

**SOME ASPECTS OF SYMBOLISM IN D.B.Z. NTULI'S**

**ONE-ACT RADIO PLAYS**

**BY**

**NAKANJANI GOODENOUGH SIBIYA**

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**NAKANJANI GOODENOUGH SIBIYA**

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**SUPERVISOR: PROF. L.F. MATHENJWA**

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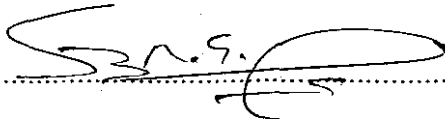
## DECLARATION

I declare that this research project entitled:

**Some Aspects Of Symbolism In D.B.Z. Ntuli's One-Act Radio Plays**

is my own work, that all the sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

SIGNATURE: .....



DATE: .....

14.11.2001

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## SUMMARY

CHAPTER 1 introduces the study and also gives the biographical details of D.B.Z. Ntuli.

CHAPTER 2 deals with the nature, history and characteristics of radio drama. In this Chapter, our focus will be on how Ntuli uses the nature and technical requirements of this medium to portray symbolic attributes of the play.

CHAPTER 3 examines the themes and subject matter that Ntuli conveys in his one-act radio plays. In this chapter we will discuss the recurring comments that Ntuli makes through different types of themes and how he depicts symbolism to enhance meaning and message in his plays.

CHAPTER 4 will concentrate on setting so as to determine the extent to which Ntuli uses symbolism to portray the significance and relevance of setting in a one-act radio play.

CHAPTER 5 shows the various literary techniques through which Ntuli depicts characterization in his one-act radio plays. This chapter will deal with the symbolic features that characters adopt and how this impacts on the plot in Ntuli's plays.

CHAPTER 6 provides a concluding statements and suggests recommendations for future research.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

An outstanding feature of D.B.Z. Ntuli's one-act radio plays is the use of symbolism as an artistic device to convey a meaningful message in a thought-provoking manner. The use of symbolism in Ntuli's radio plays is remarkable because this literary technique is predominantly used in poetry and visual drama.

In this chapter, an introductory exposition of our study will be provided. Firstly, the aim of the study will be pointed out as well as the methods we propose to adopt in conducting this research. An attempt will be made to illustrate the various approaches that have been adopted by literary scholars to analyse drama. Our main focus will be on the approaches that will be relevant for this study and how we propose to apply them in our discussion of the symbolic aspects of Ntuli's one-act radio plays. The definitions of the key concepts in this study will also be provided as well as some examples to substantiate and illustrate some vital points of our discussion. Lastly, this chapter will also give a biographical sketch of D.B.Z. Ntuli. With regard to this, an attempt will be made to ascertain the influences that have shaped Ntuli's writings and how some aspects of his biography are reflected on his one-act radio plays.

#### **1.1. AIM OF STUDY**

The primary purpose of this study is to give a critical evaluation of certain aspects of symbolism that seem to feature prominently in Ntuli's one-act radio plays. Our focus will be on how Ntuli uses symbolism with regard to setting, theme and characterisation in a play. An attempt will be made to determine the effectiveness of symbolism in conveying meaning and message in the play.

This study has also been prompted by a realisation of a need for research on radio dramas that have been broadcast by Ukhozi FM over the years. We whole-heartedly agree with Lewis (1981: 142) who complains:

The critical and scholarly neglect that radio drama has suffered is regrettable, especially considering the range and quality of the best creative work written for this medium.

As far as we have been able to ascertain, very few studies have been carried out on radio plays written in African Languages. In 1968, H.J. Lubbe did an MA research on the response of Sotho listeners to radio plays. In 1971, T. van Heerden finished an MA dissertation on the nature of selected radio serials broadcast by Radio Lebowa during the sixties. In 1988 R.H. Moeketsi did an Honours article that focuses on the nature of Radio Sotho drama broadcasts. In 1991 N.E. Makosana completed an MA study which is a comparative study of six Xhosa radio plays broadcast in 1987 and 1988. A study for MA by C. Diamond in 1993 looks at the themes in one-act plays in isiZulu and also touches on radio plays. In 1994 N.W. Tshamano did an MA study on the critical exposition of selected Venda radio plays. Z.W. Gule's 1996 doctoral thesis on isiZulu one-act plays comments on one-act radio drama as well. The most recent study is A.M. Maphumulo's 2001 doctoral thesis that focuses on D.B.Z. Ntuli's radio drama trilogy, Isivumelwano, Isivumelwano Esisha and Ngenxa Yesivumelwano.

The above examples show that, with the exception of Maphumulo's research, no other elaborate research has been conducted on isiZulu radio drama except for cursory comments that have only featured sporadically in critical writings on African literature.

We also feel that critics have shamefully neglected the enormous contribution of D.B.Z. Ntuli as a playwright. Most of the studies have concentrated on his poetry and short stories. This study therefore aims to highlight some of the features of Ntuli's plays that have resulted in extreme popularity amongst isiZulu listeners.

In conducting this study, we will take into consideration the nature of plays in general and playwriting in particular and how this genre seems to pose some problems to many writers. We also firmly concur with Gassner (1963:489) who argues that:

It is flagrant understatement to say that playwriting is one of the most difficult form of writing. It is the most difficult.

## 1.2 **SCOPE OF STUDY**

The scope of this study will cover twenty one-act radio plays that Ntuli has written from 1965 to 2000. Most of these plays have been broadcast by Ukhozi FM over the years and are available on tapes at the S.A.B.C. archives in Durban. Fortunately, most of Ntuli's plays that were broadcast on the radio were later adapted, with very slight changes, and published in various books, thus making them easily accessible. There are, however, some plays that have never been broadcast before and only appear in book form.

In analysing all these one-act radio plays, emphasis will fall on how Ntuli gives symbolic qualities to theme, setting and characterisation in a radio play. We propose to approach this study in this manner:

**Chapter 1** will provide an introduction to this study. An outline of the aim and scope of study will be covered as well as the research methodology and the approaches that will be used in this study. The biographical sketch of D.B.Z. Ntuli will also be provided so as to acquaint us with the man who has created the one-act plays that are the focus of our discussion.

**Chapter 2** deals with the nature, history and characteristics of radio drama. In this chapter, our focus will be on how Ntuli uses the nature and technical requirements of this medium to portray symbolic attributes of the play.

**Chapter 3** examines themes and subject matter that Ntuli conveys in his one-act radio plays. In this chapter we will discuss the recurring comments that Ntuli makes

through different types of themes and how he depicts symbolism to enhance meaning and message of these themes.

**Chapter 4** will concentrate on setting as we generally know it. The aim of this chapter is to determine the extent to which Ntuli uses symbols to enhance the significant role of setting in his plays.

**Chapter 5** shows the literary techniques through which Ntuli depicts characterisation in his plays. This chapter will deal with the symbolic features that characters adopt and how this impacts on the plot of the play.

**Chapter 6** provides a concluding statement. In this chapter we look back at discussions in preceding chapters, comment on our findings and give recommendations and suggestions for future research endeavours.

### 1.3 **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

For the purpose of this study, we are going to use literary criticism on drama as our primary source of information. We are also going to use tape recordings of the one-act radio plays that were broadcast by Ukhozi FM over the past years. There will be no page numbers indicated against excerpts taken from tape recordings of the plays.

In the case of the plays that have already been published, we are going to use books in which these plays appear, i.e. Amavenge (1985), Woza Nendlebe (1988), Amaseko (1990), Lalela-ke (1991) and Indoni Yamanzi (1992).

### 1.4 **APPROACHES TO BE USED IN THIS STUDY**

There are many theories and approaches that have been formulated by critics and scholars to be applied in the analysis and evaluation of drama. We are only going to mention a few of the approaches that we feel are relevant for this research.

#### 1.4.1 THE TRADITIONAL APPROACH

As the name suggests, this approach is regarded as traditional because it has always been in use and has served as a basis for our appreciation of drama for both entertainment and study purposes.

The traditional approach is based on Aristotle's views and ideas about what he regarded as a well-written play. This great Greek scholar was convinced and strongly believed that a well-constructed play should have characteristics to which playwrights had to adhere. Aristotle's view was that a play must have the beginning, the middle and the end. In other words, events, which were to be covered in a play, had to be within the scope of this plot structure as stipulated by Aristotle.

Janko (1980: 13) states that in Poetics, Aristotle discusses various possible types of a plot and comes to a conclusion that:

The well-constructed plot must, therefore, have a single issue and not a double. The change of fortune must not be from bad to good but the other way round, from good to bad.

There are various interesting arguments that have resulted from Aristotle's idea of a well-constructed play. There have also been attempts to reconstruct his plot structure because of its rigidity and the restrictions that it imposes on the playwright's creativity.

Many scholars, for instance, offer a reconstruction of Aristotle's plot and give an analysis of phases through which a play goes. They cite exposition, inciting moment, rising action, climax and falling action (which includes a reversal of events) and denouement.

According to Aristotle, a good play consists of basic elements, which are the plot, character, intellect, diction, song and spectacle. The traditional approach to the study of drama therefore considers these factors as of primary importance. If a critic uses this approach, no attention is necessarily given to other aspects of the play such as theme, setting and so forth.

#### **1.4.1.1 TYPES OF TRADITIONAL APPROACHES**

Guerin et al. (1979) give two types of traditional approaches that can be adopted in the study of drama. The first type is historical-biographical. With regard to this type, Guerin et al. (1979:25) say:

Put simply, this approach sees a literary work, chiefly, if not exclusively, as a reflection of its author's life and times or the life and times of the characters in the work.

In other words, this type of traditional approach suggests that a literary work will be more meaningful if the biographical background of the author and the setting of the play are known and understood. In using this approach, the critic will focus mainly on the biographical details of the author and how this impacts on the play as a whole.

The moral-philosophical approach is another type that critics and supporters of the traditional approach believe can be used effectively in literary criticism. This type is, for instance, favoured by Guerin et al. (1979:29) who say:

The larger function of literature is to teach morality and to probe philosophical issues.

According to this approach, the merit of a literary work is judged by the extent to which it teaches the reader or how it inspires philosophical thought. In other words, if the critic uses this approach, emphasis is on the didactic elements of the play and how the play makes philosophical comments on the day-to-day issues of life.

As we pointed out earlier in this discussion, the traditional approach has fallen out of favour with many critics. The weakness of this approach, for instance, is that it tends to be very rigid and leaves very little room for adjustments and improvements. Aristotle's views on a well-written play do not allow the playwright to use his creative powers to full potential. This approach also narrows the critic's scope of comments because he or she is only confined to few aspects that are considered as vital in this approach.

We are, however, going to use this approach in this study because it emphasises the consideration of the biographical details of the author. We feel that this will help us when we discuss theme and setting in this study. This approach will enable us to determine if there is any connection between Ntuli's biographical background and the symbolism that he uses in his one-act radio plays.

The moral-philosophical aspects of the play as highlighted in the traditional approach will also be useful when we discuss the symbolic aspects of theme and the various artistic devices that Ntuli employs to portray this. Our focus will be on whether Ntuli's themes are didactic, inspire philosophical thoughts or are simply meant for entertainment purposes.

#### 1.4.2 THE STRUCTURAL APPROACH

This approach puts emphasis on the organisation and structure of the play. In other words, it deals with what the play is made of as its constituent elements. The focus is therefore on how the play is structured. According to Diamond (1993: 8):

Structuralism tries to determine the mutual relationship between patterns, how they are distributed in the text, and how they combine to make meaningful units... it is a theory of investigating these relationships with special interest in the relationship between the parts of the whole and then between the part and the whole.

Swanepoel et al. (1987) give us elements which are based on how Paul Livett, who is one of the fathers of structuralism, defines and differentiates the various structural elements of a play. They further list some structural elements such as the scene around which the events of the play are constructed. Point of attack is regarded as the second aspect and deals with the events that create conflict and tension in the play, ideally right from its beginning. There are also stage directions that entail the overall view of how the play is to be presented to the audience.

Another element is that of continuation, diminishing possibilities and good closure. All these elements are important in giving the essential details as to how the play is structured. This approach implies that in studying drama, the critic will judge the standard of a literary work by taking these factors into consideration. With regard to structuralism, Genette (1988:65) says:

*One can regard literary criticism as a structuralism activity; but it is not, as is quite clear, merely an implicit, unreflective structuralism.*

It is therefore this direct nature of the structural approach that makes it a favourite among many critics. It deals with what the text or the literary work is. It looks into the concrete and tangible proof that a critic can use as information in the analysis and evaluation of a play. The structural approach therefore fits very well in the analysis of drama. In emphasising this, Lodge (1988:282) defines structuralism as:

*A study of the laws of composition, both of nature and of man's creations.*

If, therefore, a critic applies a structural approach in the study of drama, he or she is able to evaluate how a play is composed and to determine whether the playwright has succeeded in his attempt to produce a play.

The structural approach highlights the essential elements of the play such as plot, characterisation, style, etc in the study of drama and looks at how these aspects are implemented by the author to create a literary work. Unlike the traditional approach, the structural approach is solely concerned with the literary work at the critic's disposal. In this regard, Guerin et al. (1979:70) say:

*This approach assumes the autonomy of the work itself and thus the relative unimportance of extra-literary considerations about the author's life, his times, sociological, political, economic or psychological implications.*



According to this approach, therefore, it is unnecessary and irrelevant to get the author's biographical background in order to analyse his work. Emphasis should rather be on the importance of every aspect and detail that the author supplies in his literary work. Every technique and artistic expression used in the text or play serves to convey meaning in a literary work and is the form and vehicle through which the author portrays the context, meaning and message of his work.

In this study, the structural approach will be used to determine how the structural elements like setting, theme and characterisation in Ntuli's one-act plays contribute to his success as a playwright. This approach will also be very useful when we discuss the nature and structural characteristics of radio drama. It will enable us to see how Ntuli meets the technical requirements of radio drama with regard to effective use of microphone, sound effects, silences and music.

#### 1.4.3 THE SEMIOTIC APPROACH

The study of drama can also be implemented through the use of the semiotic approach. This approach deals with how signs are used to convey meaning in a play. Peradotto et al. (1983: 11) give this definition of semiotics:

Semiotics is the science of the signs. It deals with those general principles which underlie the structure of all signs.

We can see that the focus in this approach is on how message is conveyed to the audience through what takes place in the play. We therefore concur with Styan (2000:81) who says:

Signs are studied with focus on their potential communicative function.

Diamond (1993:9) also concurs with the above statement when she says:

Semiotics sees the reading of a literary text as an act whereby the text is viewed as a system of signs. In the text, the relationship between the

signifier (the symbol) and the signified (the meaning) is as telling as it could be in day-to-day conversation.

Many critics agree that there are three basic types of signs: the icon, the index and the symbol. Esslin (1991) defines the iconic sign as the one that represents what it signifies by a direct image of that object. The example of an icon sign is a picture or photograph. Elam (1980) defines index signs as signs that point to an object, like the arrows on street signs and the gestures we use in real life, which the actors imitate. The symbol is defined by Styan (1965:118) who says:

A symbol is both itself and the representation of something other than itself.

Kowzan and Peirce in Elam (1980:12) point out that there are natural and artificial signs. Natural signs, according to Esslin (1991:45):

In the real world, exist without anyone deliberately producing them or intending to convey a message...dimming lights on the stage, a shot of the sinking sun on the screen are deliberately used by the director to tell the audience that the night is about to fall.

The artificial signs are regarded as non-intentional by Eco (1977: 17) who defines them as:

Spontaneous, involuntary human acts or gestures that 'give away' hidden emotions and can be read by an observer.

According to the above definition, blushing of an actor may be a sign of embarrassment and this sign may have an impact on how the audience responds to the events in the play. The semiotic approach seems to be relevant in the study of drama where various objects, actors, sound effects and music can be regarded as sign systems. In his discussion of the semiotic approach, Swanepoel (1990:22) contends that:

The concept sign is wide and includes various communication systems

such as traffic signs, signs at an international airport and behaviour among animals.

In the case of a play, signs may be in the form of the speech and behaviour of the actors on stage. Costumes, sound effects and even the title may function as signs, which symbolise some significance in a play. In a text, for example, the preface, chapter headings, if there are any, sentences, names of characters, may function as a framework of signs within which the work of literature was created. Emphasis and focus is on how these signs make meaning in a literary work.

Semiotics can be fittingly applied in literature and in specific genres like drama because according to Culler (1981:8):

Semiotic has in general claimed that the study of literature ought to be above all an investigation of the way and means of literary signification.

The semiotic approach emphasises that in studying drama, a critic must evaluate certain signs, which the playwright uses to convey meaning in the play. The importance of signification is reiterated by Culler (1981: 48 ) who says:

Literature has to be treated as a mode of signification and communication, in that a proper description of a literary work must refer to the meaning it has for the readers.

Culler's statement is also supported by Elam (1980:1) who says:

Semiotics can best be defined as a science dedicated to the study of the production of meaning in society. As such it is equally concerned with processes of signification and with those of communication...

Signification and communication are therefore the two processes in the semiotic approach to the study of drama. Signification happens when a sign signifies something to the recipient through signs and codes. This is achieved by using various means like the construction of a dramatic world, dramatic action and the existence of dramatic participants.

Esslin (1991) feels that in recent times, various views and ideas have been applied to the analysis of drama, especially with regard to how it achieves its effects and conveys its meaning. In supporting the semiotic approach he says:

This semiotic approach is basically, extremely simple and practical. It asks: how is it done? and tries to supply the most down-to-earth answers, by examining the signs that are used to achieve the desired communications.  
(Esslin, 1991: 10)

There are many signs that are used in a play to achieve communication with the listeners. A character's hearty laughter or cheerful whistle, for instance, may be a sign of happiness. Thunder may symbolise disaster that will face a character in the play. The semiotic approach therefore takes a closer look at how the dramatist uses sign systems at his disposal to convey meaning in the play.

According to the semiotic approach, the dramatist's effective employment of symbolism is therefore a feature that also contributes to the success of a play. The vital nature of symbolism and its close relationship to semiotics is highlighted by Redmond (1982: 2) who regards symbolism as:

An overtone of meaning by which a given sign or meaning can carry: a deeper, or higher, or more recondite charge of significance than the sign or object or image in question could ordinarily carry.

The playwright may also include certain figures of speech and metaphoric expressions that may be perceived by listeners as significant signs and symbols in a play. There are also speech acts that can be found in drama and be perceived and interpreted in different ways by the audience, depending on their response to the sign system used.

The second process is communication. This process essentially deals with how the sign is passed from the sender to the receiver. The addresser-addressee structure underlies the semiotic approach to the study of drama in which effectiveness of communicative exercise is vital.

In this study, the semiotic approach will be used extensively because it emphasises how meaning is conveyed through appropriate and effective application of signs and symbols in the play. Our focus will be on how symbolism as used by Ntuli in his plays communicates meaning to listeners. The various methods of signifying that Ntuli uses will also be analysed by means of the semiotic methodology.

## 1.5 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

We feel that it is imperative that we define some terms that will be used in this study. We would like to emphasise that we cannot discuss these terms in detail in this section. We will only provide a cursory exposition and highlight them later in the study.

### 1.5.1 SYMBOLISM

According to Abrams (1981:195):

The term symbolism is applied only to a word or phrase that signifies an object or event which in turn signifies something or has a range of reference beyond itself.

Another interesting observation is made by Murray (1978:157) who says:

Symbolism may be described as the art of expressing emotions not only by describing them directly nor by defining them through overt comparisons with concrete images, but by suggesting what these ideas and emotions are by re-creating them in the mind of the reader through the use of unexplained symbols.

The above definitions emphasise the fact that an author can employ words, objects, events and ideas as symbols in the play. Most importantly, Murray emphasises that the listener should interpret the symbols in his own personal way.

There are three types of symbols that can be used by an author in his work, namely, the international or traditional, the national or local and the personal. Let us look at how Ntuli uses these symbols in his one-act radio plays.

#### 1.5.1.1 INTERNATIONAL OR TRADITIONAL SYMBOLISM

There are certain objects, ideas and events that are internationally recognised and accepted as symbols. The dove, for instance, is an international symbol of peace. The heart is a universally accepted symbol of love. The author can innovatively use such symbols to reaffirm what is universally accepted. It is for this reason that Mcimeli (1993) and Esslin (1991) regard these symbols as traditional ones because they have been used to such an extent that they are commonly interpreted the same way all over the world. We also agree with this view and are also going to refer to international symbols as traditional because their interpretation has had almost the same meaning in international circles for a very long time.

Ntuli makes use of these traditional or international symbols. An example is when he uses the Christmas event as symbolism for joy and celebrations. In *Isiphosiso*, Mkhize and his wife are presented with a baby that they have desired to have for the past twenty years. This happens on Christmas, the day which symbolises festivity, generosity and goodwill to many people in this world.

Ntuli also uses traditional symbolism in the form of various weather conditions. Clouds are universally interpreted as a symbol of impending rain. Ntuli makes use of this to symbolise hope and dreams of the characters in *Isomiso*. In *Ijekiphothi KaKhisimuzi*, the rising sun symbolises the rising hopes of the characters in the play:

MASIBIYA: (*Ememeza*) Ake nibheke empumalanga bantabami.  
Niyabona ukuthi ilanga liphuma lilihle kanjani ngalo Khisimuzi?

MASIBIYA: (*Shouting*) Look at the east my children. Do you see how the sun rises beautifully on this Christmas?

In Isipho SikaKhisimuzi, the snake, which is universally recognised as a symbol of evil, deceit and death, is used to symbolise the evil deeds of Xulu who killed an innocent person many years ago.

#### 1.5.1.2 NATIONAL OR LOCAL SYMBOLISM

Symbolism can also be in the form of nationally accepted concepts that are regarded as of national significance and carry a nationally relevant meaning. With regard to this, Msimang (1980:73) elaborates:

By local symbolism we mean those symbols which are peculiar to a particular society and therefore lack the universal application.

In South Africa, for instance, to Afrikaners the laager symbolises the Great Trek and the struggle of the Afrikaners to gain independence and self-determination. The rainbow has been generally accepted as a symbol of unity in diversity by South Africans who are prepared to embrace the recent political changes in our country.

The cultural diversity in our country necessitates that symbolism should have a cultural bias. In isiZulu culture for instance, an owl is a symbol of witchcraft and laziness, whereas to white South Africans, it symbolises wisdom. The same can be said of a dog, which has derogatory connotations to Africans but symbolises friendship and loyalty to whites.

Ntuli makes use of national or local symbols that display a cultural bias. In other words, what Africans may interpret as symbolism in Ntuli's play may be meaningless to other cultures or may mean something totally different from what Ntuli portrays as symbolism in his plays. In Umthakathi, for instance, the baboon is used to symbolise witchcraft:

*Umsindo wokubhonga kwemfene*

SIKHWILI: (*Ebabaza*) Qaphela Fakazi, yimfene phela leyaya!

Nansiya ibheke ehlathini!

FAKAZI: Kahle Sikhwili, ingani kukhona umuntu obeza laphaya?

Uphelelephi?

SIKHWILI: Sengathi ucashe ngesihlahla.

FAKAZI: Ngumthakathi phela lowayana, asimpthume angaze alandele imfene yakhe.

(Ntuli, 1992: 2)

*The sound of a baboon's rumble*

SIKHWILI: (*Astonished*) Watch out Fakazi, that is a baboon! It's running to the forest.

FAKAZI: Wait Sikhwili, wasn't there somebody approaching? Where has he vanished to?

SIKHWILI: It seems like he has hidden behind the bush.

SIKHWILI: That is a witch indeed. Let us hurry and get him before he follows his baboon.

In Kazikhwelwa, Ndoda's knob-kerrie is used to symbolise security and confidence. In Kuhle Kwethu, legs are used to reaffirm that to most Africans, a woman with thin legs is frowned upon and is not regarded as an ideal wife. In this play Ntuli uses Lizzy's thin, scraggy legs to symbolise loose morals.

### 1.5.1.3 PERSONAL SYMBOLS

An author may use certain symbols that have personal significance to him or her. When these symbolic expressions feature prominently in his or her literary creation and play a significant role in the plot and characters in the play, we take note of them. In most cases they become the author's unique trademark and make his or her work stand out from the rest of other authors' endeavours.

In Ntuli's plays, personal symbolism is in the form of how, for instance, he uses a musical bridge, not merely to indicate the smooth transition and divisions between scenes, but as symbolism for the course of events and the fate of characters in the play. When the character is faced with a crisis or dilemma, Ntuli uses jerky or spasmodic music to symbolise the turmoil in the character's life. In Lala Ngokuthula, MaShezi is devastated by her suspicions that her husband's grave has been tampered with and that the coffin has been stolen. The family decides to dig the grave to confirm this:

MANDABA: Cha, thula Shezi, kuzochacha konke. O, nampayana



sebeza oyihlo. Uthole yona induna...o, kukhona noNgcobo iphoyisa.  
Zikhona nezinsizwa. Kuzochacha Mntanami.  
*Umcudlwana onobudluntudluntu*  
*Umsindo wokumba*  
*Umcudlwana onobudluntudluntu*  
*Umsindo wokumba*  
*Umcudlwana onobudluntudluntu*  
(Ntuli, 1988: 74)

MANDABA: Calm down Shezi, everything will be clear. O, there comes your father with others. He was able to get induna...there is also Ngcobo, the policeman. The young men are also there. Things will be clear my child.

*Music with jerky movements*

*Sounds of digging*

*Music with jerky movements*

*Sounds of digging*

*Music with jerky movements*

We believe that Ntuli deliberately juxtaposes the jerky musical bridge and the sounds of digging to symbolise the turmoil and trepidation on the part of the characters. They are holding breaths in anticipation of what will be revealed by the digging up of the grave.

Ntuli also uses weather conditions to symbolise the problems and difficult experiences of the characters in a play. In Ngicela Uxolo, for instance, a strong wind blows throughout the play. This symbolises the problems facing Malusi whose father returns after forty years to disturb the relative peace that seems to prevail in Malusi's life.

In some cases, Ntuli uses the physical features of the characters as symbolism. In NginguMenziwa, Sithole has a scar on his forehead. This scar symbolises his personality that has not changed over the years. In Ukufika Kwabakhwenyana, Zwane has a beard that symbolises deceit and the secrets that have been hidden for many years and are only revealed at the end of the play.

We feel that the above examples are personal symbols because Ntuli uses them in different plays with equal effect. With regard to sound effects and musical bridge, for instance, Ntuli indicates explicitly what must be included by the producer of the play. In other words, what we hear as listeners is exactly what Ntuli intended, primarily

because of the symbolic attributes that are associated with these technical tools as chosen for the depiction of meaning and message of the play.

Other aspects of symbolism and the various artistic devices that Ntuli employs to convey meaning in a symbolic manner will be dealt with in detail later in this study.

### 1.5.2 THE ONE-ACT RADIO PLAY

Cruywagen (1992:24) gives a clear definition of radio drama when he says:

The radio drama is a radiogenic form derived from the stage genre; blind, flexible and intimate, it only comes to fruition in the imagination of the listener in response to radio signals received by the ear from a loudspeaker.

A detailed definition of radio drama is also given by Maphumulo (2001:7) who elaborates:

A radio drama is a complete and self-contained piece of writing intended from its inception to be acted and produced in a radio studio using audio technology such as microphones, sound generating, sound recording and tape editing equipment of radio broadcasting as distinct from the visual technology of television or film, or the alternative process of live theatre.

Ash (1985:1) uses the following words when he defines a radio play:

The radio play can be defined quite simply as a story told in dramatic form by sound alone.

Makhambeni (1990:ix) concurs with Ash and adds:

Umdlalo womsakazo ulotshelwe wahlelelwa ukulalelwa kuphela.  
Kusobala-ke ukuthi iminyakazo, izenzo nemizwa yabadlali singeke sayibona ngamehlo.

The radio play is written and produced only to be listened to. It is obvious that we cannot see the action and feelings of the actors.

The fact that the listeners cannot see the actors in the play necessitates the use of the listener's imagination in order to enjoy the play. It is for this reason that the radio drama is regarded as the 'theatre of the mind'. The listener creates his own images of what is taking place in the play. This means that the playwright must be very skillful in presenting the listener with an interesting plot and characters that will arrest the listener's interest and imagination.

The difference between the radio play and the narrative fiction is illustrated by Ashe (1972:153) who says:

Fiction is story telling through narrative; radio drama is story telling through directly presented action.

The definitions that we have given above emphasise that the listener's ear plays a vital role in enjoying the radio play. It is for this reason that radio drama is sometimes referred to as the blind medium. This is also pointed out clearly by Swanepoel in Pretorius and Swart (1983:26) who says:

...Only one of the senses is used: the sense of hearing...This sense has to be harnessed to the full if the radio play wants to awaken the necessary images/scenes and emotions amongst the listeners.

The chapter on the nature, history and characteristics of the radio play will give us a clearer picture about the unique nature of this medium.

It is not easy to define the one-act play as a genre. Diamond (1993:5) admits this:

The ultimate definition of a one-act play is nebulous. Apart from its brevity, the one-act play can be defined as having one-act and several scenes.

Pretorius and Swart (1982:26) offer this definition:

This is the drama which is comprised of only one act. It is extremely compact with regard to time, place and action.

If we consider the above definitions we can therefore define the one-act radio play as a short play that is delivered by sound alone. In most cases the duration of this play is about thirty minutes. This means that the playwright has to stick to one important event in the lives of the characters. Characters and scenes should also be few because of time constraints. With regard to how scenes should be presented in the one-act radio play, Ntuli (1988:i) says:

Umdlalo womsakazo onkundlanye ungaba nazo izigcawu ezehlukana  
ngenxa yokwenzeka ngezinkathi ezithe ukushiyana noma indawo ifana;  
noma okwenzeka ezindaweni ezehlukene.

The one-act radio play may have scenes that are separated because of what takes place at different times even though the place is the same; or what occurs at different places.

The playwright must take into consideration all these features of the one-act radio play so as to be able to create a play that will be appreciated by the listeners.

## 1.6 BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS OF D.B.Z NTULI

Deuteronomy Bhekinkosi Ntuli was born in 1940 at Gcotsheni, Eshowe district. He is the last born of six children of Zebulon and Mellina, MaShezi. He started his primary education at Gcotsheni Primary. When he reached Standard 4, he moved on to Ndulinde Primary. This was quite a distance from home, so he had to stay with relatives at Ndulinde.

It was at this stage that Ntuli developed an interest in painting that convinced him to pursue this talent. One of the few institutions that offered arts subjects was Ndaleni College. His next move was to this institution, although to his disappointment, the arts stream was terminated. He nevertheless stayed at this college and passed his Junior Certificate, after which he moved to St Francis College in Mariannhill where he passed Matric in 1959.

In 1960 Ntuli was one of the first students to be admitted at the then University College of Zululand which was at its first year of inception. It was at this stage that

Ntuli showed yet another talent in choral music composition. With the help of the renowned composer, R.T. Caluza who was the local businessman at Dlangezwa, Ntuli was able to polish and pursue this talent, resulting in having some of his compositions like Ngaphesheya Kolwandle, Kuhle Kwethu, Kaguquki Yena, earning him instant recognition as an aspiring composer.

It was also during his sojourn at the University College of Zululand that his first novel, UBheka was published. He was only 21 years old! After graduating in 1964, he worked as a clerk at Sappi paper mill at Mandeni. Few months later he moved on to Durban and worked at Hind Brothers as a personnel officer. He also did not stay long there, by the end of the year he had joined the then Radio Bantu in Durban as an announcer.

His exposure to radio broadcasting opened new doors for his prolific pen. Immediately after joining the radio station, he penned his first one-act radio play: Ingodosi Kadokotela. This was in 1965. More plays were to follow, such as the serials Umcebo Owalahlekayo, Indandatho Yesethembiso, Ngiyoze Ngimthole and Ithemba.

In 1967, Ntuli accepted a post as isiZulu language assistant at Unisa. He remained at this institution and held various responsible positions until his retirement in 1998. In the meantime, he had made great strides in academic circles, getting a BA Honours in 1971, an MA in 1973, culminating in a D.Litt. et Phil in 1978. In 1982 he was granted professorship. All his senior degrees were done through Unisa in the Department Of African Languages. In 2001 the University Of Zululand awarded him an honorary doctorate in recognition of his outstanding contribution to isiZulu literature.

Ntuli is a multi-talented author of numerous volumes of short stories, plays, novels, poems and essays. He has received many awards in these genres, in most cases getting first positions. He has compiled, edited and co-authored many books for schools, academics and the general public readership. He belongs to and acts on the boards of various language and literature societies.

In 1969 Ntuli married Adelaide Lewis. They have two daughters.

Ntuli has entertained listeners for more than thirty-five years with his one-act radio plays. Numerous awards have been received by these plays, among which are:

ASTERA (SABC) Award: 1984: Isomiso , 1986: Kuhle Kwethu.

ARTES (SABC) Award: 1993: Azikhwelwa .

SASWA-IDEM Award: 1985: UmSamariya Olungileyo , 1986: Isithembu ,  
1989: Elamanqamu.

SASWA-ADEM Runner-Up: 1984: Ngicela Uxolo , 1986: NginguMenziwa .

As we noted earlier, Ntuli's one-act radio plays have also been adapted to book form. Usiba Writers Guild has awarded the N.N.Ndebele Award For Drama to Ntuli for almost all of his one-act play collections:

1989: *Woza Nendlebe, Ishashalazi* (co-authored with N.F. Mbhele)

1993: *Indoni Yamanzi* (co-authored with N.G. Sibiya)

Our discussion has revealed that Ntuli is a prolific and highly talented playwright. The impressive number of his contribution to various genres and the awards that have been won by his works bear irrefutable testimony to the mighty pen of this illustrious scribe.

In conclusion, we think that it's appropriate to quote Mayekiso (1994:293) who aptly summarises Ntuli's enormous and significant contribution to African literature in the following well-chosen words:

In D.B.Z. Ntuli's biography we are introduced to and shown the birth and growth of a small seed, which developed into a big literary tree.

## 1.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, our attempt was to give an introductory exposition of the study on the symbolic devices that Ntuli uses in his one-act radio plays, with particular emphasis on setting, theme and characterisation. We outlined the aim of this study and gave reasons why we feel that an analysis of Ntuli's plays is long overdue. We discussed the

approaches that will be applied in conducting this project and expressed the reasons for choosing the traditional, structural and semiotic approaches as relevant for this study. We concluded with a biographical background of D.B.Z. Ntuli and highlighted why he is regarded as one of the best writers in South Africa.

## CHAPTER TWO

### RADIO DRAMA: HISTORY, NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS

#### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to provide a historical background to the radio drama. Our discussion will indicate how radio drama has evolved from humble beginnings to worldwide recognition as a vital feature in home entertainment. Our main focus will be on how radio drama in isiZulu has grown from adaptations of folktales, English plays and historical narratives to a medium that provides not less than twenty full-length plays a year for listeners' enjoyment. We are also going to look at the distinct nature and characteristics of radio drama and how it differs from other genres. Most importantly, this chapter will show how Ntuli makes use of the technical tools of radio drama like music and sound effects to portray symbolism in his one-act radio plays.

#### 2.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The birth of the radio play can be traced back to about eighty years ago, when the play entitled Danger was broadcast by the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) in 1924. This short play was written by Ted Hughes who is said to have written and completed it in one night. In 1925, the first full-length radio play entitled The White Chateau and written by Reginald Berkeley was broadcast. This was followed in 1929 by Tyrone Guthrie's The Flowers Are Not For You To Pick and Matrimonial News. After this there was a tremendous increase in the number of plays broadcast, such that by 1931, the BBC was broadcasting up to fifty plays a year.

The Second World War led to an increase in the listenership for radio drama because people were forced to spend most of their nights indoors. Because of this, by 1951 the number of plays produced each year had risen to over 300. (Source: W.Ash, 1985: The Way To Write Radio Drama.)



In South Africa, the birth of radio broadcasting was in 1924. This is stated precisely by Cruywagen, (1992: 41) who says:

At the hour of nine on the evening of 1 July 1924...South Africa entered a new era of communication, the era of broadcasting.

It was to take about twenty years before Africans could benefit from the entertainment offered by this wonderful communication tool. According to Ntuli (2000:3):

Umlando wokubhalwa kwemidlalo yomsakazo yesiZulu usukela ku-1941 lapho kwaqashwa khona umsakazi wokuqala u-K.E. Masinga.

The history of writing radio plays in isiZulu dates back to 1941 when K.E.Masinga, the first announcer, was employed.

Immediately after his arrival at the then Radio Bantu, Masinga realised the need for radio plays to entertain and educate the listeners. He adapted famous Shakespearean plays such as The Merchant Of Venice, Julius Caesar, for the radio and dramatised folktales, passages from the Bible and popular historical events. The latter were serialised as Imilando YakwaZulu and were quite popular with the listeners.

It was, however, only in 1960 that the S.A.B.C. embarked on large scale broadcasting for Africans. This paved a way for a large number of radio plays and playwrights to get public exposure. According to Maphumulo (2001: 48), more than 250 radio drama serials have been broadcast by Ukhozi FM between 1960 and 2001.

This is indeed a good indication of interest that has been shown by African playwrights in this genre. There has been a remarkable improvement in the quality of the plays that have been broadcast since Masinga's times when radio drama in isiZulu was in its infancy. There has been, for instance, a decrease in the number of plays that are adapted from folktales, famous plays by Western dramatists, Biblical and historical events. This shows that playwrights are able to use their own creativity and resourcefulness to produce fictitious material of impressive calibre.

There has also been a remarkable improvement in the themes that are addressed by playwrights in isiZulu. One is able to detect bravery on the part of playwrights who are currently addressing sensitive themes like homosexuality, prostitution, human rights issues, abuse and many others that were previously regarded as 'no go areas'. During the early days of radio drama in isiZulu, most playwrights concentrated on didactic themes that were aimed at warning the listeners against many corrupting evils. Commenting on the approach of the writers during this period Maphumulo (2001: 39) concludes:

The majority of these early productions dealt with love themes, although some dealt with crime and feud. Since these were the first radio serial dramas, their reception by radio listeners was very good, consequently they contributed to the enhancement of Zulu drama image.

In recent years, there has also been a dramatic increase in the number of female playwrights. This has resulted in providing listeners with themes that display the female perspective on various issues that were previously addressed, presumably, with bias by male playwrights.

## 2.2 THE NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF RADIO DRAMA

There are various definitions of radio drama that have been offered by different scholars in this field. According to Ash (1985:1), for instance, the radio play can be defined quite simply as a story told in dramatic form by means of sound alone. An elaborate definition is offered by Cruywagen (1992: 24) who says:

The radio drama is a radiogenic form derived from the stage genre; blind, flexible and intimate, it only comes to fruition in the imagination of the listener in response to radio signals received by the ear from a loudspeaker.

In radio drama, the most important role is played by the listener's ear. It is for this reason that some scholars define radio drama as the theatre of imagination. Horstmann (1988) calls it 'the theatre of the mind'. All these definitions emphasise the fact that the listener uses his mind and imagination to visualise the events and characters that are depicted in the play through sound.

Radio drama is comprised of the same structural elements and characteristics that can be found in other visual dramas like the stage, television and film. These common features are for example, plot, characterisation, theme and many others which make radio drama a sub-genre of drama. The most distinctive feature of radio drama is its lack of the visual element which is found in stage, television and film dramas. It is for this reason that radio drama has been referred to as the blind theatre. It is only the ear that is addressed and used as a vehicle for the reception of the play. With regard to this, Moeketsi (1988:5) contends that:

It is the ear that must capture the qualities of scene and action that ordinarily would come through the eye, and transmit them to the mind and the motor centres.

The invisibility of setting and actions means that the listener's imagination plays a pivotal role in understanding and participating in the play. The blind nature of radio drama is an advantage to the playwright because, according to Makosana (1991:2) the playwright can:

Create mental images of countless variations as long as these images are within the scope of the listener's imagination.

In other words, each listener is able to create characters and their actions according to his own specifications. The listener is therefore able to "see" the scene and action that are depicted by the playwright in the radio play. The playwright only furnishes the listener with dialogue and the necessary sound effects. This critical factor is also emphasised by Pairce (1987:5) who says:

One of the delights of writing for radio is that the audience itself provides the visual factor. You present them with the characters, their conflicts and the general ambience in which they are set. The listener provides the pictures in his or her own head.

In doing this, the playwright must be very economical and precise. This view is strongly advocated by Ash (1985:11) who warns against the tendency by some playwrights to exaggerate the use of play ingredients. He advises that:

The author of a radio play does not have to, and indeed, should not add the least element not needed for the particular dramatic story being told.

The playwright must also provide clear and precise details so as to avoid confusing the listener. With regard to this, Pieterse (1973:x) contends that:

The listener must never be in doubt as to what is happening: once he stops to wonder, he gets lost, and does not have his eyes to help him catch up.

Cruywagen (1992: 67) also reiterates the importance of providing precise details in the play so as to avoid confusing listeners:

In the book you can stop, go back, reread a passage to make sure you got it right. But in a play, if you miss something, you have missed it. So dialogue in a play must be extremely clear, emphatic.

Another unique feature of radio drama is that it is not restricted by limitations of time and setting. Radio drama is able to stimulate the listener's imagination and creative power by taking him to distant places and times in a wink of an eye. This is usually not possible in other visual dramas. In emphasising this, Tshamano (1994:16) says:

By exploiting the listener's imagination, radio drama can, for example, switch from one century to another, and can vividly evoke scenes no other medium can.

There are, however, disadvantages to this. It is at times impossible to create certain scenes and action successfully in a radio play. Especially those scenes and actions that involve large characters. In connection with this, Ash (1985:136) argues that:

At the very least, the absence of vision imposes huge restrictions on the kinds of plays radio can do. Large cast dramas are next to impossible.

This demands that the playwright be skillful in choosing the appropriate ideas for the radio play. In other words, he is only confined to scenes that can be credibly conveyed to the listener who only relies on the ear and imagination for the vivid perception and enjoyment of the play.

The radio drama's appeal to the listener's imagination is enhanced by its flexibility which allows the listener to perform other duties and household chores while listening to the radio. Radio drama is readily accessible to the listener and can be enjoyed while bathing, cooking, or even driving a car. This does not necessarily divert the listener's attention from the chores at hand. It is therefore imperative that the playwright is able to arrest the listener's attention and interest right from the start of the play.

Unlike in the visual dramas, the listener has more freedom of choice in the radio drama. If the drama does not appeal to him, he can respond quickly by switching the radio off or by tuning to other radio stations. In view of this, Ash (1985:15) says:

It is the easiest thing in the world for the listener to a radio play to decide that it is not worth the effort and switch off. That is the challenge the radio dramatist has to accept at the outset.

The same point is also emphasised by Cruywagen (1992:12) who says:

Because it is so easy for the listener to tune to another station, or worse even, to switch the radio off, the radio playwright is under tremendous pressure to write a play of considerable attention value.

The popularity of radio drama seems to entice many authors. We don't believe that authors prefer radio drama because it is easier to tackle than other genres. In fact we fully agree with Pieterse (1973: ix) who points out that:

Writing for radio is a specialised technique; but it is no more difficult or easier than writing for any other form of production.

We believe that authors prefer radio drama because it has the ability to reach more people than any other form of drama. This is especially true in the case of the African audience that comprises many people, particularly those in rural areas, who cannot afford television sets. Exposure to the stage drama is also a privilege that is enjoyed by only a minority of our people. Ntuli (1991:i) has this to say about accessibility of stage drama:

Eqinisweni baningi abantu abangakutshela ukuthi abakaze babe nalo  
ithuba lokuyobukela umdlalo weshashalazi, kokunye selokhu bazalwa.  
Akulona ihaba leli.

In fact, there are many people who can tell you that they have never had a chance to watch a stage play, probably ever since they were born. This is no exaggeration.

Cinemas are also beyond easy reach of many of our people, especially those in rural areas and small towns where cinemas are non-existent. It is interesting to note that radio is still popular even in places where visual drama is easily accessible. We also agree with Bradley (1978:vii) when he says:

In spite of the attractions of television and the theatre, radio drama still has a strong appeal for millions of listeners who prefer plays which are partly created within their own heads.

### 2.3. TECHNICAL TOOLS USED IN RADIO DRAMA

Radio drama differs from visual drama in that the radio playwright relies on certain technical tools to be able to convey his play successfully. These tools are not necessary in closet and visual dramas. Their appropriate use in radio drama influences to a very large extent the success and failure of the radio play concerned.

For the purpose of this study we are going to mention and discuss these technical tools viz., the microphone, sound effects, music, narrator and silence and see how they are used by Ntuli in his one-act radio plays on which our discussion is based. We are also going to see how symbolism is sometimes depicted effectively by the use of these tools by the radio playwright.

### 2.3.1 THE MICROPHONE

Basically, the radio dramatist relies and depends primarily on sound and dialogue for the effective depiction of his play. In writing a play, the playwright has to take into consideration the role of the microphone in the play. The script has to indicate clearly how the voices and the microphone will interact to convey a coherent message to the listener. With regard to the use of the microphone in a play, Makosana (1991:95) says:

Talking about sound, the microphone plays a prominent role in radio because it is the disseminator of sound.

Tshamano (1994:22) reiterates the importance of the microphone when he says:

The microphone is the first and most important of the technical tools the use of which the scriptwriter must understand.

Hilliard (1984), Moeketsi (1988) Makosana (1991), Cruywagen (1992) and Tshamano (1994) all agree that there are basically five microphone positions: 'on mike', 'off mike', 'fading on mike', 'fading off mike' and 'behind obstruction'.

The different positions of the microphone as used in the play create different impressions on the listener. This is in its own of vital importance since there need not be a narrator in a good and well-written play. In order to follow the action and dialogue of the characters, the listener is only guided by the level and position of sound that is produced and disseminated by the microphone.

Let us now look at the different microphone positions and see how they impact on the listener, and most importantly, how Ntuli uses them in his one-act radio plays.

### **2.3.1.1 THE 'ON MIKE' POSITION**

In this position, the actor speaks directly to the microphone. This position is also called the 'Close Focus'. It is used to create the feeling of intimacy between the actor and the listener as it creates the impression that the actor is speaking and addressing the listener directly.

The 'on mike' position is used to indicate that the character or the actor is on the scene. It therefore makes the listener feel that he is at the same place or physical position as the character or actor. In most cases, this position is not indicated on the script. It is simply taken for granted that the actor is at this position if nothing is indicated next to his or her dialogue. In all of Ntuli's plays, the 'on mike' position is not indicated or differentiated.

### **2.3.1.2 THE 'OFF MIKE' POSITION**

The actor is said to be in the 'off mike' position if he is put at a distance from the microphone. This creates an impression that the performer is at a distance from the focal point of the action being depicted. According to Makosana (1991:95), this position serves to indicate that:

The performer is not only distancing himself from the mike,  
but also from the listener.

Ntuli makes use of this position, especially to create suspense in his plays. There is an indication that the actor is no longer in the same physical spot with the listener. The intimacy between them is therefore lost.

### **2.3.1.3 THE 'FADING ON' POSITION**

In this position the actor or performer approaches the centre of the action and moves towards the microphone while speaking. This prepares the listener for the action that is



going to accompany the character's approach. In most cases this position enhances suspense in the listener.

In Ntuli's one-act radio plays, this position is indicated by the raising of the character's voice which shows his approach. The listener can therefore feel that the character is approaching the focal point of action. In some cases, this position is preceded by the sound of the character's footsteps, which in itself is an effective creator of suspense on the listener.

In most cases, Ntuli uses *esondela* (approaching) to indicate this position. This can be seen in the following example:

MANGCOBO: (*Esondela*) Cha, Thoko, sengithi angilunguze ngoba selokhu kuthe nya...  
(Ntuli, 1990:25)

MANGCOBO: (*Approaching*) Well, Thoko, I've decided to come and have a look since it's been quite for some time.

#### 2.3.1.4 THE 'FADING OFF' POSITION

The actor is said to be 'fading off' when he moves away from the 'on mike' position while speaking. This creates an impression that the actor is moving away from the centre of the action, thus leaving other characters and the listener behind. In this regard, the listener is guided by the level of the actor's voice. If it gradually descends and fades off, the listener is made aware of the actor's retreat from the scene and action without necessarily being directly told that by the character or the narrator.

In Ntuli's one-act radio plays, the 'fading off' position is often indicated by words like *eqheluka*, *buqamama*, *ekude* and so on. This can, for example, be seen in *Umthakathi*:

INDUNA: Yebo Nkosi (*Eqheluka*) ngizobalanda.  
(Ntuli, 1992:10)

INDUNA: Yes, Your Majesty (*Moving away*) I'll fetch them.  
(Ntuli, 1992:10)

This indicates clearly that Induna is moving away while speaking. He does not necessarily mention this himself. It is only the distance at which he is speaking from the microphone that the listener uses to determine the 'fading off' from the focal point of action.

### 2.3.1.5 THE 'BEHIND OBSTRUCTION' POSITION

In this position the actor sounds as if there is a barrier between him and the centre of action. The impression created is that of a person speaking over a telephone, outside a house, behind a door and so forth. To indicate this position, producers usually use a type of a microphone called a 'filter mike' which creates an impression that the voice is coming over a telephone.

This position is also indicated by the use of the echo chamber which creates echo sounds. Ntuli uses this device to a very large extent, especially when flashbacks or scenes that took place in the past are indicated. In the play an echo sound of the character's voice is used to denote this.

In the script, however, Ntuli uses isenanelo (echo) to show that the action concerned took place prior to the scene at hand. In other words the word isenanelo helps the producer and the reader of the text to see that the action concerned occurred in the past.

The echo chamber also comes handy when amazwi (voices) are heard, in most cases by a character alone. Ntuli makes use of this device in Umtitilizo:

AMAZWI: Ikhon'indlel'esheshayo. Kumanje nje abanye basebenzisa yona. Bawutholil'umtutilizo, umtutilizo, umtutili...zo.

DOLLY: Kuhle ngisebenzis'ingqonjwana engayiphiwa uMdali...

AMAZWI: Siphukuphuku, awuhlakaniphile njengabanye, uyisilima, uyisilima, uyisili....ma.

(Ntuli, 1985:72)

VOICES: There is a fast way. Others are using it right now. They

have received a bargain, a bargain, a barga....in.

DOLLY: It's appropriate that I use my God-given brain.

VOICES: Fool, you are not clever like others, you are a fool, a fool,  
a fo....ol.

The voices that Dolly hears signify the turmoil that takes place within her. The echo chamber is also used to indicate that a character is dreaming. Ntuli uses this in Ucingo when Nduduzo visits his parents in a dream on two separate occasions. The listeners hear Nduduzo's voice emanating from the 'behind obstruction' position when an echo chamber has been used.

### 2.3.2 SOUND EFFECTS

Lack of vision in radio drama necessitates the use of sound effects for depiction of action and setting in the play. The playwright therefore has to use appropriate and effective sound effects to convey information which could have been supplied by the narrator or which the audience could have easily seen and observed for themselves in visual drama. With regard to the vital nature of sound effects in a play, Cruywagen (1992:47) argues that:

In a balanced radio drama, there would be sufficient sound effects to colour the picture and guide the imagination of the listener.

Sound effects are defined by Bradley and Lee (1988:251) as:

...any sound other than music or speech that is used to create an image, evoke an emotion, compress time, clarify or re-enforce a message.

Tshamano (1994:48) defines sound effects as:

The kind of sounds that are intentionally 'brought in' in a radio drama with a purpose of creating certain effects which are of communicative value to the audience.

Cruywagen (1992) gives two sources from which sound effects for radio drama can be obtained. He cites studio effects or spot effects which are produced live or on the spot in a play. There are also pre-recorded or contrived sound effects which are stored in the archives of the studio and only used when they are relevant in the play.

The example of live or spot effects are those sounds whose production takes place live in the studio. This, for example, includes the opening and closing of doors or knocking at the door. Such sound effects are often produced or made by members of the cast who are not involved in the scene in which the particular sound effects are needed.

Sounds which are difficult to produce live during the play are pre-recorded. This includes, for example, the sound of thunder, cars, rivers, etc which are 'brought in' by the producer to achieve the desired effect.

Sound effects are used for various reasons. They are primarily used to establish a setting or to locate where the action of the play takes place. Sounds like ululating women will indicate a wedding setting in the play. The barking of dogs, accompanied by the bleating of sheep and the whistling of boys will establish or suggest a rural place as a setting in a play. The listener will therefore know that the setting of the play is a rural area without being told so by the narrator or the actor.

Time can also be established by the appropriate use of sound effects. The hooting of an owl suggests that the action takes place at night whereas the crowing of a cock indicates dawn or break of day. The time or season of the year like winter, for instance, can be indicated by the sound of the blowing wind.

Entrances and exits of actors in a scene can be signified by the use of sound effects. The sound of approaching footsteps, accompanied by the opening of a door will indicate to the listener the entering of an actor in a scene.

Tshamano (1994) and Makosana (1991) contend that sound effects can also be used to direct the listener's emotions and attention to certain stimulus. If, for instance, an actor or character in a play is driving at a dangerously high speed, the sound of a fast moving

vehicle will be heard. If he is about to be attacked, the sound of a gun being cocked will be a stimulus to the listener and make him anticipate violence or death of the character concerned.

Sound effects can also be used to create mood and atmosphere in a play. In this regard, it is again of vital importance that appropriateness of these effects is considered. In a scene where mourning takes place, it will be inappropriate to use sound effects which suggest happiness. If the sound effects that are used in a play are irrelevant and confusing, they will lower the standard of the play.

Ntuli uses sound effects to create suspense in his plays. In NginguMenziwa, for instance, the sound of approaching steps creates suspense because the listeners are anxious to find out the outcome of Menziwa's arrival. In Ucingo, MaMtshali and Magwaza are waiting for Nduduzo. Then the dog barks. This creates suspense and raises question: is the dog barking at Nduduzo? The use of sound effects in this fashion forces the listener to stop and listen.

The playwright should exercise great caution when choosing sound effects in a play. It is important to note Evans (1977:177) who offers a useful caution:

*The purpose of effects is to make a play more convincing, or more atmospheric or funnier, or just clearer. When they don't observe such artistic end they are superfluous, whether they correspond to reality or not.*

Moeketsi (1988:41) also emphasises that:

*After all, if a text is weak, its quality will definitely not be improved by the mere inclusion of sound effects.*

Cruywagen (1992:15) also cautions against the inclusion of irrelevant sound effects in a play:

*It is better to have no sound effects than an inane irrelevant effect.*

Ntuli uses sound effects to draw the listener's attention to the symbolic aspects of the play. In Isando, for instance, the sound of the hammer is heard at least eight times in the play. This leaves a lasting impression on the mind of the listener and makes him assign symbolic meaning to the hammer as used as a sound effects in the play. The same method of emphasising symbolism through sound effects is also used in Ngicela Uxolo in which the wind is a symbol of emotional turmoil on Malusi's part. The strong wind blows throughout the play and the listener need not be told that this has symbolic function in the play.

In Ucingo the sound of a cock crowing indicates that the scene takes place at daybreak. This is, however, symbolic because the start of a new day symbolises the start of a new life for Nduduzo who has just narrowly escaped death. We believe that Ntuli deliberately chooses the cockcrow as the sound effect to emphasise the symbolic nature of dawn in this play. This makes us concur with Mathenjwa (1999: 204) who says:

The symbolic meaning depends solely on the context in which that particular object is used at that point and time.

### 2.3.3 MUSIC

The playwright also depends on music for the depiction of theme and plot of his play and to compensate for the lack of the visual element in radio drama. The use of music in a play is also a skill that a playwright must learn to master with great care because a failure to do so results in a play of a poor quality.

Evans (1977:149) argues that music in radio drama falls under 'objective' and 'subjective' categories. By 'objective' music is meant the type that forms the integral part of the scene. This can, for example, be music that is part of a wedding or funeral that takes place in a scene. In other words, the action or event in the scene demands that a specific type of music be included in the scene to achieve certain effects. Music from an organ or piano may be played in a scene with romantic lovers. The music only serves to emphasise the romantic mood of the scene. It does not necessarily form the integral part of the scene and is therefore referred to as 'subjective'.

Music can also be used in a play to achieve various results. It can be used as ibika or the theme that indicates the start of the play. It can also be used as a bridge between scenes. In this case, it must be short enough and serve only to indicate that a new scene has begun. The type of the musical bridge is also crucial as it also used to set the mood in the play. If, for instance, a character has to make a prompt decision, a fast musical bridge is used to highlight this.

Music is a very effective tool that Ntuli uses to emphasise the symbolic elements of the play. In Isiphosiso, for example, a Christmas song is used as the theme in the play. This primarily serves to arouse the listener's attention as he immediately associates the theme song with a particular meaning or event. The symbolism surrounding the Christmas event is easily instilled in the listener's mind right from the beginning of the play.

In Kuhle Kwethu, Ntuli specifies that a wedding song be used as the theme or ibika because he knows the symbolic significance of music in a play. We believe that music plays a vital role in drawing the listener's attention to the symbolic elements as suggested in the theme song. We also agree with the view by Horstmann (1988:31) who argues that:

Music is a powerful generator of atmosphere and mood, and can be introduced in several ways.

It is remarkable that in most cases Ntuli specifies the type of theme music that he wants in the play. In other words, he doesn't leave this crucial task to the producer's sole discretion. We think that Ntuli does this deliberately to reinforce the impact of the theme song in emphasising the symbolic element of the play. In Ijekiphothi KaKhisimuzi, Ntuli specifies the theme song:

*Ibika-Ingoma kaKhisimuzi "Joy to the World" ngezimfijoli.*

*Theme-Christmas Carol "Joy to the World" in flutes.*

In doing this, Ntuli is not interfering with the producer's duty because, according to Horstmann (1980:30) :

The selection of music is part of the producer's job, but the writer can make suggestions if he wishes.

The choice of relevant musical bridge also enhances effective symbolism. We have mentioned that in Ngicela Uxolo , the stormy weather is used to symbolise emotional turmoil in Malusi. To emphasise this, Ntuli makes use of effective musical bridge which is also rich in symbolism:

MALUSI...Nguyena...ubanjwe ngamakhaza. Thatha isikhwama sakhe lesi nethoshi. Mina ngizozama ukumqokula.

MAVIS: Uzokusinda. Sizobambisana. Mina ngizobamba ngezansi.

*Umcudlwana onobudluntudluntu*

(Ntuli, 1988:51)

MALUSI:...It's him...he's been stuck in the cold. Take his bag and torch. I'll try and carry him.

MAVIS: He will be too heavy for you. I will help carry him. I will lift the lower part of his body.

*Jerky music*

Ntuli deliberately uses a jerky, spasmodic musical bridge partly to emphasise the symbolic words that are said by Mavis that Galela will be too heavy for Malusi to carry alone. This heaviness symbolises the emotional burden that will be carried by Malusi after the death of his father. The jerkiness of the musical bridge also reinforces the symbolic nature of the storm that is in the background throughout the play.

#### 2.3.4 THE NARRATOR

The radio dramatist can make use of a narrator to convey essential information to the listeners. The narrator is defined by Ntuli (1998:250) as:

A 'passive' character, that is one who tells part of the story instead of 'acting it out.'

According to McLeish (1988:199) the narrator's role is vital because:



A narrator is particularly useful in explaining a large amount of background information which might be unduly tedious in conversational form.

This shows that a narrator is important in providing essential details that are not easy to dramatise. The playwright must, however, be very cautious about using the narrator in the play because if used inappropriately, the narrator can spoil a good play. It is for this reason that Herbert (2000: 63) warns:

Whenever narration is included, it absolutely must serve a function in the story, and even then, any extended use of the narrator is hard to justify.

There is obviously a lot of debate about the desirability of a narrator in a play. Most critics feel that to use a narrator is an obvious display of lack of creativity on the author's part. Rodger (1982: 27) has this to say:

A form of drama in which a narrator is used overtly to describe changes of scenes and relevant information which is not contained within the dialogue is thought by purist and by the dramatic craftsman to be the lazy way to write a play.

With regard to the role of a narrator in a radio play, Maphumulo (2001: 134) says:

From a purely dramatic point of view, there are arguments against a narrator because he is said to delay the action and to break the unity of the plot. But then radio, being primarily a storyteller's medium, needs a narrator, and it gives him a convincing role, a more legitimate place than in any other type of drama.

One finds it impossible to rule out the role of a narrator in the play. There are details that are not easy to convey through dialogue alone. In the case of a long play, a narrator can be useful in connecting scenes and summarising scenes that may take longer to dramatise. Another essential role of the narrator is clarified by Willis and D'Arienzo (1981:231) who argue that:

Some events may be so harrowing that complete dramatisation makes

them unbearable. Narration helps to tone down and filter the effect.

Ntuli does not use the narrator in his one-act radio plays. We feel that this is a serious shortcoming because the narrator's role is essential in portraying symbolism in the play. This becomes clear when we compare the short story versions of some of the one-act radio plays. In Ucingo, for instance, a lot of essential information is left out in the play, which could have been provided by the narrator to enhance symbolic aspects of the events. The short story version of this play has this information in the narrative:

Inkosikazi ibubone ubuso bomnyeni wayo ukuthi bunezinkungu.  
(Ntuli, 1982:99)

The wife observed that her husband's face was misty.

The symbolic use of izinkungu (mist) is lost in the radio play. Had Ntuli used the narrator, the listener's attention could have drawn to this fact. The mist, for instance, symbolises the pain and sadness that is written on Magwaza's face. It also symbolises the dim future that faces him as the death of his son draws near.

The short story version of Isithembu, is also far richer in detail:

Kude kubuya imifanekiso yezinsuku ezedlule. Umshado wakhe omhlophe.  
Ukuzalwa kukaNomusa emva kweminyaka ekhulekelwa. Ukuhamba  
kukaMaDludla. Ukuphathana ngenhlonipho noNomusa. Ukuhlonipheka  
kwalo muzi...Baqhubeka ubusuku....  
(Ntuli, 1986: 71)

Pictures of past days kept returning. His white wedding. The birth of  
Nomusa after years of praying. The death of MaDludla. Mutual respect  
with Nomusa. The dignity of this home...The night proceeded....

The above examples show that the narrator can be useful in providing details that are not easy to portray through the dialogue of the characters. In the radio play version of Isithembu, nothing is mentioned about Mthembu's wedding or the fact that they had to pray a lot for Nomusa's birth. This vital information could have been easily conveyed by the inclusion of the narrator in the radio play.

We believe that a skillful radio playwright can be able to use a narrator with effective results without necessarily inflicting any damage to the plot of the play. We also concur with Ntuli (1999: 256) who comments:

While it is true that a radio playwright can do without any narrator, writers don't have to be unnecessarily 'shackled' onto this principle.

### 2.3.5 SILENCE

The role of silence in radio drama must never be undermined. Like music, silence can be very effective in conveying mood and atmosphere in the play. Ashe (1972: 215) emphasises the importance of silence by cautioning:

Lastly, silence. Never forget its power. Silence on radio, unlike silence in a film, is (or can be) the real thing.

This view is supported by Maphumulo (2001: 229) who comments:

Silences and pauses in drama sometimes speak louder than words.

The close relationship between silence and characterisation in the play is highlighted by Cohen (1973: 29) who argues that:

A character in a play is generally in action; even his silence may be significant action.

This shows that when the radio playwrights decides what the characters are going to say in the play, he must also accommodate silences that will enhance the impact of their actions and dialogues. The playwright should also be careful about the timing of silence in the character's dialogue and action so as to achieve maximum effect.

In the radio drama script, silence is indicated as *Pause* which is usually loosely translated as *Nya* or *Kuthi nya nya* in isiZulu. The scope of this study does not allow

us to engage in the debate about the appropriateness of the words that are used to indicate silence in the radio drama script.

The radio playwright can make use of silence to enhance the impact of the character's action and to create suspense that will ensure the listener's undivided attention. With regard to this, Bradley and Lee (1988: 163) contend that:

Sometimes the use of silence can make us feel the impact of a moment or anticipate an obvious piece of information more effectively than dialogue or action.

Ntuli makes use of silence in his plays. In most cases silence is used when there is conflict or confrontation between characters. In Isomiso, MaZulu shouts with anger at her daughter who has disappointed her by being expelled from university:

ZINHLE: Phela Mama akhona amalungelo...  
MAZULU: (*Ngolaka*) Ngithi thula! (*Kuthi nya nya*)  
(*Ngomoya ophansi*) Hambisa izimpahla zakho ekamelweni lakho.  
(Ntuli, 1988: 8)

ZINHLE: Well, there are rights Mama...  
MAZULU: (*Angrily*) I say shut up! (*Pause*)  
(*Calmly*) Take your bags to your bedroom.

Silence in this scene is used to create suspense. After MaZulu's outburst the listeners are afraid that she may chase Zinhle away. Is she going to tell her to take her bags and go away? Silence magnifies the explosive mood and raises suspense on the listeners' part.

Silence can also be used to indicate the fear and anxiety that is experienced by a character. A skillful radio playwright will make silence raise suspense and anxiety on both the character and the listener. We find an example of this in Isithembu. Before storming out to her bedroom, Nomusa has an animated argument with her father:

NOMUSA: Ngithi ngiyaya baba.  
MTHEMBU: Ngithi uma ngisaphila ngiwuyihlo awuyi entweni  
engiyibonayo ukuthi igwegwile.  
NOMUSA: Ngithi ngiyaya baba. Okungcono ngingafa nya.  
MTHEMBU: (*Ngolaka olukhulu*) Awuyi!  
NOMUSA: (*Ngesankahlu*) Ngiyaya!  
MTHEMBU: Suka phambi kwami Sathane!  
(Ntuli, 1991: 86)

NOMUSA: I say I will go, father.  
MTHEMBU: I say if I am still alive and still your father, you won't  
go to something that is wrong.  
NOMUSA: I say I am going, father. I would rather die.  
MTHEMBU: (*In anger*) You are not going.  
NOMUSA: (*With force*) I am going!  
MTHEMBU: Go away Satan!

When Mthembu wakes up the following morning, he rushes to Nomusa's bedroom:

MTHEMBU: ...Kumele ukuba uphapheme manje uNomusa.  
(*Ememeza*) We Nomusa! (*Nya*) Nomusa! (*Nya*)  
(*Ngelinovalo*) Nomusa! (*Nya*)  
(Ntuli, 1991: 86)

MTHEMBU: ....Nomusa is supposed to be awake now.  
(*Calling out*) Nomusa! (*Pause*) Nomusa! (*Pause*)  
(*In agitation*) Nomusa! (*Pause*)

Silence in this scene serves to increase suspense on Mthembu and the listener. Both are aware that Nomusa mentioned that she would rather die than not marry Sibanyoni. When there is no response from her bedroom, there is fear that she may have killed herself. The use of silence ensures that the listener is 'glued' to the radio in anticipation of the next event.

Silence can also be used by the radio playwright to symbolise doubt and indecision of a character without using any words. With regard to this McLeish (1988:165) cautions:

*Don't use words when silence can carry the emotional impact and*

indicate the meaning of the action.

## 2.4 CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter was to show the unique features of radio drama and to look at how this medium has developed and gained popularity over the years. We indicated the contribution of the famous K.E.Masinga to the development of radio drama in isiZulu, who painstakingly translated and adapted numerous materials for drama productions.

We were able to see that radio drama has the ability to reach millions of people and is able to engage the listener who has to participate in the plot of the play by creating his own visual images of the action and characters. Pairce (1987: 5) says:

One of the delights of writing for radio is that the audience itself provides the visual factor. You present them with characters, their conflicts and the general ambience in which they are set. The listener provides the pictures in his or her own head.

Our discussion also highlighted the technical requirements of radio drama and how they impact on the overall meaning of the play. It became clear that a radio playwright must be familiar with how the microphone, sound effects, music, and so forth, contribute to a good play that will be enjoyed by the listeners.

We also revealed the techniques that are used by Ntuli in his radio plays. We mentioned, for instance, how he uses music and sound effects to depict symbolism in a convincing manner.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **SETTING**

#### **3.0 INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this chapter is to evaluate setting as used by Ntuli in his one-act radio plays. We are going to see how different scholars define this concept and how relevant it is to other aspects or parts of the play. We feel that a setting of a play is worth evaluating because it forms the avenue for the events and characters to convey the plot of the play. *In other words, there must be a setting that will indicate where, when and how the events and action of the play take place.*

#### **3.1 SETTING DEFINED**

Setting refers to the background against which the play takes place. Kenny (1966: 38) maintains that:

The term "setting" refers to the point in time and space at which events of the plot occur.

Abrams (1981:175) defines a setting of a play as:

The general locale, historical time and social circumstances in which it (the play) occurs.

According to Rockas (1984:110) setting is:

...The sum total of all visual or sensuous references in a work, whether it is staged or not, including everything from the place or picture to atmosphere or mood.

These definitions indicate that there are three vital aspects that have to be considered in a discussion of setting, namely, the place or locale, time and social background to the events of the play.

The locale refers to the place where the events of the play take place, for example, in the rural area like Mahlabathini. The temporal setting or background in a play refers to the time during which events occur, for example, during the Bhambatha rebellion. The social circumstances as a setting give information with regard to the conditions in which characters live, for example, in a poor family or in a crime free society.

Another important aspect of setting is highlighted by Roberts (1998: 91) who says:

Setting refers to natural and artificial scenery or environment in which characters in literature live and move, together with the things they use.

This argument by Roberts suggests that the playwright has a wide choice with regard to the sources from which to draw for his settings in a play. There are also various techniques that can be employed by the author to depict setting in a literary work. In most cases, the expository technique is used. In this method, the setting is not only mentioned but also described in detail so as to give a vivid picture about where the events take place. Action and dialogue of the characters can also be used by the playwright to denote setting. The dialogue of the characters may, for instance, include slang or Tsotsitaal so as to denote a township setting. Mafela (1996: 109) contends that:

Language is another important instrument used to establish setting. From what the character says and how he communicates with the others, a reader is able to identify the place and time of the occurrence of the story.

The importance of a setting in a play is also highlighted by Msimang (1986: 87) who argues that besides giving us the locale, time and social conditions, setting is also important because of its:

...relevance to the other aspects of the narrative, especially style, characterisation, theme and plot.



Although Msimang's argument is based on the narrative of a novel, we feel that the relevance of setting is applicable to a radio play as well. The close relationship between setting and other elements of fiction is highlighted by Wood (1999: 145) who says:

Setting can be as important to a story as characterisation or plot and requires as much descriptive attention as any other element of fiction. Give it the care it deserves, your reward will be a story that feels authentic and unified.

### 3.2 TYPES OF SETTING

As we have mentioned, there are three aspects which the setting is comprised of, namely, the locale, time and social circumstances against which the play is set. Let us consider how Ntuli handles these aspects in some of his one-act radio plays.

#### 3.2.1 PHYSICAL/GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING

This aspect of a setting refers to the locale or the geographical location in which a scene or events of a play take place. Mafela (1996: 87) says:

Place is a physical world in which people live. In literature, place is an imaginary inhabitable space in which characters live. Even objects such as a car and a box may be considered as place, as long as they are related to human occupation, either actual or imagined.

Ntuli uses different types of locale for his plays. There are plays that take place in rural areas. Examples of these are Isomiso, Umthakathi, and Lala Ngokuthula. Ntuli also uses semi-urban areas as a setting for his plays. This can be seen in plays like Inguquko, Elamanqamu, and Azikhwelwa which take place in townships. There are also plays which take place indoors as well as those with an outdoor setting.

In most cases, Ntuli uses sound effects to indicate the locale where the events occur. Usually the sound effects that are used are those that a listener can easily associate with the place that is the setting of the play. In Lala Ngokuthula, for example, Ntuli

uses appropriate sound effects to indicate a rural locale. To show this, Ntuli simply states:

*Umsindo wasemakhaya-ekuseni.*

(Ntuli, 1988: 69)

*Rural sounds-in the morning.*

The use of the above sound effects immediately triggers the listener's imagination. He imagines a rural setting in which the sound effects that he hears in the play can be found. There is no need for an interpreter to point out that the events that are going to unfold take place in a rural area.

In other cases Ntuli does not use sound effects to indicate locale but allows his characters to mention the venue where the action takes place. This happens, for example, in UmSamariya Olungileyo where we hear Xaba thinking aloud:

XABA: Angithandi neze ukuba kuze kube mnyama kakhulu ngimi  
lapha emgwaqeni ngoba sekwande nezigebengu.

(Ntuli, 1988: 55)

XABA: I hate to wait here on the road until it gets dark. The  
criminals are on the rampage.

In the above extract, the sound effects that we hear are those of the night, which of course give no clue to the exact locale because they can be heard at any geographical location. It is only through Xaba's words that we are able to know that the play takes place on the roadside where gangsters can pounce on a victim at any time.

With regard to this type of locale, Herbert (2000:99) comments that:

An essential aspect of the setting is the atmosphere or mood of the place,  
the emotional feeling that surrounds and fills it.

There is suspense which is created by the mood that is felt in the locale in which we find Xaba. We know how dangerous it is to be stranded on the road at night. The mood and the atmosphere of the place arouse emotions of sympathy towards Xaba.

The listener will therefore be compelled to listen further so as to know the outcome of Xaba's predicaments.

Ntuli also uses the same strategy in Elamanqamu. He does not use sound effects to inform us about where the action takes place. We only get this information from the words that are uttered by Thoko:

THOKO: Sebeqale le ndaba yabo laba bafana baleli lokishi?  
(Ntuli, 1990:26)

THOKO: Have the boys of this township started their nuisance?

In most of Ntuli's plays there is no mention of the name of the place where the action takes place. If the play takes place in a rural place, Ntuli chooses any rural area as a setting. If he chooses a township setting, he does not confine himself to a specific township. This can be seen in Inguquko where we get vital information about the setting without the help of sound effects from the character's dialogue:

NDLOVU: Cha-ke lobu buluhlaza bazo buzosigulisa thina esesihlale singakhululekile ngalo moya osuhlasele kuleli lokishi.

(Ntuli, 1992:26)

NDLOVU: Well, their rudeness will make us sick, especially those of us who are no longer happy about the atmosphere prevailing in this township.

The name of this township is not given. There are also no sound effects that suggest a township setting. We assume that Ntuli wants to illustrate that the events of the play can take place at any township. This lack of limitations also adds an aspect or element of universality to Ntuli's plays. This also serves as an advantage to the listener because his imagination is not restricted to the township of the playwright's choice. The listener can create his or her own township in his or her mind.

We do feel, however, that this affects, to some extent, plausibility of some of Ntuli's plays. We believe that if the playwright mentions that the play takes place in Soweto or

at Ngwelezane, for instance, more weight is added to the content of the play and makes it more convincing and appealing to the listeners. The listeners are convinced that this is not necessarily a work of fiction which can be regarded as a fable or just pure lies but that it is real and factual because it happens at a specified place.

Roberts (1988:95) distinguishes between two types of locale, namely the natural and the manufactured. He argues that writers usually choose a natural setting in which most of the events occur outdoors. He attributes this tendency to the fact that:

Nature, in short, is one of the major forces governing the circumstances of the characters who experience life and try to resolve their conflicts in literary works.

We note that Ntuli also uses the natural type of a locale in some of his plays. Most of them occur outdoors where forces of nature dominate. The use of a natural environment heightens the listener's expectations about the course of the events because he associates a particular natural locale with certain experiences which may either be good or bad. A deep, black forest, for example, is associated with danger and evil.

In Umthakathi, for instance, the play starts with a scene in the open veld. This information is provided to the listener by Sikhwili:

SIKHWILI: Fakazi, mfo kababa, mina ngibona sengathi akusenakufika muntu ozoganga lapha emathuneni. Asisale sesihamba.  
(Ntuli, 1992:1)

SIKHWILI: Fakazi, my brother, I think no one will come and temper with these graves now. We may as well go.

The fact that the events occur at a graveyard evokes instant fear and apprehension on the listener. He associates graves with witchcraft, ghosts and all sort of evil. To the listener, a grave is a sacred place which must never be tempered with. When Sikhwili mentions that there are people who are suspected of this, it becomes clear to the listener that the play is likely to deal with witchcraft and other evil practices. Ntuli uses

a natural setting like this one to create suspense in his play and as a result the listener wants to hear the outcome of the events.

We therefore commend Ntuli's choice of natural settings to create suspense in his plays. We feel that it is the use of natural settings that make his plays so popular with the listeners because nature is close to most people's hearts and is a vital vehicle for triggering listeners' imagination.

It is disturbing, however, to note that Ntuli often chooses a natural setting to depict evil and dangerous events. To him nature seems to represent evil and serves as the venue where undesirable things occur. In Isando, for example, the river, which is a natural setting, is used as a location where Zikhwepha tries to kill Vusi. This is obviously in contrast with what nature means to many listeners. This makes his plays lack balance because he does not use nature to portray heart-warming occasions like the strolling of lovers near a stream, or the joyful playing of children in the parks.

As we have noted, another type of a locale is that in which 'manufactured' things are used as a setting. Roberts (1988:95) cites an indoor locale as an example of this type of locale. He says:

Manufactured things always reflect the people who made them. A building or room tells about the people who built it and live in it.

According to this observation, an expensively decorated room used as a setting will demonstrate the exquisite taste of the inhabitants. The cracks on the walls of a sparsely furnished room will suggest an imbalance in the possessions and personality of a character who occupies that room.

An example of the implications of a manufactured locale is illustrated clearly in Ngicela Uxolo. The room which is used as the setting of the play tells us a lot about the character's personality, social and economic circumstances and in a way explains why he acts in a certain way. Malusi, the owner of the house provides this information:

MALUSI: Hhayi, phela yisinqalanqala lesi, le ndlu bayakha ngempela.

Ingani sase sikhapha nesibhongo.  
(Ntuli, 1988:43)

MALUSI: Of course this is sturdiness at its best. They really built this house well. Indeed we were trying to make up for the past.

The sturdiness of Malusi's house suggests that he also has a very strong personality. He seems to be a man of his words, who hardly changes his mind once he has taken a decision. We immediately see the evidence of this unwavering personality when Malusi adamantly refuses to change his mind about his hostile attitude towards his father.

What we also observe is that most of Ntuli's plays show that he is extremely careful when choosing an appropriate locale as a setting for his plays. The variety of locations that he picks is quite refreshing and vital in expelling monotony, stereotypes and platitudes that often prevail in one-act radio plays that are written by other artists.

The only glaring weakness and shortcoming in Ntuli's choice of locale is that there is vagueness that surrounds some of the settings of his plays. At times there is no indication as to where the play takes place. It is sometimes difficult for the listener to know, for example, whether the play takes place in a rural or urban area. This confusion often happens when there are no sound effects which can easily suggest and identify the type of locale for the benefit of the listener. In Isipho SikaKhisimuzi and Umshumayeli, for instance, the listener is not in a position to know the exact type of the locale of the play. Even though there are sound effects like sounds of cars, buses and telephones, these do not indicate whether the play takes place in a rural or urban locale.

The lack of this information, however, does not temper with the plausibility of the plot and content of these plays. In other words, the plays still make sense even if there is no indication of the locale. This shows that Ntuli does not worry himself with giving many unnecessary details in his one-act radio plays. Priority always seems to fall on economy, brevity and the conveying of the message for the listener's enjoyment.

### 3.2.1.1 SYMBOLIC ASPECTS OF PHYSICAL SETTING

An author may use setting to convey message in a symbolic manner. According to Cohen (1973: 29):

A setting may itself be symbolic. That is, although it emerges concretely, it at the same time suggests a larger meaning which fuses with the tangible manifestations the author depicts.

Ntuli uses physical setting in his plays in a symbolic manner. Graveyards, for instance, are a physical setting that has a symbolic feature in Ntuli's one-act radio plays. In African culture, graves are revered as resting-place for the departed. They are a sacred place that one is not even allowed to point a finger at. The sacred nature of a grave is best illustrated by Mayekiso (1994:154) who elaborates:

In Zulu traditional society, graves may not be disturbed in any way and are never exhumed. In case a grave stands in a field, the plough will plough around, leaving it intact to remain recognisable in the field.

In Lala Ngokuthula, some scenes take place at the cemetery and the grave is used to symbolise moral decay, evil secrets and lack of ubuntu. Ndelu displays a false outward virtue of generosity, honour and social responsibility. The events in the play, however, show that underneath he hides abominable deeds that are symbolised by the grave that may look beautiful outside but underneath, a rotten, maggot-infested corpse is buried.

The digging up of Msomi's grave symbolises the rooting out of evil in the society, especially the scandals that are often associated with funeral undertakers. Ntuli therefore uses a grave to symbolise the manner in which Ndelu's deeds and secrets are exposed. When these secrets are exposed, what surfaces is that Ndelu uses his generosity as a mask for hiding abominable evil deeds, just as the grave hides rotten and foul-smelling corpses.

In Umthakathi, the grave again features as a symbolic element. Mthethwa, who is an elderly but highly respected and successful traditional doctor is accused of witchcraft,

simply because he is seen near a grave at night by Fakazi and Sikhwili. His remonstrations and explanations fall on deaf ears. He is taken to the king who summons Thothotho, a sangoma. The latter declares Mthethwa guilty. As a last resort, the king hides his snuff-spoon and asks Mthethwa to find it. When Mthethwa finds it, this proves his innocence. In this play, Ntuli evidently uses the grave as a setting to show that many people are wrongly accused of deeds that they have never committed.

The grave in this play symbolises the burying of all prejudice, specifically against traditional doctors who are often accused of witchcraft.

In isiZulu, we often speak of *ukuzimbela igodi noma ingcwaba*, to dig one's own grave. This happens to Thothotho, who is a sangoma but falsely accuses Mthethwa of witchcraft. It is apparent that the king is going to sentence him to death:

INKOSI:....Sala lapha sixoxe Thothotho. Kuningi esisazokuxoxa....  
(Ntuli, 1991:15)

INKOSI: ....Remain here Thothotho so that we talk. There is a lot that we need to discuss.

These words from the king are pregnant with sad news for Thothotho. He has indeed dug his own grave.

Ntuli sometimes uses indoor setting to symbolises security. In *Elamanqamu*, the whole play takes place indoors. This happens against the backdrop of victimisation, brutality and violence that take place outside in the township streets. Maseko's house, for instance, is burnt down by vigilantes because he stubbornly ventures outside in defiance of a call for a stay away. Bongwiwe's house, on the other hand is spared because she and her mother remain indoors throughout the turmoil.

In *Ngicela Uxolo*, Malusi's house is used as an indoor setting to symbolise pride, selfishness and cruelty. This is evident when Malusi refuses to open the door when a stranger knocks on a stormy night:

MALUSI:...Kungabi ngabantu abafuna usizo ebusuku kangaka.



Angizimisele neze ukuphumela amakhaza anje mina.  
(Ntuli, 1988: 44)

MALUSI: ...It must not be people who need help at such a late hour. I am not prepared to venture out into the cold.

When the setting is outdoors, the aim seems to symbolise vulnerability of the characters concerned. In UmSamariya Olungileyo, Xaba and Luthuli are stranded on the road at night. This exposes them to dangers and fears that make them act against their conscience and beliefs as ministers. As a result, they fail to help a man who desperately needs their help. We believe that this would not have been the case, had an *indoor setting been used*.

Weather conditions are sometimes used by Ntuli to denote symbolic features of setting in the play. In Isomiso, for instance, the drought and lack of rain symbolises the lack of hope and joy in the characters' lives. The sun is specifically referred to as the main cause of the problems in the play:

MAZULU: Wo, libalele nanamuhla. Akukho themba lokuthi ingana imvula.  
(Ntuli, 1988:3)

MAZULU: Wo, the sun is hot again today. There is no hope that the rain may fall.

Ntuli uses clouds and rain to symbolise hope and solutions to MaZulu's problems:

MAZULU:...Avamile amafu ukuba aqhamuke laphaya uma eza nemvula.  
(Ntuli, 1988:12)

MAZULU: ...Clouds usually emerge from there when they come with the rain.

The rain clouds are used symbolically, not only to refer to the imminent change in weather condition, but also to changes in MaZulu's circumstances. The approaching

clouds that she points at coincide with the news that Zinhle will sit for the exams. The doctor's car is also approaching. There are going to be showers of joy indeed!

Ntuli uses inclement weather conditions to symbolise problems and turmoil in the lives of the characters in the play. In *Ngicela Uxolo*, the strong, cold wind that blows fiercely throughout the play is used to symbolise Malusi's emotional turmoil that is caused by the arrival of his father who abandoned him forty years ago and has come for forgiveness. Malusi chases him away, but later regrets when he finds a letter in which his father explains everything. The wind still blows as he searches for his father in the storm. He eventually finds him dead and his hopes of staying with his father are blown irretrievably away:

MALUSI: (*Ngokukhala*) Baba, uze ungixolele... Yimina okumele ngicele uxolo kuwe. Bengingazi.  
*Isiphepho sibhoke kakhulu*  
(Ntuli, 1988:52)

MALUSI: (*Crying*) Father, please forgive me... I am the one who should ask for forgiveness. I did not know.  
*The storm intensifies*

The intensity of the storm symbolises the intensity of Malusi's dilemma and turmoil that blow away his dreams of future happiness.

### 3.2.2 TEMPORAL SETTING

Setting can also be used to denote the time when the action occurs or the events of a play take place. This can indicate, for example, time of the day, season of the year or even a certain period in the history of a community. The playwright therefore chooses a certain outstanding period or time in the life of a character around which to weave his plot and theme.

Ntuli uses different devices to indicate time as a setting in his plays. In this regard again, he depends on the appropriate sound effects to indicate the time of the day

during which the play happens. In most cases this happens right at the beginning of the play. In Umthakathi, for instance, the listener immediately recognises the sound effects that are used and simply stated:

*(Imisindo yasebusuku)*

(Ntuli, 1992:1)

*(Night sounds)*

The significance of these sound effects is that the listeners need not be told about time during which the play happens. This proves effective in creating the right mood for the events that are going to unfold.

In some cases Ntuli avoids using sound effects to show time as a setting of the action. We as listeners are told about the time in the play by the characters themselves. In Ngicela Uxolo, we know that the events occur at night because of what Malusi says in the play:

MALUSI: Phela abufiki ubuthongo...Nokho Mavis kumele silale.  
Kusile kusasa, kumele sisheshe sihambe.  
(Ntuli, 1988:43)

MALUSI: Sleep does not come. But we have to sleep, Mavis.  
It will soon be tomorrow, and we have to depart early.

It is, however, not in all cases that Ntuli provides the listeners with all the necessary information like sound effects or the characters' comments at the beginning of play to indicate the time during which the play takes place. This happens when the events of the play do not necessarily depend on a specific time of the day. The listeners in this case can only assume that the events occur during the day.

In some cases, the time span of the play overlaps. In other words, the play may start during the day and end at night time or start in the morning and end in the afternoon. This is very common in Ntuli's plays because of his ability to handle unity of time in an outstanding manner in his plays. This can be seen in a play like Isithembu which starts at night and end the following morning.

As we mentioned earlier, time does not only indicate the time of the day but also the time of the year and events that are associated with a particular time. In most cases, such periods or events cannot be indicated by using sound effects. In Elamanqamu we are made aware that the play takes place during examination times. Obviously, it could have been very difficult to indicate this time by means of sound effects. We have to depend on the information that is provided by Thoko:

THOKO: Cha-ke, i-*Mathematics* yona ngeke isadabula. Uma ngiphase yona kahle kusasa, nakanjani bayongithatha eyunivesithi.  
(Ntuli, 1990:25)

THOKO: Well, Mathematics won't elude me. If I pass it well tomorrow, surely I'll be admitted at university.

We can detect in Thoko's voice an anxiety which is typical of the examination fever that prevails during this time. This creates a mood which enhances suspense on the part of the listener. We know that Thoko's hopes and dreams of going to university depend on her ability to pass Mathematics. This suspense makes us as listeners eager to listen to the play so as to know whether Thoko's dreams will come true.

We therefore applaud Ntuli's skill in choosing the time of the year that is perfect for suspense and tension in the play. The time that he chooses depicts a strong sense of urgency which compels listeners to be 'glued' to the radio because they sympathise with the characters who unfortunately don't have all the time in the world to solve the problem at hand in the play.

Ntuli also uses the title of the play to denote the time as setting of the play. This can be seen in Isipho SikaKhisimuzi. The listener is familiar with the Christmas time and all the celebrations that accompany it. The title of the play in this case serves to attract the listener to the play. The listener has some expectations about the events that are going to unfold in the play because he identifies this time of the year with certain activities and behaviour. The time that is chosen by Ntuli therefore creates a festive mood and sets the listener's imagination in motion.

The title is also used to indicate time in Isomiso. The mere mention of drought makes the listener's mind conjure up haunting images of poverty, barren land and dry, thirsty rivers. The terrible conditions that prevail during the time of drought are reiterated by MaZulu in her first utterance in the play:

MAZULU: Wo, libalele nanamuhla. Akukho themba lokuthi ingana imvula. Namasimu engangithi ngiwalimile omile. Nezinkomo zifa malanga onke...  
(Ntuli, 1988:3)

MAZULU: Wo, it is very hot today. There is no hope that the rain will fall. The fields that I had ploughed are dry. Even the cattle die every day.

If the title of the play cannot hint at the time of action, Ntuli uses a musical theme which the listener associates with a particular time. In Isiphosiso, for example, the musical theme of the play tells the listeners that the play takes place at Christmas time. It is remarkable that with regard to Ntuli's plays, such a theme is not provided by the producer of the play, but is indicated by Ntuli on the original script by specifying clearly:

*Ibika-(Ingoma kaKhisimuzi)*  
(Ntuli, 1988:29)

*Theme song-(A Christmas carol)*

The above extract shows that Ntuli knows the importance of time as setting for the play. He knows that different times and events of the year influence the listener's response to the play. It becomes imperative for Ntuli therefore to indicate explicitly that a specific theme be used in his play to arouse the listener's interest.

The timing of the period during which some of Ntuli's one-act radio plays were broadcast on the radio is also worth mentioning. If, for instance, the play is broadcast on Christmas day, to the listener the impression is that the events of the play take place here and now. This brings the play closer to the listener and guarantees his undivided attention. This is in harmony with what is observed by Soni (1990:12) who says:

Drama lives in the 'now' of the audience...as well as the 'now' of the period in which the action is supposed to have taken place.

In using time as setting in his plays, Ntuli seems to choose the times and occasions that create certain expectations on the part of the listener. If a play happens at night, for example, there are many things that a listener can associate with this time of the day. The listener immediately visualises mental images of gangsters, ghosts, witches and all types of evil and perils. In UmSamariva Olungileyo Ntuli chooses the time that makes us sympathise with Xaba and Luthuli who desperately need help in the middle of the night on a dangerous road. We are aware of the dangers to which they are exposed. This creates anxiety and suspense in us as listeners.

We feel that the time as setting in the play is vital in drawing the listener's attention to the play and in creating the right mood for the events of the play to take place. Ntuli's success as the playwright can therefore be attributed to his ability to take into consideration the right choice of time as setting for his one-act radio plays.

### 3.2.2.1 SYMBOLIC FEATURES OF TEMPORAL SETTING

Ntuli uses time or temporal setting not only to indicate when the events in the play take place, but also as symbolism for the course of events in the play and the fate that will eventually befall the characters. Sunrise, for instance, is used by Ntuli to symbolise the rising of the characters' hopes in the play. In Ijekiphothi KaKhisimuzi, sunrise coincides with the return of Mandla who had earlier on in the play attempted to commit suicide because of his failure to resolve his marital problems. His return signals a fresh start for him and his wife. His mother is also filled with immense joy:

MASIBIYA: (*Ememeza*) Ake nibheke empumalanga bantabami.  
Niyabona ukuthi ilanga liphuma lilihle kanjani ngalo Khisimuzi?

MASIBIYA: (*Shouting*) Just look at the east, my children. Do you see how beautiful the sun is as it rises this Christmas?

We believe that sunrise as the time during which events take place in this scene symbolises the start of a new life for the characters. This makes us agree with Mathenjwa (1999: 191) who says:

When the sun emerges to start a new day, it opens a window of opportunity to new happenings and incidents.

Sunset, on the other hand is used by Ntuli to symbolise despair, hopelessness and even death of some characters. In *Isando*, the setting sun symbolises the imminent death of Zikhwili who has been hit by a truck after trying to murder Vusi. In *Ucingo*, sunset is a source of despair to Magwaza:

MAGWAZA: ...Bheka manje seliyashona. Bekuvele kukhona okungangiphathi kahle ngalolu cingo.

MAGWAZA: ...Look, the sun is going down. There was indeed something that worried me about this telegram.

The time at which the play takes place has symbolic importance to Ntuli. Most of his plays take place at night time. Night time is therefore used to symbolise problems, conflict, danger and anxiety. In most cases Ntuli uses night time sound effects to indicate this or make his characters refer directly to the time of the night. In *Umtitilizo*, Ntuli uses night time to symbolise a crisis in Dolly's life:

*Imisindo yasebusuku*

DOLLY: (*Ekhuluma Yedwa*) Ewu, sekusebusuku ngempela manje. Namehlo aseqala ukubaba nje. Noma ngifunda akusangeni kahle. Kodwa ngizokwenzenjani ngoba kusekuningi nje engingakakufundi? (Ntuli, 1983:67)

*Night sounds*

DOLLY: (*To herself*) It's night time now. My eyes have started aching. I can't absorb what I am studying. What am I going to do because there is still a lot that I haven't read?

Night time seems to complicate Dolly's problems and makes us realise that Ntuli has used the night not only to indicate the time of the day but to denote the intensity of Dolly's problems.

It is also remarkable that most of Ntuli's plays start at night and end the following morning. Dawn in this case is used to indicate the dawn of hope in the characters' lives. In Ucingo, Nduduzo, whose parents have given up hope of his arrival after a night-long wait, arrives in the morning. This symbolises the start of a new life for Nduduzo. The same can be said of the morning time as used in Isithembu. The conflict in the play starts at night when Nomusa announces her intention to marry a married man. Mthembu is against this and it is only on the following morning that he decides to let her daughter marry Sibanyoni. Morning time in this play is used to symbolise a new way of thinking, a willingness to start afresh, an opening up to new challenges and possibilities on the part of Mthembu.

Ntuli also uses certain times of the year in a symbolic manner. In Isiphosiso, events occur during Christmas, the time of the year associated with celebrations, joy and merriment. To Mkhize and his wife, this time symbolises the fulfilment of their dreams to have a child of their own. This is evident in that at the end of the play, they get a wonderful present in the form of a child they have wanted for so many years.

In Isipho SikaKhisimuzi, however, Christmas period symbolises grief and pain to Xulu:

XULU: Into embi nje ngukuthi nalo Khisimuzi uzowudla kabi ngigula.  
Ngangethemba ukuthi ngeke kungiphinde ukugula ngalesi sikhathi.  
Sengiyabona-ke ukuthi yisabelo sami. Sekufana nesipho engamukeliswa  
sona njalo ngoKhisimuzi.  
(Ntuli, 1988: 83)

XABA: The bad thing is that you will spend this Christmas while  
I am ill. I was hoping that I wasn't going to be ill again this time.  
But now I realise that it is my destiny. It is like a present that I am  
given every time on Christmas.

Ntuli also uses examination time to symbolise challenges and anxieties. In Umtitilizo, Dolly is faced with a huge challenge of writing final examinations. She does not seem to possess intelligence that can secure her a pass. This leads her into temptation to buy examination papers. In Elamanqamu, Thoko wants to sit for her exams. There are, however, death threats to those who defy a call for a stayaway. Thoko has to make crucial decisions: must she sacrifice her future by heeding this call or must she



endanger her life by defying it and writing her final exams? We are convinced that Ntuli chooses this time of the year to symbolise the debate, dilemma and anxiety that people are sometimes faced with in life.

### 3.2.3 SOCIAL SETTING

Setting can also be used to denote the social conditions in which characters live and under which the events in the play take place. We therefore concur with Soni (1990:64) who contends that:

*The 'social circumstances' of a particular play must therefore represent the atmosphere in which action and characters live, prosper, fight, fail or prevail.*

It is also imperative that the play displays conditions which the listeners are familiar with or which are within their scope of imagination. A skillful playwright will choose conditions which appeal to the listeners so as to achieve as positive a response as possible. The difficult question however is what to choose and how to portray this in a manner that will arouse the listener's interest in the play.

There are various types of social conditions that one encounters in Ntuli's one-act radio plays. In most of his plays, characters are faced with certain problems which have to be solved as soon as possible. These problems are mostly not confined to the characters concerned but also face the whole society in which they live. Ntuli often chooses one character to represent the problems, experiences and aspirations of the whole society. We are therefore able to understand the plight of the character against the background of the conditions that prevail in the society that a character represents in the play.

In Isomiso , for example, Ntuli introduces us to a community that lives under harsh and miserable conditions. This is caused by a drought that has lasted a very long time. This community is represented by MaZulu whose predicament and complaints are certainly common among the community members:

MAZULU: Wo, libalele nanamuhla. Akukho themba lokuthi ingana imvula. Namasimu engangithi ngiwalimile omile. Nezinkomo zifa zonke izinsuku.  
(Ntuli, 1988:3)

Wo, it is very hot today. There is no hope that the rain will fall. The fields that I had tried to plough are dry. Even the cattle die everyday.

MaZulu seems to speak on behalf of the whole community. The listener is sure that it is not only MaZulu's cattle that perish as a result of the drought. This is the harsh reality of the social conditions against which this play is set. Conditions like these create a mood that touches the listener's heart and emotions, thereby making him immediately hope that MaZulu as well as the society's miserable conditions will change for the better.

In Indlala, we find Nxumalo who is one of the victims of retrenchments. His plight shows the tragic conditions of frustration under which he lives. There is no doubt that he has lost hope that conditions will improve:

NXUMALO: Okunciphisa ithemba yikho ukuthi uma ngifika endaweni ngizikhalela, ngibika nokuthi sidiliziwe lapho ebengisebenza khona, nabo bavele bathi bayadiliza.

(Ntuli, 1990:39)

What dispels hope is that when I arrive at a place and lament about my having been retrenched where I have been working, they also say they are retrenching.

When we hear these sad words we immediately sympathise with Nxumalo. We know and understand how painful it is to lose a job. Ntuli uses a setting like this to direct our emotions to wish that Nxumalo could find employment in spite of all the hardships that block his way.

These two examples reveal that in some of his plays Ntuli depicts characters who live under social conditions over which they have no control. Such conditions result in hunger, frustration and lost of hope which is reflected in the character's dialogue and

actions. This of course creates in a play a mood and atmosphere which evokes sympathy in the listener and makes him wish that the conditions could eventually favour a certain character in the play.

Ntuli also uses settings which depict upheavals in the lives of the characters and the society at large. This often happens when a township or an urban area is used as a setting. Characters in such a setting live under conditions and circumstances which force them to live in constant fear for their lives because of violence and insecurity that prevail in townships. In most cases the characters in the play have to suppress their beliefs, convictions and aspirations which are at war with those of a certain sector of the community.

In Elamanqamu, for example, the situation is such that it is impossible for Thoko to write her Mathematics examination paper the following day. It has been announced that residents of her township will be mourning the death of those who were killed 'in the struggle' the previous year. Nobody will be expected to go to work or to school. Those who defy this call will be dealt with 'accordingly.' This fact is emphasised by the boys who come to Thoko's home to warn her against going to school to sit for her final examination:

UMFANA 1: Yisicelo, kodwa lowo ongasemukeli uyobona  
ngokushunqa kwentuthu...lokho kuyokwenzeka kusasa.  
(Ntuli, 1990:25)

UMFANA 1: It's a request, but the one who doesn't accept it  
will have his house burnt down....that will happen tomorrow.

Circumstances which show characters being subjected to threats and intimidation are also used by Ntuli in the setting for Inguquko. Nduduzo is summoned to accompany other township youngsters to 'discipline' those who are regarded as a stumbling block to the intentions of the township activists. Nduduzo does not seem to have a choice with regard to this situation:

NDUDUZO: ...Inkinga eba khona ngukuthi uma befuna umuntu  
yena azabalaze, lowo muntu uthathwa njengempimpi. Usengozini

njalo nje. Uma abazali bakhe bala naye nendlu yabo nje isingaze ifakwe umlilo.  
(Ntuli, 1992:31)

NDUDUZO:.... The problem arises when they want someone and that person resists, he is regarded as a sell-out. He is in constant danger. If his parents refuse to let him go, their house may be set on fire.

This statement makes the listener realise the difficult circumstances against which the play is set. The violent atmosphere that is depicted in this play causes anxiety and suspense on the listener's part. The only thing which can stop this anxiety and suspense will be to listen further. These circumstances also force the listener to sympathise with Nduduzo and his parent who have to make difficult choices. The listener wants to know if as the play progresses, Nduduzo will obey his parents and defy the vigilantes or will succumb to the call for full participation in the activities of his peers.

When one listens to Ntuli's plays it becomes clear that he chooses a setting that best depicts the theme of the play concerned. Social conditions of the characters are often relevant to the events that take place in the play.

There are various social conditions that are explored by Ntuli in his plays. Most, if not all of these conditions, evoke certain emotions in the listeners. Most of Ntuli's characters are always in situations which arouse the listener's curiosity and eagerness to hear the outcome of the character's dilemma.

Characters that are used by Ntuli are usually single parents faced with the huge and demanding task of raising and educating their children. This is the case in Isomiso. MaZulu is a poor, sickly widow whose only hope is Zinhle, her daughter who is unfortunately expelled from the university. In Elamanqamu, MaNgcobo is a single parent who is also faced with the challenge of raising a child in a violent township. In Isithembu, Mthembu is a widower who has a grown-up daughter that has decided to leave him and marry an already married man.

At times, the peaceful conditions of trust, harmony and hospitality that prevail in the lives of the characters who are chosen by Ntuli to represent a certain community, are interfered with by an outsider. This happens in Umshumayeli. The characters in this play lead a God-fearing way of life. They are innocent, ignorant ministers of religion who help a person who claims to have been attacked and mugged by robbers. At the end of the play, however, it is revealed that this man is not a preacher as he repeatedly points out, but a criminal who has pounced on many unsuspecting ministers of religion. His criminal exploits therefore interfere with the peaceful way of life of the characters in the play.

In NginguMenziwa, Sithole and MaSokhulu are a happy couple that leads a relatively successful life. They are also held in high esteem by the society in which they live. Peace and calm seem to dominate their lives. When an unknown man phones, however, this prevailing tranquillity is suddenly disturbed. Their happiness is dispelled because this stranger is determined to revenge what he claims Sithole did to him in the past. This sudden disturbance affects the listener as well and makes him sympathise with this family.

Our observation in Ntuli's setting with regard to social conditions that prevail in the characters' lives is that he chooses conditions that demonstrate the plight of the characters in the play. This serves to evoke emotions of sympathy and anxiety in the listeners. This results in suspense. It is therefore for this reason that we agree with Griffiths (1989:24) who attests that:

Suspense requires sympathy with the characters. If we do not care for them, it does not much matter if they do suffer a severe reversal.

### 3.2.3.1 SYMBOLIC FUNCTION OF SOCIAL CONDITIONS

Ntuli uses certain social conditions to symbolise various tendencies in the society. Some of the plays such as Elamanqamu, Inguquko, Azikhwela take place against a background of political turmoil and turbulent conditions in the society. Conditions like these symbolise conflict that prevail in the society. In Inguquko, for instance, there is

conflict between the youth and the parents. The youth want to introduce changes while parents want to retain the old order. In Azikhwelwa, there is conflict between the unemployed people who have struggled for ages to get work and the determined leaders who feel that authorities and employers should be confronted with demands for better wages and living conditions, regardless of possible job losses.

In some plays, characters live under certain conditions that symbolise insecurity. Crime is always the major source of such insecurity and vulnerability. In Umshumayeli, church ministers are the victims of a criminal who fleeces them of their meagre earnings. This shows that nobody is secure if criminals can be so daring as to pounce on people who are regarded as the Lord's people. The sense of insecurity also prevails in UmSamariya Olungileyo. In this play, ministers of religion, who are expected to always lend a helping hand, fail to do so because they fear for their lives. Conditions like these are used by Ntuli to symbolise the prevalent insecurity, fear and vulnerability in the lives of the characters and people in real life.

Difficult social conditions symbolise the change in the values of the society. In Indlala, for instance, Ntuli depicts social conditions that reveal poverty and desperation that exposes victims to exploitation and humiliation:

NXUMALO: Sikhulekile mnumzane.

MABHALANE: Awu, baba ungaze uthi mnumzane kimi ngimncane kangaka?

NXUMALO: Ngihlonipha isikhundla sakho phela, ngoba kusho ukuthi sesifana nezingane thina, nina nibadala..

(Ntuli, 1990: 42)

NXUMALO: Greetings, *mnumzane*.

MABHALANE: Father, do you have to call me *mnumzane* when I am so young?

NXUMALO: I respect your position, which means we have become like children and you are old.

This shows that young people no longer treat adults with the respect and honour that they rightly deserve. Nxumalo has to humble himself because he is desperate. We see this when the play progresses:

MABHALANE: Awu, unqume ukubuya Zwide?

NXUMALO: Yebo Ndaba. Noma ungxoshise okwenja izolo, ngithe angibuye ngoba yimi engihluphekile; yimi okumele ngikhonze.  
(Ntuli, 1990: 45)

MABHALANE: You decided to come back Zwide?

NXUMALO: Yes Ndaba. Although you chased me away like a dog yesterday, I decided to come back as I am the one who is in need; I am the one who should be submissive.

The above excerpt illustrates the harsh manner with which this young clerk responds to Nxumalo's search for employment. Conditions like these are a daily occurrence and are used by Ntuli in this play to symbolise ill-treatment and abuse that old people suffer in the hands of young people for various reasons.

### 3.3 CONCLUSION

Our attempt in this chapter was to discuss the various manifestations of setting as used in Ntuli's one-act radio plays. We have seen that setting also forms a vital aspect in a play in that it forms the general background against which the play takes place and forms the backbone for the events that will unfold as the play progresses. Its importance lies in that it creates a right mood for the events of the play to take place. It is quite clear that the key to the success of the play depends on the setting that the playwright chooses for his play. If the setting does not appeal, listeners will not be interested in listening to the whole play.

In this chapter, we also noted that Ntuli chooses the type of a setting that is relevant for the effective depiction of theme, plot, character and even style in the play. It is these different types of settings that reveal the locale, time and social conditions of the play and which render plausibility to Ntuli's plays. We feel that Ntuli's settings have an effective impact on the popularity of his plays with the listeners. This is because Ntuli chooses settings that listeners are familiar with. In his plays we find, for instance, characters who live in conditions where crime and unemployment is rife. The listeners identify with conditions like these because they are a reflection of what takes place in their daily lives. This makes them eager to listen to the play.

There are various effective devices that Ntuli uses to inform the listeners about the setting in his plays. In most cases he uses effective sound effects to help listeners locate and visualise the setting of the play. We noted that the setting that Ntuli uses is always within the scope of the listener's imagination. In other words, Ntuli does not use settings that are found in far away countries or planets that the listener cannot imagine.

In most cases Ntuli allows his characters to tell the listeners about the locale and the social conditions as setting of the play. What is most remarkable about Ntuli's settings is his ability to choose a setting that will evoke emotions and empathy in the listener. This enhances suspense and interest and makes it quite impossible for the listener to *switch the radio off before the play ends*.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate what Masubelele (1989:12) says:

Apparently to many, the setting emerges as something very insignificant, especially when the emphasis and the focus are mainly on the events that take place and have therefore masked it. Yet it is the most vital element of drama in that it gives context to the events in the play.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THEME**

#### **4.0 INTRODUCTION**

One of the most important aspects of a literary work is the theme that depicts the intention of the author in writing a piece of work or the message he conveys through what takes place in the literary work of his creation.

The vital nature of theme is best illustrated by Bosman (1991:140) who says:

Every writer has got, lying around somewhere in a suitcase or a trunk, various parts of a story that he has worked on from time to time and that he has never finished because he hasn't been able to find out how the theme should be handled.

This observation highlights the fact that the theme of a literary work is a delicate, sensitive and extremely crucial issue. The success of the author's creation depends on how he handles theme, which is the aspect around which a piece of literary work centres.

#### **4.1 THEME DEFINED**

Various scholars give numerous definitions of theme. Most of them do agree that a theme should primarily be regarded as what prompts the writer to write. He then decides on the plot which will be the medium through which the theme of his work is going to be portrayed.

In providing the definition of theme, Perrine (1983:105) draws our attention to the vital role of theme in a literary work by saying:

The theme of a piece of fiction is its controlling idea or its central insight.

This definition indicates that we can hardly speak of a piece of literary work that doesn't have a theme. The theme forms the gist of the author's work. In other words, a theme shapes what the author expresses as his views and ideas in a literary work. Without a theme therefore, a piece of a fiction is lifeless and meaningless.

Msimang (1986:133) also concurs that the theme is the central idea in a literary work. He further stipulates that:

The fact that theme is central, implies that everything else, including plot, setting, characters and their action is concerned with conveying that theme.

With regard to the theme of a radio drama, Tshamano (1994:184) says:

Theme may be viewed as the message which the scriptwriter wants to convey to the audience. It is the central idea which the audience arrives at, at the end of the radio drama.

We also agree with many other scholars who emphasise the notion of the theme as the central idea of a story or literary work. We also feel that theme is what shows the intention for which a piece of literary work is presented to us. The defining of theme by many scholars as what the story or play is all about, brings us to another interesting argument. There seems to be confusion in many definitions as to whether there is a difference between a theme and a subject matter in a literary work. Kerr (1956:60) for instance, has this to say:

A theme is a subject or topic of discourse.

An attempt at clearly elucidating the difference between the two terms is also offered by Lenake (1984:15) who argues that:

The term subject matter relates to what is being said in a poem, while theme refers to the underlying idea of the poem. The two concepts appear to be inseparable for literary analysis.

The above definitions, although the latter refers specifically to a poem, show that theme means different things to different people. We note however, that with regard to

a play, most scholars seem to agree that theme has to do with what the play is all about and what the playwright is trying to say through the medium of his play.

For the purpose of this study, our definition and understanding of theme will be in line with the view by Willis (1967:81) who defines theme in two ways. He says:

The term theme is often used to denote the basic subject matter of a play.

He goes further and gives this clarification:

A second way in which theme may be defined is to describe it as a statement about life that is implicit in the action of the play.

Ngara (1982: 15) concurs with Willis and explains:

...What the author sets out to write about is the subject matter...what he says about the subject matter is the theme.

In our analysis of Ntuli's one-act radio plays, we will adopt the definition of theme as both the subject matter of the play and a statement which the playwright puts forward in the play.

What becomes evident in dealing with theme is that it is a very difficult task to point out the theme of the play and there is no prescribed method of doing so. The delicate nature of this task is best expressed by Perrine (1983:109) who says:

Sometimes we will *feel* what the story is about strongly enough and yet find it difficult to put down this feeling into words.

What makes things more difficult is that most scholars agree that a play can have more than one theme. It can also have one dominant theme but in taking a closer look, one can realise that there are related statements made by the playwright which can also be regarded as co-themes. In connection with this, Zulu (1986: 28) contends that:

While the storyteller is paying more attention to the core of the story,

he also comments on peripheral, but related issues which may even be moral lessons in the form of sub-themes. These are known as motifs or sub-ordinate themes.

We have mentioned that theme is the reason for the playwright to embark on a writing adventure. This means that the playwright may convey different themes for different purposes to his listeners. Some themes may be didactic in nature so as to impose a moral lesson on the listeners. The playwright may also convey informative themes which will serve to inform the listener about the playwright's observation on human nature and behaviour as portrayed through characters in the play. In some cases, the play may be for purely entertainment purposes and serve to divert the listener's mind from the commitments and hurdles of the day.

There are certain requirements which a theme must meet in order to incite reaction which may be negative or positive, depending on how the listener interprets the play. Willis (1967:88) states that for a theme to achieve significance:

First, the statement the theme makes about life should be an important one. Second, this statement should be one that is meaningful to as many people as possible.

It is in consideration of such observations that we are going to tackle our discussion of Ntuli's themes. Our aim will be to look at the topics and subject matter that seem to dominate most of Ntuli's one-act radio plays. We are also going to consider the statements that he makes explicitly or indirectly through the subject matter that he chooses for his plays. Most importantly, we are going to illustrate the symbolic aspects of the themes that Ntuli chooses and how this enhances the message of the play.

#### 4.2 TECHNIQUES OF THEME DELINEATION

The author may use various techniques in delineating theme in a literary work. The title, for instance, may be used to suggest the theme of the play. This may be expressed directly and explicitly or merely alluded to or hinted in the title of the play. The use of such a technique may be effective in arousing the listeners' interest and eagerness to

listen to the rest of the play in order to find out how the theme is portrayed through the characters and plot in the play.

On the other hand, however, the use of the title to hint at the theme may have destructive effect on the listeners' response and attitude towards the play. In some cases, if the title discloses the theme, the plot of the play becomes predictable and thus discourages the listeners to listen any further.

Ntuli makes use of the title to indicate the theme of the play. In UmSamariya Olungileyo, the listener can easily predict that the theme will be on helping those who are in need. The same can be said of a self-explanatory title such as Ngicela Uxolo which makes listeners assume without doubt that the play will deal with the issue of forgiveness. In NginguMenziwa, listeners can easily predict that the gist of the play will be on revenge as the theme. Ntuli also uses many other suggestive titles like Isipho SikaKhisimuzi, Isithembu, Kuhle Kwethu! which make it easy for the listeners to have an idea about the theme of the play.

We must hasten to mention, however, that although Ntuli uses titles in order to indicate the theme of the play, the plot and how events will unfold is not disclosed. None of Ntuli's plays are predictable. We therefore believe that Ntuli chooses such title as a device to attract the listener. This is evident in that he chooses titles that the listeners will be familiar with, such as UmSamariya Olungileyo, Azikhwelwa, Kuhle Kwethu and many others. These titles are easily recognisable and associated with *familiar events and issues in the daily lives of the listeners.*

As we have noted in the foregoing discussion, theme is central in the play and may therefore be stated explicitly to the listeners. This can be in the form of what the playwright tells the listeners directly through the characters in the play. The listeners may, for instance be told directly by one of the characters that 'crime does not pay'. This method of delineating theme, however, tends to be overt didacticism and is not suitable for a well-written play.

The theme of the play may also be stated indirectly in the play. In this case, an individual listener comes to his or her own conclusion about the theme of the play without the playwright imposing his views and attitudes. This is of course the reason why the theme of a play can be interpreted differently by individual listeners depending on their perception of and response to the plot through which the theme is portrayed.

Ntuli uses the indirect method to delineate theme in his plays. The listeners are given freedom of choice to interpret the theme of the play. In most cases, a play may have more than one theme, depending of course on the listener's judgement.

#### 4.3 TYPES OF THEMES

Themes can be categorised according to issues that they address or on which they focus. Mafela (1996:25) says:

Themes can be categorised in different ways. Firstly, they can be classified according to the time and place in which the actions occur. These themes can be divided into two types, i.e. topical and universal themes. In topical themes, events take place in a specific limited time and space....there are also themes that are universal, that is, which cover events taking place in unlimited time and space.

Mafela's explanation indicates that an author may address issues that are particularly concerned with a specific society and period or tackle themes that touch on affairs that transcend geographical boundaries and time frames.

With regard to topical themes, Ntuli addresses issues that are particularly relevant and of interest to a specific sector of the society and are confined to a specific time frame. In Umthakathi, for instance, the theme of the play is relevant to the African audience and is confined to the times during which witchcraft was rife and witches were reported to the king and killed instantly.

The same can also be said about Izinkomo ZikaBaba in which Mandlendlovu is murdered when he tries to kill Gumedede whom he accuses of killing his father. The theme of witchcraft, although universal, is treated in a very restrictive and topical

manner in this play. In other words, the events and actions of the characters can only plausibly occur in a rural African setting.

It is interesting to note that very few of Ntuli's play focus on fully topical themes. Most, if not all of his plays address issues of universal relevance. With regard to universal themes, Diamond (1993: 22) says:

This category encompasses themes which have meaning in any cultural group or society as opposed to themes which may only be effective in a Zulu cultural experience.

Ntuli touches a great deal on universal themes in his plays. In *UmSamariva Olungileyo*, for instance, two priests refuse to help a stranger who is stranded on a dangerous road at night. Ironically, when their car has a mechanical failure, it is the very same man who comes to their rescue. This theme is universally relevant. In *Ngcicela Uxolo*, a long lost father returns to seek forgiveness from his son. The son throws him out of the house but later finds out that the father has left him a huge inheritance. Unfortunately it is too late for the son to ask for forgiveness. The theme of forgiveness in this play undoubtedly transcends cultural and geographical boundaries. There are of course many other examples of universal themes that are portrayed by Ntuli in his plays.

#### 4.4 **THEMATIC DISTRIBUTION**

In evaluating Ntuli's plays, one observes that there are recurring comments which seem to prevail in most of his plays. These serve as a portrayal of Ntuli's views about human personality and behaviour and are conveyed to us through characters and events in the plays. For the sake of convenience and due to space constraints, we are going to group Ntuli's themes and subject matter into seven components for discussion hereunder.

##### 4.4.1 **UNEMPLOYMENT**

The theme in some of Ntuli's play is unemployment. This does not come as a surprise because unemployment is one of the most serious problems in our country. Ntuli uses

unemployed characters to highlight the devastating conditions and problems that are caused by lack of job opportunities.

In Azikhwelwa, Ndoda has been searching for work for a number of years. When he eventually finds employment, he is angry to learn that there is a call for a stayaway the following day on which he has to report at work. This is a dilemma for Ndoda. His life is in great danger if he defies the masses and go to work. His family will starve to death if he does not go to work because there is no hope that he may ever be employed. He decides to put the interest of his family first. Unfortunately the results are tragic.

Indlala is about Nxumalo who has also lost hope of finding a job. He has to part with a lot of money to bribe Mbatha, an employment officer who later disappears into thin air with the money. Nxumalo is devastated and vows to kill this cruel man. After searching for him for a long time, he finds him at home with his (Nxumalo's) wife. To his relief, Mbatha explains why he had to cheat on Nxumalo and promises to find him employment.

In this play Ntuli draws our attention to various obstacles and hardships that unemployed people experience in search of employment. In most cases they are vulnerable to exploitation by money mongers who take advantage of their plight and predicaments.

In Isando, we find Zikhwepha who is faced with the problem of unemployment. This turns him into a self-destructive jealous monster. On an afternoon excursion with his friend Vusi, Zikhwepha is provoked by his friend's comments. In a jealous rage, Zikhwepha tries to kill his friend with a hammer. On realising the damage he has caused, he feels remorse and runs for help but is unfortunately run over by a speeding truck.

Again, Ntuli in this play portrays the harsh realities of unemployment and how it affects a person's personality and blurs his or her judgement. The events in the play



make us sympathise with Zikhwepha who is driven to insanity by jealousy caused by the problems that seem to be beyond his control.

The problem of unemployment has devastating effects on Mandla, a character in Ijekiphothi KaKhisimuzi. He resorts to heavy drinking when he fails to find employment and his marriage suffers as a result. He even contemplates suicide. The play however, ends in a happy note when he decides to start life afresh with his family:

MANDLA: ...Ngigcine ngingqumile ukuthi uThembalethu ngumuntu wokuphilelwa. Ngizimisele ukubambisana naye nasemsebenzini wakhe wokuthunga.

MANDLA: ...I eventually decided that Thembalethu is worth living for. I am determined to work together with her even in her sewing activities.

We note that in Ntuli's plays where the theme is unemployment, characters do not resort to criminal activities although this seems to be an obvious choice to some people in real life. This shows that when Ntuli uses this theme, he wants to show that not all unemployed people choose crime when faced with poverty and joblessness. This is evident in the happy endings that prevail in most of the plays that have unemployment as a theme.

#### 4.4.2 WITCHCRAFT

Another subject matter or theme that also dominates some of Ntuli's one-act radio plays is that of witchcraft. This does not come as a surprise because it has been the tendency with many African authors to comment on witchcraft practices.

With regard to this theme, Ntuli's emphasis seems to fall on the innocence of people who are wrongly accused of witchcraft. In Izinkomo Zikababa Zulu dies on his return from Gumede's homestead where he had gone to claim the cattle that had been given to Gumede according to ukusisa custom. There has been suspicion that Gumede is reluctant to return what is due to Zulu. When Zulu dies under controversial circumstances, this prompts his family to go to MaZungu, an *isangoma*. Meanwhile,

Zulu's son proceeds to kill Gumede. MaZungu 'throws bones' and reveals that Zulu was not bewitched but was killed by a snake. This comes too late to save Mandlendlovu who has died while trying to murder Gumede who has been accused of an offence he didn't commit.

In this play, Ntuli wants to warn the listener about the dangers of jumping to conclusions on the basis of unfounded allegations and accusations. He reminds the listener that one is innocent until proven guilty. Ntuli's aim is clearly to fight against the death of innocent people who are falsely accused of witchcraft.

Ntuli visits this theme again in Umthakathi. In this play, Mthethwa is seriously wounded by Fakazi and Sikhwili who accuse him of practising witchcraft. He is also about to be murdered according to *ukujoja* practice because an *isangoma* has told the king that Mthethwa is guilty as accused. He is however proved innocent at the last moment.

It is also evident in this play that Ntuli warns against accusing people of witchcraft when there is no proof to substantiate that. Ntuli also reminds us that even diviners who are supposed to possess supernatural powers are sometimes the cause of the death of innocent people.

False accusation on alleged witchcraft is again the issue in Isando. Vusi and Zikhwepha are close friends. Vusi is successful while Zikhwepha is unlucky in all his endeavours. This urges him to go to 'prophets':

ZIKHWEPHA: Yikho ngaze ngaya kwabakwazi ukubona izimfihlo nje. Yibona abangichathazela ukuthi lo mnyama wangena wagxila. Basho nokuthi ngawufakwa ngumngani wami omkhulu nengimethembile...

(Ntuli, 1992:73)

ZIKHWEPHA: That's why I went to those who are able to see secrets. They informed me that this bad luck entered and took root. They even mentioned that I got it from my best and trusted friend.

Zikhwepha concludes that Vusi is the cause of all his problems. He tries to kill him. At the end he confesses that he made a big mistake by trying to kill Vusi and regrets believing what he was told by diviners. The message that Ntuli puts across in this play is that it is dangerous to rely on diviners and soothsayers who sometimes make false accusations on innocent people.

The few examples that we have cited above demonstrate that Ntuli is concerned about the plight of innocent victims who are wrongly accused of practising witchcraft and casting spells on others. He uses this theme to show that the issue of witchcraft and diviners should be treated with utmost responsibility because of the fatal nature of its consequences. In Isando and Umthakathi he blatantly condemns the role of *izangoma* in propagating false accusations that may result in the death of innocent victims. In Izinkomo Zikababa he warns against accusing people of bewitching without any proof of evidence. In this play, *isangoma* is put in a positive position. If Mandlendlovu had consulted MaZungu before going to Gumedede, tragedy would have been averted. The theme of witchcraft that Ntuli chooses in these plays echoes this warning to the listeners: never jump to conclusions without tangible and conclusive evidence. The results are catastrophic.

#### 4.4.3 CHEATING

Ntuli observes that in human beings there is a bad tendency to cheat and take 'short cuts' to success. This is done in various ways. In most cases a person decides to get 'easy money' by cheating on others who are vulnerable and defenceless. Ntuli abhors this and uses this theme to put across a strong message to the listeners that crime does not pay.

In Umshumayeli, for instance, a man poses as a preacher who is a close acquaintance of reverend D.D. Dlamini. He claims to have been robbed and needs money to reach his destination. Two victims sympathise with him and offer financial help. Fortunately the cheater is caught when he is about to pounce on the third victim and is immediately arrested.

In this play, Ntuli emphasises that crime does not pay. He echoes the same warning in Lala Ngokuthula where Ndelu shows his magnanimity by donating a casket for his deceased friend. Later the family discovers that the grave has been tampered with. An investigation gets underway and the family insists that the grave be dug open. To their dismay, they find that the casket has been stolen. Ndelu is shocked and promises to donate another one. This again demonstrates his generosity. MaShezi, however, is suspicious and recalls that she had written a note and put it inside her husband's casket. To everyone's amazement, this note is found inside the casket that Ndelu has donated to replace the stolen one. He is immediately arrested to prove that one can't cheat every body all the time.

Umtitilizo explores yet another popular form of cheating. Dolly has problems with her studies and decides to buy examination papers so as to pass with flying colours. This is costly for her poor mother who is a single parent, but at last they manage to buy the set of question papers. At the exam room Dolly is devastated to learn that she bought the wrong exam paper.

The above serves as a warning which Ntuli conveys through this play. He warns the listener that it doesn't pay to take short cuts in life or try to succeed through cheating and unscrupulous means. Ntuli condemns these unbecoming practices and points out the problems that one may land in. This theme is used by Ntuli to emphasise that all those who cheat eventually get caught and suffer the painful consequences of their evil deeds.

#### 4.4.4 POLITICAL CHANGES

This is another theme that Ntuli uses to show that there are political changes that our country is undergoing. These changes have a bearing on the citizens of our country and is reflected in their behaviour. Such changes are explored by Ntuli in his plays which show his concerns and awareness about the current events and state of affairs that prevail in our country.

Inguquko, as the title suggests, is about the changes of a political nature in our country before the democratic elections of 1994. The youth in particular feel entitled to play a vital role in these changes. This is the case with Nduduzo whose political views differ from those of his parents. His father has been forced to resign from his position as a township councillor because the masses feel that councillors are the puppets of the government. Nduduzo and the local youth raid, burn or pelt with stones the homes of all the 'sell-outs'. Nduduzo's father is one of those whose houses are attacked. Nxumalo's house is also attacked by Nduduzo and his friends. Nxumalo uses his gun to protect himself and Nduduzo gets seriously injured in the ensuing battle. His leg has to be amputated as a result of this confrontation.

The statement that is being made by Ntuli in this play is that it doesn't pay to defy the will of the masses and to resist political change. This is a lesson Nxumalo learns in a painful way. Nduduzo's fate demonstrates the need for sacrifices to ensure that victory and freedom is attained.

The dangers of opposing the masses is also highlighted in Elamanqamu. The youth have called for a stayaway to mourn the death of their fallen heroes. Those who oppose this are going to be punished. Maseko defies this call and his house is burnt down. Thoko is spared because she obeys the voice of the masses. Ntuli paints a different picture, however, in Azikhwelwa. Ndoda has struggled for ages to get employment. At last he is employed and is expected to start the following day. Unfortunately this coincides with a call for a mass stayaway. Ndoda's desperation forces him to defy this and travel on foot to work. On the way he is accosted by the local youth that have been stationed at strategic points to deal with those who decide to go to work. Ndoda kills one of his attackers who unfortunately happens to be his cousin.

The theme of this play shows that Ntuli, like most of us, is concerned about the effects of stayaways which often result in job losses. Ntuli feels that people should be allowed to exercise freedom of choice, especially when their welfare is at stake. He condemns those who impose their political beliefs on others and warns them through this play

that there are serious repercussions for this. This is evident in the fact that Themba dies for standing on Ndoda's way to get a job that he so desperately needs.

In Isomiso, we find MaZulu in a pathetic situation. Her community has been struck by a terrible drought that has killed all the cattle and ruined all the crops. The fact that MaZulu is a widow exacerbates her woes and plight. The only remaining hope that she clings to is Zinhle, her daughter who is away at university. MaZulu's dreams are shattered when Zinhle arrives with the tragic news of her expulsion from university. She cannot believe that Zinhle has succumbed to political pressure and sacrificed her future by not defying those who called for class boycotts:

MAZULU: Nawe ubunalabo ebebetelekile?

ZINHLE: Phela Mama kulukhuni ukuba umuntu ame yedwa ngoba...

MAZULU: Ngithi nawe Zinhle ubuhlanganyele kule nyakanyaka okhuluma ngayo?

ZINHLE: Bengingeke ngaphuma eceleni Mama.  
(Ntuli, 1988:6)

MAZULU: Were you also among those who were on boycott?

ZINHLE: It's difficult for one to stand alone because...

MAZULU: I am saying, were you also taking part in the chaos that you are talking about?

ZINHLE: I could not be an outcast, Mother.

#### 4.4.5 REVENGE

Another recurring theme in Ntuli's one-act radio plays is his comment on the issue of revenge. His characters often find themselves in situations where they seek revenge for the evils and heartaches they incurred in the past. In Ngicela Uxolo, Malusi has to face his father who left him and his mother many years ago. Malusi suffered a lot in the past and although he is successful now, wounds and scars of the past afflictions have not healed after all these years:

BUTHELEZI: Ungangibulalisi ngamakhaza Shenge.

MALUSI: Wena wesaba ubusuku obubodwa. Bungaki ubusuku mina engangibulala phandle nomama wena ususishiyile? Ngeke uqagele nakuqagela. Phuma-ke.

(Ntuli, 1988:46)

BUTHELEZI: Don't let the cold kill me Shenge.

MALUSI: You are afraid of one night. How many cold nights did I sleep outside with mother after you had deserted us? You can't even guess. Get out.

His father asks for forgiveness and begs Malusi to listen to his side of the story. Malusi grudgingly refuses and chases him away despite that his wife pleads with him to forgive his father. When they wake up, they find that the old man has passed away, leaving a letter and a large sum of money as inheritance for Malusi.

This is a very sad story indeed. Ntuli uses this theme to show the listener that forgiving is always the best solution, difficult as it is. Even if we can't readily forgive, at least we must listen to the person's explanation about his side of the story.

In NginguMenziwa, Ntuli uses the twist in the tail to explore the theme of revenge and forgiveness. The listener is made to believe that Sithole has to suffer the consequences of the pain he inflicted on Menziwa in the past. It is only at the end of the play that the listeners realise that Menziwa does not want to revenge, but rather to thank Sithole for saving his life many years ago.

Although this play shows that good deeds must always be rewarded and appreciated, we feel that what may have prompted Ntuli to write this play was an awareness about the fear that grips one, once somebody announces that he wants revenge for the past sufferings.

#### 4.4.6 MARRIAGE

Ntuli also touches on marriage as a theme and the implications thereof on the family of the person who has to embark on this challenging journey. Ntuli shows the helplessness of the parents with regard to the choice of their children's spouses. In Isithembu, Nomusa, who lives with his widowed father, has decided to marry because she is old enough now. His father, who is a priest, even admits that Nomusa's peers have long been married. The hitch, however, is that Nomusa has decided to marry a

married man. His father objects strongly to this. Nomusa doesn't change her decision and eventually her father succumbs and allows his daughter to marry Sibanyoni:

**MTHEMBU:** Cha mntanami, anginakukuqalekisa. Ngithi hamba mntanami uyosakhela ubuhlobo obuhle kwaSibanyoni.  
(Ntuli, 1991:87)

**MTHEMBU:** No, my child, I can't curse you. I say go my child. Go and build for us good relations at Sibanyonis.

The message in this play is very clear: parents should never interfere with their child's choice of a marriage partner, regardless of the misgivings and reservations they may have about that person. They should however, try and extend advice. If this fails, they should never be the stumbling block and deprive the child of the right to marry a person of his or her choice.

Objection of parents against the child's choice of spouse is also the theme in Kuhle Kwethu. Dabula wants to marry Lizzy, a woman from the city. His mother objects to this and cites a number of reasons:

**MASIBIYA:** (*Ngokuzotha*) Mntanami, akucala uma umakoti edlula umkhwenyana ngeminyaka emibili noma emithathu... angithi nje noma eyisihlanu. Kuyethusa nje, kodwa akunakeki. Iminyaka yedlule eshumini? Bamshiyelani ontanga yabo?  
(Ntuli, 1983:89)

**MASIBIYA:** (Calmly) My child, there is nothing wrong if the bride is two or three years older than the groom...let's say, even five years. It's disturbing but not obvious. More than ten years? Why did her peers leave her?

Even though MaSibiya advises her son about Lizzy's weaknesses, Dabula is adamant that he will marry his sweetheart. There seems to be nothing that MaSibiya can do about this. The listeners sympathise with MaSibiya because they know that Lizzy is not suitable for Dabula for a number of reasons. There is then much relief when Dabula's parents later receive a letter which bears the exciting news that Lizzy has left Dabula for a rich businessman (who is probably her own age). This causes MaSibiya to ululate in jubilation:



MASIBIYA: (*Ngokujabula okukhulu*) Hhayi, mina ngiyahalalisa, ngithi: "Kuhle kwe...thu!"  
(Ntuli, 1983:91)

MASIBIYA: (*Joyfully*) I for one am applauding, I am saying: "Kuhle...kwe...thu!"

Ntuli shows how lucky MaSibiya is that events turn out in her favour. Otherwise there was nothing she could do about the situation. The message that Ntuli puts across in this play is that parents should know that they can do very little to influence their children's choice of marriage mates. Parents can only wish and hope that things will sort themselves out in favour of their wishes.

Marital problems are also the subject of some of Ntuli's plays in which characters are involved in marital conflicts and loggerheads. This is a common feature in most marriages in real life situations. Ntuli seems to emphasise that marriage is a challenge that demands maturity and commitment. This echoes the words by Toner (2001: 113) who says:

The minute you agree to marry, you set in train a series of events designed to drive you apart, if not insane.

This seem to be the case in Ijekiphothi kaKhisimuzi because Thembaletu is fed up with the problems that have strained her marriage. She has decided not to give Mandla, her husband, a Christmas present. Mandla, on the other hand, has decided to commit suicide because he feels that he has failed his wife. The play has a happy ending however, as Mandla returns home and declares his undying love for Thembaletu.

In this play Ntuli shows that marital problems should not be regarded as the end of the world. Couples should always exercise patience and seek reconciliation.

Love and marriage is also the theme in Ingoduso KaDokotela. Tozi is disappointed by Zipho with whom she had planned to marry and live happily. She vows never to love a man again. She changes her mind however, when Mandla patiently shows how he

loves her and asks for her hand in marriage. She eventually agrees and the play ends happily with the couple discussing wedding plans:

MANDLA: Ngiyabonga Tozi. Sengingumuntu ojabule kusukela namhlanje. Noma ngingakabi nalutho olutheni, ngifuna sakhe umuzi wethu....

MANDLA: I am grateful Tozi. I am a happy person as from today. Although I haven't much, I want us to build a family...

In this play, Ntuli seems to indicate that one should never be discouraged by disappointments in love affair. If one is patient enough, the right partner comes along and bring happiness that eradicates all past pain and heartaches.

#### 4.4.7 PAST OFFENCES

Ntuli also uses a theme where we find characters whose past deeds eventually catch up with them. All the secrets that have been closely guarded for ages are ultimately revealed, mostly with grievous consequences. In Isipho SikaKhisimuzi, Xulu is very ill. His son Nduduzo arrives with a parcel from the post office. It's Xulu's present from Mabonwabulawe. Xulu doesn't like this present which seems to exacerbate his illness. *This puzzles and worries Nduduzo. Parcels from Mabonwabulawe keep arriving, all resulting in Xulu's health deteriorating.* When the final parcel arrives, Nduduzo brings a policeman with him. Xulu confesses that Mabonwabulawe is the name of the person that he killed many years ago. He is arrested for this past offence.

The message in this play is that one cannot hide secrets for ever. Ntuli uses this theme to serve as a warning to the listener that whatever is hidden will eventually be seen by the world and the culprit should face the consequences of his past deeds.

Ukufika Kwabakhwenyana is a play about Betty who is about to marry a respectable gentleman. When the gentleman arrives to pay *ilobolo* the truth comes out that this gentleman is Betty's father. He deserted Betty and her mother many years ago. This revelation results in shock, tears and heartbreak.

Ntuli's message in choosing this theme is that one should never run away from one's responsibilities because past deeds tend to crop up later in life. Ntuli uses this theme to convince his listeners that the child that is born out of wedlock should be told the truth about his or her real surname so as to avoid tragedies and heartbreak in future.

#### 4.5 SYMBOLIC ASPECTS OF THEMES

Themes in Ntuli's plays are used in a symbolic manner. Unemployment, for instance, is a symbol of determination to succeed despite tragedies and hardships. The problems that face characters may seem difficult to overcome, but when the play progresses, the characters find strength and steadfastly carry on with bravery and determination.

Ntuli uses the theme of witchcraft to symbolise jealousy and lack of self-confidence. In Isando, Zikhwepha tries to kill Vusi because he is jealous and believes that his problems are caused by Vusi. In Umthakathi, unlawfulness is symbolised by the unruly behaviour of Fakazi and Zikhwili who accuse Mthethwa of witchcraft. They beat him up before taking him to the king. This is unacceptable as they do not have any tangible proof that Mthethwa is indeed a witch.

Cheating and corruption is a symbol of moral decay and lack of ubuntu in the society. This is evident in Umtitilizo. In this play we find members of the society engaged in the abominable act of selling and buying examination papers. In Lala Ngokuthula, the undertaker digs up graves and resells the coffins to enrich himself.

When we look at Ntuli's themes on marriage we observe that in some cases matrimony seems to symbolise conflict and division. In Isithembu, for instance, Nomusa's decision to get married results in conflict between her and Mthembu. In Kuhle Kwethu, Dabula's attempt at marriage seems to divide the family. We are relieved, however, that at the end of these plays, unity is maintained. Ijekiphothi KaKhisimuzi, ends with an amicable and happy reunion between Thembaletu and her estranged husband. This shows that according to Ntuli, marriage can be a unifying factor, depending on the circumstances in which the characters find themselves.

Political themes are also used by Ntuli to symbolise attitudes and views of the society at large. Azikhwelwa, for example, focuses on intimidation that is used to reach political goals. The stayaway in Inguquko is also a symbol of victimisation and intimidation that result in people's houses being set alight. In Isomiso, the class boycotts are the symbol of conflict between students and university administrators as well as between parents and students.

Ntuli also uses political upheavals to symbolise change. In Isomiso, for instance, students and youth in general are no longer docile, passive recipients of injustices meted out by insensitive authorities. The action of the students change the somehow *distorted mindset of the administrators who eventually allow them to sit for exams*. There is also a change of the youth's attitude towards parents. In Inguquko, Nduduzo challenges the views of his parent and is not afraid to express his beliefs regardless of how they differ from those of his parents. This is of course a symbol of change that the society is undergoing, particularly as the past tendency has been that parents must impose their views on their children.

Themes that deal with past offences and cheating symbolise justice because the perpetrators of evil on innocent victims are always punished. In Isipho SikaKhismuzi, Xulu suffers as a result of killing Mabonwabalawe many years ago. In Umshumayeli, the bogus preacher is apprehended by the police and eventually pays for his crimes. This indicates that justice, law and order should always prevail to protect innocent citizens against criminal elements in the society.

#### 4.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, our discussion about theme revealed that there is a wide variety of themes that are treated by Ntuli in his one-act radio plays. This distribution of themes avoids monotony and enhances the listener's interest in Ntuli's plays because there is always a guarantee that Ntuli will deliver something different with each new play he writes. This variety of themes also shows that Ntuli is an observant playwright who

doesn't hesitate to comment on a wide range of human behaviour, personality and belief.

Ntuli seems to strongly condemn many of the evils that prevail in the society. This is evident in that characters who cheat, exploit and ill-treat others are apprehended and punished. He also shows great concern about the political changes that take place in our country and feels that people should be given freedom of choice to decide their fate and destiny in life. He warns, however, about the dangers of defying the masses and majority views. This is evident in the fact that in his plays, characters who stand against the will of the people suffer dire consequences.

*Ntuli's themes also reveal that he is an optimistic playwright. His plays display a positive outlook in life because most of them end with a solution to the character's problems. Ntuli shows that he wants the listeners of his play to believe that there is always a light at the end of the tunnel. In conclusion, we want to reaffirm that Ntuli's plays are not only a great pleasure to listen to, but also have extremely vital informative value through the variety of themes that he chooses for his plays.*

The educative value of Ntuli's themes is emphasised by Biyela (1997: 93) who says:

What can be observed in all Ntuli's themes is that in each theme, the author seems to have an obligation to fulfil, a message or warning to convey to the society at large.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CHARACTERISATION**

#### **5.0 INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this chapter is to look at how Ntuli handles characterisation in his one-act radio plays. We are going to see how different scholars define and comment on characterisation as the backbone for the effective portrayal of plot and theme in the play. Our primary focus will be on devices that are employed by Ntuli to highlight the symbolic attributes of the characters that he uses in his plays. An attempt will also be made at analysing the unique features of Ntuli's characterisation techniques.

#### **5.1 CHARACTERISATION DEFINED**

Characterisation refers to fictional people that are used by the author to depict the plot and theme in the play. According to Msimang (1986:99):

Characterisation is the sum total of techniques employed by an artist in presenting characters in a literary work of art so that characters are perceived by the audience/reader as persons with moral and dispositional as well as physical qualities.

Msimang's definition emphasises the importance of plausibility of characters. In his view, characters should be life-like and make the audience forget that the artist has created them to live in a fictional world.

The close relationship between the character and the plot is highlighted by Styan (2000:109) who simply defines a character as:

A person used to enact a story on the stage.

The above definition points out that the playwright relies on characters to deliver his story to his audience. This means that the author has to be very careful about who he chooses to enact the story because the success thereof will largely depend on how convincing and fitting the characters are in the story.

The symbolic role of characters is highlighted by Makosana (1991: 40) who defines characterisation as:

The manner in which the dramatist has symbolised his thoughts through fictional characters who imitate them.

We are particularly interested in Makosana's definition because we feel that the role of the characters in the play go beyond conveying the theme and plot through dialogue and action. Characters in Ntuli's one-act radio plays have symbolic attributes that have significant impact on the listeners depending on how the symbols are perceived and interpreted.

The vital role of the characters in the play is emphasised by Styan (1960:163) who believes that:

In drama, 'characters' is not the author's raw material: it is his product. It emerges from the play; it is not put into it.

The various definitions that we have looked at above have emphasised the vital role of characters in the play. The playwright should therefore portray them in such a way that they arrest the listener's attention immediately. The listener should be attracted to and identify with the characters in the play. The action and dialogue of the characters should evoke feelings, such as sympathy, hate or love on the listeners. The listeners must be drawn by the characters to the play and make them eager to know the outcome of the play. The most effective way of doing this is to highlight the aspirations and motives of the characters right from the beginning of the play. The listeners must have a clear picture with regard to what the character wants to achieve in the play. If the character's motives are interesting enough, the listener will feel obliged to keep listening.

Characters in the play have a vital role in portraying the plot and theme that the playwright has created. The one-act play, however, poses restrictions on the playwright as far as characterisation is concerned. There is no scope for full development of the characters because the one-act play is characterised by extreme compactness in terms of time, place and action. With regard to this restriction, Sibiya (1993: 4) says:

...Because of the time limit, the problem or conflict which faces the character has to be introduced as soon as possible. This necessitates great artistic expertise on the part of the playwright.

There are two types of characters that are identified in drama. There are round characters that undergo changes as the play progresses. If a character is a cruel, jealous person at the beginning of play, circumstances and other characters will shape his/her personality, behaviour and attitude to such an extent that by the end of the play he/she is a caring, loving person. The flat character is the type that does not undergo any remarkable change throughout the play, regardless of the direction taken by the events in the play.

In a play, the protagonist is the main character around whom the events in the play are centred. In most cases he/she is the cause of the conflict in the play. The playwright assigns him/her with a challenge or problem that must be resolved within a limited time. The antagonist is the opposing character who is determined to thwart all the protagonist's attempts and endeavours. There is also a confidant (feminine confidante) in whom the protagonist confides. The foil is the minor character who either supports or contrasts the protagonist or the antagonist in the play. In most cases the playwright uses many characters for this role.

## 5.2. SYMBOLIC ROLE OF CHARACTERS

As we have pointed out, the one-act play does not allow inclusion of many characters and full development thereof. In our discussion of characters in this chapter therefore, our focus will be on other aspects of characters that are found in Ntuli's one-act radio



plays. We will concentrate on the symbolic role that these characters play and how this enhances the effectiveness of the message in the play.

### 5.2.1 NUMBER OF CHARACTERS

The number of characters that the playwright chooses for his play is very vital. Commenting on the number of characters to be used in a play, Makosana (1991:41) says:

The fewer they are, the better. A small number enables the listeners to identify their voices easily.

Besides enabling listeners to identify voices easily, we feel that characters should be few so as to reduce the number of events and scenes in the play. This enables the listeners to follow the story with relative ease and without confusion.

Ntuli seems to take the number of characters in the play with serious and careful consideration. Most of his plays have five or fewer characters. All have a significant role in the course of events in the play. In other words, if one of them were to be taken out, the absence would be glaring and drastically affect the plot of the play.

Ntuli is at his best however, when he makes use of only two characters in the play. This is evident in plays like Isomiso and Isithembu where only two characters are used. Few playwrights have been able to emulate this as it calls for greater expertise on the part of the playwright to be able to portray events by making use of only two characters.

The use of only two characters in the play, however, does not realistically reflect the African cultural setting and practices where we find members of the family or society contributing in solving a person's problems. We feel that Ntuli uses this to symbolise the desperate nature of the characters involved. They seem to be isolated by their predicaments and have no one to turn to. This is remarkably evident in Isomiso and Isithembu because MaZulu and Mthembu are widowed. They have their only daughters to turn to for consolation and hope.

Another remarkable technique that Ntuli employs in characterisation is that of using characters in the form of amazwi or voices to symbolise the thoughts, fears, doubts and conscience of the characters. With regard to the vital role of voices in a radio drama, Maphumulo (2001:161) contends that:

The voices are used to reveal the thoughts of a character and also to give background to certain events.

Ntuli uses this technique in plays like Azikhwelwa where Ndoda hears voices that beg him to put the interest of his children first in deciding whether to defy the call for a stayaway. We also find such characterisation in Umtitilizo where there are voices that encourage Dolly to buy examination papers. Dolly listens to the voices and unknowingly buys the set of bogus examination question papers. At the end of the play the voices mercilessly laugh at her.

An outstanding feature of characterisation in Ntuli's play is the use of what we may term 'reported on' characters. These characters do not appear in the play as characters. They are however central to the plot in the play. The play in fact seems to be about them. This is clear in Kuhle Kwethu. Lizzy is reported on by other characters who paint a vivid picture about the way she dresses, behaves and her attitudes towards her in-laws. The importance of Lizzy in this play is evident in that when Sokesimbone Kubheka adapted this play for television, he included Lizzy as the major character. In other words she is no longer 'reported on' like in the radio play, but appears on the screen as a member of the cast or characters.

In Umshumayeli, reverend D. Dlamini is reported on by other characters who mention his hobbies, his personality and his physical appearance to such an extent that the listeners have a clear picture of him. In Elamanqamu, Maseko is also reported on by other characters. Through what MaNgcobo and Thoko say, listeners are able to know that Maseko is stubborn and are not surprised when his house is burnt down at the end of the play.

This makes us conclude that Ntuli chooses his characters with meticulous skill that makes him stand head above shoulders when compared to other radio playwrights. Let us now consider another aspect of characterisation technique that Ntuli employs in his radio plays.

### 5.2.2 NAMES OF CHARACTERS

The name that an author chooses for a character can have an impact on the story. With regard to the relevance of the character's name in a literary work, Mueller and Reynolds (1996: 121) say:

*Finding the right names for your characters isn't the most important part of writing fiction. But it's not insignificant, either.*

The above view implies that deciding on the character's name should not be taken lightly by the author.

Ntuli uses various techniques when it comes to choosing names for the characters in his plays. He seems to make sure that he chooses names that are simple, easy to remember and fit the setting and context of the play. He chooses and uses names like Thoko, Nduduzo, Dolly and surnames like Xulu, MaZulu, Sithole and Ledwaba. These names are those that listeners are familiar with and remind them of the people they encounter in real life situations. This obviously enhances plausibility of the play and enables listeners to identify with the characters in the play.

We also note that Ntuli chooses names that befit and suit the setting where we find the characters concerned. There are names that are relevant to a rural traditional setting. Examples of these are Sikhwili, Mandlendllovu, Thothotho and Bhukuda. Names like these are commonly found in rural areas and fit very well in the context of the play. Thothotho, for instance, is a sangoma who is summoned by the king to verify witchcraft accusations that are laid against Mthethwa. All this happens in a rural setting.

For urban settings, Ntuli also chooses names that are normally associated with people who live in cities and urban areas. In Ntuli's radio plays that have an urban setting, or with characters who have a city background, we find characters with names like Dan, Dolly, Lizzy, Ledwaba, etc. Ledwaba, for instance is a doctor in a big city hospital. A name like this would be unfamiliar in a rural traditional Zulu place where we find surnames with a strong Nguni bias. This again helps in convincing listeners about the relevance of these characters in the play.

There are, above all, symbolic attributes that Ntuli attaches to the names that he chooses for his characters. Even though he does not seem to go out of his way to give a character a name that has allegorical and symbolic connotations, we feel that some names are used *deliberately by Ntuli to carry symbolic meaning in the play.*

In Lala Ngokuthula, for instance, Galela is the name of Malusi's father. To 'galela' means to strike a heavy blow. We feel that Ntuli uses this name in a symbolic way. This is evident in that Galela deserted Malusi and his mother forty years ago. This was a heavy blow to Malusi and resulted in great suffering and misery on his part. When Malusi has just settled down with a wife and a beautiful home, Galela arrives and asks for forgiveness. His arrival is a blow to Malusi as it disturbs the relative calm that has been prevailing lately in his life. Malusi throws Galela out but later feels remorse. He goes out in search of his father and unfortunately finds him dead outside. This is a blow to Malusi. The heavier blow is felt when he reads a letter that Galela has written him in which he asks for forgiveness and leaves a large amount of money for Malusi to inherit. This is indeed a heavy blow to Malusi whose wish has now been to accept and embrace his father and start life afresh with him.

In Izinkomo Zikababa, Mandlendlovu, which means 'elephant's strength or power', is used symbolically. An elephant often uses its power and strength in a destructive manner as it tramples on the grass and vegetation when it trots majestically around the bush. Mandlendlovu's actions are also destructive as he acts with unrestrained fury in trying to revenge his father's death. His mother and uncle's pleas to him not to go to Gumede's homestead fall on deaf ears:

MANDLENDLOVU: ...Ubaba akananxeba ndawo. Kusobala ukuthi ubulawe nguye uGumede...

MADODA: Awukwazi phela ukunuka abantu masinyane kangaka Mandlendllovu.

MANDLENDLOVU: Angimnuki Baba. UBaba ubize igama lakhe. Into nje kumele afe naye uGumede! Usefile! Uzobulawa yimi!

MANDLENDLOVU: ....My father has no wounds. It's obvious that he was killed by Gumede.

MADODA: You can't accuse people all of a sudden Mandlendllovu.

MANDLENDLOVU: I'm not accusing him. My father mentioned his name. The thing is Gumede must also die. He is as good as dead. He will be killed by me!

Mandlendllovu proceeds with his plan but unfortunately Gumede's son kills him before he can kill Gumede. It is obvious that this could have been avoided if Mandlendllovu had exercised restraint instead of using his strength negatively, thus resulting in his untimely death.

### 5.3 CHOICE OF CHARACTERS

Ntuli seems to be very careful in choosing the characters that will effectively portray the theme and plot in his plays. This in itself seems to have symbolic significance as well because the characters that Ntuli uses are endowed with symbolic features that stand out in the play. Let us look at how Ntuli does this.

#### 5.3.1 WIDOWED CHARACTERS

Widowed characters feature prominently in Ntuli's radio plays. He uses widowed characters in more than five one-act radio plays. This is a significant amount indeed. There is obvious symbolic function of these characters in the plays.

The widow is used as a symbol of strength, innovation, determination and reliability as qualities that emerge from the hardship of losing a husband. Most of the widows that Ntuli uses beat all odds in order to educate their children. In Ingodosi Kadokotela, MaNdaba, a widow, has victoriously struggled to send her daughter to the university. In Isomiso MaZulu overcomes steep challenges in order to educate her daughter.

We feel that the widows as used by Ntuli in the above examples have symbolic meaning. The fact that they have no one to turn to seems to inspire them to reach for the dreams that elude most of well to do parents who have spouses to depend on.

In Lala Ngokuthula, Ntuli uses MaShezi, who has just been widowed. This is supposed to symbolise gloom, bad luck as death and mourning are closely associated with misfortune. Ntuli however uses the widow to symbolise wisdom and light. MaShezi is an observant person who helps in exposing Ndelu who parades as a generous benevolent undertaker but at night digs up the casket he had donated for James, his deceased friend and MaShezi's husband. MaShezi's mourning stage seems to act as light that exposes Ndelu's horrible deeds. The widow in this case symbolises the power of good over the power of evil as symbolised by Ndelu, the funeral undertaker.

Ntuli also uses widowers in his plays. It is interesting to note that Ntuli portrays them as helpless and dependent on their children. We feel that they symbolise instability, weakness, isolation and despair. In Isithembu, for instance, Mthembu is a widower and stays with his daughter who seems to be a pillar of strength to him. This is evident in his confession:

MTHEMBU: Awu, mina iNkosi yangenzela isimanga yangipha ingane enjengawe. Angazi ukuthi ngingayibonga ngani. Awubheke nje, nomuzi wabaThembu lo uvuthiwe, kanti imizi eminingi iye iphuphe uma inkosikazi ingasekho...  
(Ntuli, 1991: 77)

MTHEMBU: Oh, the Lord performed wonders for me by giving me a child like you. I don't know how to thank Him. Look how this home of abaThembu is well cared for, whereas many homes are in bad shape when the wife has passed away...

In Isipho SikaKhisimuzi, Xulu is a widower and lives with his son Nduduzo. Ntuli again paints a picture of helplessness that shows that Xulu relies heavily on his son. This is clear in Xulu's words:

XULU: ...Ngiyabonga ngoba ukhona wena.

NDUDUZO: Ngingabuye ngishonephi Makhathini?

XULU: Wo, phela abanye abantu... kuthi uma uyise esegula... babone ukuthi sekungumthwalo, bashaye utshani.

(Ntuli, 1988: 83)

XULU: ...I am grateful that you are here.

NDUDUZO: Where else could I be Makhathini?

XULU: Well, other people... when their father has become ill... they realise that he is a burden and desert him.

In Ngicela Uxolo, Galela Buthelezi returns to his son after forty years. He is widowed and very old now. He expresses his wish and dependence on his son:

BUTHELEZI: Ngizochitha izinsuku zami zokugcina ngingendodana yami.

(Ntuli, 1988: 45)

BUTHELEZI: I've come to spend the rest of my days with my son.

Buthelezi's words tempt us to conclude that Ntuli has used him as a widower in order to symbolise despair and helplessness.

### 5.3.2 UNEMPLOYED CHARACTERS

Ntuli also makes use of unemployed characters who play a symbolic role in the play. In some cases Ntuli presents ambitious characters who symbolise courage and determination to succeed in spite of obstacles that employment puts in their way. This is evident in Azikhwelwa where we find Ndoda who has struggled for a long time to find employment. He shows great determination and sense of responsibility by not giving up. Eventually he finds employment but unfortunately the day on which he is supposed to start work coincides with a call for a stayaway. This does not deter Ndoda and he decides to go to work despite the dangers that lie ahead.

The same courage and determination is also shown by Nxumalo in Indlala. He cannot find employment but seems determined to succeed. This is a symbol of courage and hope.

There are however, some characters that Ntuli uses to symbolise self-pity, weakness and jealousy. In Isando, Zikhwepha is unemployed and feels jealous about his friend Vusi's prosperity. He displays insecurity and a sense of inferiority. This results in him attempting to murder his friend.

In Ijekiphothi KaKhisimuzi, Mandla is also unemployed. This drives him crazy and he comforts himself by heavy drinking. His problems get even worse and eventually he tries to commit suicide. We feel that Ntuli uses a character like Mandla to symbolise the misery and self-destruction that an unemployed person faces, which in some cases have tragic endings.

### 5.3.3 RELIGIOUS CHARACTERS

Ntuli also uses characters with a strong religious background to symbolise personality traits that do not only apply to the characters concerned but may also be displayed by religious people that the characters represent in the play.

In Umshumayeli, Ntuli uses three ministers of religion as a symbol of generosity, hospitality and reliability. They willingly lend a helping hand to a stranger who claims to be a preacher in the same denomination as theirs. They do this in spite of their *pathetic economic circumstances*.

In UmSamariya Olungileyo, however, ministers symbolise hypocrisy. Luthuli and Xaba do not practise what they teach because they fail to help a stranger while on their way to a religious convention. They laugh sarcastically at the stranger who pleads for their help:

LUTHULI: Ulizwe lithini kodwa igazi lakho uma sedlula ngakuleya ndoda? Ungasho phela ukuthi awuzwanga lutho sengathi ungumfundisi osewile (*Ehleka*) ongasezwa noma esesondela kunoxhaka kaSathane.

XULU: (*Ehleka*) Kusho khona ukuthi kasikawi kakhulu ngoba sisambona uSathane uma emi emnyameni nemoto ende...

(Ntuli, 1988:59)



LUTHULI: What did your blood tell you when we drove past that man? Don't say you didn't feel anything as if you are a fallen priest (*Laughing*) who doesn't sense that he is approaching Satan's trap.  
XULU: (*Laughing*) It shows that we haven't fallen much because we are still able to see Satan standing in the dark with a huge car...

This backfires when their car breaks down and they are helped by the very same man they had earlier on refused to help.

In Isithembu, Mthembu is presented as a symbol of strength and courage to stand for one's convictions. He is also a minister and is devastated that his daughter wants to marry Sibanyoni, a married businessman. Mthembu is faced with a dilemma that will taint his image in the church and in the society. At the end of the play Mthembu decides to follow his heart and whole-heartedly supports his daughter in her decision to marry Sibanyoni. This act is a symbol of great courage indeed.

#### 5.3.4 SUSPECTED/ACCUSED CHARACTERS

In his plays, Ntuli uses characters who find themselves accused or suspected of committing crime, practising witchcraft or being unfaithful. We feel that these characters portray symbolic meaning in the plays in which they feature.

In Umthakathi, for instance, Mthethwa is accused of being a witch. In Izinkomo Zikababa, Gumede is suspected of killing Zulu by bewitching him. These characters suffer a great deal as a result of these accusations and allegations. At the end of each play, they are vindicated and they cease to be mere characters who are victims of circumstances. In fact they symbolise the truth, faithfulness and innocence that is often obscured by prejudice and unlawfulness.

In Ngcicela Uxolo, Galela is accused of deserting and inflicting unbearable pain on his son. When he returns after forty years to ask for forgiveness, his son throws him out of the house but at the end of the play it emerges that Galela was innocent all these years and has tried to be a responsible father by saving a large amount of money to be

inherited by his son. We feel that Galela has been used to symbolise love that a parent has for his child in spite of insurmountable problems that may force them to live apart.

In UmSamariya Olungileyo, Indoda is suspected of being a hijacker and a thug, hence Luthuli and Xaba's refusal to help him. At the end of the play Indoda helps Xaba as a symbol of ubuntu that most of ordinary people possess. Through this character Ntuli shows that people should be judged by their actions and not by preconceived perceptions about them which are often proved to be wrong and result in tragedy.

### 5.3.5 THE 'ONLY CHILD' CHARACTERS

Ntuli sometimes chooses a character who is an 'only child' to his or her parent or parents. We feel that Ntuli does not do this in order to minimise the number of characters in the play but rather to depict and signify the importance of an 'only child' in the play. In most cases the 'only child' is a symbol of hope to the parents. In Ucingo, Nduduzo is the only child. His impending hanging for murder causes despair to his parents. Nduduzo is undoubtedly the reason for Magwaza's very existence:

MAGWAZA: Ithemba bathi kalibulali nje, mina sengathi lizongibulala engasekho uNduduzo. Into engizobe ngisayiphilela yini pho?

MAGWAZA: They say hope doesn't kill but seemingly it's going to kill me when Nduduzo is no more. What will I be living for then?

In Isomiso, Zinhle is also an only child and symbolises hope to MaZulu who trusts that all her misery will disappear when Zinhle finishes her studies. This is why she is devastated when Zinhle arrives with the sad news that she has been expelled from the university.

Parents of 'an only child' do all they can to ensure success of the child. In Umtitilizo, Dolly's mother is very poor but in spite of this she manages to get money so that Dolly can buy a set of expensive examination question papers. Dolly in this play symbolises the control and influence that 'an only child' wields over his or her parent. This is

evident in that her mother easily succumbs and collaborates with Dolly in her plans to buy question papers:

MAMA: Imithandazo iphendulwa ngezindlela ezahlukene. Kokunye le ndaba yamaphepha yisu owalibekelwa ngokhokho bakho ungakazalwa lokuthi uyophumelela ngalo ngoba ungenakuphumelela ngenye indlela. (Ntuli, 1985: 76)

MAMA: Prayers are answered in various ways. Perhaps this issue of examination papers is a plan that was designed by your ancestors even before you were born and through which you will succeed as it seems like there is no other way for you to succeed.

The decisions and beliefs of 'an only child' sometimes symbolise change to the parent's attitude, beliefs and life. In *Isithembu*, Nomusa, an only child, decides to marry Sibanyoni who is already married. Mthembu is against this and remonstrates with his daughter in great anger. When Nomusa shows determination to proceed with her plans, Mthembu eventually allows her to marry Sibanyoni. In this play, Nomusa is used to symbolise the change that will take place in Mthembu's life as the way the church and society perceives him will never be the same again.

In *Inguquko*, Nduduzo is also 'an only child' who has to decide between obeying his parents and listening to his peers who are determined to introduce changes in the township. His decision to join the youth that attack the councillors' houses result in him being crippled. His role in the play symbolises change that will affect him, his family and the township as a whole.

#### 5.4 CHARACTERS' POSSESSIONS

Ntuli also uses the characters' possessions in a symbolic manner in his plays. These possessions are somehow emphasised in the play by being given symbolic attributes that go beyond their normal role as we know them. Their significance in the context of the plot draws our attention to the symbolic qualities that Ntuli gives them in the play.

Let us look at some of these possessions and assess their symbolic qualities and significance in Ntuli's one-act radio plays.

#### 5.4.1 CARS

A car is a means of transporting people, animals and goods. Ntuli, however, uses motor vehicles in a symbolic manner so as to enrich the message of his plays. The symbolic aspects of cars are displayed in two ways: when they are literally driven by characters or when they are mentioned by characters.

In UmSamariya Olungileyo, cars are used to symbolise the transformation of the attitude of the two priests in the play. Xaba and Luthuli are travelling by car to a church convention. On the way, a stranger, who is experiencing problems with his huge black car, tries to stop them for help. They refuse to stop and help this man.

Unfortunately for them they are later involved in a breakdown. The breakdown of their car symbolises the need for a change and ‘repair’ of their attitude as ministers of religion. Ironically the same man that they refused to help earlier on, stops and gives them help. He offers to tow their car to a safer place.

This symbolises the ‘towing’ of Xaba and Luthuli from a wrong mindset to an exemplary one of extending a helping hand regardless of personal dangers. There is no doubt that their mindset has been drastically changed because we hear these words at the end of the play:

LUTHULI: ...Usuyoyethula kahle nawe intshumayelo yakho emhlanganweni. Konje indikimba yakho ithini?

XABA: Sengizoyiguqula Madlanduna. Manje seyizothi:

“UmSamariya Olungileyo.”

(Ntuli, 1988:65)

LUTHULI: ....You will be able to deliver your sermon well at the convention. What is its theme, by the way?

XABA: I am going to change it Madlanduna. It will now be:

“UmSamariya Olungileyo.”

Ntuli again uses a car in a symbolic manner in Isando. Vusi drives a beautiful car which symbolises pride, conceit and glamour to Zikhwepha:

ZIKHWEPHA: Nangempela sangena emotweni kaVusi, sahamba...  
Ngayibona isiyinhle ngokunye. Naye kwaba sengathi useyahlabekisa.  
Wavula umsakazo wasemotini, wabe esede enanela ingoma ngomlozi,  
enqekuzisa ikhanda, ebamba isondo ngesandla esisodwa. Ngabona nje  
ukuthi kuqhoshelwa mina...  
(Ntuli, 1992:75)

ZIKHWEPHA: ...We got into Vusi's car and departed. The car appeared  
more beautiful. He even acted as if he was showing off. He turned the car  
radio set on, and accompanied the song with a whistle, nodding his head  
while holding the steering wheel with one hand. I could feel that he was  
showing off...

In some cases, the character's car is involved in an accident, thereby acquiring  
symbolic significance. In NginguMenziwa, Menziwa's car overturns. This accident  
'crashes' Menziwa's bad habits and enables him to change remarkably:

MENZIWA: ...Kodwa sengiyisigebengu esingaseyiso. Ngasizwa  
nguwe Sithole...Usakhumbula yini Sithole usiza umuntu owayeginqike  
nemoto le ngaseMafikeng eminyakeni eyishumi eyedlule?...Ngabe  
ngafa...Nezindlela zami ezazimazombe ngaleziya zinkathi seziqondile...  
(Ntuli, 1988: 105)

MENZIWA: ...But I am a gangster that is not a gangster. I was helped  
by you Sithole...Do you recall helping a person whose car had overturned  
near Mafikeng ten years ago?...I could have died...My paths that were  
crooked in those days have since straightened out.

The above example clarifies the symbolic nature of Menziwa's car in this play. If  
Menziwa had not used his car on that day, ten years ago, maybe it would not have  
been involved in accident and he definitely would not have been 'transported' to  
another world. His crooked ways would not have straightened. This confirms that  
Ntuli uses Menziwa's car in this play to indicate a symbolic means of transporting  
Menziwa from being a ruthless thug to being a responsible and dignified gentleman.

#### 5.4.2 HOUSES

Houses are for shelter. Ntuli uses them in his plays not to refer to their role in  
providing shelter but to symbolise success of the characters. In NginguMenziwa,

Sithole's house is beautiful and expensively furnished. Menziwa remarks about this to emphasise that Sithole has done well in life:

MENZIWA: Uyakhile indlu yakho Jobe. *It's a mansion.* Bayiveza kancane abethelevishini, ngayithanda.  
(Ntuli, 1988: 105)

MENZIWA: You have built your house well Jobe. It's a mansion. They showed it briefly on television and I liked it.

In Ngicela Uxolo, Malusi's house is used to symbolise his strong character, especially if we consider that he has endured many years of suffering after his father left him and his mother. He remarks that his house is sturdy and strongly built.

In Inguquko, Ndlovu's house symbolises his dignity. When the youth pelt his house with stones he interprets this as an insult that undermines all the efforts that he has put in building his house and in elevating his status in the society by working faithfully to serve the community. He declares his untainted image:

NDLOVU: ...Mina nje akukho nelilodwa isente engake ngalithatha, ngisho sebefika abantu bethi bazogwaza.  
(Ntuli, 1992: 31)

NDLOVU: ...I didn't steal even a single cent, even when people tried to bribe me.

There are many other examples that illustrate that Ntuli uses the character's house in a symbolic way. If the play takes place indoors, this symbolises security. This happens in Elamanqamu where Thoko is forced to stay indoors although she desperately wants to go and write exams. Those who leave their homes and go and write suffer tragic results. This makes us realise that the house is used to symbolise security although no direct mention to this fact is done by the characters in the play.

#### 5.4.3 HOUSEHOLD GOODS

Characters possess certain household appliances and equipments and these are sometimes used in a play to symbolise some aspects of the characters in the play. In his

one-act radio plays Ntuli assigns symbolic meaning to implements that we normally use for household activities. In *Isando*, when the play starts the hammer seems to symbolise destruction because Zikhwepha uses it to destroy his friendship with Vusi. His attempt to kill Vusi by using the hammer is the evidence of this.

When the play progresses the hammer takes a different shape to symbolise the construction of friendship between Zikhwepha and Vusi. Vusi believes that Zikhwepha will survive and the hammer that the latter used in trying to kill Vusi will be used to 'build' their friendship:

VUSI:...Isando esidale le ngozi kumele sishayele izipikili  
ezizobuhlanganisa bungabuyi buxege lobu bungani bethu...  
(Ntuli, 1992:83)

VUSI:...The hammer that caused this accident must hammer on  
the nails that will strengthen our friendship...

In *Ijekiphothi KaKhisimuzi*, the hammer or any other relevant implement is alluded to in a symbolic way:

MANDLA:...Sengiphendukile....kusobala ukuthi uyangicangcatha  
Thembaletu ngoba...

THEMBALETHU: (*Ehleka*) ....Sengingumacangcatha njalo kamuva  
nje! Kusho ukuthi wena uyisikorokoro, imoto epoqokile!

MANDLA:...I have changed...It is obvious that you are panelbeating me  
Thembaletu because...

THEMBALETHU: (*Laughing*) ....Lately I have become a panelbeater!  
Which means you are a dilapidated old car, a car full of dents!

In panelbeating, different equipments, including a hammer, are used. These are used figuratively in the play to symbolise the different methods that have been used by Thembaletu to 'panelbeat' and change Mandla's personality and bad undesirable habits.

The sawing machine is used symbolically in *Ijekiphothi kaKhisimuzi*. Thembaletu is fed up with her husband. She doesn't want to honour their love this Christmas:

THEMBALETHU: ...Akusizi lutho ukuzama kwami ukumenza umuntu, nokumhlonipha njengomyeni wami uma yena engakuboni lokho kuze kube manje. Angimfuneli siph, angimphekeli kudla kukaKhisimuzi. Ngiyohlala emshinini wami wokuthunga ngivale umlomo.

THEMBALETHU:...It's pointless that I try to empower and respect him as my husband if he does not acknowledge that up to now. I'm not buying him a present, neither do I cook for him this Christmas. I will sit at my sewing machine and shut my mouth.

The sewing machine in this play is used as a symbol of shelter and comfort for Thembaletu who has to endure an abusive marriage. Thembaletu will find solace from it and forget about all the problems in her marriage.

#### 5.4.4 STICKS AND KNOBKERRIES

In Ntuli's plays, personality traits of the characters are sometimes symbolised by the sticks or knobkerries that these characters possess. In Ucingo, Magwaza walks with the aid of the stick. This symbolises his lack of strength and courage to face the future without his son who is about to be hanged for murder.

The stick is alluded to as a symbol of strength in Inguquko. Nduduzo has been wounded by a policeman's bullet. In spite of imminent disability, he shows determination to contribute to the future of his country. He emphasises that he will use his crutches to gather strength to fight on:

NDUDUZO:...Ngiyophuma ngigxolele ngibalungisele ikusasa abantu bakithi. (*Ngesankahlu*) Amandla ngawethu! Amandla ngawethu!  
(Ntuli, 1992:39)

NDUDUZO:...I will get out and hobble about, securing the future for my people. (*Animatedly*) Power is ours! Power is ours!

In Azikhwelwa, Ndoda has a knobkerrie from which he derives strength and inspiration to defy the call for the stayaway. This knobkerrie symbolises security for Ndoda:



NDODA: Ongibonayo uyocabanga ukuthi ngihamba ngedwa, kanti sibabili.

SHANDU: Newisa?

NDODA: Newisa...

NDODA: Any one who sees me will think I am walking alone, whereas there are two of us.

SHANDU: With a knobkerrie?

NDODA: With a knobkerrie...

To Ndoda, his knobkerrie is a symbol of an invisible power that will protect him against the militant vigilantes that have called for a stayaway.

#### 5.4.5. CLOTHINGS

Some characters possess clothings that are used in a symbolic manner in the play. In Umshumayeli, the bogus preacher wears grey and brown suits. The dark colours of these suits symbolise his shady character. Dark colours are also associated with mourning. The preacher's suits therefore symbolise the tears of regret that this man sheds at the end of the play when he is arrested by the police.

In Kuhle Kwethu, Lizzy has expensive clothes. Some are so expensive that his spouse is reluctant to disclose their price:

THEMBI: Pho uyagqoka yini umntwana wabantu. Isicathulo sakhona!

DABULA: Uyazi ukuthi simalini?

THEMBI: Ngicabangela emashumini amathathu amarandi.

DABULA: (*Ahleke*) Aphinde kathathu lawo mashumi...Ulibonile kodwa ijazi aphume eselifakile ekuseni?

THEMBI: Ijazi lemali phela alibuzwa. Kusho ukuthi lisemakhulwini amabili amarandi.

DABULA: (*Ahleke*) He-he, ukhulumisa okwengane ngempela.

Ngcono ngingakutsheli ngoba uzoquleka.

(Ntuli, 1985:86)

THEMBI: What a swanky dresser she is! Her flashy shoes!

DABULA: Do you know how much they cost?

THEMBI: My estimation is at about thirty rands.

DABULA: (*Laughing*) Multiply that by three...Did you see the coat she was wearing when she left in the morning?

THEMBI: An undisputedly expensive jacket. It probably costs about two hundred rands.

DABULA: (*Laughing*) He-he, you speak like a child indeed. I'd rather not tell you because you will faint.

Lizzy's expensive clothes symbolise her arrogance and loose morals. Dabula, who buys these clothes, eventually pays a heavy price when Lizzy leaves him for a rich businessman.

## 5.5 CHARACTERS' AGE

Ntuli also uses the characters' age in a symbolic way in his plays. The youth symbolise change and radical way of doing things. This is evident in Isomiso when Zinhle speaks out her mind to her mother:

ZINHLE: ...Kumele basilalele basizwe njengoba nathi singabaholi bakusasa...Kufanele siqale manje ukuzilungisela izinto ukuze kuthi sesingena ekuphatheni eminxeni ehlukene yempilo sibe sesaqala kudala ukubeka isisekelo.

(Ntuli, 1988:7)

ZINHLE: ...They should hear us out as we are also future leaders... We must start right now to rectify matters for ourselves so that by the time we assume various responsibilities, a firm foundation is already established.

Youth is also used as a symbol of political change in Azikhwela where Thabani is one of the leaders in a stayaway that is aimed at changing the attitude and mindset of the authorities and employers. In Inguquko Nduduzo feels that councillors in the township should be removed and be replaced with young, effective leadership:

NDUDUZO: Amaphuzu asemqoka abekwayo yiwo abandakanya ukuthi awuchachi manje umsebenzi wamakhansela. Kunezimali ezinyamalalayo kungabonakali ukuthi zishonephi...Amakhansela nezihlobo zawo bawathola kalula nje amabhizinisi, besebenzisa izimali zomphakathi ngendlela engafanele...

(Ntuli, 1992:30)

NDUDUZO: The vital points that are raised include the fact that the current role of the councillors is not clear. Funds are misappropriated

without trace...Councillors and their relatives get employment with ease, using the community's coffers irresponsibly...

Ntuli also uses youth to symbolise immaturity, irresponsibility and instability. This is evident in the actions of Sikhwili and Fakazi, the two young men who beat up Mthethwa whom they wrongly accuse of witchcraft. A mature approach would have been to exercise restraint and verify their allegations first rather than haphazardly jumping to conclusions. In *Izinkomo Zikababa* youth is a symbol of irresponsibility because Mandlendlovu, the young son of Zulu, acts irresponsibly and dies while trying to kill Gumede whom he alleges to have killed his father.

In *Umtitilizo*, Dolly gives in to temptation and buys a whole set of examination question papers. This ends in tragedy when she finds out that the paper she bought is a wrong one. Her actions symbolise irresponsibility.

To Ntuli, old age symbolises wisdom, maturity and sense of responsibility. Mthembu in *Isithembu* shows maturity by accepting that his daughter has freedom to choose a marriage partner. Mthembu does this despite his reservations about his daughter's lover who happens to be a married man. The same maturity that is a symbol of ripe age is shown by MaNgcobo when Thoko wants to go and sit for exams in spite of the threats from her peers:

MANGCOBO: Sengimdala Thoko mntanami. Igazi selike lisho uma kunento esolisayo. Kodwa-ke uvalo alusuki khona obala nje. Yisimo sanamuhla mntanami. Akudingi ukuba ngize ngikukhumbuze ngokusha kwemizi nokubulawa kwabantu kuyona le minyaka nawe usuyintombi nje...

(Ntuli, 1990: 30)

MANGCOBO: I am old Thoko my child. Sometimes the blood indicates when something is amiss. But anxiety is not just unfounded. It is because of today's state of affairs. I need not remind you of the burning down of houses and massacre in recent years when you were already grown up.

Even though Thoko insists on going to write her exams, MaNgcobo does not waver in her stance. The wisdom of her actions bears fruits when those who defied the call for a stayway have their houses burnt down.

## 5.6 CHARACTERS' PHYSICAL FEATURES

The physical attributes of a character are vital in depicting symbolism in a play. This fact is highlighted by Byatt in Kemp (1999: 39) who says:

If you have got enough room to make a character, if you give him or her some totally memorable physical characteristics, the character becomes symbolic and stands for itself.

The physical appearance of a character is also used by Ntuli in a symbolic manner. This happens when the physical features and attributes of a character are repeatedly referred to in the play. In this way such features adopt a significant meaning that is far beyond what the listener normally associates with the feature concerned. In most cases Ntuli uses physical appearance to symbolise personality traits, behaviour, attitudes and morals of the characters.

In Ukufika Kwabakhwenyana , Betty constantly refers to Zwane as ihwanqa lezifunda:

BETTY: Lizofika ihwanqa lezifunda, kuzothula umoya.

BETTY: The bearded one will arrive. Every thing will go quiet with envy.

The listeners only realise the symbolic aspect of this beard at the end of the play when it is disclosed that Zwane fathered Betty many years ago. This reminds us that in isiZulu, ihwanqa is also referred to as umeno (tall, uncut grass) or ihlathi (forest). The grass and the forest can be used to hide something. Zwane's hairy cheeks therefore symbolise the secrets that have been hidden from Betty for a long time. This echoes the views of Hofstatter (2001:14) who cautions:

Never trust a man with a beard. These words seem to have been drummed into women of all tastes and persuasions from the moment they've been old enough to flirt.

In Umshumayeli , Ntuli uses the beard to symbolise a mask for hiding one's true colours and identity:

MF.MTHETHWA: Yebo Dlaba. Kukhona insizwa yakwaNzuza kwaMaphumulo engumshumayeli kaMfundisi Dlamini.

MF.SHEZI: Ende nje eyihwanqa efake isudu ensunjwana?

MF.MTHETHWA: Ibiyinde yona, ifake okumpungana, kodwa ingenalo ihwanqa.

(Ntuli, 1988: 21)

MF.MTHETHWA: Yes Dlaba. There is a young man of the Nzuzas from Maphumulo district, who is Reverend Dlamini's preacher.

MF.SHEZI: A tall bearded one, wearing a brownish suit?

MF.MTHETHWA: He was tall too, wearing something greyish, but didn't have a beard.

*It becomes apparent in this play that this man's beard signifies more than the characteristics of a grown up male. Ntuli has used it to symbolise the treacherous nature of this man who claims to be a preacher.*

Physical features with symbolic meaning are also found in NginguMenziwa. Menziwa is able to recognise Sithole on a television programme by the scar on his forehead. As we all know, a scar is a permanent thing. The one on Sithole's forehead symbolises the permanent effects of what he did ten years ago when he rescued Menziwa from a car crash:

MENZIWA: ...Ngaphaphama ngabona ubuso bakho, umfanekiso ongasoze waphela emqondweni wami. Ngabona lesi sibazi esisesiphongweni sakho...

(Ntuli, 1988:105)

MENZIWA: ...When I regained consciousness I saw your face, an image that will never be erased from my mind. I saw this scar on your forehead.

After being rescued from the accident scene, Menziwa recovered and mended his ways permanently, just like the scar on Sithole's forehead. He even mentions that he is no longer a criminal. The scar also symbolises that Sithole has not changed, even today he still helps people, just like he did to Menziwa ten years ago:

MENZIWA:...Okusemqoka-ke ngukuthi ngizwile ngemisebenzi yakho yokuthuthukisa isizwe. Yinto engavamile leyo...

(Ntuli, 1988:106)

MENZIWA: ...What is important is that I heard about your activities to develop the nation. That is very rare...

In Kuhle Kwethu, Ntuli uses Lizzy's skinny, thin legs to symbolise her loose morals:

MASIBIYA: Ngiyayibona nje imicondo yakhe eniyincoma ukumhambisa kahle, ingabe khona ukuhamba lokhu ukujwayele ehamba kuziphi izinkalo!

(Ntuli, 1983:89)

MASIBIYA: I don't mind the spindly legs that you laud for making her walk stylishly, although I wonder where she learnt to walk in that fashion.

In this case, legs are no longer the limbs for walking but have been used by Ntuli to symbolise immoral behaviour. Seemingly Lizzy has also used the same 'legs' to move to other places because at the end of the play Thembi reads a letter from Dabula:

THEMBI: (*Efunda*)...ULizzy ubone omunye usomabhizinisi. Bazoshada ngoJulayi...  
(Ntuli, 1983:91)

THEMBI: (*Reading*)...Lizzy has seen another businessman. They will get married in July...

The symbolic nature of legs is also alluded to by Dabula's words as Thembi reads on:

THEMBI: (*Efunda*)... Kokunye sengiyoze ngibheke zona izintombi ezincane zaseMambatheni ezihamba kukhale ubunswinswinsi...  
(Ntuli, 1983:91)

THEMBI: (*Reading*) Perhaps I will have to look at the MaMbatheni maidens who walk elegantly.

Dabula suggests that he will look for a lady with different legs now. This obviously refers to morals which are symbolised by the legs or the manner in which a person walks.

The way a character walks is also used symbolically in NginguMenziwa :

MENZIWA: ...Yebo khona ngisaqhuga...Nezindlela zami ezazimazombe ngaleziya zinkathi seziqondile (*Ngokuhleka*) noma ngingeyona ingelosi.  
(Ntuli, 1988:106)

MENZIWA:... Well, I still limp.... And my crooked ways have since straightened (*Laughing*) although I am not an angel.

Although Menziwa jokingly mentions that he is not an angel, we are tempted to conclude that the fact that he still limps is used by Ntuli to symbolise that Menziwa still has some behavioural patterns that can be traced back to his criminal past.

An indication of this is the way he threatens Sithole and MaSokhulu on the phone and convincingly pretends to be a hardened criminal who has come to revenge past injustices.

In Umshumayeli, the trickster repeatedly refers to reverend Dlamini's umkhaba or potbelly until it gets symbolic significance:

INDODA: O, Baba Mfundisi, uyaphila uD.D. Isiqala ukuba nomkhaba into yakwabo. Sesaze savumelana ngokuthi sizode sigijima njalo ekuseni ngoba ukukhuluphala lokhu akukuhle: kuvame ukukhuthaza isifo senhliziyo.  
(Ntuli, 1988:17)

INDODA: Well, Baba Mfundisi, D.D. is fine. The chap is growing a potbelly now. We have even agreed to jog in the mornings because gaining weight is not good: it often encourages the heart disease.

Normally umkhaba signifies well-being and wealth but exposes one to diseases. Ntuli uses umkhaba in this play to symbolise vulnerability of reverend Dlamini as he is used by this trickster as the springboard to cheat on unsuspecting victims. This man has chosen D.D.'s potbelly as a key to Shezi's heart by showing how close he is to D.D. who happens to be the close friend of the victims. He uses the same 'punchline' to gain Mthethwa's confidence:

MF.MTHETHWA: Usaphila kodwa uDlamini?

INDODA: Kahle kakhulu. Into nje uthanda ukuthela manje, insizwa isisho ngomkhatshana nje...Kodwa-ke okaMfundisi Dlamini umkhaba uzokwehla ngoba sivame ukuvuka sigijime njalo ekuseni.

(Ntuli, 1988:22)

MF.MTHETHWA: Is Dlamini still fine?

INDODA: Yes indeed. He is gaining weight now, the guy is sporting a small potbelly...But Dlamini's potbelly will decrease because we often jog every morning.

The above examples have shown that Ntuli is a skillful playwright who does not merely consider physical features at face value, but goes beyond that and depicts symbolic attributes of the characters. This makes his play not only interesting to the listener but also rich in meaning that is conveyed symbolically.

## 5.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has highlighted the important role that characterisation plays in conveying the theme and plot in the play. The various definitions that we looked at emphasised the role of characters as *the backbone of the play*.

In this chapter we were able to see how Ntuli uses various aspects of characterisation to depict symbolism. We pointed out the various techniques that he employs, such as the names of characters, their possessions and physical features. In our discussion, we pointed out that the short nature of the one-act play restricts the playwright with regard to character portrayal and development. The playwright must only comment on the highlights in the character's life.

Our discussion also highlighted the outstanding ability that Ntuli displays by making use of two characters in the play as well as 'voices' to convey meaningful message and draw our attention to the attributes of the characters who represent and symbolise people that we encounter in our daily life activities. We also pointed out how he uses the 'reported on' character in plays like Umshumayeli and Kuhle Kwethu.



We feel that Ntuli's characters are real and strongly contribute to the popularity of his plays because of their strong appeal to listeners who find it easy to identify with them.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUDING STATEMENT

#### 6.1 LOOKING BACK

In this study, we have made an attempt to illustrate why we feel that Ntuli deserves a place among the best playwrights in isiZulu. We were particularly interested in how Ntuli uses symbolism, a technique which is normally associated with poetry, to convey meaning and message in his plays. We pointed out how we feel that the symbolic features of Ntuli's one-act radio plays contribute significantly in enhancing the quality of this playwright's artistic creation.

In Chapter One, we highlighted the need for a study in isiZulu radio plays in general and in Ntuli's one-act radio plays in particular. We expressed our belief that Ntuli's one-act radio plays have been neglected and a detailed analysis thereof is long overdue. We also pointed out some of the approaches that have been adopted by various scholars in pursuing an analysis of drama and highlighted those that we feel are most relevant for the scope of our study. The biographical background of Ntuli convinced us that he is an experienced and immensely multi-talented playwright whose contribution to isiZulu literature and academic field will leave an indelible mark that will be applauded by generations to come. We strongly believe that very few authors, if any, will be able to emulate the outstanding contribution that Ntuli has offered in isiZulu literature through his unique, refreshingly original and interesting style. We therefore agree with Chateaubriand in Kemp (1999: 165) who says:

The original writer is not he who refrains from imitating others,  
but he who can be imitated by none.

We discussed the history, nature and characteristics of the radio drama. The historical background of this sub-genre demonstrated the humble beginnings from which the radio play has come. We also discussed how radio drama in isiZulu has developed and

improved from the times of the famous K.E Masinga, during which only adaptation of folktales, Bible passages, historical events and translation of Shakespeare's plays were the primary source from which listeners could get plays. We applauded the meteoric rise of radio drama both in popularity among listeners as well as the standard of the radio dramas that have flowed from the prolific pens of many a playwright. In this chapter the role of Ntuli's one-act plays in enriching this genre was also highlighted, especially with regard to the number of awards that have been bestowed on this playwright.

Our discussion on setting showed how Ntuli makes use of different settings to make his plays appeal to the listeners. The symbolic aspects of setting were highlighted, particularly how indoor and outdoor settings, climatic and social conditions impact on the characters in the play. We also looked at the devices that Ntuli uses to depict symbolic aspects of setting. Weather conditions, for instance, are used by Ntuli to symbolise mood and behaviour of the characters. We pointed out how the choice of appropriate setting affects the plausibility of the play.

Theme was also discussed in detail in this study. We tried to show the rich variety of themes that Ntuli portrays and the message that he tries to convey in his plays. We also pointed out the unique manner in which he approaches the commonly used themes like witchcraft, marriage and crime. Most importantly, we analysed the symbolic significance of themes in Ntuli's plays and the devices he employs in emphasising this. We showed, for instance, how the title is used to draw the listeners' attention to the symbolic nature of the theme. We also illustrated the role of music and sound effects in highlighting the theme of the play.

Our discussion on characterisation showed how Ntuli chooses characters in the play. We were impressed by his ability to use very few characters in his plays, particularly in plays such as Isomiso and Isithembu where only two characters are used. Ntuli also chooses characters that are easy to identify with. Characters are always faced with challenges and obstacles which motivate their actions in the play. This makes them real and interesting to the listeners. Above all, Ntuli's characters have symbolic attributes. Unemployed characters, for instance, symbolise courage. Widowed characters

symbolise determination and strength. Religious characters sometimes symbolise hypocrisy. We also illustrated how the possessions of the characters are also used symbolically in Ntuli's plays. Cars, for instance, symbolise pride, houses symbolise security, clothes symbolise loose morals, and the list is endless.

As we have pointed out, our discussion has shown that Ntuli's plays are rich in symbolism which enhances meaning and invites the listener to ponder over different aspects of the play that Ntuli has used in a symbolic way. The use of symbolism also gives Ntuli's one-act radio plays a universal appeal because he often touches on the symbols that are internationally recognised.

This study has shown that Ntuli is a resourceful playwright. This is evident in his ability to employ various devices to portray symbolism in his one-act radio plays. In some cases Ntuli uses the title of the play as a tool for displaying symbolic aspects of the play. This often happens when the whole of the play has a dominant element that Ntuli has given symbolic prominence. In Isomiso , for instance, the title is used to emphasise the symbolic nature of drought and how this will prevail throughout the play. Ntuli uses the same tactic in Isipho SikaKhisimuzi , Isando , UmSamariya Olungileyo , etc. The aim again, is to draw the listener's attention to the symbolic aspects of the play by using a gripping title.

Another effective technique that Ntuli uses is that of using a character's dialogue to repeatedly refer to certain aspects of the play that have been given symbolic meaning. Although this is not done overtly, the overall aim is to emphasise certain symbolic elements in the play. In Umshumayeli , for instance, the characters refer to umkhaba (potbelly) more than four times. This convinces us that Ntuli has allowed this repetition to draw the listener's attention to the symbolic function of Dlamini's umkhaba in the play. Repetition is also used in Ukufika Kwabakhwenyana where Betty and Fikile repeatedly refer to Zwane's ihwanqa.

Humour is very important in keeping the listeners 'glued' to the play. An author who possesses an appealing sense of humour is assured of his audience's undivided attention and interest in the play. Makwela (1977:80) contends that:

The writer who can successfully give a humorous touch to something which has stirred our sympathies or a pathetic turn in the midst of a laugh, is the one who pleases us best.

Ntuli uses humorous situations and utterances to draw the listener's attention to the symbolic elements in the play. In Kuhle Kwethu , symbolism is portrayed by means of humorous comments made by MaSibiya:

MASIBIYA: ...Mntanami, ngiyazibona nje izinqe eziwuphondo,  
Ngiyayibona nje imiconjwana....  
(Ntuli, 1983: 89)

MASIBIYA: ...My child, I have nothing against her pointed  
buttocks. Neither do I bother about her scraggy legs....

We have already indicated in the chapter on characterisation why imicondo have symbolic meaning in this play. In Umshumayeli , humour is used to emphasise the symbolic nature of umkhaba of reverend Dlamini:

INDODA: ...Into nje uthanda ukuthela manje, insizwa isisho  
ngomkhatshana nje (Ngokuhleka) onjengokhanjana....

.....  
....Umkhaba muhle kubona abafushane bese beba sibhaklazana nje...  
(Ntuli, 1988:22)

INDODA: ...He is gaining weight now, the guy has grown a belly  
(Laughingly) that resembles a small beerpot....

.....  
A potbelly is fine on short people, it makes them even shorter  
and plumpy.

We feel that Ntuli's aim in the above examples is not primarily to amuse the listener but to use humour as an effective device in emphasising symbolism in the play. This illustrates how skillful Ntuli is as a playwright. We also agree with Horstmann (1988:46) when she says:

The ability to see what will make people laugh, and then to set it down on paper, is a precious gift.

Ntuli also chooses the right position to place the symbolic aspects of the play in an effective manner. In most cases, symbolism in Ntuli's plays appears towards the end of the play. In Isomiso, for instance, the play ends with MaZulu pointing at the clouds which have symbolic meaning in the play. Ucingo ends at dawn, which symbolises a new beginning for Nduduzo and his parents. In Elamanqamu the play ends with a knock at the door. This knock symbolises the opening of the door to a bright future for Thoko who will now be able to write exams and proceed to university the following year.

The positioning of the knock as symbolism in this play leaves a lasting impression on the listener's mind. This would not have been the case if Ntuli had positioned this somewhere else in the play. This shows that Ntuli is careful about symbolism as used in the play and positions it in such a way that it is the last thing the listener will hear before the play ends. This has long lasting effects on the listener's mind.

We hope that this study has succeeded in its aim of showing the symbolic aspects of Ntuli's one-act radio plays and the vital role that symbolism plays in enhancing meaning and message in the play. We also hope that it has reaffirmed some of the reasons why Ntuli is regarded as one of the best playwrights in isiZulu literature, particularly in one-act radio plays.

## 6.2 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

It is disappointing to note that very little research has been undertaken in radio drama. This world-wide trend is criticised by Lewis (1981: 142) who complains:

The critical and scholarly neglect that radio drama has suffered is regrettable, especially considering the range and quality of the best creative work written for the medium.

We share the same sentiments with many scholars like Makosana (1991) and Diamond (1993) who lament the scarcity of research on radio drama in African languages. We want to reiterate a comment by Pieterse (1973:ix) who says:

*The importance of radio as a medium in Africa, now and in the foreseeable future, although recognised, is not reflected in the amount of published material available to those who want to write for it.*

We feel that this also applies to those critics who want to write about radio drama. We also feel that more attention should be focussed on radio drama because it is the medium that is capable of reaching most of our people, especially those in rural areas. Statistics also reveal that radio drama attracts more authors than other genres like prose, poetry and visual drama. This means that a lot of research can still be conducted in this field. We would like to know, for instance, why more authors seem to find radio drama far easier to handle than other genres.

Our observation has also revealed that a large number of radio plays in isiZulu in recent years is written by female playwrights. This is an interesting tendency if we consider that female contribution in other genres is pathetic. It would be a worthwhile exercise to conduct research on why female authors prefer this medium and compare their themes to those of their male counterparts in order to find out about the issues that are often addressed by female playwrights through radio drama.

As we have indicated in this study, Ntuli's one-act radio plays demonstrate that he is a capable and innovative playwright. One may argue, however, that Ntuli's creative abilities can only be appreciated if compared with other playwrights' endeavours. There is therefore a need for a comparative study of Ntuli and other playwrights to determine the extent to which Ntuli compares with other playwrights.

Ntuli is one of the pioneers in radio drama and has obviously influenced a number of playwrights in isiZulu. According to Nkumane (1995: 157) this influence is unavoidable because:

*Most writers in one way or the other have been influenced by the literary works of prior writers.*

It is interesting to note how Ntuli's use of one-word titles has been applauded and adopted by many playwrights, thus contributing in elevating the standard of radio plays

in isiZulu. A study should also be conducted to ascertain how other playwrights have been influenced by Ntuli and how this undeniable influence has contributed to the quality of radio plays in isiZulu.

When we discussed the relevance of the narrator in radio drama, we pointed out that most of Ntuli's plays have been adapted to short story form and highlighted how symbolic aspects of the plot are affected by this. A noticeable trend has also been to adapt popular novels such as Imvu Yolahleko, Inkinsela YaseMgungundlovu, Kayikho Impunga Yehlathi, etc to make them accessible for radio listenership. We feel that a comparative analysis still has to be undertaken to illustrate how adaptations of prose to radio drama affect the author's original creation and to determine the medium that does more justice to the author's creative endeavours.

In conclusion, we want to stress that the field of radio drama in isiZulu is very rich in literary gems and treasures that invitingly await an enthusiastic scholar's hoe to unearth for the benefit of many generations to come. We humbly believe that this study will make a worthwhile contribution to the study and appreciation of radio drama in isiZulu.



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