcher had with the producer Nzau Kalulu (2004), for instance, signal the role that KBC has played to promote development in Kenya. Such developmental agendas have been the pursuit of NGO organizations such as UNICEF, UNHCR and other bodies, which have sometimes directly sponsored or supported the production of some of the plays. In the 2004 interview with Nzau Kalulu, for instance, he mentions that he had written a proposal to the UNHCR to produce a series of plays about refugees in Kenya. In the proposal, he suggests that they would draw narratives from actual survivors of civil wars in various countries. One play that resulted from this effort was titled *The Innocent Appeal* (2004), set in Kakuma camp in Kenya. It involved an actual KBC reporter going to the field and talking to some of the refugees. The play is a series of narrations by children who had been victimized by the various wars in their countries that had made them flee for their lives. It uses flashbacks to capture the gruesome memories of rape and murders that the victims had witnessed. In 1999, a play *Immoral Network*, that is analyzed in this chapter and which was first aired in 1989, won the URTNA-Map

award for its dramatization of the role that culture in the spread of HIV/AIDS.[32] In 2002, Nzau Kalulu was one of the producers in a UN sponsored project that produced the soap opera programme *Heart and Soul*. As indicated below in a report on the project:

> Initiated in 2002 by the United Nations (UN) in Kenya in collaboration with all 24 UN agencies based in Nairobi, this multimedia communications strategy is centred on a prime-time television and radio soap opera called 'Heart & Soul'. Scripted, directed, acted, and produced by Kenyan talents in the film and television industry, the series explores social and development issues evoked by 5 key themes: HIV/AIDS, environment and natural disaster management, governance and human rights, poverty reduction, and gender issues. These issues, as well as the ordinary joys and trials of everyday life in Africa, are highlighted through focus on the rich "Meli" family and the poor "Karani" family. Heart & Soul's audience, which is potentially 50 to 75 million people across Africa, are the urban and rural, youth and adult population in Kenya and other Eastern Africa countries.[33]

Nzau Kalulu's involvement as a casting director was due to his experience with radio drama production in KBC. In the report cited above, the project involved 6 directors and 25 actors drawn from KBC and other film and media schools in Kenya. Clearly, *Radio*

[32] As is common practice in *Radio Theatre*, plays are aired and re-aired over a number of years, both for the sake of continued relevance, as well as to fill in slots when there is nothing new to air. This explains why a play like *Immoral Network* was aired again in 1999.
[33] This is a programme summary posted online by Marie Graunboel to 'The Communication Initiative' network on November 4, 2002.
Source: http://www.comminit.com/en/node/119110. Date of Access: 30 July 2008.

Theatre's engagement with developmental themes can be seen in the context of the work that is done by NGOs around communication and development in Kenya.

Given this background, it then becomes important to look at the function of *Radio Theatre* in its pursuit of developmental agendas in Kenya. The chapter examines the narratives of *Radio Theatre* that thematically deal with issues of development designed around social and cultural realities of listeners. The chapter argues that radio drama, as a genre is a possible site for understanding the discourses of development in Kenya because of its engagements with the reality of listeners. The chapter uses theories that encourage a reading of popular mass media forms of soap opera and melodrama as possible sites of social learning. Often, soap operas and melodramas have been dismissed as forms that engage in exaggeration and fantasy. This chapter engages in a close reading of a selected number of *Radio Theatre* plays and analyses ways in which they represent development narratives. Through this reading, the chapter analyses the strategies that the radio texts use to encourage a particular reading of development by its listeners. We look at the manner in which each play emphasizes certain moral lessons which the listener is supposed to learn. These moral lessons are normally the pivotal point through which these plays are supposed to be understood as developmental.

5.2 Community radio and Theatre for Development (TfD): contextualizing radio drama for development

Radio Theatre frames itself within existing discourses of development communication in Africa which argue for the use of communication to improve the livelihoods and well-

being of people in underdeveloped or developing nations. The range of themes of the plays under analysis suggest the role of these radio plays in dealing with health related problems pertaining to HIV/AIDs and fertility, as well as the socially generated problems of forced marriage on the girl child. The programme is located within existing discourses on radio and Theatre for Development (TfD) in Kenya.

Radio has been identified as a crucial tool for development, especially because in many cases in Africa, it is often the only medium available to a large mass of Africans (Fardon and Furniss 2000). In the larger context of development in Africa, radio has been identified by several official bodies such as the State, NGOs and local organizations as a viable tool for disseminating information on issues of health and personal well-being of citizens through various educational programmes. However, one major criticism against State and NGO's usage of radio has been that communication only takes place through a one-way flow (Mda 1993). In what is often referred to as the top-down communication flow, the development messages often embrace the concerns and interests of those in power, while completely neglecting the needs of the people for whom these messages are intended. As Mda (1993) has argued, this often leads to partial communication where the interests of the people are completely neglected.

Part of the strategy to remedy this one-way flow of communication, according to development communication theorists has been to develop a more participatory approach to communication. Development communication theory refers to the suitable use of a communication strategy that can aid in achieving social change. This approach has been

embraced by community radio and TfD practitioners creating a good basis for engaging the participation of citizens at the grassroots level. While TfD has encouraged the use of theatre for purposes of 'social transformation and reformation' (2004:4), community radio defines itself as a 'medium in which the community participates - as planners, producers and performers - and it is a means of expression of the community rather than for the community.'" (Opoku-Mensah 2000:165). Both these fields of development communication have stressed the need for interaction, participation and community. Zakes Mda (1993:1) has argued that development communication is a means of organizing communication 'so as to increase participation, achieve self-reliance, promote equity, and close communication gaps'. He adds that

> The current emphasis in development communication is not only on access to communication media, but participation in media programming. The assumption is that participation in media production leads to participation in community development. This is a shift from the marketing approach, known as 'persuasive communications', to a participatory approach (Mda 1993:1).

Fackson Banda has argued that central to the idea of community radio are 'concepts of participation, cultural identity, and empowerment, as well as Freirian notions of dialogic communication' (2003:120). In both community radio and TfD, one finds useful ways of engaging with the media and its constructive use within a community of audiences. The two bodies of work emphasize a sense of participation with the audience.

However, in both community radio and TfD, the tendency to stress the value of community interaction, and immediate/face-to-face feedback is present. While this is definitely an important aspect for development discussions, what both discourses seem to emphasize is that 'conventional' mass media such as state-run radio do not have a useful development strategy in place because they have a top-down approach to development. Often, this approach neglects the needs of the local people, because information is formulated in the absence of its recipients. As such, this level of communication remains partial.

In this chapter, we attempt to show that in fact, through creative products such as radio drama, one can examine useful ways in which listeners can benefit from conventional mass media forms. To correct the existing assumptions about such forms' inability to connect with and engage the audience, we look at the narratives of *Radio Theatre*, produced by a state broadcaster, and examine the ways in which development narratives have been represented in the plays, and the particular ways in which messages have been encoded within the plays for possible extraction and use by the listener. One useful way of understanding *Radio Theatre* narratives of development is through an aspect of Entertainment-Education (E-E) which analyses soap opera, melodramas and the telenovela as sites in which development and social change at both individual and social levels can take place. We selectively extract certain aspects of E-E that are applicable to our reading, and attempt to analyse the possibilities that the radio texts offer to be read as developmental narratives.

5.2.1 Entertainment-Education (E-E) and the educational value of soap operas

According to Arvind Singhal et al., 'E-E is the process of purposefully designing and implementing a media message to both entertain and educate in order to increase audience members' knowledge about an educational issue, create favourable attitudes, shift social norms, and change overt behaviour' (2004:5). They add that 'the general purpose of entertainment-education [sic] interventions is to contribute to the process of directed social change, which can occur at the level of an individual, community or society'. E-E has been instrumental in showing the many levels at which soap opera and other mass media forms of entertainment can be analysed for their uses in education and information dissemination.

The concept of E-E was developed by a Brazilian creative writer-producer-director, Miguel Sabido in 1970 in a bid to understand the theoretical basis of the telenovela's social function. He mainly used Albert Bandura's social learning theory also known as the social cognitive theory. The social learning or social cognitive theory states that social learning takes place through imitation and observation of others for purposes of 'modelling (imitation of the behaviour of a role model) and self-efficacy (one's perceived ability to adopt recommended behaviour)' (Ogenga 2006:81). The theory is rooted in social psychology, specifically within behavioural theory. Miguel Sabido applied this theory to his reading of soap operas and telenovelas and concluded that these mass media forms had the power to influence people to identify with, imitate and learn from the positive and negative role models often used in melodramatic presentations of narratives.

Soap operas have in this way lent themselves to being read as sources that can be used creatively for purposes of development. As has been discussed in the introductory chapter, soap operas and melodramas in Africa engage with reality in a way that the listeners can relate to, and thus read them as 'authorities' that can adequately comment on issues affecting their lived experiences. In Africa, recent studies on the educational value of soap operas include Fredrick Ogenga's (2006) examination of *Tsha Tsha*, a South African television soap opera that was created around the concepts of HIV/AIDS and other social issues that affect young people South Africa. *Tsha Tsha* also explores a number of other realities including joblessness, crime, relationships and the social lives of a small rural society. Ogenga analyses the effects of the programme on a group of young HIV positive men in Soweto and attempts to draw conclusions regarding its effects on their attitudes and social behaviour. In a similar vein, Andersson looks at both *Isidingo* and *Yizo Yizo* as crucial tools for dealing with the post-apartheid realities in South Africa (2002; 2004). In the case of *Isidingo*, Andersson is concerned with how soap operas open up discourses that had been 'closed off' at the end of apartheid including racism and other social imbalances. The fact that the series participates in the creation of a 'rainbow nation' is destabilized by the presence of narratives of mass unrest, crime and new forms of racism, all of which are displayed as subtexts to the soap opera. The discourse of crime is extended in her reading of *Yizo Yizo*. Usdin et al. (2004) look at the impact of *Soul City*, also a South African soap opera, on issues of domestic violence, which forms part of a number of possible examples that demonstrate the potent value of the soap opera form as a tool for intervention round issues of education and social change. We thus attempt to apply these readings of soap operas as key instruments of social change in

Radio Theatre. By applying the theory of E-E, we argue that soap operas can be read as spaces that encourage audiences to engage with the messages being given in the texts for purposes of self-development.

In the following analyses, we focus on different plays that deal with developmental themes such as HIV/AIDS, infertility and forced marriage. We attempt to analyse the manner in which these themes have been presented. As in the previous chapters, we attempt an analysis of the shortfalls of these plays, by looking beyond the given or preferred readings, and attempting to analyse messages that may destabilize such readings.

In terms of methodology, the chapter uses Bandura's idea of character identification through observation, and attempts with each play to analyse the presentation of major characters within the good/evil dichotomy. We argue that in order to emphasize a developmental lesson, these dichotomies have to be made clear, as the play seeks to encourage a particular kind of reading among listeners. The chapter also looks at the different strategies that the plays use, including multiple storylines, exaggeration and 'misrepresentation' to emphasize different lessons in the plays. While each play presents new ways of looking at the different themes, we attempt to use them as examples for reading the developmental play.

5.3 *Immoral Network, Bottoms Up* and the representation of HIV/AIDS in radio drama

5.3.1 *Immoral Network*

Immoral Network was first aired in 1987 and is the only play in this thesis that is based on a script reading only. In this section, it is used to read a common theme that has been pursued in *Radio Theatre* over the years, the theme of HIV/AIDS. Hence, even though the analysis is based on a textual reading of the written script, the play remains relevant to the rest of the chapter. It signals continuity in terms of the narrative link that it has with another play, *Bottoms Up* that is set in 2004. Also, as was mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, Immoral Network was re-aired in 1999, and it won an award for its effort to create awareness about HIV/AIDS. In many ways, then, although its pursuit of themes of HIV/AIDS may be reliant on cultures that were practiced in the 1980s, it becomes a point of interest to interrogate how the theme of HIV/AIDS is treated in the play.

Immoral Network is a story about a family of three, Otieno a lawyer, Njeri, his wife and Peter their only child. The story is told in a multiple storyline format, a characteristic of the soap opera form (Geraghty 1991). In the first strand of the story, Otieno goes to his village in the rural area of Luo land in Kenya to 'inherit' Akinyi, his recently deceased brother's wife. However, it turns out that his brother, Onyango died of AIDS. The implication of this is that Akinyi is also HIV positive. Another strand of this storyline focuses on Akinyi, who, as the first scene opens, is mourning the death of her husband. As she mourns, Tero, a village 'cleanser' comes in and has sex with her, as part of a

traditional practice of cleansing to rid the clan of the 'chira' or curse that has befallen it. A third strand of the story focuses on Njeri's reaction to Otieno's recent 'inheritance' of Akinyi. As an act of vengeance, Njeri has an affair with the family doctor Dr Ole Sangale. This storyline gives birth to another that focuses on Dr Ole Sangale's proclamations that having multiple sexual partners is a traditional practice in his culture. Another strand of the play focuses on Otieno's seduction of and eventual promiscuous relationship with Mueni, the family's domestic worker. Mueni succumbs to his advances when he offers her money, and eventually gets pregnant. The last strand of the play focuses on Peter, Otieno's son, a rich spoilt sixteen-year-old boy who sneaks out of boarding school after stealing and pawning some laboratory equipment, which he trades for a lot of money. He uses this money to seduce Mueni, and eventually has unprotected sex with her.

The narrative of *Immoral Network* emphasises two broad issues, the role of culture in spreading HIV/AIDS and the negative repercussions of irresponsible sexual behaviour. Both issues reflect the initial campaigns around prevention against HIV/AIDS that were used mostly in the 1980s when the first AIDS casualties were identified. This was also a period of great ignorance on how HIV/AIDS was transmitted. As can be seen through the several storylines above, the play creates the impression of the vulnerability of all the characters in the play because of this ignorance. *Immoral Network* was first aired in 1987, a period when HIV/AIDS was still considered a mysterious disease, and around which a lot of myths were created. The narrator's introduction to *Immoral Network* voices several of the concerns that surrounded the disease:

> HIV/AIDS message designs through the media in Kenya have been laid out for 3 different kinds of audiences. For the elite, and the knowledgeable, for those who depend on the elite and knowledgeable in decision making and, or those who are illiterate and need persuasion for behavioural change … It is an open secret that in parts of Kenya and Africa at large HIV/AIDS among other health risks, is … spread through culture and outdated traditional practices affecting even the educated and the knowledgeable [and] the educated traditionalist …We created this radio drama to help reach out to those caught up in the tradition of widow inheritance or any other culture which contributes to the spread of HIV/AIDS in rural Kenya.

The narrator's words shape the intention of the programme, which is to create awareness around HIV/AIDS and the practices that aid in spreading it. The narrator also categorically maps his target audience, echoing an early AIDS campaign strategy that was used in the eighties all over Kenya: "AIDS Kills". As the narrator speaks, he pauses dramatically before naming the kinds of audiences that the play aims to speak to leaving the listener in no doubt about the fact that everyone is targeted. He also places emphasis on the word culture to impress upon the listener that this is one major but often ignored form through which HIV/AIDS is spread.

One of the strategies that the play uses to illustrate its concerns about the spread of HIV/AIDS, is the use of examples through characterization. The idea of example shows

the necessity of demonstrating lessons rather than presenting them as general moral axioms. This gives audiences a chance to extract, fill in gaps and apply the lessons they have learnt from the plays into their own lives. Bandura's theory of self-efficacy can be used to understand how listeners can identify with and reject certain behaviours based on his positive and negative role modelling theory. According to his theory, 'individuals exercise greater ability to be in control of their own actions based on how they perceive themselves as able to perform in a manner that will result in expected outcomes' (Ogenga 2006:70). This ability to control their own destinies is based on the observation and imitation of others, normally positive role models, and the rejection of negative role models (Bandura 1977). In other words, people learn by observing other people's mistakes and achievements and model themselves around those aspects of behaviour that they desire. In *Immoral Network* the listener is given such a chance through the presentation of characters that often make wrong choices and are eventually punished.

The play maps out the character of Otieno as a negative role model. He is a lawyer, who is recognizably modern and educated. However, Otieno has a very limited view of cultural practices such as wife inheritance in an era of HIV/AIDS. Within the Luo culture, the brother of the deceased is supposed to 'inherit' his brother's family to ensure the continuity of his brother's lineage. Otieno takes it upon himself to adopt this traditional practice. In an argument wife his wife Njeri, Otieno's standpoint about the cultural practice of wife inheritance, his traditional duties and his ideas about HIV/AIDS emerge:

Njeri: Baba Peter, this is too much and I will take it no more. I cannot share you with another woman. You will choose between me and Akinyi.

Otieno: We have gone over this again and again. I am a man, Mama Peter. Akinyi is my late brother's wife and so she is my wife now. I am a man of two wives. If you cannot take it, take off!

Njeri: How many nights do you spend at Akinyi's before you spend a single night here? Akinyi and her children have become the only people you think of. You have neglected us. Another thing, how in these dangerous days did you think of taking your brother's wife?

Otieno: Njeri, before you married me you knew I came from *that* community. My brother is dead and I must do the needful and I will not discuss the topic further.

Njeri: I will divorce you!

Otieno: When you make up your mind, hire me for legal advice. I am a lawyer remember? I am not ready to allow a curse on myself.

Njeri: By the way what killed your brother?

Otieno: He was sick.

Njeri: What sickness?

Otieno: I am a lawyer not a doctor. But to the best of my clan's knowledge it was a curse, *chira* and I agree with them.

Njeri: And if it was not *chira*?

Otieno: Then tell me what it is. He had a complex of illnesses, some people say it was AIDS, but *chira* was there before AIDS. So let no primary teacher tell me about things I know. I will never allow a curse on me.

Otieno is constructed as a stubborn and rigid man with tendencies to be excessively patriarchal in viewpoint. He refuses to listen to his wife's concerns, and tries to force her into silence by raising his voice forcefully against her. His voice is also sarcastic when he tells her to consider him as her lawyer when she threatens to divorce him. He proudly embraces the fact that he now has a second wife, a fact that Njeri is clearly not happy with. Within this categorization, it becomes possible for the listener to understand Otieno's ignorance about HIV/AIDS. For instance, when Njeri asks him if he knows what his brother died of, his voice is hesitant, lingering doubtfully around the words *chira*, the curse. He hangs on desperately to this word, saying repeatedly, "I will never allow a curse on me". His ignorance about AIDS is not because he is not aware of it, but that he chooses to rigidly hold on to his traditional ideals. He is aware that some people said his brother died of AIDS, but he quickly adds, "but *chira* was there before AIDS". The idea of AIDS as *chira* forms part of the early explanations of the disease among the Luo (Muriungi 2004). *Chira* was often considered a punishment to somebody who engaged in anything that was considered taboo, such as incest. It is only with growing public awareness that people began realising that AIDS was a disease.

The listener is also introduced to ideas of gender and power in the spread of AIDS. This emerges in Otieno's relationship with Mueni, the house-help. In one scene he summons Mueni to a room, established through the sound of a door slamming, and Otieno's words, "okay, next …" after his son bids him farewell. Such codes act as cues for the listener to identify the setting of the scene. Otieno summons Mueni whose location at the time is

indicated by her distance from the microphone and the sounds of approaching footsteps. In the ensuing dialogue, the listener is exposed to a callous demand for sex by Otieno, in exchange of money:

> Otieno: Mueni, has anyone ever told you that you are a beautiful girl? And for that reason I am going to promote you from a housemaid to a very important person in this house … Mueni, you are not a baby now. You are a woman. Listen, I can make you everything you have dreamed to be in your life. Mueni be my girl.
>
> Mueni: Let me go!
>
> Otieno: You will go when I say so. Take this [sic] five hundred shillings. All yours … Mueni, there is more if you say yes. Come on Mueni, Mueni, come on, say yes …

On one level, Otieno uses his power as a man to force Mueni to have sex with him. Mueni's plea for him to let her go and the fact that he still proceeds to have sex with her, shows the helplessness of Mueni both because Otieno physically overpowers her, but also because as a house-girl, she is in a position of less power over her boss. However, the play introduces the notion of money as a form of negotiation into this relationship. As we see later, Mueni finds out that she has the power to get more money and elevate her social status if she grants Otieno sexual favours. As such, this relationship continues until Mueni finds out that she is pregnant, leaving the listener in no doubt that she has been having unprotected sex with Otieno. In the end, Otieno is 'punished' for his promiscuity and irresponsible sexual behaviour when he finds out he is HIV positive.

A listener is thus able to systematically follow the development of a single character whose behaviour is demonstrated through the way he speaks and the words that he uses, and can choose to learn from the characters' mistakes and successes. As has been argued, based on the behaviour of the character, the observer (in our case, the listener) can then choose to imitate the behaviour or to avoid it, for the sake of self-development. In the case of Otieno, the play deliberately creates a man whose ignorance defines his own fate. Because he is constantly portrayed as a negative role model, the listener is bound to reject his behaviour for the sake of his/her own well-being. This is one way in which listeners learn through examples.

Another strategy that the play uses to narrate discourses of HIV/AIDS is through exaggeration and ethnic stereotyping. The play emphasizes the role of some cultural practices in the spread of HIV/AIDS based on circulating discourses in Kenya around 'backward' cultural practices and the manner in which these have encouraged the spread of AIDS. The play starts with an analysis of the Luo practice of 'wife inheritance' and its relevance in a period of HIV/AIDS. Ideally, it seeks to discourage such a custom because of its backwardness to development. As such, the build-up to the first scene is clouded with mournful sounds of a woman, in what becomes apparent as a case of 'wife inheritance', as well as related customs involving the woman having sex with the village 'cleanser. The play begins with the voice of a woman wailing:

> Mama ayoo, mama ayoo, Onyango ayoo, my Onyango is gone, who will take care of me [?] How will my kids go to school, who will pay their school fees [?] Mama ayoo, mayoooo, mayoooo, My husband is dead, uuuuuiiiiii! I am still young Onyango, who will warm my body, Ohhhh, Onyango! Mayoooo!

It is important for the play to identify that this scene is taking place in a Luo environment. One of the indicators that the listener is given is through the language of the dirge. Although the play is in English, it contains expressions that are local in nature. Within the dirge, the mourner mentions a Luo name, Onyango, which aids the listener to identify the community and setting of the scene. This opening dirge introduces the listener to the Luo culture whose practice of wife inheritance has been a site for criticism both in gender and HIV/AIDS discourses. Akinyi finds herself at the mercy of this traditional practice. As she is wailing, she gets a visit from Tero, the 'village cleanser'. The play refers to the custom of 'Tero' which collided with the belief among the Luo that if a man died mysteriously, it was supposed to be a curse, 'chira' from the ancestors. As such, this person's spirit had to be cleansed and this involved a number of ceremonies. In this particular play, one of the ceremonies introduced is that of cleansing the wife of the dead man. Tero, the 'cleanser' is introduced in the play to present this aspect of the tradition.

The presentation of this cultural practice is however exaggerated in the play. Part of the exaggeration lies in the fact that this is a play that was set in the 1980s, a time when ethnic stereotypes were still used rampantly in Kenya to explain difference. In cases where people did not know about the other ethnic group, new stereotypes emerged. As is

emerging in several sub-cultures, including internet cultures, in recent years, ethnic stereotypes in Kenya are no longer looked at as innocently. While in the 1980s, were the pet subject of the media, used in comedies such as *Vitimbi* and *Vioja Mahakamani*, the ethnic violences that have broken out in recent years have caused for a re-analyzing of the innocence of such ethnic stereotypes. In the earlier context of the 1980s however, were seen as frameworks for understanding different ethnic groups.

Therefore in reading the stereotypical presentation of Luo wife inheritance, only a hindsight reading can offer one a chance to engage with its exaggerated sense. Clearly, it was based on existing urban legends about the Luo practice of wife inheritance. In the play, two different Luo terminologies for different traditional Luo practices are interchangeably used, indicating the hastiness of presentation, as well as deliberate misinformation to emphasise certain aspects of the tradition that are pertinent to the larger story, while suppressing others. For instance, while the Luo practices of wife inheritance (tero) and grieving (tero buru) exist, the manner in which they are presented in this play is particularly exaggerated to reinforce the message that certain traditional practices can contribute towards the spread of HIV/AIDS. 'Tero buru' is a Luo ceremony usually carried out upon the death of a *jaduong* (big man of the home) as a way of honouring his death, and giving it the respect it deserves. Wife inheritance (tero) is a separate culture in which a guardian is appointed (usually the brother or male cousin/relative of the dead man) to 'look after' the family that the *jaduong* has left behind. Because it is a traditional practice, it is often frowned upon by more modern women who in most cases choose to take care of their families on their own after the death of their spouses. With the

prevalence of HIV/AIDS, this practice is quickly losing its significance and appeal among the Luos, although at the time of airing of *Immoral Network*, it was one of the most significant points of contention in the Luo culture. Thus the mixing of Luo terminologies for different practices points towards the aim of the play.

The play also deliberately inserts the idea of a village cleanser who walks around villages having sex with women recently bereaved in order to cleanse them.

> Tero: I am the 'cleanser'. I am here to cleanse you … we have to abide by the traditions … if we delay it further; a curse might befall on [sic] our clan. We have to do it now before more people start dying. Furthermore, I am the only cleanser around. I have seven other appointments today. Those women lost their husbands just like you and they are ready, waiting for me to cleanse them … since I started this traditional duty, I have cleansed 720 women …

Listening to Tero speak, the absurdity of the situation emerges even as one attempts to imagine the horrors of this culture. While it is clear that the scriptwriter is basing his knowledge on urban legends, the way he packs the play with specific horrors, points towards the intention to build fear around certain HIV/AIDS discourses that have become part of the urban legends regarding the Luo practice of wife inheritance. His intention is to reach a wider audience, where such misrepresentations are consumed as real. Instead of correcting some of these stereotypical misconceptions, the play actually re-emphasizes them by playing on their popularity.

Another cultural practice that the play introduces again through exaggeration is that of the Maasai culture of 'spear planting'. Once again, this particular stereotypical representation has to be seen through hindsight, when it had more currency than in the present time. The Maasai, who were perceived as a backward group, particularly because of the media and touristic postcards portrayal of them as warriors wrapped in traditional coloured blankets, with ornaments and decorated red hair, had to be understood in the new emerging social realities. The 1980s, when HIV/AIDS began taking on gruesome proportions, it became necessary to explain the Maasai. A customary practice of the Maasai of hospitality was quickly misrepresented to suit the narrative of the spread of HIV/AIDS. One circulating misconception of this practice is that among the Maasai a man is 'allowed' to 'plant his spear' (literally and metaphorically) in front of another man's hut, as an unspoken message that he is having sex with the man's wife. According to the stories, the owner of the house is supposed to find himself a separate place to sleep for the night. When Njeri, Otieno's wife begins having an affair with the family doctor as a form of retaliation against Otieno's 'inheritance' of Akinyi, this aspect of the Maasai culture emerges in a dialogue.

> Dr Ole Sangale: I come from a community where you can have a wife whether you are married or not.
>
> Njeri: What?
>
> Dr Ole Sangale: Yes. All you need to do is to plant a spear on the door step of a *manyatta* … The spear is a sign to show the husband or another man hoping to

> have sex with that woman that there is another man inside so no one should disturb … it is our tradition and no one can question it.

Once again, framed in a very patriarchal context, the play brings out the nuances of power and gender imbalance in contexts where the woman is denied a voice to negotiate her sexual preferences. Although Dr Sangale is having sex with Njeri, the manner in which he 'reports' to her the nature of his traditional practice, is an admission of his own sense of ignorance. Like Otieno, Dr Sangale is an educated man who is expected to know better. This irony creates possibilities for the listener to identify him as a negative role model. Like in the case of the Luo cultures, the Maasai tradition is also misrepresented in order to make it accommodate the theme around culture and HIV/AIDS. The practice of spear planting actually has its origins in ideas of hospitality among the Maasai, where man travelling to a far off place could be allowed to sleep in the main house. He would have to leave his spear outside the hut as a sign of respect for the man in the house. Also, because the spear was normally too long to fit into the *manyatta* (low roofed traditional Maasai huts), he would leave it outside. However, unlike the circulating narratives, he was not allowed to have sex with the man's wife. In *Immoral Network*, this version has been distorted to form a new narrative in which sex becomes a way of unearthing this particular tradition in order to demonstrate how HIV/AIDS is spread in this culture.

Part of this need to exaggerate can be understood as a characteristic of popular culture which often uses urban legends as sources for presenting narratives borrowed from the public sphere. *Immoral Network* borrows from several such narratives. One common

narrative is that of the house-girl and her availability to grant sexual favours to the male members of a family. A story appeared in a Kenyan newspaper, about a housemaid/domestic worker who infected a man and his two sons with the HIV virus after she had unprotected sex with each of them. She died after developing AIDS, as did the father and sons. The report adds that this story is even more bizarre because the woman of the house did not contract the disease. While this is just one story, it represents the kinds of 'hidden' narratives of the domestic sphere that circulate through public discourses. Although such kinds of narratives rarely make headline news, they remain a part of everyday life for most Kenyans. The narratives are reported in alternative spaces, and eventually find their way into the public discourse, from where *Radio Theatre* draws its examples.[34]

Although for both Luo and Maasai listeners, the play is potentially insulting, and it therefore may not fully work as a development narrative to them, the underlying lessons often emerge with each exaggeration and listeners can choose to use only aspects of the narrative that interests them. At the end of the play, all of the key participants in this sexual 'misadventure' meet together in the doctor's office, where it is revealed that they each have the virus because none of them used protection during sex. Akinyi has begun developing symptoms of AIDS, which the doctor interprets as a sign that her death is near. Such conclusions show the play's associations of HIV/AIDS with death, a view that

[34] One such example appeared in a Kenyan magazine *Kwani*, in which an eight year old girl was admitted to hospital after being diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. It turned out that her father had been sexually abusing her for some time, and that eventually, a relative had taken her to hospital where she was diagnosed with the disease. The child's mother had just recently died from the same disease, and the father, as a way of 'dealing' with his frustrations, turned on their child. Article titled 'Girl's HIV infection blamed on father' by Alex Kareithi, *Kwani 4*: pg 213.

has persisted, despite new narratives of hope that have begun to emerge around HIV/AIDS. This is demonstrated in the following play.

5.3.2 *Bottoms Up*

Bottoms Up is a narrative of reversed fate, in which the main protagonist Bosco Maele discovers that he is HIV positive. He goes for a routine HIV test in order to qualify for a promotion as an advertising manager at his place of work. He is competing for the same position as Kanzi, his friend and workmate, who also goes for the test. When the results come back from the laboratory, Kanzi is told that he is HIV negative while Maele finds out that he is HIV positive. Maele's life crashes around him as he begins envisioning death. The play emphasizes the stigma that he suffers because of his status, both at his place of work and at home. His wife of five years leaves him, he is fired from his job and when he goes back to his rural home, people are warned to steer clear of him because of his status. Dismayed at the reaction, Maele considers suicide, but at the last minute, he gets a letter that takes him back to hospital for a second test where it is revealed that the tests were mixed up and that it is Kanzi who is HIV positive. The strategy of reversed fates enables one to understand the idea of stigma and what it does, especially in a case where the person is not actually HIV positive. The listener learns a lot from Maele, who at the end says, 'One has to be HIV positive to understand what it means to live with this virus'.

One of the sources of this stigma is explained as that of ignorance, as is the case in *Immoral Network*. This ignorance leads to assumptions that people which HIV/AIDS are

immoral, have been sentenced to immediate death and should not be seen as part of a society of healthy people. In the play, the idea of immorality is demonstrated by Kanzi, who rushes to their place of work, and reports Maele to his boss. Both the boss' reaction and Kanzi's underline existing stereotypes:

> Boss: Why? Why would such a fine young man go around with women? He's not a man of many women is he?
>
> Kanzi: Well, he used to hide, he used to hide boss, but I knew it! I knew everything myself. Boss, you know … I don't sympathize with people who have AIDS. You know they go out looking for it, so why sympathize? You know what I am saying Boss?

Maele's wife also displays the same anxieties when she tells Maele, "I knew it! I knew it, and now see! I knew you had other women in your life! You have killed me and my child too". In a later scene, Kanzi comes back home with her, and as they are discussing her future, she asserts rather insensitively, "I don't want the spirit of a man dying of AIDs following me everywhere." For her, the fact that Maele is HIV positive is a confession to infidelity, and she does not give him space to explain himself, denying him the chance to explore other possible ways through which he may have exposed himself to the disease. Also, all three characters assume that everyone who is HIV positive has had sex with multiple partners, blocking out the fact that it can be also be transmitted through a single partner.

The stigma is also expressed through the fact that Maele is no longer considered part of his society. At work, people separate themselves from him, and he can no longer share their utensils at the cafeteria. Eventually, Maele is fired because people are uncomfortable with him. When he goes back to his rural home to stay with his mother, he tries to participate in events. On one occasion, he attends an AIDs awareness campaign. An old man stands up and publicly denounces and embarrasses him:

> Old Man [in a heavy Kamba/Kikuyu accent]: you garrs [girls] and women of this virrage [village]. Beware of these men who are coming from the sete [city] with those cars of theirs … with this funny ndisease [disease] then they are coming to sprend it [spread it]. The have ndecinded [decided] to come and ndie [die] here winth [with] you. *Chunga!* [watch out]. You should watch out. I know you ndon't [don't] have money, mbut [but] you will mbe [be] ngiven [given] mane [money] and HIV AIDS. *Mokigo! Ukimwi! Mutakufa nyote!* [watch out! AIDS! You will all die] Haiyaayeee! Look I can even see one of them looking at me, look, and they al [are] plentending [pretending] that they do not know what is ngoing on [going on] look! You, mmmmm, stop looking at me…

Lastly, HIV/AIDs stigma is created around the notion of death. In a rather moving dramatic monologue, Maele, having given up after being rejected publicly in all quarters of his life says:

> Narrative voice: So there I was HIV positive just waiting to develop AIDS with time, then death of course. But I had to be strong, I told myself, but how, how, how?
>
> I didn't care any way, I had had enough of that! I had had enough of everything! It was too much! I just had to kill myself! And so I went, and bought poison, to kill myself. And I had to just say goodbye to my people, the people that I cared for … oh my poor son, and my mother [sniff] but I decided to go and see why I was needed at the clinic first.

Ignorance is therefore largely blamed for the attitude with which people approach the disease in the play. This is demonstrated through different avenues, sometimes using exaggeration to emphasize the fact that these reactions are real and that they take place in several avenues. One apparent thing however, is the manner in which exaggeration works, not just at the level of content but at the level of form. The creation of each character to fit a particular role is a way in which melodrama operates in order to foreground certain morals that it seeks to bring out (Ligaga 2005). Kanzi is from the beginning presented with a question mark, a dubious character that the listener is encouraged not to trust. For instance, when Maele and Kanzi go for the test, as they are waiting outside, Kanzi displays high levels of nervousness that cause Maele to comment:

> Narrative voice: I was not worried because I was very sure of my status. The blood samples were taken and we were told to wait for twenty minutes. But

> Kanzi, Kanzi was so nervous! He was so nervous my God. He kept asking me questions.

This nervousness becomes a site of connection between the text and the listener who is expected to 'fill in' the unspoken details of Kanzi's status. Apart from the fact that going for a HIV test is necessarily thought of as a stressful exercise, the listener is supposed to interpret Kanzi's nervousness as a sign of confession that he has been practising unsafe sex. Maele however, is presented as calm and collected because he was 'sure of his status.' The two characters are obviously juxtaposed in order to emphasize Maele's character which must be presented as 'clean' if the ending of the narrative is to make sense to the listener. Maele's boss is also presented in a one sided manner, only showing how he misuses his power to show discrimination against a HIV positive person. His voice contains a level of finality when he says, "there is no way we can consider a person who has AIDS for the post." Maele's boss allows one to engage separately with the debate around HIV, discrimination and the workplace.

However, beneath this exaggeration, the play attempts to deal with discourses of HIV/AIDS which form part of everyday life. In the play, this is captured in the manner in which public information about HIV/AIDS is made available, and yet no one actually pays attention to this information. For instance, the play raises questions about how people consume existing media narratives of HIV/AIDS. As the play begins, Maele is stuck in a traffic jam on a Monday morning depicted through sounds of cars hooting in

the background. Maele engages in a dramatic monologue in which he describes the traffic jam, as well as the world around him. Maele spots a bill board and 'reads' it out:

> *Are you a racist, if no, why do you discriminate against people with HIV/AIDs? People with HIV/AIDS need your love, company and a job too.*

While Maele's reading of this billboard is at this instance accidental, it in fact forms the core of the play's narrative and keeps recurring. Maele sees the message again soon after he discovers that he is HIV positive, and after he is fired from his place of work. He also sees the same billboard towards the end of the play, after he discovers that his HIV test results had been mixed up with Kanzi's. The billboard becomes a way of re-educating Maele, and in the process educating the listener about HIV/AIDS. Therefore, while the play ends with Maele celebrating his newfound negative status, it also emphasizes the fact that he has learnt about HIV the hard way, and can therefore be sympathetic to people with the disease.

Like any other moral narratives, the use of good and evil characters emphasizes the lessons that the listener is supposed to learn. In the case of *Bottoms Up*, the negative characters are presented through the characters of Kanzi and Maggie. These two are projected as ignorant characters who do not learn from past mistakes and who suffer because of this. Immediately after Maggie finds out that her husband is HIV positive, she moves out of home. However, when she realizes that he plans to go and visit his mother in the rural area, she comes back to the house to pack her belongings. She is accompanied

by Kanzi, who reveals that he has always fancied her. Using his HIV negative status to lure her into bed, he convinces Maggie to have sex with him without a condom. Kanzi comments on Maele saying,

> Kanzi: Anyway, he used to tell me that he believed in the philosophy of flesh–to-flesh, ati *Nyama kwa nyama*. Ati a sweet is never enjoyed inside its wrapper, you know what I am saying?

The philosophy of 'nyama kwa nyama' which literally means 'flesh on flesh' is one that has been heavily criticized in Kenya, expressed through avenues such as popular music. Maina Mutonya (2006) has analysed how Princess July discredits the Luo community (in which HIV/AIDS prevalence is high) for not wanting to use condoms and for the high spread of the disease in Kenya's Nyanza province. In many ways, the play debunks popular notions of the disease by destabilizing previously held ideas. As we are later informed through Maele's omnipresent voice, Maggie, having moved in with Kanzi and having lived with him for a month, is obviously also HIV positive.

However, in spite of the way the play attempts to 'educate', one still finds the ending unsatisfactory. While it celebrates Maele's good behaviour by relating it to his HIV negative status, the play does not begin to unravel the intricacies of HIV/AIDs. As the play ends, Maele says,

> As for my former wife Maggie, I can only be sorry, I guess that's what I can say … wait a minute, the village witchdoctor might have just been right after all, because he said that this fate might have been another person's, a woman with three noses. In fact, Maggie has a hole in her nose where she put some small nose ring. I used to call it her third nose. It was her fate after all. Oh, poor Maggie, she has been living with Kanzi for a month.

The play ends on the same note as it started. Even though Maele is finally found to be HIV negative, the way in which Maggie is 'punished' for her lack of trust and infidelity by making her HIV positive shows a way that the play refuses to deal with HIV/AIDs as a part of life. This analysis echoes Roger Kurtz (1998) and others who have argued that African popular fiction always seeks to tie ends too neatly, sometimes to the point of rendering the narrative unreal. While Charles Mangua and the other popular writers sent their women to the rural areas to reform after escapades in the city, this play uses HIV/AIDS as a form of punishment, refusing to engage with more intricate details of HIV/AIDS. It refuses to engage with the aftermath of knowledge that one is HIV positive.

5.4 Curse or a cure? *Infertility* and *My Aunty Weds*

5.4.1 *Infertility*

In this section, we look at how the problem of infertility has been dealt with in two radio plays. As in the previous discussion, we look at how this issue has been represented in the

radio plays, by looking at what aspects of the problem have been highlighted, and how it can be analysed in the context of a developmental issue in the plays.

Infertility is a narrative of a couple, Mark and Tracy Wachira, who attempt to make sense of their childlessness. Mark is an illiterate man who blames his wife Tracy for their 'problem'. Rather than play victim, Tracy refuses to be put down in any way by Mark's accusations. As such, the two of them are forced into dialogue about the problem, a fact that forms the core of the play as they seek answers from different avenues. What follows is a dramatic and often humorous display of attempts as the two try to 'solve' the problem. The play cuts between scenes where either one of the couple visits places or people they think can help them resolve their problem. Eventually they go to the city to see a modern doctor who through counselling and tests, reveals that they are both sterile.

Infertility is structured around common beliefs about infertility in Kenya which, like in the case of the two previous plays, are mostly generated through ignorance. The fact that the two main characters are illiterate is a strategy that the play uses to allow the listener to access the lessons that Tracy and Mark learn. For instance, at the beginning, in a scene that captures the tension that exists between Mark and Tracy, Mark thinks Tracy cannot have children because of "those crazy secrets women keep". He qualifies his statement by stating that these secrets include abortions and family planning pills that, according to him, may have caused Tracy's barrenness. Mark considers Tracy a failure, but the listener is able to engage with his character as an irrational man who makes impossible demands on Tracy. He places the burden of having children on Tracy who, four years into their

marriage has still not shown signs and possibilities of falling pregnant. Mark threatens to marry another wife to give him children. Tracy's laughter at this point, begins to calm the listener who 'understands' that Mark's words are just empty threats. Mark comes off as a ridiculously patriarchal man whose ignorance about life and marriage are made explicit through his character. His selfish demands of Tracy as well as the verbal and emotional abuse create a picture of a comic villain in the play.

One of the things the play emphasizes is the way in which infertility has often been associated with the woman in most African societies. Such believes underline the patriarchal definitions of these societies, where men are considered blameless in the issues of infertility. Another play *My Aunty Weds* explores this myth further, engaging with the ways in which the main character, a barren woman named Syokia argues that her husband died before marrying another wife to bear him children. Marrying another wife is therefore a solution normally prescribed for a man whose wife cannot give birth. Rarely is the blame ever apportioned to the man. In the play, in the last scenes, when Mark and Tracy go to the city to see a modern doctor, the doctor asks to carry out tests on both Mark and Tracy to see where the problem is. Mark is hesitant and tells the doctor: "Doctor, I ejaculate properly! I was circumcised! I cannot have a problem". As the doctor explains, the problem is not whether or not he has undergone the right cultural practices or whether he ejaculates properly. He gives Mark a medical explanation for infertility and later returns with results that show that Mark is also sterile. Finally, Tracy is given voice as she is unburdened of her blame which creates space for negotiation between the couple that did not exist before. However, the ending of the play shows that this dialogue is still

fractured, because Tracy is willing to adopt a child while Mark says with finality: "I say no! No more discussion about adoption!"

Another common misconception of infertility is that it is a curse by a jealous neighbour or relative. Although Mark appears to dismiss this claim, he later secretly goes to visit Gudo, the village witchdoctor, to see if he can rid himself and his wife of the curse of infertility. The witchdoctor is presented to the listener through an excess of sounds that capture the idea of a witchdoctor's workplace, but also the ridiculous and often pompous manner in which these witchdoctors sell themselves to their clients in order to show their ability to solve 'impossible' problems. In order to capture the idea of a witchdoctor, a collection of meaningless sounds are brought together to create a scary image. This is further qualified by the witchdoctor's energetic and often authoritative demands of the client. The man rumbles incoherent words, and sings Luhya songs[35] to create a sense of tradition in the play. The witchdoctor's voice represents an authoritarian figure in whose presence the client is supposed to remain quiet. He is presented in colourful and superfluous language that make him larger than life. He represents one of the 'false' solutions that people seek when they attempt to deal with problems they do not understand. Just like in *Bottoms Up* where Maele goes to the witchdoctor to find out if he can be cured of HIV/AIDS, Mark uses the witchdoctor as a possible solution for infertility. The witchdoctor asks for ridiculous items, such as the dirty underpants of both Mark and Tracy. One must understand that this is part of circulating discourses and beliefs about witchdoctors. For many, witchdoctors are often (both in television and

[35] The man sings Luhya circumcision songs, which is misplaced in the context of the narrative. Once again, this error is created through the fact that the scriptwriter is so keen on writing the story that he only puts in what he knows about other cultures as is presented to him through mass media.

radio) painted as these mysterious people whose territories exist in the space of the unreal and who often demand that clients bring to them ridiculous items. In *Bottoms Up*, the witchdoctor asks Maele to bring a yellow cock. In *Infertility*, the witchdoctor's offhand remark at the end of their session, "watch or you will step on the snakes in my compound mrrrr mbrrrrr brrrrr mbrrrrr" further shows the realm of the ridiculous in which he operates. This scene dramatizes the extent to which Mark is willing to go in order to find a solution to their problem. The fact that the witchdoctor is in the end unable to help him dramatizes ways in which this solution fails. The listener understands that this is not one of the ways that one should seek to solve problems of infertility.

Another way that is discouraged in the play as a solution to the problem of infertility is meaningless prayer. Specifically, the play underlines the fact that there are priests who are normally willing to take advantage of church members. In the play, Tracy goes to the local church pastor who encourages her to pray. However, this pastor also suggests to her that he will be giving her 'private lessons' three times a week. The tone of his voice changes when he mentions the private lessons, with the pace of his voice quickening and becoming evasive, creating suspicion regarding the nature of the lessons. One senses desperation in Tracy's voice as it dawns on her that one way in which she can get a child is by sleeping with another man. The scene cuts off and the listener is never told what actually takes place. This is a classic example of how gap-filling works. As already explained earlier on in the study, gap-filling is a process through which the text creates gaps that the listener is expected to fill in on their own, depending on how they make meaning of the text (Allen 1987). The unsaid in this case is what actually happens,

because later on, Tracy confesses to maintaining her appointments with this pastor, and Mark tells her, "[t]hat fool has a bad reputation with people's wives. You are so silly!"

Infertility is thus a play that seeks to dramatize the ways in which people have misinterpreted the problem of barrenness and sterility. By dramatizing these misconceptions, the play raises awareness around solutions to these kinds of problems. It opens up space for the listener to be able to work through problems on their own, and to know what kinds of solutions are available to them. The fact that the two main characters Mark and Tracy are illiterate allows them to make the necessary mistakes for the sake of the listener's own learning. Their lack of education also helps the narrative to move from spaces of ignorance to enlightenment when they visit a gynaecologist. The gynaecologist's office becomes the space of truth. It is here that Tracy reveals that she had had an abortion at the age of thirteen, which is explained as one of the possible reasons for her infertility. It is also in this space that Mark is forced to confront his own past, where he could possibly have engaged in unprotected sex which may have caused him to have an infection that could have made him sterile. Therefore while modern medicine is seen as the ultimate solution, one has to see or discover how the moral axiom is generated. The listener, besides just knowing that he/she can go to a modern doctor for solutions, is also made aware of other possible avenues which do not form part of these solutions. In this way, *Radio Theatre* becomes one of the avenues in which development is engaged with, without necessarily forcing it down the listener's ears. *Infertility*, although a play that deals with serious issues, is often wrapped in humorous language and intonations as well as ridiculous comments and suggestions all of which make it

'palatable' for the listener who comes out of the play with a sense of having been both entertained and informed.

5.4.2 *My Aunty Weds*

While *Infertility* is a dramatization of the misunderstandings that surround the problem of infertility, *My Aunty Weds* is a play about a childless woman Syokia who finds another kind of solution to her problem. Syokia, an older woman of fifty as revealed in her dialogue with other characters, but also captured in her voice which is slow and 'mature', marries another woman, Katoko. Katoko is a young woman of twenty five who however, is poor and has just recently been thrown out of her home by her step-brothers who are tired of feeding her and her four fatherless children. Syokia is herself a rich widow whose husband died leaving her a lot of property. According to her culture, one way in which she can see to the continuity of her late husband's lineage and family name is if she gets married. However, she does not want to marry another man, because if she does, she will cease to belong to her current family. In order to avoid this, she decides to marry another woman. The play is largely a demonstration of the Akamba culture of same–sex marriage, which is explained in the context of childlessness as one of the reasons for the practice.

In an interesting study about same-sex marriages, Ruth Morgan and Saskia Weiringa (2005) reveal the kinds of discourses that have surrounded same-sex practices in Africa, from being considered taboo and therefore un-African to the kind of secrecy that has defined such practices. However, their study shows that there are traditional female

marriages that are widely accepted. In Kenya, this practice is prevalent among the Akambas and the Kuiras, and in some cases, the Kikuyus. In one of their chapters, Nancy Baraka and Ruth Morgan (2005) interview an elderly Kamba woman who takes a wife after the death of her husband. The woman, Kavisu explains that she took a wife, Mwikali because she was unable to have children of her own, and her husband passed on and left her a lot of property. According to Baraka and Morgan, traditional female marriages are accepted as a solution to problems of barrenness. Baraka compares this practice with other same-sex practices arguing that the traditional practices are more accepted and open as they are carried out for the sake of continuity of the husband's family line. In another article, John Oywa (2006) interviews 85 year old Catherine Morabo, a Kuria woman who has four wives who help with chores around her home, and whose duty is also to bear children for the sake of keeping her late husband's lineage alive. Like Baraka and Morgan's, Oywa's research shows that elderly women who are unable to have children of their own marry other women to ensure their dead husband's names do not disappear. Wairimu Njambi and William O'Brien (2007) also provide an interesting account of women to women marriages among the Kikuyu in Kenya, and how it has often been seen as an alternative space for giving women agency in a patriarchal society.

With this background in mind, one begins to understand the purpose for presenting the idea of same-sex marriages in *My Aunty Weds*. As an older childless woman, Syokia finds a wife Katoko in a relationship where both parties stand to gain. *My Aunty Weds* may have been written for purposes of creating awareness among Kenyans about the

existence of same-sex marriage, specifically practiced by a section of the Akamba. According to Nzau Kalulu (2004), there are a lot of misconceptions surrounding this practice, where in his words, 'people mistake these relationships to be sexual in nature, like lesbianism'. However, in a sentiment shared by both Baraza and Morgan (2005) and Oywa (2006) these relationships are not sexual in nature. Often, according to Baraza and Morgan's interview, the older woman regards the younger woman as a daughter-in-law, in which culturally, it is assumed that she is married to the older woman's 'son'. These insertions of male figures into these relationships have served to normalize these relationships and separate them from other same-sex relationships such as lesbianism and bisexual relationships. Traditional same-sex marriages are practiced by some ethnic groups including the Kurias, Kikuyus, Kambas and Tesos. In this play, the ethnic tribe of the Akamba, with whom this practice is most identified, is chosen as a sample for analysing and dramatizing this marriage. The narrator opens with an explanatory note:

> Narrator: The Akamba the fourth largest tribe in Kenya, amongst their beliefs, as much as marriage is a rite of passage, it is also placed in between two other important phases of life, the other two being birth and death. Marriage to them brings together families, it unites clans, marriage keeps alive identity, it withholds [sic] family lineage, it maintains continuity in society and it is from the above premise that we adopted the following play called *My Aunty Weds*.

Although same-sex marriages are only practiced among a small number of ethnic groups, it becomes important to dramatize it, because it opens up avenues for people to understand the manner in which some communities live and how they deal with problems

such as childlessness. In its presentation, *My Aunty Weds* dramatizes specific sections of the same-sex marriage that capture its normalcy within this community. For instance, Syokia intercepts Katoko as the latter is walking to the river to fetch some water. She casually asks after Katoko's family, which makes Katoko open up about the hardships she is facing with four fatherless children against her brothers that want her out of their home. She speaks sadly about how she sometimes lacks money for her children, and how she sometimes contemplates suicide. Syokia sympathizes with her and narrates her own frustrations of childlessness. When Syokia proposes, the listener realizes that the conversation had already laid the ground for the relationship to take off. Katoko's shock is that she will have someone to provide for her children, rather than that a woman is asking to marry her. Later in the play, Syokia goes to report the news to her father-in-law. In their dialogue the level of respect that Syokia has for her late husband's father shows the continued connection that she has maintained with her family. When she announces that she is going to get married, the father-in-law is a bit hesitant thinking that it means that Syokia is marrying another man. She gently corrects him and tells him that she is getting a wife, at which point the father-in-law shows clear delight.

This level of acceptability is also dramatized by Mutua, Syokia's nephew, who is studying in Britain. He laughs mysteriously when he receives a letter from home demanding his presence at the wedding. Mutua has a white girlfriend Camilla, who accompanies Mutua to the wedding ceremony. Camilla, the outsider, becomes the strategy through which the listeners (in whose communities this practice does not exist) can learn about this practice. Camilla is as a rich liberal white girl who 'chooses' to give

up a chance to travel with her parents to Mauritius for holiday so that she can go on holiday with her Kenyan boyfriend. She is the one who pays both their airfares, and on arrival in Kenya buys a four-wheel drive car which she later generously gives to Mutua. During the wedding ceremony, she is filled with awe and wonder as she observes the different kinds of traditional dances taking place, and marvels at the taste of local liquor of which she takes a few sips. She brings along her video camera and films the dances and other activities that define the ceremony. Throughout, Camilla is presented as an outsider. This particular characterization technique is necessary in order to highlight notions of same-sex practices between two vastly different communities. For instance, she is stunned when she realizes towards the end of the play, that this is a female-female wedding. In response, Mutua answers her calmly, "[t]his is adoption the African way". The introduction of a 'white' character in the play is meant to position the issue of same-sex marriages within two extremes. On the one hand, the play celebrates an age-old custom, while on the other it separates itself from sexual associations with lesbianism within which it is sometimes defined. Morgan and Weiringa (2005) have argued that several African same-sex practices attempt to detach themselves from suggestions of sexual encounters, which have been seen as a white man's construct. These practices attempt a separate definition in which they are seen in purely traditional terms in the way in which they fit into existing patriarchal orders in Africa. They argue that however, there are sexual practices that take place which most people often want to keep under wraps. The study by Njambi and O'Brien (2007) also seems to suggest the same. However, Nzau Kalulu (2004) is adamant that this is not the case with *My Aunty Weds*. Instead, he argues

that it is a traditional practice that needs to be clarified in the eyes of the Kenyans who seem confused by it.

In the discussion of infertility, both *My Aunty Weds* and *Infertility* can be seen as plays that seek to offer solutions to the problem. While the former takes a cultural approach, in which traditional practices such as same-sex marriages are encouraged as alternative ways of obtaining children, in the latter case, medical and social solutions of adoption are suggested as ways in which listeners can learn about sterility. As developmental narratives, these plays provide solutions and lessons for listeners.

5.5 The practice of forced marriage in *Not Now*.

While the analyses above demonstrate how development narratives in *Radio Theatre* present themselves through misrepresentation, one of the biggest problems in Kenya is that of forced/early marriages, in which young people are forced into adult responsibilities long before reaching the right age. Often, especially in the case of girls, this means a disregard for their education as parents are often more interested in the economic gains that such marriage transactions can bring. *Not Now* is a melodramatic play that highlights the plight of the girl child who often is easily traded for dowry at the expense of her education and future.

Contextually, this play was first aired in 1995, although the version that is analyzed in this chapter was re-aired in 2003. As such, the presentation of forced marriage must be read within the context of the mid-90s, when rising concerns about the girl child began to

emerge. In Kenya, the girl child is faced with several problems, including early pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and the possibility of being forced out of school. Kimani Njogu, in his discussion of problems faced by young people in Kenya, argues that adolescent pregnancies have adverse effects on the girl child. According to his statistics, over 40% of women in sub-Saharan countries have their first child before the age of eighteen. This of course has led to fewer women getting access to education and good job opportunities. He also sights female circumcision as another determent to the growth of the girl child Njogu 2005). For him, such societal problems can be dealt with effectively through the media. He therefore advocates for Entertainment-Education drama dramas which, through identification, can change perceptions and attitudes, both of the girl child as well as the societies that still practice backward traditions. Issues such as those picked up in this section therefore have to be read in this context.

Not Now is a radio play about a young girl, Sophia, who narrowly escapes a forced marriage to an old man, Mzee Makosa, as his fourth wife. It is told as a dramatic monologue by Sophia, many years after the events of her youth. At the time of the narration, Sophia is a successful manager in a prestigious firm. What triggers the monologue is a telegram she receives in her office telling her that Chief Muita, the local administrative officer who saved her from that marriage, is dead. She begins her narration to her secretary Pam, by detailing how her parents had attempted to 'sell' her to the old man Mzee Makosa in exchange for cows, goats and money, which they saw as a way out of their abject poverty. Worse still, the whole community had supported the marriage and had even been present to celebrate this union. Luckily Sophia was able to escape to Chief

Muita's home where she narrated her ordeal. The chief had arrested both her father and Mzee Makosa and had helped to make sure that she continued with her education. Through flashback, Sophia's life as a young girl is re-enacted to expose her torturous relationship with her father, as well as with the old man who wanted to be her husband. Through dialogue, characterization and setting, it becomes possible to analyse this play as a dramatization of an evil practice which continues to invade the lives of young girls in communities that still believe in marrying them off.

Within a larger context of progress and development in Kenya, and within the doctrines of KBC, a play like *Not Now* brings to the fore the negative aspects of traditional practices, where it is looked at as an 'enemy' of development. The practice of an early/forced marriage denies a child an equal right with her peers to attend school and build a future of her choice. Narratives of girls forced out of school appear constantly in the media. In order to highlight the negative aspects of this practice, the play melodramatically presents Sophia's plight with the intention of appealing to the emotions of the listener. It begins by dramatizing her plight against the evil hands of her father. The listener is transported to the past where Sophia who is 13 years of age has just sat for her final primary education examination. She learns that she is the top student among thousands of pupils and is ecstatic knowing that she has a bright future ahead of her. However, her parents are illiterate and as such, can only see Sophia's value in marrying her off to a rich man. This fact is demonstrated both through her mother's reception of the news and through her father's reception later that night. Sophia's mother is unable to read the letter for herself because when Sophia asks her to look at the letter, instead of

immediately reading it, she asks, "what is that my daughter?" Sophia's repetition of "[i]t is a letter. It is a letter" proves that she had not actually expected her mother to read it. Her mother also obviously relies on market gossip and radio news to follow the events happening in her own home. Further on in the conversation, her illiteracy becomes even more dramatized:

> Mother: You know, when we had our parents-teachers meeting, I heard your headmaster mention that school. Together with another one called Isalea …,Isaaa …
>
> Sophia: Mum! It's called Starehe.
>
> Mother: Yes, that one, it is that one. Yes. Yes. Together with another one called Lana … something, I don't know …
>
> Sophia: That must be Lenana, mother.

The dialogue above plays two roles. It acts as a comic relief as well as helps advance the character of Sophia's mother. It is comic in the way that she is unable to pronounce the names of some of the most well known schools in Kenya.[36] Her excitement upon hearing her daughter's news is based on the fact that her daughter would become an educated woman and not that she is one of the top students countrywide or even going to a good school. This conversation helps the audience to understand Sophia's mother's character.

[36] Starehe and Lenana Boys High Schools are both well known because of the kind of media attention they draw every year after secondary school results are announced. Their performance levels countrywide are often good securing them a prestige that dates back to the colonial era. These announcements are not only made over the radio but in the newspapers and television. By not being able to pronounce them, Sophia's mother becomes an example of illiterate Kenyan women who might have missed out of school because of traditional practices such as forced marriages.

It deliberately enables the audience to understand Sophia's mother disregard for education and why she later changes her mind and takes sides with her father in the decision to marry her off. That whereas Sophia's education excites her, "oh my daughter, you will be an educated girl", the thought of the number of cows and goats that she might have to forego just because her daughter is going to school is impossible to even think of.

Sophia's father is introduced as a tyrant. He arrives home very late at night, quite drunk and proclaims: "Everything here is my property. Even the dog that is barking is my property. My wife, my daughter, –[*slurring*] my property." He is portrayed as illiterate and dictatorial. Where Sophia's mother had shown a slight interest in Sophia's education, her father does not care. Just after his arrival home on the day that Sophia receives her letter, she gives it to him, expecting him to be happy for her excellent performance, perhaps congratulate her for being selected to attend one of the best schools in Kenya, and perhaps be willing to discuss how the school fees could be paid. However, Sophia receives a rude shock:

> Father: Oh I see. I see. Very Bright. But you see, even the fire can also take care of this [sounds of paper rustling, mingled with shouts of shock and alarm from both mother and daughter]
>
> Sophia: No! No! Dad no!
>
> Mother: What are you doing?
>
> Sophia: He has just burnt my letter!
>
> Mother: What have you done?

[Both women are by now crying helplessly]

Father: Forget about the letter. Hey hey, I said, forget about the letter. Now, as the letter burns, I am now going to call a family meeting.

Sophie's father feels he is right in disposing of Sophia in the manner that he does without answering to anyone. When he says, "I am the head … when I say black, it is black and when I say red, it must be red!" he reveals himself as authoritarian, expecting no opposition from either his wife or daughter. The two females can only cry helplessly as they observe his cruelty. Later, Sophia actually describes both her parents and Mzee Makosa as inhuman. The setting of the play in the rural area is meant to emphasize the poverty in which Sophia's parents are living, which becomes one way of explaining why they 'sell' her off to a rich man.

The play introduces the character of Mzee Makosa, the old man who pays Sophia's father money, as well as cows and sheep, as her dowry. Whereas Sophia is the sacrificial lamb, Mzee Makosa becomes a villain who wants to destroy her innocence. In a scene after Sophia has been transferred to Mzee Makosa's home after hours of being locked up, Mzee Makosa reveals his crudeness in the way he handles Sophia:

Sophia: I want to go to school. Please leave me alone. I want to go to school

Mzee Makosa: [Laughing] You are in school, you are in school now. This is the school of girls getting married. Are you getting what I am saying? The first certificate in this school of …of … of women is the first child. That is your first certificate and when a woman has five children, that is equivalent to a university

degree, so can you stop being the kid you are and become a woman for once please!

Mzee Makosa reveals the cruelty towards young girl children in this society. Their functions once married off, are to satisfy the man sexually and to bear children. This limited way of thinking is in fact a reality in most patriarchal African societies. Women are subjugated in many ways to satisfy their men folk. Sophia's helplessness is a dramatization of this fact. She is subjected to brutalities of both her father and Mzee Makosa. Later, she escapes into the forest and goes straight to the Chief's home, for as she explains, "I could never go back home". Chief Muita saves her from her forced marriage by going over to her home the following morning and arresting both Mzee Makosa and Sophia's father. This encounter also shows how language has been used to place this play, as well as define the chief's position of authority:

Mzee Makosa: There is somebody knocking.

Mzee Mulendu: [stammering] Cccccome iiin.

Mzee Makosa: Ah! Good the chief is here. He is my witness; *sindio Bwana* chief (is that not so Mr. Chief?)

Chief: Witness, what about?

Mzee Makosa: Look here chief. I paid Mr. Mulendu here bride price for his daughter and the girl ran away.

Chief: Mmm?

Mzee Makosa: So what I am telling him is if he doesn't bring the girl back by the end of the day, I will take my property back, sindio? You are my witness.

Chief: *Ngoja, ngoja* (wait, wait).

From the dialogue above, it is clear that Mzee Makosa sees the Chief as a potential witness to the agreement he is making with Sophia's father. But because Mzee Makosa is saying this to a chief, the government local representative, without shame or fear could mean that either Mzee Makosa is so ignorant he does not know what the law says about marrying off young girls. However, the Chief has come to make arrests:

> Mzee Mulendu: [Clicking his tongue] This useless girl will have to learn some manners.
>
> Mzee Makosa: No, there's no time to whip her. I am going with her. She is my wife.
>
> Sophia: No [crying] leave me alone.
>
> Chief: *weeeeeeh!* Eh eh! Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Not so fast. Mzee Mulendu. Mzee Makosa, you are both under arrest for the abduction of Sophia!
>
> Mzee Makosa and Mzee Mulendu: What?
>
> Chief: Yes.
>
> Mzee Mulendu: Abduction of what?
>
> Mzee Makosa: She's my wife.
>
> Chief: Sophia is only thirteen years old and you two can guess how serious your case will be.
>
> Mzee Makosa: But she is my wife.
>
> Chief: Mr. Makosa, you will be further charged with attempted defilement.

Mzee Mulendu: defile-what? But ... but she is my daughter.

Chief: Askari! Askari, get these people out of here.

Through the arrest, the chief's message extends to the listeners who are made aware that the act of forcing a child into marriage is wrong and punishable by incarceration. Sophia's success later in life is a testimony to the kind of life that young girls are denied when they are forced to marry. *Not Now* is therefore not just a narrative that dramatizes Sophia's life, but is a response to the rising concern in Kenya about the persistent practice of forced marriage. The close analysis of the play exposes the pain experienced by Sophia, and by extension other helpless young girls like her. *Not Now* can be read as a melodramatic presentation of the narrative of forced marriage that requires listeners to engage with this issue from a sensitive point of view. The use of a dramatic monologue appeals to the listener who is able to relate to the speaker at an emotional level. The play punishes evil while rewarding good, as a way of emphasizing the fact that it is more than just illegal to force a child to drop out of school. Looking at Sophia's success, one is forced to reconsider the long-term effects of school and look at new ways of dealing with the problem.

5.6 Conclusion

In the analyses above, we have focused on narratives that stress the developmental themes of HIV/AIDS, infertility and forced marriage. We have looked at five plays and analysed the manner in which each play has presented the various themes. Underlying the analysis was the idea that these developmental plays can be consumed as useful, in the

way that they speak of realities that affect people in their lived experiences. HIV/AIDS, infertility and forced marriage are among some of the problems that face the Kenyan society, and the fact that the plays deal with them from different angles shows the way in which radio drama can be considered a useful site through which development communication can take place.

The chapter identifies the need for re-analysing developmental narratives of radio drama. Gaining an entry point through theories that have identified soap operas and melodramas as useful ways in which people can learn about important issues in society, the chapter looks at the way in which *Radio Theatre* has presented itself to be read as a useful developmental programme. Specifically, the chapter focuses on the idea of character development, in which positive and negative role models are used, to whom listeners can relate. Using theories of identification by Albert Bandura and others, it is argued in the chapter that people learn lessons by either embracing or rejecting character types based on how they are presented. The presentation of development plays must thus be read as the focus on good/evil dichotomies that are characteristic of moral plays in *Radio Theatre*. These plays also encourage listeners to question assumptions made by the plays, which often make general sweeps of cultural and social practices in order to emphasize specific moral lessons.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

In this study, we set out to investigate the social relevance of *Radio Theatre*, a programme that has been produced for KBC since 1982. While the study acknowledged the existence of other radio drama programmes, it focused on *Radio Theatre* which remains the longest running radio drama programme in the English language in Kenya. As such, an analysis of the historical and cultural importance of the programme enabled us to explore the growth of the radio drama genre in the country. As a genre that has been produced for state institutions since the inception of the radio medium in 1928, the study has shown how radio drama becomes a useful site for engaging with government policy on both broadcasting and theatre. We explored *Radio Theatre*'s production in state-owned VOK and KBC, and concluded that the programme's preoccupation with moral narratives was influenced by restrictions and censorships that limited its exploration of political themes that reflected negatively on the government. However, we argued that *Radio Theatre*'s thematic focus worked to the advantage of the producers and scriptwriters who were able to engage with many moral issues affecting the Kenyan society, without the interference of the government. As has been shown, the moral narrative is a powerful site where undesirable behaviour in society is scrutinized, judged and corrected based on that society's moral values. As such, lessons learnt from such narratives can be applied to wider social, political and cultural aspects of society.

In order to understand how the genre functions, we began by looking at existing radio drama studies and identified a lack of sufficient literature in the field. We were however, able to locate important work that has been done by scholars of radio drama programmes produced for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). A reading of these texts confirmed a preoccupation with the aesthetic aspects of radio drama (see for instance, Lewis 1981; Crook 1999; Rodger 1981; Beck 1997; Crisell 1994). Most of these studies attempt to understand how the genre works as sound, and focus mainly on how different sound codes operate. This body of work provided us with a useful vocabulary for analysing radio drama as a genre of sound, enabling us to create a distinction between audio texts and other forms of literary texts. They also provided tools for analysing dramatic performances within the sound medium.

However, it became clear that a focus on the aesthetic aspect of radio drama alone would not be sufficient in analysing *Radio Theatre* plays. This is because the plays selected for analysis exhibited didactic themes. We therefore narrowed our focus to Africa and identified literature that related radio drama studies to society. Important work including that by Fardon and Furniss (2000) enabled us to look at how the medium of radio was generally received and understood in Africa. This led to a specific exploration of how radio drama has been studied on the continent. We were able to locate important works such as those of Liz Gunner (2000), Walter Tshamano (1993), Khaya Gqibitole (2002), Dumisani Sibiya (2001) among others who have attempted to identify and explore the meaning of the genre to its publics in Africa. Different analyses focused on the

production, reception and textual content of different plays, always locating them in their relevant cultural spaces.

The various readings enabled us to come up with a useful theoretical tool for reading *Radio Theatre* plays. Having identified the programme's preoccupation with moral plays, we looked at three main issues, the moral play, audiences and the sound medium. The moral play was defined using existing popular cultural studies which have stressed the usefulness of these forms as sites of socio-cultural engagement. The thesis specifically explored the role of the moral play in defining moral behaviour through its various representations. It emerged that the moral play operates within the domestic space. Lessons derived from these plays are often drawn from local settings, familiar characterizations and plots. This element enabled us to engage with how the moral play could be read as a useful site for generating lessons which listeners were encouraged to apply to contexts beyond the domestic space. In chapter three, for instance, we looked at how it could be used as an educational genre. The chapter explored a play that advanced ideas of progress and nationalism, using a narrative of marriage, which we argued is a familiar and accessible theme that audiences can relate to. Lessons that were learnt from the first narrative (of marriage) were applied to a more complex reading of national discourse in Kenya. The play encouraged listeners to consume it as an educational programme that engaged with ideas that were beneficial to them. One of the forms that the play used was melodrama, which emphasized two character types, good and evil. Having established that melodrama often sought to emphasize the plight of virtue against the evil schemes of the villain, we analysed how the play used the good character to gain

the sympathy of the listener, and eventually to suggest a particular reading of the national history which was considered 'acceptable'. The chapter showed how the listeners were discouraged from taking the villain's point of view on nationalism seriously, because of the negative feelings that he evoked.

However, in the course of the study, it became evident that the moral play cannot be read as a simple rendition of good and bad, which audiences are meant to consume unproblematically. While the plays emphasized a consumption of lessons based on polarized structures, sometimes the moral play complicated such boundaries. These plays encouraged listeners to consume them as real, and the presentation of characters was done in a complex manner. In chapter four, for instance, plays were presented as models of sexual moral order using a reward-punishment structure that established acceptable sexual behaviour in society. The various plays demonstrated how reward and punishment worked, emphasizing the development of characters who embraced acceptable sexual behaviour, while destroying characters who attempted to transgress such boundaries. However, in the same analysis, we established that moral characters were not always presented in rigid frameworks. Because the moral play is supposed to be consumed as realistic, they often attempted to create round rather than flat characters who were influenced by the societies in which they lived. This aspect supported the argument that the moral play is only useful if its reflection of reality is as closely related to reality as possible. The use of melodrama enabled the play to be both entertaining and educational, because it emphasized the necessary lessons for listeners.

The study also looked at the idea of development and how this has been represented in radio drama. Being a mass-media product, the relevance of radio drama in development has always been downplayed. In the study, we established that in fact, it is a relevant form in such discourses, especially because it focuses on self-development. Chapter five explored existing discourses of development communication in Africa that have attempted to devise ways of engaging with the problems facing the continent using communication methods. We looked at work that has been done in the fields of community radio and TfD and concluded that although this work was important, it was focused mainly on generating ideas about community development. This created a gap in terms of studies on self-development. However, using the Entertainment-Education model that has been generated by scholars of soap opera in Third World countries, the study was able to devise a methodology for analysing how self-development takes place. The study explored the ideas of identification and observation, which formed a basis for understanding how developmental plays functioned. Using elements such as positive and negative role models, multiple storylines, exaggeration and 'misrepresentation' of information to highlight various 'preferred' readings, the study has shown how moral plays can be used for purposes of development.

While the study was able to establish the usefulness of reading *Radio Theatre* plays as moral, one of the challenges faced was the fact that the plays often sounded too simplistic in their approach to complex social issues. Thematically, the plays focused on common domestic issues, but even then, these were presented using very simplistic styles. For instance, the plays focused more on working out the moral solutions than on tightening

storylines and creating more complex characters and settings. However, we argue that popular cultural forms seek to relate to their audiences who are not always the elite. Using a lowest common denominator approach has enabled *Radio Theatre* to reach as many people as possible, in spite of the fact that it is produced in the English language. According to Kalulu (2005), 'many people listen to *Radio Theatre* because it speaks in a language that they understand.' The reference to language is not necessarily restricted to English, but to the fact that people can relate to the accents of the speakers, their intonations and the various references used in the play. The elements of setting, characterization and plotlines are combined to create a world that is closely related to the world that the listeners inhabit.

Throughout the study, we used a multiple approach to understanding *Radio Theatre*'s audiences. All the plays that were analysed provided spaces for more than one interpretation as has been explored. As such, we showed that these different interpretations pointed towards the multifaceted nature of the texts that encouraged different points of view. At the beginning of the study we hinted at the use of theories advanced by Michael Warner (2000) and others which embraced the idea of how texts create their audiences. Throughout the study, this fact became evident, as we showed different ways in which listeners could consume meanings from the plays. Within radio drama, understanding how this audience is created is important in showing how the plays remain attractive to actual audiences who are presented with so many other choices from other media. One way that *Radio Theatre* has managed to maintain its audience is through its consistency of thematic focus, and we argue that those who listen to it, come

to it with a knowledge that the plays are mainly moral plays. As such, they have become learning spaces and different people have been able to engage with aspects that are dealt with and those that touch on experiences that are familiar to them.

This work signals to the kind of research that can be carried out on *Radio Theatre* audiences in Kenya. Part of the difficulty faced in this research was locating the actual audiences and defining the kinds of people who listened to the plays. As was explored in chapter two of the study, KBC, unlike commercial radio stations, has not established an archive of audience records, making it difficult to know how many people actually listen to its programmes. A more important question is, 'why do people listen?' It would have been particularly useful to locate emails and letters that the listeners had written to the producers over the years. As has been explained briefly in the opening chapter, this was an impossible task. Beyond the disorganized way in which archival material is stored in KBC, security issues made it difficult to access any useful material. We were however able to access audience response to a different radio drama programme, *Ushikwapo Shikamana*. This is a programme that deals with issues of HIV/AIDS, domestic violence, forced marriage, female circumcision and other issues facing the Kenyan society today. I received a sample of letters sent to the producer, one of which is included below:

> My husband used to beat me … one day he listened to the programme with me and he saw how, what he was doing, was wrong. Now we are living in peace (Njogu 2005:98).

Such kinds of responses from listeners encourage a reading of the positive effects of didactic radio plays, and the complex ways in which people selectively apply such plays to their lives.

The study has therefore highlighted the usefulness of radio drama in existing popular cultural studies in which moral narratives arguably deal with crucial issues related to the domestic spaces of everyday life. It encourages studies around didactic literature which are not always designed to present dominant ideas at the expense of audiences who receive them. The study has shown the different uses and relevance of such narratives, and demonstrates a need for more studies on radio drama in Africa. An engagement with the textual content of the genre becomes a useful entry point into other related studies of publics, broadcasting policies and production.

The study has also opened up debate around radio drama and its relationship to society. As has been mentioned, focus on the aesthetic aspects of radio drama is important, but to look at the function it plays in society allows one to investigate a wider range of radio drama programmes. Important projects are being generated around the genre. In Rwanda, for instance, radio drama programmes that address the Truth and Reconciliation efforts in the country have been identified. In other sections of the developing world, radio drama is being used to target specific problems. So far, the Entertainment-Education programme has been useful in addressing HIV/AIDS and other health/behaviour related issues. Radio drama must therefore be continuously interrogated for its relevance in society.

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