



**When Myth Becomes Meaning: Examining the
Representation of Female Character Construction in
*Uzalo: Blood is Forever.***

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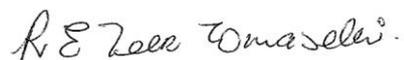
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This study is dedicated to my late grandmother, Lily Julia Wyngaard.

“There will never be a day that I don’t think of you and wish you were by my side”

– Narin Crewel

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Abstract

Soap operas have been constructed as a feminine genre displaying the everyday reality of female characters. It has been postulated by seminal scholars (Modleski, 1979/1982; Hobson, 1982; Kuhn, 1984; Brown, 1987) that the genre provides a feminine discourse, which subverts classic 'male-centred' genres that portray women as objects to be desired by the male gaze. However, soap opera scholarship has received criticism from scholars who contend that femininity is restricted to a western, white, middle-class context, thereby dismissing femininities that exist outside this framework (Geraghty, 1991; Hooks, 2003; Acosta-Alzuru, 2003).

Furthermore, scholars (Metz, 1974; Butler, 1986; Seiter, 1987/1992) have stressed the need to extend the focus of feminist scholarship from narrative structure to include the stylistic and diegetic conventions used to purvey meaning. Language therefore plays a significant role in soap opera scholarship as it is through language that messages about femininity are encoded.

The popular South African soap opera *Uzalo* presented a unique opportunity to examine soap opera as a feminine discourse, while accounting for the stylistic conventions in which meaning is inscribed. This study employed a structuralist semiotics approach to analyse the representation of the matriarchs in *Uzalo*. The theoretical framework was guided by the work of Roland Barthes (1972) and Claude Lévi- Strauss (1978) who focussed on the work of myth. The purpose of incorporating myth was to uncover the ritualistic depiction of the everyday, which is often constructed as common sense.

Key findings suggest that although *Uzalo* attempted to establish a feminine discourse by positioning the matriarchs as central characters, patriarchal values permeated the text as absent signifiers. The study also revealed that a successful feminine discourse requires a more nuanced approach that accounts for the intersectionality of gender, race, class and sexuality.

Key words: soap opera, femininity, patriarchy, myth, *Uzalo*

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Introduction

Gender equality has formed an integral part of South Africa's post-apartheid struggle for liberation. This was notably expressed in former President Nelson Mandela's first State of the Nation Address in 1994, where he stated: "freedom cannot be achieved if women are not emancipated from all forms of oppression" (South African History Online, 2011). Since then there have been attempts to shift political, economic and social practices, in both the public and private sectors, to correct the inequalities between men and women. However, despite these attempts South Africa is plagued with one of the highest rates of gender-based violence in the world with even prominent male figures being implicated in acts of violence against women.

An article by Simphiwe Sesanti (2009) revealed that patriarchal values propel skewed gender relations. Sesanti examined President Jacob Zuma's rape case in 2005 and former African National Congress (ANC) Chief Whip, Mbulelelo Goniwe's sexual harassment case in 2006. Patriarchal cultural values were used to validate the actions in both cases. Conversely, Sesanti (2009: 209) postulated that if women enter into the traditionally male-dominated media sphere, it has the potential to shift discourses around skewed gender narratives, especially in an African cultural context.

Soap opera as a feminine discourse

The introduction of soap operas on radio in the 1930s is heralded as the most popular attempt to introduce a female-centred genre to the mass media (Hayward, 1993: 85). It has been argued by feminist scholars (see Mulvey, 1975/1999; Modleski, 1979;1982; Hobson, 1982/2003; Kuhn, 1984, Brown, 1987; Brunson, 1993) that soap operas offer women a platform to construct an identity outside classic 'male' (Modleski cited in Frey-Vor, 1990: 10).

Scholars who adopted this position (see Modleski, 1979; Ang, 1982; Brown, 1987; Hayward, 1993) have argued that the narrative structure of soap operas produces a feminine discourse. According to Mary Ellen Brown (1987: n/p) "feminine discourse constructs reality for women in terms of her perceptions of the social order she is subordinate". A feminine discourse rejects dominant ideologies by foregoing a single hero and opting for multiple perspectives from different characters who resolve conflict through dialogue. The lack of narrative closure in soap opera propels the notion that soap operas do not advance a dominant ideology (Modleski, 1979: 14). For Christine Gledhill and Vicky Ball (2013: 362) "'Women's culture' [...] refers to those spaces on the margins of the dominant culture where women's different positioning in society is acknowledged and allowed a degree of expression". For these scholars, feminine discourse

and women's culture can be used to challenge patriarchal ideals (Brown, 1987: 2; Gledhill and Ball, 2013: 362).

The importance of women in soap opera is reinforced in British prime time serials like *EastEnders* and *Coronation Street*, in which matriarchs play a significant role in keeping the community together. In these soap operas, the community only functions when women are in control as they bring disparate or isolated individuals into the community/family. The function of these characters is comparable to the role of a mother whose primary responsibility is to ensure the well-being of her husband and children (Geraghty, 2006: 252).

The rhetoric of female apotheosis is emphasised by women having babies, which reinforces the myth that women are suited for child care because they are by nature domestic, nurturing and self-sacrificing. The myth of maternal omnipotence conceals the marginalisation and subordination of women in patriarchal culture (Rogers, 1991/2003: 478). As a result, some scholars (see Kilborn, 1992; Marx, 2003; Acosta-Alzuru, 2003; Neophytou, 2012; Czarniawska, Eriksson-Zetterquist and Renemark, 2013) hold the position that soap operas reinforce patriarchal ideals by their focus on women being inherently maternal.

Furthermore, the concept of a feminine discourse has been problematised by some scholars for being located in a euro-centric, middle-class framework. These scholars, many of whom reside in marginalised subject-positions (see Hooks, 1992/2003; Acosta-Alzuru, 2003; Ahmed, 2012), contended that women from peripheral communities - particularly women of colour - have rejected the notion of a universal feminine discourse because the social repression of marginalised identities is more nuanced than the struggles expressed in liberal feminist discourses. This has resulted in women of colour adopting an 'oppositional gaze' because of their lack of representation in mainstream media (Hooks, 1992/2003). The blindness towards difference has led to the understanding that studies by seminal scholars were - by default - about white women (Lad, 2016: 369).

Soap operas in South Africa

In South Africa, soap operas have played a critical role in advancing the 'rainbow nation' project (Tager, 2010: 103). *Generations* was the first South African soap opera to be broadcast in 1994. It aired on the public broadcaster, the South African Broadcasting Corporation - SABC One. Since then, a plethora of soap operas have been created, including *Isidingo*, *7de Laan*, *Muvhango* and *Scandal* (Motsaathebe, 2009: 430). Most of these serials have explored themes related to South Africa's post-1994 socio-economic and political context, exploring themes of

race relations, gender dynamics, female empowerment, crime, economics and the role of culture in a creolised society (Motsaathebe, 2009: 430).

Currently the most viewed soap operas in South Africa are, *Generations: The Legacy* and *Uzalo: Blood is Forever*, which have a combined viewership of 18 million (TVSA Blogsite, 2018). According to a recent TAM media report, *Uzalo* is the most widely watched primetime show across all platforms. The soap opera has an audience share of 71.5% while *Generations* enjoys the second highest audience share of 66.1 % (TVSA Blogsite, 2018).

Gender in the South African context

The adoption of a social realist approach in South African soap operas has resulted in a focus on critical social problems in the country. According to Tania Modleski (1979: 13) soap operas contain more references to social problems than other media forms. The realistic portrayal of everyday life encourages viewers to reflect on and work through some of their own problems faced by the characters in the fictional world (Frey-Vor, 1990: 3; Anderson, 2003: 154-155).

The violent colonial and apartheid past in South Africa have contributed significantly towards the construction of a patriarchal society. Sylvia Walby (1989: 214) defined patriarchy as “a system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women”. Linda Lindsey (2015: 3) defined patriarchy as male-centred norms operating through all social institutions that eventually become the norm. For Robert Morrell, Rachel Jewkes and Graham Lindegger (2012: 2), patriarchy is governed by ‘hegemonic’ masculinities which explain the nature, form and dynamics of male power. Morell et al argued that there are at least three types of masculinity in South Africa:

A ‘white’ masculinity (represented in the political and economic dominance of the white ruling class); an ‘African’ rurally-based masculinity that resided in and was perpetuated through indigenous institutions (such as chiefship, communal land tenure and customary law) and finally a ‘black’ masculinity that had emerged in the context of urbanisation and the development of geographically separate and culturally distinct African townships (Morrell et al, 2012: 2).

These masculinities are guided by heteronormative principles. Heteronormativity is “the view that institutionalised heterosexuality constitutes the standard for legitimate and prescriptive sociosexual arrangements” (Ingraham, 1994: 204). Such values are legitimated through cultural, educational, social and economic institutions. It is within this context that the current

study wishes to explore the role of soap operas as a critical discourse to challenge hegemonic gender prescripts. Hegemony, as defined by Antonio Gramsci, is the ability of a dominant group to sustain power through the dialectical relationship between consent and resistance. The success of hegemony resides in its ability to exist as common-sense by interpellating subjects¹ into the preferred ideology (Gramsci, 1970: 12-13).

According to Modleski (1979: 15-16) the villainess turns feminine weakness into a source of strength. This was apparent in the portrayal of villainesses such as Cherele de Villiers in *Isidingo*, Jane in *Egoli* and Anne in *Generations* who deviously manipulated men and women around them to achieve their goals. Their conniving behaviour was on some level empowering to women as they managed to hold their own against the onslaughts of powerful male characters (Marx, 2008: 89). However, these portrayals ignored other forms of social repression such as race, class and sexual orientation which are significant to the establishment of a feminine discourse.

Case Study: *Uzalo: Blood is Forever*

The soap opera chosen for this study was *Uzalo: Blood is Forever* (referred to as *Uzalo* from now). It was created by Duma Ndlovu and produced by Gugulethu Ncube and Pepsi Pokane. The story is based and shot in the second largest (predominantly Zulu) township in KwaZulu Natal (Kwa Mashu). Kwa Mashu is located 90 kilometers north of Durban. *Uzalo* is based on two family dynasties, the Mdletshe's and the Xulu's. These two families are immersed in contradictory worlds headed by the patriarchs, Melusi Mdletshe a charismatic pastor at the Kingdom Canaan Church and Muzi 'Gxabashe' Xulu who is engrossed in a life of crime (SABC One Website, 2018).

At the end of season one it was revealed that the eldest sons from both families, Ayanda Mdletshe and Mxolisi Xulu, were switched at birth. The massive news was difficult for both families to accept as Ayanda and Mxolisi were socialised by their biological parents' arch-nemesis. Furthermore, Gxabashe was arrested in the final episode and Pastor Mdletshe decided to leave Kwa Mashu after discovering the explosive news about his sons. The exit of the patriarchs resulted in the matriarchs taking on the responsibilities of their respective dynasties.

¹ Subject in this context refers to the social and theoretical construction designated to an individual as they become significant in a political or theoretical sense (Bobo, 2006: 240).

In season two, Zandile ‘MaNzuza’ Mdletshe and Lindiwe ‘MaNgcobo’ Xulu became central characters. They were forced to adjust to life as single mothers while grappling with the difficult news about Ayanda and Mxolisi. Their position as the head of their dynasties presented an opportunity to examine the potential of *Uzalo* to develop a feminine discourse in accordance with the claims postulated by soap opera scholarship in the 1980s (SABC One Website, 2017).

Rationale and Significance of the Study

Although soap opera is posited as being empowering for women, it has been contended that the genre is dictated by patriarchal discourses. Soap opera scholarship reveals that there is contestation among scholars about the concept of a feminine discourse. Furthermore, these debates indicate that feminist scholarship from the 1970s and 1980s largely focused on liberal feminist ideals, thereby excluding women who exist outside a white, middle class context (Lad, 2016: 370).

However, the widespread success of the genre makes it impossible to ignore the role of soap opera as an empowering genre for women, internationally. Global adaptations of the format have focused on women-centred themes, therefore providing a platform for the emergence of a feminine discourse, even in regions where patriarchy is inscribed in social, political and cultural institutions. For example, women in India have credited soap operas for empowering women due to the genre’s focus on entertainment-education in the region (Ahmed, 2012: 1-6).

The role of seminal soap opera scholarship cannot be discarded because it provided a foundation for scholarly debates about the potential of soap operas to challenge patriarchal values (Lad, 2016). It is for this reason that the emphasis of the genre as a political – feminist-project cannot be ignored because it offered a radical and subversive approach to take women’s pleasure seriously (Weissmann, 2016: 367).

Although feminist concerns of the ideological paradoxes in soap opera narratives are valuable, it left important gaps. These studies overlooked the role of soap opera as a system of signification, “a text of sound and image constructed in a highly conventionalised fashion” (Butler, 1986: 53). For Jeremy Butler, soap operas possess a distinct style, even if it is concealed ideologically in an invisible style. He therefore stressed the importance of studying the stylistic conventions of soap opera, including lighting, editing, camera techniques and sound to understand the paradigmatic and syntagmatic relationships of one element to other elements in the textual system (Butler, 1986: 55).

This study acknowledges the importance of seminal soap opera scholarship (Modleski, 1979/1982; Hobson, 1982; Brown, 1987) because the work provided a platform to study soap opera as a feminine discourse. These scholars constructed a theoretical debate about the male-centric orientation of popular/mass culture which cannot be ignored (Rakow, 2006: 200). However it is important to acknowledge and incorporate the perspectives of scholars who exist outside a western, white, middle-class framework to establish a feminine discourse.

Although there is vast literature on South African soap opera and gender (Marx, 2008; Thabethe, 2008; Motsaathebe, 2009; Neophytou, 2012) these studies have not necessarily addressed the intersectionality of race, class and sexuality in constructing a feminine discourse. This presents two possibilities. The first is to analyse the notion of soap opera as a feminine discourse within a South African context. The second possibility is to examine the representation of female characters through stylistic conventions that function as purveyors of meaning.

Aim and Objectives

The rise of the matriarchal characters to central positions in season two of *Uzalo* presented an opportunity to examine the potential of the soap opera to develop a feminine discourse that subverts the propagation of patriarchal values. This is influenced by the patriarchs exiting the text at the start of season two. This afforded the producers of *Uzalo* the opportunity to construct an empowered femininity in line with the arguments of seminal soap opera scholars (Modleski, 1979; Kuhn, 1984; Brown, 1987; Brunson, 1993). The aim of this study is to examine whether the stylistic and diegetic elements in *Uzalo* contribute towards the character construction of the two matriarchs. It is also the aim of this study to analyse whether these constructions reinforce heteronormative gender myths.

This study has four principal objectives:

- **To explore the contribution of myth to character constructions in *Uzalo*:** The conceptualisation of myth by Roland Barthes (1972) and Claude Lévi-Strauss (1978) will be employed to examine the dyadic characterisation of the matriarchs.
- **To examine the presence of gender mythologies in *Uzalo*:** Critical to this objective is why the matriarchs are represented the way they are and who benefits from these representations?

- **To examine the complexity of dyadic heteronormative gender roles in soap opera:**
To examine if the dyadic model of semiotics can be used to study the matriarchs as encoded signs.
- **To analyse the stylistic codes and conventions used in *Uzalo* as purveyors of meaning:** The researcher will examine lighting, dress code, mise-en-scene, body language, gesture and camera techniques as part of the signification system used to construct meaning.

Research Questions

1. In what way does the semiotic theory of myth contribute towards character constructions in *Uzalo*?

Sub-questions

- a) What is the role of stylistic conventions in the signification of characters?
- b) In what way do gender roles contribute to the mythology of patriarchy and matriarchy?
- c) What are the complexities within the dyad of gender roles in *Uzalo*?

Theoretical Lens

This study will use structuralist semiotics as a theoretical lens to examine the role of myth in ‘systems of representation’. Semiotics is the study of signs and how they convey meaning in a language system. The purpose of semiotics is not to study the meaning of signs but to establish how signs generate meaning (Fiske, 1990; Tomaselli, 1996; Chandler, 2007). The reason for choosing semiotics as the theoretical framework is to examine *Uzalo* as a language used to purvey social and cultural meanings.

The aim of the study is to analyse the matriarchs, MaNzuza and MaNgcobo, as encoded signs through which myths about femininity are expressed. The conceptualisation of myth in this context is based on the work of Roland Barthes (1972) and Claude Lévi-Strauss (1978). For Barthes myth is a mode of signification triggered by a chain of concepts which are naturalised by obscuring the myth’s origin (Barthes, 1972: 107). For Lévi-Strauss mythic narratives pose fundamental questions about human existence. Although meanings are culture-specific, the underlying structure of myth is universal (Lévi-Strauss, 1978: 3).

The use of Barthes and Lévi-Strauss's work on myth served two functions; the first was to identify the origin of mythic discourses on gender in the text; and to situate it within a socio-historical context. The second function was to organise the paradigmatic units associated with each character into a syntagmatic structure to understand their latent meanings.

Methodology

This study adopted a constructionist paradigm which is situated in a qualitative approach. The philosophical and epistemological underpinning of the research paradigm is that knowledge is constructed through ideological and political discourses (Krauss, 2005: 758-759). Semiotics is a central analysis approach in a constructionist paradigm because it is premised on the idea that messages are understood through shared meanings, which are constructed through a language system (Hruby, 2001; Holstein and Gubrium, 2011). The research design employed in this study is an intrinsic case study through which an intensive analysis is required to understand social phenomena (Yin, 1994; Stake, 2000; Creswell and Poth, 2018). Data was collected with audiovisual material and was purposively selected by the researcher to answer the research questions.

The researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis in this paradigm, which means there is an element of subjectivity that the researcher brings to the study. It is critical to acknowledge the influence of feminist discourses on the researcher as this has influenced the way in which these concepts are engaged. Furthermore, the privileged position of academia can be influential in the analysis of critical concepts like feminine discourse and patriarchy. Self-reflexivity is therefore important as all texts are subjective (Creswell and Miller, 2000: 127). However, the engagement of important theoretical concepts and a survey of previous studies played a central role in the interpretation of the data.

Structure of the Dissertation

Chapter One provided an overview of the study, introducing the critical debates about soap opera. It also explained the reason why this particular study was conducted, which is largely premised on the researcher's interest to examine the potential of soap operas to construct a feminine discourse. Furthermore, the chapter presented the aims, objectives and the research questions guiding the study. Finally, it described the study's theoretical and geographic location.

Chapter Two discusses the theoretical underpinnings of semiotics and its role in television (Barthes, 1972; Lévi Strauss, 1978; Fiske and Hartley, 1978; Fiske, 1990; Tomaselli, 1996;

Chandler, 2007). Central to the conceptualisation of semiotics was the role that myth, ideology and power play in concretising dominant discourses. The chapter also acknowledges that myths are not static, thus the constant re-positioning of the way myths are framed (Barthes, 1972; Fiske, 1990).

Chapter Three: Literature on soap operas will be surveyed. The primary focus is on the representation of female characters in the genre to elucidate the dominant myths produced about femininity. Additionally, the chapter analyses the presence of patriarchal discourses in soap opera texts, while interrogating the challenge that feminine discourses framed by seminal soap opera scholars presents. This section highlights three crucial aspects: the first of which is the role of soap opera as a feminine genre and its ability to construct a femininity that subverts patriarchal values. Second is the problematisation of a unitary femininity that ignores the struggles faced by women from poor backgrounds and women of colour. Third is the discursive function of soap opera to perpetuate social and political messages through the realistic portrayals of everyday life. According to Fiske and Hartley (1978) realism provides the illusion of reality while being laced with social and political discourses. This final point expresses the need to study the stylistic conventions of soap opera texts (Butler, 1986; Seiter, 1992).

Chapter Four provides a description of the epistemological and philosophical assumptions undergirding the study. This chapter discusses the research approach, paradigm, design, data collection and analysis strategies adopted in the study. The current study adopted a qualitative approach with a constructionist paradigm. This informed the epistemological and philosophical assumptions of the research as these approaches are subjective in their application.

Chapter five provides a detailed analysis of the findings to generate a deeper understanding of the meaning(s) contained in the data. This section attempts to answer the primary research questions drawing on the theoretical framework and literature review for a more conceptual understanding of the findings.

Chapter six provides a summary of the key findings in the study. The chapter links the findings to the research questions and objectives, and explains how the philosophical and epistemological position of the study influenced the analysis and interpretation of the data. The chapter closes with a discussion of the limitations in the study.

Theoretical Framework

Introduction

The current chapter focusses on the key concepts of semiotics to understand the purpose of myth in 'systems of representation'. This section also explores the role of ideology, power and hegemony in concretising myth. Integral to semiotics is the concept of representation, which is one of the key processes in the 'cultural circuit' (Du Gay cited in Hall, 2013: 1). Representation connects meaning and language to culture; it is an essential part of how meaning is produced and exchanged by members of a culture. Semiotics explains 'the system of representation' and how language constructs meaning (Hall, 2013: 2-3). This section will examine how cultural meanings are established through codes and conventions determined by an agreed language system.

Background of semiotics

The most common definition of semiotics is that it is a sign system in which meaning is conveyed through a conceptual language. More simply, it is the science of signs (Fiske and Hartley, 1978/2004: 22). According to David Chandler (2007: 2) 'signs' do not only refer to everyday speech but to anything that stands in for something else. Therefore, a sign can comprise words, images, sounds and gestures (Tomaselli, 1996: 30). Central to this theory is that meaning is constructed and not simply a process of communication (Fiske, 1990: 39).

For signs to be effective they must share conceptual relations, this is achieved through shared codes and cultural understandings. Signs stand for something, they signify meaning, or make things mean. Signs are strung together in codes which is the way in which texts are structured to make meaning. Therefore, words alone cannot generate meaning, they are structured in a vocabulary with certain rules- syntax (Tomaselli, 1996: 31-32).

Although theories on sign systems have existed throughout history, the two primary traditions of modern semiotics are drawn from the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's *semiology* and the American pragmatist philosopher Charles Saunders Peirce's *semiotics* -- both branches are commonly referred to as semiotics. Although the two systems emerged at the same time, during the early 20th Century, they were not linked in any way, and both theorists' work has been published posthumously gaining popularity in the mid-20th Century (Narunsky-Laden and Tomaselli, 2018: 156). While the two traditions differ, their central concern is the same: the relationship between the sign and its meanings and the way signs are combined into codes (Fiske and Hartley, 1978; 2004: 22).

Ferdinand de Saussure

Saussure's semiology is based on linguistics and is purely structural and relational rather than referential (Chandler, 2007: 6). This tradition was intended to be a science albeit its skewed anthropocentric focus (Narunsky-Laden and Tomaselli, 2018: 156). It is premised on a dyadic structure in which there is a sign characterised by a signifier and a signified. The signifier is the form the sign takes which can be material or non-material and the signified is the mental concept to which the sign refers. It must be stressed that there can be no signifier without a signified, and neither of these can exist without a sign. The three components are used to make sense of language systems (Fiske and Hartley, 1978/ 2004: 23). For example, in written language, the sign *rain* comprises a signifier which is composed of the four-letter word and the idea or concept of *rain* is a signified (Seiter, 1987;1992: 26). Saussure understood the relationship between the signifier and the signified to be informed by people who share the same culture or language system, thus there is no intrinsic relationship between the signifier and signified, the link is merely arbitrary (Chandler, 2007: 20). The combination of the two concepts form part of what is understood as the signification process. Signification is determined by the boundaries of the related signifieds in the system rather than reality or experience (Fiske, 1990: 45). In this system signs only make sense in a formal, generalised and abstract manner (Chandler, 2007: 16-19).

The structuring of language relies on relationships between words (on a phonetic and phonemic² level), which Saussure asserted is premised on a complex system of paired functional differences of binary oppositions. These relations are formed through the cognate activity of phonemic patterning of the human mind and occurs in the relationship between the signifier and the signified. This relationship, according to Saussure, is arbitrary, but self-contained in the codes and conventions of the language system. It is important to note that the oppositional relationship between words and signs exists within a closed and self-contained system. Their meaning is not derived intrinsically, but through their relationship with associative words in the language (Hawkes, 1977: 13).

² The **phonetic** structuring of language is the taken for granted difference of sounds that speakers do not take cognisance of. For example, there is no purposive difference between the sound of words call/coal in language. The difference between the two words is arbitrary. At a **phonemic** level, the difference is purposive and recognisable to the speaker. For example, the consonants of the first letter of kin and tin are opposed in a pattern of meaningful contrasts. The arrangement of the structuring of phonetics and phonemes exists at an arbitrary and systematic level; the former being the *synchronic* (self-contained and self-justifying) structure of the sounds of and the latter being the firmly rooted relationships that govern the rules and structure of language.

Langue and Parole

A significant part of semiology is the relationship between *langue* (language) and *parole* (speech). Saussure was intrigued by the heterogeneity of language which, at first, appears to be an unclassifiable reality, until its complex schema is deciphered (Barthes, 1968: 13). According to Roland Barthes (1968: 15-16), this relationship is a dialectical process as the one relies on the other to be effective. The nature of *langue* lays beyond the manifestation of each *parole*, yet it has no concrete existence of its own, except in the fragmentary displays that speech affords it (Hawkes, 1977: 9). *Langue* is the system of rules and conventions which is independent of individual users (Chandler, 2009: 8). Roland Barthes (1968: 13) refers to *langue* as “a social institution and a system of values”. *Parole* is how these rules are applied in language systems (Chandler, 2009: 8), or how an individual actualises language through the selection of speech to express their views (Barthes, 1968: 15). Saussure illustrated this relationship in an example of the game, chess. In chess, the rules exist beyond an individual game, but the rules only acquire concrete form in the relationships developed between pieces in a single game (Hawkes, 1977: 9).

Barthes (1968: 31-32), however, noted a concern with the language/speech system:

The semiological extension of language/speech notions bring with it some problems...The first problem concerns the origin of the various system, and thus touches on the very dialectics of language and speech...But in most semiological systems, the language is elaborated not by the ‘speaking mass’ but by a deciding group. In this sense, it can be held that in most semiological languages, the sign is really and truly ‘arbitrary’ since it is founded in artificial fashion by a unilateral decision; these in fact are fabricated languages, ‘logo techniques’. The user follows these languages, draws messages (or ‘speech’) from them but has no part in their elaboration.

This will be elaborated later in the chapter to understand the role social institutions and authoritative bodies play in determining cultural codes, particularly the section on myth and ideology.

Paradigms and Syntagms

Paradigms and syntagms are fundamental to the organisation of signs. A syntagm is the ordering of signs into a determined sequence. A paradigm is a group of signs so similar that they may be substituted for one another in a syntagm (Seiter, 1992: 33-34). Paradigms share a

close connection with the language system while syntagms are closely connected to speech (Barthes, 1968: 59). The meaning of a given syntagm derives in part from the absence of other possible paradigmatic choices (Seiter, 1992: 34).

For Barthes (1968: 58-59), these concepts rest on two planes. The first is the syntagmatic plane which refers to a combination of signs that occur in a linear and irreversible way. The second is the paradigmatic/associative plane which refers to units with associations that form groups within which various relationships can be found. These relationships are based on similarity and/or difference of units; however, a unit's meaning is mostly understood through opposition with competing units in its paradigm. Therefore, the only way to understand a sign is by contrasting it with what it is not. For example, the letter *a* is not like the letter *b* (Fiske and Hartley, 1978/ 2003: 34; Tomaselli, 1996: 40).

The relationship between the two concepts is like a coordinate grid comprising an *x* and *y* axis, the paradigm is a 'vertical' set of units (located on the *y* axis), while a syntagm is the 'horizontal' chain (located on the *x* axis) linked with other units in accordance with agreed rules and conventions in a language system (Fiske and Hartley, 1978; 2004: 34).

The significance of paradigms and syntagms can be illustrated through the example of film and television editing techniques, where single shots are combined in a sequence to tell an eventual story. Each shot is a paradigm and the sequencing of the shots is the syntagm. However, in formulating a shot, the director/photographer has a choice of paradigms offering different alternatives: antonyms, synonyms and binary oppositions. The selection of paradigms, and their structuring into syntagms, contribute to the overall meaning conveyed (Fiske and Hartley, 1978/2003: 34).

Synchronic and diachronic signs

Saussure's signs are embedded in a synchronic system, they are frozen in time, opposed to a diachronic system which locates the sign within a history and context. Although Saussure was aware that the relationship between the signifier and the signified was bound to change overtime, he perceived this change to occur within the constraints of the language structure. In this sense, Saussure undermined the dynamic nature of signs and their references beyond the conventions of the language (Chandler, 2007).

Terence Hawkes (1977: 9) asserted that the synchronic nature of signs is what made Saussure original. Saussure insisted that language as a total system is complete at every moment, albeit alterations to the system overtime. The sign is self-contained; therefore, meaning is limited to

differences between other units in the same system (binary oppositions). It is important to take cognisance of Saussure's structuralist background which is premised on understanding relations between different categories or phenomena in the world (Hartley, 1982: 13). In this sense, meaning is constructed through associations with other units within the same system. This is explained by the vertical and horizontal structure of paradigms and syntagms. In the sentence, "the boy kicked the girl", meaning unfolds as each word follows its predecessor. In the syntagmatic and paradigmatic relationship, the former is characterised by the sentence while the latter comprises each word selected in the sentence. However, this does not reconcile how the sign user makes sense of the phrase. For Saussure, the reader interprets the sign through its association with similar/different words in the sign system. It is through this process that meaning is inscribed in a sign (Hawkes, 1977: 15).

The relevance of Saussure's work is that it attempted to understand how signs purvey meaning. Saussure's structuralist approach relies on determining meaning through a fixed system of rules and codes that have been agreed upon by the language users of a culture. However, a shortcoming of this model is that it does not acknowledge change in the sign system. Studying sign systems as a static model limits the ability of semiotics to explore the evolutionary potential of signs. (Seiter, 1992: 37).

Diachrony is more historical in its approach as it focusses on the way meaning unfolds over time in a syntagmatic structure through the sequencing of time or events. Saussure made a distinction between synchronic and diachronic meanings in linguistics. He explained that "synchronic linguistics was concerned with the logical, psychological and associational relationships that bind together items and form a meaning system; diachronic linguistics studies relationships that bind together successive terms in sequence without forming a system" (Berger, 1998: 18-19). Diachronic analysis of the image is less rigid than Saussure's linguistic approach. It focusses on how meanings attached to signs change overtime (Berger, 1998: 19).

Charles S. Peirce

Peirce's tradition of semiotics considers everything a sign, including words, sounds, images, flavours and odours among others. However, he asserted that things have no intrinsic meaning and only become signs once they are imbued with meaning (Chandler, 2007: 13). Unlike Saussure's semiology, Peirce's sign-system is triadic and is characterised by "the sign, the user and external reality" (Fiske, 1990: 40). It is important to note that the sign was referred to by Peirce as the *representamen*, but is used interchangeably in varying texts (Chandler, 2007: 29). A sign refers to something other than itself -- the *object* and is understood by somebody -- the *interpretant*. The interpretant is not the user of the sign, it is the mental concept produced by the sign and by the user's experience of the object. In this case, meaning is not fixed it relies on the social and psychological connections the reader has with the sign and the object (Fiske, 1990: 42).

This model considers the reader of a sign integral in the meaning making process which is dissimilar to Saussure who asserted that we are born into an existing language system which determines our reality; therefore, our interpretation of signs is based on a systemic frame of reference that people are socialised into (Chandler, 2007: 26). In Peirce's model, the process of decoding is as active as encoding (Fiske, 1990: 42).

Differences and Similarities between Saussure and Peirce

The fundamental difference between Saussure's semiology and Peirce's semiotics is that Saussure's sign refers to a mental concept while Peirce's sign is referential, hence his inclusion of the object. Saussure focused primarily on the sign's relation to other signs without any attention attributed to external reality; his approach was to study the sign system synchronically (frozen in time). This has, however, been revised by subsequent semioticians working in this tradition (Barthes, 1968; 1972 and Tomaselli, 1996; 2018) who recognised the importance of history and social context as well as the significance of the interpreter of a sign (Chandler, 2007: 9)

Albeit their differences, there are similarities between the two traditions, such as their attempt to explain how signs convey meaning. Peirce expressed this in his three categories of signs all of which show a different relationship between the sign and the object. These signs are, the *icon*, *index* and *symbol*. For Peirce, the *icon* bears a resemblance to its object, for example, a photograph. An *index* is a sign with a direct connection with its object, for example, a photograph of a mother with a starving baby could be an index of famine. A *symbol* is a sign

which must be learned through convention, rule and agreement to show the connection with its object, for example, numbers and words are symbols (Fiske, 1990: 47-48).

Although the relationship between the two traditions is unintentional, Saussure acknowledged the significance of the sign in evincing the relationship between the signifier and the signified. As a linguist, Saussure was concerned with *symbols* because words are symbols. The work of Roland Barthes (1968/1973), a second-generation French semiotician, unintentionally reconciled the Peircean and Saussurean traditions through his use of terms: *arbitrary*, *iconic*, *motivation* and *constraint*. These signs can be likened to the *iconic*, *indexical* and *symbolic* signs in the Peircean tradition. Arbitrary signs correspond with what Peirce referred to as symbolic signs, they are only understood through convention. The term iconic is used in the same way as the Peircean tradition. “An iconic sign is one where the form of the signifier is determined to some extent by the signified” (Fiske, 1990: 52). The terms *motivation* and *constraint* describe the link between the signifier and signified. Iconic signs are motivated whereas arbitrary signs are unmotivated. The term constraint refers to the influence the signified exerts over the signifier. Therefore, the more motivated a sign is, the more constraint the signified has over the signifier (Fiske, 1990: 52). Fiske (1990: 56) suggested that the distinction between arbitrary and motivated signs be understood as a scale (see Figure 4.3) and not as separate categories. Therefore, the higher the degree of convention the more arbitrary a sign becomes. Likewise, the more motivated and constrained a sign is, the more iconic it becomes (Fiske, 1990: 56). Although Fiske does not reference the role of the indexical sign, it is the argument in this study that the index is the balance between iconic and arbitrary signs. The placement of the red arrow in figure 2.1 displays this. This means that the index encompasses aspects of both iconic and arbitrary signs.

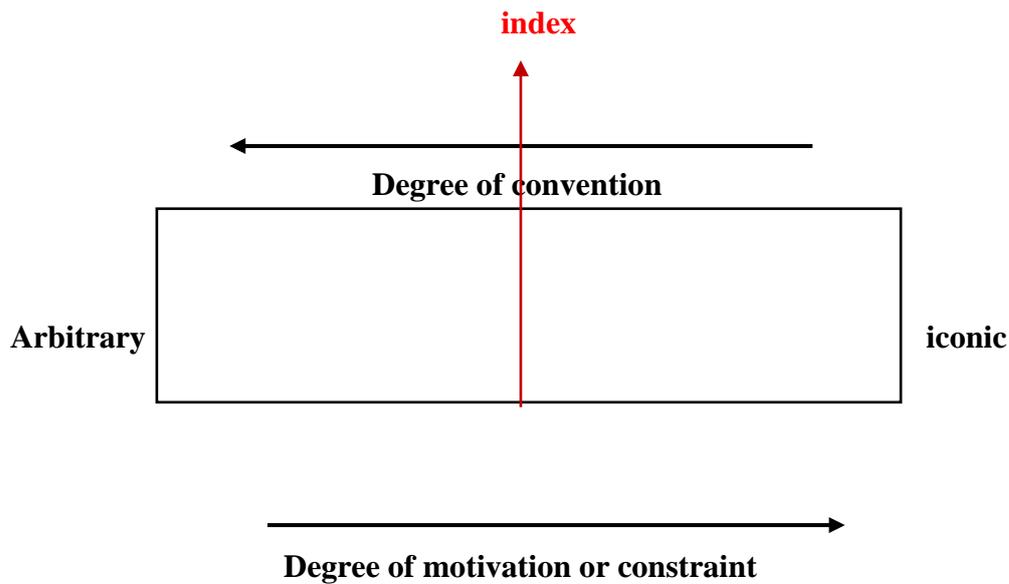


Figure 2. 1 Scale of Motivation

Source: (Fiske, 1990: 56)

Semiotics in television

Determining a grammar for television is challenging as television is based on a weaker set of codes than those that govern verbal language. A code in its simplest form is a ‘vertical’ set of signs (paradigms) which are combined according to certain ‘horizontal’ rules (syntagm) (Fiske and Hartley, 1978/2003: 41). The rules of combining signs must be agreed among members of a culture; therefore, codes do not only focus on the structure of the sign but also on its social function. Codes constantly undergo modification and operate through convention rather than stringent rules (Seiter, 1992: 36). Furthermore, television signs are multi-accentual implying that signs do not have a fixed internal meaning, they only have meaning potentials which are actualised through repeated use (Hartley, 1982: 22).

Although it is simple to define codes, it is challenging to identify them in practice because some codes are more recognisable than others. John Fiske and John Hartley (1978/2003) described codes as logical and aesthetic. *Logical* codes are unmotivated and arbitrary signs are constrained by convention. These codes rely on the explicit and binding agreement of their users. *Aesthetic* codes are motivated signs that operate at both a denotative and connotative level of signification. This is particularly challenging when analysing television because aesthetic codes overlap and operate on a number of different levels (Fiske and Hartley, 1978/2003: 42-45).

Television makes use of iconic, indexical and symbolic signs simultaneously (Seiter, 1992: 27). The composition of different iconic signs strung together on television modifies and reinforces the signification process (Hartley, 1982: 31). Therefore, to understand television images the sign reader must learn to recognise the conventions of representation. The role of representational codes is for people to become so accustomed to them that they appear ‘natural’, like symbolic signs of language. Furthermore, representational codes aim for iconic signs to be seen as the most logical way to signify aspects of the world. The most commonly used sign in television are indexical signs as they are both motivated and arbitrary (Seiter, 1992: 27-28). Christian Metz (1974: 98) illustrated this point by discussing the difference between the semiotics of photography and the cinema. He stated that:

In photography, Roland Barthes has clearly shown, denoted meaning is secured entirely through the automatic process of photochemical reproduction; denotation is a visual transfer, which is not codified and has no inherent organisation. Human intervention, which carries some elements of a proper semiotics, affects only the level of connotation (lighting, camera angle, “photographic effects,” and so on). And, in point of fact, there is no specifically photographic procedure for designating the significate “house” in its denotated aspect, unless it is by showing a house. In cinema, on the other hand, a whole semiotics of denotation is possible and necessary, for a film is composed of *many* photographs ... that give us mostly only partial views of the diegetic referent. In film a “house” would be a shot of a staircase, a shot of one of the walls taken from the outside, a close-up of the window, a brief establishing shot of the building, etc.

It can thus be seen that, unlike photography, denotation in film/television is coded. Television/filmic signs do not simply denote something but also trigger a range of connotations associated with the sign (Bignell, 1997/2002: 16). Although there are no absolute laws guiding this process, filmic intelligibility depends on certain dominant habits. Moreover, the connotative instances in film/television are superimposed over denotative meanings because signs operate simultaneously (Metz, 1974: 96-99).

The purpose of television is to function as if it is unmediated and natural (Seiter, 1992: 30). The resemblance of the sign to its referent blinds one to its origin in the signification system (Hartley, 1982: 30-31). Meaning is multiplied by connotation and myth; however, “meanings

are a product of the sign's social orientation, and are not complete until 'negotiated' by the viewer" (Hartley, 1982: 30).

Codes of camera and lighting create a naturalistic and gritty aesthetic that comes across more realistic (Hartley, 1982: 32), but this ignores the role of the camera as a recording instrument enmeshed in a technical process (Hartley, 1982: 29 Seiter, 1992: 26-28; Tomaselli, 1996: 68). Compositional codes are enveloped in a sign system established through convention and cultural codes. Codes of composition are selected from various paradigmatic units to construct a syntagmatic sequence. Although there are no stringent rules governing the syntagmatic sequence of signs, there are rules of combination that dictate which paradigmatic elements can go together; these rules are determined by cultural conventions (Hartley, 1982: 32).

Realism makes it difficult for the viewer to determine the boundary between reality and the mechanical process involved in television because signs appear as if they are natural (Fiske and Hartley, 1982/2003: 47). "We can thus call television an essentially realistic medium because of its ability to carry a socially convincing sense of the real" (Fiske, 1987: 21). However, television realism is embedded in discursive conventions through which reality is constructed (Fiske, 1987: 21). Meaning is anchored in an ideological system which directs the audience towards certain conclusions about signifieds (Seiter, 1992: 32). Although television determines the way a sign reader views the referent, it is naïve to assume that all sign-readers agree with the encoded meaning (Hartley, 1982: 36-37).

Moving towards Signification

This section will explore the contribution of second-generation theorist, Roland Barthes (1968), and how he extended Saussure's text-based dyadic structure by incorporating the socio-cultural context. Barthes reconciled this by examining the interactive process of constructing meaning which he viewed as a negotiation between the text reader/writer. Therefore, unlike Saussure, meaning for Barthes was not synchronic (frozen in time) but diachronic (evolving over time) and dependent upon how people read and interact with signs in their given cultural and personal experience (Fiske, 1990: 85; Chandler, 2007:18). Barthes also referenced Peirce's categories of the sign (icon, index and symbol) which is integral to his process of signification and reconciles the two semiotic traditions (John Fiske, 1990: 52-56)

Building on Saussure's dyadic structure of the signifier and signified, Barthes developed the concepts, *denotation*, *connotation*, *myth* and *symbol*. *Denotation* describes the relationship between the signifier and signified in the first order of signification. It is the common sense

and obvious meaning of the sign. In the second order of signification, denotation operates as the signifier (Fiske, 1990: 85-86). *Connotation* forms one of three ways used to describe signs in the second order of signification. It is the human intervention in the process of imbuing meaning in a sign; it is the range of cultural meanings attached to the sign from the society's use of a signifier and the signified (Fiske and Hartley, 1978;2003: 25). Barthes argued that connotation is the primary tool used by the mass media to communicate ideological meanings (Seiter, 1992: 30). *Myth* is the second of the three orders of signification. A myth in this context refers to "a story by which a culture explains or understands some aspect of reality or nature" (Fiske, 1990: 88). For Barthes signs become myths when they move from representational meaning towards a cultural meaning (Fiske and Hartley, 1978; 2003: 26). Connotation can be interpreted as the second order meaning of the signifier while myth is the second order meaning of the signified. Both second orders of signification rely on an agreement between members of a culture for a sign to invoke meaning which Fiske and Hartley (1978;2003: 30) refer to as cultural intersubjectivity. Barthes's third way of signification was termed *symbol*. "An object becomes a symbol when it acquires through convention and use a meaning that enables it to stand for something else" (Fiske, 1990: 91).

The symbol was the least sophisticated of Barthes's signification process, however, third generation semiotician John Fiske (1990: 92) addresses this deficiency with the inclusion of *metaphor* and *metonymy*. This is important to the discussion of how ideas become concretised in a culture or language system. For Fiske (1990: 92) *metaphors* form conceptual relationships that serve an ideological function. The sign system is thus reinforced with conceptual associations that embed myths. *Metonyms* purvey signs in an indexical manner, but it is not based on a natural association, such as smoke being indexical of fire. Metonyms are an arbitrary selection of social myths which are used to convey meaning. Therefore, the sign may be an icon, for example, a woman engaging in a sexual act with a stranger -- in the bathroom of a night club -- could connote promiscuity. Yet, a perspective of the woman's drink being spiked at the nightclub which led to her engaging in the sexual act (rape) could be purposely negated to prevent an alternative reading. A metonym, consequently, functions to limit the perspective of something to attain a preferred meaning (Fiske and Hartley, 1978; 2003: 33).

Although I have demonstrated how Roland Barthes's process of signification works, the purpose of this theory is to understand how myths, particularly social myths, are solidified. To make sense of this, the discussion must move beyond myth towards the role of ideology, power

and hegemony which can be asserted as indicators that influence myth. Before this, it is important to comprehend myth.

The role of Myth

Myth is a polysemic word with multiple interpretations. The common reference of myth is to something that is false. In semiotics myth refers to “recurring themes, icons and stereotypes which claim common recognition within a cultural group with a shared ideology” (Tomaselli, 1996: 66). While connotation signifies ‘expressive meaning’, myth signifies values associated with concepts (Hartley, 1982: 28). Importantly, myths are connotations that become hegemonic.

There are two influential semioticians who engaged with myth. The first, Roland Barthes, and the second, French structuralist anthropologist, Claude Lévi-Strauss. For Barthes, myth is a mode of signification triggered by a chain of related concepts. In fact, it is the final term of the semiological chain (Barthes, 1972: 107-113; Fiske, 1990: 88). For Lévi-Strauss, myth is premised on cultural beliefs, imagination and subjective experiences. He was interested in how the expression of myths blurred the line between nature and culture (Hawkes, 1977: 27).

Linking this to paradigms and syntagms, both theorists asserted that meaning can only be purveyed through existing paradigms which are subsequently arranged into syntagms. This is different to the nature of the theory advanced by Saussure (Lévi-Strauss, 1955: 432; Barthes, 1968: 61).

Roland Barthes

Myth, according to Barthes (1972: 113), forms part of the *second order semiological system*; therefore, the sign of the first order (the associative total of the signifier and the signified) becomes a mere signifier in the second. The signifier of myth is presented ambiguously, it encompasses both *meaning* and *form*, full on one side and empty on the other. *Meaning* incorporates the signification process which anchors the signifier to history, a memory and ideas (Barthes, 1972: 116). When it becomes *form*, the meaning of the signifier is impoverished and evaporates. The role of form is to naturalise the signifier; to make it appear devoid of historical and social bearings. However, meaning and form are not at odds with each other, there is an interaction between the two concepts, encouraging the myth-consumer to take the signification system as fact (Barthes, 1972: 116-117). Myth is actualised by the ideas of the dominant social class. If the ideas of the ruling class exist as ‘common sense’ then the operationalisation of myth is successful (Fiske, 1990: 89/176).

Fiske (1990: 89-90) illustrated this in his discussion on the social roles of women and men. He asserted that women are ‘naturally’ constructed as being nurturing and caring, thus their relegation to the home where they can raise children and look after their husband. The husband, on the other hand, is ‘naturally’ constructed as the breadwinner. This defines the most ‘natural’ social unit, the family. However, Fiske contended that by presenting these roles as natural, myth disguises their historical origin and the political effects. These roles were developed to suit the interests of men in the bourgeois-capitalist system. It is through this system that the chains of concepts related to femininity and masculinity proliferated, where the former acquired the ‘natural’ meanings of sensitivity, domesticity and the need for protection, while masculinity acquired meanings of strength, independence, assertiveness and the ability to operate in public. Although these myths appear natural, they are historical. Fiske (1990: 90) adds that “myths can effectively naturalise meanings by relating them to some aspect of nature itself”. Therefore, the fact that women give birth concretises the myth about women being nurturing. Similarly, men’s larger and more muscular bodies is used to naturalise their political and social power. This example echoes Barthes’s (1972) discussion on *meaning* and *form*.

It must be acknowledged that Barthes (1972: 108) also wrote that myths are not static and that they evolve. There is also the development of counter-myths through sub-cultures. Barthes emphasised that myths are dynamic and the value of a myth depends on the needs and values of a culture to which they belong (Barthes, 1972, 109). John Fiske and John Hartley (1978/2003: 27-28) added that myths constantly change and update themselves. Television plays an integral role because it tests myths against reality, thereby exposing when their explanatory power has decreased.

Claude Lévi-Strauss

Another significant contributor to the study of myth was structuralist anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. According to Lévi-Strauss, “a myth is a story that is a specific and local transformation of a deep structure of binarily opposed concepts that are important to the culture within which the myth circulates” (Fiske, 1990: 122).

His conception of myth developed from Saussure’s theory of language as a structural system which Lévi-Strauss appropriated into the cultural process. The link between linguistics and mythology is based on a set of shared relations within a system. The relational elements are arbitrary, yet they also exist synchronically. This is like the dialectical relationship of *langue* and *parole* (discussed earlier). Therefore, meaning resides in combined rather than isolated

units of myths. The true constituent units are not isolated relations but bundles of relations. It is only through bundles that meaning can be deciphered (Lévi-Strauss, 1955: 431).

Although meanings are culture-specific, the process of meaning-making is universal with the same deep structure underlying them. There is a thread of relation in myths throughout the world (Lévi-Strauss, 1955: 429; Lévi-Strauss, 1978: 3; Fiske, 1990: 116). For Lévi-Strauss, mythology is therefore static because although they may be arranged and rearranged, the same mythic elements are continuously combined over again. It is for this reason he claimed that myths are synchronic, yet he did not dismiss the historical form they take. His issue with history was that it is not completely diachronic. It also functions like myth to the extent that it is the subjective interpretation of the historian who attempts to reconcile a moment in the past (the unknown world) with the present. He thus argued that history is a continuum of myth (Lévi-Strauss, 1978: 17-18).

Lévi-Strauss studied ‘primitive’ and ‘modern’ cultures to understand how these societies construct meaning. He wrote that ‘primitive’ cultures understood the world through their sensory perceptions while ‘modern’ cultures understood the world through scientific rationalism. He observed that scientific thinking attempted to understand nature by dividing it into precise categories; while ‘primitive’ thought studied nature holistically (Fiske, 1990: 115).

Lévi-Strauss (1955: 444) wrote that although the orientation of the ‘primitive’ mind and scientific thought differ the logic of mythical thought is as rigorous and intellectual. It is only the nature of the things to which myth is applied that makes it different from modern science. Albeit their differences, the two groups cannot be completely detached as there are elements of myth that have been integrated into science as something that has meaning. For example, he provides a myth about the skate trying to dominate the South Wind and succeeding at it (see Lévi-Strauss, 1978: 7-8). He related this story to the function of computers because this scientific process introduced the concept of binary operations which is central to mythical thought (Lévi-Strauss, 1978: 7-8).

Myth, for Lévi-Strauss, is premised on *binary opposition*. “A binary opposition is a system of two related categories that, in its purest form, comprises the universe” (Fiske, 1990: 116). The categories assigned to binaries are cultural, yet exist as if they are natural and concrete. He explained this through the relationship of nature and culture; he asserted that while cultures distinguish themselves from nature- to establish a separate identity- they legitimate their identity through nature (Fiske, 1990: 121). Nonetheless, nature is not exactly binary, it is a

continuum rather than neat categories. Lévi-Strauss argued that the construction of binary oppositions forms part of the physical structure of the human brain to organise data into categories; but some categories are anomalous and do not fit the categories of the binary opposition. For example, within the gender construction of male and female, a hermaphrodite (a person born with two sexual organs) would be an anomalous category because he/she does not fit into the binary categories. The structure of myth is to make the binary categories appear natural to appease cultural anxieties about complex phenomena (Lévi-Strauss, 1978: 8; Fiske 1990: 121).

Lévi-Strauss's approach was influenced by Saussure and, to an extent, Sigmund Freud (despite his structuralist background). From Saussure he adopted the paradigmatic structure of binary oppositions which encompasses *langue* and *parole*. It is his thesis that studying the various *parole* leads the mythologist to understanding the *langue* present in myths. From Freud he developed the idea that analysing myth is like analysing a dream. He claimed that a dreamer will only know the surface meaning of a dream, its deeper meaning -- which resides in the dreamer's subconscious -- is available to the analyst only. This is like myth, where its 'real' meaning is available to the analyst and not the myth teller. In this context, myths, like dreams, arise from repressed anxieties in a tribal and cultural subconscious. Although it must be noted that Lévi-Strauss was a structuralist which is why he focussed on culture-specific examples rather than attempting to understand the individual (Fiske, 1990: 122-123).

Similarities and Differences

For Barthes, myth is an associated chain of concepts that are accepted as being natural through their disguised operation. For Lévi-Strauss, the mythic narrative is recognised as myth, but its meaning is hidden (Fiske, 1990: 183).

Both Barthes and Lévi-Strauss viewed myth as a form of language, yet their analysis of myth differed. For Barthes (1972) language is class-dominated and resides within a material and historical existence. He was interested in the abstract potential of language to influence social relations. Lévi-Strauss was more concerned with the systems through which language structures meaning. He was influenced by Saussure's synchronic system thus he perceived history and social specificity as superficial and less significant. Barthes, on the other hand, placed emphasis on historical and social uses in the language system in his conceptualisation of denotation and connotation (Lévi-Strauss, 1978: 13; Barthes, 1972: 109; Fiske, 1990: 133).

Ideology, power and myth

The study of ideology extends beyond political doctrines and ideas, it is concerned with the way in which social structures and relations are produced and are maintained through the representation of institutions and events (Threadgold, 1986: 19).

Karl Marx defined ideology as “the system of the ideas and representations which dominate the mind of a man [sic] or a social group” (Althusser, 1970; 2006: 158). For Marxists, ideologies are socially determined through class and the division of labour (Fiske, 1990: 165).

Raymond Williams (1977) proposed three different definitions of ideology. The first, that it is a system of beliefs within a class or group. The second definition is that it is a system of illusory beliefs (false ideas and a false consciousness) which can be contrasted with scientific knowledge. The third definition is that ideology is the general process of meanings and ideas.

This paper primarily examined Louis Althusser’s conception of power which encompasses the previous definitions. For Althusser, the power of ideology resides in its ability to engage subordinates to construct social identities and subjectivities for themselves that are complicit with it (Fiske, 1990: 165-177). Although he recognised the importance of the mode of production, purported by Marxist tradition, he argued that society consists of a combination of social and intellectual practices, including the economic, the political and the ideological (White, 1987: 139).

The concept of power

The concept of power elucidates the role of ideology. Robert Dahl (1957: 203-204) wrote that power can be defined as “the ability of *A* having power over *B* to the extent that he [sic] can get *B* to do something that *B* would not otherwise do”. Steven Lukes (1986: 40-41) extended this definition by stating that power is only effective when compliance is secured amongst subjects.

This is like Antonio Gramsci’s concept of hegemony in which the dominant social group’s ability to sustain power is exercised through the hegemonic equilibrium between consent by the masses and coercion³ by the State/ ruling group. However, the success of hegemony is situated in its latent existence (its presentation as common sense). It relies on the ability of the ruling group’s discourses to permeate social institutions in a general and universally applicable

³ It must be noted that while coercion can be a violent process, it is also instituted by rules and laws that force people to behave in a manner to achieve consensus in the hegemonic order.

manner (Gramsci, 1970: 12; Fontana, 1993: 140). Gramsci asserted that a social group can only become dominant when it exercises power; but power can only be effective when compliance is secured by the masses (Gramsci, 1971: 57-58; Lukes, 1986: 40).

Lukes focussed on the layers of power and their function within a society which he claimed are three-dimensional. He stated that one and two-dimensional power are secured through political coercion, influence, authority, force and manipulation within political systems and processes, and that it is only through conflict that the power system can be overturned. Lukes, however, criticised this view by asserting that the efficacy of power resides in the absence of conflict in social forces and institutional practices. Although there is an implicit reference to potential conflict, it will not be actualised if the power system is positioned in a natural and unquestionable manner. Therefore, he advanced the need for three-dimensional power as it relies on the ruling group's ability to make the subject comply with the dominant order, even if it is against their interests (Lukes, 1986: 20-28).

Comparable to Lukes, Michel Foucault (1982: 778) claimed that power relations are complex and extend beyond legal and institutional models such as the state, particularly, because it circulates in every aspect of an individual's (subject) life. However, unlike Lukes, he asserted that power does not come from a single source, it is never monopolised by one centre. Rather, it functions in a net-like organisation where everyone is affected by its operation (Hall, 1997: 77). The subject(s) is/are subjugated by a form of power which makes them subject to the dominant ideology (Foucault, 1982: 781).

Louis Althusser

Althusser asserted that ideology has two forms, one negative and the other positive. The former is represented in the imaginary form which functions in an illusory manner and the latter is represented in a material form and is determined by the ruling class (Althusser, 1970; 2006: 162). Ideology, in a negative form, refers to the imaginary relationship of the individual (subject) to their real conditions of existence. This manifests in religious ideology, ethical ideology and legal ideology among others, commonly referred to as the myths of a 'primitive society'. The imaginary form is much like Lévi-Strauss's contextualisation of myth in Native American cultures, where mythical thought governs people's reality (Lévi-Strauss, 1978). Althusser's conception of ideology is determined by the imaginary relations of individuals to the real relations in which they live. These relations are usually governed by Priests and/or

Despots or reside in the alienation of the subject from material and historical conditions of existence (Althusser, 1970; 2006: 165).

The positive form of ideology has a material existence. Althusser claimed that “an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices” (Althusser, 1970; 2006: 1966). The material existence of ideology develops beyond the imaginary world manifesting in physical action. For example, the belief in God transcends belief and extends towards the subject going to church and praying. Through this, the subject’s ideas become material practice (Althusser, 1970; 2006: 167-168).

Ideas disappear when they move away from their spiritual existence (negative form of ideology) towards a material practice (positive form of ideology). The spiritual or imaginary existence survives through the subject’s consciousness, beliefs and actions which appear in- and are governed by- practices, rituals and ideological apparatuses (Althusser, 1970; 2006: 170).

Most important for Althusser is how ideology attempts to interpellate individuals as subjects. He declared that the word subject takes on two forms. The first, subject means a free subjectivity, the subject is responsible for its actions. The second definition is a subjected being who submits to a higher authority and is therefore stripped of all freedom, except their free submission to subjectivity. Therefore, it can be noted that “the individual is interpellated as a (free) ‘subject’ in order that he [sic] shall submit freely to the commandments of the ‘Subject’, i.e. in order that he shall (freely) accept his subjection” (Althusser, 1970; 2006: 182).

This does not account for how some ideologies are more dominant than others, albeit, humans having multiple subjectivities that may at times clash and differ. For Göran Therborn (1980), ideologies function in a state of disorder, they are sporadic and multi-linear, yet dominant ideologies persist.

Michel Foucault (cited in Therborn, 1984: 83-84) summed up three categories that result in the social organisation of discourse. He mentioned that there is a *restriction* of whose voices are heard, this is propelled by censorship and sanctions on the voices of people who speak of counter-discourses to the main ideology. The second category is, *shielding* discourses, which is usually derived through repetition of a single discourse or by only giving authorisation to certain people to speak on a discourse to protect it. The final category is the *delimited appropriation* of discourse, which pertains to the repetition of a discourse and its social

organisation, situated in determinate ecological settings. Discourses are predominantly non-discursive and are affirmed through recognition (Therborn, 1980: 84).

Although the definition of ideology -- and how it permeates discourses -- is important, the next section locates ideology in the signification process to elucidate how myths and ideologies gain impetus in a language system.

The interplay between ideology and myth

Keyan Tomaselli (1996: 66) claimed that in semiotics, myth refers to recurring themes, icons and stereotypes which claim common recognition within a cultural group with a shared ideology. Myths are subservient to ideology -- a third order sign that operates in the realm of the symbolic. Ideology is unique because it slides between both second and third orders of signification. Although an individual from outside the common ideology may understand the mythic practice, because they are not interpellated in the cultural practice of the myth, they may not be inclined to perceive it as having a concrete existence.

A myth becomes an ideology when dominant groups influence the formation of the mythic world through control over institutions and social relations in a manner that appears natural and irrevocable. This is evident in the iconic realism of television within which objectivity and truth are purported while the highly selective processes of production are masked, particularly the elite ideological influence (Tomaselli, 1996: 67). Ideology is therefore a dominant body of shared beliefs and values in which meaning/signification serves to maintain relations of dominance (Threadgold, 1986: 17).

Returning to the Saussurean concept of *langue* and *parole*, Barthes claimed that the constituents of language/speech are determined by a deciding group and not by the 'speaking mass' (Barthes, 1968: 31-32). This is an important point as it highlights the role of the dominant group's ideological imposition in shared language systems. Central to this claim is the arbitrary nature of language and speech; while they are developed within the constraints of rules and conventions, their underpinnings are merely unscientific albeit purporting truth (Barthes, 1968: 32).

Ideology thus shares a close relationship with Barthes' and Lévi-Strauss's conception of myth. Ideology concretises myth in the sign system. As with Barthes's conceptualisation of meaning and form, ideologies are successful when the historical form of myth is emptied and enters the symbolic realm where signs are unmotivated and uncontested. This is also linked to Lévi-Strauss who claimed that the effectiveness of myth resides in the ability of cultural constructs

to appear as part of nature. In both instances, the work of ideology is hidden and afforded the status of common sense which is sustained by the dominant group (Fiske, 1990: 176).

Gender and Race

Although the relationship between myth and ideology is insidious and ubiquitous, they ignore the resistance it meets. Also, given the strong Marxist influence of the concepts, struggle and contestation is limited to interclass conflict while the potential of intra-class and intra-group struggle is undermined. This section attempts to reconcile this issue with examining myths engulfed in gender relations.

The current research explored the role of myth in gender discourses and the extent to which the construction of female characters in a narrative are developed through the ideological lens of patriarchy. According to Sylvia Walby (1989: 214), “patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate and oppress women”. Although this definition does not encompass the complexity of gender relations, it is a starting point.

Chrys Ingraham (1994: 203-204), appropriated Althusser’s (1970; 2006) conceptualisation of ideology as an imaginary relationship between the subject and their material condition to explain heterosexuality. For Ingraham, “the heterosexual imaginary is that way of thinking which conceals the operation of heterosexuality in structuring gender and closes off any critical analysis of heterosexuality as an organising institution”. The effect of this is that heterosexuality circulates as a taken-for-granted fact. Heteronormativity -- the view that institutionalised heterosexuality is the standard prescript for sociosexual relations -- is also important because both function in the patriarchal system to inculcate skewed gender myths (Ingraham, 1994: 205).

This is reflected in Laura Mulvey’s famous article *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975) in which she critiqued the way films reflected straight and binary sexual differences (Mulvey, 1975; 1999: 58). For Mulvey, women in patriarchal culture stand as signifiers for the male other, bound by a symbolic order where men can live out their fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing the silent image of women as bearer, not maker of meaning (Mulvey, 1975; 1999: 59). She thus asserted that the filmic code re-inscribes the dominant patriarchal order by constructing women as passive and castrated subjects resulting from their lack of a phallus. Docility of the feminine was further perpetuated by women’s subjugation to the male gaze giving credence to the myth that power resides in masculinity.

The function of gender myths is to naturalise hegemonic discourses that purport masculinity as being supreme. In the language system, patriarchal values can be characterised as *langue*, while femininity resides in *parole*. Therefore, the existence of femininity will always depend on the codes and conventions advanced by powerful patriarchal discourses.

Carolina Acosta-Alzuru (2003: 275) highlighted how the social, political and ideological underpinnings of myths in Venezuelan society are ingrained in the region's dominant Catholic doctrine in which the patriarchal family is positioned as the ideal (natural) lifestyle. This assumption is connected to the ideology of *machismo* and *marianismo*. *Machismo* is the belief that men are superior to women, they belong to the public sphere and - by extension - are entitled to more rights than women. These ideas are developed further in the literature review, however, for the moment it is worth noting that *Marianismo* is premised on mythical spirituality which position women as being spiritually and morally superior hence they are held to a higher moral standard of self-sacrifice. The belief is that the obedience and sacrifice of women will be rewarded in the afterlife.

This view is concurred by Mercy Amba Oduyoye (1995: 80) who argued that most African societies, specifically Nigeria in this instance, are premised on the overlap between culture, religious and marriage myths. She discussed the role of myths and folktales in African society, where she expressed that:

Myths inform social activities, shape men and women's lives and attitudes, and give expression to people's fears. Creation myths, for example, are replete with imagery that echoes of how society functions, of the nature of social relations relating to families, the economy, the running of the community. The myths help us see, at times, the society's attempt to think through the paradoxes of life. An awareness of this function helps liberate us to some degree from the negative effects of myth (Oduyoye, 1995: 21).

Like Acosta-Alzuru, Oduyoye accounted for the pervasiveness of myth in all institutions. Importantly, she asserted that awareness of the function of myth liberates people. However, the effectiveness of myth resides in its ability to function in a latent manner so that alternatives seem impossible (Oduyoye, 1995). In fact, Fiske contended that inferences of resistance are sometimes included in dominant ideologies to maintain hegemonic discourses. He referenced the *hippie* movement of the 1970s, a subculture, which was absorbed into mainstream culture and fashion thus emptying its historical and political impetus (Fiske, 1990: 185).

Returning to Fiske's discussion on how myths rely on nature to concretise their cultural constructions (see above) is important because myths, like ideology, function at two levels, the first being its imaginary conceptualisation and the second being its material and historical manifestation. It is the interplay between the two elements that naturalises myth (Althusser, 1970; Fiske, 1990: 184-185).

It is for this reason that feminist analysis of media representations forms an integral role in debunking myths because representations often function as a 'natural' reality while images and cultural constructions are embedded in unequal social patterns (Gill, 2007).

However, there has been criticism levelled against feminist film theory for its homogenisation of women and its lack of acknowledgement of multiple subjectivities in femininity. Therefore, the theory falls prey to replicating the same *machismo* and *marianismo* binary between women from different backgrounds and sexual orientations (Gaines, 1988; 1999: 293).

Gaines (1988; 1999: 294-295) argued that most mainstream feminist media approaches do not account for the marginalisation of black women and women of colour that extends beyond sexual and economic identity. She asserted that race forms an integral part of black women and women of colour's identity which has largely been unaccounted for in *universal* feminist discourses (Gaines, 1988; 1999: 295; Parry, 1991: 107). In fact, women of colour may feel more akin to men of their racial grouping than they do to white women, thus resulting in an anomalous category that Lévi-Strauss alluded to where the boundary between the binary is blurred (Fiske, 1990: 118). However, this is precisely the function of the *langue* of patriarchy, its role is to reduce complex social phenomena into categorisations of simple binaries (paradigms) through which myth can penetrate.

Conclusion

This chapter attempted to illustrate the role of myth in the second-order signification system. It extended the lens of myth to include ideology, power and hegemony which operate between the second and third-order of signification to concretise myth. It was established that myths can exist at both a synchronic (paradigmatic) and diachronic (syntagmatic) level. Lévi-Strauss adopted the former approach and argued that the structure of myth, like language, remains the same in all its manifestations. He contended that the role of the mythologist is to uncover the hidden meaning of the mythic structure. Barthes, on the other hand, studied myth diachronically. He maintained that myth relies on the history of its signifier to naturalise its

existence. In both instances, myths are actualised through ideology which functions to interpellate subjects into hegemonic discourses.

However, this chapter also revealed a shortfall in the theories on myth and ideology, particularly the strong focus on inter-class and inter-group struggles as opposed to a more nuanced approach that includes intra-group and intra-class struggles as in the case of gender and race. These issues will be addressed in the next chapter which reviewed literature on film and television which incorporate these concepts.

Literature Review

Introduction

Literature on soap opera is extensive and can be overwhelming. The point of reference for this review is scholarly work that primarily address gender, power and myth. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section examined the history of soap opera and its global success. The second section surveyed the characteristics and technicalities of the genre, exploring its ability to construct a universal feminine discourse outside patriarchal parameters. The final section addressed contesting views of different scholars about the role of soap opera as a feminist genre and interrogated how these views agree with or delegitimise perceptions of femininity that exist outside western ideals.

History of soap operas and telenovelas

The soap opera is a genre of popular fiction that emanated in the 1920s as radio serials in the United States. The genre is most noted for its contribution to the economy of broadcasting, along with its popular culture appeal, functioning as an ideological purveyor as well as being a source of pleasure for audiences (Hobson, 1982/2003: 1). The popularity of the soap opera resulted in its transition from radio to television in the 1950s and, more recently, to online platforms. However, soap operas predate these formats arguably originating in 19th Century domestic and sensation novels and magazine serials (Modleski, 1982: 15). The success of the genre can be attributed to its sponsorship by Procter and Gamble and other detergent manufacturers (Frey-Vor, 1990: 2). The format has since spread globally, with the most popular adaptations being in Britain, Australia and Latin America.

The various adaptations of soap opera have been wide-ranging. The American daytime soap opera focussed on middle-class housewives in the domestic setting, *Search for Tomorrow* (1951-1986), while the prime-time soap opera focussed on the wheeling and dealing of the wealthy, *Dallas* (1978) and *Dynasty* (1982). Britain adopted a social realist approach focussing on the British working-class, *Coronation Street* (1960) and *EastEnders* (1985). In Australia, the focus was on the young- sunshine world of middle-class, suburban families, *Neighbours* (1986). Central to all these soap operas is their preoccupation with family (Aston and Clarke, 1994: 212). “The family is a universal theme, dominating the series in Britain, America, Australia and many other countries” (Hobson, 1982/2003: 116).

In Latin America, a variant of the continuous serial was created, the *telenovela*. Like the soap opera, the telenovela was developed from radionovelas which were sponsored by detergent

conglomerates in the 1940s. This format provided independence from North American exports resulting in the rise of regional media conglomerates: 'Globo' in Brazil and 'Televisa' in Mexico (Frey-Vor, 1990: 3).

Although soap operas and telenovelas share notable similarities, there are minute differences. The most significant difference is the narrative structure of the telenovela. Most telenovelas run for a period of six to nine months consisting of 150 – 250 episodes. The second difference is the didactic nature of telenovelas – stories have a moral or religious undertone. A further distinction is the telenovela's focus on competing binaries, where good ultimately outwits bad whereas the lack of resolution in soap operas results in an unclear state of emotional equilibrium (Frey-Vor, 1990: 8).

Despite minor differences, the soap opera and telenovela are closely linked. Both formats are classified as continuous serials with melodrama being a central feature. Both are mediated forms of social representation which, through repetition, inculcate and stabilise traditional values. The most significant similarity is the universal theme of family. These similarities form the core of the current study; therefore, soap opera will be the principle reference to the serial format from this point.

Soap opera in South Africa

The current study examined a South African soap opera, thus the need to contextualise the South African format. Soap operas were first introduced in South Africa in 1953. They were broadcast on Springbok radio (one of the South African Broadcasting Corporation's radio stations). The format was only introduced on television in 1984 when *Santa Barbara* and *Dallas* were broadcast on Bop Television (a station for the Bophuthatswana homeland in South Africa) (Motsaathebe, 2009: 431). The birth of the genre in South Africa coincided with the country's socio-political changes – the transition from apartheid to democracy. These changes influenced the production of soap operas. The first soap opera, *Generations*, which was launched on SABC One in 1994, adopted a multicultural and multilinguistic framework promoted by the public broadcaster and politicians, at the time (Tager, 2010: 103). The same approach was adopted in other soap operas, including *Egoli*, *Isidingo* and *7de Laan*. This has often resulted in portrayals of an ahistorical and deracialised South Africa, where existing identities are constantly being renegotiated (Lockyear, 2004: 27).

For Ian Barnard (2006: 42) South African soap operas mirror the aftermath of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) through the portrayals of interracial couples who constantly

attempt reconciling and exploring their cultural and racial differences. However, Hester Lockyear (2004: 38) argued that there is no model for the multicultural portrayal in soap opera. Informants from the productions of *Isidingo* and *Egoli* stated that the shows are a hybrid between British and American soap operas with reference to the Australian model's portrayal of society (Lockyear, 2004: 38). Although there are different variations of soap operas in South Africa, the recurrent themes of race, class, gender, crime and unemployment are most akin to the social realist approach adopted in British soap operas.

Characteristics of soap opera

A defining characteristic in soap operas is the open-ended narrative structure with interweaving plots to sustain the action. Tania Modleski (1979: 12) wrote that soap operas depart from the classic Aristotelian narrative structure - encompassing a beginning, middle and end – because soap operas consist of permanent enigmas without resolution (Butler, 1986: 54). A consequence of this is that multiple perspectives can exist instead of a single protagonist representing truth. This results in spectators being stripped of power (Modleski, 1979: 14). Other characteristics include the organisation of time, linking the narrative to the daily experiences of women, thus creating the illusion that the narrative is concurrent with reality (Geraghty, 1981: 9-12; Barbatsis and Guy, 1991: 59). The future is also closely tied to soap operas - articulated through the 'cliffhanger'. The cliffhanger originated from the domestic novel where women performed perilous scenes at the end of each episode, leaving the audience in suspense until the subsequent episode. Although the term is still widely used in serials, it does not refer to physical danger but rather emotional tension (Frey-Vor, 1990: 2). This device encourages the audience to look forward to resolution while suppressing finality (Geraghty, 1981: 9-12).

The most distinctive feature of the genre is its female appeal. Mary Ellen Brown (1987: n/p) wrote that "the purpose of soap opera was to create the impression of a 'liberated woman' while promoting consumerist interests". This attracted sponsorship and advertising from two massive household detergent companies in the early years, Colgate-Palmolive and Proctor and Gamble. Both companies capitalised on the genre's ability to entice housewives to consume their products. According to Hester Lockyear (2004: 29), the political and economic influence of soap operas is linked to the commercial interest of advertisers. It is for this reason the genre acquired its title because *soap* is a mass-produced household commodity. The use of the word *opera* - on the other hand - is ironic because of its high-art status. However, the use of the word

is appropriate in the sense that the opera is a larger than life melodramatic production- like soap operas (Ahmed, 2012: 1).

This is significant because if soap opera is a genre outside the dominant male narrative but is considered low-art, its ability to have a substantial impact in society is limited. Mary Ellen Brown (1987: n/p) wrote that what is defined as ‘trash’ is often material that resists patriarchal cultural dominance because it threatens dominant discourses. Deborah D. Rogers (1991/2003: 476) concurred with this observation stating, “the term ‘soap opera’ has become so pejorative that it is applied condescendingly to a variety of genres and situations to indicate bathetic superficiality and kitsch”. Christine Gledhill and Vicky Ball (2013: 341) also remarked that the relegation of soap opera to what is understood as ‘the truly awful’ suggests a gendered standard that values the masculine.

According to Laura Mulvey (1975/1999: 833) the dominant ideological view espoused in classic cinematic narratives silenced women by making them bearers of meaning while men functioned as creators of meaning. Mulvey used psychoanalytic theory to illustrate “the way the unconscious of a patriarchal society has structured film form” (Mulvey, 1975/ 1999: 833). This is informed by ‘the gaze’ which positions women as part of the *man’s story*; therefore, they are filmed as objects of male desire. Men have the privilege of power through ‘the gaze’ (Aston and Clarke, 1994: 212). The consequence of this is that women are constantly relegated to a powerless position, whereas male protagonists are idolised as figures who the audience is encouraged to identify with. This was also evident in the American newspaper, ‘film character-play’, where the heroine performed perilous scenes (Frey-Vor, 1990: 2).

In classic film and television (even feminine genres) most female roles primarily revolved around family and the devotion of women’s time to the domestic setting. This also serves an ideological function to naturalise the social roles assigned to males and females. Richard Kilborn (1992) asserted that the use of binaries plays an important role in concretising these roles. He argued that the most flattering portrayal of female characters are roles in which women sacrifice themselves for others. Alternatively, women who deviate from this are portrayed as the villain[ess] or self-indulgent characters (Kilborn, 1992: 46-47). This is concurred by Caroline Acosta-Alzuru (2003: 271) who wrote that women are mostly portrayed through a Manichean view of social roles- villain[ess] or hero[ine].

Yet, Brown (1987: np) contended that women can participate in both patriarchal and feminine discourses - she called this the ‘wild zone’. By participating in the ‘wild zone’, women can

prove that they are not powerless and they can rebel against patriarchal social norms. According to Brown (1987: n/p) this was evident in the Dutch film: *Question of Silence* in which three women implicated for murdering a male shop owner used their silence as a tool of power. Laura Mulvey's (1981/1999: 123) article: *Afterthoughts on Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, opposed Brown's argument, by asserting that female protagonists are unable to attain a stable sexual identity because they vacillate between passive femininity and regressive masculinity. She found this to be problematic because the dominance of patriarchy overrides the ambiguity of femininity. Women can never fully be accepted in dominant culture because they are viewed as passive.

This assertion is comparable with Bonnie Dow (2005: 381) who observed that although the representation of women in television had changed since the 1970s, patriarchy persists. Therefore, while women had transitioned from the domestic sphere to the workplace, traditional roles for women were retained. This was evident in *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*; although Mary Richards was independent and career orientated, her character was inherently maternal and daughterly: she nurtured her co-workers, she solved their problems, and she received guidance and protection from the show's father figure, and her boss, Lou Grant, who reinforced the dominant order of patriarchy by 'putting Mary in her place' when she challenged him. Dow's observation echoes Mulvey's argument that despite women occupying resistive positions, they continue being subordinates in dominant culture because the culture is premised on patriarchy (Mulvey, 1981/1999: 123; Dow, 2005: 381).

This point also coincides with what John Fiske (1987: 38) called the incorporation device⁴ (a term coined by the Frankfurt school) which is used to suppress radical ideas. This is achieved by incorporating radical discourses into the dominant ideology. Fiske wrote:

The combination of economics and ideology was so powerful that any oppositional or radical movement was immediately swallowed up or incorporated into the dominant ideology. Thus, a show like "Charlie's Angels", popular in the late 1970s, could be said to have an element of radicalism in that it showed three female detectives in roles that were normally confined to men. But the fact that they were cast and photographed

⁴ Refer to Chapter two in the dissertation to read more about the latent function of hegemony and power. The *incorporation device* is comparable with hegemonic power.

to foreground their sexual attractiveness could be seen as a device of incorporation (Fiske, 1987: 38).

Therefore, like Dow's analysis of Mary Richards, Fiske argued that subsuming women into patriarchy is used to defuse the threat of feminine discourses. He used the metaphor of 'inoculation' coined by Roland Barthes to explain the effects of incorporation. *Inoculation* is used to *immunise* the dominant ideology with a spurt of the acknowledged evil of *radicalism* to protect it against the risk of generalised subversion (Fiske, 1987: 39). The arguments purported by scholars (see Mulvey, 1975/1999; Fiske, 1987; Dow, 2005) is that while incorporating female characters into traditionally male roles may appear subversive, it may derail the ability to construct an effective feminine discourse.

Feminine discourse

Seminal scholars on soap opera (see Modleski, 1979; Kuhn, 1984; Brown, 1987) viewed the genre as a resistive space for women to voice their concerns (Modleski, 1982: 21-24). This has arguably reshaped the way women are portrayed on television because there is less focus placed on the image, and more attention afforded to female characters' discourse (Kuhn, 1984: 18). A study by Dorothy Hobson (1980/1997: 310) titled: *Housewives and the Mass Media* indicated that the lack of female interest in current affairs or news programmes is attributed to the fact that these programmes do not reflect the interests of women. Feminine genres, on the other hand, address similar issues as current affairs and news programmes but in a way that women can relate (Kuhn, 1984: 18).

Soap operas provide a space for female voices to be heard. The non-hierarchical structure, with multiple characters and plots, departs from classic cinematic narratives. For Tania Modleski (1979: 18) the feminine subject position in soap operas transcends patriarchal modes of subjectivity. The subversive and radical approach of soap operas, to take female pleasures seriously, can be argued as a meaningful representation of women (Geraghty, 2016: 367). Representation, in this context, is defined as "using language to say something meaningful about, or to represent, the world meaningfully, to other people (Hall, 1997/2013: 1). The most significant contribution to popular culture by the soap opera is its ability to exist in the domestic setting while articulating feminine pleasure and desires, thereby establishing a feminine culture (Brown, 1987: 1).

Jeremy Butler (1986: 55-67) contended that although narrative formed the basis of soap opera inquiry, the stylistic conventions are equally important. He argued for the need to study soap

opera as a system of signification. In his article, titled *Notes on the Soap Opera Apparatus: Television Style and "As the World Goes Round"*, he wrote: "Style, as I will be using the term, signifies the patterning of techniques, the syntagmatic and paradigmatic relationships of one element to other elements within a textual system. Only these relationships generate meaning" (Butler, 1986: 55). For Butler, style is an important signifying element, used together with the narrative structure, to purvey meaning. It nurtures and maintains the genres diegetic enigmas (Butler, 1986: 67). A similar observation was made in an article by Elaine Aston and Ian Clarke: *Feminist Theory and the Matriarchal soap: EastEnders* (1994: 212) in which they claimed that the camerawork in soap operas deviate from classic cinematic approaches, which primarily foregrounded the female body. There are no unmotivated body shots (Brown, 1987: n/p), rather, the close-up and the two-shot are used to emphasise the genres focus on dialogue. Although narrative structure and style contribute significantly towards the subversive nature of soap operas, these two elements arguably play a supplementary role to the integral function of gossip in soap operas. It is critical at this juncture to define feminine discourse:

Feminine discourse is distinguished from feminist discourse which presupposes an involvement with the politics of the women's movement. It evidences an awareness of the subordination of women but does not necessarily transcribe that into political action. Feminine discourse includes that 'women's talk' sometimes referred to as gossip, is 'a form of unarticulated female power (Brown, 1987: n/p).

The role of gossip, for Brown (1987: n/p), is integral in articulating a feminine discourse. The accompanying role of narrative and style is demonstrated in this quote:

Gossip is open-ended, like the soaps, and such openness challenges the cultural dominance of other representational systems which close off, limit and contain, meaning for women. Within the serial and open structure of soaps lies the possibility of female resistance and even subversion of the dominant classical narrative form, a form which by its construction and use to define masculine ego boundaries, almost always subverts women's expression (Brown, 1987: n/p).

The challenge of feminine discourse is that it is often muted by patriarchal discourse, social constraints and historical methodologies (Brown, 1987: n/p). Tania Modleski (1979) and Laura

Mulvey (1975; 1981) both constructed arguments that reinforce the dyadic relationship between femininity and masculinity, thereby assuming a homogenous feminine subject. Mulvey (1975/1999: 833) identified two positions that female spectators could take. Spectators adopting the first position, she argued, enjoy the pleasure and freedom of the male hero, thereby choosing to identify with him because of the pleasure of power. Spectators adopting the second position would find themselves out of key with the pleasure on offer, therefore, breaking the spell of fascination. In both positions, Mulvey's female spectator either adopts a feminine or masculine position. On the other hand, Modleski (1979: 14) claimed that women were able to identify with multiple female identities in the soap opera genre, thus being diverted from power. Her argument was premised on the idea that the subject/spectator is positioned as the 'ideal mother', who possesses wisdom, and can sympathise with the conflicting claims of her family.

However, Annette Kuhn (1984: 21) contested the notion of a universal gendered spectatorship. She argued that there is a difference between femaleness (social gender) and femininity (subject position). Therefore, although soap operas are predominantly consumed by a female audience, it does not automatically mean they adopt a subject position, or what Brown (1987: n/p) referred to as a feminine discourse. Kuhn (1984: 21) further contended that psychoanalysis, the theory in Mulvey's article: *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, offered little scope for theorising subjectivity in its cultural or historical specificity.

Charlotte Brunson (cited in Kuhn, 1984: 26-27) attempted to resolve the dualism of text and context in her study on *Crossroads*. For Brunson, the subject position is constructed within a cultural context as opposed to representation in the text. Therefore, successful spectatorship/subject position relies on a familiarity with the cultural context and not necessarily the representation of feminine discourse. For example, Dorothy Hobson (1982/2003: 27) wrote that black and minority groups are almost completely excluded in British and American soap operas. Mary Ellen Brown (1987: n/p) contextualised Brunson's point in this quote:

Multiple characters foster for women a more discursive reading strategy involving the enactment by many characters of some of the social and personal discourses available to women.

This assertion departs from the dyadic arguments purported by both Mulvey (1975; 1981) and Modleski (1979) who argued that the spectator can adopt two reading positions – either

masculine or feminine - thus postulating a narrow view of femininity and feminine discourse without considering oppositional or marginal positions.

Female Characters in Soap Operas

Characters play an integral role in all soap operas. Equally important, is the audience appeal characters have. Hobson (1982/2003: 81) wrote that “the characters in British soap opera are representations of people who are recognisable to the audience”. The success of a programme, therefore, relies on its ability to portray a form of realism while meeting the aspirations of the audience. Soap operas create the illusion that the characters and the locations exist outside audience viewing. The most striking trait of the soap opera is the various strong female characters. This has proven to be popular among audiences because the range of women allows the viewer to relate to different characters (Hobson, 1982/2003: 33). Furthermore, women in soap operas play a more positive role as opposed to other genres (Kilborn, 1992: 46).

Unlike other genres, soap operas have a strong presence of matriarchal figures- comprising middle-aged and elderly women. Christine Geraghty (1991: 17) noted that US primetime soap operas also have a strong emphasis on middle-aged women, like their British counterparts. According to Geraghty, soap operas feature women who would normally be excluded in other genres due to their age, appearance or status (Geraghty, 1991: 17).

Motherhood and matriarchy are intimately linked, and the power of motherhood is one of the greatest strengths of soap operas. As the genre has evolved, the reference to motherhood has extended to the portrayal of single mothers. Traditionally, the matriarch was a mother or a widowed woman who listened to problems and offered advice. They were well respected in the community and viewed as authority figures (Hobson, 2003: 92). In contemporary soap operas the matriarch is not necessarily a mother. The presence of a matriarch may be linked to a successful business woman, she may be a leader in the community, or she may be a middle-aged woman offering her authority from life experience (Neophytou, 2012: 4).

The role of the matriarch is also addressed by Elaine Aston and Ian Clarke (1994: 214) who argued that matriarchs are not only mothers in the home, but mothers to the community. Geraghty (1991: 122) solidifies this point in the following quote:

It is the women characters who embody the function of community in the form of the matriarchs who hold the community together. It is clear that the ideal community only functions if women are in control: they bring isolated and disparate individuals into the community/family; they organise its

rituals; they transmit its values and spin the web of gossip through which it is continually renewed.

A re-emergence of the dyad between male and female characters becomes evident in British soap operas where the matriarch seemingly replaces patriarchal power. This is highlighted in an example by Aston and Clarke (1994: 213) who referenced an episode of *EastEnders* where the male characters had to receive permission from their wives to go on a fishing trip. Throughout the episode, the men were constructed as children pursuing a childlike activity, while the women of Albert Square community constantly made their presence felt. Furthermore, the character Michelle Fowler's jokes invited the female spectator to belittle male prowess. Aston and Clarke argued that the episode about the trip was framed by matriarchal authority. This is in stark contrast to US prime-time soap operas like *Dynasty* and *Dallas* where business and family matters are conducted primarily by males, albeit assertive female characters (Aston and Clarke, 1994: 212).

In *EastEnders*, a dyadic power relation between the younger generation of women and the matriarchs was formed. The latter group signify the ideal values of community and family, while the younger women threaten the values of the matriarch (Aston and Clarke, 1994: 215-216). The resistive position of the younger women can be likened to the patriarchs in prime-time soap operas like *Dallas* where the individual is valued over the community. Aston and Clarke (1994: 212) wrote that the powerful position of the matriarchal figure can be attributed to the working-class context in which soaps like *EastEnders* and *Coronation Street* are embedded. Sociologically, the balance of power between men and women is horizontal which could indicate why women play a dominant role in these shows. The younger women prioritised work and independence, preferring a materialist ethos over community/family ideals. The younger generation of women in *EastEnders* can be likened to the individualistic, consumerist and power-driven Ewing brothers in *Dallas*. Thus, the male/female binary is extended resulting in an oppositional female/female power relation (Aston and Clarke, 1994: 212-216).

However, the role of women extends beyond the matriarch. Marion Jordan (1981: 68-74) identified grandmother types, married women and 'marriageable' women. She broke down the latter category into 'mature sexy women', 'spinsterly types' and young women. Peter Buckman identified three characters in soap operas: saints, sufferers and sinners. He argued that women can be classified as: the 'scheming bitch' – who cheats on her husband, also known

as the villainess; the 'queen' - who has wealth and power and is the target of every man's envy; and the 'innocent heroine' - who is always in danger of advances by the wrong man (cited in Neophytou, 2012: 4). Dorothy Hobson also identified three classifications of women: 'the strong woman' - the woman who brings up her family, supports her friends, survives when she is betrayed by men and sometimes lives happily with a partner; 'the feisty young woman' - who is strong-willed and desires independence; and 'the innocent beautiful young woman' - who is glamorous (Hobson, 1982/2003: 94-96).

Scholarly work on female characters suggests two overarching positions. The first, that women are afflicted by failed love. This is evident in Marion Jordan's analysis of character types in *Coronation Street* and Dorothy Hobson's analysis of female characters in *Crossroads* (Jordan, 1981: 67-74; Hobson, 1982/2003: 88-96). Alternatively, scholars like Peter Buckman and Tania Modleski focus on the dyadic relationship between good and evil. Good women usually conform to conventional domestic prescripts, while evil women break away from the conventional domestic setting and are often portrayed as ruthless people who gain satisfaction from their rivals' discomfiture (Kilborn, 1992: 48).

For Modleski (1979: 15-17) an evil character is important because the negative image reflects the spectator's ideal self. The villainess transforms traditional feminine weaknesses into a source of power, thereby giving the spectator control over her feminine passivity. As discussed earlier, Modleski constructed the spectator as 'the ideal mother'. Therefore, the dialectical relationship between the spectator and the villainess is integral to the genre because it functions as a catharsis for the female spectator whose primary function is to be sympathetic and tolerant (Modleski, 1979: 14).

However, the overarching positions do not have to be separate, and women may be faced with the same circumstance but choose to deal with it differently. In *Dallas*, the characters, Sue Ellen and Pamela, who both married Ewing brothers, were faced with the issue of being placed secondary to their husbands' job. Sue Ellen chose to deal with the neglect by turning to alcohol and engaging in extramarital affairs. Pamela, on the other hand, was hopeful that love would conquer all and that they would overcome the impasse in their relationship. It may be asserted that, although both characters are afflicted by love, Sue Ellen adopted the characteristics of a villainess while Pamela adopted the position of the innocent good women, thus indicating that the overarching positions can intertwine (Ang, 1982: 125).

The Value of Female Character Types

Although character types are significant in soap operas, Hobson (1982/2003: 82) argued that they are merely shorthand for what the characters are meant to represent. The signs of the character, both visual and aural, produce connotations that inform our opinions about them. However, Hobson also stressed that as characters develop, their roles are less deterministic and more complex. Therefore, characters can be best understood psychologically as representations of recognisable people the spectator can identify with. They are types, switching between reality and fiction (Brown, 1987: n/p; Hobson, 1982/2003: 82-85). This is indicated in the subsequent quote:

As in 'real' life, people are more complex than merely being good or bad, hero or villain; they are not that simple. The characters are multi-faceted, and we see their different characteristics and their interaction with a number of other characters so that we can judge their behaviour and understand their motivations (Hobson, 1982/2003: 106).

John Fiske (1987: 151) contended that reading characters is an ideological process. Therefore, although characters represent real people, they are also an embodiment of social and political discourses. Fiske disagreed with the argument that characters are fundamentally psychological. He claimed that psychological realism fits into the ideology of individualism, where the actions of the character are influenced by biological as opposed to social factors (Fiske, 1987: 151-153).

The view advanced by Fiske can be understood as a discursive or structuralist strategy to understanding characters. Structuralism constructs a character as a textual device, therefore suggesting that the character is moulded by social and political discourses. In this sense, characters can be viewed indexically from their discursive realities. Fiske (1987: 154) expanded on this point in his analysis of Sue Ellen's character in *Dallas*:

"... Sue Ellen's drinking can be seen as a metaphor, or displaced articulation, of women's helplessness in the face of their subordination in patriarchy: it is less an insight into her personality than a textual expression of her powerlessness in the face of J.R.'s sexual and economic politics.

However, Fiske did not object to the idea of characters being read psychologically. His argument was premised on the view that psychological realism favours dominant ideologies

which is intimately linked to individualism. This view fits into the framework of ideology as discussed by Terry Lovell (1981: 40). Although Lovell disagreed with the notion of stretching the concept of ideology outside its original fixation with the relationship between labour and class: "... popular forms have class-related dimensions which cannot be captured and analysed within a catch-all concept of ideology without stretching that concept to the point of uselessness" (Lovell, 1981: 40). The core of ideology fits into Fiske's argument about dominant ideology which is inherently about ideas not being free-floating products of the mind, but rather being rooted in politics and society.

Fiske's argument is not about characters being one-dimensional or stereotypical (lacking depth). He acknowledged the complexity of characters but cautioned the spectator against identifying with characters purely on an emotional and psychological level. Lovell (1981: 47) concretised this point by suggesting that: "...even the most emotionally saturated entertainment will also produce ideas, and these will certainly be locatable in terms of ideology".

The argument purported by Fiske is that dominant ideas become naturalised if they are not read discursively. This point is reiterated by John Fiske (1987) who argued that the simplification of meaning negates deeper understanding- popular culture thus cultivates a way of thinking that limits the ability to question systems of power and ideology as these constructions become naturalised and normative. Therefore, if readers adopt an oppositional or discursive view of characters, they would see beyond the psychological conditions of the characters and see the deeper meaning. An example of this is evident in *Cagney and Lacey* where Fiske argued that, psychologically, Cagney's ambition could be a function of her character. It could also be discursively read as a protest of patriarchal subordination (Fiske, 1987: 160).

The difference between what Hobson (1982/2003: 83-84) described as a complex 'real' life character and what Fiske (1987: 151- 160) described as a discursive character is that the former is an embodiment of individualistic values and can only be understood psychologically as the focus is on the self, in relation to the text. The latter reading extends beyond the self and views the character as a discursive subject representing metonymic representations of social positions and values. Therefore, existing in the second and third order of the sign system. This does not mean that characters are static, they can vacillate between different positions. Meaning, in this context, derives from relationships and not from essences (Fiske, 1987: 151- 153).

A character is a paradigmatic set of values that are related through structures of similarity and difference to other characters: character is a conjuncture of

social discourses held in metaphorical relationship to the notions of individuality and embodied in the appearance and mannerisms of an individual actor or actress. Character, then is an embodied ideology and is used to make sense of the world by the relations of discourses and ideology that it embodies (Fiske, 1987: 160).

Significantly, seminal scholars on soap opera (*see* Modleski, 1979; Lovell, 1981; Ang, 1982; Brown, 1987; 1994) viewed the genre as oppositional to male hegemony. Therefore, soap operas in their entirety - the narrative structure, storylines and character types - arguably encourage spectators to adopt a discursive position, thereby subverting dominant ideologies. The construction of strong and independent women, typically middle-aged challenge the dominant ideas of classic narratives (Lovell, 1981: 52)

Myth and Fiction

Although seminal scholars of soap opera have adopted the view that the genre is oppositional to the dominant patriarchal structure. Helena Sheehan (1987/2004: 7) wrote that all stories and narratives are arranged into a pattern through which meaning is purveyed. The meanings imbued in these stories and images are shaped by ideas, structures and the social order. Sheehan wrote:

Every story both presupposes and projects particular images of what human life is all about, a certain picture of the social order in which plays itself out, and a certain implicit world-view. The most compelling and resonant of these images haunt us, weigh upon us, penetrate our patterns of thought and the emotion, not so much directly and overtly, but indirectly and subliminally (Sheehan, 1987/2004: 7).

Historically, the most compelling stories were embodied in myth. Myths are primitive ritual practices by ancient cultures that are used to understand reality and nature (Fiske, 1990: 88). Roland Barthes explained that myths are a chain of related concepts (Fiske, 1990: 88). For Sheehan myths are larger than life stories with symbolic significance. They are stories that concretise themes of human existence. These stories include archetypal characters and situations where fears, desires, hopes and conflicts are expressed. Myths are stories that are told and re-told, often linking the past to the present. “myths are normative narratives, setting out a society’s history, legitimating its institutions, codes and values and envisioning its future development” (Sheehan, 1987/2004: 7-8). However, myths are not free-floating fantasies, they

are embedded in structures and institutions of power, and they evolve according to the social order. Myths often function at a latent level, with their origins being obscured (Fiske, 1990: 89).

Mythical characters, like soap opera characters, are 'larger than life' and often play a metaphorical role in relation to other lives. Their indexicality carries deeper meanings, thus transporting them into the symbolic realm. Sheehan contended that characters in serials, like J.R. Ewing in *Dallas* and Ally McBeal in *the Ally McBeal Show*, are too shallow and glib in comparison to Greek mythical characters. Nevertheless, the population of archetypal figures, in soap operas, reflect the collective psyche, fears and aspirations of the American mass audience, which albeit their distinction from the factual reality of the state of the nation, appeal to audiences based on the collective dream life of the culture it creates (Sheehan, 1987/2004: 10).

The picture becomes complex when images and stories resonate with audiences internationally. Tamar Liebes and Elihu Katz (1986: 3-4) conducted a study with multi-ethnic viewers of the popular American serial, *Dallas*. The respondents were drawn from four ethnic groupings residing in Israel – Arabs, newly-arrived Russian Jews, Moroccan Jews and kibbutz members – as well as non-ethnic Americans residing in Los Angeles. The study revealed that the secret to the success of *Dallas* was the way in which different viewers from different cultures were able to relate to the story at different levels. The first level of identification with the programme was referential. This implies that viewers connected with primordial themes like kinship and the psychological and emotional traits of characters. The second level of identification was metalinguistic. This viewer was able to read the text discursively while playing semantic games such as intertextuality. The mode of identification with the mythic characters at different levels extends the global reach of popular serials like *Dallas*. This does not imply that a spectator ought to fit into one or the other category, referential identification may be solidified through intertextual references, such as religious and other institutions of power; thus, inculcating existing myths.

Myths are concretised by debasing their origins. This is presented in the example Fiske provided regarding the naturalisation of gender roles. Fiske (1990: 89-90) wrote that some myths manipulate nature itself. He argued that the construction of masculinity and femininity is based on the myth that women are nurturing and caring, thus their relegation to the domestic sphere appears natural, whereas the physicality of men justifies their role in the public sphere.

However, such myths fail to unearth the political and social bearings of these associations. These associations can also be based on an element of truth which is manipulated to support the myth.

This is concurred by Mercy Amba Oduyoye (1995: 19) who wrote that African folktales construct myths about African femininity which have been passed down generations. Myths hold significant social currency, particularly in African heritage, where they have been used to mould social relations and wield political power.

However, this can also be understood from the position of Claude Lévi-Strauss (1978) who argued that myths form part of the paradigmatic dimension of language. Therefore, they can only be understood through conceptual categories which are constituted by binaries. In this sense, myths are wielded through political and social power relations, but their existence is based on conceptual categories which simplify complex phenomena to solidify the position of the dominant social order. An example of this is the polarisation of gender roles. Femininity has widely been associated with traits like emotionality, compassion, a communal sense and compliance. Alternatively, masculinity has been associated with traits like individualism, rationality and ruthlessness. Furthermore, on television, ‘good’ women are often portrayed as submissive and domesticated whereas ‘bad’ women have been portrayed as selfish and independent (Ahmed, 2012: 2). The success of myth is based on its ability to appear as if it is natural while hiding its cultural influence (Fiske, 1990: 121).

There has been criticism by mainstream feminists that soap operas reinforce patriarchal myths. They have especially stressed the ‘stereotyped’, ‘role-confirming’ and ‘anti-emancipatory’ images of women which arguably reproduce gender stereotypes (Ang, 1985: 118-119). It can therefore be suggested that the genre is not devoid of myths about gender, class, culture and race. However, these myths may exist at a latent level.

The assertion of universal femininity is also problematic because it negates the intersection of class, culture and race in the construction of feminine discourse. If attention is not attributed to femininities that exist outside white, Euro-American, middle-class women then the claim that soap operas are ideologically neutral is open to being challenged. It can thus be claimed that a myopic focus on femininity could result in the production of a dyadic relationship between women who fit the category of white, Euro-American and middle-class and women who exist at the margins of this identification.

Whose feminine discourse?

It has been suggested that feminist scholars like Ien Ang, Charlotte Brunsdon Christine Geraghty and Dorothy Hobson, overlooked Black and Asian women in their work on soap opera and femininity in the 1980s (Lad, 2016: 369). The exclusion of these ethnicities revealed that second-wave feminism largely excluded positions outside white, middle-class feminist perspectives. Yet, scholarship from, what is often considered to be ‘marginalised’ or ‘underprivileged’ perspectives, are not uniform in response to the role of soap opera as a feminine discourse. While some scholars agree with feminist scholarship from the 1980s, other scholars have adopted an oppositional view.

Bell Hooks (2003) radically departed from Mulvey’s (1975/1999) position in *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*. She argued that the marginalisation of black women in mainstream film and television resulted in their adoption of an ‘oppositional gaze’. Hooks wrote: “black women were able to critically assess the cinema’s construction of white womanhood as object of phallogentric gaze and choose not to identify with either the victim nor the perpetrator”. They were able to recognise the misrepresentation of black spectatorship because the gaze, for them, has always been political (Hooks, 2003: 99). For black female spectators, feminist film criticism in the 1970s silenced racial differences and erased black womanhood, thereby perpetuating white supremacy. Yet Hooks also castigated black male filmmakers, like Spike Lee, for advancing phallogentric representations of black females in his cinematic productions. Therefore, black females faced a duality of oppression for being both black and female (Hooks, 2003: 101).

The argument about overlooked ethnic representations is also alluded to by Dorothy Hobson (1982/2003: 126-127) who wrote: “while the country [Britain] is multicultural and the soap operas do claim to reflect everyday life in Britain, they have sometimes struggled to incorporate black and Asian characters across their range of representations”. When the producers of *Coronation Street* were confronted about not having ethnic diversity in the 1980s, they claimed that the exclusion of ethnic characters was attributed to the fact that they did not want to portray racist characters. However, since the 1980s, there have been substantial changes in British soap operas. Popular serials, like *Coronation Street*, *EastEnders* and *Brookside*, have included ethnic characters in their storylines. Yet, despite these changes Hobson (1982/2003: 128) argued that ethnic characters do not evolve in the same way as their white counterparts. She further contended that the inclusion of such characters is for political correctness, thus their portrayals seem forced. She claimed: “the only way for the successful inclusion of any

characters in any soap is that they are an integral part of the series and the storylines reflect aspects of their lives which the audience will find believable...” (Hobson, 1982/2003: 128).

Despite the criticism of underrepresentation of ethnic characters in soap operas, there are people from marginalised ethnic groups who identify with soap operas like *Dallas*. Mita Lad (2016: 369) wrote that her mother, along with other Indian diasporic women living in the United Kingdom – in the early 1980s, religiously watched *Dallas*. This is in agreement with a study by Liebes and Katz (1986: 3-4) on *Dallas*, where they identified that the multi-ethnic appeal of the prime-time soap opera was linked to self-identification of the viewers with the characters and intertextual references. Lad agreed with Hooks about the dearth of literature on ethnic women in seminal feminist television scholarship. However, unlike Hooks, Lad credited seminal soap opera scholars for their contribution to methods that have been used to study women and soap opera (Lad, 2016: 370).

Asian soap operas and women empowerment

The introduction of satellite television in India in 1993 has contributed towards the multi-lingual, multi-lateral and multi-channel system in Indian television. This is significantly different to the government-controlled Doordarshan network. The more than 400 channels provide a diverse offering to television audiences. The diversity of programming offers soap operas, including *Hum Log*, *Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi* and *Nukkad*. However, it was the soap opera *Buniyaad* that most resembled the Euro-American format with 104 episodes of interwoven storylines. Soap operas in India depict the clash between modernity and tradition. Most significant is the genre’s popularity among female audiences who claim soap operas have empowered them through entertainment-education messages. Furthermore, it has been claimed that serials have encouraged a feminine discourse in the region (Ahmed, 2012: 1-6).

Alternatively, in Pakistan, “underlying practically all media images is a dichotomous motif which defines women as either perfectly good, wholly evil, mother or whore, virgin or call girl, even traditional or modern” (Iqbal and Abdar, 2016: 11). Mubeena Iqbal and Khairunnisa Abdar (2016: 12) surveyed eight prime-time soap operas aired in Pakistan from January to September 2014. Although the genre is widely consumed by a female audience, the study inferred that almost 70% of the women portrayed in the serial dramas did not have a specified education. Moreover, women were seldom depicted outside the private space of the home - most female characters were portrayed as docile and silent. Another dominant theme was the preference of male children. Women without a male child are perceivably weaker in Pakistani

society, thus women face pressure to conceive a son or risk their husband remarrying for the sake of conceiving a boy. The study also highlighted the dichotomous portrayals of good and bad women. The former is characterised as docile, submissive and uneducated whereas the latter is characterised as outgoing, selfish and rebellious because she does not adhere to male orders (Iqbal and Abdar, 2016: 13-14).

The dominant patriarchal setting does not allow females to progress and stand up for their own cause, thus exacerbating the social, political and economic issues related to gender inequality in Pakistan. Although soap operas can be used as a powerful medium for social change, the surveyed soap operas fail to show empowered women (Iqbal and Abdar, 2016: 14). Iqbal and Abdar (2016: 15) contended that soap operas should incorporate characters that question male dominance for social change to occur in Pakistan.

Binaries in Latin American soap operas/telenovelas

In Latin America the media and culture are inextricably linked to gender issues (Acosta-Alzuru, 2003: 270). A study by Carolina Acosta-Alzuru (2003: 270) analysed how feminism and feminists are represented in the Venezuelan telenovela, *El País de las Mujeres* (The Country of Women). Instrumental to her analysis was the Gramscian concept ‘hegemony’ which she claimed: “involves the production of consensus for cultural practices and ideas that will sustain power relations”. Hegemony is always fragile and is subject to change. The success of hegemonic discourse relies on the dialectic relationship between consensus and resistance. Therefore, according to Acosta Alzuru (2003: 270) “this conceptualisation allows us to understand how a perceived ideological threat such as feminism can be defused through domestication and trivialisation”.

A contextualisation of Latin American society particularly Caracas, Venezuela, the setting of *El País*, is necessary to illustrate the study conducted by Carolina Acosta-Alzuru. Latin American society is premised on three ideological patriarchal values: the myth of the patriarchal family; the presence of *marianismo* and *machismo* and the virgin/whore binary opposition based on the Virgin Mary and her biblical counterpart Mary Magdalene. These constructs underpin the public/private dichotomy that subordinates women in Latin America, and are strongly promoted by the Catholic church, which plays a dominant role in the region (Acosta-Alzuru, 2003: 275).

Patriarchy is propagated by the dominant ideologies of *machismo* and *marianismo*. *Machismo* is the belief that men are superior to women, they have more rights and belong in the public

sphere, while women should be subordinate to men and belong in private sphere. *Marianismo* holds that women are morally and spiritually superior. They possess spiritual strength and a capacity for self-sacrifice which makes them fit to be good mothers. The combination of the two ideologies places women in the domestic setting and assigns them the bulk of parental responsibility (2003: 275).

Albeit second-wave feminists' perception that work equates emancipation for women, most working women do so for their survival in Venezuela because 25% of the households are headed by females. Furthermore, women mainly occupy jobs in low skilled sectors with low wages. Therefore, working women does not generate ideological change and social transformation. It is merely the outcome of financial need (Acosta-Alzuru, 2003: 276).

Telenovelas are known for the presentation of these values which are demonstrated through a Manichean world view. The villain is pure evil, and the heroine is sweet and virtuous. However, *El País* is a feminist show which prompted Acosta-Alzuru to adopt a cultural studies approach - 'the circuit of culture' – to understand how meanings associated with words feminism and feminist were produced and negotiated through each moment in the circuit (production, consumption, representation, regulation and identity) (Acosta-Alzuru, 2003: 270-271).

The findings suggested that feminism represented a threat to the dominant (patriarchal) social order which functions as common sense in Venezuelan society. This was evident in the writer's rejection of the show's association with the feminist movement in Venezuela which is signified as anti-men and lesbian (Acosta-Alzuru, 2003: 285-287). Furthermore, although the telenovela delivered a critique of Venezuelan patriarchy and sent empowering messages to women, the serial did not steer too far from convention. For example, a female character, Miranda, was radical in her rejection of male dominance which resulted in the audiences' assumption that she was lesbian. However, given Venezuelans' sweeping rejection of homosexuality, the writers and producers chose to attribute her assertiveness to a traumatic experience in her past, placing her character into victimhood (Acosta-Alzuru, 2003: 282).

Therefore, the construction of a feminine discourse in Venezuela is complex because although women desire empowerment and critique patriarchy, the conventions of the region has resulted in their rejection of feminism because of its association with being anti-men and lesbian. Yet, the telenovela *El País* managed to break traditional binaries of good and evil women by constructing characters with a realistic mix of traits, including determination, honesty, ambition and passion (Acosta-Alzuru, 2003).

Rebelde

The Mexican telenovela, *Rebelde*, (Rebel) shares similarities with *El País* regarding the construction of ideal femininity and masculinity inscribed in the ideologies *marianismo* and *machismo*. However, the serial is set in the upper socio-economic town of Toluca focussing on young teenage girls who must mediate the tension between retaining traditional values and ascribing to modern ideals (Kjeldgaard and Nielsen, 2010: 35).

The central theme of the show is the cultural rebelliousness of modern youthful identities, breaking from traditional norms, due to the creolisation of identities resulting from globalisation. Therefore, the liberal feminist ideals espoused in the global media develops contention between modernity and tradition in Mexico (Kjeldgaard and Nielsen, 2010: 30)

Mexico, like Venezuela, is a male-dominated society, thus, *marianismo* and *machismo* define traditional cultural beliefs on femininity and masculinity. Women who deviate from this ideal, are regarded as ‘una puta’ (a whore) (Kjeldgaard and Nielsen, 2010: 33).

This article is interesting because it addresses the tension of multiple identifications in a globalised world. Therefore, the negotiation and construction of femininity is based on the tension between modern and traditional discourses (Kjeldgaard and Nielsen, 2010: 33). Furthermore, the study revealed, like Acosta-Alzuru’s (2003) study, that the categorisation of conformity and rebelliousness and virgin and whore are not neat binaries; these categorisations are complex. Most of the study’s respondents wished to rebel against *marianismo* without the negative attachment of being labelled a whore (Kjeldgaard and Nielsen, 2010: 41).

The two Latin American texts illustrate the limitations of reductionist categorisation. The purpose of binarisation is to maintain the dominant social order. These texts highlight that dyads cannot explain anomalous/unexplained categories (Fiske, 1990: 118) Dannie Kjeldgaard and Kaj Storgaard Nielsen (2010: 42) concluded that studies like this should be replicated in other non-Euro-Anglo contexts to provide insight into the formation of glocalised gender identities through the dialectic of global ideals and traditional values.

Gender constructions in South African soap operas

Literature on South African soap operas present two dominant positions relating to the representation of female characters. The first position is that women are treated as a homogenous group, thereby situating the analysis of characters within a dual male/female gendered framework. The second position is the acknowledgement of racial and cultural

differences; however, these differences have also been situated in a dual framework of black/white femininity.

A study by Hanneline Marx (2008), *South African Soap Opera as the Other: The Deconstruction of Hegemonic Gender identities in Four South African Soap Operas*, illustrates the first position. Marx employed Luce Igrary's theory of *Otherness* and Edward Said's theory of *Orientalism* to explain how women have been othered in dominant media discourses. She was specifically referring to a gendered *other* (Marx, 2008: 82). Her analysis of four South African soap operas: *Generations* (SABC 1); *7de Laan* (SABC 2); *Isidingo* (SABC 3) and *Egoli* (MNET), highlighted that soap operas may be gendered as both feminine and female, therefore *othered* (Marx, 2008: 83).

Like Modleski (1979: 18-20), Marx (2008: 84-86) viewed the narrative structure and characteristics of soap operas as being inherently feminine. Furthermore, villainesses, such as Monika (*Egoli*), Jane (*7de Laan*) and Cherel de Villiers (*Isidingo*) construct an empowered femininity because of their resistance to male dominance (Marx, 2008: 89). Marx (2008: 89) also argued that the villainess transforms feminine weaknesses into a source of strength (Modleski, 1979: 17). Apart from referencing Viola Milton's criticism about rigid portrayals of coloured characters, Marx did not interrogate the complexity and nuance of femininity as the *other*. Her work reflects the arguments made by feminist scholarship in the 1980s where a universal approach to gender was adopted.

Although the article positioned soap opera as an empowering genre for women, it failed to recognise the complexity of South African identities, where race and class often intersect gender issues. Furthermore, the theory of *otherness* extends into racial and class positions which Marx ignored. Gilbert Motsathebe (2009: 437) wrote: "the issue with liberal feminism in a multicultural and multiracial context is that it treats women as if they are all the same. African women may occupy traditional roles, undertaking modern activities while still being denied access to modern support systems". Nonetheless, Marx reconciled these issues in her later work, *Ignorance-Making in 7de Laan: A Critical Whiteness Studies Perspective*, where she discussed the presence of white Afrikaans hegemony in the soap opera, *7de Laan* (see Marx Knoetze, 2016). Albeit this recognition, she did not discuss issues related to gendered *otherness*.

Homogenous femininity is also explored in the article: *Women and Work in Family Soap Operas* in which the liberal feminist discourse of women entering the work place was central to the discussion of the authors, Barbara Czarniawska, Ulla Eriksson-Zetterquist and David Renemark (2013). The analysis of the characters, Cherele de Villiers and Lee Haynes, from the soap opera *Isidingo* situated women in a binary of male dominance and female passivity. Albeit the two characters subverting the dominant portrayals of females in soap operas, the paternalistic dominance of Lee's father, Barker Haynes, always seems to overshadow her resistance. Also, despite Cherele being a villainess, when she was in physical danger the popular male character, Rajesh Kumar, rescued her (Czarniawska, Eriksson-Zetterquist and Renemark, 2013: 276).

Most scholarly work on South African soap operas (see Motsaathebe, 2009; Neophytou, 2012) overwhelmingly indicates that albeit the focus on feminine discourse, the genre generally portrays males in more dominant positions to their female counterparts, thereby perpetuating gendered stereotypes (Motsaathebe, 2009: 429). Hester Lockyear (2004: 37-38) wrote:

The myth most strongly reinforced in all three soaps (*Generations*, *Isidingo* and *Egoli*) is based on assumptions about the emotional characteristics of women. Several of the women are portrayed as emotionally volatile and more expressive, more dependent and submissive than men. They are generally represented as compliant and allow men to dominate their social lives. The stronger characters who defy this characterisation are usually portrayed as unhappy, manipulative and bitchy.

This position was also adopted by Vanessa Neophytou (2012: 9-10) who examined the representation of femininities in the popular South African soap opera *Generations*. The character analysis focussed on Dineo (the good girl); Nomasonto (the wife); Ruby (Strong woman/matriarch); Sharon, (the mother) and Khethiwe (the villainess). The study revealed despite the adoption of multiple femininities, characters are still framed within a heteronormative discourse. Neophytou argued that women are still confined to the mother/whore dichotomy (Neophytou, 2012: 10).

The second position of scholarship on female representation in South African soap opera, concentrates on the black/white female dichotomy. Funeka Thabethe (2008: 78-84) argued that the valuation of whiteness plays a dominant role in the construction of black female characters in *Generations*. She asserted: "when black women are represented, they are represented [sic]

in a manner suggesting that their bodies are constructed to meet western ideals of beauty in terms of body type, skin colour and hair texture [sic]" (Thabethe, 2008: 79). Her analysis revealed that out of six characters only the character *Queen* was not thin. Furthermore, all the characters wore hair extensions and rarely showed their natural hair. Thabethe also noted that the character, *Sarah*, who opted to wear traditional African attire was represented as being inferior to her female counterparts (Thabethe, 2008: 80-82). This observation was also evident in Motsaathebe's (2009) study on *Generations*, in which he stated that some actors felt the characters were stereotypical and unrealistic and the show was a misrepresentation of South Africa, it was 'too western' (Motsaathebe, 2009: 446).

The polemical view against westernisation is further entrenched by Kenechukwu Igweonu (2007: 52) who asserted that patriarchy is a construction of Euro-American performance aesthetic. She argued that in most traditional African performances, there is gender diarchy where men and women share different but equal responsibilities. Therefore, males and females have autonomy over the roles they are assigned. Zulu Sofola's play: *King Emene* placed women at the forefront of the narrative, thereby providing healthy portrayals of African women and their sexuality. Igweonu borrows from the feminist aesthetic of Zulu Sofola, whose life and works articulate a vision of African womanhood. Sofola argued that if African women adopt a feminist aesthetic that is not confrontational, and accept being subordinate to their husbands, they will be happy. She asserted that being a wife and a mother is not powerless, it is African (Igweonu, 2007: 57). However, this culture-centric position is problematic as it assumes that African femininity is homogenous and in contention with western ideals of femininity. Nevertheless, the role of culture should not be undermined.

The role of women in Zulu culture

Culture plays a significant function in establishing relations between males and females. Like Latin America and Asia, African cultures are premised along patriarchal lines. A study by Ndumiseni Langelihle Langa (2012: 75) revealed that both men and women find Zulu culture oppressive. However, both male and female respondents in her study agreed overwhelmingly that cultural values, like husbands and wives not being equal should remain intact. Langa (2012: 77) argued that the views advanced by her research participants is most likely attributed to continued gender stereotyping that relegates women to a position of subordination.

The roles of women and men in folktales and other literary work also reflects the dyadic relationship between males and females. N. Masuku (1998: 38) claimed that folktales promote

social values and norms. They express the philosophy of communities and are never neutral. He asserted: “it can therefore be deduced that not only are folktales told for amusement, but some of the tales evince some subtle but sustained reaction to the plight of women” (Masuku, 1998: 41).

The four folktales analysed by Masuku featured women as the central characters, yet all the representations vilified women. In three of the four folktales women are labelled witches and are portrayed as evil (Masuku, 1998: 39-41).

Henry Gumede’s analysis of Zulu literary texts suggests that the subordination of women is based on power still being maintained by men through ideologies of gender inequality. The continuation of patriarchy is premised on the inability of men to relinquish their dominance over women. Therefore, while it may be argued that patriarchy is the primary power relation, patriarchal ideology is its energy (Gumede, 2002: 118). However, Gumede also noted that despite the shortcomings of the literary texts he examined, positive attitudes towards women can be found in Zulu love poems (Gumede, 2002: 119).

Customary practices also play an integral role in Zulu culture. For example, the practice of *ukuhlonipha* (respect) “a set of behaviours including stringent rules of avoidance that a wife follows when interacting with her husband and ranking members of his family” (Magwaza, 2008: 485). It also includes a certain dress code, a submissive posture and many subtle linguistic and social patterns of behaviour that are indexical of female subordination in Zulu culture (Rudwick and Shange, 2009: 69-70). Furthermore, *ukuhlonipha* must be practiced by a young woman if she wishes to get married. “She must not talk too much, speak too loudly or laugh heartily, proving that she is a suitable wife (Magwaza, 2008: 485). Congruent with feminist scholars, internationally, the primary role of a Zulu woman is ultimately to get married and rear children.

Conclusion

The literature review revealed that power, myth and gender are essential in the creation of soap operas. However, the simplification of dyadic power relations creates further exclusion, such as race, class and culture. In some cases, women from marginalised communities identify with seminal literature on soap opera scholarship whereas other women from marginalised identities adopt an oppositional position.

Literature suggests that the construction of femininity in popular South African soap operas is premised on dualisms. The first dualism is the male/female power relationship and the second

dualism is the black/white power relationship. The simplification of identities could potentially produce new hegemonic relationships. The problem is partially located in the homogeneous categorisation of identity. Therefore, the recognition and negotiation of difference plays an integral function in establishing a feminine discourse.

There is a lack of literature that critically engages the role stylistic conventions and televisual apparatus play in the constructing female characters. Seminal scholars have primarily focussed on feminine discourses, subjectivity, identity and passivity (see Mulvey, 1975/1999; Modleski, 1979; Hobson, 1982/2003; Brunsdon cited in Kuhn, 1984; Geraghty, 1991). Yet this does not address how textual devices are used to purvey meaning. This is important as scholars (see Fiske, 1987 and Butler, 2007) have indicated how stylistic conventions, including lighting, sound, dress code, camera shots and mise-en-scene contribute towards character construction and ideological values embedded in character development (Fiske, 1987: 5).

The aim of this study was to examine whether the presence of single matriarchal figures in the South African soap opera, *Uzalo*, reinforce gendered myths or challenge heteronormative discourses. It is thus important to understand systems that solidify signification practices, such as the aforementioned stylistic conventions. Although the surveyed literature acknowledges that representations of femininity reside in patriarchal discourses, there is a lack of analysis beyond this point. The literature indicates the need to analyse the role of power, ideology and hegemony in the construction of female characters through the use of textual apparatus and stylistic conventions.

Methodology

Introduction

The methodology chapter plays an integral role of linking the theoretical and philosophical assumptions of the study to the research problem and questions. This chapter is not so much about describing the employed methods, but about reasoning the value and stating why they have been chosen. The methodology focusses on the tools and procedures used to conduct the study (Henning, van Rensburg, Smit, 2007/2018: 36). The theory chapter provided a conceptual lens through which semiotics could be understood. The methodology chapter illustrates how semiotics was applied to the study (Wahyuni, 2012: 72). The chapter therefore explored the research approach. It explained the paradigm framing the researcher's ontological, epistemological, axiological and methodological assumptions (Creswell, Hanson, Plano Clarke, Morales, 2007: 238). It also discussed the research design which was informed by the selected paradigm. Finally, the application of the study was discussed which included, the method of data collection and data analysis. Issues of trustworthiness and subjectivity were also addressed.

Qualitative Approach

Qualitative research represents one of the two major research approaches through which social research is conducted. It is a field of inquiry that cuts through different disciplines and subject matter. Researchers seek to understand meaning attributed to people's social experiences, circumstances and situations. Quantitative inquiry is the second major approach (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011: 4-8). The distinction between the two approaches is their perception of reality and philosophical assumptions (Creswell, 2003: 4; Struwig and Stead, 2013: 10).

Quantitative research has its origins in a positivist/post-positivist paradigm, implying that reality and laws of behaviour exist outside of context; thus, the researcher is independent from the object being researched (Struwig and Stead, 2013: 10). A quantitative approach relies on measurements and observation to test theories through experiments and surveys that yield statistical data (Creswell, 2003: 18).

Qualitative research, on the other hand, situates the researcher in the world; therefore, research cannot be completely objective and value free. It invokes an interpretive and naturalistic approach to the world and attempts to understand how people make sense of reality (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 3). The aim of the qualitative researcher is to interpret and construct qualitative aspects of communication experiences (du Plooy, 2009: 30). The inquirer usually

makes knowledge claims based on constructivist perspectives (Creswell, 2003: 18). The research can be conducted in multiple ways through written or spoken language or by observation (Durrheim, 2006: 47). Critical to this approach is the in-depth and open-ended data generated from research.

The aim of a qualitative approach is to understand “the social meaning people attribute to their experiences, circumstances and situations, as well as the meanings people embed into texts and other objects” (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011: 4). Therefore, central to this process is extracting meaning from the data (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011: 4).

This study adopted a qualitative approach because the researcher holds the view that research cannot be objective and politically neutral. Rather, it is acknowledged that the researcher is historically and locally situated in the processes being studied. There is a level of subjectivity that the researcher brings to the process (age, gender, race and class) which influences and shapes the way in which social phenomena are interpreted. Therefore, the researcher plays an active role in the process of generating meaning (Krauss, 2005: 767; Denzin, 2017: 11-12).

In this particular study, the researcher identified as a gender activist. While the idea of femininity and feminism are contested concepts (see chapter 3), the researcher acknowledges the need for structural reform that broadens the role of women in society (particularly women of colour, women from [previously] disadvantaged backgrounds and women living in overtly patriarchal societies). This has influenced the interpretation of the data, although validity and reliability of the study has been ensured through the use of different data sources. This will be addressed latter part of the chapter.

Furthermore, the research analysed a bounded case to give a detailed account of meaning embedded in the data source. The researcher was the primary instrument in the study and attempted provide a thick and rich description of the examined phenomena (Henning, van Rensburg, Smit, 2007/2018: 4).

Research Paradigm

The research approach is closely linked to the paradigm of a study. A paradigm is a basic belief system and worldview that defines the nature of the world for its holder. These views influence the choice of method (gathering evidence), ontology (perception of reality) and epistemology (way of knowing) adopted in a study (Guba and Lincoln, 1994: 105-107; Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011: 4-5). This study is situated in a constructionist paradigm because the central premise of the research is to understand how meaning is constructed.

Unlike [post]positivist paradigms, constructionism positions the researcher as the primary instrument for both collecting and analysing data (Terre Blanche, Kelly and Durrheim, 2006: 276). The paradigm moves away from *ontological* realism towards ontological relativism; therefore, “societies dialectically augment objective reality, by way of institutionalisation and legitimisation, and subjective reality, through socialisation and the development of identity” (Hruby, 2001: 53). The *epistemological* position is rooted in the idea that knowledge is not an impartial truth claim, it is embedded in ideological and political discourse (Aguinaldo, 2004: 129). The *axiological* assumption that characterises constructionism is that the researcher exists in the social world they are studying. Therefore, they must “position-themselves” in relation to the context and the setting of the study (Creswell and Poth, 2018: 21). The *method* of analysis in this study is structuralist semiotics which falls in line with meaning being constructed through social relations (Wahyuni, 2012: 72). This will be elaborated further in the discussion. Most important, is that these beliefs have shaped this dissertation and the way in which the researcher has investigated social phenomena (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 19).

According to James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gabrimum (2011: 341) constructionism is a mosaic of research efforts and is diverse in its philosophical and theoretical bearings, encompassing aspects of constructivism. Although the two are often used interchangeably, they do not share the same meaning. Constructivism holds that the individual constructs views according to their cognitive thoughts and experiences. It assumes that thoughts and feelings originate from the individual (Terre Blanche *et al*, 2006: 278). Constructionism is based on the notion that meaning exists at a social rather than at an individual level. The beliefs and values of an individual derives from a larger discourse. Constructionists insist that realities are not unique to the individual; they are the product of social definitions that are far from equal in status. It is asserted from this perspective that realities are contested, and textual representations are ‘sites of struggle’ (Terre Blanche *et al*, 2006: 278; Chandler, 2007: 65). The research acknowledges this distinction but recognises the extent to which they intersect, thus positioning constructionism in the broader interpretivist paradigm (Holstein and Gabrimum, 2011: 341; Creswell and Poth, 2018: 7).

In the previous chapter it was suggested that power, hegemony and ideology concretise language systems. In this study, the social world is interpreted as a kind of language system of meanings and practices that construct reality. Constructionism postulates a dialectical relationship between subjective and objective reality. According to George G. Hruby (2001: 53), “Identity is formed by social processes. Once crystallised, it is maintained, modified, or

even reshaped by social relations. The social processes involved in both formation and the maintenance of identity are determined by the social structure”. Therefore, while people may actively construct their world, it is not necessarily on their own terms (Holstein and Gubrium, 2011: 342). Central to constructionism is understanding how knowledge is constructed through the constitution of language (Hruby, 2001: 58; Terre Blanche *et al*, 2006: 278).

Case Study Design

The research design needs to connect with the paradigm and the research questions. “The design is the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study’s initial research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusions” (Yin, 1994: 19). The design is a guideline for the study, it is a ‘strategic framework’ (Durrheim, 2006: 35). Although researchers refer to a qualitative design, the application of this relies on a selected design approach. John Creswell and Cheryl Poth (2018: 67) listed five approaches in qualitative research designs: narrative, ethnographic, phenomenological, case study and grounded theory. The design approach for this research is a case study.

Scholars have opposing views on case studies. Robert Stake (2000: 435) asserted that a case study is not a methodology, but a choice of what is to be studied. He stated that it is the method applied to study a case. Other scholars present a case study as a methodology or type of research inquiry (Stake, 2000; Yin, 1994; Creswell and Poth, 2018). This study adopts the position of Creswell and Poth (2018: 96), that a case study is “a methodology, a type of design in qualitative studies, an object of study and a product of the inquiry”. This definition offers a more comprehensive understanding of a case study.

Qualitative case studies are positioned in an interpretivist framework (Baxter and Jack, 2008: 545). They help the researcher explore social phenomena within a given context (Baxter and Jack, 2008: 545). This approach is employed when research seeks to answer ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions, when research focuses on contextual conditions to understand an issue and when the context and the phenomenon of the study are closely linked (Baxter and Jack, 2008: 545). Therefore, an interpretive case study seeks emic meanings held by people within the case (Stake, 2000: 440).

According to Creswell *et al* (2007: 239), case study designs require detailed, descriptive questions that facilitate an in-depth understanding of the unique case - or various cases - to be studied. A descriptive case study provides a contextual explanation of a phenomenon, relying on multiple data sources, rather than an individual source. Cases are situated in a bounded

system or multiple bounded systems (time and place) through which detailed data collection (observations, interviews, audio-visual material and documents) generates a case description and case-based themes (Stake, 2000: 436; Creswell *et al*, 2007: 245; Creswell and Poth, 2018: 97).

Robert Stake (2000: 437-438) claimed that there are three types of case studies. The first category is an intrinsic case study which focusses on a unique event. The aim is to understand the events in the case. The second category is an instrumental case study. The aim of this approach is for the case study to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalisation. Although the case is examined intently, its purpose is to explicate external issues. The third category is a collective case study. This approach is like the instrumental case study but extended to several cases. However, reports on cases do not necessarily fit neatly into any one of the categories. Therefore, Stake (2000: 438) suggested that the three approaches be understood as heuristic rather than deterministic categories.

Robert Yin (1994: 14) claimed that both quantitative and qualitative approaches could use case study designs. He characterised case studies as explanatory, exploratory or descriptive (Baxter and Jack, 2008: 247). Although Yin has three categories, he argued that they serve a pluralistic, rather than unitary function (Yin, 1994: 3). Explanatory case studies seek to explain the complex direction of a cause-and-effect relationship over a longitudinal time frame. Exploratory case studies explore an unknown area of research. The aim is to develop pertinent hypotheses and propositions as part of a pre-test or pilot study. The purpose of a descriptive case study is to accurately describe the characteristics of a phenomenon (Yin, 1994: 15; Baxter and Jack, 2008: 547-548; du Plooy, 2009: 50-52).

Yin (1994: 44-45) also suggested that case studies can be differentiated by single-cases (holistic and embedded units of analysis) or multiple-cases. The holistic and embedded single-case studies mirror Stake's (2000: 437-438) intrinsic and instrumental case studies. The holistic case is limited to an extreme or unique situation. This is comparable with the intrinsic case study. The embedded case study adopts a more global perspective, comparable with an instrumental case study (Baxter and Jack, 2008: 549). The multiple case approach is analogous to collective case studies (2000: 437).

The current research adopted a single, intrinsic, case study approach, with a descriptive objective (Yin, 1994: 45; Stake, 2000: 437; du Plooy, 2009: 51). In this approach, the researcher focusses on an issue or concern which is illustrated in a bounded case study

(Creswell *et al*, 2007: 246). Intrinsic case studies develop thick descriptions of the researched topic. Stake (2000: 440) wrote that: “Much qualitative research is based on a holistic view that social phenomena, human dilemmas, and the nature of cases are situational and influenced by the happenings of many kinds”.

The purpose of this study is to describe the characteristics of the phenomena and the relations between the variables in the sampled episodes of *Uzalo: Blood is Forever* (Season Two). The intrinsic and descriptive approach provides an in-depth account of a case. Therefore, the researcher not only attempted to examine the characterisation of the two matriarchs, but also attempted to identify “patterns, relationships and the dynamic that warrants the inquiry” (Henning, van Rensburg, Smit, 2007/2018: 32). The single, intrinsic approach provided a holistic account of the researched phenomena. This contributed towards the primary objective of the research which was to examine the underlying myths embedded in the character constructions in the soap opera, *Uzalo* (du Plooy, 2009: 51; Henning, van Rensburg, Smit, 2007/2018: 32).

Yin (1994: 8) recommended six types of information collection: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observations and physical artefacts. Although collecting voluminous data ensures rigour, it is also dangerous because it generates overwhelming amounts of information that can become difficult to organise and manage (Baxter and Jack, 2008: 554).

Purposive sampling

The preferred process of sampling in qualitative research is non-random/purposive. The researcher selects participants and sites that inform an understanding of the research problem and phenomenon (Creswell and Poth, 2018: 158). There are several qualitative sampling strategies for locating and recruiting participants depending on the aim of the research. Michael Quinn Patton (cited in Coyne, 1997: 627; Struwig and Stead, 2013: 128-130) provided a comprehensive list of purposive sampling strategies (see Patton, 1990). This study adopted a *criterion sampling* strategy because the case was selected from a set predetermined criterion (Struwig and Stead, 2013: 128-129). Sample size is equally important when choosing a sampling strategy. The selection strategy and size for this study was based on the research design (case study). According to Walcott (2008a) “any case over one dilutes the level of detail a researcher can provide” (cited in Creswell and Poth, 2018: 160).

This study examined a single case, the South African soap opera, *Uzalo: Blood is Forever* (Season Two). This season aired on the public broadcaster - SABC One - in 2016. All episodes were purchased from the SABC in December 2017, thereby giving the researcher ample time to analyse each episode reiteratively. The selection of this soap opera was based on two significant reasons. The first reason is its high audience ratings since its debut on SABC one in February 2015. Figure 4.1 provides a summary of the audience ratings for 2016. The table shows that *Uzalo* had just over 60% of the audience share (see Appendix B). Current ratings from September 2018 reveal that ratings have spiked further, reaching a viewership of 10 million (TVSA blogsite, 2018).

Market	Channel	Target			
National	SABC 1	Adults Age 15+ (Adults Age 15+			
Description (grouped)	Year	Month	AR %	SHR	AR Viewers
UZALO	2016	February	21,2	60,8	7 135 387
		March	22,1	61,4	7 424 930
		April	22,1	61,3	7 435 876
		May	21,4	59,9	7 226 656
		June	22,5	62,6	7 566 667
		July	23,0	63,8	7 753 101
		August	23,0	63,8	7 755 083
		September	22,8	63,0	7 790 898
		October	23,0	64,0	7 843 723
		November	21,2	60,5	7 225 898
		December	22,7	62,1	7 416 774
	2017	January	22,2	62,2	7 578 144
Summary UZALO			22,2	62,1	7 506 629

Figure 4. 1 Audience breakdown of *Uzalo* (season two)

Source: SABC

The second reason for selecting this case study is its location. *Uzalo* is filmed in KwaMashu, a township located 32 kilometres north of Durban, KwaZulu Natal. This is significant because it is the first time that a locally produced soap opera has been filmed and based in KwaZulu Natal. Although KwaZulu Natal is a predominantly isiZulu-speaking province, the language is widely spoken throughout South Africa and the amaZulu group is the largest ethnic group in the country. Furthermore, the language forms part of the Nguni languages (including isiXhosa, Ndebele and SiSwati), thereby making *Uzalo* accessible to a large audience. *Uzalo* also makes use of subtitles.

A detailed audience breakdown (from 2016) revealed that the programme is predominantly viewed by a female audience (58%). However, there is a significant male viewership (42%) (see Appendix B). This is not uncommon for primetime soap operas. For example, the audience

demographic for *Dallas* was nearly one-third male (Allen, 1989/2013: 53). The significance of the audience segmentation in *Uzalo* is that in Season Two the matriarchs, MaNzuza and MaNgcobo, became central characters after the patriarchs exited the text. This is important because most literature indicates that the primary role of women in soap operas is to be a wife and mother. When women do not fulfil this role, they are often characterised negatively (Jordan, 1981; Hobson, 1982; Kilborn, 1992). The director and head writer of *Uzalo* viewed this as an opportunity to adopt a feminist approach to the characterisation of MaNzuza and MaNgcobo which made this an intriguing case study and sample (Onuh, 2016).

Data Collection

Data collection is concerned with who, what, when, where and how data was collected (du Plooy, 2009: 395). Primary data collection is the raw material of the research process. It is original and more focussed than secondary research. There are many ways to collect primary data, for example open-ended interviews, focus group interviews, observation, unobtrusive measures (archival sources) and the internet. Secondary data sources analyse, synthesise and describe primary data, for example government surveys (Reddy and Acharyulu, 2008: 52-56). Primary data was used in this research in the form of an archival source – the television programme, *Uzalo*. FW Struwig and GB Stead (2013: 105) wrote that “these strategies do not involve direct contact with people, but they can provide interesting evidence about cultures, human behaviour and people’s beliefs and attitudes”.

However, there are limitations associated with archival sources, such as bias and the ability to accurately interpret some records. One way to ensure trustworthiness of sources is by using triangulation (using other sources of data as supporting evidence) (Struwig and Stead, 2013: 105). Transcriptions and audio material from an interview with the *Uzalo* production team, Mmamitse Thibedi (producer) and Thuli Zuma (director), and the lead actors, Dawn King (MaNgcobo) and Leleti Khumalo (MaNzuza), were used to triangulate the researcher’s semiotic analysis. The interview transcriptions and audio material were obtained by a CCMS Master’s student, Janet Onuh who also conducted a study on *Uzalo* (see Appendix C).

Data collection was split in two phases. During the first phase, the researcher viewed 156 episodes of *Uzalo*, focussing on the dyadic construction of the lead female characters, MaNzuza and MaNgcobo. General observations were documented in a journal insofar as they related to the binary categorisation.

The second phase narrowed the data to ten episodes, the first five and last five. These episodes were selected because they focussed on the central storyline of the season - the murder of MaNzuza's son, Nkosinathi. The reason for limiting the episodes for analysis was based on time constraints and the study's intensive approach. This approach was applied in previous studies by the Glasgow University Media Group, *More Bad News* (1980) and Jeremy Butler, *Notes on the Soap Opera Apparatus: Televisual Style and "As the World Turns"* (1986) in which a small sample was used to do a micro-analysis of the diegetic segments of the chosen text. Furthermore, it has been suggested that a small sample in a semiotic analysis grants the case study analytical integrity and interest (Rose, 2016: 110).

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a process that often occurs as the research progresses (Struwig and Stead, 2013: 178). According to Sharlene Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy (2011: 302) there is no uniform way of doing data analysis but it requires strong methodological knowledge. Joseph A. Maxwell and Margaret Chmiel (2014: 21) stressed the importance of theorising qualitative data analysis for a better understanding and a more insightful presentation of data.

A key theoretical component of qualitative analysis is the distinction between two types of relationships: those based on similarity and those based on contiguity. In qualitative data analysis, similarities and differences are generally used to group and compare categories. Similarity-based relations use coding as a categorising strategy. Contiguity analysis focusses on the relation or influence among parts of a text; relations are based on seeing connections between things as opposed to seeing similarities or differences. The distinction between similarity and contiguity relations was developed in structuralist linguistics where Ferdinand de Saussure distinguished between associative (similarity-based) and syntagmatic (contiguity-based) relations (Maxwell and Chmiel, 2014: 22-25).

The current research employed a similarity-based approach, also known as an associative/paradigmatic approach. This was achieved by coding categories, which can be defined as "a means of sorting the descriptive data you have collected... so that material bearing on a given topic can be physically separated from other data" (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003: 161 cited in Maxwell and Chmiel, 2014: 24). The objective of the similarity-based approach is akin to Claude Lévi-Strauss' 'paradigmatic' analytic schema which he used to identify binary oppositions in folklorist texts (Lévi-Strauss, 1978). The aim of the associative approach is to find similarities and dissimilarities among paradigms to determine their relative

value (Barthes, 1968: 72). Furthermore, it attempts to understand the underlying law or patterns embedded within the binary oppositions (Fiske, 1990: 115).

Carla Willig (2014: 137-138) suggested two ways in which meaning can be derived from data. The approaches she proposed, was the ‘suspicious’ approach and the ‘empathetic’ approach. The suspicious approach presupposes that phenomena are merely the surface-level manifestations of underlying structures. The empathetic approach, on the other hand, requires the researcher to understand the phenomenon from within the data-set. This approach refrains from importing ideas and concepts from outside the text. Willig (2014: 139) argued that although it may appear that the two approaches are separate, neither of the them can generate a satisfactory interpretive approach. Therefore “it is a combination of the old (in the form of the interpreter’s presuppositions and assumptions which are informed by tradition and received wisdom) and the new (in the form of the text) which makes understanding possible” (Willig, 2014: 140).

The approaches advocated by Willig (2014) are comparable to synchronic and diachronic signs, where the suspicious approach can be likened to a diachronic sign system while the empathetic approach can be likened to a synchronic sign system (see chapter two). This study applied both approaches because although an in-depth analysis of the chosen case study was conducted, the researcher acknowledged that signs do not exist in isolation they are connected to socio-cultural contexts (Barthes, 1972: 115-116). Therefore, although a text such as *Uzalo* encompasses a system of signs tied together to generate meaning (Berger, 2012: 17), the language system is influenced by elements outside the text, including culture, politics and social mores which are equally important to the interpretation of the text.

Data Sifting

Style and diegesis form an integral part of film and television analysis. Elements, including lighting design, camera techniques/framing, dress code/costume, mis-en-scene/setting and characters play a major role in constructing meaning (Metz, 1974; Butler, 2007). For Jeremy Butler (1986: 55) “‘Style’ [...] signifies the *patterning* of techniques, the syntagmatic and paradigmatic relationships of one element to other elements within a textual system”.

The focus on style in this research was to understand its indexical relation to character construction. Butler’s (2007) chapter on television style in *Television: Critical Methods and Applications*, facilitated the creation of six categories used to separate data (Flick, 2014: 23). This included a focus on: (1) the *duration* MaNzuza and/or MaNgcobo appeared in a shot (face

time and voice time); (2) the *character(s)* who appear in the shot with them, (3) their *dress code*, (4) *locality/setting* (including lighting), (5) *mannerism* (body language and voice inflection) and (6) *camera shots* (ideological function). Data was tabulated and analysed according to the selected indices (see Appendix A).

Content Analysis

Content analysis is a visual method intended to interpret language and spoken texts. It incorporates a strict set of rules to ensure rigour. These include selecting, coding, and quantitative analysis of large numbers of images (Rose, 2016: 85). Lutz and Collins (1993: 89) cited in Gillian Rose (2016: 87) stated:

Although at first blush it might appear counterproductive to reduce the rich material in any photograph to a small number of codes, quantification does not preclude or substitute for qualitative analysis of the pictures. It does allow, however, discovery of patterns that are too subtle to be visible on casual inspection and protection against an unconscious search through the magazine for only those which confirm one's initial sense of what the photos say or do.

Content analysis was used to sift through the ubiquitous data as 156 episodes were watched during the first phase of data collection. Although this approach appears simplistic, it requires a technical process. Data was thus separated into organisational categories (see Maxwell and Chmiel, 2014: 25) to support findings. According to Margrit Schreier (2014: 176) content analysis requires the development of a coding frame. Building the coding frame is achieved through structuring and generating data. Structuring refers to creating main categories and generating refers to the creation of subcategories for each main category. Codes assign meaning to the information obtained which can be provided from existing literature and theories (concept-driven) or developed from the current data set (data-driven). A code is a concept that describes what is being said; it can also be understood as the name given to a basic meaning unit. The researcher usually identifies a code by highlighting a word, sentence or paragraph that describes a specific phenomenon. A code should be interpreted in relation to other codes, they are rarely isolated units of meaning. Once codes have been identified, they are grouped into categories which are generally abstract and conceptual (Struwig and Stead, 2013: 179; Schreier, 2014: 176). It must be noted that while developing a coding frame is a rigorous

process (see Struwig and Stead, 2013: 180-181), the researcher only used this to condense the data set into categories which were later interpreted through a semiotic analysis.

The categories selected in the research were both concept-driven and data-driven (Schreier, 2014: 176). The data-driven codes were generated during the first phase of data collection, these included matriarchy, patriarchy, dynasty/family, femininity, children, modernity, tradition, culture, religion, criminality, law, township life, domesticity, morality, depravity, glamour and modesty. The codes were eventually narrowed to six concept-driven categories (*duration; character(s); dress code; locality/setting; mannerism* and *camera shots*) which helped the researcher interpret the frequent generalisations. Previous studies by television scholars (see Glasgow University Media Group, 1980; Butler, 1986; Fiske, 1987) as well as common themes in soap opera literature (see Mulvey, 1975; Modleski, 1979; Brown, 1994; Hobson, 2003) influenced the selection of categories. In the final stage of the research, which formed part of the semiotic analysis, the researcher interpreted the thematic patterns that were generated from the categories to answer the research question(s) (see Chapter five). This process should be reiterative to ensure the rigour of the study (van Rensburg; Smit and Henning, 2007/2018: 107).

Semiotic Analysis

A semiotic analysis was conducted after arranging the data into coded categories. Semiotics was used as a theory and a method of analysis in this study, therefore there will be an engagement of theoretical concepts to support the application process. As discussed in the theory chapter, semiotics is concerned with how meaning is generated and conveyed through conceptual relations. Essential to semiotics is that it takes linguistics as a model and applies it to other phenomena (Berger, 2012: 5). Christian Metz (1974: 107) cautioned against this by stating that: “the concepts of linguistics can be applied to the semiotics of the cinema only with the greatest caution”.

Television codes were analysed in this study; television is a highly complex medium that incorporates verbal language, imagery and sound simultaneously to convey meaning (Berger, 2012: 36-37). The researcher attempted to reveal how layers of encoded meanings are structured into television programmes (Fiske, 1987: 6). The meaning of television signs is determined by a sign system. “The semiotician tries to understand the conventionalised systems controlling a text and postulates how those systems determine the meanings of its signs”

(Butler, 2007: 441). Unlike language, television codes are governed by convention rather than stringent rules (Seiter, 1992: 36).

A semiotic analysis entails the arrangement of a set of concepts that produce a detailed account of how meanings of an image are produced (Rose, 2016: 106). Meaning derives from the combination and contrast of signs (Butler, 2007: 441). The sign is the union of the *signifier* and *signified*, it is the associative total of the two terms (Barthes, 1968: 38; Barthes, 1972: 111). The signifier is the form the sign takes while the signified is the mental concept of the sign (see Chapter 2). The dyadic structure is integral to Saussure's tradition of semiotics because signs generate meaning from their opposition and differentiation to other signs in the language system. Signs, therefore, function through their relative position and not their intrinsic value. Because the relationship between signifiers and signifieds is arbitrary, sign values constantly change (Berger, 2012: 8-10).

Understanding myth

Roland Barthes (1968;1972) expanded on the dyadic model by incorporating the socio-historical context to Saussure's text-based theory (see Chapter 2). Barthes argued that studying the form of signs does not contradict the necessary principles of totality and history. He contended that "the more a system is specifically defined in its forms, the more amenable it is to historical criticism" (Barthes, 1972: 111). For Barthes (1968: 93) signs are not ahistorical; as the language system evolves, the substance and form of signs evolve too. The role of the semiotician (researcher) is to illustrate how the signifiers in the second-order of the sign system conceal the signs of the first order (Barthes, 1968: 94).

It is important at this point to introduce the role of denotation and connotation in a semiotic analysis. As discussed in chapter two, denotation describes the relationship between the signifier and the signified in the first order of signification. However, televisual denotation is a coded process encompassing iconic, indexical and symbolic signs simultaneously. Connotation comprises second order signifiers which comprise the signs of the denotative system. The role of connotation is to attach cultural meanings to signs (Barthes, 1968: 91; Berger, 2012: 19).

A great deal of media analysis involves discovering the connotations of objects and symbolic phenomena and of the actions and the dialogue of the characters in texts – that is, the meanings these may have for audiences – and

tying these meanings to social, cultural, ideological and other concerns (Berger, 2012: 20).

The quote by Arthur Asa Berger (2012) contextualises the aim of the current study. It is through analysing second order signs that the true meaning of phenomena is revealed. Integral to this is understanding that myths can be viewed from two points, as the final term of the linguistic system, or as the first term of the mythical system. On the language plane, Barthes called the signifier *meaning*. On the plane of myth, he called the signifier *Form*. In the case of the signified, there is no ambiguity, thus it is referred to as *concept*. Barthes's conceptualisation of the relationship between *meaning* and *form* is particularly significant because he argued that *meaning* retains elements of the signifier, while the function of *form* is to impoverish the meaning of the signifier, thereby encouraging the myth-consumer to internalise the system of signification as fact (Barthes, 1972: 113-116).

It must be remembered that connotative instances on television are superimposed over denotative meanings. Therefore, the role of second order signs is central to the analysis because connotation and myth influence the way we think about people, places, products and ideas (Bignell, 1997/2002: 16). More importantly, Barthes established a link between myth and ideology which is actualised through the institutionalisation of meaning (Fiske and Hartley, 1978/1996: 40; Fiske, 1990: 76/176).

The work of Claude Lévi-Strauss is also significant to the role of mythology. He attempted to understand the underlying laws behind the set attitudes found in particular societies by reducing the constituents of mythic thought into relational bundles (Lévi-Strauss, 1978: 2; Barbosa de Almeida, 2015: 628). Unlike Barthes, Lévi-Strauss stressed the importance of understanding signs within their synchronic structure by arranging them into paradigmatic units (Lévi-Strauss, 1978: 17-18). This structure is premised on opposition where each constituent is defined in relativity to other units in the sign system to ascertain recurrent patterns. The simplification of the mythic structure makes them appear natural. The paradigms can only serve two functions, they can either possess positive or negative value in relation to each other (Fiske, 1990: 115). In this sense, Lévi-Strauss's conceptualisation of myth was scientific because he attempted to understand the coded messages of myths by reducing them to their most basic units (Lévi-Strauss, 1978: 3; Berger, 2012: 28).

Central to Lévi-Strauss's conceptualisation of myth is the paradigmatic analysis of signs. As discussed in the theory chapter, signs exist on two planes, the first is the syntagmatic plane

which can be defined as “a (varied) combination of (recurrent) signs” (Barthes, 1968: 62). The second is the paradigmatic plane which can be defined as selected signs used to complete the sequence of the syntagm (Fiske and Hartley, 1978; 2004: 34). This study focussed on the paradigmatic plane to establish an understanding of the character constructions in *Uzalo*. The reason for this is that paradigms are closely related to language (*langue*) while syntagms are closely related to speech (*parole*) (Barthes, 1968: 59). Although neither language nor speech can exist without the other, the nature of language exists beyond the manifestation of each speech, thus functioning as “a social institution and a system of values” (Barthes, 1968: 13; Hawkes, 1977: 9). Therefore, the paradigmatic units assisted the researcher to unearth the latent messages embedded in the text. On the other hand, Barthes’s conceptualisation of myth helped the researcher marry the signs in the text with their socio-cultural associations.

Application

One of the most challenging aspects of conducting a semiotic analysis is that television does not conventionally breakdown into discrete units of meaning like language. In other words, it has no equivalent of an alphabet. The closest television has come to identifying its smallest unit is through Herbert Zettl’s technological definition of the frame. Zettl’s definition (cited in Seiter, 1992: 31) explained that: “a complete scanning cycle of the electrobeam occurs every 1/20 second which represents the smallest complete television picture unit”. This definition does not account for elements of denotation and connotation. Christian Metz therefore identified five channels of communication, the *image, written language, voice, music* and *sound effects* which he argued must be analysed at the level of the shot (Seiter, 1992: 33). Ellen Seiter (1987: 24), introduced more terms to the vocabulary of semiotic, including *channel, code, paradigmatic, syntagmatic, connotation, denotation, synchronic, diachronic*. The current study did not analyse each shot. Instead, the researcher separated the codes into vertical sets of signs (paradigms) and combined them according to certain syntagmatic rules based on the characterisation of the matriarchs (Fiske and Hartley, 1978: 41).

According to John Fiske (1987: 5), televisual codes exist at three levels. Level one comprises ‘reality’ (denotative elements), including the appearance, make-up, environment, behaviour, speech, gesture, expression and sound of characters. At the denotative level, signs are highly motivated (iconic/indexical); they are clear and obvious, closely resembling external reality. Level two comprises ‘representation’ (connotative elements), including, camera, lighting, editing, music and sound. The signs are less motivated than the signs in level one but more motivated than symbolic signs (indexical). Signs are encoded electronically by technical codes

which transmit the conventional representational codes that shape the representation of narrative, conflict, character, action, dialogue and setting. Finally, level three comprises the 'ideological codes' which are usually characterised by class, race and gender. These signs are arbitrary (symbolic); the viewer must be aware of the social and cultural codes expressed in the text because they are less obvious than the iconic and indexical signs. The process of making sense of the characters requires constant movement between the three levels because meaning can only be determined when 'reality', 'representation' and 'ideology' merge into a seemingly natural unity (Fiske, 1987: 6). However, codes are dynamic, they evolve over time which can make it difficult for the analyst to determine where a paradigmatic unit ends and the syntagmatic chain begins (Fiske and Hartley, 1978: 41; Seiter, 1992: 33).

The paradigmatic approach is concerned with what characters mean as opposed to what they do, therefore it relies on searching for binary oppositions in the text to establish relations (Berger, 2012: 27-28). To assist this process, Barthes (1968: 65) suggested the need for a commutation test. The commutation test serves two functions. The first is to identify significant differences, or distinctive features, within a paradigm or syntagm, the second function is to help the semiotician understand the significance of why signs are produced the way they are (Fiske, 1990: 110).

Uzalo is premised on dyadic paradigms, thus the features of the paradigms are obvious. The more challenging role was to identify the underlying meaning governing the character constructions. The characterisation of the matriarchs is based on an oppositional relationship between their respective dynasties. Figure 4. 2 indicates the dyadic categorisation of the principal characters in the season. It is evident in the illustration that characters either fall within the paradigm of good or evil. These two worlds are articulated through good, symbolised by the Kingdom of Canaan Church. MaNzuza (the ex-wife of Pastor Melusi Mdletshe) is at the helm of the Mdletshe dynasty which is synonymous with piety, morality, law enforcement and modesty. The world of evil is symbolised through crime. MaNgcobo (the wife of the convicted criminal, Muzi Xulu) is at the helm of the Xulu dynasty which is synonymous with gangsterism, glamour and corruption. It is therefore simple for the audience to determine the oppositional units within the text because each dynasty represents the antithesis of the other. These relations will be explained further in the interpretation of the data.

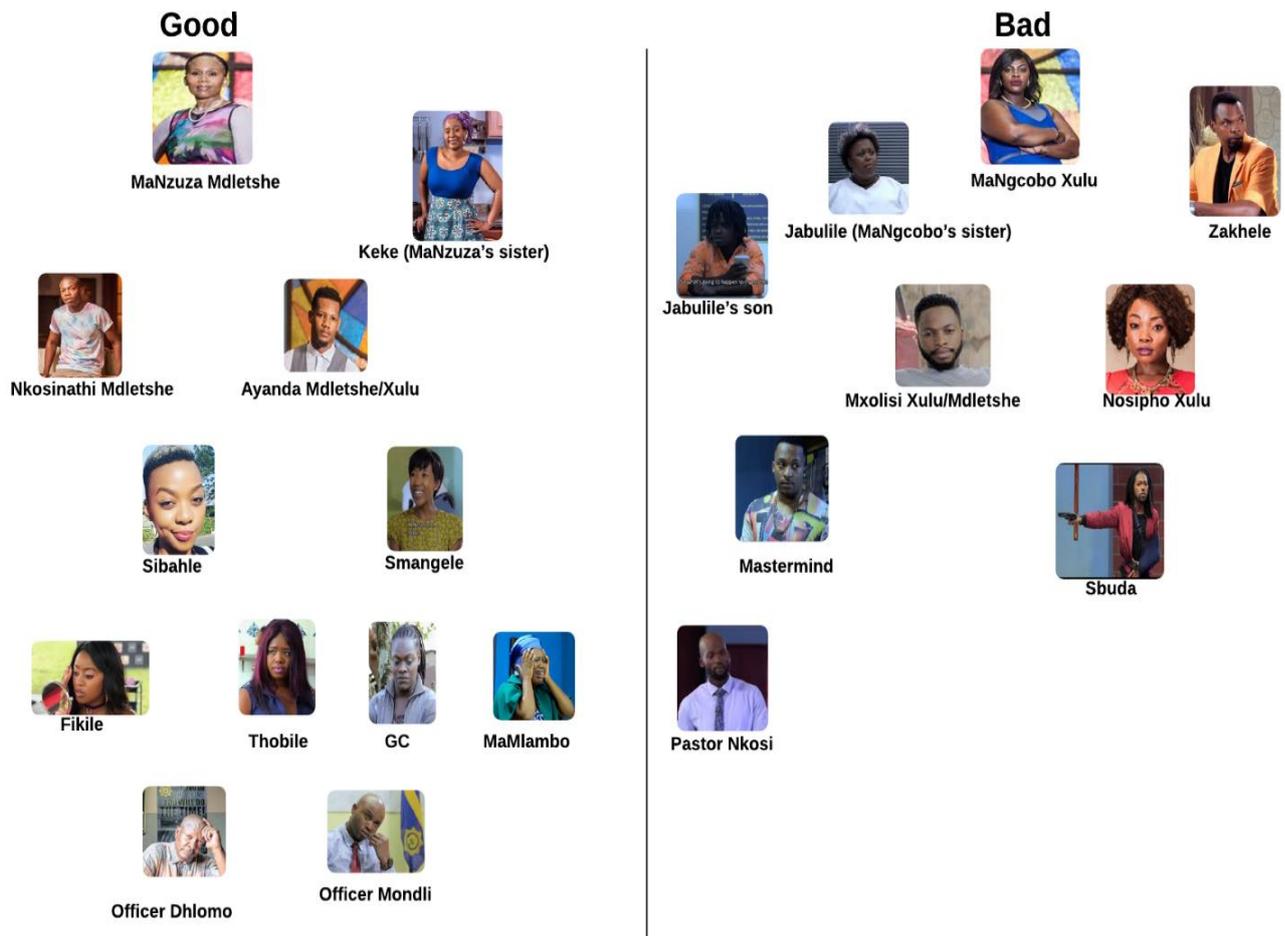


Figure 4. 2 *Uzalo* cast, season two

Source: *Uzalo*, Season Two, Episodes (SABC/Stained Glass Production, 2016)

It is impossible for a researcher to capture every aspect of semiotics in a single study. Therefore, a checklist for semiotic analysis of television, designed by Arthur Asa Berger (2012: 37-38) was used to facilitate the process.

A Checklist for Semiotic Analysis of Television	
1.	Isolate and analyse the important signs in the text <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the important signifiers and what do they signify? • What is the system that gives these signs meaning? • What codes can be found?
2.	Discuss the ideological and sociological matters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the paradigmatic structure of the text? • What is the central opposition of the text? • What paired oppositions fit under the various categories? • Do these oppositions have psychological or social import?
3.	What is the syntagmatic structure of the text? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which of Propp's functions can be applied to the text? • How does the sequential arrangement of elements affect meaning? • Are there formulaic aspects that have shaped the text?
4.	How does the medium of television affect the text? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of shots, camera angles and editing techniques are used? • How is lighting, colour, music and sound used to give meaning to signs?
5.	What contributions have theorists made that can be applied? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What have theorists in semiotics written that can be applied to the analysis? • What have media theorists written that can be applied to semiotics?

Figure 4. 3 Semiotic analysis checklist

Source: (Berger, 2012: 37-38)

Trustworthiness and credibility

Despite the involvement of the researcher in qualitative inquiry, the work must demonstrate credibility. According to Golafshani (2003: 600) “while the credibility of quantitative studies depends on instrument scores, in qualitative studies the researcher is the instrument. Therefore, the credibility of qualitative research depends on the efforts of the researcher” (Golafshani, 2003: 600). The challenge with qualitative research is to ensure that the interpretation is not biased. This is difficult since qualitative paradigms assume that reality is socially constructed (Creswell and Miller, 2000: 125).

There are diverse interpretations of qualitative trustworthiness (Creswell and Miller, 2000: 124). The two recurring concepts in the literature is reliability and validity. “Validity is a process whereby [sic] the researcher earns the confidence of the reader that he or she has got it right” (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011: 48). However, validity is a contested term in social constructionist approaches because it does not account for multiple perspectives, it assumes a universal truth. Therefore, validity in this context can be understood as a process of interrogation that necessitates multiple and sometimes contradictory readings, thereby negotiating the practice of power (Aguinaldo, 2004: 130). Reliability is concerned with consistency in the researcher’s observations as well as cross-checking and verifying data by looking at divergent sources (Hesse-Biber, 2011: 52).

David Sless (1986: 55) argued that the issue with the researcher’s [single] lens is that it produces a dominant reading position. Sless was specifically referring to the structuralist semiotician Roland Barthes (1972) who, he contended, assumed an authoritative reading of texts like the photograph on the front cover of the *Paris Match* in his publication, *Mythologies* (see Barthes, 1972). By doing this, Barthes denied alternative reading positions (Sless, 1986: 58). The role of the semiotician is to reveal the structure of messages and how these hidden structures shape and influence ideology and people’s political views. Sless wrote: “the sad irony is that Barthes’s critical rejection of French bourgeois values adopts the same imperialist posture that he finds so offensive” (Sless, 1986: 46).

The researcher employed [data]triangulation as a validity strategy to address the concerns raised by Sless (1986). Triangulation makes use of two different methods to answer the same research question and looks for convergence in the findings. Data triangulation uses different data sources (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011: 51). The researcher transcribed and analysed the audio material obtained from an interview with two *Uzalo* producers, Mmamitse Thibedi and Thuli Zuma, and the two matriarchs, MaNzuza (Leleti Khumalo) and MaNgcobo (Dawn King). The material was obtained from a colleague at CCMS who conducted a similar study for her master’s dissertation (Onuh, 2016).

The researcher re-transcribed the audio material to gain a contextual and accurate understanding of the three interviews. The data was subsequently categorised according to emergent themes based on the research questions and evident themes in the literature review. This process was followed by cross-referencing the two data sources to see if there was

convergence among the themes ascertained in the researcher's semiotic analysis and the interviews.

Scholars have varied opinions on the use of reliability in qualitative research. Some scholars have argued that reliability is a consequence of validity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 292; Patton cited in Golafshani, 2003), while other scholars view reliability as a purely quantitative approach (Van der Riet and Durrheim, 2006: 93). The way reliability was ensured in this study was by systematically recording data sources in a thorough and comprehensive way. Moreover, the researcher reiteratively compared research findings with existing literature.

It is apparent in the literature that the open-ended and interpretive nature of qualitative research makes researcher reflexivity an extremely valuable and necessary part of a qualitative study. Gillian Rose (2016: 108) argued that most semiotic readings are polluted with subjectivity. It is thus important to acknowledge that our thoughts, feelings and experiences are products of systems of meaning that exist at both a social and an individual level which influence our understanding of the social world (Terre Blanche, Kelly and Durrheim, 2006: 278). Creswell and Miller (2000: 127) therefore proposed that researchers acknowledge their beliefs and biases early in the research process to allow readers to understand their position. However, the researcher will always have a privileged and powerful position in the research process. It is thus important for the researcher to constantly self-reflect throughout the process and to refer to multiple data sources to ensure validity and reliability (Morrow, 2007: 216)

Social constructionism underpins the beliefs and assumptions of this study. The position undertaken by the researcher is that "social reality is constructed through the dialectical relationship between society and the individual and the interactive emergence of social constructions of both reality and identity" (Hruby, 2001: 53). Therefore, the social world can only be interpreted as a kind of language, a system of meanings and practices that construct reality. (Terre Blanche et al, 2006: 279).

It is acknowledged that not everybody shares the same understanding of their social reality and that meanings are variable across contexts of human interaction (Van der Riet and Durrheim, 2006: 91). The research accounted for this by applying the encoding/decoding model developed by Stuart Hall (1973/1993). Hall agreed that messages are polysemic but contested the linear approach used to interpret messages. He argued that the preferred hegemonic reading is not the only way messages can be decoded. Hall advanced three reading positions, the dominant, the negotiated and the oppositional position. The first of the three refers to a reading position that

is aligned to the preferred meaning encoded by the message producers. The negotiated position may disagree with the hegemonic position but does not actively contest this position. The oppositional position completely disregards the message advanced by the preferred meaning (Hall, 1973/1993: 515-517).

The purpose of the study was not necessarily to analyse the preferred reading of the narrative but to explore the underlying meanings encoded in the text. These underlying messages in the text may be understood through the different reading positions postulated by Hall (1973/1993: 515-517).

Limitation to the study

One of the limitations of this study is its narrowed focus on the text. The research would have been more balanced if there were more people interpreting the signs, particularly regular viewers of *Uzalo*. Although subjectivity is accepted in qualitative inquiry, it can pollute the interpretation of data. Semiotics has been criticised for being too subjective.

The purely textual nature of the approach limits findings to the researcher's reading and limits perspectives that may differ (Chandler, 2007: 222-223). However, triangulation was used to avoid a singular reading. Also, time constraints restricted the possibility for the research to use more episodes. Finally, the inferences cannot be generalised or replicated as in the case of most qualitative approaches because the sample was small, and the case study was specific.

Furthermore, there is no universal format to conduct a semiotic analysis, particularly a semiotic analysis of a television programme. This presented a major challenge because television uses a complex set of codes, making it difficult to identify a basic unit of analysis since signs at the denotative level operate simultaneously (at the level of icon, index and symbol). The researcher attempted to solve this problem by being as rigorous as possible; but it must be stressed that the role of qualitative research is not to produce replicable research. The aim of this study, instead, was to use a single case study to highlight a social phenomenon.

Conclusion

This chapter positioned the study in a social constructionist paradigm which determined the philosophical underpinnings of the research, dictating the approach and data collection methods used. A discussion on the descriptive and intrinsic nature of the case study design was expounded to explain the parameters of the research. A detailed account of the method of data collection and analysis was discussed, along with the study's limitations which was equally addressed. The following section will provide an interpretation of the data to answer the

research questions and to gain an understanding of the structuralist semiotic approach in the case study, *Uzalo*.

Data Analysis

Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the methods employed in this study. This included a discussion on the research paradigm, the design and the methods of data collection and analysis. This chapter will attempt to generate a deeper understanding of the meaning(s) contained in the data to answer the primary research question detailed in chapter one. For a more conceptual understanding of the findings, this section will draw from previous chapters, including the theoretical framework and the literature review.

The interpretation will reference the ten analysed episodes of *Uzalo* (the first five and the last five), along with interview transcripts from a study conducted by a colleague at the Centre for Communications and Media in Society (CCMS), Janet Onuh, whose Master's research⁵ was based on a similar topic.

Philosophical Position

The interpretation of the data was developed from the researcher's epistemological and philosophical position (Willig, 2014: 137). The dissertation is a marriage between the different conceptual and empirical components embedded in the study. The choice of theory (structuralist semiotics) underpinned the method (semiotic analysis). Both theory and method attach meaning to shared understanding of phenomena. This is further linked to the constructionist paradigm which asserts that language is situated in a shared vocabulary of meaning (Krauss, 2005: 759).

Furthermore, the researcher holds the view that knowledge is not an impartial truth claim because what we know is rooted in political and ideological discourses (Aguinaldo, 2004: 129). The underlying view in this study is that meaning is socially constructed through codes and conventions maintained by institutionalised ideologies. For conventions to be successful, codes must be agreed by members of a group, society or culture within which they are located (Fiske and Hartley, 1978: 42). The function of ideology is to interpellate individuals as subjects into cultural and institutional structures (Barbosa de Almeida, 2015: 627). The researcher is not absolved from this process because she/he is located within the complexity of the phenomena

⁵ Onuh, J. (2017) [The Representation of Matriarch in South African Soap Opera: A case study of Uzalo](#), MSS, University of KwaZulu Natal. [Online]. Accessed 23 November, 2018.

they are researching and cannot be detached from the influence of ideology (see chapter one/four).

The case context

Uzalo is based on the contestation of two dynasties originally headed by the patriarchs, Melusi Mdletshe - a pastor at the Kingdom of Canaan Church and Muzi Xulu – the owner of Xulu panel beaters. The two families are immersed in contradictory worlds of church and crime; these two worlds symbolise good and evil (SABC Website, 2018). In season two, the matriarchs rise from their supportive roles to head their households. In doing this, they were forced to deal with the challenges their families faced. Furthermore, season one of the soap opera ended with a cliffhanger, the revelation that Ayanda Mdletshe and Mxolisi Xulu, were switched at birth, thus threatening the dyadic relationship between the dynasties. The matriarchs were forced to grapple with this difficult discovery without their husbands because Muzi ‘Gxabashe’ Xulu was sentenced to a lifelong prison sentence, while Melusi Mdletshe ran away from Kwa Mashu after finding out that Ayanda and Mxolisi were switched at birth. For the producers, this afforded *Uzalo* the opportunity to explore the role of single mothers as well as the freedom to develop a ‘feminist’ narrative that could be used to challenge patriarchal discourses (Zuma and Thibedi Interview, 2016).

The ten episodes selected for analysis captured the transition of the women into their leadership positions, yet it also highlighted their perils. The first challenge was digesting the news that both MaNzuza and MaNgcobo had mistakenly reared their arch-nemesis’ son for twenty-one years. This bleeds into the main story-arc of season two which was principally about the death of MaNzuza’s younger son, Nkosinathi, who was accidentally murdered by his biological brother, Mxolisi Xulu, and MaNgcobo. MaNgcobo forced Mxolisi to bury Nkosinathi’s body beneath her office at Xulu panel beaters because she believed that reporting Nkosinathi’s death to the police would ruin her family. Her decision to not report Nkosinathi’s accidental death to the police solidified her position as a villainess. However, this decision was made to protect her children as MaNgcobo knew that if she reported the incident both she and Mxolisi would go to prison, leaving Nosipho on her own. The complexity of this decision was captured in scene one, episode four (see Appendix A).

MaNzuza, on the other hand, attempted to establish a relationship with Mxolisi. She hoped that he would turn his back on the nefarious lifestyle he was immersed in with the Xulu family. MaNzuza is also protective of her family and is thrilled that Nkosinathi was excepted to study

Biokinetics at the University of Cape Town (UCT). Nkosinathi was killed on the eve of his journey to Cape town. MaNzuza had no idea that Mxolisi was directly involved in Nkosinathi's death. When she eventually learnt the truth about Nkosinathi's passing in the final episode, it resulted in her running over MaNgcobo with her car as well as shooting Mxolisi in his right shoulder.

Uzalo, in this sense, not only experimented with the possibilities of the two worlds playing against each other but also explored the idea of the two worlds blurring. Thuli Zuma, director of *Uzalo*, revealed in an interview with Janet Onuh that:

Like, uhm, we really wanted characters who were more than just one thing. So, uhm, uLindiwe is the gangster, right? She's... the villain, your big mafia boss. Zandile, is very, she is very obviously your church mother; but within that, like we set the convention, that's what it is [sic] [...] what about a gangster, when you look at it, can belong in a church? And, what about a woman at a church, when you look at it, looks like it could belong in the gangster world? So, their ends are very clear [...] but the means is sometimes where the lines get blurred (Zuma, 2016).

This is in agreement with the claim by Dorothy Hobson (1982/2003: 106) that "as in 'real' life, people are more complex than merely being good or bad, hero or villain; they are not that simple". *Uzalo* therefore attempted to add nuance to the binary characterisation of MaNzuza and MaNgcobo. This illustrates an argument purported by Claude Lévi-Strauss who contended that separating phenomena into simplistic binaries ignores the complexity of reality which make myths appear as if they are natural (Fiske, 1990: 115). It may be argued that by examining the underlying patterns in the text, the semiotician is able to establish the text's latent meaning.

The single, intrinsic case study provided a holistic description of the events that occurred in the examined episodes. It illuminated specific instances relevant to the research questions and objectives (Poht and Creswell, 2018: 247). During the data collection phase (see Appendix A), the researcher detailed the events in the first five and last five episodes, focussing only on the scenes in which MaNzuza and MaNgcobo appeared. The central focus was the dyadic characterisation of the women in relation to their dynastic function. The researcher observed whether the stylistic and diegetic elements in the text, such as lighting, camera techniques, dress code/costumes and mise-en-scene influenced the characterisation of MaNzuza and MaNgcobo. Furthermore, the study attempted to examine how the two matriarchs reconciled

the absent patriarchs of which the dynasties are premised. This left the matriarchs to deal with the consequences of the discovery.

The aim of this was to ascertain whether the matriarchs are independent characters or merely manifestations of the absent patriarchs, thereby compromising the ability of the producers to construct a ‘feminist’ narrative/discourse. Mmamitse Thibedi expressed that:

It was our decision to explore women from the context of their own strength as opposed to the context of who they are when they are supporting men (Zuma and Thibedi Interview, 2016).

Figures 5.1 and 5.1.2 below offer a summarised description of the findings from the data collection. The information was separated into three categories - icon, index and symbol - which is based on the discussion of the semiotic analysis in the methodology chapter. Recurrent themes from the surveyed literature, theory and raw data were selected, these included *matriarchs, family, dress-code, mise-en-scene, camera shots, lighting* and *music/sound*. Figure 5.1.1 describes the characteristics associated with MaNzuza, while figure 5.1.2 describes the characteristics associated with MaNgcobo.

	ICONIC	INDEXICAL	SYMBOLIC
Matriarch	MaNzuza	She is the head of the Mdletshe dynasty (the ex-wife of Melusi Mdletshe). She is a loving mother who will do anything for her children. She is reserved and modest, but steadfast in her moral convictions which are based on her Christian values	morality
Family	Ex-wife of Melusi Mdletshe. Ayanda, Nkosinathi and Mxolisi are her children Samukelisiwe and “Keke” is her sister	She is a devoted mother and sister. She is the central figure in her family	Motherhood
Dress code	Wears long dresses with a long, soft material blouse underneath. She often wears stockings with her attire. Does not wear pants/trousers. Minimal make-up. Her hair is usually short and kept above shoulder length. She wraps her hair in a scarf particularly when mourning her son – Nkosinathi	MaNzuza is conservative and committed to her strong values which are informed by her Christian beliefs	Conservative
Mise-en-scene	Domestic setting: The interior of the house is painted lavender with shades of red in the decor. There are family pictures and paintings decorated around the house. There is a crucifix on the table in the hallway. Kingdom of Canaan Church: The church has stained glass windows with a few rows of pews	The domestic setting highlights her role as a mother and homemaker. The crucifix is indicative of her Christian beliefs which is actualised in her role as mother of the church	Modest
Camera shots	Principally uses close-up and medium close-up shots. Camera is usually held at eye level	These shots capture dialogue and show characters’ emotions in realistic/natural settings	Natural
Lighting	Predominant use of three-point lighting of varying intensity (key light; fill light and back light), soft lighting and high-key lighting	Indicates normalcy and stasis because of its predominant use in soap operas and sitcoms	Normalcy
Music/Sound	Predominant use of major chords during musical interludes	Major chords usually indicate happiness/goodness	Happiness/heroine

Figure 5.1. 1 Summary of MaNzuza’s characteristics

	ICONIC	INDEXICAL	SYMBOLIC
Matriarch	MaNgcobo	Matriarch/Head of the Xulu dynasty (her husband Muzi Xulu is serving a lengthy prison sentence). Protective of her children at all cost. Defies patriarchy through her dress code and her mannerisms. Involved in the criminal world. However, she does perform traditional Zulu rituals	Criminality
Family	Ex-wife of Muzi Xulu (Gxabashe). Mxolisi, Nosipho and Ayanda are her Children and Jabulile is her sister	She is a devoted wife and mother who will do anything for her family	Motherhood
Dress code	Long hair extensions, false eye lashes, lots of make-up. She usually wears high heel shoes. She also wears pants/trousers and blouses and dresses with elaborate patterns	MaNgcobo is a modern woman who constantly challenges traditional (Zulu) patriarchal values	Modern
Mise-en-scene	Domestic setting. The house is a double storey with modern fixtures. The interior of the house has shades of brown and metallic colours. Xulu panel beaters' is painted dark grey with a painting of car situated behind the office desk. The office does not have any operational items. There are a few cars and tools at the panel beaters	The domestic setting highlights her role as a mother. Her presence at Xulu panel beaters is indicative of her commitment to provide for her family's financial needs, while protecting their luxurious lifestyle	Domestic/Xulu Panel beaters
Camera shots	Close-up, medium close-up and Extreme close-up shots (ECU)	These shots capture dialogue and the characters' innermost emotions. ECUs can be used in hostile situations. The viewer can see through the lies of the villain	Hostile
Lighting	Predominant use of low-key lighting and hard lighting	This type of lighting usually indicates oppositional or deviant values	Disequilibrium
Sound/music	Predominant use of minor chords and staccato notes and percussion instruments	Minor chords are indicative of despair	Melancholy/Villainess

Figure 5.1. 2 Summary of MaNgcobo's characterisation

Denotation

At the denotative level signs reveal the perceptual similarity between the signifiers and signifieds (Metz, 1974: 108-109). The denoted meaning comprises elements akin to Fiske's (1987: 5) discussion of the first level of televisual codes, 'reality' (see chapter four). This level is characterised by conventional signs that are easily identifiable to the sign-reader because of their iconicity (Fiske and Hartley, 1987/1996: 44). Therefore, the notion of reality is heightened because of the realistic portrayal of events in the text (Fiske and Hartley, 1978/1996: 45). Under the iconic heading is a description of the signifiers associated with MaNzuza, Figure 5.1.1 and MaNgcobo, Figure 5.1.2. Barthes (1968: 48) explained that:

The classification of the signifiers is nothing but the structuralisation proper of the system. What has to be done is to cut up the 'endless' message constituted by the whole of the messages emitted at the level of the studied corpus, into minimal significant units by means of the commutation test, then to group these units into paradigmatic classes, and finally to classify the syntagmatic relations which link these units.

The denotative signifiers in figures 5.1.1 and 5.1.2 were selected according to Barthes's quote. Although ten episodes were sampled for the analysis, the researcher watched 156 episodes from season two (the entire season). The signifiers are a product of the structuralisation process in which the researcher identified recurrent traits associated with each matriarch. The characteristics formed the signifiers of the denotative level which is detailed in the iconic column of both tables, including dress code, family members, description of the mise-en-scene and the technicalities (camera shots, lighting and music/sound). The iconography helped the analyst understand the characterisation of the characters. The signifiers in figures 5.1.1 and 5.1.2 highlight the differences between the two characters. It is clear from the iconic signifiers that the matriarchs are constructed in opposition to each other.

Television images

To understand television images, it is important to recognise the conventions of representation. Representation forms the second level of Fiske's (1987: 5) television codes. The function of representational codes is for the viewer to become so accustomed to them that they seem natural, like symbolic signs in language. It is therefore important for the sign-reader to understand that although iconic signs appear as the most logical way to signify aspects of the world, they are a product of social convention (Seiter, 1992: 27). The purpose of television is

to function as if it is unmediated and natural, yet every element in the narrative is intentional and embedded within an ideological system (Fiske, 1987: 24).

Televsual images are complex because first-order signs morph into second-order signs making it difficult to isolate the difference between denotative and connotative messages. For Seiter (1992: 28), television images are indexical because although they are motivated, the signs carry connotative messages. This is evident in *Uzalo* where iconic signs imbue indexical and symbolic meanings. For example, MaNzuza's dress code was indexical of her conservative values and her religious beliefs, which was reflective of her symbolic role as a heroine. MaNgcobo's dress code, on the other hand, was indexical of her non-conformist and glamorous lifestyle, which was reflective of her symbolic role as a villainess. These signs are further complicated by technical codes, such as camera shots and music/sound which shaped the representations of narrative, conflict, character and setting (Fiske, 1987: 5). The simultaneous operation of denotation and connotation contributed towards signs being loaded with multiple meanings (Hartley, 1982: 26).

The researcher has used images from *series two, episode four* to explicate the denotative signs used to construct the dyadic characterisation of the matriarchs. This is important as it provides a context for the characterisation of the matriarchs through which the meanings associated with them is imbued. This will also illustrate the challenge of isolating first-order signs from second-order signs as images are multi-layered. Images from episode four were selected because they reinforce the dyadic relationship between the two dynasties. Furthermore, this episode sets the tone for the entire season as the main story-arc is the death of Nkosinathi.



Figure 5.2 1 Mxolisi and MaNgcobo leaning over Nkosinathi's lifeless body



Figure 5.2 2 MaNgcobo and Mxolisi standing around a metal drum



Figure 5.2 3 MaNgcobo and Mxolisi standing around a metal drum

Source: Uzalo, Season Two, Episode Four (SABC/Stained Glass Production, 2016)

It must be remembered that in film and television there is a whole semiotics of denotation. According to Christian Metz (1974: 98-99) denotation is codified. This is attributed to the perceptual similarity in visual and aural analogy between the signifier and the signified (Metz, 1974: 108-109).

In figure 5.2.1 MaNgcobo and Mxolisi are kneeling over Nkosinathi's blood-stained body. The lighting is not clear, the viewer can only see the silhouettes of both characters. There is a window behind them which protrudes minimal light allowing the viewer to witness what has happened. MaNgcobo and Mxolisi are looking at each other; it is clear that something has gone wrong because they both appear disconcerted. There is text that accompanies the image; Mxolisi says to MaNgcobo: "I'm going to call the cops" to which she responds "And say what?", which further indicates that something bad has happened. There is a red tool box located next to Nkosinathi's bloody corpse. This only makes sense when the viewer sees that the sharp object that killed Nkosinathi is from the tool box. At a denotative level, inferences can be made about the place (Xulu panel beaters), the characters (MaNgcobo, Mxolisi and Nkosinathi) and the relationship between the characters (the fact that Nkosinathi is dead and MaNgcobo and Mxolisi have something to do with his death). At this point it is premature to discuss the lighting or the lack of colour saturation evident in figure 5.2.1 to 5.2.3 as this forms part of the connotative analysis.

For avid viewers of *Uzalo*, they are well aware of what is happening in the scene because they have witnessed the build-up. Although what has occurred is seemingly evil, the viewer is aware that it was an accident. Nonetheless, the choice to bury Nkosinathi's body was a selfish decision. Yet, the viewer is reminded that the reason for not reporting the incident is based on the fact that Nosipho would be left alone. Therefore, while an evil deed was done, MaNgcobo had good intentions which is concretised by her primary role to protect her family (children).

In figures 5.2.2 and 5.2.3 MaNgcobo and Mxolisi are standing around a metal drum with a fire burning. MaNgcobo is holding a wooden plank. Mxolisi is standing on the opposite side of the metal drum watching MaNgcobo with the plank in her hand. He has his hands in his pocket; the side of his face is stained with blood. It is also evident that they have changed their clothes because what they are wearing in figure 5.2.2 and 5.2.3 is different from what they were wearing in figure 5.2.1



Figure 5.2 4 MaNzuza standing in the kitchen



Figure 5.2 5 MaNzuza sitting on her bed reminiscing

Source: Uzalo, Season Two, Episode Four. (SABC/Stained Glass Production, 2016)

In figure 5.2.4 MaNzuza is standing in the kitchen opposite Ayanda. The word ‘kitchen’ denotes a space reserved for cooking and eating. The sign of the kitchen is reinforced by signifiers commonly associated with the space, including oven mittens, kitchen cupboards, the oven light, the food on the table, the pots on the stove and the apron MaNzuza is wearing over her clothes.

In figure 5.2.5 MaNzuza is sitting on her bed. The sign bedroom is reinforced by the pillows, the bedside lamp and the headboard which are common signifiers associated with the space. MaNzuza is affectionately holding a photo frame with Nkosinathi’s picture in it.

The dyadic relationship between MaNzuza and MaNgcobo is evident at the denotative level. Figures 5.2.1 – 5.2.3 present an eerie milieu. The body language of both MaNgcobo and Mxolisi evince that something untoward has occurred. In figure 5.2.4 – 5.2.5 MaNzuza appears more relaxed. The environment looks more inviting because the tone is light. The juxtaposition of the images in which MaNgcobo and MaNzuza are embedded highlight the stark differences between them which will be further explicated in the section on connotation.

The denotative analysis of images from episode four formed part of the commutation test which serves two functions. The first of which is to identify significant differences between signs. The second function of the commutation test is to determine the significance of why images are produced in a particular way (Fiske, 1990: 110). It is clear from the structuralisation of the denotative signs that the matriarchs were constructed dyadically. This is evinced in the eerie milieu in figures 5.2.1 – 5.2.3 and the relaxed atmosphere presented in figures 5.2.4 – 5.2.5. Yet, the significance of this cannot only be ascertained from the synchronic structure of the signs as the underlying laws that contribute to this binary opposition are premised on culture, a reference point through which an individual comes to believe the reality of the expression (Callum-Swan and Manning, 1994: 466).

Connotation

It is necessary at this point to discuss the significance of connotation in the signification process. The signifiers of connotation (second order significations) are made up of signs from the denotated system (first order significations) (Barthes, 1972: 91). Meaning is imbued through socially-orientated signification (Hartley, 1982: 26). Connotation impoverishes the meaning of the first sign (denotation) by ascribing a single and usually ideological signified to it (Seiter, 1992: 29). Although connotation is arbitrary, it usually has an iconic dimension. The richness of the signifiers, which postulate a comparative order of facts, ideas and decisions in the first-order system (refer to the iconic/indexical columns in Figures 5.1.1 and 5.1.2), evaporate in the second-order system. This is especially significant in technical codes, such as lighting, music and camera shots through which meaning is accentuated (Hartley, 1982: 32).

Lighting

Lighting was one of the major technical devices used to connote the binary relationship of the dynasties in *Uzalo*. Light and dark played a significant role in creating perception while also contributed towards characterisation. There are four basic properties of lighting in television: direction, intensity, colour and diffusion (Butler, 2007: 151). Lighting direction and intensity

was examined in this study. This consists of three-point lighting, high and low-key lighting and hard and soft lighting. The most commonly used lighting in soap operas is high-key lighting. This is achieved by the three-point lighting system in which the actor is lit from three sources of lighting of varying intensity (a) the key light; (b) the fill/motivated light and (c) the backlight. However, the way the technique is used depends on the atmosphere the cinematographer is attempting to create.

The three-point lighting technique can provide high-key lighting or low-key lighting which is achieved from manipulating the light source. The use of high-key lighting creates an evenly lit set with little contrast between dark and bright areas. This type of lighting is predominantly used in soap operas and primetime programmes because it produces a realistic aesthetic and it signifies normalcy, stasis and equilibrium. High-key lighting was predominantly used in the Mdletshe home and most of the scenes involving MaNzuza. Soft lighting was also used in the scenes where MaNzuza appeared to symbolise her role as the heroine (Fiske, 1987: 8; Butler, 2007: 151-154). Low-key lighting usually signifies deviance, opposition and mystery (Fiske, 1987: 8; Butler, 2007: 151-154). This lighting technique was used to concretise MaNgcobo's role as a villainess. Contrarily, the lighting technique used in figure 5.2.4 and 5.2.5

The contrast of lighting played a significant role in episode four of season two when MaNgcobo and Mxolisi were burying Nkosinathi's body. In this episode the use of hard lighting in the office of Xulu panel beaters juxtaposed with the high-key lighting in the Mdletshe residence concretised the signification of the Mdletshe dynasty as good and the Xulu dynasty as evil.

Figure 5.2.1 demonstrates the effect of backlighting. The 'window' behind the characters through which light seeps in produces enough light for the viewer to see what is happening. The effect of this is an eerie environment associated with deviance and disequilibrium. This is exacerbated by the use of smoke which is evidentiary of the fire burning inside the metal drum. Fire connotes death and danger; the flame is emphasised by the contrast of the surrounding darkness. The minimal use of light makes the viewer feel as if they are intruding, or witnessing something they are not supposed to see. This is amplified by the hard light which conceals the characters' faces. The lighting technique employed in figures 5.2.1 to 5.2.3 solidifies MaNgcobo's role as a villainess.

It is evident from the lighting technique in figures 5.2.4 and 5.2.5 that MaNzuza is constructed in opposition to MaNgcobo. In both images the lighting is evenly balanced with very little

contrast between light and dark. The lighting in figures 5.2.4 and 5.2.5 signifies normalcy. It is apparent from this lighting technique that MaNzuza is constructed as a heroine.

Camera shots

The camera viewpoint is central to the construction of meaning because it is the lens through which the audience views the events in the narrative. It is through the camera that aesthetic designs of the setting, costuming, lighting and actor movement make sense (Butler, 2007: 158). The way these designs are portrayed is located in an ideological framework. In most classic narratives, as well as in soap operas, a scene is introduced with an establishing shot (long shot) to show the space and the narrative components of the scene. The establishing shot is usually followed by a medium or medium-long shot which typically develops into an alternating pattern to indicate a conversation between two people. The alternating shots (or shot-counter-shot) are usually close-up or extreme close-up shots to display the emotional state of the characters. A scene generally ends with a re-establishing shot to once again show the viewer which characters are involved in the scene and where they are located (Butler, 2007: 205-206).

The focal length is integral to how the camera manipulates the images on the screen. According to Jeremy Butler (2007: 161) there are three conventional types of focal length: wide angle (or short); 'normal' (or medium) and telephoto (or long or narrow). The wide-angle lens heightens the illusion of depth in the image. Objects filmed with wide-angled lens appear further apart than they do with 'normal' or telephoto lenses. The telephoto lens gives a narrower view than the wide-angled lens, but it magnifies the scene, making it appear closer. In this lens the depth of the visual is lost but the image appears closer. The 'normal' lens is medium-sized in comparison to both wide-angled and telephoto lenses. This lens has been accepted as the most natural lens. The 'normal' focal length uses a shallow focus to emphasise one area in the image.

Figures 5.3.1 to 5.3.10 provide shots from a scene in episode one of *Uzalo* to illustrate Jeremy Butler's (2007) discussion of the use of camera shots and focal length in soap operas.



Figure 5.3. 1 Establishing shot of MaNzuza



Figure 5.3. 2 Medium-long shot of MaNzuza



Figure 5.3. 3 Medium-close up shot of MaNzuza



Figure 5.3. 4 Close-up shot of MaNzuza and Mxolisi



Figure 5.3. 5 Medium shot of MaNzuza and Mxolisi



Figure 5.3. 6 Medium shot of MaNgcobo and Mxolisi



Figure 5.3. 7 Medium-long shot of MaNzuza and Mxolisi



Figure 5.3. 8 Medium-long shot of Mxolisi, MaNgcobo and MaNzuza



Figure 5.3. 9 Medium close-up shot of MaNgcobo



Figure 5.3. 10 Re-establishing shot

Source: Uzalo, Season Two, Episode One (SABC/Stained Glass Production, 2016)

Figures 5.3.1 to 5.3.10 are a compilation of shots from a scene in episode one. The scene was introduced with an establishing (or long) shot of MaNzuza anxiously waiting for Mxolisi to be released from Westville prison. Mxolisi was imprisoned for his involvement in car theft along with his father, Muzi ‘Gxabashe’ Xulu. Mxolisi asked MaNzuza to fetch him from prison instead of MaNgcobo because he wanted to start life on a clean slate and redeem himself from a life of criminality. A close-up shot was used in figure 5.3.5 to show the elation of MaNzuza and Mxolisi embracing each other. There is also evidence of the shot-reverse-shot in figures 5.3.4 and 5.3.5 as well as in figures 5.3.6 to 5.3.10. These shots indicate dialogue, they also show the emotions expressed by characters. Almost every scene in *Uzalo* uses the pattern explicated in this example, which is in-line with literature suggesting that soap operas utilise close-up and medium shots to emphasise dialogue and heightened emotions (Modleski, 1979;

Brown, 1987). The use of a 'normal' focus lens is also in agreement with literature explaining camera techniques employed in soap operas (Fiske, 1987; Butler, 2007).

However, the camera work also serves a symbolic function. The close-up shots signified the love and affection between MaNzuza and Mxolisi. Their physical closeness symbolises their bond as mother and son. MaNzuza was excited to establish a relationship with Mxolisi upon learning that he was her biological son. This is in contrast to the use of medium-long shots between MaNgcobo and Mxolisi which separated the characters physically and metaphorically. The distance emanates from Mxolisi's desire to remove himself from the nefarious lifestyle of the Xulu family. When Mxolisi walked away from MaNgcobo with MaNzuza, it solidified his decision to turn his back on the Xulu family.

Music/Sound

Similar to lighting and camera techniques, music and sound signify the emotional significance of images on television. It plays a vital role in directing the viewer how to respond to characters (Bignell, 1997/2002: 161). The reactions music and sound evoke are based on culturally agreed associations between sound and emotion (Berger, 2012: 14). For example, the predominant use of major chords in the scenes involving MaNzuza signified happiness and normalcy, whereas the predominant use of minor chords, staccato notes and percussion instruments in the scenes with MaNgcobo signified melancholy and mystery. It must be stressed that the analysis accounted for the predominant use of sound/music signifiers associated with each character; however, when MaNzuza was mourning Nkosinathi's death, melancholic piano melodies were played which signified her sadness.

Connotation and Myth

Connotation and myth depend on each other as they both derive from the same first-order system, denotation (Barthes, 1972; Fiske and Hartley, 1978/1996). The term *form* in semiotics is used in conjunction with *meaning* and *concept*. For Barthes (1972: 115-116), *meaning* belongs on the plane of the *signifier*, *concept* belongs on the plane of the *signified* and *form* belongs on the plane of *myth*. As meaning, the signifier is full and rich, it has a history which is built into a self-sufficient signification system. Meaning embodies a knowledge, a past and a memory. The concept distorts meaning of its history and memory but does not abolish it. It manipulates elements of meaning and implants a new history in the myth (Barthes, 1972: 117). Myth, on the hand, turns signs into an empty and parasitical form evaporating its history and fullness. The essential point of this system is for the form to constantly root itself in meaning

so that the social meanings purported by myth appear as common-sense (Barthes, 1972: 117; Bignell, 1997/2002: 23).

In this study the basic unit of analysis was MaNzuza and MaNgcobo, however each character was situated within the context of their respective dynasties. At an iconic level it is evident that the matriarchs exist in binary worlds (Barthes, 1972: 115). The characters' appearance, body language, gestures, mannerisms, facial expression and proximity to other characters is attached to the traits associated with their kinship (Fiske, 1990: 68-69). Thuli Zuma (Interview, 2016) that:

So, if you look at them aesthetically, you know uhm MaNzuza, who is in the church, her dress is more conventionally modest. You know, she's got long sleeves, uhm, she doesn't wear tight-fitting clothing. So, she, uhm, adheres to what we conventionally understand as somewhat of like a modest woman where, uh, Lindiwe/MaNgcobo, on the other side, is aesthetically, in her dress and wardrobe, wears a lot flashier, uhm, bolder colours, big jewellery, tight-fitting clothes, what we might conventionally associate with someone who is, uhm, like edgier, trendier. Living a faster and more glamorous life.

The character traits demonstrated by MaNzuza and MaNgcobo are presented in figures 5.4.1 to 5.4.6. It is apparent in the images that the matriarchs are ideologically embedded in social codes that are commonly associated with the behaviour of a heroine (MaNzuza) and villainess (MaNgcobo).



Figure 5.4. 1 MaNzuza is in the Mdletshe lounge



Figure 5.4. 2 MaNgobo standing up to officer Dhlomo



Figure 5.4. 3 MaNzuza sitting in the Mdletshe lounge



Figure 5.4. 4 MaNgcobo and Mxolisi in the Xulu lounge



Figure 5.4. 5 MaNzuza drinking a cup of coffee



Figure 5.4. 6 MaNgcobo is drinking glass of whiskey

Source: Uzalo, Season Two. (SABC/Stained Glass Production, 2016)

The images in figures 5.4.1 to 5.4.6 reinforce the characteristics associated with the matriarchs. The contrast between the hand gestures and body language signify MaNzuza's conservative personality against MaNgcobo's boisterous personality. The colour palate of the furniture and fixtures in their homes signifies the modesty of the Mdletshe dynasty in comparison to the opulent lifestyle of the Xulu family. MaNzuza's house is simple with inexpensive furniture, while the staircase in the Xulu household is indexical of the house being a double storey. Furthermore, the Xulu household has a leather lounge suite which carries connotations of wealth and luxury. The big silver boulders positioned next to the stairway connote power and dominance. This makes sense when comparing the stairway to ancient Roman architecture as can be seen in figure 5.5.1



Figure 5.5. 1 ancient Roman building

Source: Roman Empire: 27 BCE –476CE (Know the Romans, 2018)



Figure 5.5. 2 staircase in the Xulu home

Source: Uzalo: Season Two. (SABC/Stained Glass Production, 2016)

Moreover, the dress code of two characters exhibited in the images reinforces MaNzuza's conservative lifestyle, while MaNzuza's clothing is trendy and tightfitting. This spills over into the kind of beverages each matriarch drinks; MaNzuza drinks coffee while MaNgcobo drinks whiskey. In most soap operas, including *Days of Our Lives* (internationally) and *Isidingo* (locally), the villain(ess) often drinks a glass of whiskey while plotting their next move. It is thus that stylistic conventions are used to reinforce the characteristics associated with each dynasty. The characterisation of MaNzuza and MaNgcobo is in agreement with literature suggesting that female characters are either constructed as the submissive heroine or the non-conformist villainess (see Geraghty, 1991; Neophytou, 2012; Iqbal and Abdar, 2016).

However, these roles do not exist in isolation from the broader socio- historical context in which they are embedded. Myth attempts to conceal the origin of the construction of social codes used to determine good and evil or heroine and villainess so that they appear natural and unmediated. The semiotician attempts to understand the underlying power source that gives myths their value. The table below, Figure 5.6.1, shows the symbolic signs associated with each matriarch. It is through the symbolic signs that the dyad of good and evil is actualised. It was important for this study to examine how the signs associated with the matriarchs propagate ideas about womanhood.

<i>Matriarch(s)</i>	<i>Family</i>	<i>Dress code</i>	<i>Mise-en-scene</i>	<i>Camera Shots</i>	<i>Lighting</i>	<i>Music/Sound</i>
<i>MaNzuza</i>	<i>Motherhood</i>	<i>Conservative</i>	<i>Domestic</i>	<i>Natural</i>	<i>Normalcy</i>	<i>Happiness/Heroine</i>
<i>MaNgcobo</i>	<i>Motherhood</i>	<i>Modern</i>	<i>Domestic/Xulu Panel beaters</i>	<i>Hostile</i>	<i>Disequilibrium</i>	<i>Melancholy/Villainess</i>

Figure 5.6. 1 Syntagmatic and Paradigmatic expression of the matriarchs' characteristics

Paradigmatic and Syntagmatic analysis

“A paradigm is a set from which a choice is made and only one unit from that set can be chosen” (Fiske, 1990: 57). All units in a paradigm must share similar characteristics with other units to determine their membership in that particular paradigm. Yet each unit must be distinguished from other paradigmatic choices. Meaning is imbued in the choice of paradigms selected, the meaning of what is chosen is determined by what the paradigm is not (Fiske, 1990: 57-58). The combined units of a paradigm form a syntagm. A syntagm may be defined as “a (varied) combination of (recurrent) signs” (Barthes, 1968: 62). The important aspect of a syntagm is the rules or conventions by which the combination of units is made. In language this would be called grammar or syntax. In this context the rules or conventions that determined the paradigmatic units is *womanhood*. The Oxford dictionary lists three definitions of the word, including (1) “The state or condition of being a woman; (2) The qualities considered to be natural to or characteristic of a woman and (3) Woman considered collectively” (Oxford dictionary, 2018). The use of the word womanhood in this study encompasses all three definitions.

Paradigms are closely linked to *langue* while syntagms are closely linked to *parole* (see chapter two). To understand a syntagm (*parole*), the semiotician must have knowledge of the language system on which the chosen signs are predicated. This makes paradigmatic units important as they inscribe meaning to the syntagm. For Metz, however, a paradigmatic analysis is futile because the obviousness of film (television in this context) obfuscates present and absent signs. He further argued that paradigms are sedimented in the syntagmatic ordering of a text, thus impoverishing their value (Metz, 1974: 70).

Although the researcher acknowledged the claim postulated by Christian Metz (1974), this study did not analyse the shots as paradigmatic units, instead it focussed on the matriarchs as encoded signs situated within the context of the text. In other words, the context in which the matriarchs are situated is the lens through which the encoded signs can be understood. *Uzalo* is a unique case because season two was predicated on a dyadic structure of present and absent signs actualised through the characterisation of the Mdletshe and Xulu dynasties.

Figure 5.6.1 demonstrates the paradigmatic units associated with each matriarch which is linked to their symbolic role a good (MaNzuza) and evil (MaNgcobo). The syntagm in the analysis is womanhood which is intimately linked to speech (or *parole*). The paradigmatic units were selected from the symbolic signs in figures 5.1.1 and 5.1.2. MaNzuza’s identity was

predicated on what MaNgcobo was not. The binary system limited the potential for the two characters (as signs) to mean anything outside of their conceptualisation as good and evil. For Lévi-Strauss the paradigmatic element of language is integral. He believed that making conceptual categories within a system is the essence of sense-making; therefore, it is only through the structure of binary oppositions that meaning can be inferred. Lévi-Strauss's system perceives myth as a language through which meaning is determined from an insulated system of binary oppositions. It is from this process that underlying patterns or laws of language can be revealed (Lévi-Strauss, 1978: 6; Fiske, 1990: 116).

However, although the paradigmatic units (langue) that described the characterisation of each matriarch appeared synchronic, the position of this study is that these characterisations are located in a metalanguage (or myth). Myths attempt to obscure their origins and thus their political and social dimension (Fiske, 1990: 89). It is the role of the mythologist to uncover the hidden history and socio-political context of the myth. The argument in this study is that to understand the underlying patterns of the paradigmatic units in the syntagmatic structure of womanhood, the myth of patriarchy must be addressed.

Soap opera and Femininity

It is clear from the literature review that soap operas are predominantly consumed by a female audience. In season two, *Uzalo* had a female viewership of 58% and a male viewership of 42% (see Appendix B). Although the male viewership was significantly high, the programme was still mostly viewed by a female audience. This coincides with seminal soap opera scholars (Modleski, 1979; Kuhn, 1984; Brown; 1987) who have argued that soap opera is a feminine genre that posits a feminine discourse.

To the contrary, scholars (see Mulvey, 1981/1999; Fiske, 1987; Acosta-Alzuru, 2003; Dow, 2005) have argued that soap operas are embedded in dominant patriarchal discourses. This was central to the research problem in the current study because although soap opera is purported as a feminine genre, it was critical to examine the roles assigned to women in society in these texts because it has been argued that genres like soap opera incorporate an element of radicalism to appease viewers who have oppositional views to heteronormative patriarchal discourses. The purpose of incorporating radicalism into dominant patriarchal discourse is to show that patriarchy can accommodate 'the new woman' into its worldview without necessarily having to change anything (Fiske, 1987: 38). It is for this reason that the matriarchs

in *Uzalo* can be understood as textual devices embedded in discourse and ideology, which is actualised through their physical presence (Fiske, 1987: 153).

MaNzuza and MaNgcobo's characterisation was based on archetypal characters from KwaMashu township who share similar traits. According to Dawn King – the actress who plays MaNgcobo, the characters were workshopped. Dawn King stated that:

She is not made-up of just one character, she's made up of a combination of characters, of women that you see in society, mainly in Durban... and that is why so many women identify with her (King Interview, 2016).

The realistic presence of the characters and their signifieds, including their dress code, homes, and mannerisms may be discursively read as a metaphoric representation of their social position and the values they embody. These values are encoded in the symbolic codes of culture that organise the way people comprehend fundamental oppositions, like male/female; modern/traditional or good/evil (Fiske, 1987: 158).

However, this does not address the ideological function of MaNzuza and MaNgcobo's characters. Although it is evident that they are constructed in opposition to each other and that they represent competing paradigms of good and evil, this does not necessarily unmask the latent function of their character constructions.

Barthes's (1972: 13-14) analysis of 'the world of wrestling' offers insight into the characterisation of the matriarchs. "For Barthes, wrestling is like ritual, pantomime, or Greek tragedy, where what is important is to see some struggle being played out by actors who do not represent realistic individual characters, but ideals or moral positions" (Bignell, 1997/2002: 19). Barthes's interpretation of wrestling can be compared to Lévi-Strauss's conceptualisation of myth in which he argued that the purpose of myth is to concretise themes of human existence through ritual practice (Lévi-Strauss, 1978: 3). For Barthes, it does not matter if the good wrestler wins or not, the point of the match is to make the coded signs of good and evil explicit to the audience to propagate myths about good and evil; but Barthes deviated from Lévi-Strauss by attempting to locate its origin. He thus contended that the history of wrestling is rooted in west European Christian culture (Barthes, 1972: 23).

The characterisation of MaNzuza and MaNgcobo is comparable to Lévi-Strauss's analysis of myth where although their construction as good and evil is explicit, the meaning of these positions is hidden. In relation to Barthes's conceptualisation of myth, the characterisation of

the matriarchs is premised on the continuum of the sign system where the more arbitrary a sign becomes, the more its origin is obscured. It is vital to return to the syntagmatic structure (or parole) of womanhood presented in figure 5.3.1. While examining the actualisation of each matriarch's position as good and evil, it becomes clear that it is located within a patriarchal framework. It is evident that the coded signs associated with the matriarchs are determined by the language of patriarchy where good women conform to traditional conventions whereas bad women adopt a modern lifestyle thereby choosing to forego traditional conventions.

Zulu Culture

This only makes sense when locating the narrative in the context of a Zulu cultural framework which is widely referenced in the soap opera. According to Raymond Williams (1958/2011: 53-54), culture is ordinary. He argued that "every human society has its own shape, its own purposes, its own meanings. Every human society expresses these, in institutions, and in arts and learning." Culture is therefore a reference point to one's reality (Swan and Manning, 1994: 466). In the Zulu culture if practices are observed in the correct manner, blessings are expected to be showered from the supernatural world. Alternatively, if anything is done in a culturally unacceptable manner, misfortune is set to be bestowed on an individual, family or the nation at large (Langa, 2012: 4).

The producers stressed that *Uzalo* is different from other popular South African soap operas because it is unilingual, set and shot in KwaZulu Natal (KwaMashu) and focusses specifically on Zulu culture. Thuli Zuma stated:

Yeah. So, we are shooting in KZN and our matriarchs, most of our cast, if not all, are Zulu. So, Zulu it's a big broad uhm culture and things are different from neighbourhood to neighbourhood and family to family but it is a big backdrop which we understand. So, it's a shared reference and experience we all have. So, one of the things I think is really cool is that we are able to draw on things, which outside of the Zulu culture, it doesn't really make sense (Zuma and Thibedi Interview, 2016).

In the literature review it was established that fictional representations of women in Zulu culture often conform to patriarchal practices. This was evident in N. Masuku's analysis of Zulu folktales in which he stated that "not only are folktales told for amusement, but some of the tales evince some subtle but sustained reaction to the plight of women" (Masuku, 1998: 41). Henry Gumede's analysis of four Zulu literary texts also suggested that gender relations

are rooted in patriarchal ideologies (Gumede, 2002: 118). Furthermore, the surveyed literature indicated that customary practices like *ukuhlonipha* -- based on linguistic and social patterns of behaviour -- position women in subordination to men (Rudwick and Shange, 2009: 69-70).

The matriarchs in *Uzalo* were rooted in these cultural traditions which manifested in their characterisation. MaNzuza was conformist in her role as a matriarch in the Mdletshe dynasty. Her favourable portrayal is tied to her observation of the African cultural practice of *hlonipha*. Although the practice is about respect, in general, the responsibility is placed on women to observe the practice. *Hlonipha* actions entail conventions that dictate posture dress code, gesture and other behavioural patterns (Rudwick, 2008: 153). MaNgcobo's portrayal as the villainess was embedded in the fact that she resisted *hlonipha*. Although she understood her duties as wife and mother, she was unafraid to challenge elders and men which is forbidden in Zulu culture.

Language is also significant to the cultural practice of *hlonipha* in the avoidance of using syllables occurring in the names of older relatives and/or people of superior status. "The 'deep' variety of *isihlonipha* comprises a large corpus of lexical items which are synonyms for the expression of words with syllables to be avoided" (Rudwick, 2008: 155). This is comparable with what the *Uzalo* producer, Mmamitse Thibedi, said regarding language as textual device to concretise the behavioural traits associated with each matriarch:

So, everybody speaks Zulu but it's what type of Zulu? How harsh is it? So, where MaNzuza is modest, even her language in a sense is more traditionally modest, whereas MaNgcobo is harsher. She is deemed more crass in terms of language (Thibedi, 2016).

This is not specific to Zulu culture, the surveyed literature indicated that patriarchy permeates through most fictional representations of women universally (Brown, 1987; Acosta-Alzuru, 2003; Motsaathebe, 2009; Ahmed, 2012; Iqbal and Abdar, 2016). In most cases the villainess is characterised as someone who resists the hegemonic ideals of the fictional world, they reside in. Carolina Acosta-Alzuru (2003: 270) claimed that most telenovelas in Venezuela are predicated on binaries governed by hegemonic discourses located in patriarchy. Good women are sweet and virtuous while bad women are pure evil. Furthermore, good women sacrifice their lives for their families and they are seen as spiritually superior because of their submission to patriarchy, while bad women are inferior because they challenge male dominance.

Acosta Alzuru's (2003) analysis of female characters in telenovelas mirrors the binary opposition of MaNzuza and MaNgcobo in which MaNgcobo's resistance was portrayed as pure evil. The strength that a character like MaNgcobo possessed is always linked to a shortcoming. For example, MaNgcobo's ability to stand up to authoritative figures was portrayed as a deficiency of her femininity. This is a universal trait in soap operas, for example villainesses in popular South African soap operas, like Monika (*Egoli*), Jane (*7de Laan*) and Cherele de Villiers (*Isidingo*) were all characterised as evil because they protested male dominance (Marx, 2008: 89).

The binary in *Uzalo* can be viewed in line with Antonio Gramsci's (1970) theory of hegemony and Steven Lukes's (1986) conceptualisation of power. Returning to the theoretical framework where these two concepts were engaged in detail, it was stated that power is the ability of A to get B to do something that B otherwise would not do. Integral to the efficacy of both theories is securing compliance by subjects. This is achieved by interpellating a subject (or individual) into the dominant ideology and/or culture. The success of interpellation is predicated on latent coercive measures that appear natural or common-sensical (Gramsci, 1970: 12-13; Lukes, 1986: 40-41). Fiske (1987: 39) argued that the issue of coercion could be addressed by subsuming radical ideas into dominant discourses to defuse oppositional ideologies.

The tension between the binary characterisation of the matriarchs is arguably based on consent and resistance to the subordination of male dominance. The function of hegemonic discourse is to exist as if it is common-sense. Part of achieving this is through Barthes's conceptualisation of myth in which meaning is used to support the emptiness of form so that the myth appears as the only possible way to construct reality. Hegemonic discourses are also sustained through the institutionalisation of myth, thus if myths about gender can be viewed as common-sense then their ideological objective is achieved, and their ideological work is disguised (Fiske, 1990: 176). However, the dialectical construction of MaNzuza's perceived 'consent' and MaNgcobo's perceived 'resistance' was reconciled by their principal role as mothers who are primarily concerned with protecting their children.

As mentioned above, season two was chiefly about the matriarchs coming to terms with being single mothers while grappling with the fact that their sons were switched at birth. Episode four and five were arguably the most important episodes in the season because it placed the question of morality at the centre of the narrative. Although MaNgcobo forced Mxolisi to bury his biological brother's body, she did it ironically to save him and Nosipho, her daughter. It is clear

that Nkosinathi's death was an accident, but the odds were stacked against the Xulu family which resulted in a seemingly savage decision to bury Nkosinathi's body at Xulu panel beaters. MaNzuza was an equally caring mother concerned with protecting the interests of her children. She was fixated on her children's well-being, especially since she was the only present parent in the household. Although she was strict with Ayanda and Mxolisi, she only had the best intentions for them. The characters' love for their children is apparent in a statement by producer Thuli Zuma (Zuma and Thibedi Interview, 2016)

Like we said, the way they do things is different but what they want is the same. They want the best for their families and I think that is uhm common amongst most men and women across South Africa. Like, you just want the best for your family.

Yet, as Fiske (1987: 24) noted nothing is accidental in television programmes. He argued that realism is structured by a hierarchy of discourses. This was also explicated by John Hartley (1978: 32) who contended that although news appears real and unedited, it is enveloped within a sign-system that the audience learns to accept as reality. This is arguably similar to the construction of female characters in soap opera. It is evident from existing literature on that the role of the matriarch is characterised by a maternal figure, irrespective of whether she has children or not. However, these traits are linked to the mythic discourses imbued in femininity.

Fiske (1990: 89) illustrated how myths attempt to incorporate natural elements to concretise their meaning. He discussed how women are often 'naturally' perceived to be more nurturing and caring than men because they give birth; thus, solidifying their position as caretakers of the home and their children. This, nonetheless, is a distortion of reality which is entrenched in the values of bourgeois men in capitalism to propagate the unequal sexual division of labour (Fiske, 1990: 89).

Likewise, MaNzuza and MaNgcobo are a product of this language system. Their position as mothers, albeit their dichotomous characterisation, is located in the framework of Zulu culture. As discussed earlier, most African traditions are premised on the practice of *ukuhlonipha* which is predominantly enforced upon women by men. Integral to *hlonipha* is for to get married and rear to children.

This is not confined to Zulu culture as previous studies on soap opera also emphasised the importance of motherhood and marriage in constructing a feminine discourse (see Modleski, 1979; Hobson, 1982/2003; Brown, 1987; Aston and Clarke, 1994). Implicit in most these soap operas is the desire for women to be freed from the constraints of patriarchy, yet in most cases they are constrained by patriarchy through their narrow portrayal as mothers.

However, the purpose of this research is not to delegitimise the soap opera as a feminine genre. The aim was to examine the role of the genre's stylistic and textual devices as tools to advance preferred discourses. It must be acknowledged that the producers of *Uzalo* (Zuma and Thibedi Interview, 2016) stressed that their decision to have two female matriarchs at the helm of what was a traditionally patriarchal role was purposive. It was their intention to deconstruct the myth that females cannot adopt powerful positions, particularly within a Zulu context. Thibedi (2016) expressed that:

we don't want to box them in the sort of black and white and good or bad because there is no [one] human being who doesn't have those traits [...]

Yet, in as much as this presented an opportunity to challenge patriarchal discourses, it is the contention of the researcher that the matriarchs were silenced by the absent voices of the patriarchs. Their characterisation was premised on two sacrificial roles: adopting the legacy of their husbands and protecting their children. This denied the women an opportunity to locate themselves outside these discourses. An example of the missed opportunity for constructing an empowered femininity was the panel beater business. MaNgcobo's role as a head of the Xulu dynasty was not fully recognised as she constantly required the assistance of a male figure to solve her financial issues. Her presence at Xulu panel beaters was ornamental as she did not contribute towards the advancement of the business. She was no more financially empowered than MaNzuza in this sense. It is apparent in the literature that patriarchy rears itself mainly in the sexual division of labour which was not addressed in *Uzalo*. This impinged the ability of *Uzalo* to construct an empowered feminine discourse.

The complexity of constructing a feminine discourse

Although the discussion thus far has described hegemony as a static system of power, this is not the case. Hegemonies are fragile and subject to change (Acosta-Alzuru, 2003: 276). The researcher contends that multiple hegemonies manifest at different levels. The rationale for this argument is based on the position postulated by Stuart Hall (1985: 97) in which he rejected the notion that ideologies are static and fixed within the dominant class. For Hall, this position

does not explain how dominated groups use ruling ideas to interpret and define their interests. Hall's position sheds light on the criticism of western scholarship regarding the establishment of a feminine discourse through soap opera.

It may be contended that, within the realm of language systems, there may be multiple manifestations of power dialectics. This can be illustrated through the intersectionality of the different forms of oppression (gender, race, class and sexuality). At different moments one identity struggle may take precedence over the others, hence the researcher's rejection of a static conceptualisation of power, hegemony and ideology.

Carolina Acosta-Alzuru (2003: 276) illustrated this point by pointing out the contradictions with gender power struggles in Venezuela. The practice of *marianismo* and *machismo* can be likened to the cultural practice of *hlonipha* in Southern African societies. Both practices place the responsibility on women to behave according to patriarchal values, thereby constructing women who resist such practices as evil (Rudwick and Shange, 2009: 69-70; Kjeldgaard and Nielsen, 2010: 35).

Kenechukwu Igweonu (2007: 52) established binaries between western and African values, asserting that African femininity is different to a liberal feminist position on femininity because women in African societies enjoy the autonomy over the roles they are assigned. This view, however, propels the notion of a singular framework of gender identity which is as problematic as Tania Modleski's (1979) claim in her essay *The Search for Tomorrow in Today's Soap Opera* which also valorises the role of femininity constructed within a patriarchal lens.

The characterisation of MaNzuza and MaNgcobo is also located within a socio-historical framework. It is apparent that the mythic discourses that permeate the text are located in Zulu cultural practices. Furthermore, the narrative also problematises the adoption of a femininity that exists outside a Zulu cultural context. This challenge is also presented in the Mexican telenovela *Rebelda* in which the tension between retaining traditional beliefs and adopting modern values is placed at the forefront of the narrative (Kjeldgaard and Nielsen, 2010: 33).

Constructing a feminine discourse presents many difficulties because there is no uniform approach to establishing feminine culture and identity. Although *Uzalo* attempted to challenge patriarchal ideologies by placing the matriarchs at the forefront of the text, the underlying myths about womanhood were still dictated by the language of patriarchy. Both MaNzuza and MaNgcobo could not explore possibilities outside their identification as mothers. The text was

based on their children and their adjustment to being single mothers. However, this should not be undermined as these positions reflect the experience of many women living in South Africa, currently. The point the researcher is making is that feminine discourse can only become effective when representations of women become more dynamic.

Conclusion

This chapter attempted to answer the primary research question which sought to examine the function of textual devices in soap operas, and whether these textual devices advance heteronormative gender discourses. It may be suggested that while both characters in *Uzalo* were designed in opposition to each other, their role as matriarchs was the predominant function for each of them. This arguably inhibited the ability for either character to explore a femininity outside the constraints of masculine culture.

Conclusion

Introduction

This section will relate the findings in the case study to the research questions and objectives. It will discuss the undergirding philosophical and epistemological position of the study and explain how this impacted the interpretation and analysis of the findings. The chapter will end with a brief discussion of the limitations of the study and will provide recommendations for future studies in this field.

Revisiting the research questions and objectives

The primary research question in this study was to examine the role of myth in the construction of the lead female characters in *Uzalo*. The primary scholars used to examine the function of myth were Roland Barthes (1972) and Claude Lévi-Strauss (1978). An analysis of the stylistic conventions, including, lighting, mise-en-scene, dress code and camera techniques were employed to examine the characters' dyadic portrayal as good and evil. The study also explored whether the characterisation of the matriarchs subverted dominant patriarchal ideals as a result of the patriarchs exiting the text. Finally, the research addressed the assertion that soap operas provide a feminine discourse.

Philosophical assumptions

It was explained earlier in the dissertation that the current study was located in a constructionist paradigm. This influenced the interpretation of the data as constructionism rejects that meaning is determined by subjective interpretations. Instead, constructionists postulate the view that knowledge is connected to a metalanguage which is located in structures and institutions of power. Therefore, reality is not unique to an individual, it is based on a shared language system through which subjects are interpellated. Language is determined by the dominant discourses in a group or society, but it is not static it is always a site of struggle. It is thus through language that systems of representation are established. Representation is predicated on hegemonic discourses. Although hegemony is fragile, there are constant attempts by dominant groups to gain consent from marginalised people. This is generally achieved by making dominant discourses appear natural and common-sensical (see Hruby, 2001; Terre Blanche *et al*, 2006; Chandler, 2007; Gabrium and Holstein, 2011).

Patriarchy in feminine genres

Although soap operas are feminine and they attempt to subvert dominant male-centred narratives, there are challenges with developing a feminine discourse. The first challenge, which has been at the forefront of soap opera criticism, is its perpetuation of patriarchal values through the normalised portrayal of the nuclear family. Furthermore, this is symbolically extended to roles where women adopt maternal traits, such as controlling and caring for the community (Geraghty, 2006: 252). These representations propel popular myths associated with femininity that restrict the ability for women to exist outside masculine discourses (Aston and Clarke, 1994).

The second challenge of creating a feminine discourse is the assumption that femininity is homogenous. The literature review highlighted contesting arguments about feminism and femininity, particularly among women of colour. Kenechukwu Igweonu (2007: 52) argued that in African culture power is diarchic, therefore men and women share different but equal responsibilities in the roles they are assigned. Igweonu further asserted that in African culture women accept their subordinate position to their husband. Furthermore, in Latin America religious beliefs coincide with social practices, it is thus difficult to fight against this form of repression because it is entrenched within mythic and spiritual beliefs, which perpetuate patriarchal values (Acosta-Alzuru, 2003: 275).

It may be argued that the character construction of the matriarchs in *Uzalo* was influenced by the Zulu customary practice, *ukuhlonipha* (see Chapter 2 and 5). It was apparent through MaNzuza's mannerisms and dress code that she adhered to traditional Zulu values. Contrarily MaNgcobo challenged traditional Zulu values through her dress code and mannerisms. The juxtaposition of MaNzuza as a pious, conservative and modest woman (the heroine) with MaNgcobo as a stubborn, modern and glamorous woman (the villainess) reinforced the belief that women who deviate from cultural norms are immoral.

In season two *Uzalo* attempted to challenge the nuclear family paradigm by positioning the matriarchs as authoritative figures in their households. This cannot be ignored as it provided MaNzuza and MaNgcobo the opportunity to play a central role in the narrative since the dynasties were originally developed around the patriarchal figures. From the start of season two both characters were afforded the power to control the fate of their dynasties.

However, the text principally focussed on the perils each character faced as single mothers attempting to protect their children. In this sense the primary focus was their children; thus, negating the exploration of a femininity outside the parameter of being domestic figures. This is in agreement with soap opera literature which suggests that female apotheosis is emphasised by women having babies and rearing children (Rogers, 1991/2003: 478).

Despite the binary construction of MaNgcobo as a devious character and MaNzuza as a pious character, neither of them overtly challenged patriarchal values outside the domestic realm. A key example of this can be illustrated through the role MaNgcobo played at Xulu panel beaters. Although she was assigned the position as head of the Xulu dynasty, she was unable to use her wits to solve the financial challenges the company faced. In the first few episodes of season two MaNgcobo and Nosipho were saddled with financial problems as a result of Gxabashe being sent to prison. Instead of the producers using this as an opportunity to explore the possibility of MaNgcobo taking over the panel beater and excelling in her role as a business leader, she constantly required the assistance of male figures to sustain her lifestyle. MaNgcobo's role at Xulu panel beaters was ornamental, thus limiting the potential of *Uzalo* to explore a feminine discourse outside the constraints of domesticity.

In this sense MaNzuza and MaNgcobo were no different in that their principal responsibility was to protect their children. Although they had different means of achieving this, their goal was the same. The overarching discourse in *Uzalo* was that motherhood is eternally feminine. The study therefore revealed that although the women were positioned in leadership roles, they were overshadowed by the latent power of patriarchy which permeated the text, thereby hindering the ability to construct a feminine discourse that challenges dominant gender myths in Zulu culture.

The function of Myth

The conceptualisation of myth by both Roland Barthes and Claude Lévi-Strauss revealed that soap opera narratives reproduce the same mythic structures that propel heteronormative gender myths. It was the argument in this study that the syntagm of womanhood was determined by the langue of patriarchy. By this it is implied that although each woman was designed in opposition to each other and given the opportunity to explore these positions without the presence of the patriarchs, their character development was premised on a language system predicated on patriarchal values. In this sense the absence of patriarchy was reinforced in the signification system.

Barthes (1972: 3) explicated this point in his argument about wrestling in which he stated: “whether the good wrestler wins or not, the bout would have made good and evil easily readable through the medium of the coded signs the wrestlers use to communicate their roles and emotions to the crowd”. Therefore, far from mindless entertainment, wrestling purports ideas about morality and justice. Nonetheless these signs are not natural, they are products of a specific culture tied to a historical period and a particular way of organising society (Bignell, 1997/2002: 21).

Comparable to wrestling soap opera is not a mindless form of entertainment, the signs – in this context MaNzuza and MaNgcobo – belong to a highly codified system which purports ideas about femininity (Bignell, 1992/2002: 21). However, the underlying structure of the coded signs is predicated on the obscured myth of patriarchy, which is evinced in the character portrayals in *Uzalo*. Therefore, although season two provided a context to explore femininity outside the normalised nuclear family structure, the myth of patriarchy was reinforced through the textual devices used to construct MaNzuza and MaNgcobo.

Feminine discourse

The establishment of a feminine discourse is a complex task because the interpretation of femininity is heterogenous. The literature review explicated how feminine discourse is adopted in different contexts. It is evident that the intersectionality of race, religion, class and culture contribute significantly towards how women make sense of their reality. Returning to Charlotte Brunson’s distinction between subject position and social subject (cited in Geraghty, 1991: 40), it may be argued that audiences adopt varying positions while watching soap opera texts based on their subject position, thereby agreeing with literature suggesting the complexity of a feminine discourse.

In both Latin America and in an African context, culture and religion shape the way femininity is perceived. It is also apparent in these regions that the economic plight of women makes them susceptible to adopt skewed religious and cultural beliefs. Furthermore, the choice of women to adopt a diarchic position, in which they accept their role as subordinates to men does not necessarily indicate a crisis of feminine discourse, but it does create gaps for female exploitation especially in regions where the economic position of women is fragile and exploitable.

In *Uzalo* femininity was evidently located in heteronormative gender myths about women being inherently domestic, while men dominate public spaces. It is thus apparent that while

soap operas provide women more voice time, there is no alternative to the nuclear family structure. Femininity can only function in this framework and women's issues can only be resolved within this normalised structure (Geraghty, 1991: 50).

Moreover, by focussing on the role of MaNzuza and MaNgcobo in the private sphere, Uzalo ignored and glamorised the public sphere of work, unemployment, trade unions and business. The issue with trivialising the experience of women in the public sphere, reinforces their location in the private sphere.

Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that by advancing two female characters to a leadership position without their respective patriarchs was a bold decision that paid off. The audience ratings continued to increase in season two, dispelling myths about the need for women to have men to enhance their presence in soap opera texts. Although MaNzuza and MaNgcobo's children were the central focus of the season, the audience was able to relate with the two characters and live through the characters' anxieties with them, which is a critical device in soap operas to generate a feminine discourse.

Limitations of the study

Although the researcher attempted to analyse myth, it would have been interesting to listen to the perspective of female viewers of *Uzalo* to understand their interpretations of the text. This would have provided a more balanced analysis. One of the criticisms of textual analysis is the subjectivity of the researcher. However, the objective of this study was not to make concrete assumptions about gendered discourses, but rather to elucidate the possible underlying messages located in soap opera texts.

Further studies should incorporate both a textual and reception analysis to examine how audiences make sense of the social phenomena addressed in the text. It may provide a more nuanced perspective on how messages are decoded by audiences in relation to the producers' intended meaning.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Episode Transcripts of Uzalo, episodes 1-5 and 152-156

UZALO SEASON 2 EPISODE 1

DURATION OF APPEARANCE	CHARACTER(S)	APPEARANCE	LOCALITY/SETTING	VOICE REGISTER	CAMERA COMPOSITION
03:37-04:01	MaNgcobo and Nosipho (daughter)	MaNgcobo wearing a blue dress with stripes. It is a low-cut dress exposing her cleavage Long weave/wig	Xulu Panel beaters' office The lighting is dark	They appear concerned as the police are holding a press conference discussing the arrest of MaNgcobo's husband, Gxabashe	Medium-long shot
05:22-05:45	MaNzuza and Nkosinathi (son)	MaNzuza is wearing a long multi-coloured floral dress with a long sleeve black blouse underneath Short wig	Mdletshe Lounge The lighting is bright	She is pleased about Gxabashe's arrest. She expresses her gratitude for officer Dhlomo's work to Nkosinathi. She is proud that he has received an award for his excellent work as a police officer	Medium shot
10:03-12:07	MaNzuza, Nkosinathi and Ayanda (sons)	MaNzuza is wearing a long multi-coloured floral dress with a long sleeve black blouse underneath Short wig Minimal make-up	Mdletshe lounge Bright lighting	MaNzuza is sitting on the couch talking to both Nkosinathi and Ayanda. She is talking to Nkosinathi about going to university in Cape Town. The phone rings during their conversation and MaNzuza walks to the kitchen to take the call. When she returns, she asks if they can accompany her to the police station to fetch Mxolisi as he has been released on parole. Ayanda uses the excuse that he has commitments at the church. MaNzuza appears dismayed	Medium-close-up and Close-up shots

12:08- 13:42	MaNgcobo and Nosipho	MaNgcobo is wearing a blue dress with stripes. She has a long weave/wig Big gold chain and earrings	Xulu panel beaters' office Dark/dull lighting	Both mother and daughter are stressed about the company's finances. A male employee walks in asking for money owed to him. This creates tension and MaNgcobo says that he must look for money elsewhere for money. The employee is convinced that if Gxabashe was around he would have been paid. MaNgcobo gives him her fancy necklace in exchange for money	Medium close-up shot
15:31-17:18	MaNzuza, Mxolisi and MaNgcobo	MaNzuza is still wearing her floral dress and black blouse MaNgcobo is still wearing the blue dress	Outside the police station/prison	MaNzuza is anxious and excited to see Mxolisi. They embrace as soon as they see each other. MaNgcobo emerges as they walk towards the parking lot. She is visibly upset that Mxolisi had not told her that he was being released from prison. The encounter is awkward with Mxolisi choosing to go home with MaNzuza, leaving MaNgcobo alone	Medium close-up and close-up shots
17:20-19:13	MaNgcobo and Nosipho		The panel beaters' office	MaNgcobo vents her frustration about Mxolisi to Nosipho. She is very upset that Mxolisi told MaNzuza about his release from prison and not her. MaNgcobo's stress is further heightened by the fact that her finances are taking strain since the incarceration of Gxabashe	Medium closeup and close-up shots
19:14-20:33	MaNzuza and Mxolisi		Mdletshe home	MaNzuza and Mxolisi enter the Mdletshe home and stand in the kitchen. When Ayanda enters the kitchen, there is visible tension between Ayanda and	Medium close-up and close-up shots

				<p>Mxolisi. The two men look at each other and Ayanda decides to walk out.</p> <p>MaNgcobo tries phoning Mxolisi but he rejects her call</p>	
21:12-23:25	<p>MaNzuza and Mxolisi. Ayanda and Nkosinathi enter at 22:37 minutes in the scene.</p>		<p>Mdletshe home- the kitchen</p>	<p>Mxolisi is cooking for MaNzuza while she sits at the table and talks to him, excitedly.</p> <p>Yet again, he rejects MaNgcobo's call.</p> <p>MaNzuza talks to him about his future.</p> <p>MaNzuza and her three sins sit around the table. Ayanda and Nkosinathi are not happy about him living in the Mdletshe house because of his troubled past</p>	

UZALO SEASON 2 EPISODE 2

DURATION OF APPEARANCE	CHARACTER(S)	APPEARANCE	LOCALITY/SETTING	VOICE REGISTER	CAMERA COMPOSITION
02:32-05-19	MaNgcobo and Mxolisi	MaNgcobo is wearing a leopard print blouse with tight-fitting black pants. She is also wearing high heel shoes. Yet again, she is wearing bold jewellery and accessories (necklace and earrings). Her hair (wig/weave) is long and untied with curls.	In the KwaMashu neighbourhood. MaNgcobo is driving a black Range Rover	MaNgcobo is talking to Mxolisi about her financial struggles. Although MaNgcobo is a strong-willed character, she loves her children and will do anything for them, therefore Mxolisi's rejection of her is painful. Mxolisi lacks empathy because he has vowed to start a new life with the Mdletshe's. MaNgcobo is very emotional when she talks to Mxolisi. She expresses her love for him, yet it seems to fall flat	Long shot and medium close-up shot
05:25- 06:43	MaNzuza, Nkosinathi and Ayanda Mxolisi enters the scene at 5 minutes, 37 seconds	MaNzuza is wearing a black and white horizontal striped dress. She has a black polar neck underneath the dress. Her hair is short. She has minimal make-up with modest accessories	They are in the lounge of the Mdletshe home. Yet again, the lighting is bright	Nkosinathi and Ayanda are weary of Mxolisi, especially because of his involvement with the Xulu family. They are particularly worried about his role in Gxabashe's escape from prison. MaNzuza is adamant that Mxolisi will stay at the Mdletshe home. She	Close-up shot

				<p>is also convinced that he has changed his behaviour. She is unhappy about Ayanda and Nkosinathi's attitude towards Mxolisi. She makes this very clear in her conversation with them. Although she does not raise her voice, she is strong-willed. When Mxolisi enters the Mdletshe house the tension rises. His position in relation to MaNzuza, Ayanda and Nkosinathi is interesting; he sits opposite them. When they inform him about Gxabashe's escape from prison, he looks surprised.</p>	
06:43-08-35	<p>MaNgcobo and Nosipho Officer Dhlomo followed by three police officers enter the scene at 7 minutes, 3 seconds</p>	<p>MaNgcobo is wearing a leopard print blouse with tight fitting long black pants. Her hair (wig/weave) is long and untied with curls.</p>	<p>MaNgcobo and Nosipho are in the kitchen of their home. The kitchen has modern fixtures. It is extravagant: granite tops and a two-door fridge, it is spacious. The lighting is very dull and dark (eerie)</p>	<p>MaNgcobo is standing while Nosipho is sitting on a stool opposite her. MaNgcobo is venting about how upset she is with Mxolisi not acknowledging her as his mother. She is further angered by his lack of empathy towards Nosipho and her financial woes. She is convinced that MaNzuza has turned</p>	<p>Medium close-up and close-up shots</p>

				<p>him against the Xulu family.</p> <p>Officer Dhlomo explains that Gxabashe has escaped prison. She is alarmed by this news and irritated by his accusatory tone.</p> <p>He hands over a search warrant to MaNgcobo. She is unhappy about him searching the home and pays him no attention when he explains that he is surveying the home. MaNgcobo is unperturbed by the police presence in her home.</p> <p>However, when officer Dhlomo leaves, she turns to Nosipho and says that Gxabashe's escape from prison could be good for them. She believes that it will relieve their financial issues</p>	
08:36-10:02	<p>MaNzuza, Mxolisi and Nkosinathi.</p> <p>Ayanda enters the scene at 9 minutes, 8 seconds</p>	MaNzuza is wearing the same attire as earlier	MaNzuza, Mxolisi and Nkosinathi are sitting in the Mdletshe lounge. The lighting is unusually dull	<p>MaNzuza and Nkosinathi are sitting next to each other, while Mxolisi is sitting opposite them.</p> <p>They are talking about Gxabashe's escape from prison. Nkosinathi feels unsafe and uneasy about his release.</p>	Close-up camera shots

				<p>Mxolisi's phone is ringing; MaNgcobo is trying to contact him. MaNzuza instructs him to take the call in private. Ayanda brings MaNzuza a cup of tea. They are talking about Nkosinathi going to Cape Town. Once Nkosinathi exits the lounge, MaNzuza pleads with Ayanda to make Mxolisi feel welcome in the Mdletshe home. Ayanda thinks that MaNzuza is too trusting of Mxolisi.</p>	
13:21-15:15	<p>MaNgcobo Nosipho enters the scene at 13 minutes, 35 seconds</p>	<p>She is wearing the same attire as earlier</p>	<p>MaNgcobo is standing in the lounge of her home. The lighting is dim with the same eeriness as previous scenes.</p>	<p>MaNgcobo appears anxious. She is pacing around. She is holding her cell phone. Nosipho rushes into the house. She finds her mother sitting on the stairway. As she gets in, she looks outside the window, expressing her concern about the police waiting outside their house. MaNgcobo is waiting for Gxabashe to call her, but Nosipho cautions her stating that she does not think he is going back home. MaNgcobo is agitated when she says</p>	<p>Medium long shot, medium close-up shots and close-up shots</p>

				<p>this because she has complete trust in him. He eventually sends her a message telling her that he is in their hiding spot. Interestingly, when Nosipho enquires about the message, she replies by saying: “more final demands”. She acknowledges at this point that she has always followed Gxabashe’s orders</p>	
18:26-18:38	MaNgcobo	She is wearing the same attire as described earlier	She hurriedly walks down the stairway with a black scarf in her hand and a handbag. She is evidently leaving the house	She is frantic and rushes out the house	Medium long shot, Close-up shot
18:39-20:20	MaNzuza and Ayanda Nkosinathi enters the scene at 18 minutes, 46 seconds Mxolisi enters the scene at 19 minutes, 30 seconds	MaNzuza is wearing the same clothes as earlier, but she has an apron over her clothes because she is cooking	MaNzuza and Ayanda are standing by the stove. MaNzuza is cooking. The lighting is darker than usual	They are talking and laughing. When Nkosinathi walks in, they talk about Gxabashe’s escape from prison. They are anxiously awaiting his arrest again. When Mxolisi enters the kitchen, the mood changes. Ayanda and Nkosinathi question him about his whereabouts. MaNzuza interjects and tells them to stop fighting	Close-up shots and medium shots
20:21-20:30	MaNgcobo		MaNgcobo is driving her black Range Rover		Medium-long shots

20:31-22:27	MaNzuza and Nkosinathi	MaNzuza is wearing the same attire as described earlier	She is standing at door of Nkosinathi's bedroom	MaNzuza is asking Nkosinathi if he has packed his bags for Cape Town. She expresses her love for Nkosinathi. She also asks him to accept Mxolisi as his brother, but he is stubborn	Medium shots and close-up shots
22:29-23:56	MaNgcobo and Gxabashe. The police enter the scene at 23 minutes, 18 seconds	MaNgcobo is wearing the same attire as described earlier. She has scarf over her head and slightly covering her face	She is in an open space, it is suggestive of a field, but the lighting is dark to ascertain her exact location	She is excited to see Gxabashe again. They embrace, and she explains how difficult life has been without him. The policemen arrive not long after she has met with Gxabashe. Gxabashe fires shots at the police and flees the scene. MaNgcobo is left on the ground and is taken into police custody for obstruction of justice	Close-up shots

UZALO SEASON 2 EPISODE 3

DURATION OF APPEARANCE	CHARACTER(S)	APPEARANCE	LOCALITY/SETTING	VOICE REGISTER	CAMERA COMPOSITION
00:16-00:35	MaNzuza and Nkosinathi	MaNzuza is wearing a read doek. She is wearing a black long-sleeved top with black tights and a sarong over the tights When MaNzuza wakes up, she is wearing a doek with a gown.	Durban beach front- evident from the iconography	Although MaNzuza and Nkosinathi are not talking in the dream, they are walking along the shore-line. Suddenly, they head in opposite directions and MaNzuza starts drowning while Nkosinathi stands watching helplessly. MaNzuza wakes up looking shocked and perplexed. Her room is dark at this point.	Close-up and medium close-up
00:51-01:44	MaNgcobo, officer Dhlomo and officer Mondli	MaNgcobo is wearing her leopard print blouse and long black pants with her big necklace and earrings. However, she looks dishevelled. Her hair is messy. Her make-up seems to be smudged. She does not look as glamorous as she did before	Police station (interrogation room). The lighting is dark, natural light is blocked from entering the interrogation room. Yet again, an eerie atmosphere is presented to the audience	She does not obey authority. She is feisty. She is deeply loyal to her husband, she does not give-in to Dhlomo's demands. Interestingly, when Dhlomo asks why she would meet a strange man in the dark, she admits that it was Gxabashe. She raises her voice when talking to the officers. She is also very dismissive and evasive when questioned about Gxabashe. She exits the interrogation room with attitude	Medium close-up and close-up shots
02:03- 03:15	MaNzuza and MaMlambo (Hlengiwe)	MaNzuza is wearing a black and white tartan dress with a white long-sleeve blouse underneath. She is wearing black	KwaMashu neighbourhood (street vendor)	MaNzuza is buying fruit at a street vendor. MaMlambo sees her and they walk together on the street. They are talking about Nkosinathi	Medium close-up shots

		stockings with brown ballerina shoes. Her hair is short, and her make-up is minimal. Her accessories are modest		going to university in Cape town and the fact that Ayanda is still living with MaNzuza it has emerged that he is not her biological son. While they are talking, MaMlambo has a premonition about MaNzuza's family. She references drowning which points to the dream MaNzuza had, but she also mentions that something bad will happen because there are two bulls in a kraal. MaNzuza dismisses MaMlambo's vision and walks away	
03:16-03:58	MaNgcobo and Gxabashe (on the phone) Nosipho enters at 3 minutes, 46 seconds	MaNgcobo is wearing the leopard print blouse with tight, long black pants. Her appearance is still dishevelled. Despite appearing disarrayed, she still has on her gold necklace, watch and earrings	Xulu house- the kitchen and living room	Gxabashe phones MaNgcobo and questions her about how the police located them. She replies that she has no idea but asks why he left her to deal with the police, alone. She expresses her love for Gxabashe and assures him that she will always be faithful to him. He hangs-up on the call. Nosipho walks down the stairway appearing confused by her mother's actions. She asks where her mother was the previous night. MaNgcobo appears blank and storms out the house, leaving Nosipho even more confused	Medium close-up and close-up shots

03:59-	MaNzuzza, Mxolisi and Ayanda Nkosinathi enters the scene at 4 minutes, 39 seconds	MaNzuzza is wearing the same clothes as described earlier	Sitting around the kitchen table.	MaNzuzza is impressed by Mxolisi's cooking skills, but there is still tension between Ayanda and Mxolisi. Ayanda is weary of Mxolisi. MaNzuzza diffuses the tension by discussing Nkosinathi's farewell dinner. When Nkosinathi enters the conversation shifts towards the brotherly bond Ayanda and Nkosinathi share	Medium-close shots
05:03-05:17	MaNgcobo and employees at the panel beater shop	MaNgcobo is wearing the same clothes as described earlier, with high-heels. Her hair looks well put together, again. She also has on an oversized pair of sunglasses with a big brown handbag	Xulu panel beater shop	MaNgcobo is upset about a toolbox being left unattended in the walk-way of the panel beaters. She scolds an employee for being callous with the toolbox. Yet again, she breaks any code of etiquette between males and females.	Close-up shots
06:22- 07:50	MaNgcobo Dhlomo offers the scene at 6 minutes, 42 seconds Mxolisi enters the scene at 7 minutes, 20 seconds Nkosinathi enters at 7 minutes, 30 seconds	Same clothes as described earlier	Panel beater's office. The lighting in the office is dull. Ironically, the lighting where Nkosinathi is standing is also dull	MaNgcobo is sitting at her desk in the panel beater's office. She is looking over financial reports. It is evident there is a lack of money. She looks in the cash-flow box and finds a wad of cash, but it is not enough to cover the expenses of the Xulu business. She appears disillusioned. When Dhlomo enters the office to inform MaNgcobo about Gxabashe being arrested again, she is notably upset. She realises that her struggles will only get worse. Her disposition is still one of	Close-up shots and medium close-up shots

				<p>strength, albeit being broken. She refuses to breakdown in front of officer Dhlomo. When Dhlomo leaves the office, she phones Mxolisi telling him about how distressed she is. He offers to help after hearing her plea. Nkosinathi overhears Mxolisi's phone conversation. He becomes suspicious</p>	
09:12-10:35	<p>MaNgcobo and Mxolisi Nkosinathi enters the scene at 10 minutes, 7 seconds</p>	<p>MaNgcobo is wearing the same clothes as described earlier</p>	<p>Xulu panel beater's office. The lighting is eerily dark</p>	<p>MaNgcobo is anxiously waiting for Mxolisi to arrive. When he arrives, MaNgcobo begs him to help her financially. She drinks a sip of whiskey when he says that he cannot help her. She begs for his help. He is trying hard to turn his life around, but he is torn between helping his mother and sister and staying away from nefarious criminal activities. Mxolisi does not make eye contact with MaNgcobo. Mxolisi eventually agrees to steal one car to help MaNgcobo and Nosipho. He tells her that this is the last time he will partake in criminal activities. Nkosinathi overhears the conversation between Mxolisi and MaNgcobo and tells Mxolisi that he knew Mxolisi couldn't be trusted. MaNgcobo shouts at</p>	<p>Close-up shots and medium close-up shots</p>

				Nkosinathi to get out of the panel beater's office, but he continues insulting Mxolisi	
10:36-10:55	MaNzuza and Ayanda	MaNzuza is wearing the same clothes as described earlier. She has an apron on because she is cooking	Mdletshe kitchen and lounge	MaNzuza is preparing a meal while Ayanda is watching the news which is covering Gxabashe's arrest. They both feel safe because he is arrested	Medium close-up shots
10:56-11:30	MaNgcobo, Mxolisi and Nkosinathi	MaNgcobo is wearing the same attire as described earlier	Xulu panel beaters (the foyer)	Nkosinathi is storming out of the panel beaters to inform MaNzuza about Mxolisi's criminal involvement. Mxolisi and MaNgcobo are racing behind him, attempting to stop him from telling anyone what he heard. Nkosinathi threatens to tell officer Dhlo mo what he has heard. He recorded the conversation between Mxolisi and MaNgcobo. Mxolisi wrestles Nkosinathi for his phone, but Nkosinathi trips and is stabbed by a sharp screw driver. Mxolisi and MaNgcobo stand in disbelief as they look over at Nkosinathi's lifeless body. Mxolisi wants to call the ambulance but MaNgcobo tells him that it will get them into more trouble since Mxolisi is on parole. She decides that they must dispose the body by themselves. Mxolisi is stuck between making a good moral decision and shielding	Medium close-up and close-up shots

				MaNgcobo from more trouble. No matter what choice he makes, he is destined to be in trouble. MaNgcobo quickly takes charge of the situation, barking instructions at Mxolisi	
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UZALO SEASON 2 EPISODE 4

DURATION OF APPEARANCE	CHARACTER(S)	APPEARANCE	LOCALITY/SETTING	VOICE REGISTER	CAMERA COMPOSITION
01:09- 01:52	MaNgcobo and Mxolisi	Leopard print blouse with long black pants. Dishevelled hair and make-up	Xulu panel beaters. The lighting is dark	MaNgcobo and Mxolisi are frantically trying to figure out how to get rid of Nkosinathi's body. Mxolisi is persistent in his desire to call the police, but MaNgcobo knows that the consequences of that will not be good for either of them. MaNgcobo, therefore, instructs Mxolisi to toughen up. MaNgcobo's disposition in the moment is both frantic and strong. She instructs Mxolisi to follow her orders. At this moment she takes charge by force. Her toughness/strength is displayed in this scene, especially through her boisterous and aggressive stance. Mxolisi has no choice but to abide by her instructions.	Close-up shot
02:22- 04:10	MaNgcobo and Mxolisi	MaNgcobo is wearing the same attire as described before	Xulu panel beaters. The scene is still eerily dark	MaNgcobo and Mxolisi stand over Nkosinathi's body in disbelief. MaNgcobo appears bewildered. She is scratching her head. Mxolisi is still adamant about calling the police, but MaNgcobo begs him not to do so. She takes control over the situation. MaNgcobo's motivation to conceal the murder is to save	Medium long-shot, medium close-up

				her family. Mxolisi is conflicted because he concerned about MaNzuza.	
04:11- 04:44	MaNzuza, Ayanda and MaMlambo	MaNzuza is wearing the same attire as described before, with an apron over her clothes.	Mdletshe home – the kitchen. The lighting is dimmer than usual	MaNzuza is irritated that both Mxolisi and Nkosinathi are not home for dinner. MaMlambo visits to speak to Ayanda about the church. MaNzuza is unperturbed because she is worried about Nkosinathi	Medium and Medium-long shots
04:45- 06:40	MaNgcobo and Mxolisi. MaNzuza phones Mxolisi at 5 minutes 22 seconds		Xulu panel beaters. The lighting is dark	MaNgcobo shouts at Mxolisi to follow her instructions. She is using a frantic and aggressive tone. MaNzuza calls Mxolisi worried about where he is and what time he is coming home. Mxolisi assures her that he will be home soon MaNgcobo stares at him piercingly, hoping he doesn't tell MaNzuza what has happened. Mxolisi and MaNgcobo have a tense moment after his phone call with MaNzuza. She is angry with him and calls him 'weak'. MaNgcobo orders Mxolisi to dispose of Nkosinathi's body. He follows her command and uses a jack hammer to dig a hole in MaNgcobo's office to bury Nkosinathi's body	Medium, medium-long and medium close-up shots
06:41- 08:01	MaNzuza, Ayanda and MaMlambo		Mdletshe home – the kitchen	MaNzuza appears concerned. She is anxiously	Medium-long and medium close-up shots

				waiting for Nkosinathi and MaNgcobo to return home. MaMlambo suddenly gets a premonition about a dark cloud looming over the Mdletshe family which signifies that something bad is about to happen, but MaNzuza dismisses MaMlambo's vision. This is largely because MaMlambo's connection with the ancestral world contradicts MaNzuza's Christian beliefs	
08:02- 08:56	MaNgcobo and Mxolisi		Xulu panel beaters – in the office	MaNgcobo and Mxolisi are digging a grave in the office to bury Nkosinathi's body. Mxolisi is withdrawn, but MaNgcobo shouts at him to continue digging the grave	Medium close-up and medium shots
09:08-10:19	MaNgcobo and Mxolisi		Xulu panel beaters – in the office	Mxolisi is apprehensive to bury Nkosinathi's body, but MaNgcobo agitatedly tells him to continue with their plan. She firmly instructs him to bury the body.	Medium close-up shots
10:20- 11:19	MaNzuza, Ayanda, Thobile, GC and Smangele		Mdletshe home – the kitchen	MaNzuza is in the kitchen preparing for Nkosinathi's surprise farewell. GC, Thobile and Smangele have arrived for the party.	Medium shot
11:20- 12:17	MaNgcobo and Mxolisi		Xulu panel beaters – in the office	MaNgcobo and Mxolisi continue filling the grave with sand. Mxolisi gets sick, but MaNgcobo tells him to toughen up. Both characters look worn-out	Close-up, Medium close-up and medium shots

12:18- 13:02	MaNzuza, Ayanda, Thobile, GC and Thobile		Mdletshe home – lounge	MaNzuza appears worried. She asks Ayanda if knows where Mxolisi and Nkosinathi are. Ayanda admits that Nkosinathi is with his girlfriend at a mall. Angered by what Ayanda tells her, she throws her apron at him and goes to her bedroom.	Medium and medium close-up shots
13: 11- 16: 42	MaNgcobo and Mxolisi		Xulu panel beaters – in the office	MaNgcobo walks into the office with a bucket and a mop. She thanks Mxolisi for listening to her. She tells him that they have done a good job burying Nkosinathi because nobody will find his body, but Mxolisi looks upset. MaNgcobo expresses no remorse for what she has done because she was preserving her own interests instead of going to jail. Mxolisi gets sick, but instead of comforting him, MaNgcobo yells at him to be tough.	Medium and medium-long shots
16: 43- 18: 03	MaNzuza		Mdletshe home – MaNzuza’s room. The lighting is dark	MaNzuza is looking at a picture frame with Nkosinathi’s picture with pride. She attempts calling Nkosinathi and leaves a voice message. She sounds concerned, yet she also scolds him for not being home. She eventually expresses how proud she is of him going to university	Close-up and medium close-up shots

<p>18: 05 – 23: 06</p>	<p>MaNgcobo and Mxolisi</p>	<p>MaNgcobo has changed her attire. She is wearing a navy-blue shirt with long black pants and high heel shoes. Her hair is untied</p>	<p>Outside Xulu panel beaters – The lighting is dark</p>	<p>MaNgcobo and Mxolisi are standing around a black drum with a fire burning. They are burning the clothes they were wearing earlier because they have Nkosinathi’s blood stains on them.</p> <p>The atmosphere is tense. MaNgcobo and Mxolisi are standing opposite each other. Mxolisi is disturbed by his actions. He cannot come to terms with the fact that he has killed his brother. Mxolisi tells MaNgcobo that he hopes she burns in hell for her actions. He feels extremely guilty for what they have done. Although MaNgcobo is opposite him, she refuses to look directly at him. She appears withdrawn. MaNgcobo eventually cracks and expresses that the only reason disposed of Nkosinathi’s body without informing the police, is because she was trying to protect her family. She explains emphatically that there was no alternative other than the decision they made. She emotionally exclaims that the KwaMashu community hate their family and would never believe their version of events. She emotionally tells Mxolisi that</p>	<p>Medium close-up and close-up shots</p>
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				they will take this secret to their grave. She tells him that fate has brought them together through Nkosinathi's death, and that this will unite them forever.	
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UZALO SEASON 2 EPISODE 5

DURATION OF APPEARANCE	CHARACTER(S)	DRESS CODE	SETTING/LOCALITY	VOICE REGISTER	CAMERA COMPOSITION
00:56 – 01:54	MaNzuza, Ayanda and Mxolisi	Black and white Tartan dress with long-sleeved white blouse underneath. She is wearing stockings with pink bedroom slippers	Mdletshe home – entrance hallway It is darkly lit	MaNzuza wakes-up because Ayanda is questioning Mxolisi regarding is whereabouts. She interjects the fight asking them why they are fighting. MaNzuza embraces Mxolisi and asks if he is ok. He looks guilty but doesn't tell her about Nkosinathi. She comforts him while he is crying. He acts as if he is emotional because he wants to be accepted by the Mdletshe family	Close-up and medium close-up shots
02:25 – 03: 20	MaNzuza	MaNzuza is wearing a black long-sleeved chiffon blouse with a long black and white dress over it.	Mdletshe home – the kitchen. MaNzuza is sitting at the dining table	MaNzuza is saying a prayer thanking God for uniting her with Mxolisi. She asks God to forgive her for judging Mxolisi. She further asks for God's protection over Mxolisi's life. She also prays for God's protection over Nkosinathi and Ayanda's lives. Ironically, she is praying for peace and happiness, yet this is the antithesis of the situation	Close-up shot
03: 55 – 06: 11	MaNzuza, Ayanda and Mxolisi	Same attire as described earlier	Mdletshe home – in the lounge	MaNzuza is stirring a cup of tea. She appears to be aloof. It is evident that she is worried about Nkosinathi.	Close-up and medium close-up shots

				Although Mxolisi is aware of what has happened to Nkosinathi, he keeps quiet. MaNzuza is seriously worried and Mxolisi's guilt is evident	
06: 12 – 07:58	MaNgcobo Nosipho enters at 6 minutes 46 seconds	MaNgcobo is wearing the navy-blue dress. However, the audience can only see the top of the dress. Her is dishevelled. She has not got any make-up on. She appears disorientated. Although she has a chunky necklace and earrings, she does not look like her usual self	Xulu kitchen – MaNgcobo is standing against the kitchen cabinet	MaNgcobo attempts calling Mxolisi, but his phone goes to voice-mail. She tells him that she hopes he has not said anything about Nkosinathi's murder. Nosipho appears jovial, but MaNgcobo is withdrawn. She looks like a ghost. Nosipho notices that there is something wrong with her mother and probes. MaNgcobo refuses to tell her what has happened and starts screaming, telling Nosipho to leave her alone.	Close-up shot
07:59 - 12: 25	MaNgcobo Ayanda enters at 9 minutes 52 seconds	MaNgcobo is wearing a navy-blue shirt-dress. The dress sits on the knee, with the back slightly longer. She is carrying a big handbag. She wears high heel shoes. Yet again, her accessories are big and noticeable. Her hair is tied back	Church – MaNgcobo walks down the aisle of the church	MaNgcobo sits on the pew and emotionally starts singing a gospel song. She gets onto her knees and starts praying pleading forgiveness for her sins. When Ayanda walks in he is shocked to see MaNgcobo on her knees praying, emotionally. She eventually opens her eyes and sees Ayanda, greeting him as her son. He refuses to acknowledge MaNgcobo as his mother because of her notorious lifestyle. He admits that although he has Xulu	Medium- long and close-up shots

				blood in his veins, he is a Mdletshe. This scene is one of the few times the audience sees MaNgcobo vulnerable	
12: 55 – 14: 47	MaNzuza and Mxolisi	Wearing same attire as described earlier	Mdletshe home – Nkosinathi’s bedroom	MaNzuza enters Nkosinathi’s bedroom and sits next to Mxolisi on the bed. She appears happier than she was earlier. She starts reminiscing about previous times, before she knew Mxolisi was her son. She recalls the bond shared by Mxolisi and Nkosinathi. She is excited that she has the chance to establish a relationship with Mxolisi	Close-up and medium shots
14: 48 – 16: 11	MaNgcobo Nosipho enters at 14 minutes 56 seconds	Wearing same attire as described earlier	Xulu panel beaters – the office	MaNgcobo is attempting to contact Mxolisi. He refuses to answer his phone. MaNgcobo appears concerned. When Nosipho enters, she asks her mother, again, if there is anything wrong with her, but MaNgcobo sarcastically states all the other issues they are facing. MaNgcobo’s body language is very suspicious	Close-up shot
20: 17 - 21:05	MaNgcobo and Mxolisi	MaNgcobo is wearing the same clothes as described earlier	Xulu household – the kitchen. She is drinking a glass of red wine	Mxolisi is expressing his guilt to MaNgcobo. He feels uncomfortable about that the Mdletshe’s are searching for Nkosinathi, when he knows that Nkosinathi is dead. Mxolisi is conflicted because he is trying hard to reform his life, but he loves	Close- up shot

				MaNgcobo and feels obliged to protect her	
21:19 – 22:04	MaNgcobo and Mxolisi	MaNgcobo is wearing the same clothes as described earlier	Xulu household - the kitchen	Mxolisi is put into a precarious position because he wants to the right thing and tell MaNzuza about Nkosinathi, yet he also wants to protect MaNgcobo and the Xulu dynasty. The scene is tense	Close-up shot
22:05 - 23: 57	MaNzuza Mxolisi enters at 22 minutes 8 seconds and Ayanda enters at 22 minutes 24 seconds	MaNzuza is wearing the same clothes as described earlier. She is wearing stockings with pink bedroom slippers	Mdletshe home – the entrance of the hallway	MaNzuza is carrying Nkosinathi’s luggage. She is hopeful that he will come home in time to catch the bus to Cape Town. Mxolisi wants to tell MaNzuza about Nkosinathi, but Ayanda enters the house. Ayanda admits that he cannot find Nkosinathi. MaNzuza starts crying uncontrollably. She falls on the floor screaming that she wants Nkosinathi. She looks helpless. Ayanda embraces her, but Mxolisi stands aside looking guilty and out of place.	Close-up and medium shots

UZALO SEASON 2 EPISODE 152

DURATION OF APPEARANCE	CHARACTER(S)	DRESS CODE	SETTING/LOCALITY	VOICE REGISTER	CAMERA COMPOSITION
03: 06 – 04:18	MaNzuza, Keke (MaNzuza’s sister) and MaMlambo	MaNzuza is wearing a doek round her head, with a gown over her pyjamas	Mdletshe home - the hallway	MaNzuza is annoyed that MaMlambo has visited early in the morning. MaMlambo has come to tell MaNzuza that Nkosinathi’s spirit is not at peace. She further explains that his remains are somewhere in KwaMashu. MaNzuza is sceptical because the previous search at Xulu panel beaters was a sham. MaNzuza is irritable because MaMlambo always has dreams/visions that go unresolved. Furthermore, MaMlambo’s connection with the ancestral world contradicts MaNzuza’s Christian beliefs. She eventually walks to her bedroom	Close-up shots
06: 19 – 07:45	MaNzuza, Keke and MaMlambo	MaNzuza is wearing a long-sleeved dress with a blouse underneath. She has on black stockings. MaNzuza’s hairstyle is a short bob. She still wears modest make-up and accessories	Mdletshe home – the Kitchen	MaNzuza is standing by the kettle making something to drink. She still refuses to accept MaMlambo’s premonitions about her family. She eventually walks out the house because she is irritated by both Keke and MaMlambo	Medium close-up shot
09:53 - 11: 53	MaNgcobo and MaNzuza	MaNgcobo is wearing a short (slightly above the knee) black and white	Xulu home – cleaning the dining table	MaNzuza visits MaNgcobo. They both sit at the dining table. MaNzuza discusses how	Medium-long and close-up shots

		<p>dress with bedroom slippers. MaNgcobo has on deep-red lipstick with long red-painted finger nails</p> <p>Her hair is untied</p> <p>MaNzuza is wearing the same attire as discussed before. She has on black ballerina shoes (flat pumps)</p>		<p>their husbands could not stand each other, yet their sons were separated at birth. MaNzuza's intention for visiting MaNgcobo is to make peace with the Xulu family. She believes that the switch of their sons is a sign from God to tell them to forgive each other. MaNgcobo is visibly uncomfortable because she is guilty about Nkosinathi's murder.</p>	
15:16 – 17:36	MaNzuza, Keke, Ayanda and Smangele (Ayanda's wife)	MaNzuza is wearing the same attire as discussed earlier. She has changed her shoes and is now wearing bedroom slippers	Mdletshe home – the kitchen sitting at the dining table	MaNzuza and the other characters are talking about MaMlambo's visions. MaNzuza is not convinced about her premonitions. They are also talking about Smangele's pregnancy. It is a jovial conversation	Medium, and medium close-up shots
17: 37 – 20: 22	MaNgcobo and Mxolisi	MaNgcobo is wearing the same attire as described earlier	Xulu home – sitting at the dining table	MaNgcobo is reading her bible. MaNgcobo tells Mxolisi that MaNzuza visited earlier in the day asking for peace between the Xulu and the Mdletshe families. Mxolisi doesn't want to visit MaNzuza because he feels guilty for lying to her about Nkosinathi. This is the first time the audience sees remorse from MaNgcobo. She realises that she has denied a mother the opportunity to mourn her child. She finally agrees that they must tell MaNzuza where they have buried Nkosinathi's remains	Close-up

21:56 - 23:57	MaNzuza, Keke, Ayanda and Smangele	MaNzuza is wearing her pyjamas with a gown over it. She has a doek (head-scarf) tied on her head	Mdletshe home – lounge	MaNzuza and Keke silently watch Smangele and Ayanda argue over her pregnancy. MaNzuza appears surprised by what she is hearing. She is stern with the two of them, but does not get too involved in their argument	Medium, medium close-up shots
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UZALO SEASON 2 EPISODE 153

DURATION OF APPEARANCE	CHARACTER(S)	DRESS CODE	SETTING/LOCALITY	VOICE REGISTER	CAMERA COMPOSITION
02:52 – 03:58	MaNzuza and Keke	MaNzuza is wearing a plum polar neck	Mdletshe home – at the dining table in the kitchen	The conversation is about Smangele. Keke does not trust Smangele, but MaNzuza does not take heed of what Keke is saying. MaNzuza receives a text from an unknown number informing her where Nkosinathi’s body has been buried. MaNzuza freezes from shock	Close-up shots
05:27 – 06:53	MaNzuza, Keke and Mondli	MaNzuza is wearing a long plum polar neck dress	Mdletshe home – MaNzuza is sitting at the dining table	MaNzuza appears subdued. She is also very emotional. Mondli questions her about the validity of the number. Mondli promises to do his best to solve Nkosinathi’s case	Close-up shots
12:19 – 15:26	MaNzuza and MaNgcobo Mondli enters at 13 minutes 52 seconds	MaNzuza is wearing the same attire as described earlier. MaNgcobo is wearing black long pants with a leopard print chiffon shirt. Her hair is untied. MaNgcobo’s finger-nails are still painted bright red	Mdletshe home – MaNzuza is sitting on the couch in the lounge. When MaNgcobo enters the house, she sits next to MaNzuza	MaNzuza is sitting on the couch looking worried. MaNgcobo comes over with a jar of cupcakes. MaNzuza shows MaNgcobo the text that was sent to her. MaNgcobo offers her comfort. Mxolisi has come to speak to MaNzuza about the message she received regarding Nkosinathi. The two women’s dispositions are different. While MaNzuza is sad and crying, MaNgcobo appears	Close-up and medium- long shots

				uneasy. MaNgcobo eventually comforts MaNzuza when she hears that the number, she sent the message on is untraceable.	
15:52 – 17:05	MaNzuza, MaNgcobo, Keke and MaMlambo Ayanda enters at 16 minutes 30 seconds	MaNzuza and MaNgcobo are wearing the same attire as described earlier	Mdletshe home – lounge	MaNzuza is going with MaNgcobo, Keke and MaMlambo to see if Nkosinathi’s remains have been buried where the message suggested it may be. MaNzuza appears cautiously hopeful.	Close-up shots
18:41 – 20:57	MaNzuza, MaNgcobo, Keke, MaMlambo, Ayanda and Kwa Mashu community	MaNzuza and MaNgcobo are wearing the same attire described earlier	Open veld in Kwa Mashu	MaNzuza appears worried. Ayanda is holding her. MaNgcobo appears uncomfortable. MaNzuza is holding her bible close to her chest.	Long, close-up, medium-long and medium shots
21:43 - 23:50	MaNzuza, MaNgcobo, Keke, MaMlambo, Ayanda, Mxolisi and Kwa Mashu community	MaNzuza and MaNgcobo are wearing the same attire described earlier	Open veld in Kwa Mashu	When MaNzuza sees the body being excavated, she starts sobbing. Ayanda comforts her. MaNgcobo and Mxolisi look at each other in guilt. The atmosphere is sombre and emotional. Although MaNgcobo is guilty, she has a sense of remorse because she provided closure for MaNzuza	Long, medium and medium-close-up shots

UZALO SEASON 2 EPISODE 154

DURATION OF APPEARANCE	CHARACTER(S)	DRESS CODE	SETTING/LOCALITY	VOICE REGISTER	CAMERA COMPOSITION
02:55 – 03:53	MaNzuza, Keke and Mondli	MaNzuza is wearing a long black chiffon dress	Mdletshe home – sitting at the dining table	Mondli has brought the envelope with the DNA results to MaNzuza’s house. She appears nervous. The results reveal that the remains belong to Nkosinathi. MaNzuza gets up from her chair and walks away.	Medium close-up and close-up shots
08:48 – 09:04	MaNzuza, Keke, MaMlambo and Ayanda	MaNzuza is wearing a long black dress. She also has a deep purple doek wrapped around her head. She has a black shawl over her dress	Mdletshe home - lounge	MaNzuza walks into the lounge announcing that they should start planning Nkosinathi’s funeral	Medium, medium close-up and close-up shots
09:05 - 11:40	MaNgcobo and Nosipho	MaNgcobo is wearing a vertical black and white striped shirt. Her hair is untied. She has on bulky accessories	Xulu home – kitchen	MaNgcobo is drinking a cup of coffee. She appears distant. Nosipho and MaNgcobo are talking about Nkosinathi’s remains. Nosipho confronts MaNgcobo about murdering Nkosinathi. MaNgcobo appears shocked. Nosipho starts piecing together the chain of events. MaNgcobo does not make eye-contact with Nosipho. Instead, she stares directly ahead.	Close-up shot

				MaNgcobo cannot face Nosipho	
12:31 – 13:57	MaNgcobo and Nosipho Mxolisi enters at 12 minutes 54 seconds	MaNgcobo is wearing the same attire described earlier	Xulu home – Kitchen	Nosipho is very upset because she has realised that Mondli was right about MaNgcobo and Mxolisi being involved in the murder of Nkosinathi. MaNgcobo is crying, although she is not admitting to anything> She attempts embracing Nosipho, but she refuses. Nosipho feels betrayed. When Nosipho walks out, MaNgcobo breaks down, crying. It is the first time that audience sees remorse her show for what she has done	Close-up shots
13:58 - 14:52	MaNzuza	MaNzuza is wearing the same attire described earlier	Mdletshe home – MaNzuza’s room	MaNzuza is looking at a picture of Nkosinathi in a big picture frame. She says a prayer in which she expresses her acceptance of Nkosinathi’s death	Medium-long shot
14:53 – 17:15	MaNgcobo and Mxolisi Keke enters at 15 minutes 41 seconds	MaNgcobo is wearing a loose-fitting top with earthy colours. Her hair is untied	Xulu home – in the kitchen	MaNgcobo appears subdued. There is nothing she can do to resolve the situation because the truth is out. The mood is sombre	Close-up
17:16 – 18:48	MaNzuza, MaNgcobo, Mxolisi, Ayanda, MaMlambo. Keke, Thobile and GC	MaNzuza is wearing the same attire described earlier. MaNgcobo is wearing a loose-fitting top with earthy colours. She is also wearing long black pants. Her hair is untied.	Mdletshe home – in the lounge	The mood is sombre. Ayanda has opened the service in prayer. Everyone is discussing funeral arrangements. MaNzuza appears distant. MaNgcobo and Mxolisi appear uncomfortable as they know	Long, medium-long and close-up shots

		MaNgcobo is wearing a shawl over her outfit		they are responsible for everything. Mxolisi is stuck in the middle because MaNzuza wants him home, but he is guilty for killing his brother. He also doesn't want to leave MaNgcobo to suffer alone.	
22:33 – 23:57	MaNgcobo and Mxolisi	MaNgcobo is wearing the same attire described earlier	Xulu home – the dining table	MaNgcobo is pouring herself and Mxolisi a shot of whiskey. Both MaNgcobo and Mxolisi appear lost. They can barely speak to each other; the atmosphere is tense. Mxolisi wants to confess to the murder. MaNgcobo does not appear very happy about what Mxolisi is suggesting	Medium close-up

UZALO SEASON 2 EPISODE 155

DURATION OF APPEARANCE	CHARACTER(S)	DRESS CODE	SETTING/LOCALITY	VOICE REGISTER	CAMERA COMPOSITION
00:57 – 02:07	MaNgcobo and Mxolisi	MaNgcobo is wearing the same attire described earlier	Xulu home – the dining table	MaNgcobo takes control of the situation. She stops Mxolisi from going to tell MaNzuzu the truth. The scene is tense. MaNgcobo makes it clear to Mxolisi that she will not go to jail. She takes the bottle of Whiskey and threatens to bash Mxolisi’s skull if he tells MaNzuzu the truth about Nkosinathi’s murder	Close-up
10:13 – 12:30	MaNzuzu, Keke and MaMlambo Ayanda call MaNzuzu at 11 minutes 58 seconds	MaNzuzu is still wearing the black long dress with the purple doek wrapped around her head.	Mdletshe home – sitting at the dining table in the kitchen	All three ladies are drinking a cup of tea. MaNzuzu is saying that she can finally get some closure from this entire ordeal. MaNzuzu is naïve. She is hopeful that she can restore her relationship with Mxolisi. Ayanda calls to tell MaNzuzu that Smangele has given birth. This lightens the mood. She appears excited	Medium close-up shots
12:31 – 14:13	MaNgcobo and Mxolisi Nosipho enters at 13 minutes 3 seconds Jabulile (MaNgcobo’s sister) enters at 14 minutes 8 seconds	MaNgcobo is wearing the same attire described earlier	Xulu home – sitting at the dining table	MaNgcobo and Mxolisi are sitting and drinking whiskey. The atmosphere is still tense because Mxolisi wishes to do the right thing, but MaNgcobo is adamant that he will not tell MaNzuzu the truth. Nosipho seems confused by MaNgcobo and Mxolisi’s behaviour. MaNgcobo is still scolding and threatening Mxolisi	Medium close-up shots
15:18 – 16:52	MaNgcobo, Mxolisi and Jabulile	MaNgcobo is wearing the same attire described earlier	Xulu home – at the dining table	When Jabulile enters MaNgcobo’s house, both MaNgcobo and Mxolisi are shocked. MaNgcobo attempts to	Medium close-up

				appear concerned, but Jabulile dismisses her. Both MaNgcobo and Mxolisi are forced to sit down while Jabulile is standing and yelling at them. She reveals the tape she found with MaNgcobo and Mxolisi discussing the murder of Nkosinathi. MaNgcobo and Mxolisi appear anxious because they cannot run away from the truth any longer	
17:21 – 19:29	MaNzuza, Keke, Thobile, GC and Mastermind (Smangele’s brother and Mxolisi’s friend) Smangele and Ayanda enter 17 minutes 53 seconds	MaNzuza is wearing the same attire described before	Mdletshe home – the lounge is decorated with blue and white balloons	MaNzuza appears more relaxed and excited because they are about to welcome Ayanda and Smangele’s baby boy home. Although Keke is against the celebration, it is a way for MaNzuza to take her mind away from Nkosinathi’s death. When the baby arrives home, everyone is filled with joy	Medium long, medium and close-up shots
19:30 – 21: 54	MaNzuza and Keke Jabulile enters at 21 minutes 8 seconds	MaNzuza is wearing the same attire described earlier	Mdletshe home – sitting in the lounge	MaNzuza and Keke are discussing the funeral arrangements. MaNzuza appears confused because she is mourning Nkosinathi, yet celebrating the birth of her grandson, Nkosinathi. She is also concerned because Nkosinathi’s surname is Xulu which she believes is contaminating her son, Nkosinathi’s, memory. Furthermore, the audience can see the irony of the entire situation because Nkosinathi was killed by Xulu’s. Jabulile visits MaNzuza. She states that she knows who killed Nkosinathi	Close-up
22:18 - 23:35	MaNzuza, Keke and Mxolisi	MaNzuza is wearing the same attire described previously	Mdletshe home – the lounge	Mxolisi rushes into the Mdletshe home panting. MaNzuza is concerned about him, but Jabulile is aware that he was chasing her. MaNzuza	Medium close-up shots

				appears confused, but Jabulile proceeds to play the recording of MaNgcobo and Mxolisi discussing their involvement in Nkosinathi's murder. MaNzuza is terribly shocked. She is in disbelief. She falls to the ground, holding her chest.	
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UZALO SEASON 2 EPISODE 156

DURATION OF APPEARANCE	CHARACTER(S)	DRESS CODE	SETTING/LOCALITY	VOICE REGISTER	CAMERA COMPOSITION
01:00 – 01:44	MaNzuza, Jabulile and Mxolisi	MaNzuza is wearing the same attire described earlier	Mdletshe home – hallway entrance	MaNzuza is crying. She is in disbelief. The recording she has heard has broken her. She is frozen and speechless. Mxolisi gets on his knees and begs forgiveness from MaNzuza	Close-up shots
02:19 – 04:12	MaNzuza, Jabulile and Mxolisi	MaNzuza is wearing the same attire described earlier	Mdletshe home – hallway entrance	Mxolisi attempts explaining what happened to Nkosinathi. He states that it was an accident. He is on his knees begging forgiveness (<i>flashback scenes from the night Nkosinathi was murdered</i>). MaNzuza is in shock, she cannot utter a word. MaNzuza eventually walks away, silently	Close-up shots
04:43 - 04:59	MaNzuza, Jabulile and Mxolisi	MaNzuza is wearing the same attire described earlier	Mdletshe home – hallway entrance	MaNzuza silently walks past Mxolisi and Jabulile with her bag in hand. She appears ghost-like, walking past both Mxolisi and Jabulile without saying a word	Close-up shots
05:35 -	MaNgcobo and Nosipho MaNzuza enters at 6 minutes 57 seconds	MaNgcobo is wearing the same attire described earlier	Xulu home – in the garage	MaNgcobo seems to be running away. She has packed two suitcases and is heading towards her car. Nosipho is fighting with her mother to confess the truth, but MaNgcobo is obstinate. She wants to run away. MaNzuza rams her car into MaNgcobo. She seems to have no emotion	Close-up shots

07:48 – 09:08	<p>MaNgcobo and MaNzuza</p> <p>Nosipho enters at 8 minutes 25 seconds</p> <p>Mondli enters at 8 minutes 41 seconds</p>	<p>MaNgcobo is wearing the same attire described earlier</p> <p>MaNzuza is wearing the same attire described earlier</p>	Xulu home – outside, on the road	<p>MaNgcobo is laying in a pool of blood on the road. MaNzuza gets out her car, walks towards her and looks over her saying, die Satan. She proceeds to get in her car and drives away.</p> <p>Nosipho arrives after MaNzuza has fled the scene. She is frantically trying to wake her mom from the ground. When Mondli arrives, Nosipho is on the floor trying to resuscitate MaNgcobo. Mondli calls for back-up and an ambulance</p>	Close-up, medium long shots
15: 16 – 19:11	<p>MaNzuza</p> <p>Mxolisi enters at 16 minutes 59 seconds</p>	MaNzuza is wearing the same attire described earlier	Mdletshe home – Ayanda’s office	<p>MaNzuza walks into Ayanda’s office. She appears robotic, unlike her normal personae. She sits in the office and pulls out two picture frames, one with Nkosinathi’s picture and the other with Melusi (her husband) inside. She eventually breaks down and starts crying, asking why Melusi left her alone. Her sadness is further exacerbated by the fact that her biological son killed his own brother. She feels alone. She is sobbing.</p> <p>Mxolisi stands at the entrance of the office. He appears remorseful. While Mxolisi is apologising, MaNzuza’s lip is trembling. He starts telling her the truth behind Nkosinathi’s death. As he is explaining what happened, she points a gun at him. MaNzuza’s entire body is trembling. She starts telling him that she loved him, as her own child. She yells at</p>	Medium close-up shots

				him questioning him as to why he would kill Nkosinathi. She is very upset	
21:44 – 22:47	MaNgcobo, Nosipho, Mondli, Ayanda, Keke, Jabulile and Kwa Mashu community	MaNgcobo is wearing the same attire described before. However, she is being taken way in a stretcher by the ambulance	Xulu home – on the street	MaNgcobo is being carried into the ambulance vehicle on a stretcher. Nosipho is crying uncontrollably. Ayanda and Nosipho are walking alongside the stretcher attempting to talk to MaNgcobo, but she is unconscious	Close-up, medium-long
22:48 – 23:51	MaNzuza and Mxolisi	MaNzuza is in the same attire described earlier	Mdletshe home – Ayanda's office	MaNzuza continues pointing a gun at Mxolisi. He is pleading with her not to shoot him. MaNzuza is trembling. She eventually pulls the trigger and Mxolisi falls onto her, but she lets him fall onto the floor. She hovers over his body, but she is still trembling	Medium close-up shots

Appendix B: Uzalo demographic breakdown

Source: SABC archives, 2016

Analysis of programmes:
144 of 359 days included;
Reported date(s): 08/02/2016 – 09/02/2016; 11/02/2016; 15/02/2016 – 17/02/2016; 22/02/2016 – 24/02/2016; 29/02/2016 – 02/03/2016; 07/03/2016 – 09/03/2016; 14/03/2016 – 16/03/2016; 21/03/2016 – 23/03/2016; 28/03/2016; 30/03/2016; 04/04/2016 – 06/04/2016; 11/04/2016 – 13/03/2016; 18/03/2016 – 20/04/2016; 25/04/2016 – 27/04/2016; 02/05/2016 – 04/05/2016; 09/05/2016 – 11/05/2016; 16/05/2016 – 18/05/2016; 23/05/2016 – 25/05/2016; 30/06/2016 – 01/06/2016; 06/06/2016 – 08/06/2016; 13/06/2016 – 15/06/2016; 20/06/2016 – 22/06/2016; 27/06/2016 – 29/06/2016; 04/07/2016 – 06/07/2016; 11/07/2016 – 13/07/2016; 18/07/2016 – 20/07/2016; 25/07/2016 – 26/07/2016; 01/08/2016 – 03/08/2016; 08/08/2016 – 10/08/2016; 15/08/2016 – 17/08/2016; 22/08/2016; 24/08/2016; 29/08/2016 – 31/08/2016; 05/09/2016; 07/09/2016; 12/09/2016 – 14/09/2016; 19/09/2016 – 21/09/2016; 26/09/2016 – 28/09/2016; 03/10/2016 – 05/10/2016; 10/10/2016; 12/10/2016 – 13/10/2016; 17/10/2016 – 19/10/2016; 24/10/2016 – 26/10/2016; 21/10/2016 – 02/11/2016; 07/11/2016;
Selected date(s): 08/02/2016 – 31/01/2017;
Selected channel(s): SABC One;
Selected day part(s): 20:00:00 – 21:00:59 (MTWTF --);
Selected market(s): National;
Selected variable(s): AMR %; TSUSHR %; AMR;
Selected Activities: Live + VOSDAL;

Selected target(s):
Adults Age 15+ (Adults Age 15+) [Individuals and Guests Age in years (from 15 – 120)] (National) Universe: 33'869'449; Sample: 8'364;
Ranking: None;
Notes:

Average Demographic Profile (Base: Adults)

SABC 1: Uzalo

Market	Target	
National	Adults Age 15+ (Adults Age 15+)	
Profile Header	Profile Details/Variables	Demo%
Gender	Male	42%
	Female	58%
	Age – 15 - 24	22%
	Age – 25 - 34	23%
	Age – 35 - 49	27%
	Age – 50+	27%
Ethnic Group	White	0%
	Coloured	3%
	Indian	0%
	Black	97%
Language	English	1%
	Afrikaans	3%
	Nguni	59%
	Sotho	37%
LSM Group	LSM 1	
	LSM 2	0%
	LSM 3	2%
	LSM 4	21%
	LSM 5	24%

	LSM 6	28%
	LSM 7	13%
	LSM 8	6%
	LSM 9	5%
	LSM 10	1%
	LSM 1 – 4 (Age 15+)	23%
	LSM 5 - 6 (Age 15+)	52%
	LSM 7 – 10 (Age 15+)	25%
Watch Via DSTV	No	77%
	Yes	24%
Province		
	Western Cape	6%
	Northern Cape	1%
	Free State	6%
	Eastern Cape	14%
	KwaZulu Natal	22%
	Mpumalanga	9%
	Limpopo	11%
	Gauteng	24%
North West	7%	

Market	Channel	Target			
National	SABC 1	Adults Age 15+ (Adults Age 15+)			
Description (grouped)	Year	Month	AR	SHR %	AR VIEWERS
UZALO	2016	February	21,2	60,8	7 135 387
		March	22,1	61,4	7 424 930
		April	22,1	61,3	7 435 876
		May	21,4	59,9	7 226 656
		June	22,5	62,6	7 566 667
		July	23,0	63,8	7 753 101
		August	23,0	63,8	7 755 083
		September	22,8	63,0	7 790 898
		October	23,0	64,0	7 843 723
		November	21,2	60,5	7 225 898
		December	21,7	62,1	7 416 774
		2017	January	22,2	62,2
Summary UZALO			22,2	62,1	7 506 629

Appendix C: Interview transcripts

Interviewer: Janet Onuh

Interviewee(s): Thuli Zuma and Mmamitse Thibedi

Transcriber: Shannon Landers

Duration: 1 hr 09 minutes 51 seconds

This interview has been transcribed as accurately as possible. However, there have been slight alterations for more coherent sentences. The editing has in no way impaired the intended meaning of both the interviewer and the interviewees.

Janet: I am about to record our conversation, is it fine?

Mmamitse Thibedi (MT): Yes.

Janet: Alright. Ok. Like I said earlier, I am trying to see the representation of matriarchs in *Uzalo*. S, my first question is, in what ways do Zandile and Lindiwe compare to other local and international soapies, the matriarchs. How are they similar and how are they different?

MT: Uhm, locally, I think they are very similar to a lot of women in our communities. Uhm, they actually attest to have much. When, when they come across women, whether they are speaking publicly, women talk to them about how they can relate to their experiences on the TV show. Obviously Lindiwe and, uhm, Zandile are two, like, different characters. One is the gangster's wife, who has now inherited, in a sense, the gangsterism that comes with her family and one is the priest's uhm wife. She tried to maintain the, the religious aspect or spiritual aspect of her family and that's how they have gotten the family. They are similar in that both of them don't have their husbands anymore in Season Two and so they were able to rise as matriarchs and uhm; and sort of their stories being dependent on, on their husbands' stories collapsed. It was our decision that we wanted to explore women from the context of their own strength as opposed to the context of who they are when they are supporting men. Uhm, so I think that, locally, they represent a lot of women who have to go through life without, uhm, men; normalising women standing on their own, without needing men around them. Whether their situations are normal or not, that is another story, but we have normalised that context. And I think this has a universal feel because it speaks to women's personal strengths and some

of the, uhm, patriarchal issues that they come into, being that they are women who no longer have husbands next to them. Yeah.

Janet: So, you feel they are actually, so you are saying that internationally they also have some level of similarities?

MT: Absolutely! I think that there is a universal context to it, so an international context to it, in that. Like, Cookie in *Empire*, I think she stands alone, and she is a very different character to, uhm, Zandile but, but her context is, is the same, in that she is a woman who stands on her own. Yeah.

Thuli Zuma (TZ): Yeah. Absolutely! I would, I would agree. I also think that in the Second Season we also explored a little bit, like you said, about, uhm, how they run, you know, they have risen as matriarchs in each of their household lives, but also how they run up against the patriarchy, you know what I mean? Like, MaNgcobo, in sort of losing her husband and needing to find *another* husband to make her way in the world because it's not always easy to make a way as a woman without that, but then that falling apart and her having to stand alone without having to seek out male support. Uhm, yeah.

Janet: Alright. Thank you. Ok. My next question is, uhm. Zandile as a pastor's wife and Lindiwe as a criminal's wife, they are almost opposite, like you explained earlier. Why is this important to the storyline?

MT: It is important to the storyline because, uhm, we have to tell. For us to be sort of socially responsible, we have to tell parallel stories that reflect the good and the bad in our society, and how even in the good there is some bad how in the bad there is some good. Uhm, it would be irresponsible, I think, uhm, for a show such as ourselves. Like a show such as ours, to ignore our social ills. For example, you know, our societal ills, you know. So, we choose to embrace them. We choose to challenge them. We choose to go at them in a sort of heightened reality way. In a sense that the stakes are very high, the stories are fast pace. I think what happened at the beginning of the season was, was quite devastating, in a sense that Lindiwe had to bury Nkosi, uhm, Nkosinathi. Uhm, but as heightened as that aspect of the story is, it speaks to the criminal world and how women *are* involved in the, in the criminal world; and also, it carried on the theme that the two kids were switched at birth and for us to, uhm, properly talk about, or juxtapose the issues of, whether you are moulded or shaped by nurturing or by your nature. Uhm, we needed themes or families that were thematically rooted in very different, uhm, in very different lifestyles or lives.

Janet: Ok.

TZ: It's just more dramatic, you know. It's more dramatic to have a gangster's wife and, you know, a priest's wife. Or, a woman in the church and a woman in the criminal world and see how those, how they interact with each other than having both of them in the criminal world or both of them in the church world; and seeing how that fight played out within this world. So, by doing that, we are able to look into this one world and into this other world and play these worlds against each other. It's more entertaining, more drama, in addition to certainly being socially responsible.

Janet: Ok. My next question is, what are the possible choices in home setting, as in the dressing, the wardrobe, the speech, the script, the actions and also the storyline, their roles in the home or wider society that assist in establishing this opposition?

Lauren: So, the choice in their wardrobe. Active decisions made to make them...

MT: ... To make them different.

Thuli: So, if you like look at them aesthetically, you know, uhm, MaNzuza, who is in the church, her dress is more conventionally modest. You know, she's got long sleeves, uhm, she doesn't wear tight-fitting clothing. So, she, uhm, adheres to what we conventionally understand as somewhat of like a modest woman where, uh, Lindiwe/MaNgcobo, on the other side, is aesthetically, in her dress and wardrobe, wear a lot flashier, uhm, bolder colours, big jewellery, tight-fitting clothes. What we might conventionally associate with someone who is, uhm, like edgier, trendier. Living a faster and more glamorous life. So, uhm, but that's one of in which the differentiation happens. Yeah. Also, in their home. That is something we thought about going into production design and putting up the sets. Like, what sort of home would a character like *this* live in? What sort of home would a character like *this* live in? So, from the outset, we were trying to get the artistic vision of the whole thing. All the departments working together on wardrobe to create a three-dimensional character. So, you have someone like MaNgcobo who lives the way she does, and she doesn't walk into a house and you think, huh?! That's weird! I would never have expected that. Or, in instances where that happens, then that to further explain or explore, give another dimension to the character. You know, because once you, uhm, put something up that people understand, like, ok, I get this person. Sure, they live in a place like this, they dress like this. Then if something doesn't fit that then you are able to play with expectations of that and further reveal character or add drama by going against the grain.

MT: Yeah. Exactly, and, uhm, I think with language, the (sigh) the actors themselves played the character is translated. So, everybody speaks Zulu, but it's what's type of Zulu? How harsh it? So, where MaNzuza is modest, even her language, in a sense, is more traditionally modest, whereas MaNgcobo is harsher. She is deemed more crass in terms of language. So, yeah, because she is more street, uhm, and so yeah. I think the actors themselves did that very, very well.

Janet: Alright. Thank you. Ok, my fourth question is, uhm. In soap operas, matriarchs typically fulfil certain roles, but also the business woman, the good and bad mother, but also, sorry, the lover, mistress, trouble maker. Which of these do you think Zandile and Lindiwe fit in and why?

MT: Well, I think the interesting thing about them as matriarchs is that their primary source of concern, or what they live for, is their children. Like, uhm, uMaNgcobo. She, even within the gangster context, from season one right up until season two, she always tries to shield them or protect them in a way that doesn't land Mxolisi in jail, for example; and so even though a character like uZandile will look at that and see that as her perpetuating Mxolisi's gangsterism or criminal life, she sees it as controlling. So, they both play very strongly in their motherly roles but their interpretations and their expression of what being a good mother is, are two completely different; and, uhm, even, you know, with Zandile because she is conventionally good and therefore I think sometimes we see her character being too harsh and two, and therefore driving away her children or Mxolisi. Uhm, and driving them towards that which she deems more evil. Sometimes we see MaNgcobo being more compassionate so we don't box them in the sort of black and white good or bad because there is no [one] human being who doesn't have those traits. Yeah.

TZ: Yeah. That was something we talked a lot about in the, uhm, casting and creation. Like, uhm, we really wanted characters who were more than just one thing. So, uh, uLindiwe is the gangster, right? She's, second season, she's especially your, uhm. The villain, your big mafia boss. Zandile is very, she is very obviously your church mother; but within that, like we set the convention, that's what it is, but what is it about a gangster that can really be good? So, what about a gangster, when you look at it, looks like it can belong in a church? And, what about a woman at a church, when you look at it, looks like it could belong in the gangster world? So, their ends are very clear, what they want is very clear, but the means is sometimes where the lines get blurred. Yeah. It's just, like, this idea that no one is any one thing. So, we see even in

our story arcs, even if not in the over-arching big arc, our smaller arcs trying to take these characters through journeys which reveal all these other aspects that you're talking about, the businesswoman, the trouble maker, seeing the trouble maker in MaNzuza, seeing the lover in MaNzuza when we'd expected to see this side it just in Lindiwe and visa-versa. Yeah.

Janet: Ok. Thank you. So, we within the period that the pastor and Gxabashe played the role of head of their families, how will you describe the role of the matriarchs?

MT: Do you mind taking that, Thuli?

TZ: Yeah. How do I describe the role of matriarchs?

Janet: While their husbands were still playing the [role of] head of the home.

TZ: Ok. Well, ahg man, I hate to lean on clichés but here we are. You know, it's that whole thing of like the husband is the head of the house, but the woman is the neck, you know what I mean? So, even when the husbands were present, they were the heads with a capital H, but the women were always the ones who kept things working. They were always the ones who held things together and made things function. Uhm, you know, without the matriarchs, the gentlemen would, uhm yeah... heads without necks, rolling around.

Janet: Ok, so you are saying that they always set the lead?

TZ: Well, no. I don't think it would be right to say that they were always in the lead, but, you know, they were always, uhm, so their role when the dudes were in was more that of a support, right? Keeping things together, making things work. While Gxabashe was out there doing his work, doing the big gangster moves, MaNgcobo is here making sure that the kids are taken care of. King sure that the cops aren't on their tails. Like, making sure that everything can function and work the way it needs to. While Gxabashe is out on the street and everyone is like, oh him, he is the one to be really scared of, but without MaNgcobo and everything that she is doing to his side, like, none of that would be able to work anyway.

MT: I think that it was quite a challenge for us. I think that is why we took it on in season two because I think there is a belief out there that a show without a patriarch figure and a male villain, is a show that cannot work. Uhm, I think even the channel - they won't express in that way. They were worried that without a strong male lead at the forefront and a strong male villain at the forefront, will people still respond to the show in the way that they did in the first season? What we discovered was that actually our society is more progressive than we

thought, than what we may be when we are sitting in the writers' room because when suddenly these two women rose and carried the show, of course with their sons and their daughters, but they were right there in the forefront. The show didn't collapse. Thematically, the show still remained strong and I think there is also this belief that women can never be as bad as men, therefore women will always be a weaker villain and that is not what we saw with MaNgcobo. Uhm, and so, while we did miss the male figures in that age group, what we missed was the relationship between the older relationships, the older characters as opposed to sort of the void of villain versus hero. What we had was heroines, and yeah.

Janet: Ok. Thank you. With both lead men out of the storyline. How have the roles of the matriarchs possible changed season two, being the *de facto* heads of the families?

MT: So, I think their roles, they became less, uhm, sort of observers of life because they have to carry the stories, they carry the, uh, story. I mean the process is parallel because we've got the two sons who were switched at birth and obviously season two was exploring what that switch means, but suddenly the women are now the ones who have to deal with the aftermath of the switch at birth. The men were not there for that. Uhm, and their choices are sometimes hard and they go at each other. Sometimes they don't know what the right thing to do is because they come from different paradigms where Zandile would like to deal with it in a religious way and MaNgcobo would like to deal with it in a more traditional way. Even those worlds collide but they were both chiefs of their own paradigms and their own families. Yeah. They had to sort of mean front and centre and captain the ship. Uhm, yeah.

Janet: Thank you. This is in-line with the question you said earlier about MaNgcobo, uhm, burying Nkosinathi in the office? So, the question is. What are their differences in season two episode four (that is the period where Zandile is at home waiting for her son to come back so that he can go to school while they were there, they killed him).

TZ: So, the question about that is?

Janet: The question is, what are the differences between them that can be seen in episode four?

MT/TZ: Oh.

Janet: That's season two.

MT: What are their differences? Well, it's how they...

TZ: In ep. four.

MT: ... How they choose to deal with... Because that's where they...

Lauren: It's kind of where that episode, where I think its crystallising that...

MT: Yes! Making them, polarising them...

TZ: That's the one where she is doing the burial.

MT: ... Yes, she's doing the burying, and I think, were it Zandile in that role, she may not have chosen to hide the body. So, that's where you see the differences in, in how they interpret life. Zandile would have probably decided to do the right thing and handed herself over to the cops, whereas MaNgcobo looked at all other variables. Her husband is in jail. Nosipho would be out on her own. Mxolisi has just come back from jail. So, what is the best course of action? And I'm not sure, I mean I, I know it's a crime. It's criminal, what they did, right? But I'm not that other women were judging MaNgcobo as harshly as we would have thought because some felt that under such pressure and under such circumstances, she did what she had to do and they accepted it for what it was; but I think that the episode does show us what exactly what the two women are for the rest of the season. It cements their roles.

TZ: And I mean, it sets them up in direct opposition to each other. You know, here is Zandile waiting for her son to come home and here is Lindiwe burying her son. I also think it speaks to, that ep., like, what you were saying about how the choices we make, force us to make the same sort of choices, you know? So, what Lindiwe does and her justification to Mxolisi is... He wants to call the cops and she says, "well, look at who we are? No one is going to believe us". So, in that way, the choices that she's made in the past have forced her into this corner to have to keep making the same kind of choices, whereas if Zandile was in the same position, would have had the luxury to go, like, it was a mistake, and be believed. Yeah. So, I think that also really paints the difference.

Janet: Yeah, alright. Thank you. OK, how do the matriarchs depicted in *Uzalo* compare to the known matriarchs in Zulu culture or townships? Are they really fictionalised? Or, is it a thing of reality?

TZ: I think, they are a lot closer to real women in the same sort of environment, positions. You know, without the heightened stakes that we give them. I think that they are quite similar to your common women. I know that whenever I speak to my aunts or like the ladies who work at home, everyone really identifies with MaNzuza, and Lindiwe, even... outwardly, it was MaNzuza, you know, but...It's a really interesting thing because even the ones who see

themselves as a MaNzuza, right? Like, these are the kind of choices I would make. This is how I would look after my family, still really relate and, uhm, empathise... have empathy and compassion for, uh, Lindiwe because at the end of the day, like we said, the way they do things is different, but what they want is the same. They want the best for their families and I think that is, uhm, common amongst most women across South Africa. Like, you just want the best for your family. You just want them to be ok and you want to be ok and you want to look after them. Uhm, also in the second season, with the disappearance of the men, that's a situation which also super common and relatable in our South African context. There's a lot of women looking after families alone and having to bear under the weight of that. I think that Lindiwe gives a really great escape because she shows what a lot of women actually can't do or wouldn't be in positions, but find themselves in situations. It's such a relief to like watch someone on TV and bearing a child and thinking, life actually gets tough sometimes. Sometimes I would be, yeah, I get that. I understand that.

MT: I think sis Dawn, the lady who plays Lindiwe, she says that she gets that a lot, where women are like, 'man! Being a single mom is really hard and like, uhm, people really judge you. Or being a divorced woman is really hard. People judge the collapse of your marriage. They blame it on the woman as opposed to the man then the women are left putting back together the pieces of a broken home, So, they relate and empathise with her because of the root of her issues. So, all the other things she does, people are able to, they don't overlook them, but they feel like it's happening because of a reason; and she found it bizarre because what normally happens with actors is that people attack them on the road, like, yeah, you're a bad guy. So, she thought that her rising in the villain sort of role would warrant or would bring that kind of attention and she says, contrary to that, people say, you're a fighter, you're a survivor' and she is just like, oh my gosh! This is so scary, I'm a criminal! [laugh]. You know, so yeah. So, people, women, do see in her what may be happening in their own lives.

TZ: Like, in our first couple of eps. after the burial of Nkosinathi, I mean what? It was maybe 26 or 34 episodes, where Zandile was just crying, all the time. Like, in every scene, she was just weeping, you know? Her sons disappear and then they think they found him, then they haven't. She was just always crying, and I remember we were worried just thinking, like, it's a little dark. It's a little irritating; and I'll never forget my aunt, one day, she was saying I've got to go, I've got to go watch *Uzalo*. I just feel so bad for Zandile because it must be so hard and I understand how... and I said to her, isn't it too much and she was like no, no, no. It's good, it's good. It's very sad, you know what I mean? I think it's that escape of going like,

actually, you know? There are some stretches in life where you are like, if I could just sit and cry for a full month, that is exactly what I would do because things are really difficult, but you can't. You have to get up, you have to go to work, you have to make sure that the lunch is packed and the house is clean, bills are paid; and so, to be able to see another woman on screen go through that. Been given the space to mourn without someone saying, 'ok! Enough now'. I think it was, you know, surprisingly...

MT: We were glad when it was over though.

TZ: Yeah, we were glad.

Janet: Ok. So, uhm. Just a follow-up from the question I've just asked earlier. Even if they are fictionalised, you want the audience to identify with them. What exactly do you want the audience to identify with?

MT: Well, I think we want them to identify with them as. That they are human and they have human qualities and that they have human flaws, and that their flaws and strengths are shaped by where they come from. How they were raised. Uhm, they shape the outlook of their children so that even if MaNgcobo's life looks glamorous, that another woman can look at it and say, it looks pretty from far, but when you look inside it's not so pretty. So, perhaps I can take the honest route as opposed to trying to bypass life and get to wealth and riches quicker. Yeah, so that's what we wanted people to do. To look in and see harsh truth reflected right back at them so that we can. I mean it's very idealistic, you know? Part of story telling and film making is we are hoping to shape, uh, to shape how people process life, or for them to look back and see how they could change their decisions; and so, what we found with *Uzalo* is that because it is so harsh and so melodramatic, people first latch onto the melodrama then they reflect. So, sometimes it feels gratuitous, you know? Like, one week we have to kill Nkosinathi and then dig up and then bury him and then like walk with him and then see them burn the clothes. You can tell that story in one scene, but sometimes, with certain story points, it feels like, the more we pay attention to the melodrama, the more people look into that situation and start seeing themselves. It's like what's happening now with Pastor Nkosi, but anyway that's another story all together. Yeah.

Janet: Ok. I don't know maybe you have anything to say on that. I was actually, I asked her that. From the portrayal of the two matriarchs, what do you want the audience to identify with?

TZ: Uh. I would say just that it's a little bit of what I spoke about before. Just that no one person is any one thing., you know? That everyone has a little bit of something in them and that, uhm, I think what's really great, a little bit like what we were saying before. Showing a story like this you are able to see not just what the characters do but what drives them to do that; and through that, uhm, sometimes your means are justified for your ends. So, I think like in a way, I would like for it to allow people to give others the benefit of the doubt, right? To not be so judgemental. To open up different aspects of society, different choices, different situations we find ourselves in and just go like maybe you looked at this and thought that only a person like XYZ finds themselves here, but maybe actually you could find yourself here. Maybe we aren't so different.

Janet: Alright. Thank you.

Lauren: Janet. I think the next two questions have been answered. Do you want to move to the next section?

Janet: Ok. My next question is, in what way has the setting of *Uzalo* in KwaMashu influenced the representation of the matriarchs compared to American soapies, like the *Bold and Beautiful* and local soapies, like *Generations* and *Isidingo*?

TZ: Uhm! I think one of the really cool things about it being in K-Mash (KwaMashu) is that, uhm, it brings it home, you know what I mean? It makes it more relatable, like *Generations* is great. Well I suppose now it has opened up more, but for a while a lot of their world was sort of high-flying ad-execs (advertising executives) which is really entertaining and is fun to watch but is not necessarily the lived experience of a lot of people watching the show. So, of course being a kingpin or a queen-pin in a large hijacking syndicate is probably not a lot of people's lived experience, but you know? Being set in the township and the fact that we are on location, so we are not just saying we are in the township and showing you inside a studio, but that we are out in that world that people can like see and be like, oh! That's by that place or, Ah! KwaMashu looks just like this place, or like, this happens in our township too. Uhm, I think that's really cool and it's just another way in which the audience is able to relate to the world and to our characters.

MT: Yeah. And I think also because we cast a lot of people from KZN. Our extras come from K-Mash and so I think one of the big responses from is that the way people speak relates to them and they feel like they know those people's characters. They don't feel so distant to them. The way, for example, that Thobile and GC relate to each other, their use of language is not

necessarily the same as when you are in Soweto and then also supporting female characters, like more MaMlambo and the ladies of the church and their interactions, also reflects the community of KwaMashu as opposed to sort ideal characters that we plant into a world that doesn't exist. Yeah.

Janet: Thank you. How are the typical roles, discussed before? The matriarchs, the mothers as good or bad, the businesswomen, the lover, the trouble maker, like you said earlier, different in some ways with the story set in KwaMashu? Specifically, the world of the church and the world of crime. Do you understand, or should I?

MT: You mean how they are different when they are in KwaMashu than when they are in...

Lauren: ... Say *Bold of the Beautiful* or *Generations*?

MT: Oh... I think they, uh, they give a local KwaMashu context. I mean, I think our themes are generic like religion and Christianity and gangsterism, they are universal and they are generic but the kinks, the types of, uh, problems that they might find in the church then become more localised. Like, for example, the issue that happened in the church with pastors that take advantage of, uhm, the congregation and sell oils and false healing, uhm, you'll find that one will pop up in KZN in a way that it doesn't pop up, in, uh, Soweto sort of, for example. So, it's just how, it's the realisation of it, how it actually works. It's a small, it's those kinds of kinks, I think. Yeah.

Janet: Alright. Thank you. *Uzalo* is set in a predominantly Zulu culture as within the context of Zulu. How do you consider this in your representation as a series producer or as a scriptwriter, uhm, of these lead characters which are the matriarchs?

MT: How is... Oh, sorry. I don't understand.

Lauren: How is the Zulu culture factored? Like affect the role of the matriarch.

MT: Oh. Ok.

Janet: Within a Zulu culture? So how does it affect the two representations?

MT: [laughs] Always.

TZ: Yeah. So, we are shooting on KZN and our matriarchs, most of our cast, if not all, are Zulu. So, Zulu it's a big broad, uhm, culture and things are different from neighbourhood to neighbourhood and family to family but it is a big backdrop which we understand. So, it's a

shared reference and experience that we all have. So, one of the things that I think is really cool is that we are able to draw on thing which outside of the Zulu culture it doesn't really make sense. Like, one of characters, MaMlambo for instance, it's a very Zulu and KZN thing. Like, so her name. So MaMlambo is a character who is able to, uh, communicate with the ancestors and she does that sort of vibe but she is always at church. Like, for. Her name, for instance, is a play on words that you understand in the Zulu context. It's like uMaMlambo is a, well I don't want to say mythical, because it's real. Uhm, but it's an understood cultural reference. It's a snake which people use to do black magic and stuff like that, MaMlambo... [speaks Zulu] ... it's like the snake of the house. Just for like that is something we think that is really fun for us because it's like. Oh! That's her name and that's what she does. So, already with just hearing the name, you know. I know, when we said her name out loud because I remember for a long-time people hadn't noticed what her name is and I was watching it with my aunt and I can't remember what the ep. was but it was something about she was foreseeing something and someone said her name and my aunt was [claps] MaMlambo! Like, you know? All of the sudden, she is. So, that's really fun that we have this shared context and reference and it also is nice because when we play against that, you know? It's like saying, the, uhm, the first line of a really well-known saying or the first three words of a well-known song. You don't have to say the whole thing, everybody already understands and so we are able to play with stuff like that. You know? Uhm, to undercut expectations or to save us time in the storytelling...

MT: Uh, uhm, what Thuli is saying is so true because I don't come from KZN, I moved here for the show. I didn't realise that, and I think what maybe if. So, I grew up in Soweto so it was amalgamated, so it was a mix. Everybody coming from everywhere. So, it's not like a concentration of just Tswana [South African ethnic group] or just Pedi [South African ethnic group] or whatever. So, when I came to KZN and people introduce themselves and then they tell you their surname, you are expected to know the surname, therefore you know the clan [speaks in Zulu]. So, you know the whole thing that comes with names and I found that fascinating that our characters. Like Zandile, we call her MaNzuza but Nzuza is her maiden name and that's how Zulu people address each other. They address you with your maiden name with the prefix of Ma-, I think, and I was just like, Oh! That's really deep and everybody just and most people can identify by the different clans and it's a lot of clans but they can identify, therefore which region you come from. So, I found that surprisingly rich and it's encouraging because it means that people do have, because some of the stuff is not written, do have a deeper

understanding of their culture and their roots and where they come from. I think specifically, KZN, I found that to be very true. Yeah.

Janet: Ok. Interesting. Matriarchs are generally represented as powerful. There is a general belief that they are always powerful and we can see this in the way that both matriarchs were represented, but how may the fact that South Africa is predominantly patriarchal, how does this influence the portrayal of the two matriarchs?

MT: It heavily influences, I think. It, it, it, uhm, I think more so in season. That is why I was saying that we have to challenge ourselves because suddenly when you get into the writing room, what you realise is that you judge patriarchy as a system, as a flawed system, yet your thinking is informed by the patriarchy. So, when you get even to the writing room, you first have to see yourself and your conventional patriarchal way of thinking, identify what it is about the patriarchy that you so identify with and then break that down so that you can come up with a character that is not only informed by your prejudice or your limited understanding of the world, which is largely patriarchal; and I think we saw that quit a lot and it's a painful process. You have to come face to face with yourself...

TZ: ... because here we are feminists, down with the patriarchy! Kicking its teeth in every day, here we go and then all of a sudden, we are sitting down and we are saying there are two female leads that are going to carry the story, now write for them. Then we think, well, they don't have men, so what do they do? Then you are just shocked and horrified at yourself. You are like, how am I? So, you realise that because we are raised in a patriarchal society that a lot of our thinking. Like, my biases were inclined that way without me even realising it. You know? So, on set I'm like rah, rah, we need more women. Screw this! Don't call her darling and don't you flirt with her while she is trying to do her job; and I'm like, yeah! I'm fighting the patriarchy. Then, in the writing room I'm like, oh. I literally have no ideas for the female characters, if it doesn't revolve around men. So, we had to remove those biases and go like, hey! My life doesn't revolve around men, so many women I know, their lives don't revolve around men. Why do I think, if we are going to tell a story, that it has to revolve around men? It was hard work. Uhm, and then also just going like, ok, so, and this is the tension between, I think what we are trying to do in trying to stay true to the Zulu culture but also trying to uplift and empower women, just within the story. Uhm, so sometimes you write something and the cultural advisor will say, no, you can't do that in our culture and then it's like, ok, well, in the *new* culture. Yeah, well, in this world. Now. We just come from one of our characters having lobolo

negotiations and women don't attend the lobolo negotiations at all, but there are no men in the family so we said, well, we are not going to get out and get uncle so and so and such and such, the women must go and negotiate and then making a choice to not make a big deal about that in the world. So, within the world of our story, we have choice. We could either go like all the characters going AH! AH! Women! Lobolo, oh my gosh! You know? Which is one way to deal with it. To go like look it is a shock and a surprise but we are going to do it; but we thought, you know what? No. We are just going to rock up and everybody is going to look good and negotiate like nothing is going on because they are the heads of the family and why shouldn't they? In that way, just trying to normalise, even when we step outside culture and when we go against the patriarchy and we try and try to treat it in a way that normalises it. So, hopefully, slowly everyone watching at home can go like, one day mom with her, single mom with her child can go, actually forget calling uncle such and such, I'll sit in with you for the lobolo negotiations. You know? Here's hoping.

Janet: Yeah. Ok. I think you've answered the next question?

Lauren: Yeah, because it's sort of around modernity and tradition. We've done that, we can just. I think we've done it all.

Janet: Thank you so much. Please. I want if anybody has a question to ask relating to the project and some other things. Alright. Thank you.

Lauren: You don't have any questions regarding your own project that you think maybe you could get some insight into? You're ok? Prof. Ruth? I'm sure you've...

Prof Ruth (PR): No. I think there's a lot of stuff that you've been talking about. Like you obviously have it on tape and I'm thinking that actually answers that question and that actually answers that question. So, I think you've been really helpful. You've talked a lot about more than just matriarchs and maybe it's because all of us are either matriarchs or insipient matriarchs. I was just actually looking around. You say, you are isiZulu but not from KwaZulu Natal?

MT: No. I'm Pedi.

PR: You're Pedi. So, I was actually looking around and thinking, do we have any Zulu people here?

MT: She is. [referring to Thuli].

TZ: Just me! The lone Zulu ranger.

PR: I mean, it's not odd. I mean what really surprises me is that none of us, it's kind of surprising and I was just sort of wondering and one thing that kind of bothers me. Lauren and I putting together a paper on some of the things you've been talking about, like locality, specifically. Uhm, and the rootedness of the locality, uhm, and how the location becomes a character in and of itself. Uhm, and obviously, it is very closely tied to issues of language and in that sense *Uzalo* was sort of different to a lot of other, except for *Muvhango*. I can't think of another programme that is unilingual, taking out the English input.

MT: No. It's not a lot of them. I mean even *Muvhango* is not unilingual because it has Venda and Zulu and Sotho.

PR: I mean it really had. Their brief was to be, to uhm, uhm...

MT: ... speak to the minority languages...

PR: ... yeah! and to fill that big space. Uhm, but, I guess what I'm trying to say is that it divides a thin line between being something which is quite diverse because I know that I have been speaking to other people who have been working on *7de Laan*, for instance, and you all know. You must think there, for the grace of God. I mean *7de Laan* is like, please God don't let that happen to us. I mean, it's just, it's been so stable for so long and it's just had this death blow right in the solar plexus, you know? For lots of reasons and you could probably tell me the five top reasons, but three will do. One of them is language. You know? That they were forced, uhm, their commissioning editors were very clear that they had to be more multilingual and more inter-cultural and that kind of just got to the stage where tipped the balance between being multilingual and just losing their core viewership, uhm.

MT: Have they lost their core viewership, *7de Laan*?

PR: Pardon?

MT: Have they lost their core viewership, *7de Laan*?

PR: They've lost 2 million viewers in five weeks.

MT: Geez! Five weeks?

MT: I didn't know that that happened to them.

PR: You know? I mean, it's very serious; and partly because they have really started to change. They've been losing viewers over the last year, but over the past few weeks it has been precipitous. Both in terms of time-slot and in terms of actors and language. So, I was really quite curious to know how you cope with issues that are relatively universalistic, uhm, but doing it in one language only? You may say to me, people do it in English all the time and there are programmes in English that have international followings which have such Scottish accents or Irish accents that actually sometimes want subtitles under them but they are minority cult programmes. For a programme to maintain its position as one of the two and obviously you switch positions now and again but you are one of the two leading programmes, in terms of absolute audience numbers. How does that work? I mean, what I am trying to is playing with the idea of cultural and linguistic specificity with cultural specificity on the one side and universality on the other side and it being so widely popular across South Africa.

MT: I don't know. I think it's less tricky than that. For, for the, uhm. For like Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho because the language is different but there is a lot of cultural sameness there and there is a lot of cultural cross-referencing. It's not so different from my Sotho culture. So, I think people are watching the show because they are identifying with it based on the cultural context and they can see themselves reflected in that but also, it's nice to hear a pure language. So, from where I come, I realise that Zulu, being here in KZN, less people understand Sotho than people. Like, in Joburg, people understand a sort of wider variety of languages but I think people appreciate that about the show. They appreciate that it is actually Zulu and so you can just watch the show and enjoy the Zulu language itself, but on a cultural level you are watching and sort of identifying, oh! in my culture we do the same thing. So, it doesn't feel like. So, for example, even now we've. So, we export *Uzalo* to France. Uhm, and I think that. They love it so they are ordering more and more episodes. So, it feels like...

PR: Is it translated, or?

MT: It's translated. No, it's, it's, it's dubbed. They dub it, but I think that we do universal themes which goes a long way as well because a universal theme. A theme of death and loss a universal. Yeah.

PR: I mean I'm old enough to remember. When I first met my husband, he was dubbing *The Sweeney* from English into Afrikaans and what was the German one? Oh, you are too young. He was dubbing German programmes, massive numbers of German programmes into...

MT: I didn't realise that the dubbing is still like a big thing.

PR: No, but this was, was the late 1970s. I mean half the industry was just dubbing.

MT: I think I remember that period.

TZ: I think there's something really, and I do think that there's a fine line, but I think there's something very engaging about something authentically itself, even if it's not what you understand, do you know what I mean? Like, but if it's truly itself then it's interesting, especially when the themes are universal and the characters are relatable. You know? You can watch, I love these, uhm, Guy Ritchie's films and it's a very specific subculture that I am not part of but it is so interesting and even watching those characters, I can think of people I know of, even in my context, and I think that's really helpful. I think that we are helped by the fact that it's a Zulu show because, like you say, it does belong to a family of languages that are easily understood. So, the Nguni because it belongs to the Nguni languages so that means that the Xhosa people can watch it and not need subtitles and the Ndebele's can watch it so it's already a larger group and then also for the fact that. It's like this weird thing about Zulu. For instance, we have a number of people on the crew, not the majority, but a few people who are up from Joburg, who have moved here for the show who aren't Zulu but speak Zulu. So, that's the thing I've found being Zulu. You travel around the country and I speak to people in other languages and I can hobble past hello but I can't speak any further than that but I find that if I find someone who doesn't speak English, we can sort of make it work in Zulu, even if they don't speak Zulu; and I'm not sure, maybe it has something to do with how we have moved around. The size of the Zulu population...

PR: ... Just the absolute numbers.

TZ: ... which I feel makes Zulu feel less alien to others, like who aren't necessarily Zulu.

MT: But I also think that they've made a mistake with *7de Laan* because changing the language ratio is like changing the show. It is like changing the show which was a huge mistake.

PR: It was political engineering that went on but I do...

MT: ... But I would expect that they would lose viewership based on that because I feel like if *Uzalo* suddenly became, like we switched it to English, I don't know that, I don't know that people would like it.

PR: It's really interesting and I know that this is taking your time but I know that when, you know? Under the old apartheid television, they had very strict language quotas and it was

literally 50/50. It had to be 50% English, 50% Afrikaans. Now, there was Afrikaans production but nothing to fill 50% of your quota so dubbing was a mainstay of keeping the quota engineering going but then what happened was that after 1993/1994, uhm, and I remember being very involved in programming during that stage. We could not show programmes that had been previously dubbed in their original language because they were just wrong. Those characters didn't sound like that. You are giving the character new intonations. New voices...

MT: ... and people don't identify with it.

PR: You spend three years or two years of investment getting to know a character, now suddenly they have to be in a new language? I don't think so.

MT: People disengage because you ask them to buy into something and they bought into it, now you asking them to change.

PR: You getting them to code switch and they wouldn't do it. So, I mean you can have code switching within the programming but you have got to set that up from the outset. Yeah, and I think the last thing about the isiZulu and I think we did touch on it and I think it is very important, is there is no such thing as isiZulus, there are variations, there are cultural, class, regional expectations. When we first did voter education, we came up very badly with that because we did programmes in isiZulu that were kind of language edited into [inaudible]. The youth just said, ahg no! Voting is not only for old people.

Lauren: I've just got one question. Mmamitse, last time we were here, you let look at the SABC calls for proposals. Uhm, I must say I haven't gone through it with a fine-tooth comb. Was there anything specific there relating to Janet's research about representing women in a particular way? Or was it just about wanting African stories and you guys thinking it would be interesting to see how women play out within a particular story?

MT: Interestingly enough, eTV has started doing that, calling for proposals that specifically speak of women issues or that speak of women in a way that speaks to women, but the proposal, mostly what they are asking for in the brief, is the language quota and then just sort of themes in society. They want us to address crime, they want us to address women issues, in a sort of generic, but there is no directive to develop matriarchal characters. It's not like that. So, we have to sit and think ok. Where is our head space as a nation, right now? What are people speaking of, or yearning to see? Uhm, so that's what we have to do in the writers' room but

then we do propose it and then the channel will say, oh! That's really good and then they will give input and grow on in that idea. So, we will say we want women lead characters [laugh]

Lauren: So, you actually had quite a discussion around that?

PR: It's actually quite interesting, and I think it really goes to the heart of things. Uhm, presumably, you got rid of the male characters serendipitously, for other reasons outside of narrative storylines. Ok, let's not go into why but let's just assume that there were other issues at stake here. Then you have a choice. You either substitute them with other new people to fill those structural roles or you dump them. Did you play with the idea of having other people play those roles? Do you play with that structural possibility of structural substitution?

TZ: Yeah. It was definitely something we thought about.

MT: We actually had a character come in, but sort of definitely a 3 months arc. Come in and come out but at the point when we lost the male leads, there's two things that we decided. It was that we needed to test the younger generation in the show and see what kind of space they can occupy? If they have the kind of gravitas for us to see them grow into those roles. Obviously, it doesn't take a year but that's what we were setting up, and then we spoke about why we need to replace the men? Why don't we try it? It was scary because we weren't even sure if it would work or not but we had to try for, being storytellers, we had to try and remodel.

TZ: because the initial discussions were, before we decided, it was a question of ok, well what do we do now? Do we get other people for that same role? Do we get other characters to come in and fulfil that role? Or? The decision was kind of like sort of what we were talking about coming face-to-face with yourself in the writers' room. This is what we are trying to be in the world. This is who we say we are. So, then let's try it. Why do we need to bring in dudes? Is it actually necessary for the story? Or, is it just our conditioning and our biases that make us think that we need it?

PR: I think it's more than just conditioning and bias. I'm just trying to play Devil's advocate here. I think about other stories where, longer running programmes, where characters have kind of died, or left to go and work on a movie or walked off set, whatever. Then you've sort of got this gap and you have to figure out what you are going to do with it. Uhm, so it's a structural thing as well, where you have to relate all of the various characters together and what is very clear about the way that *Uzalo* has been sort of set up is that there is, I'm trying to think of the word. There is a huge amount of symmetry in it. You know. As one family so does to the next

family does. It is kind of serendipitous that you sort of lost both male characters within a relatively short period of time. So, was that sort of a decision that you were going to run both camps in the same kind of line? Could you have done with replacing one of them? And if you had replaced one of them, what would that have done to the symmetry of the story?

MT: We, we, we. You know? Ok, so what happened was that the one male lead left and then the symmetry did kind of change. Then suddenly Gxabashe didn't have someone to go against but then he was going against the system, the law. Now the law started speaking way more than the character because you know? You need two, we needed two opposing forces. Then we lost Gxabashe and then for a little while it felt like the void was there and it was a real void. In the church, the void was that we didn't have someone very strong speaking or representing the moral compass of the show and when Gxabashe left we didn't have an antagonistic element; and then, that's when the boys' roles but the boys did not, because they are young, maybe I'm ageist, but they didn't bring the gravitas that was needed. So, even us that's why when we faced up to our own, like how we view things. How we landed with the two women was through a process of elimination, really; and then it turned out to be right in the end but there was, a shift did happen. The audience reviews. People didn't stop watching the show but they were like, oh, we miss this and we miss that and we realised that what they miss is the dark versus the light and we, because we were limited in how we saw the females didn't make it organically sort of go there and push ourselves to go that way.

PR: Because I mean that really is the heart of the melodrama. You have to have those two codes of folds. So, it was just as well that you kept your courage and just continued

Lauren: So, I think we're done. Thank you so much.

Interviewer: Janet Onuh

Interviewee: Leleti Khumalo

In what ways does MaNzuza compare to other local and international matriarchs? How is she i) similar ii) different?

MaNzuza is very similar to both local and international matriarchs in that the challenges she faces are universal themes. In her daily work life, she faces issues of social ills such as dealing with children directly or indirectly affected by drug abuse, sexual identity/ orientation and sexual abuse. In her home life she is dealing with issues of infidelity, the loss of a child, a “lost” or misdirected child whom she is trying to rehabilitate.

Where she differs from other matriarchs is that she has an extremely high moral compass and some of the challenges she has faced in her path, have led her to some compromising outcomes. When she as a center of our moral code can no longer hold, the world is shaken to its very core.

What are the possible choices in home set dressing, wardrobe, speech/script, and actions in the in church and at home that assist in establishing MaNzuza’s character?

In establishing her characters, her wardrobe was designed to accommodate her conservative outlook: long skirts & shirts and modest colors. The makeup department plays around a lot with her hair because though she is conservative, she is feminine and beauty conscious and this is a way of retaining her femininity.

As a performer, I translate my own scripts and so I determine MaNzuza’s tone of. Although mostly respectful, when pushed into an emotional corner, she will sometimes use harsh Zulu words; that indicate the anger of a mother. This makes her character less clinical and more realistic because though she is influenced by her belief system/ religion she is also influenced by the streets of Kwamashu.

With both leading men out of the storyline, how has the role of MaNzuza possibly changed in season 2, being the new de-facto head of her family?

MaNzuza’s storyline and story in the world changed in that she had to be the decision maker in her family. She had to pick up after the pieces of her broken family. She had to fight for the survival of her children and she had to mourn her child alone.

This is a huge undertaking for a woman who has had the support of her husband her entire life. We saw MaNzuza becoming stronger but also more singular in her vision.

In soap operas matriarchs typically fulfil certain roles, for example that of a good mother and the bad mother but also the businesswoman, the lover, the mistress, and the troublemaker. Which of these do you feel MaNzuza fits and why?

MaNzuza fulfills different roles. She is both good and bad, in that she is predominantly a good person who has the propensity to do very bad things in the name of defending those she loves. She is also a lover, a friend and a dedicated church leader who held the church together while her husband was away for a year “finding” himself.

How are these roles that MaNzuza plays, possibly *different* in some ways with the story set in KwaMashu (specially the world of the church) compared to other soap operas?

The roles are the same universally the difference is the translation of character and different nuances informed by the environment and her particular socialization.

In recent times, MaNzuza has had to look at herself as a woman born in KZN and basically raised in the church: She’s had to examine her particular prejudice against homosexuality. She’s had to look at acceptance and love even if she doesn’t fully understand homosexuality. She’s had to reform her thinking first before she could preach to others. All this self-reflection nuanced also by her leadership role in the church. She’s answered some complicated questions for herself.

***Uzalo* is set within a predominately Zulu culture - how do you consider this in your portrayal of MaNzuza. Is her portrayal realistic in some ways or is it purely fictionalised compared to actual matriarchs in townships or Zulu culture?**

Her portrayal is very much realistic. It is informed the everyday women that live in the townships across the country. It’s a case of Art imitating life, for without drawing references from real people, the character would not be relatable and therefore would not move people.

When building a character, one has to seek to reflect and mirror society in truth. For this to happen, I had to spend time with the woman that best represented MaNzuza and get to understand deeply what their role in their communities is.

Interviewer: Janet Onuh

Interviewee: Dawn King

Transcriber: Shannon Landers

Interview between Janet and Dawn King (Lindiwe ‘MaNgcobo’ Xulu)

This interview has been transcribed as accurately as possible. However, there have been slight alterations for more coherent sentences. The editing has in no way impaired the intended meaning of both the interviewer and the interviewees.

Janet: My first question is. In what ways [sic] does Lindiwe compare to other local and international matriarchs, shown in soap operas? How are they similar and in what way are they different?

Dawn King: Ok. Firstly, I'd like for her to be referred to as MaNgcobo because that is the name she is known by now, which is her clan name. Her maiden surname is Ngcobo and in our culture we use MaNgcobo, referring you to, it's a sign of respect to someone married. Uhm, so she's known widely in South Africa as MaNgcobo. So, Lindiwe is her first name, but it is not really used that much. Even within the story, itself, her name is Lindiwe but everybody else calls her MaNgcobo. On the street she is known as MaNgcobo. So, I think that will automatically be your number one difference. She is very, uhm, compared to the other matriarchs in, you know, other soap operas; uhm, she's an African woman. She is a woman that everyone in South Africa identifies with because she could be your, just your woman next door or the aunt in the family, but then, certain situations push her into becoming something that even she doesn't expect to become. You know, but she is mainly pushed into those situations, uhm, by, uhm, you know situations like that include her family. When her family is being threatened, in whatever way, she then, uhm, she moves into this other space where she becomes the matriarch, or she becomes the 'villain', but it's due to the fact that she has to then, uh, be strong because she is, at this time, both mother and father in this household. So, she really needs to make those decisions basing it on the fact that she's *gotta* [sic] take care of her family. So, she's, I would say, uhm, she's different, uhm, in that way but she's very similar to your characters, like Stephanie Forester in *the Bold and the Beautiful*, uhm, Stefano Dimera in *Days of Our Lives*. Very similar, because they all, it's all in the name of protecting family. Whatever it is that they've done, it was, uhm, it was based on the fact that they were protecting

their families. So, it is all family driven. Uhm, which I think is another similarity, uhm, in all cultures, family is very important. So, yeah, that would be MaNgcobo for you.

Janet: Ok, thank you. Ok, my next question is, what are the possible choices in who sets dressing, wardrobe, speech, script and action in the business and at home, that assist in establishing Lindiwe's character, 'MaNgcobo's' character?

Dawn King: Uhm. A lot was done. There was actually. She was workshopped. The character was workshopped. We sat around the table and we spoke about the character and we chose people in society that we could combine and actually come up with one character. She's not made up of just one character, she's made up of a combination of characters, of women that you see in society, mainly in Durban because, uhm, there is a certain behaviour associated with, with specifically Durban women. There is a way that they behave. A way that they talk. That they dress. Uhm, certain hairstyles that they prefer. Uhm, certain designs that they, they prefer in terms of clothing. Certain brands, I should be saying. Uhm, so she's a combination of a lot of women. And, that is why so many women identify with her, you know? So, uhm, there is a lot of. You would take your corporate woman. You would, you would, you would. Most of the time, I identify myself with my own people as well. I mean after the character was workshopped, it was up to me to bring her to life. It was up to me to then, uh, make sure that she has an everyday life, she's a woman that lives every day. So, that is why the minute I step on this set, I become MaNgcobo, in every sense of the word. But the minute I take off my hair, I'm no longer MaNgcobo. And I have said to people onset that if I ever arrived into [sic] the set, into this house, without my hair, please chase me away because I will then be an intruder. I am not MaNgcobo. So, the hair, for the character is very important. It's how I have, uhm, I have, uhm, separated myself as Dawn Thandeka King from MaNgcobo, the character; because even in my, I've chosen to wear my hair very short, uh, to identify myself so that when I am out there, be it at the mall or going to a function, people can know that I am not my character, so that they can know the difference between MaNgcobo and Dawn because it is very important. There needs to be a woman who represents what she stands for and she needs to stand on her own and she does not need to be disturbed by Dawn. So, she exists, and I'm happy because I drew from a lot of women, both that are close to me and those that are not close to me. The one's I know and the one's I don't know. I meet women on a day-to-day basis and I take something, you know, from, uhm, from those to add into the character; and there are times that we do storylines that are very deep that require, uhm, a lot of emotional, uhm, how can I put this? We have very emotional scenes, sometimes. So, what I'm trying to say, is I need to

remember that it is not Dawn that is sad, but it is MaNgcobo and I needed to create her own psychology. I needed to create the character's emotions, and I needed to be able to move away, as Dawn. Move away from her emotions and from her psychology because the story sometimes goes into very deep and dark places that Dawn would not necessarily want to go into. So, I need to be able to go in and out very quickly, and out of the character very quickly. So, a lot of work has been done to actually create this woman that you see, on screen. Uhm, and, it's been fun. It's been also difficult [sic] because there are choices that I've had to make as an actress, uh, that are choices based on the character, that I would not necessarily make as a person. She is a very dark woman, uhm, at some point but she is also a very loving woman; and I based the mother, the loving mother, part of it. I based that on myself because I am a mum of five and it was very easy for me to then be a mother in the story. Uhm, what was a bit different was that the children, in the story, are older than my kids so then I had to then work towards being a mom of older kids and try to understand what it is like to be a mom of older kids; and, again, I work with very good actors that have become my children. Even off set, they refer to me as mum. So, that part was very easy, the mum part was very easy, but the dark parts, where she goes into very dark places, uhm. Well, look, I've had to do my research on that, based on what I have watched. Maybe, based on what I have seen growing up; but also, psychologically, I have had my own challenges as a person, so I've been able to know that when you go through such a thing, emotionally this how you feel, physically then this is how it would translate. This how I developed the twitch of the eye. Then I had introduced the twitch of the eye when we had buried Nkosinathi under the table because it came to the point where the mention of the name, Nkosinathi, stresses her out so badly that it starts showing, physically. So, I knew that, as a person, as Dawn, I knew that it is possible for one to have something that shows that you are not well emotionally and psychologically because usually when we are very stressed, you get a numb feeling on your side. So, you know, you get twitches. So, you know, I just took it a step further and I just started twitching. So, every time, like now in the story, the twitch is back because we are getting towards the end. Uhm, it's towards finding out that we are the ones that did it. So, yeah, there is a lot that has gone into building the character, a lot.

Janet: I think that has answered the next question because I was actually going to ask you your personal inputs to that character, but I think you have answered that. So, I will move to question five, I think...

Lauren: ... because the influences were also spoken about. You said. Just if I can follow up with one thing, you said that watching. With what you watch try and find the darkness. Like, for example, what movies have been helpful?

Dawn King: Uhm, I grew up watching *Days of Our Lives*, a lot. So, there, there were times when Marlena would go through, uhm, with Stefano would go through very *dark* periods; and all I had to do was just remember that. Draw from that file, you know, because, obviously, when we watch things they get stored away somewhere. So, uhm, I would just draw from those lines. I used Stefano Dimera as. You know, it's funny, because I am a woman and I identify very much with Stefano Dimera; and so, the character is a combination of both male and female influence that I've watched on [sic] different kinds of movies and *soapies*; and, you have people like, uhm, I've watched people like, what is this Italian dude?

Lauren: ... Like in America, or?

Dawn King: Yes. There is this American film. This American guy. He is very famous. Very well-known.

Lauren: Robert De Niro?

Dawn King: Not Robert.

Lauren: Al Pacino?

Dawn King: Yes, Al Pacino. That's the guy that I also draw a lot of this from. Uhm, especially with the mental depth that you go into because you need to create the character's mental state. So, there's quite a few things that I've watched where you can see that he internalises his characters a lot. Uhm, and when it comes out. It is not necessarily that when you are angry, you need to start throwing things, you can be angry. It can show in your eyes. It can show somewhere else, instead of you throwing things around or shouting or, you know? It's characters like that; and, uhm, locally (pause). I think, locally, I would say I also identify with another man on *Isidingo*, Barker Haines. I mean, that guy has been also, like a long-time matriarch [sic] and then you would have your, uhm, lady that played Cherel. Uhm, it's those characters that I draw a lot of info from. That I have watched, growing up. I haven't necessarily had to go back and watch it again, but I also discovered that, you know, I was more interested in those characters than any other character because I, you always want to know, what is she up to next? What is he up to next? And so that is the type of character that I have been able to create, and that's the character that I've become. It's funny because the people out there [sic]

love MaNgcobo love MaNgcobo and I have no clue why. She has done nothing but just bring misery to people lives, and they don't mind that she's done that; and every time that Mxolisi and MaNgcobo come to a point where they are almost caught, everyone starts to panic. They go "no! but...". So, people know we've done wrong, but they don't want us to be brought to justice. It says a lot about our society.

Lauren: ... And, also probably understanding the human psyche, that it is a woman who is trying to protect what she's has, and so.

Dawn King: and now she is doing it alone, as well. It was better at the beginning when there was her husband, but, as well, she was actually the strength behind the husband. Her husband might have seemed to be the, uhm, to be the man, you know, of the house because he was a gangster and, you know, but she was really. She was really, really his backbone because, uhm, the story was beautiful when they were still together. It all sorts of turmoil but also very beautiful moments. Uhm...

Lauren: It was a solid relationship.

Dawn King: Yeah! It was the normal. I mean, relationships are like that. So yes, yeah.

Janet: Ok. Thank you. Ok, in soap operas, matriarchs have to specifically fulfil certain roles. For example, that of a 'good mother' and a 'bad mother' but also 'the business woman', 'the lover', 'the mistress', 'the trouble maker'. Which of these do you think MaNgcobo fits and why?

Dawn King: Very good mother. Uhm, she is not really a business woman, but she is. It is just that she is not in the forefront of the business. She oversees things; and, uhm, trouble maker? Yes, but it is also based on the fact that she is rectifying. So, you would, she would stir up trouble, but it will be due to her wanting to fix something, inside the home, like any mother would. So, I'd say she is a very good mother because she has a very strong relationship with her children, especially her son, even though it has come out that he is not her son. Mxolisi and MaNgcobo are still very close. I think it is even beyond the fact that they have done stuff together. They've killed people together, like Nkosinathi. Well, they didn't kill him. He fell on a sharp thing. All they did, was hide the fact that he died. Uhm, but they have a very close relationship; and I', very lucky to be playing alongside someone that I am close to. Like, we've developed a relationship as mother and son, even off set. Uhm, like, I'm very fond of him as my son. He's very fond of me as his mom and, uhm, I think that's the relationship people also

identify with, outside, like the public. That's the relationship that everyone knows that these two are like peas in the pot [sic]. They're inseparable and they're doing everything together and so you would find people asking, where is Mxolisi? You know? And when they see him, they are like, where is MaNgcobo? Something like that. So, I think what stands out from that is 'good mother', really, really 'good mother'.

Janet: Ok. Thank you. How can the differences between Zandile and MaNgcobo be seen in episode four? Like the one you have been saying where, uhm, Mxolisi hides the body?

Lauren: When you bury the body in the office. It is quite interesting because when I lecture about representation, I often talk about oppositions. What is interesting is how you take charge in a stressful situation (burying Nkosinathi's body), whereas Leleti Khumalo is in the kitchen, in a domesticated setting. Is there anything you would like to add about filming of this scene in particular? Or, how you felt the two characters were kind of set up as differences in those moments? Because it was an intense episode.

Dawn King: It was. That is why I'm trying to think about because you don't realise how deep you go into something. I think I didn't realise how deep I had gone until I had watched it. Uhm, because you actually, honestly, you leave your body as yourself and something takes over you. Uhm, something you cannot identify until they say cut and it is gone, and you don't even know what that was. So, that episode was one of those episodes where you go into it so deeply that you realise that, actually, this character can do anything. You can actually, as that particular character, do anything because, mentally, all there was, was let's make this disappear. The character is not even aware of how I'm pushing a young man into an even deeper space. A darker space, and all he wants is to have a relationship with his mum. His mom, who just wants him to be a good church boy and grow up a good boy. And I think that is automatically the difference right there. The other household is very light and fluffy and roses; and here, we are hardcore. We don't leave things to be done by someone else, we do them. MaNgcobo is the kind of person who gets down and I do it. Whereas, I think the character of MaNzuza always relies on God and the supernatural to solve the problem, but MaNgcobo, as much as she believes in God, she gets down and dirty. Yeah, and that particular scene we shot when we were burying him was. It was one of those things that make you appreciate the art and appreciate that you can actually get to that point or you can go to that level as a performer. Uhm, you realise that your body is just a vessel; and you realise that, uhm, yeah, as I was saying, really, your body is just a vessel and through the vessel you can actually portray

anything; and to actually, even though, we're in the world of make-belief, but some things are very real sometimes. When we portray certain characters, some things are very real, like shooting that scene was something very real. So, yeah.

Janet: Ok. Thank you. How does MaNgcobo compare to non-matriarchs in Zulu culture or township? For example, does she represent these women in anyway? Or, are they purely fictionalised?

Dawn King: Like I said, I don't think MaNgcobo is based on fiction. I think, like I said, she is a combination of a lot of women. A lot of women in the township are strong. They do things themselves. A lot of them run their own households. Uh, a lot of them are business women, that are no-nonsense business women. We find women in the townships that are taxi owners and automatically that is a male-dominated industry and we, you need to be tough as a woman there. Uhm, you find women that are in government that are running their own departments, that have men as their subordinates. Uhm, so she is based on a lot. She's based on those women and those women do exist. It is not fiction that she, she. Oh! She kicks butt. Oh! She does because she is not apologetic about who she is and there are a lot of women that are like that out there. A lot of women. So, she represents a lot of different kinds of women. There is no one woman that is like that. She has got too many colours to be one woman.

Janet: Ok. In your view, what are the features of MaNgcobo's character with which the audience may identify with the most or the least?

Dawn King: Uhm, I guess her very wacky sense of humour. She will just throw a line and she won't even know that it's funny and, or say something, a phrase, and say something and then the public will keep that. Uhm, like. For example, there was this like scene where she was with MaNgcobo and Gxabashe were still in bed and so she wanted to get some 'morning glory' and he said that he was tired and then that [in Zulu] "you are depriving me of my rights!" And, uhm, people stuck to that and when they see me on the streets, that's one of the things they say. So, that's the one I think they identified with the most. There is also another one where she was with her daughter and she was encouraging her daughter to go out there and meet new people, meet new friends. Uh, and then she said [in Zulu] which literally means "you're eating away at life with a spoon", type of thing. That's another thing that stuck. So, yeah, her wacky sense of humour.

Janet: Ok, and the least? [referring to the previous question]

Dawn King: Uh, I don't know if there is anything least about this character. She doesn't do anything small. Everything about her is big. Her personality is big. Her energy is big. When she walks in you have to take notice because if you don't you are in trouble for something. Uhm, she's that kind of woman. She is really not apologetic, so I wouldn't say that there is anything they identify with the least. I don't know, maybe there is. I just don't know.

Lauren: This question, if you don't mind me interrupting Janet, is interesting with what you said when you said, well, she is involved in the world of crime but yet the audience still love her; and so, you would think that the audience might go, oh well, she is kind of like done some really bad things and that would be something that might identify with the least but it doesn't make sense that they still love her.

Dawn King: They love her. Like I said, anything that she does, she does it big. So, you are kinda [sic] forced to love her because if you don't you are in trouble. Why don't you like it? Type of thing. So, people fear not to love her (laughs). Just in case I (the audience) may end up in trouble. It is interesting because both males and females really love the character. The men refer to MaNgcobo as [in Zulu] "Gxabashe's wife". Uhm, the women would then be. Well, anyone would call her MaNgcobo but, okay, it's between MaNgcobo and "Gxabashe's wife". That's how people out there. Like, you will have your taxi drivers. We were in Ballito yesterday and we went inside the shop at the petrol station and one of the taxi drivers was, like "MaNgcobo! Can we take a picture with you?" And I'm like, "I'm going to ignore you, just because you're shouting!" So, I got into the car and started driving. So, I still give them the say attitude that she has, uhm, because I think that is what they enjoy. Just the outbursts. She doesn't speak, she has outbursts. So, that is what people enjoy. The fact that "you're like this, even in real life", but they don't know that I am doing it just for them. I'm not like that in real life. I'm not saying I'm a shyer person, but I am. Sometimes, I prefer to be more quiet, just to be subtle. In everything I do, I wish I could just disappear or be invisible, sometimes. Sometimes, I think that it is too much. Looking from outside in, it is too much. Ok, so yeah. We were saying that there is nothing least about her. Everything is big.

Janet: Ok. Cause even me the way you say *haibo* is quite different from the different from the usual one. The way you say it, I don't know. I just love it. Every time you say it, my husband says, come on she is saying *haibo*, I just love it (laughter).

Janet: Ok. Thank you. How are the typical roles, discussed before, the role of a mother, the role of a businesswomen, the lover, the trouble-maker possibly different from the setting of Kwa Mashu? For example, specifically, the world of crime.

Dawn King: Can you ask the question again?

Janet: Ok. Uhm. How are the typical roles discussed, that is, the role of the mother, the lover, the businesswomen, okay. How are they different, in some ways, with the story set in Kwa Mashu? Specifically, the world of crime.

Dawn King: I think with any set-up; these roles will find their way to exist within that set-up. Uh, sorry (phone rings). Uhm, and so, you find that, for instance, I said she's a good mother. She is a good mother in a world of crime. She has been able to be a very good mother within the set-up of crime. So, you wouldn't say that it is unrealistic for a mother, in the Kwa Mashu set-up, in the crime-ridden set-up. You wouldn't say that it is unrealistic for a person to be a good mother in that set-up because it is very real. You find mothers, in your typical townships, of boys that are thieves, that are gangsters, that are whatever, but they still have to be their mothers. So, it is a very real situation where those roles exist, within the storyline, that we are dealing with, within the township that it is set-up in. They exist, and they exist very nicely. You find that, even though Mxolisi has become what he has become, he has grown into the gangster that he is, she (MaNgcobo) still has control over him as his mother. He still knows that this is his mother, and he knows not to cross certain boundaries and not to talk to her in certain ways because this is the mum that you wouldn't necessarily want to step on her toes because her slap is very close as well (laughing). She will *Klap* (slap) you. Actually, there is a scene, I think it is still coming up in the episodes, where she slaps him because she is just tired because he does silly things sometimes. He makes silly mistakes. He takes [sic] stupid decisions and so, as a mother, you're like, "you are stupid! Why did you do it like that"? She is a good mother within that context.

Janet: Ok, thank you. Uzalo is set in a predominantly Zulu culture. How do you consider this in your portrayal of MaNgcobo?

Dawn King: Uhm. Look, MaNgcobo understand that she is a wife, but she is a combination of a modern wife and a traditional wife. I will say modern, 90%. Traditional, the rest. You know when there are ceremonies, we have to put *doeks* (a scarf) on our heads. Like, you tie your hair with a doek. She's had to do that very few times, in the story. I can count twice, where they were having a ceremony for Mxolisi, she agreed to do it because of the love she has for Mxolisi,

she agreed to put a doek on her head, against her will, but she had to. And then the time where Gxabashe died, so she was in mourning and that is another time she put a doek on her head. Other than that, she is not the kind. She would want her hair to be there for everybody to see. She doesn't even sleep with a doek on her head. So, she does not conform; and she likes to question even when the elders are sitting and talking, she would still question. If she doesn't like what the elders are saying, she will tell them she doesn't like it. For instance, when Gxabashe died and the elders came and they started making decisions and telling her what to do, hell broke loose because she was like, "where have you been all this time"? You are now coming because he is dead. She promised to kill them. To shoot them. Yet, these are elders. You would then think that a traditional Zulu wife would respect them (the elders). She doesn't. She doesn't listen very easily and eventually she will listen and agree. She doesn't agree very easily. So, she is an interesting one because she respects culture but if she feels as if her time is being wasted. She doesn't have the patience for somethings. She feels that her time is being wasted. So, it is not that she disrespects culture, and that is how I have created her to be because I respect culture, personally. I respect culture a lot, and, uhm, I am also married to a Zulu man and I know that there are times when we have ceremonies, either at our home or at his home or at my family home. I don't behave the same at my family home as I would at his family home. At his home, I am what you call a Makhoti and so my head would have to be covered and so Dawn would do that, but MaNgcobo wouldn't. She would have to be forced to do it. She would have to be told that she has to do it, and she would do it for two minutes and next minute she doesn't have the doek on her head. So, she is an interesting one in that, yeah, she follows her own rules.

Janet: That was the final question. Thank you. Is there anything you would like to add?

Dawn King: Look, I think it is very important for people to watch the story so that they can understand why the characters are the way they are. The people that have watched Uzalo from the beginning, from Season One until now (Season Two), will understand the different dynamics [sic] that the characters have had to go through and the highs and lows of MaNgcobo. Uhm, and it's interesting where the story is going now. What we are shooting now is very interesting in that she is almost cornered. She almost doesn't know what it is that she should do and so she is starting to panic. Yeah, but it is interesting to watch.



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29 June 2017

Ms Shannon Leigh Landers (216074111)
School of Applied Human Sciences – CCMS
Howard College Campus

Dear Ms Landers,

Protocol reference number: HSS/0910/017M

Project title: Examining the construction of female identity in South African Soap Opera: A case study of *Uzalo: Blood is forever*

Approval Notification – No Risk / Exempt Application

In response to your application received on 27 June 2017, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....
Dr Shamilla Naidoo (Deputy Chair)

/ms

Supervisor: Professor Ruth Teer-Tomaselli
Cc Academic Leader Research: Dr Jean Steyn
Cc School Administrator: Ms Ayanda Ntuli

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

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