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Envisioning and visualizing English football in East Africa: the case of a Kenyan radio football commentator

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This paper examines Mohammed Juma Njuguna's radio commentary on English Premier League football to a Kenyan audience. It observes that this commentator's performance uniquely deviates from the play-by-play style of radio football commentary which we have known in Kenya. His focus is not limited to the football match event, and to comprehend it one has to consult other frames of interpretation beyond the football match event. These narratives not only invoke a socio-cultural context but are also constructed and performed in a way that closely relates them to aspects of the oral traditional performance. I investigate this phenomenon in the light of the concept of radio football commentary as an envisioning process, and argue that such envisioning goes beyond the football match event to the wider perceptions and social myths of both the community of fans and the wider society and culture.

Introduction

The performance of radio football commentary has been one of the dominant aspects of contemporary football cultures in Kenya. It has gradually developed certain enduring patterns that inform the individual commentaries of specific commentators. By the mid-1980s, radio football commentary had developed to the level of an oral performance genre, characterized by a distinct structure and texture. Specific thematic and linguistic conventions emerged and were informally accepted as the rubric of radio commentary which, in its practice, echoed Ferguson and Reaser's concept of sports announcer talk (SAT).¹ Significantly, this genre was underpinned by what we could refer to as the need to envision the football match through verbal and prosodic features of language. Nevertheless, this apparently pragmatic origin and function of radio football commentary in East Africa can also be placed within the specific historical and socio-cultural circumstances that have characterized the nature and function of media in Africa, an argument also made by Louise Bourgault in relation to the practice of radio on the African continent.² The point one can highlight in Bourgault's argument is that from the very beginning, radio aimed at endearing itself to the public. I argue in this paper that in the contemporary Kenyan society it was a popular medium of creating visibility particularly for those in power and/or those who aspire to rise to positions of power.³

If public-oriented radio programming is invaluable to those who seek to influence public opinion, then radio coverage of sports events is even more so. John Owens has observed that it took only one year for Marconi's radio technology to

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become involved in the coverage of sports.⁴ While this may have been in response to the need to pass sporting information instantaneously across wider spaces, the realization that the sports audience was largely male and extremely loyal immediately attracted sponsorship – the main objective of which was of course the potential commercial leverage in sport coverage.⁵ This paper suggests that in Kenya, this loyal male constituency attracted politicians and power brokers.

Another significant point mentioned by Bourgault, and which informs this paper, is that the practice of radio in Africa has also taken on the colour and tenor of the oral traditions of communities in African societies.⁶ We can argue that this pattern may have developed from the practice of endearing radio to the masses. The colonial government's quest to use radio to identify with the public also meant that allowances had to be made for the entry of markers of cultural identity. Closely linked to this cultural dimension of radio in Africa has been the use of the medium as one of the facilitating agents of theatre for development. Kenya has had a sustained practice of radio drama, and Dina Ligaga has argued that in Kenya, radio drama has been an effective medium for the performance of development themes because it speaks to the reality of its listeners.⁷ Ligaga explores some of the basic social themes that have been the subject of performances by the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation's radio theatre programme, which has run since the 1980s. It is this phenomenon of instrumentalizing radio that informs the unique strand of radio football commentary performed by Mohammed Juma Njuguna. It is a practice that takes football commentary beyond its pure mediational role to become an active site for the reconstruction and performance of many other narratives that define the socio-cultural, economic and political character of the society that produces them.

This invokes the argument of oral performance theorist Richard Baumann about the complex relationship between an event and a narrative performance based on that event. He argues that the narrative performed in relation to a specific event is not necessarily limited to the frame of that event, and that adequate commentary of an event also appeals to other frames of interpretation beyond the real event so that the event can be aptly illuminated – a process that he terms 'verbal art'.⁸ Mohammed Juma Njuguna's performance is thus not limited to the referential dimension of radio football commentary but also covers a wide range of context-specific narratives. These narratives help to transform radio football commentary into a multi-dimensional mirror that enables the audience to not only 'see' the match but also to engage with the whole gamut of their real-life experiences; they see themselves and others in the experience of life beyond the football match event.

This collective element underlying radio football commentary is perhaps related to the communal character of radio audiences in many regions of Africa. Charlistening in many African societies had a public and social character, mainly due to the scarcity of radio receivers.⁹ Indeed, there were very few radio receivers in Kenya until the 1980s, particularly in the rural areas, and thus radio football commentaries were specifically directed towards groups of listeners. These group listening situations created vibrant and participatory contexts around the listening process. This paper argues that the unique nature of Mohammed Juma Njuguna's radio football commentary should thus be perceived within the changed scenario of sport mediatization. Commenting on the media situation in the contemporary age, John Owens has pointed out that in this era of digital technology, widespread broadband internet access, and 500-channel television, it is easy to see how an 'old' technology, like radio, can become viewed as ordinary.¹⁰

While the radio football commentary of our contemporary era could have been adjusted to fit within its new context, to understand a specific radio commentator's performance style and its impact on the audience, they must be placed within a bigger frame. Other factors, such as the character and influence of other competing media, historical and socio-cultural aspects of the society that produces the radio commentaries, also need to be considered. One has to undertake, in Geertz's terms, a 'thick description' of cultural forms in order to cultivate an accurate understanding of their nature and function.¹¹ In the case of football commentary, language and verbal art are used to reveal a match event to an audience. This revelation is also an envisioning, and the commentary space is also appropriated to reveal and envision other significant cultural aspects of society more broadly.

Football commentary: the Kenyan experience

The story of football commentary in Kenya can be understood within the specific political, economic and socio-cultural circumstances of the country. Ellis Cashmore defines sports culture as 'everything that we learn and do that has its sources in sports', and this definitely includes radio football commentary, a cultural form that has developed around and because of football. Cashmore's main point is that sports cultures may have their origin in the competitive sporting events, but their substance is not necessarily limited to these events. They are informed by the processes and issues that underlie and surround them, which include the historical conditions under which the sport in question emerged and matured and the changes that encouraged certain developments and discouraged others in the growth of the sports culture in question.¹²

In the Kenyan case we can understand the emergence and growth of football cultures within what Bethwell A. Ogot has described as the populist style of the Moi Presidency in Kenyan society in the 1980s, a leadership style that was characterized by an overriding tendency to seek to forge a direct relationship with ordinary people, and the creation of the perception that the will of the people was supreme in governance.¹³ Radio became an invaluable tool in this project, and inevitably football, as a game for the masses, was promoted. The genre of radio football commentary thus developed very much like one of the apparatuses of populist politics. The government financed the production of these broadcasts and the President and his top government officers directly created identification between them and the football match events by attending most matches.

Furthermore, two ethnicity-based football clubs emerged that captured a country-wide fan base. Gor Mahia and AFC Leopards gained automatic support from the Luo and Luhya ethnic groups in Kenya, respectively. The rivalry between the two teams was as intense as their successes on the football pitch in Kenya and the East African region in general were impressive. The two football clubs gradually acquired the status of Kenyan cultural symbols and Kenyans from all walks of life developed an interest in following their battles on the pitch.¹⁴ The main medium of people's engagement with these football clubs was radio. Over time, these two community clubs lost their strength within the privatized context of Kenyan football; however, more significant still is Kenyans' shift of attention to European football, particularly the English Premier League.

Contemporary Kenyan society has witnessed improvement in the information and communication technology infrastructure, with satellite television finding its way to even relatively rural areas. Satellite sports broadcasts on DSTV have become one of the marks of popular culture, and fan groups and structures have formed around leading English clubs such as Arsenal, Manchester United, Chelsea and Liverpool. It is particularly noteworthy that Arsenal and Manchester United fan groups in Kenya are almost as significant and loyal as the groups of fans in England.¹⁵

It is also worth noting that Arsenal's fan group is bigger, more committed and more passionate than any of the other Kenyan English fan groups. One cannot explain with certainty why this is the case, but the general assumption is that since the club has had a history of signing up black players both from France and from Francophone Africa, Kenyans readily identify with the team. Indeed, at the peak of the club's success during the 2003/2004 season, when it enjoyed an unbeaten run of 49 matches, almost 75% of the team was black and it included such names as Kolo Touré and Emmanuel Eboué, both from Cote d'Ivoire. Previously one of the greatest icons of African football, Nigerian Nwankwo Kanu, had played for the team, and more recently the team has included notable African players such as Laurent Etame Mayer of Cameroon and Emmanuel Adebayor of Togo. Furthermore, Kenyan football fans have identified with other black Arsenal icons such as Thierry Henry, Nicholas Anelka and Patrick Vieira. While most of these fans watch the games live on Supersport in bars, social halls and even residential homes, an important constituency of fans are unable to access televised matches because they are in remote locations, are travelling or are perhaps at work, and therefore keep in touch with the action on radio.

It is also worth noting that since the introduction of privatization in Kenyan media, Royal Media Services has been the largest and most popular media house. This is the media house that owns Citizen Radio, for which Mohammed Juma Njuguna performs his commentaries. Commercial media is generally more innovative than the national media service; furthermore, there has been stiff competition among the media houses, which has further pushed the innovative practices of mediatization to reach unprecedented heights in Kenya. Radio Jambo, which falls under Africa Media Services, also runs football commentaries. In fact, this is a sports station that has a strong focus on mediatizing sports talk, sports commentary and music. It is against this background that Mohammed Juma Njuguna performs his football commentaries on Citizen Radio. All other Kenyan commercial media houses run periodic interludes in which information on European football, and particularly English football, is featured. English football has become one of the most visible strands of popular culture in Kenya.

It is also important to consider Mohammed Juma Njuguna's performance against the background of the classical Kenyan radio football commentaries of the 1980s. These mainly focused on Kenyan or East and Central African football. Once in a while, Kenyan radio commentators covered continental football matches involving the Kenyan national football team or the then-dominant clubs Gor Mahia and AFC Leopards. A large constituency of these commentaries' target audience was football fans who could not watch the match live or on TV – sports TV did not even exist in Kenya at that time. The commentaries were designed to be as informative and captivating as possible. Among the leading commentators of the time were Leonard

Mambo Mbotela, Ali Salim Manga, Jack Oyoo Sylvester, Salim Juma, Ishmael Mohammed and, significantly, Mohammed Juma Njuguna.

The contemporary situation is very different. Radio football commentary operates in a multi-media situation in which a Kenyan fan listening to the match on radio may at the same time have access to the live televised match, to frequent updates on his/her cell phone through the Zain and Safaricom service providers, and/or to live commentary from the BBC if his/her cell phone is internet-enabled. The task of the radio football commentator is thus not to compete with these media, but to introduce it and frame it within its wider cultural context. Mohammed Juma Njuguna watches the matches on TV like any other fan with access to a television, and his live, professional commentary on English Premier League matches gives a detailed contextual and statistical account of the games.

It is against this background that we examine Mohammed Juma Njuguna's commentaries on three selected matches, all in the English Premier League: Arsenal v Liverpool on 31 March 2007, Arsenal v Tottenham Hotspur on 24 April 2007, and Arsenal v Chelsea on 5 May 2007. As previously mentioned, Arsenal is arguably the most popular English football club in Kenya; as a commercial station, Citizen Radio tends to cover most of the club's matches, with the aim of catching the attention of most of the Kenyan fans. Mohammed Juma Njuguna's style seems to have a level of consistency, inasmuch as he seems to have developed some templates that inform each of the commentaries, and in a way each seems very much like the others.

Radio football commentary as oral performance

Mohammed Juma Njuguna's commentary style in the three matches selected for study reveals a number of patterns that are comparable to significant strands of the African oral performances.

The commentator starts each match with an elaborate opening formula, the content and style of which are always similar. It consists of a welcoming gesture to the audience, followed by a prayer: 'Eee Mungu wetu mwenye kuneemesha neema kubwa kubwa na neema ndogo ndogo. Twaomba utujalie pumzi na nafsi ili tuweze kuwaletea waja wako matangazo haya ya mpira. . . .' ('Oh God Almighty, the one who grants big blessings and small blessings. We ask that you grant us life and personality so that we can manage to run this football commentary for the benefit of your people').

This is a rather informal prayer that is in fact close to parody.¹⁶ Sometimes Njuguna extends the prayer by making reference to the potential threat of 'enemies' who might cast evil spells on him that could spoil the commentary. This is definitely a humorous and rather ridiculous approach to prayer. However, since the football match event has an element of the carnivalesque, the prayer amounts to neither blasphemy nor heresy, but is appreciated as part of the subversive trend of the carnivalesque, an integral part of most African oral performances.¹⁷ Mohammed Juma Njuguna's use of the carnivalesque in his opening formula can thus be perceived as a sort of break from the conventional football commentary at two levels. Firstly, rather than beginning with an official exposition of the match event, as other commentators are wont to, he starts with a prayer, an aspect that lends a divine aura to an otherwise purely secular event. On another level, by choosing to begin a football commentary with a prayer, the commentator subverts the solemnity that defines

the structure and style of prayer. This is most probably meant not only to infuse humour into the football commentary event but also to relieve the anxiety and tension that generally characterize the moments just before the football match begins.

Within his opening formula he also acknowledges his close friends and colleagues, names which he mentions not only in the three commentaries under scrutiny here, but in virtually all his commentaries. This invokes some specific patterns of African oral performances which are related to the notion that the African oral narrative performance is – in Finnegan's terms – a moment of sociability,¹⁸ an aspect that also parallels the nature of fandom, which is a process through which the fan transforms himself from a passive consumer into a proactive collaborator.¹⁹ Mohammed Juma Njuguna's reference to members of his audience is thus in a way a simulation of the collaborative nature of football fandom and the oral narrative performance. In both cases, the commentator's audience is given visibility. In the case of the oral narrative performance, it is the narrator who is visible as the leader of the performance session, but reference to other audience members is a way of sharing this visibility with others within the performance.

The opening formula also includes the commentator's introduction of both teams' line-ups, conventionally carried out by identifying the players by name. Njuguna reads out the players' names but deliberately pronounces some of them inaccurately – particularly in cases where the inaccuracy in pronunciation leads to a humorous caricature of the name when appreciated from the Kiswahili language perspective. For instance, in his commentary on the match between Arsenal and Liverpool, he mispronounces the names of three players: Arsenal's Cesc Fàbregas (Francesc Fàbregas Soler), which he pronounces as 'Fabaragasi', and Liverpool's Dirk Kuyt and Peter Crouch, which are pronounced as 'Khuyut' and 'Korocho' respectively. This subversion is not due to the commentator's inability to pronounce the names correctly but is just part of the teasing games that are characteristic of carnival spaces. The beauty of the game resides in the fact that the audience knows the proper pronunciation and is therefore amused by the phonological liberties that the commentator seems to take with such names.

The structure of the three commentaries deviates noticeably from the continuous play-by-play mode; instead it employs a freestyle mode that occasionally shifts focus from the main event on the football pitch to other spaces and people beyond the confines of the football match. One of the most dominant subjects of the commentator's digression is a typically Kenyan socio-cultural practice called 'salaams'. This is an exchange of greetings and short messages among close friends using the radio medium, which was a very popular trend in the 1980s, and was performed in radio programmes specifically set aside for it. This was practiced for both utilitarian and aesthetic reasons – it was useful to the extent that friends were able to communicate goodwill messages to each other, but it was also a rich site for artistic expression. It was performed around the creative play with names and sending of short hilarious messages to each other.

This is echoed in Mohammed Juma Njuguna's radio football commentary. For instance, at one point in his commentary on the Arsenal v Tottenham Hotspur game he sends out greetings to people who happen to bear the following names: Dr Quick Nyamasyo, Samuel Kihara, Professor Maji Marefu, Juma Mkoloni, Fundi Kasia, and Kinyua Ringera. Most of the names have punning qualities and are essentially neologisms meant to inject humour into his performance. For instance, 'Quick' is not a conventional name but most probably a description of the said Dr

Nyamasyo's effectiveness. Fundi Kasia is presumably a pseudonym, since 'Fundu' is a Kiswahili noun for technician and 'Kasia' is closely related to the Kiswahili word 'Ghasia' whose English translation could be anywhere between 'trouble', 'chaos' and 'disorder'. 'Maji Marefu' is Kiswahili and practically translates to 'long water', or perhaps could also be a lexical phrase for 'deep water'. However, most importantly, Professor Maji Marefu is a renowned herbalist from Tanzania who practices in Kenya – this introduces another dominant aspect of Njuguna's commentaries, which is allusion to socio-cultural texts beyond the event of the football match. While the commentator makes no direct reference to the herbalist in question, it is possible to argue that the personality of the said herbalist is invoked, as well as the rather phenomenal status of Tanzanian herbalists practicing in Kenya.²⁰

The name Juma Mkoloni could also be read as an allusion to 'ukoloni', which is Kiswahili for colonialism. In this context, the term seems to have little to do with the experience of colonialism per se but is just a pseudonym whose typology and use is limited to a particular social context. This practice of using pseudonyms between close friends in public spaces is an invocation of a trend within the oral tradition of some communities in the East African region. Okot p'Bitek has discussed this phenomenon in what is referred to as the *mwoc* performance among some pastoralist communities in northern Uganda, the most dominant being the Acoli,²¹ and Karin Barber has termed the practice 'the performance of personhood'. Karin Barber's use of the term 'personhood' is closely related to the central objective of this paper. She defines the expression of personhood as 'the revelation of states of mind, emotions and inner experiences'. Simply put, she perceives the process of expressing personhood as synonymous with envisioning – exposing to the outside world what exists inside.²²

It is this consciousness that informs Mohammed Juma Njuguna's apparent bias towards some names in his commentaries, especially names that are wholly or partly pseudonymous. For instance, in his commentary on the Arsenal v Chelsea match he frequently mentions his friend Tony Kinyozi. 'Kinyozi' is a Kiswahili term for 'barber', and in Kenyan contemporary parlance barbers more often than not appropriate the name of their vocation, which becomes a sort of identity that they prefer even to their own conventional names. It is significant that this structural pattern of reference to names of people away from the football pitch, names that further seem to invoke particular sets of relationships and aspects of cultural experiences, creates a situation where Mohammed Juma Njuguna's style of radio football commentary not only envisions specific football match events but also appropriates this space to show many other images of Kenyan society.

This may be unprecedented in the culture of radio football commentary in Kenya but it is simply an echo of some East African oral performance traditions, the most elaborate of which is the Acoli oral performance tradition, which Okot P'Bitek borrows from in his poetry. George A. Heron has termed this aspect of Bitek's poetry 'the rhetoric technique'.²³ This technique involves the performer's envisioning of and interaction with the audience during an oral performance session. The performer expresses feelings and opinions but also makes sure that he acknowledges the presence of an audience that is directly referred to every now and then, in a sense giving them visibility.

Mohammed Juma Njuguna's commentaries also reveal an inconsistency in how the unfolding event is captured in the form of narrative. He shifts between continuous and apparently faithful relaying of the match event and disconnected interpre-

tive comments on the event as it unfolds. For instance, in his commentary on the match between Arsenal and Tottenham, Njuguna at one point broke from play-by-play style to engage in a one-sided conversation with his audience. This conversation mainly revolved around his perceptions of the ability of different players in the game. He praised Kolo Touré (then an Arsenal central defender) as ‘chaka la simba’ (‘a bush in which there resides a lion’). He offered his approval of Touré’s diet and disapproval of the food eaten by Dimitar Berbatov (then a Tottenham Hotspur striker), stating that he considered Berbatov a ‘debe tupu’ (‘empty tin’) ostensibly because he grew up on a diet that did not include African tubers and cereals. At that point the commentator completely lost the thread of the play-by-play commentary and chose to engage in speculative discourses that appealed to stereotypes of race.²⁴

This was largely speculative talk, since the diets of professional footballers in England are similar, and it is unlikely that African players would access and eat their local food separately from their European counterparts. Indeed, within a few minutes the commentator was forced to eat humble pie when Berbatov dribbled past Touré and scored. The commentator wailed and screamed, lamenting and blaming the Arsenal coach for fielding very young players: ‘I told you Arsene Wenger, these boys are too young. . . . Sorry, I am using the colonialistic language. It is because I want Arsene Wenger to hear me.’²⁵ It is thus clear that at times the commentator’s attempt to combine narrative construction of the event and a detached interpretation of the event is characterized by contradiction and deconstruction. This situation invokes Richard Bauman’s argument that while narratives are seen as verbal icons of the events they recount, it is not easy to determine the nature and extent of the congruity between the event as it occurs and the means by which it is to be captured in a continuous narrative.

As this match progressed the Arsenal team improved, and the final score was 2–2. The commentator’s dismissal of Arsenal’s players as too young was therefore undercut by the team’s fairly decent performance in the match. Nevertheless, we cannot accuse the commentator of stating falsehoods that are overtaken by actual events on the football pitch – the commentary is a narrative constructed as the event unfolds, which is therefore comparable to what Albert Lord and Milman Parry have termed the ‘oral performance formula’,²⁶ defined by the balance of reproducing an oral tradition on the one hand and individual creative imagination on the other hand.

In the case of radio football commentary, the tradition is comparable to the existing social myths and stereotypes that are repeatedly produced and performed in wider football fandom until they become a sort of tradition. For instance, some players, teams, styles of play and so on are profiled in particular ways among particular communities of fans, and because the radio commentator belongs to such communities he/she is under their influence. For instance, in 2006 many of Arsenal’s fans took the general view that the players were generally too young and inexperienced. By this time most of the senior players that had been at the club for some time, such as Patrick Vieira, Robert Pires and Thierry Henry, had left. Mohammed Juma Njuguna’s remarks were therefore partly informed by this perception, but the actual run of the match did not fully conform to this perception, because it was spontaneous and unpredictable. It is in this light that Baumann has argued that the interpretation of a narrative constructed out of a live event does not

depend on one frame. It is made both in the immediate and referential reality of the event and in other external but related frames of interpretation.²⁷

The foregoing discussion of the structure of Mohammed Juma Njuguna's style of radio football commentary is intriguing since it questions the basic assumptions behind the nature and function of radio football commentary. It also challenges the view that the commentary singularly envisions the match event and that the audience is fully enlightened by the commentary. It is apparent that alongside the football match event, the commentator envisions many other phenomena, and that when tracking the game in its play-by-play form, the narrative that is constructed is not necessarily limited to that event. As a matter of fact, the commentator sometimes gives up the meditational role and merely reacts to the game; for instance, in moments of goalmouth action during the Arsenal and Chelsea game Njuguna frequently broke into shouting, moaning, wailing and babbling. These euphoric moments were followed by calm and articulate speech.

In one significant incidence of what one could term 'unreliable and unapologetic commentary', in the Arsenal v Chelsea match, Njuguna was caught unawares in the middle of a calm and dismissive description of one of the Arsenal players, Brazilian striker Julio Baptista. He described the player as 'big for nothing'. Suddenly Baptista picked up a long pass from his goalkeeper and raced towards the opposition's goal, getting fouled in the process. Disregarding his previous dismissal of Baptista, Njuguna started to shower praise on Baptista's pace, strength and vision. The Chelsea defender who fouled the player, Dutchman Khalid Boulahrouz, was red-carded and Arsenal were awarded a penalty, which was scored by Brazilian midfielder Gilberto Silva. The commentator became ecstatic, obviously not concerned that the events had contradicted the opinion that he had expressed just a few seconds earlier. In a way, this echoed oral performance critic Walter Ong's argument in relation to the nature of oral performance. He argues that oral performance cannot be conceptualized as a fixed entity, since the realities of oral composition and performance render the oral text inevitably evanescent.²⁸

Conclusion

This paper described the radio football commentary style of Mohammed Juma Njuguna, a popular Kenyan radio commentator. It perceived a unique trend in his performance style that seems to deconstruct the conventional play-by-play style, whose main focus is on the coverage of the football match event as it unfolds. Mohammed Juma Njuguna's style is more or less a combination of play-by-play commentary and a unique freestyle commentary style that is characterized by the performance of many narratives whose subject matters go beyond the football match event. His coverage is therefore not limited to the envisioning of the football match event; it is an envisioning of the commentator's creative imagination within its immediate socio-cultural context. The audience sees much more than the football match event.

I have placed this practice in its immediate historical and socio-cultural context and established that perhaps this stylistic shift in radio football commentary may be seen as a result of the rapid changes in media technology in our contemporary times, which may have had an effect on the needs of the audience. Widespread television coverage of football has relieved the radio commentator of the task of tracking all nuances of a football match, and in order to sustain his relevance in the

practice of sports coverage, he has had to repack his performance. I have compared Mohammed Juma Njuguna's performance to aspects of the philosophical and aesthetic patterns of African oral traditional performance. To this extent, I have sought to describe the commentator's style of radio football commentary as an echo of the African oral tradition; a view that invokes an argument made by Louise Bourgault on the practice of media in Africa.²⁹ Indeed, the practice of radio football commentary could be understood as a process of envisioning the socio-cultural reality of the society that produces and consumes the commentary.

Notes

1. Ferguson (1983) and Reaser (2003) describe what they refer to as the situational and functional features of sports announcer talk (SAT), and argue that SAT is characterized by oral reporting of an activity, including background information and interpretation. It is a dialogue or monologue directed to an unseen, unknown and heterogeneous mass audience and contains a variety of discourses that vary in levels of arousal or excitement.
2. Louise Bourgault (1995) traces the historical development of radio in Africa from its earliest presence in South Africa in the 1920s, and discusses the BBC relay service founded as the second radio service in East Africa by the British East African Company in 1927. She argues that this early radio service was generally aimed at the public, and that the British colonial government's aim was to introduce the use of local languages in Kenya, such as Kikuyu and Kamba, to endear the radio service to the public.
3. In Kenya, particularly during the period between independence in 1964 and 1992, when the media was liberalized, there was only one media house, which was a symbol of the power and control of the government. During the attempted coup in 1982, the mutinying Air Force officers immediately took control of the media house.
4. Owens, 'The Coverage of Sports on Radio', 128–31.
5. Ibid.
6. Bourgault, *Mass Media in Sub-Saharan Africa*, xiv, 1.
7. Ligaga, 'Radio Theatre: Interrogating', 82–4.
8. Richard Baumann, quoted in Auslander, *Liveness. Performance in Mediatized Culture*, 32.
9. Ambler, 'Mass Media and Leisure', 119–36.
10. Owens, 'The Coverage of Sports on Radio', 128.
11. Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 5.
12. Cashmore, *Sports Culture*, viii–x.
13. Ogot and Ochieng, *Decolonization and Independence in Kenya*, 187–213.
14. <http://kenyapage.net/football/>
15. A spectacular case of this commitment was witnessed after the 2008/2009 semi-final match between Arsenal and Manchester United, which led one Kenyan Arsenal fan to commit suicide. He was found hanging in his apartment, dressed in an Arsenal replica jersey.
16. Parody is a stylistic feature that mainly consists of playful and subversive imitation used by artists to comment on their immediate reality.
17. In Rivkin and Ryan (*Literary Theory: An Anthology*, 45–51) Mikhail Bakhtin defines the carnival as a people's second life organized on the basis of laughter: a festive life that seeks to subvert all those structures that are official and conventional. It is a temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and the established order, marked by suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions.
18. Finnegan, Ruth. *Limba Stories and Story Telling*, 62–64.
19. Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, 137.
20. In most Kenyan cities and urban centres, there can be found self-proclaimed doctors from Tanzania who claim to have wonder drugs that can cure any disease.
21. Okot p'Bitek has explored this concept in both his critical and fictional works, the most elaborate of which is his novel *White Teeth* (1989).

22. Barber, *The Anthropology of Texts and Publics*, 103.
23. Heron, *The Poetry of Okot p'Bitek*, 12–13.
24. It is generally believed in many parts of Africa that European food is not sufficiently nutritious. This is of course a fallacy based on the belief that 'if it is not African food, then it is not food'. But this is a very empty social myth, since even among different African communities there are differences in diet.
25. It is significant to note that the commentator's use of the phrase 'colonialistic language' is an allusion to a significant moment of post-independent Kenya's history. In 1964, Jomo Kenyatta, the first Kenyan Prime minister delivered a speech to the parliament in English, at the end of which he delivered another informal speech in Kiswahili. In justification of this he said that English is a 'colonialistic language'. Incidentally, this is a pattern that took root and has become an unofficial but consistent speech delivery style of the post-independence Kenyan presidents.
26. Finnegan, *The Oral and Beyond*, 96.
27. Baumann, *Story, Performance and Event*, 4–6.
28. For a deeper insight into this argument see Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy*.
29. Bourgault, *Mass Media in Sub-Saharan Africa*.

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