

PERSUASION IN JULIUS CHONGO'S *POCEZA M'MADZULO* AND *FUMBI KHOBBOO!*

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ABSTRACT

The paper aims at exploring Julius Chongo's use of persuasion in his written works. By focusing on four stories; two from *Poceza M'madzulo* which are 'Fisi Wankhuli' (The Greedy Hyena) and 'Mkomwini Woba M'mphika' (The Son in Law Who Stole from the Cooking Pot) and another two from *Fumbi Khoboo!* which are 'Okoma akali Moyo' (Those who Love when One Is still Alive) and 'M'busa Oipa' (The Evil Pastor), this paper uses the concept of rhetoric to examine the stories above and observes that Chongo uses persuasion to keep his audience engaged. He also employs the element of vividness more in stories that were transcribed from performed radio stories than those that were published. It is concluded that Chongo departed from the text to add more persuasive devices while performing the stories on radio.

Keywords: *Persuasion, short story, local language literature, radio performance, rhetoric*

INTRODUCTION

Julius Chongo (1934 – 1995) was author and presenter of *Poceza M'madzulo*, a half-hour weekly programme that aired on Radio Zambia of the Zambia Broadcasting Services from 1966 to 1976. While some of the stories shared by Chongo are an adaptation of traditional Chewa tales such as *Fisi Wankhuli* (*The Hungry Hyena*), most of Chongo's works are his own composition, (Wendland, 2004).

Writing in the foreword to Wendland's *Poceza M'madzulo* (2004), Mtonga says that stories in Africa are composed for performance as opposed to reading. It therefore follows that Chongo composed his stories for performance on radio hence their being read on the programme *Poceza M'madzulo*. Of works attributed to Chongo, Wendland's *Poceza M'madzulo* (2004) is different in that it is Wendland's own transcription and translation to English of the stories as Chongo performed them on radio.

This paper takes into consideration the assumption that Chongo was aware that his audience was a listening one on radio and that just with a movement of the hand could change the channel to listen to another (more) interesting programme on radio or turn off the radio altogether. Wendland (2021; 60) has noted that Chongo "was a verbal craftsman, thoroughly committed to giving his many weekly listeners a good show, devoted to entertaining them in a manner that was seldom found then, or even nowadays – that is, through the dramatic power of the spoken word and the rhetorical power of the human voice alone." It is for this reason that this article's area of exploration is how persuasive Chongo has been in his work to ensure he does not lose the audience on the way. This study becomes even more relevant considering that the programme, according to a major national mass-media survey of 1971, was "one of the most popular ever aired on the ZBS in any language; indeed, many speakers of related Zambian languages would regularly listen into the broadcast every Thursday evening (Wendland, 2004; iii). This necessitates an investigation into the persuasive nature of the works written by Chongo. What elements of persuasion did he employ to attract such a huge audience?

The Art of Persuasion

In his famous essay *Sense and Sensibilia*, Austin says that utterances have force and meaning. This suggests that speech is meant to have an effect on the listener just as it means something. Of course this marries well with the idea that every literary work is produced for the sake of a reader. Any address has an intended addressee. A work will not be produced without the reader in mind. Bakhtin (1981) has argued that a word is uttered in response to an earlier utterance. Similarly, this utterance that is a response

to an earlier utterance is in itself an action that anticipates a reaction through a response in the form of another utterance.

The work of a writer, in this case, is enormous as it is intended to have an effect on the reader. Even though it is not always possible for the effect to be achieved, as Austin has states, it remains the role of the writer to have the reader in mind as he works through his writing. Barthes (1977) believes that writing and reading are so inextricably linked together that one cannot be separated from the other. It therefore follows that the reader is not divorced from the work just as the writer is a part of it.

This ‘marriage’ between the reader and the work interwoven through the text leads to the current discussion on how the writer, at the point of writing the work, creates in the work a quality that helps the reader consume it. Barthes has also argued that the work is created with a certain quality that enables it to be consumed. He argues that the quality of the work leads to the appreciation of its taste. This taste that is appreciated from the quality of the work is what might be referred to as the aesthetic value which, De Man in his essay, *The Return to Philology*, anthologised in Leitch (2001), argues is deeply rooted in the linguistic structures. It can be suggested from this, therefore, that the way language is used is for achieving a certain aesthetic value. It has already been stated that it is that aesthetic value that enables the audience to consume that work.

This two-way creative process of the literary piece of work brings in the question of persuasion. Bhabha (1994) says that there is within writing the textual and the rhetorical function. The rhetorical function is the writer’s wooing of the reader to read their work. This persuasion which Guerin *et al.* (2005) also calls rhetoric dates back to the Greeks who employed it in oratory. Today, rhetoric is used to mean a variety of ways used by a writer to get the reader to respond in certain ways.

When first used by Aristotle (2004) in his work *Rhetoric*, rhetoric has been used to refer to the means to discovering the best ways of persuading. It does not apply to the actual persuasion. He argues that even though one is unable to actually persuade, their ability to employ the necessary devices of persuasion is rhetoric.

Calder, (1999) identifies three major elements of rhetoric: pathos, ethos and logos. Pathos, he states, refers to the orator’s attempts at putting his audience in the right frame of mind. This involves the use of emotive or affective language to achieve this effect in the audience. Ethos, on the other hand, focuses on the speaker or addresser’s being a trustworthy person. This says that the speaker should be one of virtue for the audience to trust them. And logos refers to the persuasion that appeals to reason. This thrives on rationality of the speech.

While the suggestion by Guerin *et al.* (2005) is that rhetoric of the day refers to the ways in which writers attempt to get the reader to respond in certain ways, Leitch (2001) sees it as a study of figures of speech. One would take this approach to be narrow considering that persuasion is broad and, as Aristotle put it, requires the use of various methods to sway the audience to think or respond in a particular way. This, however, does not mean that Leitch’s view should be entirely discarded as the aim of this work is to explore the various ways persuasion has been achieved in the works under study.

While most arguments above have looked at rhetoric and persuasion from the angle of the speaker or subject of the discussion, it is important to take into account the fact that the reader or audience is treated as key in the discussion because any case of persuasion will be expected to target the audience. This is because “the audience is already aware that the speaker’s intention is to persuade the audience even before the speech is delivered” (Moyo, 2014; 903). Since the audience is aware of the persuasive intentions of the speaker, it is expected that the speaker knows the identity of the audience beforehand (Tindale, 2013).

Based on the above exploration, this work intends to view persuasion as the speaker or addresser’s desire to get the audience on their side of the argument. This is because persuasion is seen as a positive and mutual action as opposed to propaganda (Jowett and O’Donnell, 2014).

Justification of the Selection

The stories under discussion were purposively selected. The selection was informed by the article's desire to make a contribution to discussions on Zambian oral literature. This author (Moyo, 2022) has argued that there is need for African institutions to focus on African conceptions and explorations of the world for Africa's progress. Similar to an earlier work on Vimbuza Songs (Moyo, 2014) this study seeks to examine works of art that are in the local language not only to connect the work to academic spheres but also through the exposure of the works to contributing to safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage of the communities concerned with the subject of the work. It is hoped that the selection of works in chiChewa will create space for more research focussing on local knowledge.

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In discussing persuasion in these works, the paper will focus on four stories; two from *Poceza M'madzulo* and another two from *Fumbi Khoboo!* From *Poceza M'madzulo* the stories of focus are 'Fisi Wankhuli' (The Greedy Hyena) and 'Mkomwini Woba M'mphika' (The Son in Law Who Stole from the Cooking Pot) while from *Fumbi Khoboo!* 'Okoma akali Moyo' (Those who Love when One Is still Alive) and 'M'busa Oipa' (The Evil Pastor) will be read. 'Fisi Wankhuli' and, 'Okoma akali Moyo' have both human and animal characters while the other two have human characters only.

'Fisi Wankhuli' is about a hare that steals chickens from the nearby village. When the villagers notice his footprints around their chicken coop, they agree that Hare is responsible for the missing chickens. Hare is summoned to a traditional court presided by the chief. When the charges are laid before him, Hare says that he is not responsible for the crime. He tells them to ask him to help them catch the thief. They do.

Since Hare had been keeping heads and feathers of the chickens, he has been killing, he makes a traditional dance gear hat comprises a headdress (from the feathers), a waist belt and a neck chain (from the heads). The gear is too big to be used by him. Later, he tells Hyena of the many chickens he has been given every time he dances in the nearby village. Hyena agrees to take part in the dance so that he also receives the chickens. Hare makes an appointment with the people in the village for a dance and tells them that they should capture the dancer.

On the day of the dance, Hyena, dressed in Hare's dance gear, dances and is captured immediately after the dance as he has the evidence of the stolen chickens on his body. He is burnt to ashes.

'Mkomwini Woba M'mphika' follows Machisa, a son-in-law who lives in his wife's village. He is very hardworking and quite industrious. He kills wild birds and animals for food. One day, he kills a guinea fowl which the family says will not be cooked until the day they will hold a hoeing-for-beer event.

Every day that follows, Machisa looks forward to eating the guinea fowl until he grows impatient. On the day of the hoeing-for-beer event, Machisa feigns illness and stays away from the fields. After everyone has left for the field, Machisa goes to the granary where the cooked guinea fowl has been kept. In the granary, Machisa eats the guinea fowl before standing up and pushing the roof only to let loose the pole which supported the roof from outside to keep it open. The roof falls shut!

When people return from the fields, Machisa's father—in-law can be heard asking his wife to cook nsima for his son-in-law who is unwell. He emphasises that the guinea fowl should be given to him to enjoy since he killed. When Machisa's mother-in-law opens the granary with the help of the people around, she is surprised to find her son-in-law in there. She asks her daughter, Machisa's wife to get the pot. When her daughter gets in she finds the whole relish eaten by her husband who is greasy on the shirt, hands and the mouth.

After this has been announced to the people outside, Machisa gets out of the granary, goes into the bush and heads for his village without return.

'Okoma akali Moyo' follows Kacikwati, a man whose stay in his village is compromised by his many animals that destroy his neighbours' crops. With his wife, he leaves the village to live far from the rest of the people.

Since they settle by the roadside in the wilderness, they offer shelter to many travellers who use that road. They provide their visitors with all sorts of animals the visitors may need to eat. For example, the wildcat sleeps in the chicken coop, the leopard in the goat pen, the lion in the cattle barn, the hyena in the pig sty (for three days since he feigns illness that whole period).

Kacikwati, after being unwell for some time, asks his wife to inform all the past visitors that he has died. Upon learning this, all the past visitors come for the funeral. In the funeral house, when all have gathered, hyena asks to have a private talk with Kacikwati's wife outside where he asks that he eats the body of Kacikwati. She objects to that. Back inside the house, hyena asks leopard, wildcat, and lion to go out so that he has a private talk with Kacikwati's wife. They go out. Once again, hyena asks Kacikwati's wife again for the body claiming that she won't have to suffer digging the ground to bury the body.

When hyena tries to eat the body, Kacikwati responds and confronts him. Kacikwati shares the story with the others. Angry with the behaviour, lion kills hyena who is said to be a kind of individual who will love someone only when they are alive.

'M'busa Oipa' trails Pastor Vakoma who visits members of his church around the community from nearby places to farther ones. With time, he gets into a sexual relationship with a married member of the church, Ms Langiwe.

One day, while Ms Langiwe is in the house with the pastor, her husband, Mr Phiri, returns unexpectedly since he has been informed in confidence by concerned neighbours about his wife's dealings in his absence as he is a long-distance driver. Ms Langiwe and the pastor plan to kill him as he enters the house. The pastor axes Mr Phiri who dies immediately.

The two carry the body in a sack to a nearby dam where Pastor Vakoma sews the top part of the sack together with his gown unknowingly. When they throw the body into the dam, Vakoma is dragged with it into the dam. That is how he dies.

Ms Langiwe reports the matter to police who inform Vakoma's wife. She says she knew her husband was an evil man, and it is his evil ways that have led to his death.

From the onset, it should be stated that there is a serious problem in assigning the authorship of some of these works to Chongo as they are an adaptation of works assigned communal authorship, the folk tales. All the same, because Chongo has brought his own creativity to the works, they shall be regarded as his since they are not presented in their raw form. Chongo has, in fact, stated that some of these stories are based on actual events but he has modified them to suit his own purposes, (Chongo, 1972).

Bakhtin (1981) says that artistic prose is related to rhetorical genres whose examples are journalistic, moral, philosophical, and other writings. He seems to look at such works as being rhetorical in the sense that they are intended to sway the audience. In fact, Bruss (2013) says that apart from lucidity, simplicity and vividness, narration needs to employ faithful character portrayal. What one sees in this is that works are based on reality. To be believed, the writer has to portray reality in the work.

Booth (1983) suggests that writers should not intrude into the work by forcing ideas into the reader. He says that the writer should basically show the reader the events as they unfold and the rest will be done by the reader. What this implies is that the writer should avoid such words as 'kind', loving, 'clever' in describing their characters. He says that such should be deduced by the reader from the actions of the characters. His view is that such intrusion is usually in works that are deemed historical. Yet, he still realises that the complete retelling of a story with the author completely absent makes the work appear more artificial than natural.

In Chongo's works, the author's presence is rarely seen. On several occasions, the work is merely a narration of events. In cases where the author is seen, there clearly is a reason why it is so. In 'Fisi Wankhuli', apart from the title referring to hyena, the author says of Hare, *Kalulu wankhuli* (greedy hare)' (pg. 9). He also says, '*Kalulu anaona ngati ulemu umenewu womuitana kumowa wachifumu*. (Hare considered it an honour to be invited to the beer party)' (pg. 10). Other instances of intrusion in this story

is where the author says '*Nawo aFisi osaganizapo kuti kaKalulu kali panzeru, kufuna kuwakoloweka nayo nkhani imeneyi*' (But hyena did not have the slightest idea that the clever Hare was working on a plan to hang him up in this affair)' (pg. 12), and '*Nkhani ya Kalulu inamveka yoona m'makutu mwa Fisi chifukwa chankhuli yace yopanda nayo manyazitu*, Fisi (This proposal of Hare's sounded sweet in Hyena's ears because of his unbound lust for meat)' (pg. 106).

In 'Okoma akali Moyo', the author's intrusion is equally seen when the narrator says, '*Pamene anamanga panali pamalo abwino, pa njira ya anthu aulendo* (they built in a good area where strangers passed)' (pg. 2). In another instance, the narrator says, '*Bambo Kacikwati ndi akazi ao, anali anthu acifundo ndiponso afulu kwambili kwa alendo* (kacikwati and his wife were kind people who were also free with their visitors)' (pg. 2).

The situation is different in 'Mkomwini Woba M'mphika' where the narrator actually uses the characters' own thoughts to share attributes of the characters. He does not necessarily intrude into the text on behalf of the reader. Yet, this is happening in 'M'busa Oipa' where even the title is very suggestive to the reader leading to the interpretation by the author on behalf of the reader. Interestingly, the wife says about the husband, '*Mwamuna wanga anali m'busa woipa* (my husband was an evil pastor) (pg. 48). Other cases include the narrator saying, '*M'busa Vakoma, tsopano anayamba kugwa mcikondi conyansa ndi Mai Langiwe* (Pastor Vakoma now started falling in dirty love with Ms Langiwe)' (pg. 39). However,

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avoiding direct intrusion, the author uses the character's thoughts when the narrator says, '*Tsiku lina, M'busa Vakoma anali kuganiza yekha kunyumba kwake namati, 'Ya, koma lero nikapitako, nikamuuza Mai Langiwe kuti mtima wanga uli pali iwe...'*' (One day, while at home, Pastor Vakoma thought, 'Well, today when I go there, I will tell Langiwe that my heart is after you (sic)...')' (pg. 39).

In these instances, it appears that Chongo does intrude into the life of the text. Yet, there is need to say that in most cases, he narrates events as they happen. As much as it cannot be objectively stated how much of the author's own interpretation of the text is advised, it would be said that Chongo merely tells the story. He does little to interpret it for the reader. One, at times, would be made to wonder who would be believed the most between a narrator who says a character was good and kind and one who shows what the character does. It would be taken for granted that one that merely shows the actions would easily be believed as opposed to one who makes general statements that are not supported by evidence.

Similarly, in cases where Chongo has made general statements, he has gone ahead to show the events happening independent of the author. This signifies that the author wishes the events in the work to be believed from their happening.

An important element of rhetoric already referred to earlier is that of clarity and vividness. As Bruss (2013) has already suggested, vividness contributes to creating a picture that is convincing to the reader. This, it has been seen, Chongo has successfully done through his use of descriptive language. Chongo's writing extensively exploits imagery and enables the reader to experience the world of the narrative particularly in 'Fisi Wankhuli' and 'Mkomwini Woba M'mphika'. In one instance in 'Fisi Wankhuli', Chongo describes the dancing gear on Hare:

Mitu yankhuku yovala mukhosi ngati mkanda, malaza ovala kunsongolo kuti azikalira bwino...kudzanso cakumutu ca nthenga za nkhuu zakubacati pikuu (There were the chicken heads for wearing around the neck like a neck-chain, rattles for the calves to give...proper sound...and also a headdress of stolen chicken feathers sticking up)'(pg. 11).

In this section, Chongo exploits visual imagery for the benefit of firstly, the reader in his visualising the world of the story and, secondly, the author in managing to control the reader to think in a particular way, in this instance, in a way that as already explained above, enables the reader to see the reality in the

work. The imagery in this work works to the advantage of the author in that the major characters in this work are animals. By giving so much life to the characters, Chongo manages to get his reader to appreciate the fictional world as a realistic one.

A similarly vivid picture in 'Mkomwini Woba M'mphika' is created when Machisa is discovered in the granary. He is described as follows:

Tikho anaona pa mphika wa nkhangha mposatseka! Amuna ake aMacihisa ali noni noni. Kumanja ndi kukamwa, m'pamalaya pomwe wawa, mafutaka.... Tikho misozi inaza m'maso niigwera pacifuwa pamawere ace osagwa aja (Her husband Machisa was all greasy noni noni on his hands, around the mouth, and even on his shirt.... Tears came to Tikho's eyes and fell upon those youthful breasts of hers) (pg. 90).

As was the case with the animal-character dominated 'Fisi Wankhuli', this story has also seen an impressive use of the technique of vivid description. It would be suggested here that Chongo's use of vivid description is for the sake of the reader's ability to see the work in a world his own.

Conclusion

In this study, it has been shown that Chongo has tried to use the tool of rhetoric to capture the attention of the reader. The final element of vividness, it should be mentioned, seems to have been more employed in the works that were transcribed from actual stories broadcast on radio. It could be argued that Chongo did not necessarily read his stories. The clear difference could propose that Chongo while performing the stories probably departed from the text that he was reading hence the performed text being more 'flowery' than the one written to be read. It should be stated, however, that there is no direct relationship observed whether Chongo's use of persuasive techniques in his works contributed to the popularity of the work. It has been noted, however, that for persuasion to succeed, there is need to personalise it for the targeted audience (Keptin, 2015; Scharmer *et al*, 2022). To what extent can it be argued that Chongo personalised his work? While it is clear that the work was shared in a specific language, there is no evidence that the work was intended primarily for audiences coming from the Chewa-speaking regions.

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