Representation of the Matriarch in South African Soap Opera: A case study of *Uzalo*

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DECLARATION - PLAGIARISM

I, Janet Atinuke Onuh declare that:

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2. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

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ABSTRACT

The portrayal of strong female characters, often known as matriarchs, is one of the conventions of the soap opera genre. The genre is considered a 'female genre' based on the regular depiction of powerful, influential and independent-minded female figures. Limited study on the construction of this prominent character within the context of South African soap opera led to this study, using the relatively new soap opera, *Uzalo: Blood is forever* as a case study. The study aimed to explore how the two matriarchal figures in the soap were represented by the producers and the reasons motivating this portrayal. A qualitative research methodology was adopted and data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with selected production team and cast members of *Uzalo,* and a basic textual analysis of episode 4, season 2. Interpretation of this data was achieved through the mobilization of genre and narrative theory. The study found that the two matriarchs were constructed within the binary oppositions of crime-Christian values, tradition-modern, religion-secular and good-bad. However, their portrayal is more complicated than a straightforward binary model, showing the complexity of the characters in their roles as mothers, wives, business-woman/church leader and de-facto heads of their homes. Representations of the characters conformed to both international and local conventions of matriarchal depiction but were subverted due to their construction within the South African KwaMashu township context that is defined by its Zulu culture. The decisions and actions of two *Uzalo's* matriarchs depict their similarity to both international and local matriarchal soaps, however, their construction as Black African matriarchs distinguishes them from international matriarchs, and their setting within township reveals their uniqueness from local South African soap operas. Though the representation was aimed at representing strong independent women, the construction of the matriarchs was influenced by a patriarchal ideology.

Keywords: KwaMashu, the matriarch, soap opera, South Africa, *Uzalo: Blood is Forever*

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AAM - Anti-Apartheid Movement

BBC - British Broadcasting Corporation

CCMS - Centre for Communication, Media and Society

CS - Cultural Studies

EE- Entertainment Education

INK - Inanda, Ntuzuma KwaMashu

KZN – KwaZulu-Natal

RFP - Request for Proposal

SABC - South African Broadcasting Corporation

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CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Introduction

Television is one of the channels of media that cut across class, race and gender which serves as a medium for promoting and shaping cultural texts (Bignell, 2004). Television has a unique "relation to cultural studies" as it helps to "emphasise on cultural reception as a life practice rather than on interpretation or production" (During, 2005:109-110). According to Chris Barker (2000), no medium matches television for the volume of popular cultural texts it produces and the sheer size of its audience. Though this medium was known as a British invention, it spread across the globe through the United States; this was due to their high level of technology and innovation (During, 2005). Popular television broadcast programmes which tell stories that resonant with the audience are games, shows, music, party politics, films, sports, dramas, documentaries, soap operas among others (Barker, 1997; 2000). Cultural studies are concerned with these popular television programmes; hence this study explores soap opera (Milton, 2008; Tager, 2010). This study is set within a cultural studies approach that includes relevant sets of theories and practices that exist within humanities and social science and is dedicated to the study of the cultural process with specific interest on popular culture (Pitout, 2007).

International soap operas such as *The Bold and the Beautiful* as well as South African local soap operas, such as *Generations*, *7de Laan* are hugely popular with the viewing public (Ahamed, 2010; King'ara, 2013; Milton, 2008; Tager 1997; 2010). This has led to the creation of many other local soap operas like *Isidingo, Ashes to Ashes, Skeem Saam, Muvhango*, amongst others. Internationally, including South Africa, soap operas are known for their attraction of female audience and portrayal of strong and powerful women known as the matriarchs (Brown, 1994, Geraghty, 1991, Hobson, 1982, Marx, 2008). The concept of matriarchs as role models in the family social structure resonates with the public. This is so because soap operas are known for the portrayal of realism as it shows the practical understanding and acceptance of actual nature of life/world rather than mere idealism that is seldom centred on female audience women and families (Barker, 1997). This enables viewers to identify with those portrayals as it provides the means through which they view their lives experiences (Geraghty, 2006; Hobson, 2003; 2006; Tager, 2010). The storyline in soaps usually revolves around the matriarchs as the central characters often representing the "power of

motherhood" demonstrated within the family unit (Hobson, 1982; 2003:93). This representation by soap operas elevates women from the typical portrayal by other television programmes like dramas, news, documentaries and so on, as domesticated spouses and mothers with their professional lives often ignored (Feasey, 2013; Friedman and Hambridge 1991). This private sphere has been made public through soap operas (Brunsdon, 1997).

Most times in television drama, women are shown pursuing careers popularly known as 'female professions' such as teachers, nurses, secretaries; mainly jobs that require care and patience. On the other hand, those (women) who pursue their professions religiously are depicted to have succeeded at the expense of their homes and most often considered as villains (Ingham, 2007; Modleski, 1979). The media representation of women in present-day soaps has evolved, representing female figures within the sphere of socio-economic and political society. Also, it shows how women can both succeed in their career pursuit and their homes (O'Reilly, 2004). For instance, in a post-apartheid nation like South Africa, women are now involved in socio-economic and political issues like politics, mining, agriculture, finance and in the technology-driven sectors (Apleni, 2012). These presently are depicted in television; women are portrayed as presidents, CEOs of multi-international mining companies, ministers and thus along; for instance, Stephanie in *The Bold and the Beautiful,* Katlego in *Isidingo*, Karabo in *Generations*. These are quite different from the early portrayal of women as mainly domesticated in the television specifically the early soap operas such as *The secret of storm, Search for Tomorrow, Love of Life, Edge of Night, Guiding light* among others. In the report entitled *Women Republic of South Africa* (2015), showing the status of women in the South African Economy, President Jacob Zuma highlighted the contributions of women and how their active participation has made significant contributions to the growth of the nation. He further emphasised that the country could attain more if more women are involved. This is an indication that media, policy makers and academia understand the historical and contemporary role of strong female figures in modern South Africa. It is against this backdrop that this study is investigated.

This study intends to investigate how matriarchs are constructed and represented by the producers of a local South African soap opera *Uzalo* and the ways in which the generic conventions in comparison with other local and international soaps matriarchs are either adhered to or subverted. This chapter provides the study's rationale and objectives, introduces

the South African soap opera *Uzalo: Blood is Forever* as the case study and briefly explains the study's theoretical framework, methodological approach and key research questions.

Background of the Study

Uzalo: *Blood Is Forever* is now a five-times-weekly (Monday – Friday) serial drama although it was initially aired thrice weekly and season 1 was first broadcasted in 2014. *Uzalo* is modelled along the community soap opera format, aired on SABC1 8:30-9:00 primetime while the omnibus started on the 14th February 2016, viewing every Sunday at 12:30 noon. The South African Broadcasting Cooperation (SABC) is a public service broadcaster (PSB), that offers three channels which are free-to-air namely; SABC 1, 2, and 3. SABC 1 is the highest track of broadcasting in Nguni Languages (isiZulu, isiXhosa, some Tshivenda and isiNdebele) that is, 80% African languages also broadcast in English and generally, SABC has the largest geographic coverage, and largest audience (Request for Proposal (RFP), 2014; Tager, 2010).

SABC 1 broadcastings aim to reflect the daily lives of Mzansi[1], as it delivers South African stories to its citizens (REF, 2014). Officially, SABC 1 is referred to as "the official storyteller of Mzansi"; this is the reason for their highest audience reaching about 85% (RFP, 2014:50). This indicates that majority of viewers in South Africa depend on terrestrial, free-to-air public service broadcasting. According to SABC prime-time viewership ratings, as of 23rd December 2015 until now (end of 2017) *Uzalo* is the most popular South African television production. Having attracted 9.18 million viewers in August 2017 it streaks ahead of its 'predecessor', *Generations* (Ferreira, 2017). Writing ten years ago, Ruth Teer-Tomaselli (2005: 569) explained that *Generations* is a:

> soap opera in the grand style of *Dallas*, depicting the fortunes and tribulations of an upwardly mobile black family as they make their fortunes in the "new" multiracial South Africa. Its enormous popularity is attributed to the positive aspirational messages embodied in the program.

The rapid increase in the number of viewers for *Uzalo* since its inception highlights that individuals in South Africa are possibly beginning to resonant with stories that are generated from Durban (Manda, 2015), and that are possibly more 'gritty' and 'localised' than the glamorous aspirational soap operas.

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[1] Mzansi is a common Xhosa word that means South Africa (Rosati, 2010)

Uzalo was conceptualised by Gugu Zuma-Ncube and her two executive co-producers, Duma Ka Ndlovu and Pepsi Pokane. One of the reasons for the productions' 'localised identity' as contributing to its popularity is that it is an isiZulu (an Nguni language) soap opera with English subtitles. This makes *Uzalo* unique even across the SABC channels as "most soap operas and sitcoms are multilingual, using English as an anchor language, with generous additions of other South African languages interspersed" (Teer-Tomaselli, 2005: 571)

The narrative follows two eminent middle-class families with strong ties (a priest family and a gangster family) that both gave birth to sons on the same day, in the same hospital but were accidentally switched by the nurses. The story begins at the Queen Anne Hospital during the time of Nelson Mandela's release from prison (11 February 1990), this date is relevant within South African context because it marked the beginning of freedom and the end of apartheid.

Uzalo has been labeled both a telenovela and soap opera (Ndlovu, interview, 26 August 2015). Both genres are serial melodramatic genres pitched to popular audiences (Allen, 1985; Bielby and Harrington, 2005; Brown, 1994; Cewelti, 1976; Childers, 2006; Hobson, 1982, 1994; Modleski, 1979). In both, emotions offer the basis of the spectacle. Furthermore, both are broadcast daily during the week. They are not governed by seasons unlike the structure of sitcoms and series. Telenovela and soap opera have multiple trade publications, discussion boards, blogs and websites dedicated to them. More importantly, these genres share the contradictions of being successful and disdained at the same time. However, there are some relevant differences between them (Acosta-Alzuru 2008). Soap opera is an open-ended narrative broadcasted for years, for instance, *Dallas, The Bold and the Beautiful, The Young and Restless* that have been running for over 20 years, and locally are *Generations*, *Isidingo, and Isibaya* which have been running for more than 10 years. Telenovela narratives are shorter having a conclusive ending (Bielby and Harrington, 2005). Telenovela usually run between one to two years. These are some of the peculiarities of the two genres (soap and telenovela), however, genres can change and become hybrids, which frequently leads to genre innovation (Marshall and Werndly, 2002). Duma ka Ndlovu**,** *Uzalo's* executive producer commented that in the aspect of South African television hybridity, the country's television industry "can't afford to be exclusively telenovela or exclusively soapie" (Ndlovu, Interview, 26 Aug 2015). This is maintained by a television critic, Thinus Ferreira (2015b:1), who explains that "SABC1's new *Uzalo* telenovela is light on soap and heavy on conflict as a more 'mature' *Soul City* that's less preachy, and 'more dramatic."

According to Liebes and Livingstone (1998), soap opera is of three models; dynastic soaps, community soaps, and dyadic soaps, these will be explained further in the Literature Review chapter. For the purpose of this study, *Uzalo* is referred to as "soap opera" in order to maintain a level of consistency with name usage, as well as the focus usually attributed to matriarchs in a soap opera. *Uzalo* tells a story of different families and characters, contains numerous episodes and seasons, involves the use of cliff-hanger and arcs; it is now in its fourth year of screening. All these made it align more with the features of a soap opera than a telenovela.

The narrative of *Uzalo* is pronounced "unique to itself" as it tells "a specific story, which happens in a specific place" (Ferreia, 2015:1) thus following a criterion for narrative television that involves the arrangement of events in time (Newcomb, 2004). The story continues in KwaMashu, after 25 years where both families unknowingly raised each other's sons. The pastor's son, Ayanda, becomes a DJ after dropping out of the university while the gangster's son, Mxolisi, is a graduate and proposes to join his father's 'business'. The process of identity construction necessitated some questions which were posted by the producer, Zuma-Ncube; "what makes you who you are, is it your upbringing, who your parents are, or is it DNA, or who you were born to?"[2] As such *Uzalo* is premised on a classic nature versus nurture story narrative, with the two *Uzalo* matriarchs set within this wilder opposition. This opens the television show to questions around representations and identity construction, a point of interest to cultural studies (Tomaselli, 2012) which frames this study, as will be discussed in Chapter Three.

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[2] Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e7XTQTXxWqU&feature=youtu.be Accessed on 12/05/2015.

Figure 1.1: The Two *Uzalo* Matriarchs (MaNzuza on the left played by Leleti Khumalo and MaNcgobo on the right played by Dawn King).

Source: TV and Thinus (2015)

"The steady viewership growth of the isiZulu show…is largely due to a massive increase by the writers in the amount of melodrama, incredible tension and eye-popping characters without fully going over-the-top" (Ferriera, 2017). The two *Uzalo* matriarchs provide much of this. Figure 1.1 above illustrates the two matriarchs (MaNgcobo and MaNzuza) that are under investigation in this study. As in the picture above, the two characters are depicted in binary opposition to each other (Levi-Strauss, 1968). MaNzuza is the wife of the Pastor Mdletshe and MaNgcobo the wife of Gxabhash Xulu (gangster). The main story arc for season one sees the hostility between the families and the discovery they have been raising one another's sons. After the arrest of the gangster, Gxabhash, MaNgcobo takes control of running the affairs of the home and the panel beating business although, that was a cover for their involvement with car theft. While Pastor Mdletshe's decision to leave the country to Swaziland from prison without meeting and informing the family also forces MaNzuza to assume the leadership position in the family and in the church. Both women ensure that their families stay together throughout their challenges in the absence of their husbands. This is one of the characteristics of a matriarch (Collins, 2005; Feassay; Schaffer, 1988). In season two, the two matriarchal figures drive the narrative without patriarchal figures, unlike most other South African soap operas particularly.

The emergence of these female figures as default leaders in their various families mirrors the larger society to a great extent. Statistic South Africa (STATS) (2016) reveals that 58.7% of South African families are headed by male figures and 41.3% headed by females which are predominantly older women. The convergence of a turbulent historical past, out-of-sync socio-cultural practices and a hostile free-market economic model has conspired to dispossess black townships[3] of the 'ideal' family structure (Retele, Shefer and Clowes, 2012). The *Uzalo* producer's decision to depict this scenario not only confirms the conventional characteristic of matriarchs as leaders in and out of the home (Hobson, 2003; Geraghty, 1991) but also mirrors the reality of a South African context (Morapane, Interview, 26 Aug 2015). The previous statement confirms to one of the characteristics of soap opera which "offer stories that authenticate the audience's world by reflecting that world back to them. Soap operas are also agents of culture meaning that is, they contribute to teaching and concretising audiences' attitudes about their societies' values" (King'ara, 2013: 90). The depiction of the two characters diametrically opposed to each other and yet united in their shared human experience opens up many avenues for representing different attitudes and values (Leadbeater, 2015). Some of these attitudes and values may be typical of the paradigmatic structures in representing matriarchs but with *Uzalo* the analysis opens up to broader features that speak to the representation of tradition-modern; religious-secular, Christian values-crime comparisons, as they may be influenced by the shooting and story location in KwaMashu (Vande Berg *et al.*, 2004).

Location of the Study

The shooting of *Uzalo* in a location like KwaMashu, which was described as "poor but vibrant" (Ferreia, 2015:1), makes *Uzalo* unique as it subverts the often-typical glamorous setting of many other South African soap operas which are typically shot on set in Johannesburg. According to the producers, KwaMashu will be a strong "invisible" character (Ferreia, 2015:1). *Uzalo* producers further explained KwaMashu as "a character itself. It's a very specific place with its own type of feel, and its own characters. In the story, we really try to weave in KwaMashu as its own character so it's not just a story that could be set anywhere." (Ferreia, 2015:1).

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[3] Townships are legal terms used to describe formally pronounce urban areas. They originated in South Africa during apartheid regime due to the country's economic requirement for cheap labour (Ladd, n.d; McGaffin, Naprer and Karuri-Sbina, 2015).

Due to the set location of the soap, the study will be conducted in Durban, South Africa. KwaMashu has been grouped with its neighbouring townships Inanda and Ntuzuma, and together, they are referred to as INK (Inanda, Ntuzuma and KwaMashu) by the eThekwini Municipality (The dplg, nd). Collectively, the INK area is home to about 500 000 people. Geographically, KwaMashu is one of the townships located in the province of KwaZulu-Natal precisely 32 kilometres north of Durban, South Africa. The township name is in admiration of Sir Marshall Campbell, which signifies Place of Marshall[4]. The *Uzalo* team has converted a massive warehouse in the Riverhorse Valley precinct (north of Durban) into a studio and set, – much of which is based on actual properties in the KwaMashu, like the church interior and pastor's home. Interviews with the production team took place in the *Uzalo* studio located in Newlands East, Durban.

Figure 1.2: Map showing the position of KwaMashu within KwaZulu-Natal.

Source: Google Maps (2016)

Statement of Purpose, Rationale and Significance for the Study

"Black, beautiful intuitive and strong
The matriarch the stabilizer the earth's backbone
From the beginning she excels determined to survive In her womb the seed of trillions through the
ages she will provide
Unfazed by obstacles perpetual is her drive ……….
Against all odds she presses on not a
moment does her love wane

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[4] Available at http://www.sahistory.org.za/place/kwamashu accessed on 24/04/2016

She looks down through the annals of
time and realize she must maintain
Her aura of invincibility her spirit of
strong will Her disposition of I will
succeed regardless of the mountainous hills

She is black, bold and beautiful
her strength personified from birth
She is the matriarch, she is our mother
the backbone of the earth" (Gissendanner, 2006:1)

These words above distinctively describe the character of a matriarch, especially African matriarch within the African-American context, determined to hold on to the future irrespective of the challenges and difficulties experienced along the way.

This study's primary objective is to investigate the role of matriarchs as central characters within the soap opera genre. This will be investigated using *Uzalo a*nd its two matriarchs and mothers (MaNgcobo and MaNzuza) who are set up as binary opposites (Levi-Strauss, 1967; 1972), as the case study. Numerous studies have been done on the genre of soap opera, especially as a women's genre (Geraghty, 1991, 2006; 2010; Hobson, 1982, 2003; 2006; Kuhn, 1981; Levine, 2014; Liebes and Livingstone, 1998). Many other studies include the pleasures and viewing habits of its audiences (Alle, 1985; Brown, 1994; Tager 2010), its presentation with respect to production (Davies, 2006; Elliott, 1972), ethnographic comparisons (Hobson, 1982; 2003; 2006; Lacey, 2000; Marx, 2007; Tager, 1997), local and global ethnographic comparisons (Barker, 1997; Dunleavy, 2005), the roles of mothers and matriarchs at home (Collins, 1987; Feasey, 2012; Feasey, 2013), and their role in 'narrating a nation' (Marx, 2004; Milton, 2008). However, what makes this study unique is that *Uzalo* is the first soap opera shot in KwaMashu, a black and predominately IsiZulu Township in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, also featuring the two matriarchal figures driving the narrative without patriarchal figures unlike all other South African soap operas, this depicts the uniqueness of *Uzalo's* matriarchs to other South African matriarchal soaps. The study thus aims to provide new insights into the influences of the Zulu culture on the representation of matriarchs in a soap opera and the ways in which this portrayal may adhere to or subvert the typical codes and conventions used in the portrayal of the matriarch.

Matriarchs are one of the prominent characters that feature in soap operas (Brown, 1994; Neophytou, 2012; Tager, 1997), and within *Uzalo* these two matriarch characters are the primary focus of this study. Within the soap opera context, Christopher Sewell (2012) describes

this character as a mother, wife, home expert and figurehead of a home, in addition they are typically the installer of values in the home either good or bad (Collins, 2005), While, Tonia Modleski mainly describes the character as the good mother (Modleski, 1979). On the other hand, Chinweizu and Gardner conceded with the description of matriarch character not only within the soap opera context but also within the society, although this character could sometimes be presented differently, and this could be influenced by culture (Chinweizu, 1990; Gardner 2004). The social behaviour of a nation or people dictates their culture, and this is described as a particular and distinctive way of life of a specific social group or people (Du Guy *et al.* 2003). Capturing the imagination of audiences with a record number of viewership (*Uzalo*) in a country with an eclectic racial mix and cultural differences such as South Africa is a testament to the progress made in post-apartheid multicultural "rainbow nation" (Barnard 2006:41; Lockyear 2004; Tager 2010; Van der Merwe 2013). Also, it indicates some level of success the country has recorded in relation to its apartheid era. Ian Barnard (2006:41) further demonstrates that this depiction of South African people of different classes, races, sexualities, ages, genders and political persuasions in prime-time programming, is symbolic of South Africa's success as a country, in using popular television programming "to shape a nation which is trying to rise above its apartheid past".

With regards to the case of the existence and the representation of matriarchs, it follows that this identity may be depicted differently or similarly depending on the culture and its 'shared meaning' (du Gay *et al*, 1997; Hall, 2003). For instance, American television represents 'good' woman as submissive, sensitive, domesticated, and 'bad' woman as rebellious, independent and selfish (Barker and Jane, 2016). The usual attribute of a matriarch to be strong and powerful is dismissed by Gardner who notes that this charisma is termed to be "strongest-minded" that could not control home, families, community but men inclusive; this matriarch with such quality is described to be a 'witch' and such authority and influence can only be achieved through the practice of "witchcraft" (Gardner, 2004:31). This is so because the matriarchs are very persistent and manipulative by always encouraging and engaging others to do their dirty work (Gardner, 2004). In spite of the abundance of soap opera scholarships, introduced above, little or no study has been done on production/representation of isiZulu matriarchs on South African television, specifically *Uzalo*. This study will therefore, fill in this gap by investigating the representation of matriarchs and their roles based on a South African township context. The study will therefore, contribute to the body of literature concerning representation of townships and societies and the depiction, roles and influence of black women and matriarchs (Collins

2005; Feasay, 2012; 2013; Levine, 2014; Mazart, 2014; Sewell, 2012; Tager, 1997; Wright, 2015).

Objectives of the Study

In line with the problem stated, the overall objective of this dissertation is to explore the construction/representation or encoding (Hall, 2010) of the matriarch character within the South African context as represented in the South African soap opera, *Uzalo*. This aim can further delineate according to three main objectives:

- To investigate the role of the matriarch in South African soap opera, using *Uzalo* as a case study, and the motive for this representation.
- To investigate the influence of location (KwaMashu) on the representation of the matriarch.
- To explore the ways in which the generic conventions of the matriarch character are either maintained and/or subverted in *Uzalo.*

Framing the Study: Theory and Methodology

The study seeks to address the aforementioned objectives through the use of theories and analytical strategies that are included in genre theory (Altman, 1984; Berry-Flint, 2004; Feuer, 2000; Marshall and Werndly, 2002; O'Donnell, 2007) and narrative theory (Bal 1997; Kozloff, 2000; Levi-Strauss, 1967; Newcomb 2004; Propp, 1968, Todorov, 1977) which are all within the field of cultural studies.

Theoretical Framework

The use of genre theory will assist in exploring the intended meanings of the encoders who are the producers of this media text, as well as the way in which the generic codes typically used in representing the matriarch are either maintained and/or subverted. Soap opera is a serial fiction genre that enables the weaving together of different numbers of "symbolic characters, issues and subplots, which virtually represent cultural rhetoric" (Childers, 2006:399; Kontranowski, 2014). Genre is the process of identifying a text in terms of its type based on certain familiar narrative conventions (Marshall and Werndly 2002; O'Donnell, 2007). The programme format, subgenres, general characteristics, character types, and the plot types are all part of the narrative conventions (O'Donnell 2007: 96). Genres are accepted by both genre theorists and those involved in the process of communication (producers and by the audience)

(Neale, 2001, Newcomb, 2004). The features of the genre and how it used in representing KwaMashu in terms of the narrative storyline, language, plot, character type, and so on in *Uzalo* will be addressed in this study. Approaches by Jane Feuer (2007) in studying genre will inform this study, i) aesthetic, ii) ritual iii) ideology, but specifically, emphasis will be on the first two approaches (aesthetic and ritual). The aesthetic approach enables the analysis of the portrayal of culture in narrative and it is the approach that serves as a negotiating platform for both producers and audiences. The study is interested in the "recurring formal and stylistic features" (Vande Berg *et al*., 2004: 118) of the text in terms of the soap opera. However, in order to contribute to new information in the area of television studies with an analysis of an isiZulu soap opera, the study will also take cognisance of the codes included that create a local Zulu aesthetic in terms of the semantic features of a genre.

The study's specific interest in this case, is how the narrative representation of KwaMashu (the use of setting and iconography as visual and aural signs) influences the representation of the matriarch as a character type (see Clark *et al,* 2007). This leads to the ritual approach which involves shared values and beliefs (Feuer, 1995) that can be operationalised via a basic textual analysis of the text in order to analyse "recurring syntagmatic narrative structures" (Vande Berg *et al*., 2004: 118). The focus is on the larger cultural context of a text and the meaning-making structures within the text. Meaning is constructed through recurring themes in the genre or the use of binary oppositions (paradigmatic structures) and narrative structure (syntagmatic structures) (Vande Berg *et al.*, 2004) and genre involves the process of identification as mentioned above. The last approach ideology promotes the ideals of the producers to the audience and gives no room for negotiation (Feuer, 2007). That is, the audience accepts the ideology pitched by the producers without any reservation or query. These three approaches will be discussed further in chapter three.

A specific generic feature of soap opera is its 'never-ending' narrative structure. Hence, narrative theory will be used to identify and analyse the way in which the *Uzalo* producers create interest, conflict and tension in the narrative as well as character development, particularly between the matriarchs. This is typically achieved through formulaic devices such as cliff-hangers (see Newcomb, 2004) and the structural approach of the manipulation of binary oppositions. Claude Levi-Strauss' (1967) work on narrative binary oppositions in analysing characters, settings or actions in terms of their similarities and differences (Prinsloo, 2009), offer formulas for recognising relationships between features. This approach will be useful in

setting up the two matriarchs for comparison (as binary oppositions) and extends to their paradigmatic structures, opening up analysis to broader features that speak to the representation of concepts such as tradition-modern; religious-secular, Christian values-crime comparisons. The use of genre and narrative theory will thus allow for an investigation as to what the connotative meanings may be in the binary oppositions of the two matriarchs. In addition, Vladimir Propp (1968) the narrative schema and characters categories will be considered. Propp argued that all narratives share common features serving similar purposes. Propps argued that "these "functions", might take varying shape in specific cultural context but could, on close analysis, be found to serve different narratives in the same manner" (Newcomb, 2004: 415). This schema is useful in considering the narrative function of the matriarch. It is interesting that although 'the father' appears as one of Propp's (1968) primary story-characters, the mother does not, but is sublimated into other roles and 'functions'. This is focal point of my study, because the role of the mother in soap opera has been a key theme in soap opera scholarship (Ahmed, 2012; Feasey, 2013; Hobson, 2003, 2006; Geraghty, 2006; 2010; Kuhun, 1984), and this study aims to contribute to this body of knowledge with a specific emphasis of South African opera set in a township.

Methodological approach

Qualitative research is used in this study as it focuses on people's descriptions of what occurs in their world and in understanding human phenomena and the meaning that societies assign to these phenomena (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; King and Horrock, 2010). Data collection occurred via semi-structured face-to-face interviews with the *Uzalo* production team as expert informants that are four in number; these include the director, serial producer and the two cast members that played the matriarchs (Leleti Khumalo and Dawn King). The study thus follows the research design of qualitative inductive reasoning which focuses "on the logic of exploring the meaning-making process" (du Plooy, 2009: 33) with the aim of understanding the encoded representation of matriarchs in *Uzalo* by the producers of this portrayal (Hall, 1980). In order to explore the representation of the matriarchs, season 2, episode 4 will be analysed via a basic textual analysis (Mckee, 2003). This episode is chosen because it depicts the matriarchs in an extreme contrast. Therefore, basic text analysis (Creeber, 2006; Mckee, 2003) was employed both in <u>creating specific questions to be asked</u> from the production staff that may reveal information on the <u>deliberate signification</u> and in the <u>researcher's own textual analysis</u> of episode 4, season 2. Data will further be analysed in line with literature and the theoretical framework, briefly discussed above. In addition, Stuart Halls' (2010) encoding/decoding

model and circuit of culture in term of production/representation will inform the studies' analysis of the preferred meaning that will be elicited from the semi-structured interviews with staff of Stained Glass Productions.

Key Research Questions

The following key research questions are relevant to the study as they will be used to answer vital rudiments of the study:

1. How do the creators of *Uzalo* intend to represent the two matriarchs?
   - In what ways do the two matriarchs in *Uzalo* compare to other local and international matriarchs?
   - What soap opera generic codes and conventions, and narrative techniques are used or subverted in this portrayal?
   - What binary oppositions are set up between the two Matriarchs and for what reason(s)?
2. What specific roles of matriarchs can be identified within a contemporary Zulu context, as portrayed in *Uzalo?*
   - How do the characters portrayed by the two matriarchs represent (or stereotype) the average South African matriarch?
3. What does *Uzalo* reveal about the role of narrative setting in terms of generic adaptions?
   - In what ways has the setting of *Uzalo* in KwaMashu influenced the representation of one of soap operas most central characters (the matriarch) (compared to past soap operas)?

Structure of the Study

This dissertation is divided into six chapters. This first chapter provides a brief overview of the study; this includes background and contextual information of *Uzalo* as the case study, location, statement of purpose, rationale and significance of the study, aim and objective of the study, framing the theory, methodology and key research questions guiding the study and structure of the study.

Chapter Two provides reviews literature relevant to contextualising the study. The literature includes local and international scholarship on soap opera (brief history, definitions, generic

codes and conventions) and particularly the matriarch character, women and soap opera as well as a discussion of matriarchs in Zulu society.

Chapter Three presents the theoretical perspective that frames the study. It moves from a discussion of cultural studies as the broader approach that underpins the study, to a more detailed explanation of genre and narrative theories that are applicable to the study.

Chapter Four delineates the study's methodological approach and provides details on the research design, sampling, data collection and the form of analysis adopted in the following chapter.

Chapter Five is the data analysis and discussion chapter. Primary data collected through interviews with one of *Uzalo's* director, serial producer and the two cast members playing the matriarchs are analyzed and discussed. This is in light of the key research questions, literature review and theoretical framework. This chapter also presents the basic textual analysis to elucidate the ways in which the matriarchs are presented through the selection of a specific scene, in episode 4, season 2.

Chapter Six is the last chapter, which concludes the dissertation with a synthesis of the main findings in response to the key questions as interpreted with the aid of previously discussed literature and theory.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter evaluates the representation of matriarchs within the soap opera genre via a review of both local (Marx, 2008; Milton, 2008; Neophytou, 2012; Tager, 2010) and international (Barker, 1997; Brown, 1994; Feseay, 2013; Geraghty, 1991; 2010; Hobson, 1982; 2003; Levine, 2014; Liebes and Livingstone, 1998; Modleski, 1979) scholarship. A matriarch is considered a central character in soap opera genre (Hobson, 2003). This study is concerned with how this important character is represented in a South African local soap opera (*Uzalo*), in comparison with other local and international television representations, particularly in soap operas. The codes and conventions of soap opera are discussed and this includes a brief history (Allen, 1985) of the genre. In reviewing historical and contemporary soap operas this chapter will highlight the soap opera themes, types, characters and narratives devices. Other important topics discussed in this chapter include; women and soap opera/feminist criticism (Ang, 1985; Brunsdon,1997; Geraghty, 2005; Gledhill, 1987; Hobson, 2003; Mulvey 1981; Parry, 1991;), South African television and soap opera (Burton, 2012, Kruger, 2012; Lockyear, 2004; Marx, 2008; Milton, 2008; Neophytou, 2012; Tager, 2010) and finally a discussion of matriarchs in African, and more specifically Zulu, society (Gumede, 2002). These topics are all discussed from the perspective of production and representation.

Representation/Production

The final output of any television program goes through vigorous stages of negotiations and compromises among the production team; this is why television programs are also known as negotiated products (McEachern, 1994). The process of depicting these products is referred to as representation (Krijnen and Bauwell, 2015; Bateman *et al*, 2010). Representation is one of the major processes in the 'circuit of culture' model (Du Gay *et al*, 1997). It should be noted however, that the circuit of culture model will not be explored as a theory in this study but an aspect of the model – representation – would be referenced throughout this study. Stuart Hall described the concept (representation) as "the production of meaning of the concepts in our minds through language" (Hall, 2013:3). It helps in depicting the world meaningfully to other people, hence is a medium through which meaning is "produced and exchanged between members of culture" (Hall, 2013:1). Hall emphasised that meaning can only be constructed based on shared meaning, and the understanding of how representation depicts reality or

connects meaning and language to culture is dependent on three approaches; the reflective, intentional and constructionist (Du Gay et al, 1997; Hall, 2013). In this study, I am concerned with the constructionist approach.

The reflective approach posits that meaning lays on the reality of the given society, while the intentional approach focuses on how meaning is derived based on author's intention (Hall, 1997). Meaning of text in the constructionist is socially constructed that is, the meaning is generated based on specific representational systems of concepts and signs. Materials or concepts in themselves nor the individualist usage of language cannot attach meaning to language; rather meaning is created through the language system or whatever specific system is used to represent concepts (Hall, 1997). Hence, "symbolic function" plays a huge role in meaning construction (meaning depends not on the quality of signs/concepts but on its symbolic function) (Hall, 2013:11). This study adopts a constructionist approach in exploring how the producers of *Uzalo* soap represents matriarch within the context of South Africa (Zulu) culture.

Soap Opera: a brief history, definitions, codes and conventions

Soap operas were created and broadcast in the 1930s on American radio, and ever since, this "guise daytime radio serials" popularity has been on the increase (Allen, 1985 and Hobson, 2003:7). Its primary objective was to serve as a medium for promoting household cleaning products manufactured by the likes of Proctor and Gamble, Colgate Palmolive and Lever Brothers, and other adverts and sponsors of toothpaste, breakfast cereals, drugs, food and beverage with women and housewives as target audiences (Brown, 1994; Hobson, 2003). By 1939, soap operas and other 'washboard weepers' were transformed and taken to the general press and used as "generic substitute for the less colourful and more cumbersome daytime dramatic serial which became the most elite of all narrative art forms, as a vehicle for selling the most humble of commodities" (Allen, 1985:8-9).

The radio serials transited to television serials in the 1950s, since then; there has been remarkable changes and improvement in the soap opera industry. The transition influenced the commercial terrain as it allows American manufacturers to expand their market (Allen, 1985). Initially, in the 1920s, commercial radio establishment was only local, but the involvement of soap operas in the 1930s permitted national networking which was eventually adopted internationally in countries like Australia, Britain and even South Africa as manufacturers used it as a medium to reach their potential costumers (Hobson, 2003).

The first successful soap opera producer, according to Dorothy Hobson, was Frank Hummert and his wife Anne Achenhurst who produced the soap titled *Betty and Bob* in 1932. The soap drew the attention of many audiences specifically women as it discussed issues and themes like family, romance, marriage, divorce, remarriage, fidelity, jealousy, childlessness or child-rearing, love and so forth, and these are still part of the characteristics of modern-day soap operas (Hobson, 2003). In the United Kingdom the first soap opera was *Mrs. Dale's Dairy* with a storyline about the "everyday lives of a heroine's family" and basically described issues of middle-class characters (format of American radio and television soaps); it came through the British radio soap opera which started in 1948 till April 1969 (Hobson, 2003:9). The first South African soap opera was in the 1990s mainly targeted at the white female audience (*The Dingleys*) but in 1994 using media as a tool for nation-building, *Generation* was introduced (Burton, 2012).

In the 1960s, soap operas emerged as a new type of television programme. This phenomenon became wildly known and accepted by millions of viewers across the globe, for instance, *Dallas* an American soap opera which focuses on upper-middle-class characters was viewed internationally due to its global conventions (Barker, 2000). In Australian soap operas, *Neighbour* was the first to reveal the different attitudes and values of the culture it represented (family tie, young characters, more middle-class representation of vibrant working population), this made it different from other soaps (*Dallas, Mrs. Dale's Dairy* and so on which concentrate on middle-class portrayal) (Hobson, 2003: 14-15). This greatly affected the production of soap operas because it introduced young people to mainstream soap operas, which led to the inclusion of more young actors and therefore attracted more young viewers. Currently, different social standing and ages are included more frequently in American soap operas globally and locally with defined contexts (Hobson, 2003). In the late 1950s and 1960s, there was more portrayal of "working class and low middle class" characters which drew awareness to cultural changes in the sphere of entertainment and art. This shift was called a "kitchen sink drama theatre" with the aim of portraying "domestic realism" (Drabble, 1985:538). According to Christine Geraghty (1991:1), soap operas were taken more seriously in the 1980s due to "convergence of two merging trends" which include "growing interest in popular television forms and "awareness, prompted by feminism". The interest of feminist theorists regarding soap opera genre started as a result of its stereotypic portrayal of female characters. In those early days, feminists had issues with representations in soap operas for not depicting

women/female characters "as they really are, or really could or should be" (Gledhill, 2003: 346). This was the bases for the genre's criticism by feminist theorists (Marx, 2008).

Authors and scholars like Dorothy Hobson (1982), Robert Allen (1985), Christine Geraghty (1991), Ellen Brown (1994) and Anne McCarthy (2001) define soap operas differently based on scope and emphasis. However, a common feature in their descriptions is the genre's "seriality", or continuity (McCarthy, 2001:47). Hobson (1982:33; 2003:1) viewed soap opera genre as an endless drama serial, which should be run and transmitted daily or more than three times a week for fifty-two weeks a year as it provides a way of escape from everyday trouble for its audiences. She added that soaps are "escapist or fantasy programmes through which women could realize the romance missing from their everyday lives" (Hobson, 1982:26).

Geraghty examines the role of women in prime time soaps and the pleasures of watching. She defines soap opera as a serial broadcasted several times a week with the aim of attracting a predominantly adult female audience (Geraghty, 1991). Geraghty (1981) described soap opera as a continuous serial with well-structured time, sense for future and interweaving stories which are spread across the episodes. Allen (1994:51) simply posits, in agreement with Hobson, that soap is a "continuous drama serial which should be transmitted daily". Jonathan Bignell (2004: 19) described the whole genre of soap opera as a "continuing drama serial involving a large number of characters in a specific location, focusing on relationships, emotions and reversals of fortune". Liberty Kontranowski and Ambyr Childer viewed it as a serial fiction genre, enabling the weaving together of different and numerous numbers of "symbolic characters, issues and subplots which virtually represent cultural rhetoric" (Childers, 2006:399; Kontranowski, 2014). Kontranowski (2014) adds to that definition that stories in soap operas are narrated across extended periods, involving different characters that are often interwoven with other stories. This popular genre presently, ranging from different countries and contexts, soap operas serve as channels for entertainment, but also for educating, for example, *Soul City* (King'ara, 2013, Tufte 2001, 2008) and *Intersexions* (Govender*, et al.,* 2014). Soap operas are also considered instrumental to the construction of national identity and the promotion of multiculturalism (Barnard, 2006; Milton, 2008; Ponono and Wasserman, 2016; Teer-Tomaselli, 2007; Van der Merwe, 2013). This study, however, narrows its focus to that of the construction of the television matriarch as influenced by the cultural milieu of KwaMashu.

According to Brunsdon (1997:27), soap operas have "strong generic" elements and Baym (2000) further explained that those elements have the capacity to influence the interest,

activities, organization and pleasure of the fans. In America, it is termed as a daytime and primetime serial but in other countries like Britain, Australia, India and South Africa among others, it is described as a genre that is aired once a week, several times a week or daily at different times of the day. Weekly or bi-weekly might change to frequent broadcasting; this could depend on the relationship that exists between the advertisers and the broadcasters (McCarthy, 2001). For instance, *Uzalo* in South Africa was previously aired thrice a week but is presently aired five times a week by 8:30 pm (SABC 1) (see Chapter One). These generic features distinguish soap opera from other forms of melodrama like series and serials.

Difference between Series, Serials and Soap operas

Soap operas are often referred to as serial melodrama as explained above (Childers, 2006; Geraghty, 1981; Jonathan, 2004; Kontranowski, 2014; Hobson, 1982; 2003). Nevertheless, there are some split differences between them (soap opera, serial and series – another type of melodrama) in both "structure and the psychological relation of the viewers" (Brown, 1994:48). The three types of narrative (series, serials and soap opera) are all distinguished by the "organisation of time" (Geraghty, 1991:11). *Series* typically involves self-contained episodes in which the story is completed but sub-stories may continue across episodes, which shows that time is dominated in the narrative as all the main problems shown at the beginning of the story are resolved at the end of a single episode (Hobson, 1985 and Allen, 1991). Consequently, Feuer (1992) and Geraghty (1991) confirmed that the episodic format of series narrative influences the way its audience respond to the narrative.

A serial is an unfolding narrative containing organized and established characters, setting, plots that runs from one episode to another with a cliffhanger as a knot that connects previous episodes to the next and teasers before commercial breaks (McCarthy, 2001; Witteboles, 2004). The end of each episode happens as the highest pitch of audience/viewers interest. This is to create suspense, frenzy or panic as the case may be. A complete story is told in this type of narrative but spread across a number of episodes with different sets of unresolved puzzles that aim to sustain the viewers' interests and their anticipation for more episodes (Higgins, 2016; Wittebols, 2004). This explains how the interests of habitual viewers of long-time screened serials are sustained. Serials have a "final ending" as resolutions are provided to the problems, which are set up at the beginning of the narrative (Geraghty, 1991:10). This closure shows that the serial narrative is subordinate to the organisation of time. However, soap opera contains all the features of serial except that it lacks closure because it is an open-ended narrative and

resolutions are pending. Tonia Modleski expressed this by saying, "it is not only that successful soap opera do not end, it is also that they cannot end" (Modleski, 1979:12).

Regardless of the differences that exist between the narrative structures of series and serials, there are some similarities. These are in their classification as melodrama and in their use of cliffhanger (Gaycken, 2015). Although the attribute of cliffhanger usage is commonly known with serial and soap operas, series use it in connecting sub-stories from one episode to another even though the main story or subject are concluded in a single episode (Geraghty, 1991 and Gaycken, 2015). Cliffhanger is a "hook" or "device" used to sustain audiences' attention to the next episodes through suspense (Hobson, 2003:69). The differences and similarities of series and serials can be illustrated in comparing soap operas and telenovelas.

Soap opera is described as an open-ended narrative while telenovela is a closed-ended narrative (Allen, 1997; Barker, 2000, Bielby and Harrington, 2005; Pingree *et al*, 1983). As the name implies the open-ended nature of soap opera does not move towards an absolute end of a narrative but is often continuous (Allen, 1997; Slade and Beckenham, 2005). The closed-ended telenovela narratives usually have anticipated closure or end to the narratives (Ahmed, 2012). So also, telenovelas are produced on one particular theme, whereas soap operas deal with different themes so as to sustain continuity (Slade and Beckenham, 2005:339). Although soaps sometimes have some individual storyline that comes to an end, unresolved storylines are always involved. Additionally, Chris Barker (1997) demonstrated that telenovela appeals to the large audience, which cuts across gender and class, and is not associated to only the female audience like soap opera. However, it should be noted that both melodramas (soaps and telenovela) are recognised and highly successful in the global television market (Slade and Beckenham, 2005). This market includes a variety of soap opera models.

Soap Opera Models

According to Tamar Liebes and Sonia Livingstone (1998) in their study of *European soap operas*, they conveyed that there are different types or models of soap opera genre. These are the dynastic soaps, dyadic soaps and community soaps.

Dynastic model

The storylines of dynastic soaps focus on one powerful family headed by patriarchy, and traditional issues like power, family values, and gender relation are portrayed. This model is further described in two forms, the Godfather and the Honourable patriarch. Godfather dynastic

model/families are stories that focus on a mafia-chief, who are powerful and have all it takes to organise the world around themselves often through illegal means, and here violence and corruption are heightened. This is common among Greeks and Italians. Power is translated from economic to political and because of their pronounced success they often escape justice and this makes them believe they hold the key to success (Liebes and Livingstone, 1998).

The second dynastic model is Honourable patriarchal families which are opposite to the Godfather families as corruption is discouraged and the model laid more "claims to realistic representation" (Liebes and Livingstone, 1998:8). This soap model is also known as patriarchal soap which portrays a "particular version of family in which the battle for control centres on the male hero" but the moral responsibility, relationship and value management are in care of the woman/mother even when they have careers because their primary responsibility is as a mother or wife (Geraghty, 1991:74). Patriarchs here are either portrayed as businessperson or professional men who are concerned with the regular running of the business or profession. They set the pace for other family members to follow as they (patriarchs) are "upright and responsible". Imposing the patriarch's will on the family members and workers is usually the challenge here (Liebes and Livingstons, 1998:8). Part of the patriarchs' focus is to hold the family together in the face of challenge or crisis as they are often connected to the issue of power, property and money. The respect and authority expressed by the men in the business sphere are often transferred to the home or family. Geraghty (1991). The two types are similar, as they both connect to the outside world through love/romance and marriage and one generation to another are linked through a hierarchical structure. This model is common with American primetime soaps, for example, *Dallas* and a South African example is *Generations* which portrays the wealth and troubles faced by a rising black family within the context of multicultural society (Teer-Tomaselli, 2005). However, *Uzalo* may have been considered as dynastic in the first season with the two opposed patriarchs but cannot be labeled as such from the second season onwards, as the two matriarchs head up the two main families without the patriarchal characters, this made the season unique.

Dyadic Model

This model is very light on social realism but draws more or heavy on melodrama and here the reliance of the younger generations are sustained by powerful male figures also known as patriarchal moguls. This subgenre is described as a "destabilised network of a number of young, densely interconnected, mostly uni-generational, interchanging couples, with past,

present and future romantic ties, continually absorbed in the process of reinventing kinship relations" (Liebes and Livingston, 1998:4). The disruptions in this model are constituted by characters' often exchange of positions within the context of intergeneration or intra-generational relationships. Subsequently, relationship structures are changed and established as characters experiments by engaging with new intimate partners to form new partnerships. For instance, from heterosexual to homosexual relationships, form dyad to triangular relationships. The discovery of a familiar character as biological blood relations and other related matters leads to regular redefining and reinventing of family and community. Example of this model is the popular American soap broadcasted on e.TV (a South African TV) *The Young and Restless*.

Community Model

In this model of soap opera, stories are narrated with numbers of equal, separate families and characters. Unlike dynastic hierarchal structures, it is focused on portraying community with its regular daily routine of love, betrayal, reconciliation, sickness, unemployment and teenage drug habit. British soaps are examples of community soap also known as matriarchal soap, and here the soap is less concerned with the centrality of patriarchy (Geraghty, 1991). British soaps are the longest runner of community soaps, an example is *Coronation Street and 7de Laan* within South Africa context. The control of business and family is not a point of struggle between the male heroes rather the women are presented as the pillar of support to the family both practically and morally. Women are portrayed at the front line in their home and the family business is "indisputably controlled by the mother" (Geraghty, 1991:74). Crisis in this type of soap is different from the patriarchal soaps (Geraghty, 1991). This model is aimed at promoting the lives of working-class characters, overcome social conflicts and discourage class differences as it encourages togetherness or living together as a community with less focus on one influential or powerful family (Liebes and Livingstons, 1998). The soap exposes different problems faced at home and at work by different people in the community and the kind of relationship that exists between the characters in this type of soap makes them highly interconnected (Allen, 1985). As such, *Uzalo* involves the community of characters and depicts social-cultural realism through crime, violence and drugs showing the lived experiences of individuals in the township of KwaMashu. This is evidence that *Uzalo* shares features of community soaps and other codes and conventions within the wider genre of soap opera.

Codes and Conventions of Soap Opera

Genres are defined by their conventions: repeated, expected and almost predictable qualities. It is important to note that soap opera may have some inherent characteristics, but the genre boundaries are not fixed or permanent (Marx, 2007). In this sense, Lee Harrington (2006) revealed that soap opera broadcasting can be described broadly depending on shared cultural references. This confirms Chris Barker's (1997) view that soaps are global narratives and even though the same codes and conventions[5] are repeated around the world, they could also be regional or local. Soaps are referred to as local when they are produced to attract a specific home audience within a national space as "they encompass the history, culture and specific problems of particular local conditions" while regional soaps have a wider regional appeal that serves a particular language community (Barker, 1997:75-76). As such, one would assume that *Uzalo* could be described as a local soap as it is based in a particular township of KwaZulu-Natal, and is produced in isiZulu. However, it's extraordinarily high ratings indicate that it appeals to a wider South African audience and may thus be considered as a regional soap.

Soaps are considered global when they have formal conventions of soap operas (see below) and are viewed internationally, when they are produced in various countries across the world, and the fact that "it is one of the most exported forms of television viewed in a range of cultural contexts" (Barker, 1997:75). Examples of international soaps with global conventions shown on SABC 1 in South Africa are *The Bold and the Beautiful, Days of Our Lives, Dallas, The Young and Restless* among others.

Apart from the few conventions mentioned earlier in the definition of soap opera and its comparison with other melodramas and other soaps, other conventions will be examined to help form the premise for discussion in the subsequent chapters. Narrative structure is one of the conventions of soaps. It mainly involves the use of multiple interweaving threads that connect the storylines, since the narrative spreads across numerous episodes with different themes and subject matters which could be less (resolved) or more permanent (Barker, 1997). Melodrama is a key convention in soap opera and this can best be illustrated in the themes. Soap opera themes revolve around the representations of "romances, families and attendant rituals [such as] births, engagements, marriages, divorces [and] deaths" (Brunsdon, 1981: 78).

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[5] Conventions are the features that constitute a particular genre which the audience can use to connect to the genre (Allen, 1985; Budd *et al*, 1999; Spence, 1995). The learning and recognition these particular genre's conventions assist the targeted audience so as to "make meaning in the television medium" (Bignell, 2004:16)

These are the issues that provide the "narrative dynamic" and "emotional interest" of the genre (Barker, 1997:80). Furthermore, soap plots are usually recognised around the "falling out between family and community members; jealousies, infidelities, dirty dealings, hidden secrets and their exposure, social problems, for example, illegitimacy, abortion, sometimes work problems, e.g. redundancy" (Gledhill, 2003: 352). On the contrary, Tania Modleski (1982: 68) explained some soap themes as "the evil woman, the great sacrifice, the winning back of an estranged lover/spouse, marrying her for money, respectability, etc, the unwed mother, deceptions about the paternity of children, career vs. housewife, the alcoholic woman (and occasionally man)". Allen (1989: 49) sums up these varying themes as a "dramatic concern with heterosexual romance, kinship, and family". These are the focal themes in *Uzalo* particularly family.

Chris Barker (1997:79) further demonstrates melodrama as another convention of soaps; it is the "heightened sense of the dramatic, a focus on emotions and life's torments where characters may appear to have insufficient motivation from a 'realist' point of view". It is centred on "the moral fantasy of showing forth the essential 'rightness' of the world order..." (Cawelti, 1976:45). Things are exaggerated here through the use of elevated acting format and lingering close-up shots through dramatic music and also a variety of twists which often stretch the credibility of the storyline or narrative. It is difficult if not impossible for soaps to exclusively dwell on one of either convention (realism and melodrama), they could either be heavy on realism or light on melodrama or vice versa. For instance, British soaps more often fall into the realism category while American soaps are more melodramatic (Barker, 2000).

Although in a fictional production another important convention is that of realism. In this case, realism refers to a "set of conventions by which the drama appears to be a representation of the real world with motivated characters, recognisable locations and believable social problems" (Barker, 1997:78). This is the reason most soaps are located in areas with which the audience can geographically identify (Hobson, 1982; 2003). Location and set are major components in the creation of dramatic realism in the production of soap operas as these "create the physical space in which the drama takes place" showcasing visual style that can be associated with its location which should look like the real thing (Hobson, 2003:70). According to Brunsdon (1997:27), realism in soaps is divided into "external realism" and "internal realism". Referencing the outside world through the discussion of contemporary issues, mode of dressing, settings and depiction of social problems are known as external realism. This is also

known as social realism. Whereas, an instance where a character verifies audiences' experience and knowledge of the personality being portrayed is known as internal realism. The idea of realism in soap opera is central to this study that examines the specific roles of matriarchs in a contemporary Zulu context, as portrayed in *Uzalo*. Further, the study is interested in how the characters portrayed by the two matriarchs represent (or stereotype) the average South African matriarch. Allen (1985: 91) supports this line of inquiry as he asserts that "the soap opera text constantly walks the line between one that can be read as fiction and one that spills over into the experiential world of the viewer".

Character is another convention of soaps. It is one of the "most important elements in any soap operas" which also serves as a tool for attracting audiences to the genre (Hobson, 2003:81). Diverse and multiple characters are involved in the genre with emphasis on female roles including mothers, housewives, older women, divorcees and widows with a range of social issues (Gledhill, 2003). This made soaps to be often perceived as a female genre, although presently, the genre also discusses and represents male issues which birthed. Geraghty's (1991) opinion that though soaps are still women's fiction genre, men have become part of the important elements of the genre. Even though men take up major roles in soaps, Dorothy Hobson noted that men are not the main driving force of the narrative (Hobson, 2003). Furthermore, Modleski (1983) points that soaps are more of feminine than masculine narrative, this explained why it gained popularity among women viewers. Apart from the strong portrayal of female characters, children are also important characters shown in soap although with few appearances on the screen. Modleski (1982:86) also states that children are important in soaps because they often determine marriages and relationships, even though they make a little appearance in the storyline as "three-dimensional characters." The genre also focuses on the family as most of the characters presented revolve around the phenomena of family. One of the major traits that define each character in soaps is their dressing and appearance, this does not only distinguish them but helps the audience to understand and relate to the character's personality and how they evolve (Hobson, 2003). These conventions are further discussed in the following sections with a particular focus on women and soap opera, and the character of the matriarch. However, despite the differences in definition and rate of broadcasting, another feature of soap opera that remains constant and cuts across the scope and emphasis of national boundaries is "its historical association with female spectatorship" (McCarthy, 2001:48).

This focus on females has led to numerous studies titled which include; *the impact of socio, economic and cultural soap operas on housewives* (Anitha, 2014); *the popularity of soap operas amongst women* (Ahmed, 2012); *the consumption of soap opera among Arab women* (Georgiou, 2012); *exhausted and exhausting: television studies and British soap opera* (Geraghty, 2010); *women's fiction still? The study of soap opera in television studies* (Geraghty, 2006); *from crossroads to wife swap: learning from audiences* (Hobson, 2006) *representation of contemporary women in soap operas* (Ahmed and Khalid, 2012), the reception of The Bold and the Beautiful by urban black female viewers in KwaZulu-Natal (Tager, 1997), amongst others. However, the limited studies on representation/production of (Zulu) matriarchs within South African television soap operas, led to the necessity for this study.

Matriarchs

Characters, as noted above, are the "most important elements in any soap opera" (Hobson, 2003:81). The matriarch is a character considered as one of the important elements in soaps as stories are often narrated around this character.

The word matriarch originated from Latin[6]. It contains '*matri* and *'arch, matri* means "mother" and *arch* means "ruler". Matriarch is defined as the mother, head and ruler of her home and family (Steinmetz and Kipfer, 2012). Subsequently, Lynn Beisner (2014) viewed matriarch as a woman who decides to make the world a better place not only for her family but also for others around and intensively speaks the truth when others decide to be silent. The description of this character is not limited to women with biological children. They are women who stand for others, not necessarily their own children as they practically embrace authority that comes with age and use it to help others (Beisner, 2014). She is not only in control but occupies the central position of the family taking over in the absence of the man of the home (Schaffer, 1988). According to Stephen W. Reiss, (2009: ix) the matriarch can be described in six (6) words; female, fair, firm, concerned, compassionate and capable.

Within the soap opera context, Christopher Sewell describes this character as a mother, wife, home expert and figurehead of a home, while Collins posits that she is typically the installer of values in the home either good or bad (Collins, 2005; Sewell, 2012). In addition, Barker (2000: 24) describes matriarchs as "strong and independent-minded" character. Examples of

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[6] Available at: http://www.meraenglish.com/2013/02/26/origin-of-matriarch/ accessed 23/06/2016

matriarchs in television soaps are; international characters such as Stephanie in *the Bold and Beautiful*, Mag Richardson and Noele Gordon in *Crossroads*, Annie Sugden in *Emmerdale farm*, Sheila Grant in *Brookside*, Karabo in *Generations*, and Lee Haynes in *Isidingo* among others. Bill Bonner and Will Bonner noted that her focus is her children, making sure she provides for them emotionally, ensuring they are well educated and capable individuals as she often instills in them a sense of duty to themselves and to the family at large (Bonner and Bonner, 2012). As such many soap matriarchs are considered to be a 'good mother' when she is constructed as full-time, at home, middle class, and fulfilled through domestic ambitions (Boris, 1994:161). However, this view is challenged by Glenn (1994) and Chang (1994) as a patriarchal assumption of traditional motherhood which usually restricts women's selfhood and identity. Because a mother is identified not by what she feels but by what she does (Ruddick, 1994:34). The concept of motherhood is central in representing women as powerful matriarchs (Clerk, 2001). This is a global convention with regards to the matriarch character. However, as the object of this study is the representation of two Zulu matriarchs, attention needs to be given to the significance of motherhood and black African matriarchs. That is, how they are depicted both globally and locally.

Global Representation of Black (Women) Matriarchs

Globally, one of the frequent roles women are depicted in which cut across race particularly within American and British soaps is the "mothering" role (Liebes and Livingston, 1992). However, the Black African American women over time in the American media particularly television programmes like soap opera are portrayed differently. For instance, the Black African American women are regularly represented as mammies[7], matriarchs, jezebels, welfare mother or mommies (Collins, 2000; Hook, 1992; Manatu, 2003; Parry, 2003). These stereotypical portrayals are tagged as "controlled images" and challenging such depictions has been the "core theme in Black feminist thought" (Collins, 2000:69). These controlled images of black womanhood are generated from the domain of dominant ideologies of race, class, and gender which are mainly organised to "make racism sexism, poverty, and other forms of social injustice appears to be natural, normal and inevitable parts of everyday life" (Collins, 2000:69).

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[7] Mammies are known universally word or image for black women who are known to be self sacrificing. It originated from the South after slavery (Christian, 1980).

Mammy is a word that implies a "faithful, obedient domestic servant" who is "loving nurturing and caring for her White children and family better than her own" (Collins, 2000:72), this is one of the popular ways in which the black African American women are constructed (as domestic help). This image is aimed at influencing the maternal behaviours of the black woman even in their own homes, however, the inadequate used of the mammies image to control the black woman led to the construction of the black matriarch. The black matriarch has similar function motherhood with the mammy image (Collins, 2000). These two images are often represented as contrast, for example, the mammy signifies the Black mother figure in the White homes or family, while the matriarchs signifies the mother figures in the Black homes, the mammies are constructed as "good" mothers while the matriarchs are depicted as "bad" mothers who are usually blamed for Black societal civil problems as a result of their inefficiency in fulfilling their traditional maternal roles in the home (Moynithan, 1965). This justifies Patricia Hill Collins (2005:74) claim that sometimes, the portrayal of black woman as matriarch was only but to have a direct fellow to blame when things work or fail in the family unit:

> Portraying African American women as matriarchs allow the dominant group to blame Black women for the success or failure of Black children…Such a view diverts attention from the political and economic inequality affecting Black mothers and children and suggests that anyone can rise from poverty if he or she only received good values at home.

The portrayal of women in soap operas could either depict their success as good mothers or otherwise as failures specifically in the family role. Tonia Modleski (1979:14-18) identified the "good mother" and the "villainess" – bad mother. The good mother was described as an individual that owns greater wisdom than all her children, "whose sympathy is large enough to encompass the conflicting claims of her family… and who has no demands or claims to her own – she identifies with no one character exclusively" (Modleski, 1979:14). While the villainess character is often depicted to be bad as she challenges gender norms, strong in manipulating others even her children in order to achieve her selfish ambitions (Modleski, 1979).

Apart from the regular portrayal of the Black African American woman as a complex character with tremendous strength facing difficult situations or a woman who is overcome by incessant demands of providing and protecting her family, also is her sexuality. The sexuality of the Black African American women are represented with the image of Jezebel, a term derived

during the slavery era; this controlled image represents the sexuality of the African Black woman as "sexually aggressive" (Collins, 2000:81). Parry (2003) and Manatu (2003) supported that the depiction is not due to sexual orientation but based on a popular culture that habitually commodifies the Black African-American woman's body as hyper or aggressive sexual beings, and are not portrayed as characters that are romantic. Hook (1994) is of the opinion that this controlled image of Black African female as Jezebel could be associated to the traditional body features possessed by Black African American women which are quite distinct from other races. These body characteristics of the Black African American woman are evident in the Black South African women.

South African Representation of Black (Women) Matriarchs

Within the national context of South Africa, the Black woman is frequently represented as a wife, mother and matriarch (Neoytou, 2012). Lewis (2000: 5) describes the virtue of the African woman with regards to the South African context:

> The myth of the black woman as strong mother and nurturer, ever-sacrificing, ever-dutiful and denying her own (needs) and thoughts seems to reach back in the South African cultural imagination to the familiar figure of the reliable, ever-present domestic servant. Both her status, as 'mother' whose services are bought and the familiar stereotypes of her humility, loyalty and duty seem to come into play when we examine South Africa's prominent images of the unconditional love, loyalty, fortitude and strength of black women as mothers.

These attributes are mostly ascribed to the black African woman considering that their family set up is most frequently with an absentee father, automatically leaving the mother as the *de-facto* head of the family (Collins, 2005; Feassay, 2013, Sewell, 2012). This is evident in this study as both MaNgcobo and MaNzuza are the heads of their households in the absences of their patriarchal figures. This portrayal of black woman as matriarch was said to be inappropriate as it contradicts the core norms of the African culture as it tends to reduce the patriarchal authority within the family, which is not the "ideology of the dominant African culture and value" (Lebsock, 1983:147), particularly the Zulu culture in which the two matriarchs are constructed.

As scholarship on the representations of black South African women may be more limited, Tager's (1997) study on the *Identification and interpretation: The Bold and the Beautiful and*

the urban black viewer in KwaZulu-Natal will be referenced. This study differs from my study as it is an ethnographic reception analysis, whereas my study is interested in construction and representation. However, Tager's study is useful to my research as participants are black South African women. Therefore, an understanding of what the participants find appealing from their responses about the soap opera matriarch and other female characters and how they relate gives insight as to what they identify with as Black African women and hence gain insight of the South African matriarch.

When one of Tager's research participants, Songile, was asked to identify the character she most liked from *The Bold and the Beautiful* she noted that:

> I like Stephanie because she stands for the truth, and she sees things before they happen. She just talks the truth, and she's strong. She doesn't fear, she just says it out when there's something to say (Songile, interview, in Tager 1997).

Subsequently, Sibolelo mentioned the same character-Stephanie:

> I guess she's um very motherly you know. She wants to take care of her family and everything (Sibolelo, interview, in Tager 1997).

This reveals that participants identify with the international matriarch Stephanie but with the national appeal as they associate her character to be strong, truthful and playing her maternal role of caring and protecting the family. However, other participants expressed their likeness to the character Brook Logan:

> I also like Brook. She's quite a character you know, the way she plays her role, for me is quite nice – she's beautiful also. Um…see, on the other hand, there is Dr. Taylor. She's so nice you know, I like her too. But okay, I don't want Ridge to divorce Taylor. I hope something will happen to her, say an accident – something like that, I don't want to see her disappointed (Kaitira, interview, in Tager 1997).

However, Sibolelo expressed his dislike for the character Brook Logan:

> She's is a marriage-wrecker, I don't like her at all. I mean she's good at what she does, but she's doing bad things. I mean that she's trying to worm her way back into Ridge's life, and what she's done to the family and everything – you know? She's someone who's trying to get what she wants, but she doesn't care about the consequences to other people. Although I think Sheila is worse because she hides. You know; Brook doesn't hide from anybody what she's doing – what you see there is what you get (Sibolelo, interview, 1997).

From the participants' responses, it is evident they identified with matriarch and other female characters as strong women who stand up for themselves and are protective of their family. Some viewers also appear to like a character based on their good looks. However, overall they disliked those characters that pursue their desires at the expense of someone's happiness. Their expressions to the American female characters coming from South African context could be inferred to what they could also identify with a black South African woman or matriarch and also their understanding of their matriarchal status.

Matriarchal Status

Matriarchal status is attained in three ways; either by marriage, age/position or by default (Beisner, 2014). In some instances, power and authority are acquired through the process of marriage, common with community soaps. The success achieved by men as they struggle with various trials, tribulations and challenges to attain the place of influence and power also contribute to their status as the head of the family (Geraghty, 1991). Such hierarchy of power exhibition by the patriarchs can also reflect on their spouses not only as the wives or mother of their children but also as authority figures. Traditionally, older women are seen as sources of knowledge and support, because they are familiar with the customs and most times are the custodian of such customs. Women acquire their authority and powerful positions in the family and society as a result of their age; this might not be so at their early stage but as they age, it is believed that they have experiences on cultural and traditional issues (Beisner, 2014). A matriarch is believed to ensure the continuity of family rituals as a custodian of culture; also as culture is passed on, she ensures that no vacuum is created when she is gone. For instance, Ball (2007) gives the example of 'Pauline Fowler' in *EastEnders* - a matriarch, who assumed this position on the death of the senior matriarch 'Lou Beakes'. Even though she had been in the serial right from inception, she only filled in the position of matriarch after the death of the formal matriarch (Geraghty, 1991:76). Examples within the real-life context of South Africa are the 'Gogos' which presently have turned out to be the feature of contemporary South Africa (Partab, 2011). Gogos is an isiZulu word for grandmother commonly used in the "valley of 1000 Hills (Kwadedegendladle) in KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa" (Yancura, 2016:164). Currently, Gogos are the heads and breadwinners of about "1.5 million households" in South Africa (Harrisberg, 2017:1).

Generally, the sphere of power in both political and social sphere (private and public sphere) is owned by patriarchs while women take their place in the home subordinate to patriarchy.

This changed during the World War II because as men departed for war women took the place of power both at home and the public sphere (Aidenbaum, 2014; Tarlow, 1996). This matriarch is attained by default. The description of the matriarch in this study is not within matriarchal society but within soap opera. However, the idea of matriarch by default is pertinent to this study as both the lead 'husbands' exited the storyline, and the two lead wives/mothers assumed the leadership positions. As such, it is important to consider a feminist perspective.

Women and Soap Opera: a feminist criticism

The unrealistic and stereotypical images of women and the manner in which soap opera narratives represent and address women captured the interest of feminist theorists and scholars with a common background in feminist film theory (Barker, 2000; Brunsdon, 1997 and Geraghty, 2005). Soap opera is considered a feminine genre that creates space where women issues and motivations are "validated and celebrated" and pleasure is particularly appreciated by women viewers. According to Ang (1985), Geraghty (1991) and Hobson (1982) soaps are women genre, because the themes of the genre are entangled within interpersonal family relationships of divorce, marriage, romance, family, children, and so on, which are within the domestic issues that concern women. However, it is surrounded by many criticisms and with such queries as to what extent soap operas can be considered as women fiction (Barker, 2000:23 and Geraghty, 2005). Although the genre is also known for the portrayal of strong and independent female characters, they are often confined within the private sphere; this representation is prominent in soap operas. Likewise, the portrayals of women that are financially independent within the public sphere in soaps are limited (Barker, 1997).

Modleski (1982) described soap opera as feminine due to the unending nature, its lack of resolve and the constant disruption which can also be associated to feminist thought because it creates a forum that enables female voices to be heard. The range of characters involved in soaps is one of the reasons why it is described as a feminine or feminist genre (Strinati, 2000). However, female characters in soaps are frequently situated around their male counterparts (Modleski, 1979).

One of the conventions that make soap operas a women-oriented narrative is because women are central; as it offers stories that its female audience easily understands and relate to (Geraghty, 2005). Chris Barker (2000) and Brunsdon (2000) agreed to the argument as they point out that soaps are regularly deploying varieties of independent and strong-minded women characters (matriarchs) and the genre pays attention to complexities of private sphere often

ignored by other television genres. Though women are portrayed as strong and powerful individuals in soaps, their "strengths are frequently put at the service of family and the men within it" (Barker, 2000:24). Also, women are also represented as both "victims of claustrophobia" in family life and another way the "saviour" of any relevant issue that concerns the family (Barker, 1997:83). However, Brunsdon (1997) argued that such depictions are stereotyped as women are often portrayed as sex objects and housewives. This is why Barker argued that the enhancement of soaps through the use of glamour and physical appearance of women was mainly for the gaze of the male (Barker, 1997). In addition, Geraghty (1981) notes in her study of *Coronation Street*, that the portrayal of women in the soap are unrealistic as they are portrayed to be much stronger and independent in comparison to reality. Subsequently, according to Mulvey's view on soap opera as a female genre, it is overrated because instead of promoting feminine ideologies, they promote patriarchal ideologies as women are regularly depicted as subordinates to their male counterparts (Mulvey, 1981). As such, soap operas often depict men as active characters while the female characters as passive (Parry, 1991). However, this statement is quite contrary as depicted in *Uzalo*. Hence, this study will explore how the two matriarchs are constructed within the soap opera specifically season 2 as active characters rather than passive and within the dominant public sphere that is often associated with patriarchy.

Even though soap operas have very "strong generic features", Brunsdon suggested that culturally, soap operas have low cultural status not because they are worthless in comparison with other genres like films but possibly because the viewers have "less cultural power" (Brunsdon, 1997:27). On the other hand, soaps provide a private sphere for its audience to understand how women can be involved in political and social functions, this private sphere help its viewers to understand the contemporary world which is why soap is described to be part of the "gendered cultural system" (Geraghty, 2005:315). Based on Honda O'Donnell's (1999) argument with a focus on European soaps, it was noted that the portrayal of men and women are different, as women are presented to be more competent and dynamic than the men even though it does not always guarantee happy endings. Hayward (1997) disagreed with the argument that despite the fact that soaps are constructed by the rhythm of women's' lives, the themes and contents are shaped by all gender. Gauntlett and Hill (1999) further argued that soap has experienced a little shift, as it focuses on stories that are not exclusive to women but men inclusive and this has made men to become interested viewers. This shift led to Geraghty's concern that this little shift has affected the initial narrative orientation of soap genre and the

pleasure derived from it as it paved way for an increase in the inclusion of "crime series convention" in the genre (Geraghty, 2005:191). This form of hybridity plays a huge role in *Uzalo* as MaNgcobo's character is constructed to play her motherly role within the contexts of crime and violence juxtapose to the context of religion and a moral strand of MaNzuza's character. This formed the basis for the two matriarchs' opposition.

In conclusion, Geraghty noted that soap operas are still women's fiction or genre not only because of its storylines narrated but because of the way the soap opera viewers feel about the program (Geraghty, 2005). So also is the South African soap opera which are known for portraying stories that resonate with its viewers for example *Uzalo*.

South African Soap Opera

The major national South African television responsible for broadcasting local soap operas is South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), established in 1936. Its creation was modelled along the popular international television British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), with the central aim of servicing the interest of the dominant white speakers in South Africa specifically English and Afrikaans (Burton, 2012). Broadcasting of the television programmes were in English and Afrikaans. In 1982, two other channels were introduced added to the one channel that was initially in operation for five hours daily, namely; (SABC 1, 2 and 3). SABC 1 broadcasts in Nguni languages (that comprises of Zulu, Xhosa, Venda, Ndebele) and English, with the main focus on "public service mandate" likewise SABC 2 which broadcasts in English, Tswana, Sotho, and Afrikaans (Teer-Tomaselli, 2005:558). While, the last channel SABC 3 broadcasts mainly in English aimed at cosmopolitan and sophisticated audience across all races (Teer-Tomaselli, 2005:558).

After several transformations of the South African broadcasting structure in the apartheid regime, it led to the creation of other television programmes like soap operas and this marked a crucial moment in the country's history (Tager, 1997). South Africa's soap operas were modelled on American soap operas but with the inclusion of social justice issues like HIV/AIDS, sexual behaviour, birth control, discrimination, inequality, homosexuality, and social rejection and so on. This inclusion of social justice issues into the South African soaps defined its local contexts; hence, it distinguished it from American soaps (Burton, 2012). The genre's theme focuses in South African soap operas were based on feminine interest specifically; family, romantic love, multiculturalism, national identity (Burton, 2012; Milton, 2008; Teer-Tomaselli, 2007).

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In 1993, the aims and mission of SABC were changed after the restructuring of the Nationalist party, which was a year before the historic election that marked the end of the apartheid regime in the country. The SABC's aim was now focused on promoting entertainment alongside Bishop Desmond Tutu's affirmation of South Africa as a "Rainbow Nation" for different races to live peacefully and have an equal inspirational device which was initially available to a selected few (White) (Burton, 2012:221). This new mission of using media as a tool for nation building (Milton, 2008), peace promotion and democratic society, led to the creation of other soaps like *Generation, Isidingo, 7delaan, Mahvngo,* among others, as well as academic research on soap operas. This became the focus of the channel as Dr. Ivy Mastsepe-Casaburri (the then chairperson of SABC) in the Annual Report stated that SABC "commits itself to increasing South African drama production" (SABC Annual Report, 1994:7).

The increase in the production of soap operas in South Africa led to an increase in academic work done on the genre in relation to its local and international counterparts (soaps) like *Generations, 7de Laan, Isidingo, Dallas, The Bold and the Beautiful, Coronation Street, Eastender, Crossroads* (Barnad 2006; Barnett, Ives and Marx 2008; Lockyear 2004; Milton 2008; Tager 1997; 2010; Van der Merwe 2013)

As discussed above, soap operas enable a "mothering structure" to be portrayed by the producers and viewed by the audience, and how matriarchs within soaps are been imagined have all enhanced popularity among viewers (Geraghty, 1991:97). For instance, matriarchs in *Coronation Street* (Ann Windass, Ivy Tilsley), *Eastender* (Lou Beale, Barbara Windsor, Pauline, Pat) were portrayed with power and economic status although at different levels but their motive is the unity and survival of their families; hence they are represented as middle-aged women with ideal family and community values (Hobson, 2003). In all the soaps, the mothers and matriarchs are imagined as the burden-bearer and potential support to the family. These portrayals are mostly common with British soaps (Aston and Clarks 1994; Geraghty, 1991 and Hobson, 1985). Stephanie Forrester in *the Bold and the Beautiful,* Miss Ellie Ewing in *Dallas* and Nill Richardson and Nicola Freeman in *Crossroads* were also portrayed as strong women in the soap but within a patriarchal structure (Clarks and Aston, 1994; Hobson, 1985 and Tager, 1997).

Tager (1997, 2010) noted some differences and similarities in the portrayal of matriarchs in South African soaps, compared to international soaps, specifically between *Generations* and *The Bold and the Beautiful*. In the South African soap *Generations*, Karabo Moroka was

portrayed as the matriarch; she was represented to have some level of influence and power within the dominance of patriarchy of the Zulu culture (Mpungose, 2010; Neophytou, 2012). Her influence is seen as every member of the family seeks her approval before taking any serious decision, which is to some extent an indication of her importance and influence as the mother and leader of the clan/family. While Stephanie the matriarch of the Forrester in *The Bold and the Beautiful* was depicted as a woman of great character and strength and within the public sphere. Her strong personality and influence were seen in her decisions regarding family business, also, the extent she attained in order to protect her family and marriage. This is evident in her lengthy-duration feud with Brooke Logan so as to protect her sons and husband. Although she was manipulative, her persistence in her pursuits and her ability to often stand for the truth are part of the characteristics that made her character prominent. Both matriarchs (Stephanie and Karabo) share some similarities. They are wives, sophisticated, strong-willed and have socio-economic status being in the frontline of business as CEOs with the first aim of protecting their families in face of challenges and trials. In addition, their world is centred on wealth, power and fashion design.

The ways in which the two *Uzalo's* matriarch compare to international and local soap opera matriarchs will be further discussed in the analysis presented in Chapter Five.

Matriarchs in the Zulu Society

Generally, African societies according to their cultural beliefs regularly portray men as privileged, dominant and powerful while the women are subordinate. This could vary across cultures in Africa but in little degree (Aidendaum, 2014), however, the common feature in the portrayal of women which is universally indiscriminable is motherhood (French, 1995). Concerning the case of the existence and presentation of matriarchs, it follows that this identity may be depicted differently or similarly depending on the culture and its 'shared meaning' (du Gay *et al*, 1997 and Hall, 2003). South Africa, specifically the Zulu society, is structured strongly as a patriarchal and conservative society though women, mothers, wives and matriarchs influences are felt and recognized within the patriarchal system (Gumede, 2002).

The Zulu society and culture emerge from a clan that belongs to a larger group known as the Nguni who migrated to the Natal region in the 16th century (The Big Myth, 2011). The people called themselves "abakwaZulu" which means 'people of Zulu'; this came to existence as a result of their beliefs as the descendants of a chief called Zulu - meaning 'heaven' in Nguni language. The 'abakwaZulu' became their official name after the death of the chief (The Big

Myth, 2011:1). According to the Zulu tradition, men play "dominant roles" in Zulu families. They are at the forefront of everything like hut ownership, decisions making, receiving visitors and commonly known as strong warriors, which is one of the major attributes of a Zulu man (warrior), while wives and mothers are "primarily responsible for their children" (The Big Myth, 2011: 2; Hassim, 1990). As they engaged in wars to conquer other towns, the wives were left to take the front row in the family in the absence of the patriarch (Retele, 2012; Aidenbaum, 2014 and Gumede, 2002). It is a cultural practice for men to practice polygamy (The Big Myth, 2011; Martens, 2009). This common practice of polygamy within the Zulu culture is a common norm across societies in Africa and the migration of men made children dependent on their mothers and likewise, the social and economic conditions of the societies played a role in forcing women to assume the place of leadership (Baynes, 1995).

Matriarchs, as established earlier, are strong and powerful women in the home and society and are usually referred to as the backbone of townships (Sewell, 2005). They are both women with biological and non-biological children who also care for others around them with deeper personal feelings (Bassin, Honey, and Kaplan, 1994; Card, 1996; Leonard, 1996). In South Africa, this could be traced back to apartheid where many black workers (mostly males) were accommodated in urban areas in single-sexed hostels near their workplace, in communities on homeland borders, or in townships outside white urban areas and the women were left to fend for their families (Percival and Homer-Dixon 1995). During apartheid regime, the men travelled long distances to secure jobs and afterward stayed in the black townships in the outskirt leaving their wives and children on the farms or in rural areas (Bhana, 2017; Jeremy, 2008). Arguably, the women were regarded as "surplus appendages" that belonged in rural areas (Friedman and Hambridge 1991:161). This scenario forced the women to be strong, to fend and look out for the family in the absence of the patriarchs.

Zondi (1996) noted that the role of women as influential and powerful has been part of the Zulu culture before the coming of the whites. Giving the example of princess Mnkabayi who took responsibility of a small Zulu kingdom after her father lost the will to live due to the death of his wife; her role was recognized and respected by all men and the king's headmen (Zondi, 1996). Due to princess Mnkabayi's influence, to this day Zulu kings have female royal advisers. Women (matriarchs) with such features are referred to as *'Usoqili'* (the male trickster or father of tricks) because the women exhibit power in an unscrupulous, cunning and cruel manner just like men do (Ndlovu, 2009; Zondi, 1996).

In Zulu popular culture, the married female maintains their maiden names, for instance, uMaNzama (the daughter of Nzama) and even though they are strong and influential, they are expected not to express their ideas publicly but rather through their husbands (Gumede, 2002). Their influence is seen through the ideas expressed by the husbands. This supported the statement of Chinweizu that, though it is a commonly believed that matriarchs are less influential in a patriarchal environment, experiences have shown that this is not true. Rather, the most relevant achievement recorded of the patriarchy was via the assistance of a woman (Ibekwe, 1990).

According to the Zulu culture, matriarchs are only imagined and recognised within the patriarchal system unlike the British culture (viewed from the context of soap operas) that is not concerned with the centrality of patriarchy (Mpungose, 2010). This led to the argument that femininity within the Zulu context is frequently misrepresented as passive while men are shown to be active. This representation contradicts the fact that women are still involved in the "traditional network of authority" as noted above (Ndlovu, 2009:111). In the regular practice within the same context (not the royal domain), women hardly assume the role of matriarchs by inheritance but often by default, for instance, the absence of patriarchs either as a result of "premature deaths of relative to the women due to sickness. It could also be instance[s] when the patriarchs are alive but affected by unemployment, poverty, income inequality, gender power or other reasons" (Ratele *et al,* 2012:554). These could cause the men to play a limited role as the head of the family and this automatically launches the women to the forefront (to fill the vacuum that was created) to raise the children and protect the family (Ratele, 2012; Stats SA, 2010). This is not common only to the Zulu context but to other societies, that is globally (Marray, 1981; Sharp and Spiegel, 1987).

Townships are places of hybridity and are influenced by a host of challenges and associated with poverty, underdevelopment, decay and even death (Ellapen, 2007:114). Townships have a unique history, as is briefly discussed in connection to KwaMashu in Chapter One. This history has had a direct impact on the socio-economic status of these areas and how people perceive and operate within them"[8].

Women play a very important role in South African townships as the numbers of homes headed by women are on the increase (Ratele *et al*, 2012). According to Li Pernegger. and Susanna

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[8]Available at: http://www.shisaka.co.za/documents/TownshipTransformationTLnarrative.pdf   accessed 05/07/2016.

Godehart (2007) South Africa's population of 47.8 million people live in the 76 largest townships in the country. This means almost half of all the metropolitan households are living in townships (2.7 million). Majority of these households are either headed by mother, sister, aunties, and the Gogo/grandmother while a minimal percent are man-headed. This implies that one of the powerful individuals holding the townships together are the matriarchs (Sewell, 2012; Collin, 2005 and Ratele, 2012).

Presently, there is a paradigm shift in society; the dominant place of patriarchy is crumbling as women are slowly breaking the silence and taking on roles previously assigned to men only (Hassim, 1990). As a result of the changes and struggles in the socio-political/economic transformations and gender equality, especially in the workplace, women have now become family breadwinners and some are the sole heads of families (Mpungose, 2010). The ways in which this may be reflected in *Uzalo* will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed available literature that has indicated the soap opera genre to have both global and local conventions, making it distinctive from other genres. Some of these conventions include; a serial narrative structure, the use of narrative devices such as cliff-hangers, the use of both melodrama and realism, the themes of love, family and betrayal, and most importantly, to this study, the central importance of the matriarch character. Three different models of soap opera were introduced; dynastic, dyadic and community. These convention and models are discussed in order to better analyse the type of soap opera *Uzalo* may be considered.

Scholarship on the representation of the matriarch, both globally (Brown, 1994; Geraghty, 1991; Hobson, 2003) and locally (Marx, 2008; Milton, 2008; Neophytou, 2012; Tagar, 1997; 2010), revealed that they are strong influential characters. The chapter then presented a critical feminist perspective. In soap opera, women are portrayed as active but often this agency is confined to the domestic setting, and if it does take place in the workplace, the women are typically very glamorous which some critics argue is for the benefit of the male gaze (Barker, 1997). Continuing with a feminist perspective Collin's (2005) research on the representation of black women on television revealed that portraying a Black African American woman as matriarch is to have a figure (person) to blame when things go wrong in the family. These depictions are all described as controlled images by the black feminist. Nonetheless, soap

operas are still considered women's fiction because of the pleasure that female audiences derive from them.

The history of South African soap opera and television was briefly explored, how over the years the genre has been used as a tool for nation building aimed at promoting multiculturalism. The role of women in a patriarchal Zulu society (and in townships in particular) is established in order to provide an explanation that may be drawn upon in the representation of MaNgcobo and MaNzuza as soap opera "spills over into the experiential world of the viewer" (Allen, 198: 91) Though it is a patriarchal society, the influence of women, mothers, wives and matriarchs cannot be overlooked as they are the back-bones of townships.

Numerous global and local studies have been conducted on soap, but with little study in South Africa with regards to the construction of the local television matriarch. In an attempt to bridge this gap, the study uses both representations, genre studies and narrative theory as its theoretical framework, so that the choices in the construction of the two matriarchs may be better understood. These were explored in the next chapter – Chapter Three.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

Chapter Two examined relevant literature on matriarchs' representation within the soap opera genre (Allen, 1985; Barker, 1997; Brown, 1994; Brundson 1997; Geraghty, 1991, and Modleski, 1979). It was noted that "characters are the most important element in any soap opera" (Hobson 2003:81), and it was emphasised that British and American soap operas narratives revolve around matriarchal figures who are often portrayed as influential and powerful (Liebes and Livingstone, 1998). This concrete conclusion is limited within (South) African soap operas, because of the limited studies in that area. Therefore, there is need to investigate this prime character in *Uzalo*, a local South African soap opera. A narrative consists of four main conventions; genre, character, form and time (Schneider and Hartner, 2012). Hence this present chapter discusses genre and narrative theories that allow for an exploration of these conventions in relation to how the two *Uzalo* matriarchs are represented. These theories were selected for this study due to their relevance in understanding how representation can be "reconstructed, rearranged and reimaged" (Newcomb, 2004:413). It also serves as a means of "organizing, framing and directing experience and knowledge" (Newcomb, 2004:413).

Theoretical frameworks are "theories [that] give researchers different 'lenses' through which to look at complicated problems and social issues, focusing their attention on different aspects of the data and providing a framework within which to conduct their analysis" (Reeves *et al.* 2008: 631). Different theoretical frameworks centre on different aspects of a problem or phenomenon and therefore can only show a partial view of truth. That is, theory deals with a particular segment of reality at a time and the generalisations are done systematically (Bal, 1997). In the case of this research, the aim is to investigate the representation of matriarchs within a South African soap and as such the study is broadly informed by a cultural studies approach.

Cultural Studies (CS) Approach

The genre and theories chosen for this study relate to the field of Cultural Studies (CS) because CS is an umbrella for relevant sets of theories and practices that exist within humanities and social science dedicated to a study of the cultural process with a particular interest in popular

culture (Pitout, 2007). The cultural studies approach mainly deals with daily activities of life, how they are constructed and how individuals relate to these activities in their everyday lives (Turner, 1996). Again, due to the scope of CS and the involvement of numerous topics, it assists in giving voice to those relegated from the conventional society with the aim of interacting and connecting to the world (Hall, 1997; Tomaselli and Mboti, 2013). Equally, cultural studies examine how both genre and narrative reflect and participate in the legitimising social practice and recognising how their conventions maintain hierarchies of power, valve and culture (Bawarsh and Reiff, 2010). Through television, some of these conventions are portrayed particularly within the cultural text of a soap opera (During, 2005).

CS mainly concentrates on the debate around politics, economic structures and individual's roles in the sphere of analysis. These are the bases of Simon During's argument as he stated that cultural studies are debated around three issues beginning from the "claim that culture has strong political force; the determining power of economic structure on cultural formations; and the argument over the role individual experiences should play in analysis" (During, 2005:38). This implies that CS is relevant to this particular study in relation to individual analysis as it provides the foundation on how to investigate the representation of matriarchs in *Uzalo* which is narrated within a Zulu cultural context. The description of CS as a set of theories and methodologies that are used in a number of disciplines therefore, makes it a multi-theoretical and interdisciplinary field that "enables the understanding of phenomena and relationships that were not accessible through the existing discipline" that is, literary studies (Turner, 1996:12). According to Keyan Tomaselli, one of the functions of CS is its concern on how meanings are created and encoded by the producers of texts (Tomaselli, 1996). This helped to emphasise the focus of this study which is to investigate how the producers of *Uzalo* represent the two matriarchs as they were depicted within binary yet parallel worlds of crime and religion.

Genre Theory

Genre as a term has been defined in various ways and used differently throughout history to indicate its etymology or the origin of the word (Bawarshi and Reiff, 2010). The etymology can be traced back as a Latin word, meaning type or kind used by Aristotle to differentiate major literary forms like the sonnet, epic and tragedy (Feuer, 2000; Kress, 2003, Silverblett, 2007). Genre's existence is as old as the Western literary tradition and has been in existence for over 2000 years, used for the division and naming of literature into different types with "nominological and typological functions" (Allen, 1989:44). This genre term is commonly

used in the rhetoric, literary theory, media, and also within numerous studies in linguistics (Arancon, 2013; Chandler, 1997; Ren, 2010; Wang, 2006). From the 1960s, the study of the genre has increased and become quite popular in the field of folklore studies, literary theory, rhetoric and linguistic areas (Deng, Chen and Zhang, 2014). From the 1990s, genre theory has been identified as a significant tool in the process of identification of specific characteristics of a text and this is used by the professionals which serve as their mirror in the different stages of developments in the professional setting (Askehave, 2014).

How Genre Works: Definitions, Codes and Conventions

Genre is a means of classifying films and television programmes into recognisable units and sub-units by identifying particular similarities and differences to other films and television programmes (Stadler and McWillim, 2009). Such classification is typically based on style and storyline where characters are important (Berry-Flint, 2004). Genre is thus integral in the construction and interpretations of texts (Ryall, 1975:28) via familiar narrative conventions (Bongco, 2000; Hyland, 2004; Marshall and Werndly, 2002; O'Donnell, 2007).

Conventions are specific features and roles that help in the identification of a particular genre (Silverblett, 2007). The five specific conventions common to all genre classifications are the formulaic plot, characters, setting, style and structure, and iconography (Berry-Flint, 2004; Stadler and McWilliam, 2009). These conventions are the core elements of every narrative, particularly to television programmes like soap operas (Mittell, 2004). In soap opera, generic convention plays a significant role as it is used in the understanding and construction of triangular relationships most often between the producer, text and the audience, and the reality of soap opera genres are achieved through repetitions in orientation, expectation and conventions (Bongco, 2000; Chandler, 1997). As such, the use of genre studies aid this study in addressing two of its key questions; i) in what ways do the two matriarchs in *Uzalo* compare to other local and international matriarchs are either different or similar, and ii) what soap opera generic codes and conventions, and narrative techniques are used or subverted in this portrayal?

Steve Neale (1980:20) points out that genre should not only be taken as a form of textual codification but as a "system of orientation, expectation, and conventions that circulate between the industry, text and subjects". Generic conventions are not only used for circulation and reception of media texts but are also of great importance as they form the "central aspect of film form and intelligibility" (Berry-Flint, 2000: 27). For instance, the popular American soap opera *The Young and the Restless* is not just described by broad consensus but also

comments on and formally typifies the convention of the serial melodrama. It should be noted that generic meanings cannot be inscribed within a single narrative but through repetition of genre motifs by intertextuality (Berry-Flint, 2000). Intertextuality occurs when one or more texts are referenced by another text(s), hence reading relation is created between the texts (Stadler and McWilliam, 2009). With regards to intertextuality, genre theory consists of the concepts that various work, be it television programmes/shows or films can be positioned into a classified "related work" (Butler, 2007:430; Chandler, 1997; Feuer, 2000:138; Kress, 2003; Neal, 2001:1). Part of what this study will thus address is the way in which the two *Uzalo* matriarchs 'refer to' other local and global examples.

According to Newcomb (2004), genre studies are often viewed from the ideological perspective concerned with shaping and arranging peoples' experience of life in some specific ways which seems to address the audience appeal, and for reshaping social, cultural or industrial change. Since genres are recognised and accepted by genre theorists and those involved in the process of communication (producers and the audience), these serve as useful tools in the field of media and another related sphere (Chandler, 1997; Mittel, 2001; Neale, 2001; Newcomb, 2004). Genre is the tool by which producers bring their imagination to birth. In every stage of production, genre is considered, ranging from the producers, writers, director, actors, technical cue and so on; genre posts some level of expectations at all stages of production domain (Berry-Flint, 2000; Newcomb, 2004).

Since the whole narrative or formulaic plot, setting, characters, styles, structure and iconography of TV are defined by genre, the producers that fund, distribute and schedule the work relay on the available pool of talents and techniques to meet the specific expectation; this is achieved by the particular genre chosen to be narrated. As a result, the writer based on specialisation in specific genre provides scripts that fall within the expectations of the producer. This also equips the directors to use their skills in managing the production process according to schedules and precise budgets. As such, the concept of genre serves as an insurance policy to the production studios (Stadler and McWilliam, 2009) and promotes "industrial efficiency" as the production team can use materials and infrastructures repeatedly (Newcomb, 2004:424). Location can be restructured or constructed to enable its multiple usages and also costumes, weapons, vehicles and decorations could be used for years by the producers for productions. All these are possible through the use of genre (Stadler and McWilliam, 2009). Subsequently, due to the huge cost involved in the production, genre is used as a means of "standardizing

production" (Gledhill and Ball, 2013). Actors are identified with specific roles which are expected to be played out according to "generic definitions" (Newcomb, 2004:424). For example, Leleti Khumalo was purposefully chosen to represent the pastor's wife and Dawn King to represent the gangster's wife due to their physical presentations and capabilities, as well as what the actors themselves may 'embody' for the producers and audience (this will be further elaborated in Chapter Five).

Generic conventions and expectations include narrative, audio-visual codes and a relationship to the real world (Branston and Stafford, 2010). Through the use of generic conventions, producers are able to encode their intended meaning to the audience (Hall, 2010/1980). Encoding and decoding is a process that involves the model of communication which includes the transmission of messages or the process of creating messages, either through images or texts like books, news, magazines, films and so on send by the producers with an intended meaning attached to the messages (Hall 2010/1980). The production/representation process is also known as the encoding process which is characterised by underlying meanings and ideas as the message is constructed (Nightingale and Ross, 2003). Hence, creators of *Uzalo* encode their intended meaning in the representation of matriarchs by the use of generic conventions. Adrian Beard (2004: 15) noted that "knowing that readers have previous experience of generic texts allows producers of text to be confident that they will reach their intended audience(s)". This idea influenced this study to ask, in what ways the two matriarchs in *Uzalo* compare to other local and international matriarchs. In addition, the setting of *Uzalo* within KwaMashu was a deliberate encoded choice by the producers. This then leads to a related research question that seeks to answer the ways in which the setting of *Uzalo* in KwaMashu influenced the representation of the matriarchs (compared to past soap operas).

The process of receiving and interpreting the messages is called decoding and is dependent on the viewer's 'real world'. These messages might be interpreted differently from the anticipated meaning encoded by the producers. This is due to the polysemic nature of messages which can have multiple forms of interpretation; this includes the dominant, negotiated and oppositional meaning (Hall, 2010). For example, international viewers of *Uzalo* may hold a dominant reading of the representation of MaNgcobo and MaNzuza as township matriarchs as they may simply believe what is presented to them. However, due to cultural proximity, KwaMashu residents may hold an oppositional reading of this portrayal if they believe that what is presented is exaggerated, or they may hold a negotiated reading if they perceive *some* of the

matriarchs characteristics as recognisable and relatable. This study does not offer a reception analysis where audience decoding is central. Rather with regards to this line of inquiry; I seek to identify the specific roles of matriarchs that are represented (encoded) within a contemporary Zulu context, as portrayed in *Uzalo*.

Genre in Analysis

In term of analysis, genre is used for "interpretation and critical analysis" of film and television particularly by film scholars because it is the foundation that led to the "conception of media in our societies" (Stadler and Mcwilliam, 2009:243). Genres are created and defined by different societal diversities and convolutions showing that there are numerous types of genre and subgenres which are unknown (Fowler, 1989a; Wales, 1989b). A defined genre by one proponent could be referred to as a subgenre by another proponent this indicates that the level of construction is diverse (Chandler, 1997; Hernandez, 2001). The notion of hybridity is also relevant in the analysis of genre. Hybridity refers to "texts that exhibit the recognisable style, structure and/or characterisation of two or more established genres" (Stadler and McWillliam, 2009:221). Hybridity may be the result of industry or production differences (resources, technology etc.) or in the actual narratives' difference like setting and character. For example, *Uzalo* follows the technical and basic narrative device conventions of a soap opera, as discussed in Chapter Two. However, its inclusion of criminal characters, storylines and location (KwaMashu setting) could encourage some to categorise it as a 'township drama' or 'gangster genre', as well as a soap opera.

From a literary analytical perspective, Tvetzan Todorov (1976:162) states that a genre, literary or otherwise, is the "codification of discursive properties". Analyzing Todorov's (1976) work, Jane Feuer describes genre from two different perspectives of "theoretical and historical" viewpoints (Feuer, 2000:140). She indicates that some genres are accepted based on the pre-existing theory or specific critics, i.e., based on the degree to which it conforms to the genre's conventions (inherent nature of the genre), while some genres are recognised and accepted by cultural consensus that often exists between the producers and audience; this is referred to as the historical perceptive. Mainly this aspect is selected according to "culturally negotiated process that privileges particular aspects of a text over others" (Stadler and McWilliam, 2009:220).

Feuer identified three approaches to genre particularly within television study; "the aesthetic, the ritual, and the ideological approaches" (Feuer 2000:145). The aesthetic approach defines

genre based on its generic conventions and these conventions are used as an assessment tool to evaluate if a particular work maintains or subverts generic conventions. The ritual approach describes genre as a pitch for negotiation between producers and audience(s) through which culture is portrayed and explained. In other words, the ritual approach recognizes genre as a "popular social ritual" (Stadler and McWilliam, 2009:232). Equally, the ritual approach also views television as a "cultural form" where the "negotiation of shared beliefs and values [help] to maintain and rejuvenate the social order as well as assisting it in adapting to change", meaning the cultural context is of core importance (Newcomb and Hirsh 1983:45-55; Feuer, 2000:145). Ritual is described as a system of actions that are symbolic and encompassing expressed in an obvious but metaphoric manner of some abstract beliefs be it "religious, social, or personal" (Sobchack, 1982:155). Arguably, it was stated that ritual and myth work hand in hand in narrative framework (Sobchack, 1982). This is so because myth provides ritual contents that are symbolically acted up. Rituals are repetitively employed to alert the audiences of cultural occurrences which are the key element that permeates social importance to genre (Stadler and McWilliam, 2009). Consequently, each genre has its own ritual, formulas, conventions and iconography (Blod, 1994; Sobchack, 1982). The last approach discussed by Jane Feuer is the ideological approach. Here, genre is seen and used as an "instrument of control" by the elite, industries, or producer/encoder (Feuer, 2000:145). This provides limited space for negotiations between the industries and the audience. Borrowing from Stuart Hall's encoding and decoding model (2010/1980), the audience is expected to accept the dominant ideology enveloped in a message without any question asked. Here the audience is passive, not active as the producer expects the encoded intended meaning to be accepted by the audience (Hall, 2010/1980).

This study will use a mixed genre analysis approach, by combining both aesthetics and ritual (Feuer 2000). In terms of the aesthetic approach, the study is interested in the "recurring formal and stylistic features" (Vande Berg *et al.*, 2004: 118) of the soap opera text. However, in order to contribute new information to the area of South African soap opera with an analysis of an isiZulu soap opera, the study will also take cognisance of the codes included that create a local Zulu aesthetic in terms of the representation of the matriarch character. Since the aesthetic approach is used as an instrument for reviewing films and television shows, it does not only examine how television programmes use particular conventions but whether they complete, break, or transcend some of the core elements (conventions) of its genre (Chandler, 1997; Feuer, 2000; Mittell, 2004). Character type is one of the conventions of genre, known as the

"sphere of action" (Lacey (2000:137). Characters in every narrative are very important because storylines centre on them, particularly matriarchs in soap operas (Hobson, 2003). Distinct qualities of matriarchs are encoded and observable in their feelings, dress, speech, and so on which give the narrative a unique "symbolic importance" (Buckingham, 2000:147). The setting of *Uzalo* in KwaMashu also lends symbolic importance, and as such the ways in which the matriarch's generic conventions are fulfilled, retained or subverted in the representation of the two matriarchs (MaNgcobo and MaNzuza) are explored.

The ritual approach is included in this study via a basic textual analysis of episode 4, season 2, to identify the "recurring syntagmatic narrative structures" (Vande Berg *et al*., 2004: 118). This will be discussed further in Chapter Four. Meaning is constructed through recurring themes in the genre or the use of binary oppositions (paradigmatic structures) and narrative structures (syntagmatic structures) (Vande Berg *et al.*, 2004). Claude Levi-Strauss (1972) places importance on binary oppositions in analysing characters, settings or actions in terms of their similarities and differences (Prinsloo, 2009). This is a paradigmatic structure because it relates to ideas and examples around binary oppositions. *Uzalo* contains the primary binary opposition in the set-up of the two families and by extension the two matriarchs. This approach is thus directly relevant to addressing the research sub-question on what binary oppositions are set up between the two Matriarchs and for what reason(s). A more detailed explanation of binary oppositions is offered in the next section on narrative theory.

Exploring genre above reveals that narrative structure is one of codes and conventions of soap operas (Allen, 1985; Barker, 1997; Brunston, 1997; Geraghty, 1991; Hobson, 2003). Hence, narrative theory will be discussed below.

Narrative Theory

The structure of narrative was first illustrated by Aristotle and Plato in ancient Greece, but during the 20th century there was a broadened understanding of storytelling and this gradually led to the emergence of narrative as a theory (Wigston, 2013). The study of narrative also known as the "science of narrative" began in 1969 as the familiar French word *narratologie* which was changed to "narratology" by Tzvetan Todorov in the book *Grammaire du Decameron* (Grammar of Narratives Todorov, 1977:111). Narratology is described as the systematic study of narrative (Currie, 1998) or the ensembles of theories of narrative including "texts, images, spectacles, events, cultural artifacts" that often tell a story (Bal 1997:3; 2009:3). The theories are bases for understanding, analyzing and evaluating narratives (Bal, 1997). For

Edward Branigan (1992: 3), narrative is described as a "way of organizing spatial and temporal data into a cause-effect chain of events with a beginning, a middle and end that embodies a judgment about the nature of those events" which is applicable to both fiction and non-fiction formats. Though narratology encountered some challenges in the 1980s which lead to it being declared 'dead', it has evolved into a tangible, coherent and precise area of expertise in the field of literary and cultural studies. Mark Currie (1998) corroborated this conclusion that narratology did not die but simply underwent a process of positive transition as its moved away from its limitations and excesses of its early stage or youth.

The term narrative is a word derived from the Latin word *narr* meaning to 'make known'. Nick Lacey commented that narrative always conveys information in a connected sequence of events, and this reveals its uniqueness (Lacey, 2000:13; Alleyne, 2015). It is often structured logically in a sequence and not randomly with a casual sequence. Sequence is an important element because it determines the development of narrative (Lacey, 2000). It is also a basic and constant forum through which humans express their experiences regardless of ethnic origin, primary language or enculturation (Chafe, 1998; Levi-Strauss, 1972). It is also reviewed in recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events in which it is inferred or occurred (Labov, 1972). Accordingly, Roland Barthes (1977:79) explains that narrative is "present at all times, in all places, in all societies... like life itself, it is there, international, trans-historical, trans-cultural". Just like the existence of life, narrative is first and foremost a remarkable variety of genres, able to be carried by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images, gestures, and the ordered mixture of all these substances.

For Gerard Genette (1990) narratology is viewed from two perspectives, the thematic analysis of a story which is also known as narrative content and the analysis of narrative as a mode of representation of the story. The analysis of narrative by mode is of more relevance as the uniqueness and distinctiveness of narrative lies in the mode of representation rather than the first aspect (thematic) which has to do with the content analysis. Hence, narratology is an important instrument in television studies particularly the soap opera genre (Allen, 1992; Butler, 1994; Porter *et al,* 2002). This is because it aids in understanding the details of narrative structure and this happens because narratives are governed by some specific rules and strategies which organize the story elements into a logical sequence (O'Saunders and Fiske, 1994). This study, however, will mobilise some aspect of narrative so as to identify the dominant narrative

and the way in which the selected episode from *Uzalo* opens, climaxes and ends. Although narrative elements are included, they are not the focus of the study; rather the focus is on the ways in which the matriarch characters are represented.

According to Seymour Chatman (1978), story has two important components; event and existents because they make up the contents of every story (Chatman, 1978). Event involves the actions and general happenings in narrative while existents entail the characters and settings (Porter *et al*, 2002). Chatman (1978) also explained that event is divided into two categories; kernels and satellites. On the one hand, activities that contribute to the progress or widen other options of a narrative is described as kernels (Kozloff, 2000; Porter *et al*, 2002). Kernels are "narrative movements that give rise to cruxes in the direction taken by events" (Chatman, 1978:53). For example, episode 4 season 2 analysed in Chapter Five, presents a kernel as it shows MaNgcobo (and Mxolisi) doing the unthinkable, something that will haunt them for the rest of their lives. Most of the actions that follow this is directly dependent on them burying Nkosinathi's body. Kernels are very important to any narrative, a change or alter in kernel automatically leads to the change or altering of the plot (Porter *et al,* 2002). On the other hand, satellites are minor or routine events in narrative which often concern the existents (character relationships and provides texture to the narrative by providing "depth and richness" to the narrative (Porter *et al*, 2002:4). The routine events do not move the story along its "causal trajectory", meaning the removal of those events (satellites) in a narrative do not affect the storyline or "logic of the plot", it remains intact (Chatman, 1978:54; Porter *et al*, 2002:4). Thus, existent is the unit of my analysis for this study, as it will investigate how MaNgcobo and MaNzuza are depicted as either static or flexible in their respective roles within the setting of crime and religion in the township of KwaMashu.

Characters and settings as noted earlier are the sub-elements of existents, and are responsible for the happening of events in a narrative. As such, a character can be described as 'good' if the character is not static to one plot function all through the story but flexible in adopting other role functions. This is possible as a result of events - satellites and kernels (Chatman, 1978:119). This kind of flexibility is referred to as a trait which is described as, "the sense of relatively stable or abiding personal quality, recognizing that it may either unfold, that is, emerge earlier or later in the course of the story, or that it may disappear and be replaced by another" (Chatman, 1978:126). The background in which the narrative is located is referred to as the setting (Alleyne, 2015).

Narrative can only be complete when it goes through its chain beginning from the tale (story), teller (narrator), and the listener/audience. In the context of this study, *Uzalo's* producers are regarded as the narrators. Discourse is the medium by which the expression of a story is communicated or told to its audience (Chatman, 19878; Eckstein, 2003). It does not follow a particular logic of order; it could be at the beginning, middle or as the narrative unfolds which differentiates it from a story. In the context of this study, discourse is concerned with the format of how *Uzalo* presents the matriarch and arranges the contexts within which they carry out their narrative functions. This includes the looks, feelings and pace of the story (Porter *et al*, 2002). With regards to the MaNgcobo and ManZuza, Chapter Five will elaborate on the ways in which this is evident according to the following categories: i) embodiment (body language, tone of voice, display of emotions; ii) clothing, make-up and hair; iii) place and setting (where they are situated, props, lighting etc.); iv) character interaction and treatment; v) script (how they speak, what they say). These characteristics will be identified both from the basic textual analysis of episode 4, season 2 and the interviews conducted with the *Uzalo* producers and actresses.

The understanding of this visual discourse helps in highlighting the intentions and messages of the narrative encoder and producers (Holand, 2000; Kozloff, 2000). It is therefore useful in addressing the study's first research question that seeks to examine how the *Uzalo* creators (including the actresses that play the matriarchs) intend to represent the two matriarchs.

Selected Narrative Theories: Character spheres of action and binary oppositions

Influential structuralists have developed different approaches to narrative theory ranging from Aristotle (1971), Tzvetan Todorov (1976; 1977), Vladimir Propp (1968), Ferdinand de Saussure (1966), Claude Levi-Strauss (1972), Seymour Chatman (1978) and Roland Barthes (1974; 1977) amongst others. Two of the above-mentioned theorists (Levi-Strauss and Propp) are most relevant to this study's objectives. Propp's (1968) model provides a category of characters, which will assist my investigation on the representation of matriarch characters and the roles they fulfill within the narrative. Levi-Strauss' (1967/1972) model assists in exploring the binary oppositions that are used in the deliberate differential construction of the two matriarchs. However, Todorov's (1977) narrative theory of the shifting states of social formations will be briefly explained, as the characters 'perform' in these states. Additionally, these states are somewhat altered within the soap opera's narrative structure.

Tzvetan Todorov's (1977) narrative theory suggests that a story begins in a state of equilibrium where everything is stable until an outside force (person, event, etc.) disrupts the balance of the setting and creates a disequilibrium that must be fought against to restore order, or an altered stable equilibrium, in the narrative world. Todorov (1976) breaks the stages of these actions into five separate categories throughout the narrative: Equilibrium, Disequilibrium, Recognition, Repair and return to Equilibrium. However, in some cases, the return to equilibrium is not necessarily the order and balance from the beginning of the film but actually a New Equilibrium on its own. This short description can be seen in figure 3.1 below
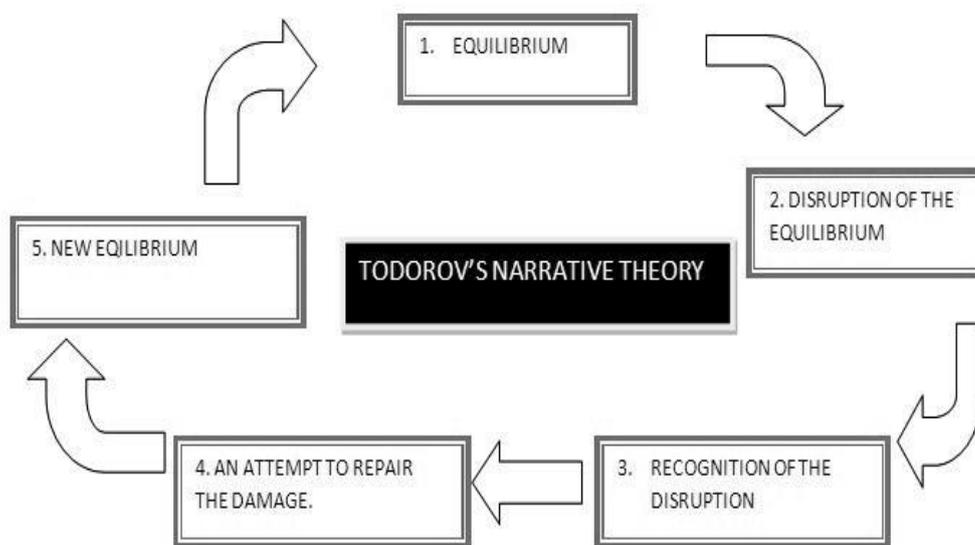
Figure: 3.1
Source: Todorov (1977)

Todorov's (1977) views on narrative show that narrative undergoes some logical changes, which he called the "casual transformation" and these changes are very specific. His description of narrative structure is slightly more complicated than Aristotle's traditional structure but with some similarities (Lacey, 2000:27). Nevertheless, Aristotle's traditional approach has formed the platform for more intricate framework mainly for analysis of narrative developed from the early twentieth century; this has been modified to analysis and constructs narratives in a multiplicity of media (Alleyne, 2015). Conversely, it is difficult for the traditional narrative structure (Aristotle and Todorov) to be applicable to the soap opera genre, because the end of the narrative is "indefinitely deferred" (Bignell, 2004:94). Soaps are able to

sustain this continuous running as they centre on different characters, portraying them in some specific settings with multi-stranded narrative structures, and these strands are different depending on the soaps (Geraghty, 1991; Lacey, 2000; Modleski, 1979). Nick Lacey (2000:38) commented that ending "some of these narratives may begin and end in one episode; others will continue for several episodes or even years"; but the paradigmatic and syntagmatic structure makes it impossible for the narrative to come to closure (Geraghty, 1991). As such, Todorov's sequence may not be directly applicable to *Uzalo*. However the use of terms such as equilibrium and disequilibrium will be used in the study's analysis.

Propp's narrative theory was expressed in his book *Morphology of the Russian Folktale,* published in 1928 but translated to English in 1958 (Aldris, 2014, Lacey, 2000; Propp, 1970; Puckett, 2016). After numerous analyses of over 100 folktales into simple and irreducible forms of narratives, Propp came to the conclusion that all evident characters involved in narrative could be categorised into seven different broad character types with specifically defined roles (Propp, 1968). His belief was that it is easier to categorise narrative/folktales according to the characters rather than contents because its broadness (contexts) makes it difficult to accomplish. Propp further stated that this common structure that linked folktales could be applicable to any old folktales or new narrative (Propp, 1968).

According to Propp, his category of character types remains constant in all narratives; his focus was to describe the characters according to their role of actions and not based on their personal characterisation (psychological motivation of the characters). He called this "sphere of action" (Lacey, 2000:51). The characters include; villain, donor, princess (and father), helper, hero, dispatcher, false hero (Lacey, 2000; Propp, 1968). Although it will be noted that 'the mother' as a character is not mentioned in Propp's list of character types, she is sublimated into other roles and functions. Each of these characters have specific roles in the development of the narrative. The villain(ness) is the character that is responsible for the narrative's disruption as the character creates narrative complication. The donor is another sphere of action that is responsible to provide a guide (it could be object, information, or advice) to the hero which will assist in the resolution of the narrative. The princess character is usually the centre of the fairy tale and the most threatened by the villain, who has to be saved by the hero at the climax of the narrative. The father's role is to give the princess away to the hero at the end of the narrative. In fairy tale, this character is often the king. The helper is the character that aids the hero in his task for resolving and restoring the equilibrium, and the character that sends the

hero on the task is known as the dispatcher who sometimes could be the princess' father (Aldir, 2014). The hero (protagonist) is the central character of a narrative that restores the narrative equilibrium through the completion of his given task to save the princess and win her over. According to Propp, there are two types of hero; the victim-hero and the seeker hero. The victim-hero comes across misfortunes and is the centre of the villain's attention while the seeker hero is the character that is in contestation with the villain to aids other individuals who are the villain's victims (Berger, 1997; Lacey, 2000; Propp, 1968). Lastly, the false hero is the individual or character that appears to be good but is not and is revealed at the end of the narrative to have been a bad individual (Lacey, 2000).

The adoption of Propp's whole character types is not always applicable to all narratives particularly television and soap opera, as one character can take on two or more functions or roles (Aldir, 2014) and their roles can change. This further implies that the features of a character can be changed or altered once the character is identified and established in the narrative (Mikes, 2013, Propp, 1968). For instance, a father (or mother as the case may be) in soap can also be the villain like the case of *Uzalo*. The spheres of actions occupied by both MaNgcobo and ManZuza will be identified in the collected data, and this will assist in further elaborating upon the ways in which the two township matriarchs are presented.

Propp broke folktales down into smaller possible units called the narratemes or narrative functions that ensure the continuity of a narrative which could lead the narrative to different directions. The narrative functions revolve round the seven character types (Aldir, 2014). He described the functions in two ways; the actions of the character in the story and the results of such actions to the story (Berger, 1997). Based on Propp's analysis, he concluded that there are 31 functions in folktales, but it may not be necessary for all the functions to appear in a tale or narrative; rather the functions that do appear should be in a given order (Propp, 1968; Lacey, 2000). As all narratives share common features, the 31 functions could take various shapes in different specific cultural contexts when analysing a narrative, as noted in Chapter One (Newcomb, 2004). This is important to take cognisance of in addressing the research questions that are centred on the location of KwaMashu: i) what specific roles of matriarchs can be identified within a contemporary Zulu context, as portrayed in *Uzalo* and ii) what does *Uzalo* reveal about the role of narrative setting in terms of generic adaptions?

Patricia Holand noted that the stage of complication is an essential part in any narrative because it is the stage that helps to maintain the narrative structure where retardation comes to action

which indicates the importance of causality to narrative (Holand, 2000; Lacey, 2000). In most narratives, characters initiate and respond to actions, which mean that the functions of Propp are distributed among the text's characters (Lacey, 2000). This provides the platform for their development (character development) (Hobson, 2003). As the two *Uzalo* families are set up in dualistic terms, it is assumed that most of the conflict in *Uzalo* ensues from a clash between the two families (including the matriarchs). Many audiences are drawn to serials because of the characters as they concentrate on what happens to the characters, how they develop in the narrative regarding their relationships, and how they cope with different obstacles as the story unfolds week by week (Hobson, 2003; Thorburn, 1976; Porter, 2003). The more interesting a character is in the way the character grows and changes over time, creating layers of depth in the metamorphoses, the more the audience relate and identify with such characters (Porter, 2003). Using Propp's narrative schema and his categories of characters, the narrative function of the matriarch will be investigated in this study.

It is important to note at this point that most narratives or fairy tales attain climax with the defeat of the villain, and the hero unites with the saved princess. However, not all functions are often used, which does not nullify Propp's theory, as he stated earlier that not all the functions need to appear in a narrative (Aldir, 2014; Lacey, 2000). Within Propp's model, magical agents and weddings at the end are common with science fiction, fantasy and horror narratives for example. His model can also be applicable to contemporary narratives not necessarily using the magical agents. Here, magic is not the focus, but its effectiveness in assisting the hero to achieve a transition (Holand, 2000; Lacy, 2000).

In soap operas, Propp's theory is applicable, because of the regular existence of villainous or bad characters (criminals for example) and on the other end good characters (loving mothers for example). In addition, the community of characters (Allen, 1985) provides a variety of characters that may be relatable to the other spheres of action as suggested by Propp. For example, a lost girl could be compared to the princess and the friend of the good girl can often act as the donor or dispatcher. The father could be interpreted as a variety of different person(s) such as community leader, or even boss figure[9]. Propp's theory is relevant in indicating the similarities that connect different films or narratives together and also identifies the differences

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[9] Available at http://sites.google.com/site/jenainsworthy/soap-operas-characters accessed on 25/10/2016.

in a narrative (Aldris, 2014). This leads to the next relevant theorist and concomitant concept that is relevant to this study.

While Propp's approach identifies categories of characters and 31 constant functions, Claude Levi-Strauss' (1972) work on binary oppositions indicated that all narrative structures and meaning-making structures depend on binary oppositions (Levi-Strauss, 1972). The French scholar, also known as the father of structuralism and cultural anthropology, drew readers' attention to the understanding of binary oppositions and the place of myths in human thinking, as he analysed 800 South American Indians myths (Levi-Strauss, 1963; Fourie, 2007). Levi-Strauss's approach to narrative after studying hundreds of myths and legends around the world observed that we make sense of the world, people and events by seeing and using binary opposites everywhere (Levi-Strauss, 1972). Moreover, the height of every narrative is its binary oppositions; this reveals the relationships that exist between the characters and their settings (Levi-Strauss, 1967; 1972; Lacey, 2000), making this perspective relevant to the examination of two matriarchs within the *Uzalo* representation of KwaMashu as a setting. The theory emphasised that binary opposition is the foundation through which we are able to make sense of reality and Levi-Strauss believed this is achieved through the creation of myth (Lacey, 2000). Myth is of great relevance as they are used to deal with contradictions experienced by individuals which appear to be mysterious but are justified and "resolved symbolically" (Turner, 1993:72). Similar to folklore, legitimising myths are beliefs and stereotypes about '*the way things are*' within a particular culture or society (Pratto *et al.* 2006). In this way, Levi-Strauss' work is helpful in responding to the study's key question on the way in which the characters portrayed as the two matriarchs represent (or stereotype) the average South African matriarch.

Binary opposition is the process of depicting or narrating a story with two or more characters in opposition with one another (Herman, 2006). For instance, some systematic opposition is between the good/bad, rich/poor, weak/strong, feminine/masculine, domestic/savage, and so on. These pairs of oppositions are also seen in characters (Wigston, 2009). Hence, these characters can only be understood by the use of "system of oppositions" (Lacey, 2000:65). This indicates that the concept of good can only be understood in relation to evil, that is, good is conceived when evil is understood. In this way, it may be argued, that MaNgobo, a 'criminal wife' may only be understood in comparison to MaNzuza, a 'church' wife. Oppositions in characters are traceable in their looks, dressings, actions and so on, that can be used as

differences and similarities that exist between the oppositions (Lacey, 2000; Prinsloo, 2009). For instance, hero or good are often portrayed as good looking while the villain is often portrayed as ugly. This relationship between the oppositions shows that "binary opposition are also hierarchies" as one character may be portrayed to have more privilege or dominance over the other (Moon, 1992:3). Narrative heroes often win over the villain or evil hence, it can be said that "conventional narratives show us a successful struggle against opposing forces" (Lacey, 2000:67). Hobson points that, even though soap opera is rooted in the concept of binary oppositions, it does not totally focus on the singular aspect of either good or bad but rather:

> Good characters and bad characters seem to be a redundant concept in relation to [soap opera] genre. As in real life, people are more complex than merely being good or bad, hero or villain; they are not that simple. Characters are multi-faceted…their different characteristics and their interaction with a number of other characters so that we can judge their behaviour and understand their motivations. The acceptance of different characters and an understanding of their psychological complexities is something that is possible because the nature of the genre again enables the production to develop and reveal many aspects of the major character (Hobson, 2003: 106).

Uzalo's high ratings are a testament to the popularity of the production and as the literature review revealed, a production's popularity may be due to the reliability of the characters to the audience (Tager, 1997). In order for the matriarchs to be relatable one would assume that they need to be presented as complex characters. In as much as the study will highlight the differences in the portrayals of the matriarchs their similarities, crossovers and complexities will also be accounted for.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the theories (genre and narrative) that underpin the study indicating their relevance even though they both play different but equally important roles in understanding the study. The theoretical explanation reveals that there is a connection between genre and narrative as narrative structure is one of the generic conventions. Narrative has long been a vehicle for reflecting on ethical questions, describing characters tangled in conflict and facing dilemmas where they must choose between competing values (Booth, 1989). Hence, the insight gained on narrative theory will be used in this study to analyse and describe the textual representation of the two matriarch characters in *Uzalo*. Propp's categorisation of characters will be used to describe the mother/matriarch spheres of action as portrayed in the local soap.

Also to be analysed is the way the two matriarchs are set within a binary opposition with a focus on episode 4, season 2. As explained above, these characteristics can be directly observable in categories such as i) embodiment (body language, tone of voice, display of emotions; ii) clothing, make-up and hair; iii) place and setting (where they are situated, props, lighting etc.); iv) character interaction and treatment; v) script (how she speaks, what she says). This complexity, as well as the unique setting within KwaMashu will also be considered in the analysis.

The next chapter (Chapter Four) explains the study's methodology (research paradigm and design), data collection and form of analysis (that will then be provided in Chapter Five).

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The previous chapter outlined and discussed the theoretical framework of narrative theory and genre theory that underpinned the study in order to elucidate meaning-making processes and concepts that apply to the representation of the figure of the matriarch in *Uzalo*.

This chapter provides the study's methodological approach commencing from the research design, sampling and recruitment strategy, data collection, the ethical considerations, limitations encountered, and the reliability of the study. It thus outlines and presents how the research was practically conducted by the researcher (Terre Blanche and Durrheim, 1999). In this study, a qualitative approach was adopted. Data were collected via two methods. Firstly, was the field research technique of semi-structured interviews with expert informants from the *Uzalo* cast and production team that included; the director (Thuli Zuma), serial producer (Mmamitse Thibedi), and the two cast members that play matriarchs (Leleti Khumalo and Dawn King). Secondly, generic and narrative data is elucidated via a basic textual analysis of episode 4, season 2.

The approach used and the reasons for the selection was to achieve the aims and objectives of the study which are to: (i) investigate the role of the matriarch in South African soap opera, using *Uzalo* as case study and the motives for this representation, (ii) investigate the influence of location (KwaMashu) on the representation of the matriarch and (iii) to explore the ways in which the generic conventions of the matriarch character are either maintained or subverted in *Uzalo*. Figure 4.1 below schematically summarises the process involved in conducting the study.

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                    The representation of matriarch in South
                    African soap opera: A case study of Uzalo


  ┌─────────────────────┐                              ┌─────────────────────┐
  │  Literature review  │                              │ Theoretical framework│
  └─────────────────────┘                              │  Genre and Narrative │
                                                        └─────────────────────┘

              ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────┐
              │            Key research questions             │
              │   •  How do the producers of Uzalo represent the │
              │      two matriarchs?                          │
              │   •  What specific roles of matriarchs can be │
              │      identified with contemporary Zulu context as │
              │      portrayed in Uzalo?                      │
              │   •  What does Uzalo reveal about the role of │
              │      narrative setting in term of generic     │
              │      adaptations?                             │
              └──────────────────────────────────────────────┘

                        ┌─────────────────────┐
                        │  Research approach   │
                        │ Qualitative approach │
                        └─────────────────────┘

                        ┌─────────────────────┐
                        │   Data collection    │
                        └─────────────────────┘

  ┌─────────────────────┐                    ┌──────────────────────────────┐
  │  Episode 4, season 2 │                    │ Semi-structured interviews:   │
  └─────────────────────┘                    │    •  Director                │
                                              │    •  Series producer         │
                                              │    •  Two cast members        │
                                              │       playing matriarchs      │
                                              └──────────────────────────────┘

                    ┌──────────────────────────────┐
                    │         Data analysis         │
                    │ Basic textual analysis        │
                    │ In addition to the            │
                    │ literature review and the     │
                    │ theoretical framework         │
                    └──────────────────────────────┘

                        ┌─────────────────────┐
                        │      Conclusion      │
                        └─────────────────────┘
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Figure 4:1: Summary of the study's methodology

Research Approach: Qualitative

This study adopts the qualitative research approach. This is because part of the study focuses
on people's accounts of the happenings in their world, so as to understand human phenomena

and the meaning that societies assign to these phenomena (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; King and Horrock, 2010). Consequently, this approach through interviews with the production staff and two cast members enables me to gain a deeper understanding of the intended meaning encoded in *Uzalo* with the main focus on the textual representation of matriarch. This study allows the viewing and understanding of participants' experiences and the process on how meanings are created through and in culture (Creswell, 2007; Kumar, 2011; Maree, 2007), with the aim of understanding the intentions and experiences of the production team as expert informants ((Bless and Higson-Smith, 2004; Honcock, Ocweford and Windridge, 2007; Kumar, 2011).

John Creswell (1994: 1-2) described the qualitative research approach as a process that is all-encompassing as its aim is "to understand a social or human problem". Qualitative research empowers the participants to have their voice heard as they share their experiences pertaining to a particular phenomenon, and this can help to "minimize the power of a relationship that often exist[s] between researcher and the participants" (Creswell, 2007:39). This shows that qualitative research emphasises the process of "interpretation rather than quantification, putting emphasis on subjectivity and not objectivity giving more flexibility in the research process" (Cassell and Symon 1994: 7). This is one of the distinct differences between qualitative and quantitative research design.

Qualitative research is also more flexible, emergent, often non-linear and non-sequential in the aspect of operationalisation (Kumar, 2011). Topics to be explored are identified and are usually guided or viewed through a theoretical lens which provides a framework for conducting the whole study from the purpose and problem statement, research questions, method of data collection to data analysis (Creswell, 2007; Baxter, 2008). This is described as the "scaffolding of the study" (Anfara, 2008:870; Creswell, 2007:37). The theoretical framework for this study provided guidance on methods of data collection and data analysis. For instance, the genre and narrative theories presented in Chapter 3 provide the study with 'tools' with which to make sense of the explanations offered by the interviewees with regards to their choices on how to represent and construct the matriarchs and the ways the setting of *Uzalo* in KwaMashu produces a transgression in the soap opera's generic codes, particularly with regards to character. This is because the focus is on a particular character not the production of the whole soap opera. A basic textual analysis of episode 4, season 2 using the theoretical framework

helps to identify the examples of the ways in which the matriarchs were deliberately encoded, and will be discussed alongside the data from the interviews.

In qualitative research, there are different kinds of designs such as narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, case studies and discourse analysis among others, but in selecting and using an approach, the researcher has to identify the specific investigation area of interest (Creswell, 2007; Denscmbe, 2007). For the purpose of this study, a case study was selected as the relevant design. This will be discussed subsequently.

Research Design: Case Study

A case study design was used in this study because it involves the study of a phenomenon within a "bounded system" of setting or context (Creswell, 2007: 73). This approach allowed the exploration of the construction of Zulu matriarch in South African soap operas using *Uzalo* as a case study. In addition, the choice of case study approach enables the phenomenon of study to be well-explored (Baxter and Jack, 2008) as it fully describes a unit, person or organization (Hancock, 1998; Maree, 2007) which often serves as a field for data gathering (Dyll-Myklebust, 2011).

The success of every research project depends on the research manual, map or plan (Maree, 2007). A research design is "a plan, structure and strategy of the investigation so conceived as to obtain answers to research questions or problems" (Kerlinger 1986: 279). Bruce Thyer (1993:94) viewed research design as "a blueprint or detailed plan for how a research study is to be completed". It mainly focuses on justifying and balancing the phenomenon and how it could be explored. Also, the choice of sample for the study, data collection and analysis for the final result is used to achieve the primary aim of the study (Thyer 1993: 94). The choice of research design by the researcher is determinant by some factors such as research assumptions, skills, practices and approaches to data collection (Maree, 2007; Marshall and Rossman, 2011). In this study, I was interested in the construction of Zulu matriarchs on South African television and *Uzalo* as the unit through which to mobilise the investigation. It assumed that although the production will follow generics codes and conventions, the setting of the production within KwaMashu would also lead to interesting changes in this characters' portrayal. The study also assumed that based on the narrative constructed on the lives of two opposing families that the two matriarchs would be presented somewhat differently from each other.

A case study is defined as a "systematic inquiry into an event or set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest" (Bromley, 1991:302). This is one of the attributes of qualitative research. Kobus Maree points out from the interpretive perspective that case studies "strive towards a comprehensive (holistic) understanding of how participants relate and interact with each other in a specific situation and how they make meaning of a phenomenon under study (Maree, 2007:75). This (case study) through the interviews with the production teams and the textual analysis of episode 4 season 2, enhanced my understanding of the expert informants' reasons and intentions regarding the representation of the matriarch in *Uzalo.*

A case study approach also allows for the "exploration of multiple perspectives" (Simons 2009:21), where all relevant individuals involved in the phenomenon are given the opportunity to air their views concerning the issue rather than just a particular individual. In this context, not only the producer and the director were interviewed but also the specific characters. Hence, it was important to hear from the actresses playing the matriarchs on the ways in which they developed the directions given to them via the production choices and script in terms of playing the two different matriarchs. Specific questions were thus designed to elicit this information. For example:

1. What are the possible choices in home set dressing, wardrobe, speech/script, and actions in the business and at home that assist in establishing MaNgcobo / MaNzuza's character?
2. How much input do you have in these choices in order to develop the character?
3. What other influences do you bring into playing MaNgcobo / MaNzuza?
4. In soap operas matriarchs typically fulfill certain roles – e.g. that of 'the good mother' and 'the bad mother', but also the businesswoman, the lover/mistress, the troublemaker. Which of these do you think MaNgcobo / MaNzuza's fits, and why?

Despite the benefits of the dynamic and evolving nature of a case study approach, it is not without some criticisms. A lack of generalisability of findings or results is one, as most often as findings from a case are not always applicable to other similar cases and such cannot contribute to scientific development (Starman, 2013). However, Kobus Maree (2007) and Beverley Hancock (1998) opposed Starman's (2013) view, arguing that it contradicts the primary aim of case study since it does not focus on generalization but a specific phenomenon and their peculiarities. Case studies are most useful and relevant in the first stage of research

which is generating hypotheses but weak in testing hypotheses and theory building. It is said to be biased towards the researcher as it often confirms the preconceived notion of the researcher and it is difficult to summarise and develop general propositions (Starman, 2013:38). However, this was overcome as my analysis was supported by references from different scholars on similar issues and views and not based on my personal preconceived notion. Also, I overcame the lack of generalisation as I contextualized the study by using established scholars of soap operas (Allen, 1985; Geraghty, 2005; Hobson, 1985, 2003, 2010; Liebes and Livingstone, 1997; Marx, 2008; Milton, 2008; Tager, 1997) and adopted well-known and rigorous conceptual frameworks. Moreover, expert informants may arguably project their personal agenda during data gathering rather than just provide information (Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Denzin and Lincoln, 2003; Starman, 2013). In order to proffer a solution, I emphasised at the beginning of the interview that the research was for academic purpose and instances where responses were off topic, were not considered in the analysis.

Sampling and Recruitment Strategy

Purposive sampling was selected as it is specific and not random (Tashakkari and Teddie, 2003). It deals with the identification of selected individuals that are well informed and provide relevant and needed information for the study based on their knowledge and experiences with the phenomenon of study. This study based its selection of participants on respondents with knowledge, experience and influence on the construction of the matriarch characters in *Uzalo,* thus known as expert informants (Bless and Higson-Smith, 2004). They included the director (Thuli Zuma), serial producer (Mmamitse Thidbedi), and the two matriarchs (Dawn King and Leleti Khumalo). Both the selection of *Uzalo* as a case study and the interviewees can be described as "information-rich cases…from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research" (Patton, 1990: 169).

In terms of recruitment, prior to this research, communication and co-operation between the Centre for Communication, Media and Society (CCMS) and Stained Glass Production had already been established in 2015 by Dr. Lauren Dyll-Myklebust and Prof. Ruth Teer-Tomaselli for the broader research project, "Representing and consuming the local: Exploring the production and reception of *Uzalo,* KwaMashu" (ethics approval number HSS/1110/015CA). As such convenience sampling was also employed as interviewees were selected "amongst a readily accessible group of people" (Pitout, 2009: 501). All interviews with the expert

informants (see appendix 3 for interview schedule) and research activity at the *Uzalo* studio was permitted via the gatekeeper permission letter provided by the *Uzalo* Series Producer (Mmamitse Thibedi). Recruitment of expert informants was conducted via email and the approval of gatekeeper letter (see appendix 1) from the production company – Stained Glass Production and each expert informant was provided with informed consent form (see appendix 4) before the interview was conducted.

The selection of the episode for the basic textual analysis was also purposively sampled. Episode 4, season 2 was selected because it focuses on the two matriarchs and its narrative from beginning to the end alternates between the two characters (this will be explored below under analysis).

Data Collection and Analysis

In order to elicit meaningful data within the case study, two data collection techniques were employed, i) the field research method of semi-structured interviews and ii) a basic textual analysis of a selected episode. Data collection to a great extent determines the "quality, quantity, adequacy and appropriateness of data" to a research work (Pawar, 2004:3). Therefore, methods of data collection are chosen based on the nature of a research problem, objectives and research questions (Pawar, 2004:3).

Semi-structured Interviews

The semi-structured interviews were conducted according to three formats; i) face-to-face paired interviews, ii) one-on-one interview and lastly iii) written interview. The aim of the semi-structured interviews in the study was to understand the representation process of the matriarch in *Uzalo* within the setting of KwaMashu and to establish the preferred reading/encoded meaning in the portrayal of the matriarch.

The choice of this data collection method was based on its effectiveness to understand the personal experiences of others (Fontana and Frey, 1994). The value of semi-structured interviews is that they address the needs of both i) comparable responses with the same pre-determined questions being asked of each interviewee (see appendices 3 for schedule of interview) and ii) the need for the interview to be developed by the conversation between the interviewer and interviewee (Wisker, 2001). Semi-structured interviews are thus relevant in this study as they afford participants the flexibility and time to delve deeper into aspects that

might pertain directly to their roles in production (Berger, 2011). In summary, this interview structure was found to be most useful as it ensures specific research questions (note on appendix 3 how the interview questions are categorised under each key research question), flexibility and texture (Fontana and Frey 2003). The information provided from this approach is not only rich in depth, but such information is difficult to obtain through other methods (Hancock, 1998), as the two *Uzalo's* matriarchs are studied in their natural settings (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000:3). This gives me the opportunity to be exposed to the "inner experience" of the expert informants (Corbin and Strauss 2008:12), which assisted in understanding the process on how meanings are created by the producers of *Uzalo*

In qualitative research, an interview is described as a dialogue rather than "a question-and-answer session" (Barker, 1999: 247). It is a "conversation with a purpose" (Burgess, 1984: 102). In fieldwork, the key to successful interviewing is to "find the person(s) who (are) best qualified in terms of the key research question, to provide the researcher with the information required" (Maree, 2007: 88). All four semi-structured expert interviewees had to sign the informed consent (see appendix 4) which provides information regarding the study (Brennen, 2013:16), this will further be explained under the ethical consideration. Prior to the interview, I inquired if the informants would like to ask any questions as they signed the informed consent form. The serial producer responded and said she would like to know if I was interested in going into television production after my academic pursuit. I responded that the present study was due to my area of interest in television production/representation but without any firm certainty if the passion will be pursued as a career in future.

A paired interview format was used for interviewing the director (Thuli Zuma) and the serial producer (Mmamitse Thibede) at the Stained Glass Productions Studio in Riverhorse Road on 22 August 2016 (see appendix 5 for pictures taken during data collection with some of the expert informants). Also present were two CCMS honours students and three academic staff members and supervisors of the broader South African television research project. In paired interviews individuals are interviewed at the same time (Mann, 2016). Most often, individuals involved in paired interviews are related like couples, parents, dependent person and co-workers (Jennings, 2005; Morris, 2001). One of the advantages of this type of interview is that it allows the expert informants to articulate their own experiences, react to, and comment on the ideas and viewpoints of one another. This allows for interaction, joint reflection, and complex relationships to be explored (Mann, 2016). Paired interview is said to be the most

efficient kind of interview as it produces in-depth data compared to other types of interview (Davies, 2016). This is arguably so as paired interviews assist in "providing more complete data as each interviewee fills in the other interviewee's memory lapses and gaps in the storytelling" (Wilson *et al*, 2016:1554). I found that this was particularly the case when the two interviewees could reflect on the realities of KwaMashu and its influence on the construction of the two characters. For example in response to the following question: how do the matriarchs depicted in *Uzalo* compare (represent) known matriarchs in Zulu culture or a township (or are they purely fictionalised)?

Nevertheless, there are two challenges to this interview form, the issue of one person dominating the other, and that not all topics or issues can be discussed, for instance, issues that require a high level of privacy (Wilson *et al*, 2016). These challenges were not evident in the interview conducted with Zuma and Thibedi because they hold similar positions in terms of status within Stained Glass Productions and the issues discussed were not of a sensitive nature. Zuma and Thibedi were given time to respond individually to the questions asked as both were highly knowledgeable about the phenomena and that gave room for more probing and clarification of depth information (Maree, 2007). The interview lasted for 1:09:51 and was audio-recorded. Both informants agreed to use their real names.

A face-to-face or one-on-one interview was conducted with Dawn King who plays MaNgcobo, the 'gangster matriarch' on 14 September 2016 at the Stained Glass Production Studios. Also present were my two supervisors. After signing the informed consent form, the interviewee agreed to use her real name as she provided answers to questions asked which were mainly directed to her portrayal of her fictional character of the matriarch. The initial idea was to conduct another paired interview with both actresses, however this was not possible. It was difficult to secure a time with both actresses who are very busy and appear in most scenes of the production. King agreed to meet with us for twenty minutes. However, she was so enthusiastic in her responses that the actual interview was almost double the length (38 minutes 45 seconds) and yielded rich information. The interview was conducted in 'MaNgcobo's lounge' (her *Uzalo* home set) and that it was a one-on-one interview were arguably contributing factors to this (see appendix 5 for pictures).

A written interview was conducted with Leleti Khumalo as efforts were made to conduct a face-to-face interview as well as a telephonic interview, but these were abortive. The interview schedule (see appendix 3) was emailed to her with an informed consent letter, and after few

days, Khumalo sent back her responses via e-mail on 21st April 2017. This format of interview presents some challenges such as the lack of visual cues like body gestures which also limits me from understanding the situation of the interviewee situated during the interview (Opdenakker, 2006). In addition, I had no opportunity to further probe like I did in the previous interviews, and thus this interview was more limited in its responses. However, similarly to King's interview, this written interview also afforded a level of privacy and was still 'conversational' which involved an interactional sequence but with the absence of visual cues (Frey, 1983). This form of interviewing assisted in attaining the responses from the second matriarch that was of paramount importance to the study's objective.

Transcription

After the completion of the interviews, transcribing audiotapes was done using verbatim transcription immediately after the interviews were conducted, so as to avoid summary which could lead to researcher biasness (Nieuwenhuits, 2007). Immediate transcription after the interview helped me to highlight areas that needed to be followed up, dropped or introduced in future interviews (Lindlof, 1995:210-211). For instance, after the first (paired) interview, it impacted my subsequent questions with other expert informants – King and Khumalo. The dialogue provided depth to important interview questions that were not initially included in the interview questions and that helped to slightly alter the rest of the interview schedules (see appendix 3). During my interview with King, some of the questions were also altered. For example, she noted that 'Lindiwe' should be referred to as MaNgcobo because it's a clan name and famous name. This observation was taken and reflected in the interview with Khumalo as she was referred to as MaNzuza instead of Zandile as I initially structured. In this transcription, unintelligible parts of the transcripts were indicated with ellipses, underscores and blanks (Lindlof, 1995:211). Since this is not a matter of studying the linguistic conventions, notations using timing, intonations, sound lengths and emphases were not used in this study's transcription.

Analysis

The study's analysis was conducted via a basic textual analysis (that includes elements of a narrative analysis) and is presented comparatively. Data presented in all levels of the analysis (including the interviews) will be discussed with reference to the literature and theoretical framework discussed in Chapter Two and Three respectively.

A basic textual analysis was used in this study to analyse episode 4, season 2 of *Uzalo*. Alan Makee (2003) explains that text is anything that meaning can be created from; this could be in film, books, television programmes, t-shirts and so on. In this context, soap opera as a television genre is the focus. Hence, he described textual analysis as a process of data gathering that enables a researcher to get informed on how a particular individual make sense of the world (Makee, 2003). Therefore, a textual analysis is a tool used for observing, discovering and understanding issues like attitudes, behaviours, concerns, motivations and culture of a text producer.

A textual analysis is concerned with the expression of lived experiences of the authors which reveals both the social context of their production and also provides the audience with the "means of shared experience" (Beuer *et al*, 2014: 11). This is one of the reasons why textual analysis is a useful tool in cultural studies (Makee, 2003). However, in this study, I used textual analysis to understand how the producers of *Uzalo* constructed the two matriarchs (MaNgcobo and MaNzuza) in episode 4, season 2 within the worlds of binary oppositions (Levi-Strauss, 1972) and in relation to lived experiences. Interpretation in textual analysis is done by breaking texts into a component of signs in order to investigate the latent (denotative) and the connotative meaning attached to a text (Chandler, 2002; Makee, 2003).

A basic narrative analysis of the selected episode is presented first in order to make comments on the dominant narrative and the way in which it opens, climaxes and ends (on a cliff-hanger). As Chapter Two explained the soap opera genre functions with multiple narratives and contains a community of characters (Allen, 1985). However, this study is concerned with the dominant narrative that contains the two matriarchs. Todorov's (1977) shifting states of equilibrium and disequilibrium were useful in this regard, as well as the codes and conventions of the soap opera genre as previously discussed. The analysis is then presented comparatively.

A textual analysis of episode 4, season 2 compares MaNgcobo and MaNzuza in their deliberate construction in terms of the following categories; i) embodiment (body language, tone of voice, display of emotions), ii) clothing, make-up and hair, iii) place and setting (where they are situated, the props in use), iv) character interaction and treatment, and v) script. The denotative and connotative meanings associated with these categories are identified and discussed in terms of how the two *Uzalo* matriarchs differ from each. Levi-Strauss' (1972) model of binary oppositions is useful here. Furthermore, the data gathered during the interviews with the expert informants was mobilised to provide an in-depth discussion of these

observations. After the deliberate construction of the two matriarchs was identified via a textual analysis the discussion was moved into the ways in which these characters are presented in comparison to other local and international soap opera matriarchs. The setting of KwaMashu is vital to this discussion, and in this section, the primary data that was drawn on emanates from the interviews. The analysis was thus ended with a discussion on the ways in which South African Zulu township matriarchs are established. The idea of cultural proximity and the influence of setting on this representation, as explained by the interviewees were useful here.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues in qualitative research are fundamental so as to ensure that the researcher takes into consideration measurable efforts to protect the participants' privacy and confidentiality (Mathew, 2012). Before the commencement of this research, I obtained an ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) (see appendix 2). Again, a letter was addressed to the Stained Glass Production stating the research title, the aims and the objectives of the study and the importance of the research to scholarship on South African soap opera. This led to gatekeeper permission (see appendix 1).

Prior to the interview, the aims and objectives of the study and the issue of confidentiality and privacy were explained to the expert informants. Each informant signed the informed consent (see appendix 4), this confirmed their willingness to participate and that they understand what their participation means for the study. The informed consent contains the summary of this study and the details of the research's supervisor in case of any query. It also explains that the participants have the right to use a pseudonym but all informants opted to use their real names as they agreed that it is their position within *Uzalo* / Stained Glass Productions that was important to the information they shared. Each of the expert informants was made to understand that they were free to either continue or stop the interview at any given time. The informed consent also specified that if the informants felt any of the information given should not be documented or analysed due to any reason, it would be retracted. Finally, with the permission of the informants, the interview was recorded using CCMS audio recorder, which helped me to have the details of all the conversations and later transcribed verbatim\ so that data analysis could commence.

Limitation of the Study

The challenges faced in this study were mainly during the data collection. Due to the busy schedule of the production team, it was complicated to find a date that was convenient and suitable for the expert informants to conduct the interview. This was because at the period of data collection they were shooting so many episodes and a lot of the scenes were shot on location. This made the production crew extremely busy, hence I had to find the time they were shooting off set which was convenient for the informants. Moreover, their schedules are published one to two weeks in advance and this made allocating time for the interview difficult.

I was able to conduct two interviews before the one-month production break (November 2016) with some expert informants (the director, serial producer and one of the matriarch character). The last interview with the other matriarch character was finally scheduled and conducted in April 2017. However, I applied some flexibility which is often required in fieldwork so as to overcome research challenges (Neuman, 2014). For instance, I was ready to interview with very little notice, I was happy to wait for a break in production/shooting of scenes. I also waited for some months to complete the last interview after the production break which was written interview even though it was not part of the initial planned semi-structured interview. This was the only convenient format for my last informant, although the interview took seven months after the first two interviews were conducted.

Reliability and Validity of the Study

This study is reliable and valid as all the information and methods of data collection were from credible sources and when subjected to the same condition can yield a similar result. Reliability and validity are tools used in evaluating the process of a research work (Golafshani, 2003). Reliability in qualitative research assists in evaluating the quality of the study with the basic aim of generating an understanding of the phenomenon under study (Stenbacka, 2001). Validity refers to the appropriateness of all the tools used in the study, that is, to establish if the sample and data analysis used were valid for the study and finally if the result and conclusion generated were appropriate for the sample and context (Leung, 2015). According to Ellen Drost (2011:114), validity is important because it is mainly "concerned with the meaningfulness of research components" as it shows the trustworthiness of the study in achieving the research objectives.

To ensure dependability and transparency of this research work ranging from its findings, the procedures taken during data collection, recording of findings and presenting them in data analysis have been clearly stated and justified in this chapter, and was also established through the "checking of findings alongside existing theory" stated in Chapter Three (Smailes and Street, 2011: 258). Again, in this study, I ensured that the study reflects the real *Uzalo's* matriarchs as portrayed by the expert informants as their views were presented in the findings and analysed by using quotations (Babbie and Mouton, 2004). In order to maintain confirmability in this study, I ensured that the field notes were well reviewed and referenced to the research objectives and questions were made more regularly to ensure that the focus of the study is maintained. Furthermore, all the interview recordings and transcriptions are available which can be compared side-by-side against the final write-up of the dissertation.

Conclusion

Focusing on the research aims and objectives, this chapter discussed the steps that were taken in the process of data collection and data analysis for the study. With well-defined ethical considerations, the data collected pertained to textual, production and representation of the matriarch characters portrayed in *Uzalo*. The next chapter (Chapter Five) presents my analysis of the data and its findings which contains a textual analysis of one episode (episode 4, season 2) which was supplemented with my semi-structured interviews. Data was discussed comparatively and in the light of the literature review and the theoretical framework that underpins the study. The main focus here was to answer the stated research questions (see chapter one) in relation to the aims and objectives of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

In order to investigate how matriarchal characters are represented in the soap opera *Uzalo*, this chapter presents the data analysis drawn and interpreted from the semi-structured interviews with the expert informants; Thuli Zuma (director), Mmamitse Thibede (series producer), and the two cast members playing the role of matriarchs Dawn King (MaNgcobo), and Leleti Khumalo (MaNzuza). This data analysis is guided by the previous observations and arguments of various scholars of soap operas; Allen (1985), Brown (1994), Geraghty (1991), Hobson (2003), Mulvey (1981) among others, as a continuous serial, targeted at female audience and known for its portrayal of strong female characters (matriarch). The theoretical framework of genre and narrative theory is also instrumental in interpreting the data in response to the study's key research questions; i) How do the creators of *Uzalo* intend to represent the two matriarchs, ii) What specific roles of matriarchs can be identified within a contemporary Zulu context, as portrayed in *Uzalo?,*iii) What does *Uzalo* reveal about the role of narrative setting in terms of generic adaptions?

Furthermore, this chapter analyses episode 4, season 2 in order to explore the ways in which *Uzalo* maintains and subverts the soap opera's narrative devices, as well as producers/creators' intentions in their construction of the matriarch figures in *Uzalo*. It also examines the role of matriarch in relation to the contemporary Zulu culture as portrayed in the soap and the effect of narrative settings in such a portrayal in order to analyse how the two matriarchs were depicted in contrast within the context of crime and religion in the soap. These findings are drawn from both the interview and a basic textual analysis. The analysis is presented comparatively according to the following categories; i) embodiment (body language, tone of voice, display of emotions; ii) clothing, make-up and hair; iii) place and setting (where they are situated, props, lighting etc.); iv) character interaction and treatment; v) script (how she speaks, what she says.) It should be noted that episode 4, season 2 is the point of reference throughout this chapter but it will not be analysed cinematographically because cinematography deals with shot composition, framing, lighting, camera angles and so on which are not the focus of this study. The setting of KwaMashu is vital to this discussion. The analysis will thus end with a discussion on the ways in which South African Zulu township matriarchs are established.

Narrative Structure

This section evaluates how generic codes and conventions and narrative techniques of the soap opera genre are either used or subverted in the *Uzalo*. It starts by presenting an overview of the narrative structure of episode 4, season 2. This episode was chosen for analysis because it focuses on and best depicts the climax of the two matriarchal characters; their roles as mothers and the extent a woman can go in order to protect herself and her family. The parallel depiction of the two matriarchs in the soap opera *Uzalo* points out the height of storytelling which is within the contrast of binary oppositions (Levi-Strauss, 1968), this is evident in the overview of the episode.

Overview of episode 4, season 2

The dominant structure of the narrative in this episode is the killing and burial of Nkosinathi (the younger son of MaNzuza) in the Xulu panel beaters by MaNgcobo and Mxolisi. The opening of the episode showed MaNgcobo and Mxolisi with Nkosinathi's body as MaNgcobo affirmed the death of Nkosinathi to Mxolisi. It was difficult for him to believe her as he begged his brother to wake up and not die on him. Mxolisi's first reaction was to call the police to explain that this was an accident, but he was immediately stopped by MaNgcobo, drawing his attention to their criminal status and that no one would believe them. She emphasised "Mxolisi, you're on parole and I'm thug's wife, who will believe us that he fell and died in a panel beaters?" (Quote from the episode subtitle in episode 4). MaNgcobo quickly devised a plan to get rid of the body to avoid being caught and spending the rest of their lives in jail. In the mix of all the happenings at the Xulu panel beaters, MaNzuza the mother of Nkosinathi was at home (the Mdletshe's house) with Ayanda cooking and setting the table for a dinner which was to mark Nkosinathi's last night at home before going to Cape Town for university studies.

After a long wait, MaNzuza became worried about Nkosianthi's lateness for the dinner and she tried calling him severally but her calls were transferred to voice mail. While expressing her concerns to Ayanda (pastor' son), MaMlambo came in to see Ayanda attending to church issues. Meanwhile, Mxolisi was also late for the dinner but promised MaNzuza to be home in 20 minutes as his responses to her (MaNzuza) call which came in at the time himself and MaNgcobo were trying to move Nkosinathi's body to the office for burial. Mxolisi became more confused and jittery but MaNgcobo snapped at him and asked him to toughen up after

which she got the jackhammer and gave to Mxolisi to use for breaking the office floor in order to dig the grave for Nkosinathi's burial.

After Mamlambo was done with Ayanda and was about to leave, she suddenly had a quick vision, and MaNzuza reluctantly said she hoped it was not one of MaMlambo's premonitions. However, Mamlambo said she does not know but she saw a dark cloud that hovered over the Mdletshe's family which meant something bad was about to happen. Quickly, MaNzuza interrupted her and said the cloud could be a sign of rain. She then asked Mamlambo to leave, and this was about the same time when Mxolisi and MaNgcobo were burying Nkosinathi under the table in the office at the Xulu panel beaters. This was the climax of the episode. After the burial, MaNgcobo ensured that the place was cleaned-up with all the office accessories back in place as usual and also arranged for them to change their clothing.

MaNzuza was still worried about her sons (Nkosinathi and Mxolisi) particularly Nkosinathi because it was getting too late, but the arrival of GC, Thobile and Smagele for the dinner made her discover that Nkosinathi planned to meet up with his girlfriend at Gateway shopping mall. This made her angry as she asked the guests to help themselves with the food while she went to bed. While in her room she was still worried about Nkosinathi; she left him a message and asked him to make it home on time so that he would not miss his bus. She ended the call by expressing her love to him. On the other hand, in the panel beaters, MaNgcobo tried hard to destroy anything that could expose or link them to the disappearance of Nkosinathi such as burning the clothes they wore during the burial at the Xulu panel beaters' backyard. In the process of burning the clothes, MaNgcobo emphasized to Mxolisi that no one must know about the incident as this was their secret. Though Mxolisi felt bad about their action, he had to agree with her. After MaNgcobo and Mxolise left the panel beaters to their houses, the episode came to an end with a cliffhanger showing a splash of Nkosinathi's blood by the corner of the office in the panel beaters which they had forgotten to clean.

Uzalo and its Narrative Conventions

From the brief overview, it is clear that the episode (4) has only one narrative structure (late arrival of Nkosinathi to his family dinner and his burial) and the editing of all the scenes cuts between the two matriarch characters (MaNgcobo and MaNzuza) which were depicted between Xulu panel beaters to Mdletshe's house. The episode has a total of fifteen scenes; eight scenes

were in Xulu panel beaters, six scenes in Mdletshe's house and only one scene in Xulu's house; this was when Nosipho noticed that MaNgcobo (her mother) was not around and she was all alone in the house (see appendix for the summary of the episode's scenes). Right from the opening sequence of the episode to the end of the episode, the narrative alternated between the two matriarchal figures. That is, the first scene was in the Xulu panel beaters, next scene was the Mdletshe's house, and back to Xulu panel beaters and so on. This is one of the reasons why this particular episode was selected for analysis as it focuses on the two matriarchal figures on how they both dealt with the same issue (Nkosinathi) although in different contexts (MaNgcobo dealing with Nkosinathi's burial in the office and MaNzuza on the other hand, preparing and waiting for Nkosinathi's arrival for his dinner). The portrayal of the two matriarchs in this episode was to further explain the different personalities and conduct of the characters and how they interpreted and dealt with life situations as Mmamitse Thibedi noted: "so that's where you see the differences in how they interpret life. I think that episode shows us exactly who the two women are for the rest of the season" (Thibedi, Interview, 22 Aug 2016).

Thuli Zuma further described the episode by stating that it sets the two characters "up in direct opposition to each other, MaNzuza waiting for her son to come home and here is MaNgcobo burying the son."(Zuma, Interview, 22 Aug 2016). Though the situation was an accident, the community or police were not going to believe them because of their antecedent and the choices that she had made in the past, whereas:

> MaNzuza could have gone to the cops and they could have believed her that it was an accident, because of the kind of life she is known to be living as a religious and law-abiding citizen (Zuma, Interview, 22 Aug 2016).

Dawn King concurred with Thibede and Zuma by saying, MaNgcobo's approach to dealing with issues is totally different from MaNzuza, "the character of MaNzuza always relies on God and the supernatural to sort out her problems, but MaNgcobo in as much as she believes in God she gets down and dirty" (King, Interview, 14 Sept 2016). This shows their level of spirituality, MaNzuza holds onto her beliefs while MaNgcobo is actionable (translates her belief into action). The attributes of the characters are depicted throughout the sequence of the narrative.

According to Todorov (1977), all narratives must undergo some logical changes which includes five stages, starting from the state of equilibrium where things are at their normalcy to the stage of disruption where harmony is interrupted, followed by recognition of the disruption, a repair

is done in the next stage and finally the development of the new equilibrium where things get back to normal though not the same as the first stage of equilibrium. According to Allen (1985) and Geraghty (1991), soap opera has a complex narrative structure; it never starts off with a state of equilibrium nor end with a new equilibrium however, the genre is structured on constant and regular lack of resolutions. This ensures its' "absolute resistance to final closure" (Allen, 1985: 75). The indefinite ending convention makes it difficult for a new equilibrium to be reached as such making it difficult for Todorov's model to be applicable to the genre. Each episode in *Uzalo* picks up from previous unresolved issues and always ends with another unresolved issue which often ends at a height of suspense also known as a cliffhanger (Bignell, 2004). Numerous episodes, unresolved issues, interweaving characters, sense of future among others are all soap conventions and these are all observable in *Uzalo*. Most importantly, it is structured on an open-ended narrative (this is evident in its 2-3 years of screening).

In terms of the aesthetic approach to genre study, genres are identified according to their generic conventions, which also serve as an assessment tools to evaluate if a particular genre maintains or subverts its genre's conventions with focus on recurring happenings, styles and "artistic expression" (Feuer, 2000:145). Consequently, *Uzalo* maintains the core elements of soap opera genre; but it subverts soap opera conventions due to its setting in South African context specifically the township of KwaMashu.

Uzalo, as stated above is described as a soap opera genre because it has a community of characters (Allen, 1985). This convention is observable to a degree with the arrival of GC, Thobile and Smagele for the dinner and the inclusion of premonitions which is also typical of soap opera genre. However, episode 4 is different as it focuses on the two matriarch characters (MaNgcobo and MaNzuza). Therefore, the following section will provide analysis of the two matriarchal figures in *Uzalo* based on how they are constructed in episode 4, season 2.

Analysis of the Two Zulu Matriarchs in *Uzalo*

This section draws on previous literature and primary data collected in this study. It also consults previous interviews conducted with *Uzalo* cast and crew members from the broader *Uzalo* project. The purpose of including multiple data sets is to completely address the research questions related to the way in which the matriarchs compare to other local and international soaps matriarchs, the way in which the characters both conform to as well as subvert soap opera matriarchs' conventions.

According to Gumede, one of the popular Zulu cultural practices is for a woman to maintain her maiden name after marriage as a sign of respect (Gumede, 2002). The two matriarchs in *Uzalo* are named according to this popular Zulu practice; **Ma**Ngcobo and **Ma**Nzuza and their famous names within the soap and to their audience are their clan names and not their first names: Lindiwe (MaNgcobo) and Zandile (MaNzuza). King emphasised this during the interview and why she prefers the character to be called MaNgcobo:

> Because that is the name that she is known with which is her clan name, maiden name is Ngcobo so that's why in our culture we use MaNgcobo, a sign of respect to someone married. Both in the storyline and on the street she is known as MaNgcobo even though Lindiwe is her first name, but her famous name is MaNgcobo. This automatically describes the first difference of MaNgcobo's character as a matriarch to other matriarchal soaps (King, Interview, 14 Sept 2016).

The names MaNgcobo and MaNzuza distinguish them from other matriarchal soaps because of the Zulu culture evident by the inclusion of **Ma** to the maiden names. Mentioning the names alone without further explanation speaks about their lineage and automatically their clan. This justifies why the matriarchs in the study are referred to as MaNgcobo and MaNzuza rather than Lindiwe and Zandile.

According to Hobson (2003:68), costume, dressing and make-up further help to depict a character's personality to the audience so as to enable them to clearly understand the personality of the character portrayed and how they develop from stage to stage. In line with Hobson's comments on characters' personality construction, I will start the next section by providing a textual analysis of the two matriarchal figures as constructed in episode 4 under the following sub-headings; i) embodiment; ii) clothing and make-up; iii) place and setting; iv) character interaction and v) script. The description of the character as constructed in episode 4, season 2 will begin with MaNgcobo because she was the first matriarch featured in the episode.

MANGCOBO

MaNgcobo is in her middle 40s, a mother of two adults (Nosipho and Ayanda – who was accidentally switched at birth with Mxolisi). A Zulu woman and the wife of Gxabhashe Xulu a gangster, her depiction within the context of crime was deliberately represented as a gangster's wife. This is visible in her embodiment depiction.

Embodiment

MaNgcobo was represented to be brave and determined through her body gestures and tone of voice. This was seen in her lack of fear or any form of sympathy to Mxolisi's worries. She hailed and manipulated Mxolisi to bury Nkosinathi in the office under the table. For instance, when Mxoilsi said he was going to call the police to report the incident as an accident, MaNgcobo yelled at him and said "are you mad?...Mxolisi you are on parole and I am thug's wife, who will believe us… that he fell and died in a panel beaters?... have you lost your mind?" (Quote from the subtitled dialogue in episode 4). Within the Zulu culture a mother, no matter her level of anger, is not expected to raise her voice particularly to a man (Luvuno, 2004). MaNgcobo challenges this norm by shouting at Mxoilsi in order to snap him into reality. Squatting close to Nkosinathi with her left hand on his tummy, she looked away from the body with a worried look, after a while she looked back at Mxolisi and said "there's only one way to take care of this, we must get rid of the body" (Quote from the subtitled dialogue in episode 4). Her quick resolve of the dilemma connotes the extent MaNgcobo is ready to go in fulfilling her motherly protective role (Khunou, 2006). This further reveals MaNgcobo's level of hardness as she takes the lead of the situation and this also reveals that she is not a novice in the world of crime.

MaNgcobo's body language in episode 4 was also seen through twitching of her eyes, rising up her hands while moving to and fro and scratching her hair, wildly opening her eyes, and speaking fast as she emphasised the need for them to get rid of Nkosinathi's body, to avoid going to jail and leaving Nosipho all by herself. In order to hasten her plan of getting rid of the body she quickly went and picked up the jackhammer and gave it to Mxolisi. MaNgcobo's two hands were on her head when Mxolisi responded to MaNzuza's call. Mxolisi's reluctant agreement to MaNgcobo's plan was after she aggressively hailed, opening her eye and pointing her forefinger at him to man-up. Her body gestures here were in anticipation of a quick solution to the problem and even though she is constructed as strong taking charge she acknowledges the norm of Zulu masculinity to be tough and strong). While Mxolisi takes the jackhammer to the office, MaNgcobo stood in front of Nkosinathi's body with hardened and fearless face. These acts represent her being in control of herself, Mxolisi and the entire situation**.**

The clothes they wore during the burial, Scene 14 depicted her burning the clothes at the panel beater's backyard. Here she appeared to be moody and sad and her hair looked unkempt, trying to express herself to Mxolisi after he said to her:

> We killed my brother and buried him right here in the office. So everything that we do in there… every time we come here we'll be standing on top of him. How am I going to face MaNzuza? I'll have to face her every day… as if nothing happened. And then Ayanda and I… we'll drive around the whole of KwaMashu looking for someone who's dead… meanwhile, I know exactly where he is" (Quote from the subtitled dialogue in episode 4).

This expression by Mxolisi reveals guilt and remorse, as he understood the consequence of their action to the family of the deceased (MaNzuza and Ayanda). This reaction stirred up MaNgcobo's emotions as she began to cry and pulled her hair and told Mxolisi it is the only way to cover up their tracks. This display of her emotion would connote her own remorse towards their earlier action and she being a mother, this would weigh heavily on her as well. However, she decided to rise above these emotions so as to take control of the situation. MaNgcobo's yelling and screaming at Mxolisi was for him to see the need and urgency for them to get rid of the body and to avoid the risk of him going back to prison. In additions, not wanting to leave her daughter all alone shows that the evil she had done was mainly for the protection of her family. Her two hands on her head represents her acknowledgement of the kind of trouble they were in and the cry by MaNgcobo was one of her display of emotions, which implies that despite her focus and brave portrayal as one aspect of her villainess, she still had some aspect of weakness and even though she realised the wrong she did she could not afford the price of being caught. Her depth in self-knowledge and awareness of the situation they were involved in showed her level of vulnerability which according to Hobson, helps to "unite her with the audience" (Hobson, 2003: 92). That is, this assists the audience to understand the reason behind her action even though it was a criminal thing to do. The villainess in soaps is often depicted to be a self-centered individual whose action is only for self-interest (Modleski, 1979). Mangcobo's action can also be described as selfish because, as a mother, she has an understanding of what it feels like when one loses a child. That should have restrained her from burying Nkosinathi. Rather, she went ahead to protect her family while causing others pain, which depicts her as a villainess, who is mean, manipulative and all that matters is how to keep her persona and her family's image intact in the community of KwaMashu. MaNgcobo's personality was further depicted in her clothing and appearance.

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Clothing, Make-up and Hair

MaNgcobo in this episode (4) was depicted with moderate make-up wearing black jeans, a silky blouse of light brown with black dots (leopard prints), on her right wrist she wore a red and silver bangle and on her left wrist, she wore a gold wristwatch together with a ring on her finger. On her head, she wore a well-kept modern hair extension (this also helps indicates her status in the community and her style of fashion) with a chain necklace and a loop earring. In the process of burying Nkosinathi MaNgcobo's hair became unkempt and her face was sweaty.

MaNgcobo's unkempt hair and sweaty face connote the level of stress she was going through. MaNgcobo's loud and bold colours of jewelery display wealth and prestige and the tight-fitted jeans and blouse clothes, high heels shoes, and modern hair extension shows her association with modernity or Western dressing. This also connotes that she is fashionable and always conscious of her looks to the smallest detail. This signals her distance from traditional Zulu dress codes. Zulu wives (Makoti) and mothers are expected to dress in a traditional and conservative way and not Western. For instance, according to Zulu cultural practices, wives/mothers are expected to cover their hair especially during family functions but this is not the style of MaNgcobo (King, Interview, 14 Sept 2016). The portrayal shows her level of individualistic personality, this in some way negotiates her Zulu femininity and her role as a matriarch within the context of Zulu identity, as her outfits, make-up and hair speaks less of a Zulu wife and indicate more of a contemporary or Western woman and her kind of wardrobes may not be acceptable to the older Zulu generation. During the interview, King noted that "the character MaNgcobo was window shopped" before her construction in *Uzalo*, this was done so as to represent originality of township women particularly KwaMashu (King, Interview, 14 Sept 2016). Seemingly, this shows that even though the culture appeals to traditional and conservative dressings, women/mothers style of dressing in the present townships have been affected by the changes of the existing contemporary trends. These contemporary trends also influenced the place and setting of MaNgcobo's character.

Place and Setting

Figure 5.1

Source: SABC1 Mzansi Fo Sho (2016)

The introductory scene from the previous episode is the capture in figure 5.1. It is the office of the Xulu panel beaters, the place where MaNgcobo buried Nkosinathi and the figure provides details of setting within which MaNgcobo is constructed.

Figure 5.2

Source: SABC1 Mzansi Fo Sho (2016)

Uzalo as a whole was shot in the township of KwaMashu, hence MaNgcobo was often depicted in the Xulu's house - the lounge, bedroom, sometimes in the kitchen cooking, salons and so on, but throughout the scenes in episode 4, MaNgcobo was set in the Xulu panel beaters (main panel beater, office and backyard) in KwaMashu. The props included in the construction of MaNgcobo in this episode are main panel beater working tools (shovel, jackhammer etc.) The office was painted in blue, with a red and black chair behind a large transparent glass table, a large picture of a red sport car on one side of the wall and by the other side of the office the

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same kind of picture but in a portrait size and a certificate and other office accessories (see figure 5.1 and 5.2 above). The use of light, dark and colour was significant in the episode as all the scenes in the Xulu panel beaters portraying MaNgcobo were shot in the dark (night), this is one of the elements commonly associated with crime films. Film genre is a way of classifying films/movies base on "style and story", these associated generic elements are very important as they are "central aspect of films form and intelligibility" (Berry-Flint, 2004:25-27). Hence, the inclusion of intertextuality of crime element (guns, violence, dark etc) in the construction of *Uzalo's* matriarchs is one way in which their depiction subverts the usual bright and soft focus aesthetic of soap opera genre. Setting will further be explored hereafter under binary oppositions.

Colours are important elements in filming, as they assist in conveying "interpersonal meaning" which are often used to symbolise things, specific people, ideas, class and so on (Kress, 2002). That is, colours are enveloped with numerous meanings and they help in creating better perspectives regarding any portrayal they are pictured in. According to du Plooy (2009), dark colour is associated with unpredictability and tension. In this context, it is associated with evil. Depicting MaNgcobo throughout the episode (see figure 5.2) in the dark represents her association with evil or bad dealings; this could be related to the killing and burial of Nkosinathi in the panel beaters. The pictures of red sports cars connote the level of her operations in the panel beating business to be top class and expensive, and the colour red connotes strength (Olesen, 2017). This shows that her dealings in business are strong even though she is a woman; she can still succeed in a business usually associated with men. The two different sizes of the red sport car pictures imply that the business dealings are done in both small and big category but maintain the same level of quality, class and strength. The paint of the main panel beaters (dark and red colours) connotes masculinity and strength; this further indicates MaNgcobo's involvement in the public sphere convention usually associated with men. Her braveness is depicted in the way she interacts with herself and other characters.

Character Interaction

In *Uzalo*, MaNgcobo is known to be Mrs 'no-nonsense,' who interacts with few people in KwaMashu unless they have something to do with her family. In episode 4, MaNgcobo was shown only interacting with Mxolisi (the son she raised). Being his mother for the past 25 years has led her to know Mxolisi's personality and how he can be persuaded to do something. When Mxolisi was confused and worried about getting rid of his brother's body, MaNgcobo held his

hands and said: "Mxolisi toughen up" (Quote from the subtitled dialogue in episode 4). After Mxolisi responded to MaNzuza's call and lied about his arrival to the dinner, MaNgcobo snapped at him and said "you know what I hate about you? You can't be a man and face up to any situation, you're too weak" (Quote from the subtitled dialogue in episode 4). MaNgcobo's statement is a replication of what Zulu culture stands for as men are expected to always be tough as a portrayal of masculinity, this is paramount within the Zulu society which is highly patriarchal, and this Khunou (2006) calls hyper-masculinity. The hegemony of masculinity expects a man to do or exhibit certain traits in order for the individual to be considered strong. MaNgcobo acknowledged that fact even though she exhibits bravery she expected Mxolisi to exhibit more as a man but his trace of weakness negotiated her maternal roles for raising a weakling. This was what she used to manipulate and force him into agreeing to get rid of Nkosinathi, his brother. All this she did to protect him even though he is not her biological son, she still loves him unconditionally and this is a defining feature of motherhood. Her manipulation on him challenges the traditional notion of a good mother who only advises her children and leaves them to make their choices, but conforms to the attribute of a villain (bad mother) who always manipulates people, even her children just to have her way (Modleski, 1979). In addition, it may be argued that MaNgcobo uses Zulu male norms and patriarchy to her own end, threatening her son with the insult of 'being a weakling' in order for him to abide by what she asks of him.

Script

As discussed earlier in embodiment, an aspect of the scripts is included which explains how she speaks and what she is expected to say. For example, MaNgcobo was represented to speak in isiZulu dialect and she is scripted very often to communicate at the top of her voice hailing, snapping and screaming at Mxolisi. The script dictates that her whole persona is assertive and belligerent and she is visualised as taking control. Her mannerisms are bold and focus on her solution. The differentiation of her and MaNzuza becomes apparent, particularly where MaNzuza is depicted as domesticated, but MaNgcobo interacts within the male-dominated world which is the Xulu panel beaters (Public sphere). As discussed with specific excerpts above, she promotes the strength of women/motherhood but affirming the feature of patriarchy. The script spoken by her represents her as having agency in manipulating patriarchal Zulu norms according to her own agenda.

MANZUZA

MaNzuza is a mother of two sons (Mxolisi and Nkosinathi) though Ayanda was the son she raised who was switched at birth with Mxolisi. After the incidence of the switch was revealed, Ayanda still maintained his identity as an Mdletshe, remaining loyal to MaNzuza through tough situations. MaNzuza is a woman with strong religious convictions and high moral standards, married to a pastor and founder of KwaMashu Kingdom Church. MaNzuza's representation, as depicted in episode 4, will be explored through her embodiment; clothing, make-up and hair; place and setting; character interaction and script.

Embodiment

According to Hobson "…the connotations of the reading of the visuals are part of the characterization" in soap operas (Hobson, 2003:68). Just like MaNgcobo, MaNzuza's visuals are characterised by her body language, emotions and tone of voice. Specific to this episode (4), MaNzuza's figure was featured as a worried domesticated mother.

MaNzuza's face was gloomy as she spoke to Ayanda and asked about her sons (Nkosinathi and Mxolisi) "why aren't they here? Its Nkosinathi's last night before he leaves for Cape Town" (Quote from the subtitled dialogue in episode 4). MaNzuza's statement represents panic which is an aspect of the nurturing nature of motherhood. Her sons' lateness to the event which marks the beginning of a new adventure for him signals to her that something is not right. She appeared to be distracted when Mamlambo walked in to see the pastor. Seeing MaNzuza's cold attitude, Mamlambo quickly apologised for interrupting but MaNzuza ignored her by dialling Mxolisi. When Mamlambo tried to tell the Mdletshe family the sudden vision she received MaNzuza appeared not to be interested by rolling her eyes and dropping her head backward.

Later, MaNzuza demonstrated her anger and displeasure as she raised her voice and snapped at Ayanda, threw her apron on him when she finally found out that Nkosinathi went to Gateway shopping mall with his girlfriend. Expressing surprise, MaNzuza opened her eye wildly and said "Nkosinathi has a girlfriend? He should've at least told us he's going out with his girlfriend…I spent the whole day cooking for him" (Quote from the subtitled dialogue in episode 4). Domestication is a primary role for women in the Zulu culture (African Craft Market n.d; Big Myth, 2011). This is one way in which MaNzuza is portrayed as 'the good mother', a typical role for certain soap opera matriarchs, such as Annie Sugden in *Emmerdale farm*, and Thandaza Moekoena in *Muvhango*. A good mother according to Bonner and Bonner

(2012) is depicted as a mother who prioritises the well being of her children by ensuring that they are provided for both physically and emotionally so as to be capable fellows. Also how she instils in them the sense of duty to themselves and to the family at large. Her role as a good mother is achieved without been manipulative (Modleski, 1979). This justifies why Douglas and Micheals (2005:110-139) described the good mother as a woman that is "selfless, serene…and spontaneous and who is satisfied by her maternal role".

MaNzuza decided to call it a day telling Ayanda and other the guests to "dish up for [themselves]" and went to her main room still looking gloomy (Quote from the subtitled dialogue in episode 4). The patriarchal system in which MaNzuza is depicted expects men to be served, but her anger towards Nkosinathi's action made her disregard the practice by asking men and her guests to dish for themselves. Later in her room, she had a bright smile on her face (see the figure below fig 5.3) as she held and looked at Nkosinathi's portrait picture and left a message on his phone which said: "my boy, please make sure you don't miss your bus tomorrow…I love you…I'm very proud that you're going to the university, bye my boy" (Quote from the subtitled dialogue in episode 4). This is the explicit characteristic of a mother; she can never be angry with her child for long no matter the circumstances this is related to her maternal nature (Feasay, 2012). After the call, she fell on her bed backward calling Nkosinathi.

While is it arguable that *Uzalo* may rely on the convention of external realism (Brunsdon 1997:27) in its gritty storylines and cultural proximity to KwaMashu, this scene is an example of its inclusion of the convention of melodrama. MaNzuza's dramatic acting style and the close up provides for a "heightened sense of the dramatic, a focus on emotions and life's torments where characters may appear to have insufficient motivation from a 'realist' point of view" (Barker, 1997:79).

Figure 5.3

Source: SABC1 Mzansi Fo Sho (2016)

In spite of the melodrama that surrounds MaNzuza in this scene, her conservative nature is portrayed through her clothing and choice of makeup.

Clothing, Make-up and Hair

MaNzuza was depicted as a domesticated mother, dressed in three-quarter high neck gown cream in colour, a black pop socks, purple slippers and an apron. Her choice of wardrobe connotes that she is a conservative woman though conscious of her femininity and beauty; this is demonstrated in the kind of hair and outfit she is always portrayed in. On her head, she has a well-kempt short hair with a simple small dot earring on and light make-up on her face. Fresh food, snacks and juice were set on the table as depicted below in Figure 5.4:
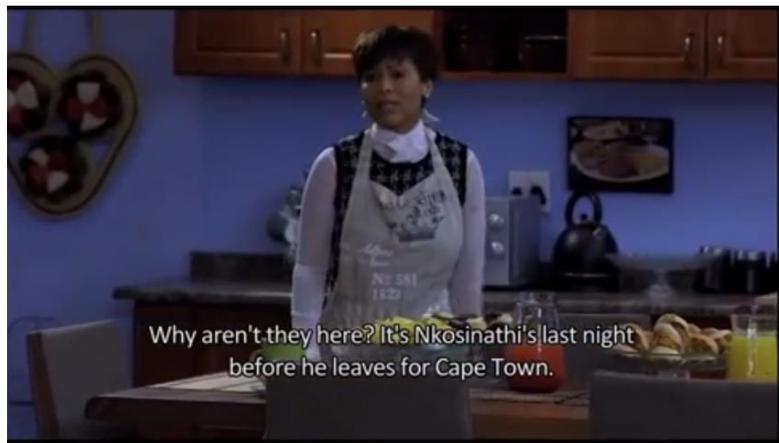
Figure 5.4

Source: SABC1 Mzansi Fo Sho (2016)

MaNzuza's dress sense symbolises her as devoted to her domestic duties, which leads to a discussion on the settings in which she is represented.

Place and Setting

The construction of MaNzuza as a matriarchal figure in episode 4 was done in Mdletshe's house specifically in the kitchen, lounge and main bedroom (see figure 5.3 and 5.4). For the majority of the episode, MaNzuza is placed in her kitchen. She is thus aligned, both to the convention of 'the good domestic mother' (Hobson, 2003; Geraghty, 1991; Feasay, 2012) and to the expectation of a conventional Zulu wife or mother. It depicts the feature of a Christian mother who is accustomed to home-life, like the woman described in Proverbs chapter 31 (see

Proverbs 31:10-28[10]). The kitchen is a location often associated with the devoted "good mother" (Feasay 2013:27; Parteb, 2011), however, domesticity in soap opera is important because it helps in illustrating the role of a traditional good mother (Feasay, 2013). It was argued earlier that the study assumes that its Zulu context may subvert certain soap operas convention, however in this instance the importance of domesticity in the soap opera is entrenched by its pivotal role for women in the Zulu home.

The props for the setting is light, the three locations depicted are all painted in light blue/purple with some touches of brown and also the bed linen in MaNzuza's main bedroom was in ash colour. The choice of MaNzuza's home settings and the props implies that the house is homely, welcoming and modest and the colours symbolise trust, loyalty, dignity and reliability (Olesen, 2017) and blue in relation to female connotes "especially attractive and rare in nature" (Gage, 1999:193). So also is the light of the house setting which also can be associated with good dealings, predictability and femininity - because light colours are often associated with softness as compared to dark colour which usually connotes hardness as such associated with masculinity (Gage, 1999). This aligned with Kress and Van Leeuwen's, (2002:347) description, that colours are used to represent "specific people place and things as well as classes of people". Most of the other accessories in the house are in neutral colours this depicts the setting to be simple and not flashy or bold. The constructions of MaNzuza's character in this setting further emphasise her conservative nature as a mother/matriarch.

Character Interaction

MaNzuza interacts with people from the church to the community (KwaMashu) at large but in this particular episode, she was constructed to interact with her sons (Ayanda and Mxolisi), Mamlambo, GC, Thobile and Smangele. In *Uzalo*, MaNzuza often takes the role of a mother to those around her, providing them with a strong support system. However, in this episode it was reversed as her guest Mamlambo serves as her support system on the issue of Nkosinathi and this continued in the subsequent episodes.

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[10] Proverb 31, described the attributed associated to a various women who does everything within her reach to protect and provide for her home. This defines the impact, importance and influence of matriarch in a home.

The character of MaMlambo is "a controversial character from the township, a staunch Christian and a [Zulu] prophetess"[11]. According to Zulu context, she is an oracle of a snake mediating between the people and the ancestors (Maseko, 1988). She is also one of the council members in the church known as the "spiritual advisor" (Masson, Interview, 26 Aug 2015). MaMlambo is the name every individual in KwaMashu calls her but MaNzuza calls her Hlengiwe because she does not believe in Mamlambo's premonitions and that is why she quickly interrupts her when she was about to reveal the vision she received even when Ayanda seemed interested to hear the details of the vision. Traditional soap operas take place in the present tense, and as discussed in Chapter 2, include elements of realism that attract their audience (Hobson, 2003). The inclusion of MaMlbambo into *Uzalo's* narrative may be considered an alteration of these conventions, as she brings with her an element of mysticism and 'the supernatural'. This is not typical of soap opera, particularly British soap opera. The only popular example of 'the supernatural' is Marlena Evan's 'possession by the devil' in *Days of Our Lives*. And many consider this ludicrous[12]. However, although MaNzuza may be dismissive of MaMlambo's premonitions and communing with the ancestors, many Zulu people valorise their relationship with the ancestors and seek the assistance of traditional healers in their daily life. MaMlambo is also a Christian and this reflects the contemporary practice of the integration of traditional beliefs and Christian worship (Kahakwa, 2005). As such, the *Uzalo* audience is likely to relate to her character. The traditional Zulu spirituality as embodied in MaMlambo may be considered an alteration to the realism of traditional soap opera.

Script

The script usually depicts MaNzuza as passive and calm. However, when she discovered Nkosithani was out with his girlfriend, she responded by yelling at Ayanda which to some extent reveals maternal instincts as a protector. MaNzuza, according to the script is portrayed to communicate in isiZulu language or dialect. However, due to her position as a pastor's wife, she is clearly expressive of her disbelief in MaMlambo's prophecy:

> *Mamlambo*: (Screamed)

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[11] Available at: https://www.iol.co.za/sunday-tribune/entertainment/real-life-pain-helps-actress-gugu-gumede-find-her-character-8670919, accessed on 29/11/ 2017.

[12] Available at: http://www.channel24.co.za/TV/News/6-days-of-our-lives-storylines-well-never-forget-20160621, accessed on 29/11/2017.

Ayanda: MaMlambo what is wrong?

MaNzuza: I hope it's not one of your premonitions?

MaMlambo: I've just had a vision…there is a dark cloud hanging over this family. Something bad is about to happen.

Ayanda: What is it?

MaMlambo: I don't know

MaNzuza: Hlengiwe, Hlengiwe…don't talk about the dark cloud over my family…

MaMlambo: MaNzuza, this dark cloud…

MaNzuza: Maybe it's a rain cloud!

Mamlambo: I'll go now

MaNzuza: Bye Hlengiwe

The scripts also depict her within the private sphere as a devoted domesticated mother and she fulfills the roles of a traditional woman as compared to MaNgcobo.

Similarities and Differences between International and Local Matriarchs

Matriarch, the focus of this study is described as a "strong and independent-minded" character (Barker, 2000:24). She is also known as the mother, head and ruler of her home and family (Steinmetz and Kipfer, 2012). These are some of the universal conventions of matriarch characters. For instance, Stephanie Forester from international soaps the *Bold and the Beautiful* (Tager, 1997)*,* Mag Richardson in *Crossroad* (Hobson, 2003) and Karabo in *Generations* (Tager, 1997), and Lee Haynes in *Isidingo* from South African soaps. They are all matriarchs represented as strong female characters, wives, mothers, involved in business, and overseers of their homes and families. As found in the interviews with *Uzalo's* two lead actresses, MaNgcobo's and MaNzuza's construction in *Uzalo* share some similarities with both international and local matriarchal soaps. Khumalo noted in relation to her character:

> 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 (Khumalo, Interview, 21 April 2017).

King further explains another similarity of her character to other local and international soap's matriarchs, that characters' actions are often family driven:

> when MaNgcobo's family is been threatened in whatever way she then moves into this space where she becomes the matriarch or she becomes the villain, but its due to the fact that she has to be strong because she at this point in time is both the mother and father in this household… she has got to take care of her family…She is very similar to your characters like Stephanie, Stephanie for instance in the *Bold and the Beautiful* because all they do is in the name of protecting family, whatever it is that they've done it was on the bases of the fact that they were protecting their families so it all family-driven (King, Interview, 14 Sept 2016).

Thibedi concurred with Khumalo and King as she points out presents a "universal theme as it speaks to women's personal strength showing universal context like Cookie in *Empire.* I think she stands alone and I would say she is a very different character to MaNzuza, but her context is the same. She is a woman that stands on her own (Thibedi, Interview, 22 Aug 2016).

Apart from the similarities, some notable differences in the construction of *Uzalo's* matriarchs in comparison to other international and local matriarchs were discovered from the findings. For example, MaNcgobo differs from other local matriarchs because the character is depicted in a township within a Zulu context which is reflected in her name "MaNgcobo" indicating her clan name (King, Interview, 14 Sept 2016). She is also different to international matriarchs because she is:

> An African woman, she is a woman that everyone in South Africa identifies with because she, could be…your woman next door or the aunt in the family or you know but then certain situations pushed her into becoming something that even she doesn't expect to become, you know? But she is mainly pushed into those situations you know when it involves her family (King, Interview, 14 Sept 2016).

For Khumalo, she identifies the differences that exist to both local and international matriarchal soap by stating MaNzuza:

> Differs from other matriarchs because 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 centre of our moral code can no longer hold, the world is shaken to its very core (Khumalo, Interview, 21 April 2017).

These findings reveal that the matriarchs represented in *Uzalo* have major similarities to both local and international matriarchal soaps. They were constructed as strong individuals, mothers, a wife who control their family affairs and businesses without patriarchal figures and who are both diligent in maternal roles as providers and protectors of their families. This is in line with Geraghty's explanation that the matriarch is portrayed as the fellow responsible for both moral support of the family and the family business is "indisputably controlled by the mother" (Geraghty, 1991:74). For both matriarchs, the family is very important which is why their actions and decisions are often family driven. For instance, MaNgcobo's action on burying Nkosinathi was focused on protecting her family which implies that their primary aim and central focus is family (Geraghty, 1991; Liebes and Livingstone, 1998), as such facing similar daily experiences and challenges. Viewing from the participants' responses from Tager's (1997) study, it is evident that MaNgcobo shares common similarities with the characters Stephanie and Brook in their maternal roles and their constant persistence in getting what they want. While MaNzuza can be likened to Dr. Taylor. This indicates how the producers of *Uzalo* took cognizance of the core global conventions of soap opera in their construction of the matriarch characters within both public and private domain. This portrayal shows *Uzalo's* alliance with universal conventions. According to Allen, generic convention or codes are elements that enable "viewers to read a particular text or textual features as one belonging to a larger category of text the viewer knows as soap opera" (Allen, 1985:85).

However, the British and American soap opera conventions (Geraghty, 1991; Liebes and Livingstone, 1998; Modleski, 1979; Tager, 1997) are disrupted due to their setting in the primarily Zulu township of KwaMashu. The Zuluness was depicted in the narrative as all the character communicate and interact mainly in isiZulu dialect, the involvement of patriarchal influences, the inclusion of some common Zulu cultural practices like 'lebola' negotiation, burial, child introduction ceremony to the family ancestors and the role of a mother in child nurturing and upbringing. International soap opera matriarchs are often depicted within the secular (Feasay, 2012) and sometimes within crime domain like the dynastic soaps (Liebes and Livingston, 1998; Teer-Tomaselli, 2005). *Uzalo* subverts this tradition by representing one of its matriarchs within a strong religious context, for instance, like Sheila Grant in *Brookside* who is portrayed with strong Catholic convention, her religion was depicted as her strength (Hobson, 2003). Both matriarchs are Black African women. There have been popular black South African matriarchs depicted on television before, such as Karabo in *Generations*, Mekki in *Skeem Saam,* Nambitha Mpumlwana in *Ashes to Ashes,* Thandaza Moekoena *Muvhango,* among others.

However, MaNgcobo and MaNzuza shift the usual representation of these women as they are constructed in a township which is contrary to the usual depiction of *Generations'* and *Isidingos'* matriarchs who are set in the suburbs and their actions are often associated with the elite, transacting and interacting in the business world besides their patriarchal figures. Though MaNgcobo's action is associated with crime and violence and MaNzuza's action is associated with the church, both continued with their maternal roles and the daily running of their homes and business as heads of their respective families within the township of KwaMashu. Although it is evident that *Uzalo* has a large and varied viewership, the setting of *Uzalo* within KwaMashu was a deliberate choice by the producers to provide 'something different' to what has been screened before, yet recognisable both in its television conventions and the setting within which the action takes place in real life. *Uzalo* director, Thuli Zuma's description below supports the idea that audiences prefer television fiction that is culturally proximate to their own experience (Castello, 2010).

> I think one of the really cool things about being in KwaMashu is that it makes it more relatable. Like Generations is great and actually, they have opened up more but for, for a while a large part of their world was of high flying which is really entertaining and fun to watch but it not necessarily the lead experience of lot of people watching the show. So of course, being a queen in a large hijacking syndicate is probably not a lot of people's lived the experience. But being set in townships and the fact that we are on location so we are not just saying we are in the townships and then showing you inside the studio, but we are out in that world, that people will have seen and say; ahh that place or that place or ahh KwaMashu looks just like this place or like this happens in our townships too. I think that's that's another way in which the audience is able to relate to the world and to our characters. (Zuma, Interview, 22 Aug 2016).

Uzalo's audience arguably identifies with the cultural identity or context of the soap (which encompasses the history, culture and specific problems of a particular local context). The setting of the two matriarchs within a Zulu township like KwaMashu pronounced their distinction to other matriarchal soaps.

Comparing the Matriarchs: Establishing a South African Zulu Township Matriarch(s)

The section above provided evidence of the construction and representation of MaNgcobo and MaNzuza. This section presents the meaning of these matriarchs for the local soap opera thus addressing the research question on the role of the Zulu context in representing the matriarchs. This section compares the matriarchs and narrative setting as it includes the analysis of binary

oppositions that are deliberately constructed between the two matriarchs, and the meaning of this for the production of South African soap opera particularly on the creation of a township matriarch. Binary opposition as a main device has been well established in the episode analysed and will be considered throughout the discussion of the construction of South African Zulu matriarch living in a township.

Binary Opposition
According to Levi-Strauss (1968), the height of every narrative is its binary oppositions that reveal the easy clarity of the message or concepts embedded with particular emphasis on characters and settings. Understanding a concept, in this case, narrative is achieved through the use of contrasts (Levi-Strauss, 1968). Binary opposition is the process of depicting or narrating a story with two or more characters in opposition to one another (Herman, 2006). My analysis of episode 4 reveals that the matriarch characters were represented in contrast to each other between the good and the bad, and the villainess and heroine.

Based on Levi-Strauss' (1968) argument, meaning making of all kind of structure can only be possible through binary oppositions and Lacey (2000) further noted that binary oppositions can be portrayed in a narrative through the physical appearance of the characters. This was demonstrated in the representation of matriarchs in *Uzalo*, from the analysis. MaNgcobo was set within the public sphere (Xulu panel beaters), burying Nkosinathi, dressed in tight fitted Western clothing while MaNzuza was set in a private sphere (Mdletshe's house) as a domesticated devoted mother, cooking and arranging for Nkosinathi's last dinner party, in her conservative clothing. This is evident that the contrasts between the characters are not only traceable in their appearance but also in their actions (Prinsaloo, 2009). Serial Producer, Thibede (Interview, 22, Aug 2016) notes the importance of the contrast between the two characters, in helping to depict a spectrum of South African societal ills (taxi syndicate, car hijacking, drug abuse, sexual identity and orientation) and themes (family tie and interpersonal relationships, marriage, divorce, etc) linked to them. This is apparent in the setting of the matriarchs within the context of crime/secular (MaNgcobo) and religion/Christian values (MaNzuza). For example, the social ill and gritty experience of South African crime are depicted in MaNgcobo's hijacking syndicate. Car hijackings are a grim reality in South African society with about "53003 victims of hijacking" from 2016 (April) to March 2017, this reflects an increase of about 93% (STATS, 2016/17:36-37). However, the social ill of prejudice is examined through the character of MaNzuza. Khumalo (Interview 21 April 2017) reflects:

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.

This inclusion of social justice issues into South African soap opera defines its local contexts and distinguishes it from American soaps (Burton, 2012).

Paradoxically, working with the binaries of good and evil, that is usually associated with reductionist thinking, playing these binaries against and within each other provides more complexity to the matriarch characters and the themes associated with them. Thibedi (Interview, 22 Aug 2016) explains that "[i]t is important to the storyline because we have two total parallel stories that reflect the good and the bad in our society and how even in the good is some bad and how in the bad there is some good".

Thibedi's explanation is supported by soap opera scholarship as Hobson (2003: 106) explains that:

Good characters and bad characters seem to be a redundant concept in relation to [soap opera] genre. As in real life, people are more complex than merely being good or bad, hero or villain; they are not that simple. Characters are multi-faceted…their different characteristics and their interaction with a number of other characters so that we can judge their behaviour and understand their motivations (Thibedi, Interview, 22 August 2016).

From the findings, it can be deduced that the construction of the two matriarchs is more than a simple depiction of good versus the bad. King's description of MaNgcobo's role in *Uzalo* illustrates this:

Very good mother and troublemaker yes, but it's also based on the fact that…she would stir up trouble but it would be due to her wanting to fix something inside the home like any mother would. So I think she is a very good mother because she has a very strong relationship with her children especially her son (King, Interview, 14 Sept 2016).

This description links back to her depiction in episode 4 where, although her actions and deeds were evil, the reasons behind it are mainly traced back to fulfill her motherly duties to protect her family no matter the cost.

Similarly, Khumalo describes her character of MaNzuza as 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 (Khumalo, Interview, 21 April 2017).

The good mother in soap opera is an individual that owns greater wisdom than all her children, "whose sympathy is large enough to encompass the conflicting claims of her family… and who has no demands or claims to her own – she identifies with no one character exclusively" (Modleski, 1979:14). While the villainess character is often depicted to be bad as she challenges gender norms and strong in manipulating others even her children in order to achieve her selfish ambitions (Modleski, 1979).

Describing MaNgcobo's character as a good mother knowing that she sometimes manipulates either her children or other characters around to get things done even though with right intention contradicts the Modleski's description of a 'good' mother. She may thus rather be defined as a manipulating mother or villainess. She does not just advise her children and allow them to make their decision like a good mother would (Modleski, 1979). Rather she manipulates them in doing things her way so as to get her desired result (seen in the case of Mxolisi). Again, she seizes some aspect of her helpless moments and uses them as instruments in manipulating other characters. Although within her domain of villainess, her focus is her family particularly her children, this is one of the encapsulating features of a matriarch; her children are of paramount importance to her in whatever condition and she is devoted to her children no matter the circumstance (Feasey, 2013; Hobson, 2003). For MaNzuza her character fits more into the description of Modleski's 'good mother' although she had her moments of foibles (see Modleski, 1979).

The description of the matriarch figures by King and Khumalo shows that the characters are complex, Zuma confirms it. She said one of their aims is to portray the complexities of the matriarchs' personalities. Zuma further expressed that:

> … MaNgcobo is the gangster right, she is in the second season especially. She is essentially the villain, the big mafia boss and MaNzuza is very…obviously your church mother. But within that is like we challenge the conventional; what about a gangster when you look at it, looks like it could belong in church, and what about a woman in

church when you look at it looks like it belongs 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 so is like this idea that no one is any one thing, and so even in our story arcs hmm even if not in the over-arcing big arc but our smaller arcs trying to take these characters through journeys which reveals all these other aspects that you are talking about, you know the businesswoman seeing the troublemaker in MaNzuza (Zuma, Interview, 22 Aug 2016).

Thus, the construction of matriarchs in *Uzalo* complicates Levi-Strauss' model by not depicting purely the two contrasts of good vs bad, but rather depicting each concept to have an element of both that is. The oppositions were not clear-cut in *Uzalo*. This was emphasised by Thibedi that the story shows "how even in the good there is some bad and how in the bad there is some good" and portraying just one aspect of each character will not do justice to the representation (Thibedi, Interview, 22 Aug 2016). This statement aligns with the argument of Hobson (2003: 106) that "people are more complex than merely being good or bad, hero or villain… and soap opera genre enables the production to develop and reveal many aspects of major characters". *Uzalo's* producers depict this by showing MaNgcobo's love and sacrifice for her family within the context of crime and violence. For instance, MaNgcobo's reason behind her action in episode 4, indicates her aspect as a good mother (always ready to protect and nurture her family). In other episodes, different aspects of the two matriarchal figures are constructed, like MaNzuza who is depicted to be "too harsh and too judgmental and therefore, driving away her children…" (Zuma, Interview, 22, Aug 2016), could be described as a bad mother. Although the producers were interested in portraying a parallel contrast between the two matriarchs, they were also conscious of not portraying an absolute character that represents only one thing, that is, either 'totally good' or 'totally bad'. Rather they chose to depict the imperfections of the matriarchs' personalities expressing both their strengths and weaknesses. This means, even though MaNgcobo is portrayed as the villainess, sometimes she is also depicted to portray the features of a good mother and vice versa. According to Chatman's (1978) existent, the two matriarchs can be described as "good" character as they are not static to only one role in the entire soap but flexible by adopting different roles (wives, mothers, business fellow, bad/good defacto- heads etc)

Furthermore, Thibedi noted in the interview that the construction of *Uzalo's* matriarchs within the contrast world of good and evil assists in the continuity of their narrative so as to investigate

if individuals are who they are based on who they are born to be (nature) or based on upbringing (nurture) (Thibedi, Interview, 22, Aug 2016). Zuma further added to Thibedi's view that it will be "more dramatic to have [a] gangster's wife and you know priest's wife or woman in the church and woman in the criminal world and see how they interact with each other (Zuma, Interview, 22 Aug 2016). The portrayal within the two worlds of good and bad, heroine and villainess was to equip audiences to understand the narrative in which the matriarchal figures were portrayed. As Berger (1997) explains a particular event or object gains its meaning only when it is compared against its contrast. Hence, the depiction of MaNgcobo as bad or villainess blossoms in contrast to MaNzuza as good or heroine and vice versa. This shows that the matriarch figures in *Uzalo* were deliberately constructed within those two parallel contexts and this further illustrates that binary opposition is the fundamental building stone in this narratives (Herman, 2006). However, it should be noted here that *Uzalo's* primary narrative is about these families' opposition.

According to Propp, his category of character types remains constant in all narratives, his focus was to describe the characters according to their role of actions and not based on their personal characterisation, this he called the "sphere of action", the characters include; villain, donor, princess (and father), helper, hero, dispatcher, false hero (Lacey, 2000:51; Propp, 1968). Although mother/matriarch is not on the list of Propps' character types, she is sublimated into other roles and functions. In this context the heroine is MaNzuza and villainess is MaNgcobo as seen in the episode analysis. These characters by Propp are used in *Uzalo* to further establish their contrasts of binary oppositions in the narrative. For Propp, hero(ine) is classified into two; the hero's role as a victim, a character that comes across misfortune and whose role is in contest with the villain(ness) and the villain is described as the character that often causes disruption or complication to a narrative (Propp, 1968). From the analysis above, MaNzuza's construction is associated with the formal (victim heroine) in the narrative, who is constantly faced with adversities, such as her husband leaving for Swaziland indefinitely to find himself, discovered her son was switched at birth, trying to build a relationship with her new found son (Mxolisi) and helping to rehabilitate him from the life of crime, challenges from church and her missing son (Nkosinathi) among other things. MaNgcobo the villainess is slightly different to Propp's villain that often caused disruption of the narrative and she only unleashes her disruptive skills as villaines**s** or troublemaker when her family is threatened. However, the burial of Nkosinathi in the panel beaters is the catalyst for an extended disequilibrium (Todorov 1977) as it introduces change, challenges and instability in a variety of characters' lives. The matriarchal

differences were further established through their homes setting, dressing and their actions. These differences were set out through the textual analysis if episode 4 above. However, the following section draws on the interview data and literature in the interpretation.

Contrast: Settings and Wardrobe

According to Hobson, the construction of soap opera characters through dresses and appearance are of most importance, because through this medium audiences are able to have an in-depth understanding of the style and personality of the characters. It "helps to create personality and register the change in a personality" (Hobson, 2003:68). This coincides with the findings mobilised from this study's data; the choice of wardrobes, home setting, speech/script, action, props, roles amongst others helped to establish the differences and oppositions between the two matriarchs (see the analysis of episode 4 above). This further provides details to contrast delineation in the portrayal of matriarchs in *Uzalo*. Zuma (Interview, 22 Aug 2016).explained possible choices taken in relation to a home setting, dressing, wardrobe, roles, action and script in establishing the oppositions in the story:

> So if you look at them closely…MaNzuza who is in the church; her dresses are more conventionally modest, she got long sleeves and she doesn't wear tight-fitting clothing…so she appears to what we conventionally understand like a modest woman. While MaNgcobo on the other side is in her dressing and wardrobe a lot flashier, bolder colours, big jewellery tight fitting clothes. What we might conventionally associate with someone who is edgier, trendier, living a faster and more glamorous life…this is also seen in their homes.

Khumalo and King responded to the same question concerning the choice of wardrobes and other forms of settings used in the portrayal of their individual characters in *Uzalo*:

> Her wardrobe was designed to accommodate her conservative outlook: long skirts and shirts and modest colours. 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 (Khumalo, Interview, 21 April 2017).

In relation to narrative theory, binary oppositions are exposed through the physical appearance of the characters (Lacey, 2000). The matriarchs are constructed in the soap to be fashionable although from different perspectives, MaNzuza as conservative and traditional while MaNgcobo the trendy and Western, this contrasts are portrayed in their clothing, and home settings (see analysis of episode 4). MaNgcobo entertainment area/ lounge is depicted in dark wood, black ornamentation, stainless steel appliances and marble countertops that connotes

hardness and coldness (see fig. 5.5 below). On the other hand, MaNzuza's portrayal is associated with light and bright colours and soft fabrics (see figure 5.6 below) which connotes warmth.

figure 5.5 - MaNgcobo's lounge   figure 5.6 - MaNzuza's lounge

Source: Photograph by Shannon Lander while visiting the *Uzalo* set, 22, August 2016

The use of props is a major feature in distinguishing the two matriarchs. MaNgcobo's home settings are in dark colours which are often associated with masculinity and strength (hardness) (see figure 5.5) whereas MaNzuza's are in bright colours associated with femininity and softness (see figure 5.6). King further expressed this by saying at "the other household (MaNzuzas') is very light and fluffy and rosy and here (MaNgcobo) we are hardcore" (King, Interview, 14 Sept 2016). As such, the constructions of the characters' differences were influenced by personal inputs. During the interview, the actresses described their characters in relation to the other character. For instance, King could not talk about her character (MaNgcobo) without relating it to the character of MaNzuza, which was also the case with Khumalo. In order to create an understanding of the characters they portrayed, King and Khumalo described their characters through their contrasts. This subscribes to some extent to Levi-Strauss' argument that the world generally lies within binary oppositions, hence concepts can only be understood in relation to another concept opposite to it (Levi-Strauss, 1968).

Script/Speech

A flexibility of soap opera genre is that it permits writers/producers to introduce natural characteristics of the actors into the characters they play. The producers employed this by

allowing the individual actors to create the "illusion of the ordinary" through scripts translation, some aspect of the dressing and so on (Hobson, 2003:67). Apart from the usually assigned costumes and makeup attached to a particular character in a soap opera, personal inputs of the actor playing the character role is relevant. This concept was well understood by the *Uzalo* producers as they allowed personal influences to be introduced into a character by the actor and this is often influenced by how they understood and interpret their roles. In response to the question: what are the personal influences brought into the portrayal characters, Thibedi explained:

> I think with language, the actors themselves played huge parts in that, their interpretation and their understanding of the characters led to how the character is translated. So everybody speaks Zulu but what type of Zulu, how harsh is it, so where MaNzuza is modest even her language in a sense is more traditionally modest whereas MaNgcobos' is hasher, she is more… crass…in terms of language (Thibedi, Interview, 22 Aug 2016).

Through each actor having the freedom to read and slightly alter their script empowers them to reveal their characters and may provide better depictions which enable the audience to easily relate to the character. This was demonstrated in Khumalo and King's responses to the question regarding personal inputs and influences towards bringing their specific characters to life in the storylines:

> As a performer, I translate my own scripts and so I determine MaNzuza's tone. Although mostly respectful, when pushed into an emotional corner, she will sometimes use harsh Zulu words; that indicates 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 (Khumalo, Interview, 21 April 2017).

Furthermore, Khumalo noted that in order to depict reality and bring life to her character, she had to spend some time some women from the township:

> 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 (Khumalo, Interview, 21 April 2017).

According to Dawn, the inclusion of her modern hair extension to the character was one of her personal input used to define the personality and status she portrayed in the story. She further illustrates that:

> It was up to me to then bring her to life; it was up to me to make sure ah that she lives an everyday life. She is 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. The minute I take off my hair, I'm no longer MaNgcobo but an intruder (King, Interview, 14 Sept 2016).

Hair is one of the indispensable signs that connote class, race, social status or even economic position of an individual. This supports A'Lelia Bundles argument that "hair maintained its importance as an outward indicator of one's status" (Bundles, 2001:62). She further explained that the introduction of the hair to the character was not only relevant and restricted to the character but also "very important because it helps on how I have separated myself as Dawn Thandika King from MaNgcobo the character" (King, Interview, 14, Sept 2016). She felt a clear distinction between her as a person and the character she plays is very significant to enable MaNgcobo to be prominent without any kind of interruption from the personality of Dawn King, even though actors are allowed to include their personal traits into the character they play. This is why as Dawn King she chose to wear "short hair" in her everyday life to further establish the difference for her audience (King, Interview, 14, Sept 2016).

In addition, King's personal input to the role was the creation of the character's emotions or psychology that suit her portrayal as a "very dark woman"; this aspect as King noted was brought to life for instance by introducing the "twitching of the eye" after the burial Nkosinathi in the office (see episode analysis above) (King, Interview, 14, Sept 2016). This body language exhibited by MaNgcobo connotes how she was physiologically affected and stressed out by her action and anytime the name Nkosinathi is mentioned she is taken back to that dark moment even though she is constructed as the villainess. King indicates that her understanding of the character was not only influenced by the script but from her experiences in life while growing up and through other films and soap operas she had watched:

> So I draw from that file, like Stephanie's very dark periods…and Al Pacino that's the guy that I draw a lot of these from especially with the mental depth that you go into. Because you need to create the characters' mental state and he internalises his characters a lot. Locally, I think I would say I identified with another man on *Isidingo* Barker Haines (King, Interview, 14 Sept 2016).

It is clear that actors in the production process do not only rely on scripts for the description of the characters they are to portray like Khumalo indicated how she determined the tone of her character by translating her own script. King draws not just from local soap opera' actor likes

Barker Haines and international soap opera actor like Stephanie but also draws from other genres like gangster and action film stars like Al Pacino. These actors are relevant because through their intertextuality, each character provides an element that helps in the construction of MaNgcobo. For instance, the instinct and drive of a mother to constantly defend and protect her family was drawn from Stephanie Forester (*the Bold and the Beautiful*). Barker Haines is the villain in the local soap *Isidingo* who is extremely manipulative and a master game planner. He usually does not have all the plans at the beginning of the game but as it unfolds, he strategizes and improvises plans to counter his suppose enemy(s). This relates to MaNgcobo's quick plains on how to get rid of Nkosinathi's body. Al Pacino is well known for his mafia roles and is a talented star in portraying the psychological emotions of his characters (for example, *Scarface*, *Carlito's Way* and *The God Father*). Some of these character's idiosyncrasies were gathered and infused in the construction of MaNgcobo by King. With regards to genre theory, this shows that referencing of other texts (intertextuality) and genre hybridity (inclusion of gangster elements in the soap), played huge roles in the construction of the matriarchal figures in *Uzalo*. Intertextuality is the process that allows the referencing of one or more texts by another text (Stadler and McWilliam, 2009).

King and Khumalo's personal influences and sourcing from other texts, as well as other women in their society as noted above, demonstrates the actors' deep understanding of their characters and all that is needed for proper representation of the matriarchal roles. King noted that it enables them to picture the reality of the character they are portraying rather than the script that only provides an abstract view of the character.

Apart from the depiction of the two matriarchs in the public sphere (MaNgcobo) and domesticated (MaNzuza) in episode 4, the entire soap opera distinguishes the matriarchs by portraying MaNgcobo to maintain her motherly duties in the midst of crimes and violence while MaNzuza within a religious sphere. Regardless of all these differences that exist in the construction of these matriarchs, in viewing episode 4 and other episodes it is evident that the matriarchs also share some basic similarities. Their confirmation to international/local matriarchal soaps marked those similarities between them and the fact that both matriarchs led the narrative without their husbands (upon whom the first season is based) ensured that their families were taken care of in-spite of everyday challenges. These attributes agree with the views of Bently and Wilsdon (2002:12) who noted that matriarchs possess the ability to "exercise rich mature suffering and duty, with their best effort to bring up their families to the

best of their ability through trials and tribulations that exist along the way, and they are steadfast in this even in the absence of their spouses". This was evident in the construction of the matriarchs in *Uzalo* particularly season 2 as the matriarchs' personalities were more pronounced with the in the absence of their spouses.

Role of KwaMashu Location in the Matriarchs' Representation

The location influenced the representation of matriarchs in *Uzalo*. Location is the geographical place where soap is set or shot. It is very significant to any soap opera because it provides the visual style that creates the physical space of the drama (Hobson, 2003). In addition soap locations basically create the "geographical space that the audience can identify with and to which the characters return again and again" (Barker, 1997:77). Hence, soap operas are known for their illustrations of realism through location (Barker, 1997; Hobson, 1982; 2003).

Uzalo director, King Shaft Morapane (Interview, 26 Aug 2015) indicates that the setting of *Uzalo* in KwaMashu influenced the representation of the matriarch as it helps to "bring in a sense of nostalgia, because we want people to watch it and say "oh I know that, actually I did this not long ago". Zuma (Interview, 22 Aug 2016) further elaborates on this:

> I think one of the really cool things about being in KwaMashu is that it brings it home and makes it more relatable unlike *Generations* which is really entertaining and fun to watch but it not necessarily the lived experience of a lot of people watching the show. So of course being a large hijacking syndicate is probably not a lot of people lived the experience, but being set in townships and the fact that we are on location so we are not just saying we are in the townships and then showing you inside the studio but we are out in that world, that people can see it and go like oh that or that place or ah KwaMashu looks just like this place or like this happens in our townships too. 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 (Zuma, Interview, 22 Aug 2016).

Furthermore, Thibedi added that their casting of people from KZN, and particularly KwaMashu, helped their representation of matriarchs to be relatable to their audience. She exemplified how the location influences the script, for example:

> Thobile and GC relate to each other, their use of language. And supporting female characters like MaMlambo, the ladies in the church and their interactions also reflects the community of KwaMashu as opposed to the sort of the ideal characters that we plant into the world that doesn't make sense (Thibedi, Interview, 22 Aug 2016).

The role of the matriarchs in KwaMashu within the context of crime and violence reveals the social problems associated with the location:

> You see KwaMashu, if you check out the history of the township, was once famous as being one of the most violent townships at some point. We try to take it to that level where crime…the way we tell it and portray it, we go all out so that it's real. We have an audience and we need to take them on a journey (Shaft, Interview, 26 Aug 2015).

The above description of KwaMashu explains the reason behind the hybridity of including elements of the gangster genre in the soap and this reveals the uniqueness of the matriarchs' depiction in the narrative, compared to other international and local soap opera matriarchs. Engaging characters from the location like GC and Thobile who are familiar and understand the real structure of KwaMashu and how individuals relate and interact with one another helped to add originality to the soaps' depictions particularly in this context the two matriarchs. "Cultural proximity…incorporates educative, cognitive and emotional elements and aspects related to the audience's immediate surroundings" (Castello, 2010: 207), and it is evident that *Uzalo's* producers were aware that language is one of these elements that encourages audience viewership.

The setting of *Uzalo* in KwaMashu greatly influenced the representation of the matriarchs in comparison to local soaps like *Generation* (set in Sandton, Johannesburg with cultural diversity and it is an up-market-suburb) as noted earlier international soap like *The Bold and the Beautiful* (Beverley Hills, USA is also an up-market suburb). These locations resonate with both local and global elites. Seemingly KwaMashu township, as a location for *Uzalo* which is predominantly Zulu culture, plays a very significant role in the portrayal as it helps to bring the story and portrayal home where the viewer can easily relate and associate with and hence helps create depth in the understanding of such portrayals (Barker, 1997; Hobson, 2003). The setting of *Uzalo's* matriarchs in KwaMashu in this context has two sides in relation to the general generic conventions of soap opera. As highlighted in Chapter Two, Chris Barker commented that soap operas are both universal and at the same time local in relation to their conventions (Barker, 1997). The setting and depiction of the *Uzalo's* matriarchs within a physical geographical space identified *Uzalo's* universal aspect in relation to the convention of soap opera (Hobson, 2003). Also, the setting within a physical location (KwaMashu) shows how *Uzalo* is localised which "encompass the history, culture and specific problems of particular local conditions" (Barker, 1997:75).

Zulu Culture

According to the narratives of the four interviews, the construction of matriarchal figures in *Uzalo* maintained the Zulu cultural identity, though with some contemporary influences. Carton (2009) described 'Zuluness' within the contemporary context as still alive and flexible in the construction and adaption of postcolonial South Africa, as noted in Chapter Two. When the producers were questioned on how the Zulu culture affects the representation of the matriarchal roles, King affirms that every Zulu wife is expected to stereotypically abide by the rule of the culture, providing an illustration of covering hair during a ceremony. The character of "MaNgcobo will be forced to do this" (King. Interview, 14 Sept 2016). She continued to describe MaNgcobo as "90% modern and10% traditional" though she respects the culture, being a modern woman makes it challenging to navigate around cultural dictates (King, Interview, 14 Sept 2016). In comparison, MaNzuza is portrayed in contrast to the understanding of 90% modern and 10% traditional as she is portrayed as a stereotypical Zulu woman. MaNzuza's commitment to the depiction of stereotypical Zulu women is included in the textual analysis discussed earlier.

In addition, Zuma (Interview, 22 Aug 2016) explained that the *Uzalo* producers understood and took cognisance of the variety and heterogeneity of Zulu cultural practices and rituals as they vary from neighbour to neighbour or according to each family's strict specifications in their representation of matriarchs. This she considered interesting because "it is a shared reference in an experience that we all have" (Zuma, Interview, 22 Aug 2016), hence it ensures that the narrative portrays a contemporary Zulu cultural identity. More interesting it affords the audience experience the culture and its shared meaning (Du Gay *et al,* 1997). Though the matriarchs were constructed within strong Zulu cultural influences, the producers acknowledged postcolonial South Africa by depicting characters that incorporate modern and Western elements. For example, although MaNzuza observes the expectations of a traditional Zulu woman in the home, she is reluctant to believe in traditional spirituality, dismissing MaMlambo's gift of communing with the ancestors.

Interestingly, Thibedi commented that coming from Soweto, she has personally observed that once a Zulu individual tells you his/her surname; you are automatically expected to know their lineage:

> I grew up in Soweto. So when I came to KZN, like when people introduced themselves and they tell you their surnames you are expected in a sense to know their surname, therefore you know

the clan and therefore you know their names. Yeah, so you know there is a whole thing that comes with names and I found that fascinating that our characters like Zandile we call her MaNzuza but MaNzuza is her maiden name and that's how Zulu people addressed each other (Thibedi, Interview, 22 Aug 2016).

This common Zulu cultural practice as explained by Thibedi agrees with King's earlier comment regarding naming. In addition, Thibedi's comment regarding her previous location of Soweto indicates that township spaces within South Africa are localised. For instance, KwaMashu (KwaZulu-Natal) as noted earlier is a predominantly Zulu township while Soweto (Johannesburg) is the largest South African township with the predominance of multilingualism (all the eleven official languages are spoken there)[13]. However, both are black townships. One of the soap opera located in Soweto is *Muvhango* and it is different from *Uzalo*, as it is a Venda based production that reflects township life, especially in Soweto, with two branches of the same family torn apart by the clash between the urban and rural ways of life while *Uzalo* on the other hand, depicts only the life experiences in the township.

The construction of what this study refers to as 'township matriarch' is unique to the scholarship of South African soap operas because of its familiarity within the context where substantial numbers of homes are headed by women/matriarchs. Previous studies (Tager, 1997, 2010; Max, 2008) focus on settings in suburbs but *Uzalo* focused on township matriarchs leading the story/narrative in the absence of patriarchal lead characters. This reveals the uniqueness of *Uzalo* to other popular South African soaps *Isidingo, Generations, High Rollers, Scandal* among others. And although Muvhango is set in a township, there are no published studies that have explored the representation of the matriarchs within this production. Moreover, the increase in *Uzalo's* viewership as noted in chapter supports Manda's (2015) comment that individuals in South Africa are beginning to resonant with stories that are generated from Durban. Individuals in South Africa embrace the show because it depicts the uniqueness of the manifestations of contemporary Zulu culture in a township setting. Despite the differences in cultural practices across the country there a still point of commonality that Thibedi believes contributes to *Uzalo's* popularity: "A lot of cultural cross-referencing is not so different from my Soweto culture. So I think people are watching the show because they

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[13] Available at: https://www.brandsouthafrica.com/tourism-south-africa/travel/cities/soweto-heartbeat-of-the-nation Accessed on 4/12/2017.

identify with it on the bases of the cultural context and they can see themselves reflected in it" (Thibedi, Interview, 22 Aug 2016).

In analysing the representation of Zuluness as captured by these two lead characters, it is evident that Zulu culture is engaged within the embodiment, clothing and setting, which is also explored in the textual analysis. However, patriarchy is another element of Zulu culture.

Patriarchy and Feminism

Zulu culture is structured as a patriarchal society where men have authority and are dominant figures (Gumede, 2002; Mpungose, 2010). It was discovered from the interviews that patriarchy is quite the definition of Zuluness and this greatly influences the representation of matriarchs in *Uzalo*. Thibedi believes that the patriarchal system "heavily influenced" their construction of the matriarchs from the beginning of the script writing. They discovered that their thoughts have been "informed by patriarchy" (Thibedi, Interview, 22 Aug 2016). She considered this as a rigorous process so as to fully develop the portrayal of the matriarchs:

> So when you get into the writing room you first have to see yourself and the conventional patriarchal way of thinking. Identify what is it about the patriarchy that you are to identify with and then rack that down so that so you can come up with a character that is not informed only by the prejudice or by your limited understanding of the word which is largely patriarchal. And I think we saw that as quite a painful process (Thibedi, Interview, 22 Aug 2016).

Thibede's comment shows how the producers sidelined patriarchy and in order to construct the matriarchs, they included their own black feminist thoughts into the soap opera narrative and fiction. Zuma agreed with Thibedi that it was a challenging period even though there were instances and situations where they stood as a feminist in all senses of the word but coming to the writing room, things turned out to be difficult

> I literally have no ideas of the female characters if it doesn't revolve around men because we are raised in a patriarchal society that a lot of our thinking is like biased. I think what we are trying to do is to stay true to the Zulu culture but we're also trying to uplift and empower women even just within the story and so it's like sometimes you like write something you know cultural advisers will say you can't do that because you don't do that in our culture…we just came from one of our characters have lebola negotiations and women don't attend lebola negotiations at all but there are no men in the family. So within the world of our story, we had the choice to either go with all the characters like ah, women doing lebola which is the shock and surprise we gonna

do it…because they are the heads of the families and why shouldn't they (Zuma, Interview, 22 Aug 2016).

In this way, the narrative needs of the production create an alteration in what may be Zulu cultural norms like the involvement of women in lebola negotiation. Moreover, Zuma added that the setting of *Uzalo's* matriarchs within a patriarchal society also affected the way they are represented in the soap, like the usual norms that success is easily attained when a woman has got a supportive husband beside her rather than being a single mother. This was seen in the struggle of MaNgcobo after her husband was imprisoned for life, she needed to find another husband to pave a way for herself because it is not easy to make it as a woman (Zuma, Interview, 22 Aug 2016). From Zuma's comments, the matriarchs are both constructed within a patriarchal system, particularly MaNgcobo who is constructed within a system of business and violence which is often described as 'a man's world'. This common ideology of crime as men domain is also evident in media entertainment as most of the crime or violence scenes are often portrayed by male characters (Cecil, 2007; Escholz, Mallard and Flynn, 2004; Sumser, 1996). This portrayal has the attributes to the dynastic model of soap opera common with the American soap where the control of public sphere is associated with patriarchy (Liebes and Livingstone, 1998); unlike in season one where the husbands were in charge of the public sphere and the women played a supportive role, this representation changed in season 2 as the matriarchs were constructed to stand on their own as the heads of their families and businesses which indicates the feature of community soap as described in matriarchal soap (Liebes and Livingstone, 1998). The blending of American soap with community soap reveals the genre-blurring and also hybridity in this soap.

While the husbands of the matriarchs (Gxabashe and pastor Mdletshe) were present in the show (narrative), the matriarchs were still playing the supportive role:

> Their roles when the dudes were in the show was more that of a support right, keeping things together, making things work while Gxabhash was out welding his gun doing like the big gangster, MaNgcobo is here making sure that the kids are taken care of, making sure that the cups are turned their tails. Like making sure that everything can function and work the way it needs to while Gxabashe is out…without MaNgcobo and everything that she is doing to his side hmm like I doubt if that is going to work anyways (Zuma, Interview, 22 Aug 2016).

The presence of the patriarchs as depicted in season 1 does not mean the matriarchs were passive characters rather they "were always the ones who held things together and make them

function…without the matriarchs, the gentlemen were just heads without necks rolling around" (Zuma, Interview, 22 Aug 2016). In this way, the Matriarchs may be described as maintaining the equilibrium of the narrative (Todorov, 1977). However, in season two their roles were that of "father and mother in their households" (King, Interview, 14 Sept 2016). Khumalo noted that this "is a huge undertaking for a woman who has had the support of her husband her entire life" (Khumalo, Interview, 21 April 2017). Thibedi concluded by saying the two matriarchs became the "chiefs of their own paradigms and their own families" even though sometimes they are faced with "difficult issues which lead them to be in dilemma of not knowing the right thing to do" (Thibedi, Interview, 22 Aug 2016).

It is thus evident that patriarchy is challenged in season two as both matriarchs were constructed as strong and powerful, taking charge of their families and business/church in the absence of both patriarchs throughout trials and adversities. Notwithstanding, the issue of masculinity is tackled from time to time. The producers further demonstrated their feminism by representing the matriarchs to succeed in a world where success is only ascribed to male figures hence, rejecting the dominant ideology relating to male hegemony as the owners of public sphere and women only belonging to the private sphere. Chang (1994) challenges this view by positing that women are not only domesticated, it is a patriarchal assumption of traditional motherhood which usually restricts women selfhood and identity. Moreover, Zuma's earlier comments on how they overcame the long influence of patriarchy in the writing room demonstrate how the producers/writer side-line patriarchy and incorporate their own feminism into the soap opera narrative particularly in their construction of the two matriarchs.

Due to the unending nature of soap opera and the lack of resolve, Modleski described soap opera as a feminine which can easily be associated to feminist thought because it creates a platform that enables the female voice to be heard (Modleski, 1982). Dominic Strinati says "the range of characters covered by soap opera is one of the reasons why it has been seen as feminine if not feminist genre" (Strinati, 2000:219). This is related to *Uzalo* as a soap opera because it depicts femininity by constructing MaNgcobo and MaNzuza as dominant figures in their various characters and not passive or controlling images like mammies, matriarchs or jezebel according to Collins (2000) description of black African female depiction in the media. According to Thibede, the popular belief that women can never be as bad as men is not applicable to *Uzalo* as seen in MaNgcono's character (Thibede, Interview, 22 Aug 2016). This, however, contradicts Parry's (1991) observation that soap operas often represent women as

passive and men as active. This was explored to reveal if the representations of the two matriarchs are merely fictional or they portrayed the lived experience of township matriarchs.

Realism

One of the conventions of soap opera genre is social realism which is in association with location because soaps have been shown to portray the social problems experienced by the people in their everyday life (Graghty, 2006, Kilborn, 1992). This explains why Hobson (1982) states that soaps are concerned with the portrayal of people and the problems faced in their daily lives involving their personal lives and relationships. This study finds that *Uzalo's* matriarchs were constructed with the convention of social-cultural realism. A central research question aimed to explore the ways in which the matriarchs depicted in *Uzalo* compare to known matriarchs in Zulu-township portrays realism, or if they were purely fictionalised. Zuma noted that some women across South African could relate to the characters because certain attributes of the characters were modelled on real women living in KwaMashu:

> I think they are quite similar to your common woman. I know that whenever I speak to my aunt or like the ladies who work at home everybody want or always like to identify with MaNzuza and MaNgcobo…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's common amongst most women across South Africa. Like you just want the best for your family, you just want them to be ok. Also in the second season, the disappearance of the men is a situation which is also super common and relatable in our South African context. There is a lot of women looking after families alone and having to bear under the weight of that and I think MaNgcobo gives a really great escape (Zuma, Interview, 22 Aug 2016).

Thibede further commented that the portrayal is not a mere fiction but women across South Africa could relate to it because of their understanding of the "root of the issues" (Thibede, Interview, 22 Aug 2016) faced by the matriarchs in the story. In order to expand on this Thibede referenced the conversation she had with Dawn, explaining how Dawn confirmed that playing her character (MaNgcobo) helped her to relate to lived social-cultural experiences of women like single mothers, divorcees and women having to maintain their families despite the disruptions in family systems (Thibede, Interview, 2016). Extracting from their audiences' comments, Thibede further notes that many viewers attest to "relate with their experiences" of the matriarchs even though they were set within two different contexts of crime and religion (Thibede, Interview, 22 Aug 2016). This replicates many South African women whose

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situation has forced them to take the place of leadership in protecting their home and children (Ratele, 2012; Holborn and Eddy, 2011; Stats SA, 2010; 2016). "The proximity is found in the characters and their problems" (Castello, 2010: 213).

During the interview with King, she revealed that MaNgcobo was deliberately constructed so that she would be interpreted as proximate to the Durban audience's experiences, particularly women living in townships:

> Her 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 is not made up of just one character; she was made of a combination of characters of women that you see in societies mainly in Durban. Because there is a certain behaviour associated with specifically Durban women, there is the way that they behave, a way that they talk, a way that they dress, certain hairstyles that they prefer, a certain design that they prefer in term of clothing certain brand I should be saying hmm. So she is a combination of a lot of women and that is why so many women identified with her. In addition, a lot of women in the townships are strong, they do things themselves a lot of them run their own households, a lot of them are big business women, they are no-nonsense women and you can also 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 (King, Interview, 14 Sept 2016).

Due to the various personalities built in her character, these helped many women across South African to relate to this character. Khumalo also notes:

> Her portrayal is very much realistic. It is informed by 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 (Khumalo, Interview, 21 April 2017).

The findings reveal that the representation of matriarch in this local soap opera (*Uzalo*) maintained one of the conventions of soap opera genre that is social realism. According to Barker (1997:78), realism is a "set of conventions by which the drama appears to be a representation of the real world with motivated characters, recognisable locations and believable social problems" with some elements of melodrama. Geraghty defines soap opera as realism, melodrama and light entertainment (Geraghty, 1991). *Uzalo* fits into this as its

present interweaving characters, set in a physical location (KwaMashu) and depicting the social problems like prejudice, drugs, car theft (the main dealing of the Xulus), violence and that are prevalent in South African society. In order to immerse themselves in their characters, Khumalo and King identified women in the KwaMashu society who best described their characters and spent some time with them so as to have a deep understanding of the character. This proves that the portrayals in *Uzalo* of the matriarchs were not a mere creation of imagination but foregrounds the fact that they are portrayals of realism of everyday life experiences of township Zulu matriarchs.

Furthermore, the Stats records (2016) indicating 41.3% of homes headed by women and Ratele *et al's* (2012) study that demonstrates the huge case of fatherlessness in South African homes, shows that women are the ones shouldering most of the family responsibilities in the absence of the men or patriarchal figures. This supports the findings that the portrayal of the matriarchs in *Uzalo* as the protectors of their homes, the de-facto heads, and decision makers is not a fiction but the actual situation that is familiar in the context of South Africa. In essence, realism helps uphold a level of recognition among people as supported by Strinati who opined that the portrayal of reality by soap operas helps in gaining and maintaining its popularity (Strinati, 2000).

Intentions of the Construction of Uzalo's Matriarchs

One of the intended meanings of the producers behind the construction of matriarchs was to portray societal ills and to depict the imperfection of man. As such, every individual should be given a chance to evolve.

According to Hall, every message encoded by the producer/encoder contains intended meaning to which the producer is hoping to broadcast to the audience even though the message may be interpreted differently from the views or intended meaning of the producer due to the polysemic nature of the message (Hall, 2010/1980). One of the motives behind the representation of matriarchs in *Uzalo* as explained by Thibedi was aimed at representing the societal ills of the context (Thibedi, Interview, 22 Aug 2016). The township of KwaMashu is known for its high record of crimes and including car theft. Car theft is one of the major crimes involved by the Xulus and Xulu panel beaters is used as a cover, which is now headed by MaNgcobo and Mxolisi as a result of the husband's absence. This is in line with the view that narratives are

tools to the producers which helps in communicating their (producers) imaginations or experiences to existence so as to reach its targeted audience (Chandler, 1997; Mittel, 2001).

One of the motives behind such a depiction of the matriarchs in *Uzalo,* according to the Thibedi (series producer) was to "explore women from the context of their own strength as opposed to the context of who they are when they are supporting men" in a society that is highly patriarchal and in masculinity hegemony (Thibedi, Interview, 22 Aug 2016). Executive Producer, Duma Ndlovu says the depiction in the story was mainly to give women a voice:

> in the stories that I write women play a very pivotal role we try to give them, in fact not try, we give them a central role because women in our society have been left out and for the longest time have not been listened to (Ndlovu, Interview, 26 Aug 2015).

According to Thibedi, apart from *Uzalo's* entertainment and melodramatic features, part of their aim as producers was for the audience to relate and understand the reasons behind every action of the matriarchs and learn from the consequences of their actions:

> I think we want them to identify with them that they are humans and that they have human qualities and that they have human faults and their faults or strengths are shaped by where they came, how they were raised hmm their marriages. They shaped the outlook of their children so that even if MaNgcobos' life looks glamorous then another woman can look at it and say it looks pretty from far but when you look inside is not so pretty so perhaps I can take the honest truth as opposed to want to bypass life and get to wealth or riches quicker. So that's what we want yea we want people to look in and see hash truth reflected right back at them (Thibedi, Interview, 22 Aug 2016).

Furthermore, Zuma commented:

> I guess I would like for people to give others the benefit of the doubt right, to not be so judgemental to open up different aspect of society, different choices, different situations we find ourselves in just go like maybe you looked at this and we felt only a person like X Y Z would find themselves here but maybe actually you could find yourself and maybe we aren't different (Zuma, Interview, 22 Aug 2016).

This highlights the intention of the producers to portray the two matriarch characters, so as to assist their audience to understand and recognise human imperfection and that would help to reduce too much expectation from one another and pave way for second chances. As such,

Uzalo fulfills one of the elements of entertainment education[14] (EE) as it provides a narrative that majority of its local audiences could investigate to so as to understand the social world they are living in (Ang, 1985; 1996). This supports King'ara's (2013:90) view that "soap operas as entertainment programmes are particularly dynamic in promoting audiences' social interactivity and locating them with their socio-cultural-political network. [That is] soaps facilitate the audiences' self-reflexivity as they negotiate socially ascribed subjectivities, hence allowing them to view their world from more personalised perspectives". Therefore, *Uzalo* in comparison to other local soap like *Isidingo* – which "deals with current events in the country" (Cardey et al, 2013:297) conforms to the local conventions, as it is used as a channel for educating its audiences on current socio-cultural or political issues (contextualised to Zulu culture and the township of KwaMashu). Furthermore, the producers' portrayal of the two characters from two different worlds or contexts is to reveal that there are consequences attached to any action and decision taken in life which could either be good or bad. This in some ways reveals the intended meaning encoded in the representation of matriarchs by the producers (Hall, 2010/1980).

Conclusion

From the analysis of episode 4, season 2 and the findings assembled from the interviews, this chapter provided comprehensible evidence that the two matriarchal figures in *Uzalo* are deliberately constructed between the contrasts of good and evil, heroine and villainess, and between the parallel worlds of religion and crime. The themes associated with these binaries enable the narrative to include storylines that reflect some of the social ills within South African society. Their settings within a Zulu patriarchal are both acknowledged in the narrative through characters fulfilling the traditional norms, and also challenging them. Overall, the construction of *Uzalo's* matriarchs conforms to universal matriarchal conventions and subverts by its setting in South African context with a specific location to the township of KwaMashu. The township setting of *Uzalo* lends itself to cultural proximity for the audience. This was intentional so that characters are proximate (collective proximity) and the stories help audiences to think about their own problems (personal proximity) (Castello, 2010:216). Though constructed within binary oppositions, the two matriarchs complicate the overly-simplistic contrast of 'good and evil/bad' by Levi-Strauss (1968), and finally, their representation in the narrative is within the

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[14] Entertainment Education (EE) "is a strategic process that uses communication and media to develop intervention that both educate and entertain for the purposes of facilitating pro-social change" (Cardey et al, 2013:289).

convention of social realism. The next chapter, chapter six presents the overall conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

The study was undertaken in order to examine the representation of the matriarch within South African soap opera, using the case study approach of *Uzalo* which is set in KwaMashu, Durban, South Africa. To achieve the set research objectives, the study explored how *Uzalo's* producers intended to represent the two matriarchs in the soap opera, the specific roles of matriarchs that could be identified within a contemporary Zulu context and what *Uzalo* revealed about the role of narrative setting in terms of generic adoptions. With a focus on episode 4, season 2, the study explored the soap operas' narrative structure and generic conventions with interest on how these components influenced the construction of the two matriarchal figures in *Uzalo*.

The first chapter introduced the study's problem statement, the background of the study and the global representation of the matriarch character in the popular genre of soap opera and narrowed the investigative discussion to South African context. The second chapter reviewed relevant literature that helped in contextualising the study by exploring the general concept of soap opera (Allen, 1985; Barker, 2000; Bignell, 2004; Brown, 1994; Burton, 2012; Childers, 2006; Drabble, 1985; Hobson, 2003; Kontranowski, 2014), women and soap opera in line with feminist criticism (Collins, 2000; Geraghty, 1991; Gledhill, 2003; Hook, 1992; Manatu, 2003; Marx, 2008; Modleski, 1983; Parry, 2003), understanding the evolution of South African soap opera/television (Marx, 2008; Milton, Neoyptou, 2012; Teer-Tamaseli, 2005), and a brief description of matriarch within African/Zulu societies (Collins, 2005; Feassay, 2013; Gumede, 2002; Ndlovu, 2009; Neoytou, 2012; Lebsock, 1983; Lewis, 2000; Ratele, 2012; Sewell, 2012; Zondi, 1996). The theoretical framework that informed the study was discussed in chapter three. The relevance and use of genre theory (Berry-Flint, 2004; Butler, 2007; Chandler, 1997; Feuer, 1992, 2000; Kress, 2003; Neale, 2001; Newcomb, 2004) and narrative theory (Barthes 1974; 1977; Chatman 1978; de Saussure 1966; Levi-Strauss, 1972; Propp, 1968; Todorov, 1976, 1977) was explained and situated in the study within the domain of a Cultural Studies (CS) approach (During, 2005). The methodology employed in this study was delineated in chapter four. It explained the qualitative research method and the systematic procedures followed in the process of data collection using semi-structured interviews and textual analysis of the selected episode. Chapter five presented and discussed the analysis of findings gathered during the semi-structured interviews with the expert informants from *Uzalo's* production team members and discussions around the codes and conventions of *Uzalo* as identified using textual

analysis. This chapter draws conclusions from what the study found in response to its key questions. It also suggests areas of future research.

Narrative structure

Disclosed from the findings, *Uzalo*'s narrative structure involves the use of multiple interweaving threads that connect the storylines since the narrative spreads across numerous episodes and with different themes and subject matter which could be less (resolved) or more permanent (Barker, 1997). *Uzalo* maintained the generic conventions by sustaining the seriality whereby the story's closure is "indefinitely deferred" (Bignell, 2004: 94). With numerous episodes, the connecting element of cliff-hangers, and the community of characters, these all show how *Uzalo* conforms to the genres' conventions, and also how it is subverted since it is set within the context of South Africa in Durban. These points will be outlined succinctly in the next subsection as I provide the analysis of these two matriarchs and their portrayal within the Durban context.

Analysis of the Two Zulu Township Matriarchs in *Uzalo*

By situating this study within the genre theory, this shows that referencing of other texts (intertextuality) and genre hybridity (inclusion of gangster elements in the soap) played huge roles in the construction of the matriarchal figures in *Uzalo*. So also, the blending of American soap with community soap (Liebes and Livingstone, 1998) reveals the genre-blurring and also hybridity in this soap.

MaNzuza's construction is associated with the formal (victim heroine) in the narrative, who is constantly faced with adversities, such as her husband leaving for Swaziland indefinitely to 'find' himself, discovered her son (Moxlisi) who was switched at birth, trying to build a relationship with her new found son (Mxolisi) and helping to rehabilitate him from the life of crime, challenges from church and her missing son (Nkosinathi) among other things. MaNgcobo the villainess is slightly different to Propp's (1968) villain that often caused disruption of the narrative as she only unleashes her disruptive skills as villainess or troublemaker when her family is threatened. However, the burial of Nkosinathi in the panel beaters is the catalyst for an extended disequilibrium (Todorov, 1977) as it introduces change, challenges and instability in a variety of characters' lives.

Global and Local Conventions

This study reveals that MaNgcobo and MaNzuza are similar to both international and local soap matriarchs, such as Stephanie Forester in *The Bold and the Beautiful,* and locally Karabo in *Generations*. This implies that the two matriarchs' construction maintained the global conventions; of strong independent individuals, mothers, wives and their line of actions and decision making is driven by the love for their families (Barker, 1997; Geraghty, 1991; Modleski, 1979). However, the narrative subverts global conventions as both matriarchs were set within the township of KwaMashu and within the context of Zulu culture evidenced by the dominance of the isiZulu which further helped the realism portrayal due to the cultural proximity for a majority of the production's viewers. Cultural proximity "incorporates educative, cognitive and emotional elements and aspects related to the audience's immediate surroundings" (Castello, 2010: 207), and it is evident that *Uzalo's* producers were aware that language is one of these elements that encourages audience viewership.

Specific to MaNzuza's character, the findings revealed that she is different to other matriarchal soaps as MaNzuza was constructed within the context of strong religious beliefs (Christianity) contrary to the oft-depicted of matriarchs within secular contexts, such as Cherel de Villiers in the mining business of *Isidingo*, or Brooke Logan in the fashion industry of *Bold and the Beautiful*. MaNgcobo was however, portrayed as a strong villainess playing her motherly role within the context of crime and violence. Additionally, the construction of these are unique in the sense that they sublimated in the narratives without patriarchal characters in comparison to other local soaps where such matriarchal characters are not sublimated in cognisance of patriarchal characters like MaAgnes in *Isidingo*.

Binary Oppositions

According to Levi-Strauss (1968), the narrative world and the general world at large make better sense when things are portrayed with their oppositions. The findings revealed that the two Zulu matriarchs in *Uzalo* were set within the model of binary oppositions as they were portrayed within the parallel worlds of crime and religion, heroine and villains, good and bad. In relation to narrative theory, binary oppositions are exposed through the physical appearance of the characters (Lacey, 2000). The matriarchs are constructed in the soap to be fashionable although from different perspectives, MaNzuza as conservative and traditional while MaNgcobo as modern and Western, (see a textual analysis of episode 4).

However, my findings additionally revealed that oppositions were not clear-cut in *Uzalo* as both matriarchs (MaNgcobo and MaNzuza) were constructed to have complex personalities supporting the view of Hobson (2003: 106) that 'people are more complex than merely being good or bad, hero or villain […] and soap opera genre enables the production to develop and reveal many aspects of major characters.' This implies that no one individual is perfect because even at the height of our good personality traits there also exists some traits of bad and vice-versa. It must however, be noted as discussed in my analysis chapter that this was a deliberate decision on the part of the producers of *Uzalo* in their portrayal and construction of these matriarchs to further underscore that binary oppositions may be present within the individual. In as much as the producers were interested in portraying a parallel contrast between the two matriarchs, they were also conscious of not portraying an absolute character that represents only one thing that is either 'totally good' or 'totally bad'. Thus, the construction of matriarchs in *Uzalo* complicates Levi-Strauss' model by not depicting purely the two contrasts of good vs bad, but rather depicting each concept to have an element of both. The oppositions are not clear-cut in *Uzalo*.

As Berger (1997) explains a particular event or object gains its meaning only when it is compared against its contrast. *Uzalo's* entire narrative is grounded with binary oppositions as it is within the wider oppositions that the two matriarchs are constructed. The research revealed that this was deliberately done to enable producers of *Uzalo* to portray South Africa's societal ills and to investigate identity construction as two individuals were mistakenly switched at birth and raised by two different worlds (crime and religion). This shows that the matriarch figures in *Uzalo* were deliberately constructed within those two parallel contexts which further illustrates that binary opposition is the fundamental building stone in this narrative (Herman, 2006). The producers' aim according to the findings was to investigate if nature is stronger than nurture or vice-versa regarding the moulding of individual identity. The matriarchs were set in the binary opposition of crime and religion, and the choice of wardrobe, script, action, and roles based on the findings were to further establish the difference between the personalities portrayed as seen from the analysis of episode 4, season 2, which was analysed at the early part of chapter five. This highlights the intention of the producers to portray the two matriarch characters, so as to assist their audience to understand and recognise human imperfection and that would help to reduce too much expectation from one another and pave way for second chances. Their portrayal of two characters from two different worlds or contexts is to reveal that there are consequences attached to any action and decision taken in life which

could either be good or bad. This in some ways reveals the intended meaning encoded in the representation of matriarchs by the producers (Hall, 2010/1980).

Character Immersion and Depictions with Current Happenings

When actors and actresses are permitted to get involved personally in the creation of the characters they are to portray, it helps in bringing to life the actual depictions which enhance the reality birth of the characters they portray (Hobson, 2003). This was one of the findings; the cast members playing the matriarchal figures went beyond the scripts into the physical space (townships) to identify women that best described their characters and spend some time with them in order to gain a deep understanding of the character. The findings subsequently revealed that the portrayal of the matriarchs depicted the current happenings and challenges of the South African context where many homes are headed by women as a result of absentee fathers. This is in cognisance to the character consideration of MaNgcobo as supported by Dawn King, who was interpreted as a figure that township women could relate their life experiences with. This highlights the notion of cultural proximity because it "is found in the characters and their problems" (Castello, 2010: 213). As such, their character considerations indicated with great similarity personal struggles faced by most women raising their families in the context particularly in townships (Holborn and Eddy, 2011; Stats SA, 2010). In this way, the narrative needs of the production create an alteration in what may be the Zulu cultural norms. In this regard to the contemporary Zulu culture, the needs of *Uzalo's* narrative encouraged an 'alternation' to Zulu norms; for example, the inclusion of women involved in 'lobola' negotiations. It can thus be concluded that *Uzalo* producers understood and took cognisance of the variety and heterogeneity of Zulu cultural practices and rituals as they varied from neighbour to neighbour or according to each family's strict specifications in their representation of matriarchs.

Setting and Wardrobe

The setting of *Uzalo*'s matriarchs in the township of KwaMashu cannot be downplayed. *Uzalo* being the first South African soap opera set in KwaMashu did not only affect or influence the matriarch representation but also helped the viewers to resonate with the soap and in this context, the representation of the two matriarchs and the notion of realism in relation to a 'physical' context that people can identify (Manda, 2015). Hence, it can be categorically stated that social realism is the main focus in *Uzalo*, which further described the cultural history associated with the cultural identity. While is it arguable that *Uzalo* may rely on some

conventions of melodrama to provide a "heightened sense of the dramatic, a focus on emotions and life's torments where characters may appear to have insufficient motivation from a 'realist' point of view" (Barker, 1997:79), in its gritty storylines and cultural proximity to KwaMashu, social/external realism are more prominent (Brunsdon, 1997: 27).

Through the portrayal of a real-life context and the present-day situation of KwaMashu as depicted in *Uzalo*, social realism becomes a prominent and central idea for the consideration of the setting (and character portrayal of this soap as I discussed earlier). The spectrum of South African societal ills (taxi syndicates, car hijacking, drug abuse, sexual identity and orientation) and themes (family ties and interpersonal relationships, marriage, divorce, etc) are pointers of social realism and considerations of the producers. This is apparent in the setting of the matriarchs within the context of crime/secular (MaNgcobo) and religion/Christian values (MaNzuza). For example, the social ill and gritty experience of South African crime are depicted in MaNgcobo's hijacking syndicate. Car hijackings are a grim reality in South African society with a record of about "53003 victims of hijacking" from 2016 (April) to March 2017, this reflects an increase of about 93% (Stats, 2016/17:36-37). However, the social ill of prejudice is examined through the character of MaNzuza. The consideration of the setting within KwaMashu explains the reason behind the hybridity of including elements of the gangster genre in the soap and this reveals the uniqueness of the matriarchs' depiction in the narrative, compared to other international and local soap opera matriarchs.

Likewise, the use of KwaMashu as a physical location for the soap clearly revealed from the findings that the generic adoptions were strongly maintained in *Uzalo* and not subverted. In other words, the soap tries to portray or address social realism, and thus fulfill the local conventions of soap opera (Barker, 1997). Additionally, it was argued earlier that the study assumes that its Zulu context may subvert certain soap operas convention, however in this instance the importance of domesticity in the soap opera is entrenched by its pivotal role for women in the Zulu home. In addition, the portrayal of the characters within a patriarchal society shows the peculiarity of Zulu identity or culture as a strongly patriarchal society that usually advocates for male dominance (Mpungose, 2010). The findings revealed how the influence of patriarchy was challenged by the producers hence, allowing the female characters to be more prominent in the soap without the 'guidance' of male figures. For instance, it may be argued that MaNgcobo uses Zulu male norms and patriarchy to her own end, threatening her son with the insult of 'being a weakling' in order for him to abide by what she asks of him.

Possible Areas for Further Research

Although carrying out this particular study was highly interesting and educative, it had its own limitations. This is because the study was only able to investigate a specific aspect of the portrayal of the matriarchal figures; hence there will be a need for further research in order to cover those important areas like audience studies and identity construction. Understanding the producers' intent in the representation of matriarchs in *Uzalo* is a useful starting point. However, in order to attain a fuller understanding of both the encoding and decoding model (Hall, 2010/1980) further research is needed to explore the interpretation of matriarchs of the same soap opera by their audience. This would investigate how audiences (both genders) interpret the portrayal of the characters and justify if the audiences hold an ideological, negotiated or oppositional meaning to the representation as encoded by the creators according to the encoding and decoding model of Hall (2010/1980).

With regards to developing a more robust analysis of South African township matriarchs, a comparative study could include selected matriarchs from other local soap opera such as the character of Thandaza Moekoena played by Sindi Dlathu in *Muvhango* and Mkabayi Zungu played by Thembi Nyandeni in *Isibaya*.

Further study could also be carried out so as to explore the intentions of *Uzalo* producers regarding identity construction if it is built on nature or nurture by investigating the character development of the two individuals Mxolisi and Ayanda (the first sons of MaNzuza and MaNgcobo). This will help to ascertain 'if who you are- is based on your up bring or who you are born to be" (Thibede, Interview, 22 Aug 2016).

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APPENDIX 1: GATEKEEPER LETTER

Stained Glass
productions

20th April, 2016
Janet Atinuke Onuh
Centre for Communication, Media and Society (CCMS)
School of Applied Human Science
College of Humanities
Howard College Campus
University of Kwazulu-Natal

Dear Janet Onuh (Student) and Dr. Dyll-Myklebust (Supervisor)

RE: Permission to Conduct Research

Gatekeeper's permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research on the production of the television show, *Uzalo*, provided ethical clearance has been obtained.

We note the working little of your dissertation is: *The Representation and Interpretation of the Matriarch in South African Soap Opera: Case Study of Uzalo.*

It is noted that you will be gathering data and constituting your sample by observing production in action and by interviewing staff members (as and when they are available) particularly a producer, creative director, a scriptwriter and the two cast members playing the role of matriarch; Zandile Mdletshe played by Leleti Khumalo and Lindiwe Xulu played by Dawn King. We also note that focus group will be conducted with *Uzalo* audiences where a couple of episodes are to be screened. These will be facilitated separately from production sites.

Data must be collected with due confidentiality as stipulated in the informed consent form to be provided to interviewees.

Yours sincerely,

On behalf of Stained Glass Facilities

Mmamitse Thidbedi
Uzalo Creative Director

Directors:Kobedi Pokane | Gugulethu Zuma
Reg. No. 2006/007188/07   VAT No. 434019987

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APPENDIX 2: ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNIVERSITY OF ™
KWAZULU-NATAL

INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

27 May 2016

Mrs Janet A Onuh 215080388
School of Applied Human Sciences
Howard College Campus

Dear Mrs Onuh

Protocol reference number: HSS/0612/016M
Project title: The Representation of the Matriach in South African Soap Opera: A Case Study of *Uzalo*

Expedited Approval

In response to your application dated 24 May 2016, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have 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 Shamila Naidoo (Deputy Chair)

/px

cc Supervisor: Dr Lauren Dyll-Myklebust
cc Academic Leader Research: Dr Jean Steyn
cc School Administrator: Ms Ayanda Ntuli

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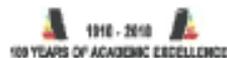
APPENDIX 3:   INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

To ask scriptwriter/ series producer / two lead actresses:

Research Question 1: How do the creators of *Uzalo* intend to represent the two matriarchs?

5. In what ways do Zandile Mdletshe and Lindiwe Xulu compare to other local and international matriarchs? How are they i) similar ii) different (subverted)?

6. With Zandile as a pastor's wife and Lindiwe as a criminal's wife, they are almost the opposite of each other – why is this important to the storyline?

7. What are the possible choices in home set dressing, wardrobe, speech/script, actions in the storyline, their roles in the home or wider society that assist in establishing this opposition?

8. In soap operas, matriarchs typically fulfill certain roles – most predominately that of "the mother" ('the good mother' and 'the bad mother'), but also the businesswoman, the lover/mistress, the troublemaker. Which of these do you think i) Zandile and ii) Lindiwe fit, and why?

9. Within the period that Pastor Mdletshe and Gxabashe played the role of heads of their families, how would you describe the role of the matriarchs?

10. With both leading men out of the storyline, how have the roles of the matriarch possibly changed in season 2, being the new de-facto heads of their various families?

11. How do they leverage / or play out their authority /power differently to each other?

12. What can their differences be seen in episode 4, season 2 (explain episode)?

Research Question 2: What specific roles of matriarchs can be identified within a contemporary Zulu context, as portrayed in *Uzalo?*

13. How do the matriarchs depicted in *Uzalo* compare (represent) known matriarchs in Zulu culture or a township (or are they purely fictionalised)?

14. Even if they are fictionalised, you want the audience to identify with them – what exactly would you like them to identify with?

15. In your view, what are the features in each character with which the audience may identify i) the most ii) the least?

16. In what way do you see a possible similarity between the personal struggles of these matriarchs a reflection of the challenges faced by most women you know raising their families in townships?

Research Question 3: What does *Uzalo* reveal about the role of narrative setting in terms of generic adaptions?

17. In what ways has the setting of *Uzalo* in KwaMashu influenced the representation of the matriarch compared to American soaps like *Bold and the Beautiful* and local soaps like *Generations, Isidingo*?

18. How are the typical roles discussed before of "the mother" ('the good mother' and 'the bad mother'), the businesswoman, the lover/mistress, the troublemaker possibly changed or different in some way with the story set in KwaMashu (and specifically the world of the church and the world of crime)?

19. *Uzalo* is set within a predominately Zulu culture – how do you consider this in your representation (for scriptwriter/series producer) or portrayal (lead actress) of the matriarch?

20. Matriarchs are typically presented as empowered women, and we can see this is some ways in Lindiwe and Zandile, but how may the fact that South Africa is a predominately patriarchal society influence the portrayal of these women in *Uzalo*?

21. How does the matriarch's role characterize the clash of value between modernity-traditional Zulu culture, religious-secular values and Christian-criminal mindsets in the townships?

APPENDIX 4:   INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Correspondence with interviewees: Letter of invitation to participate in the study

Dear Sir/Madam

I, (Janet Atinuke Onuh), am collecting data to complete a study on: **Representation of Matriarch in South African Soap Opera: a Case study of *Uzalo***. The study is conducted under the supervision of University of KwaZulu-Natal, Centre for Communication, Media and Society (CCMS). My supervisor's name is Dr. Lauren Dyll-Myklebust I am writing to request your participation.

The study seeks to explore the representation of the matriarch character within the South Africa context as represented in *Uzalo* and how the soap opera's usual television codes and conventions are either applied or subverted (challenged or changed) in *Uzalo* in order to construct meaning in a contemporary Zulu context. Associated with this is an investigation of what Stained Glass Production's intention is in representing the two matriarchs in certain (different) ways.

Participation in this study is voluntary. As a participant, you may withdraw from the research at any time without negative consequences. In general, responses will be treated in a confidential manner. Confidential information will not be used without your permission. If you are interviewed as part of the *Uzalo* production or cast, your role will be that of an expert informant, and the value of your insights lie in your experience and who you are. I would therefore prefer you to reveal your name, but should you prefer a pseudonym, this will be respected.

We request the use of an audio-recorder in the interviews. The data will be kept securely for five years for purposes of verification by my supervisors Dr. Lauren Dyll-Myklebust at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Should you request, an electronic copy of the final projects will be sent to you on completion.

Thank you for your time.

Your willingness to participate in this study will greatly be appreciated.

Details of the researcher and institution of research:

	Address	Phone Number	Email address
Researcher	Janet Atinuke Onuh	0631915928	atinukefasanya@yahoo.com
Department	Centre for Communication Media and Society (CCMS)	+27-31-260-2505	http://ccms.ukzn.ac.za/Homepage.aspx
Institution	University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) Howard College Campus, Masizi Kunene Ave, Glenwood, Durban, South Africa.	+27-31-260-1813	www.ukzn.ac.za

Supervisor	Dr Lauren Dyll-Myklebust	+27-31-260-2298	dyll@ukzn.ac.za
Chair, UKZN Human Sciences Research Committee	Dr. Shenuka Singh	+27-31-260-8591	singshen@ukzn.ac.za
Committee Clerk, UKZN Human Sciences Research Committee	Mr. Prem Mohun	+27-31-260-4557	hssrechumanities@ukzn.ac.za
Please do not hesitate to contact any of the above persons, should you want further information on this research, or should you want to discuss any aspect of the interview process.			

Signed consent

• I understand that the purpose of this interview is solely for academic purpose. The findings will be published as research projects/dissertations and may be published in academic journals.	**Yes** ☐ **No** ☐
• I understand I may choose to remain anonymous. (Please choose whether or not you would like to remain anonymous.)	**Yes** ☐ **No** ☐
• I understand that I may choose whether or not my name will be quoted in remarks and or information attributed to myself in the final research documents. • I choose to use a pseudonym, not my real name.	**Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐
• I understand that I will not be paid for participating.	**Yes** ☐ **No** ☐
• I understand that I reserve the right to discontinue and withdraw my participation any time.	**Yes** ☐ **No** ☐
• I consent to be frank to give the information. • I consent to the use of audio-recorder during focus group discussions.	**Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐
• I understand I will not be coerced into commenting on issues against my will, and that I may decline to answer specific questions.	**Yes** ☐ **No** ☐
• If I am part of the *Uzalo* production team/cast I understand I reserve the right to schedule the *time* and *location* of the individual interview.	**Yes** ☐ **No** ☐
* By signing this form, I consent that I have duly read and understood its content.	

Name of Participant	**Signature**	**Date**
Name of Researcher	**Signature**	**Date**

APPENDIX 5:   PICTURES

Photo 1: Me with Thuli Zuma (left) and Mmamitse Thibedi (right) after the interview conducted in the office overlooking the studio
Source: Photographer, Lauren Dyll

Photo 1: Me with Dawn T. King after the interview conducted in Xulu's lounge
Source: Photographer, Lauren Dyll

Photo 1: Me with Dawn T. King and my supervisor (left)
Source: Photographer, Sarah Gibson

APPENDIX 6: SCENES IN EPISODE 4, SEASON 2

SCENE	TIME	SETTING	CHARACTER(S)	MOOD/ACTION	DIALOGUE
			UZALO SEASON 2 EPISODE 4		
1	01:06-01:50 44 seconds	**Xulu Panel Beaters**	**MaNgcobo and Mxolisi Nkosinathi's body**	☐ The setting is dark ☐ MaNgcobo and Mxolisi are panicking ☐ They hover over the Body ☐ Mxolisi is distraught ☐ MaNgcobo puts on a brave face and gives him orders about what to do	☐ **MaNgcobo tells Mxolisi that they have to get rid of the body** ☐ **He is conflicted because deep down he wants to transform his life which is why he wants to tell the police**
2	02:28-04:08 1 minute 40 Seconds	**Xulu Panel Beaters**	**MaNgcobo and Mxolisi Nkosinathi's body**	☐ The setting is dark ☐ MaNgcobo is strong, she takes charge	☐ **She orders Mxolisi to find a shovel and bury the body** ☐ **She also tells him that they must bury the body beneath the office because no one will find him**
3	04:09-04:43 44 seconds MaMlambo enters at 04:21	**Mdletshe home-Kitchen**	**MaNzuza, Ayanda and MaMlambo**	☐ Lighting is bright ☐ MaNzuza and Ayanda are waiting for Nkosinathi and Mxolisi to come home for the surprise farewell ☐ MaMlambo comes to visit Ayanda (church pastor) ☐ She appears very Happy ☐ As MaMlambo leaves, it is evident that her premonition makes Ayanda and MaNzuza nervous	☐ **MaNzuza is getting slightly impatient as she waits for Nkosinathi and Mxolisi** ☐ **MaMlambo has another premonition and tells MaNzuza to pray** ☐ **MaNzuza tells her to stop thinking negative thoughts**
4	04:44-06:40 1 minute 58 seconds MaNzuza calls at 05:25	**Zulu Panel Beaters**	**MaNgcobo and Mxolisi Nkosinathi's body**	☐ Setting is dark ☐ MaNgcobo is in control of the situation ☐ They both carry the body to the place it will be buried ☐ MaNgcobo appears affected that he chose not to tell MaNzuza- she seems jealous over the fact that he cares about MaNzuza	☐ **Mxolisi is emotional, MaNgcobo demands him to follow her orders** ☐ **MaNgcobo calls him weak and tells him to man up** ☐ **When MaNzuza phones, he is tempted to tell her but, instead, he tells her that he will be home soon** ☐ **She asks him why he did not tell her about Mxolisi's death**

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5	**06:41-08:00** **1 minute** **9** **Seconds**	**Mdletshe** **Home kitchen** **and** **living room**	**MaNzuza, Ayanda** **and MaMlambo**	☐ **MaNzuza looks** **worried** ☐ **MaMlambo is** **about** **to leave when she** **has another**	☐ **MaMlambo tells MaNzuza** **and Ayanda that there is a dark** **cloud hanging over their**
6	**08:01-08:51** **50** **seconds**	**Xulu Panel** **Beaters**	**MaNgcobo and** **Mxolisi** **Nkosinathi's body**	☐ **Setting is dark** ☐ **They are flustered** ☐ **She is strong yet he** **appears to be weak** ☐ **He gets a flashback** **to his childhood in a** **similar situation** **where his father** **tells him that he is** **weak (the viewer** **witnesses his** **disconnect with the** **Xulu's)**	☐ **She orders him to dig a** **deeper hole**
7	**08 :52-09:04** **11** **Seconds**	**Xulu house -** **lounge**	**Nosipho**	**. Setting is dark** **. coming down from** **the bedroom** **. she appears worried**	**, Nosipho was calling out for** **her mother (MaNgcobo)**
8	**09:05-10:18** **1 minute** **13** **Seconds**	**Xulu Panel** **Beaters**	**MaNgcobo and** **Mxolisi** **Nkosinathi's nosy**	☐ **Mxolisi and** **MaNgcobo are** **burying the body** ☐ **MaNgcobo is** **looking messy** ☐ **She appears** **Heartless**	☐ **Mxolisi hesitates once again** **but she tells him to follow her** **orders**
9	**10:19-11:16** **57** **seconds**	**Mdletshe** **home-kitchen**	**MaNzuza, Ayanda,** **GC, Smangele and** **Thobile**	☐ **Guests arrive for** **the farewell party** ☐ **MaNzuza appears** **anxious waiting for** **Nkosinathi**	☐ **The guests ask where** **Nkosinathi is, Ayanda whispers** **to them that he is at Gateway** **meeting with a girlfriend**
10	**11:17-12:14** **57** **seconds**	**Xulu Panel** **Beaters**	**MaNgcobo and** **Mxolisi**	☐ **MaNgcobo and** **Nkosinathi continue** **digging the grave,** **he is about to bury** **the body** ☐ **They are standing** **opposite each other,** **but do not make eye** **contact** ☐ **There is great** **intensity in this** **scene**	☐ **She shouts at him and tells** **him to toughen up**
11	**12:15-13:08** **58** **seconds**	**Mdletshe** **Home**	**MaNzuza, Ayanda,** **GC, Smangele and** **Thobile**	☐ **MaNzuza is very** **worried at this** **point**	☐ **She demands to know what is** **going on** ☐ **Ayanda tells her that** **Nkosinathi is with his girlfriend** ☐ **MaNzuza angrily takes off** **her apron and goes to the** **bedroom**
12	**13:09-16:40** **31** **seconds**	**Xulu Panel** **Beaters**	**MaNgcobo and** **Mxolisi**	☐ **Mxolisi is retiling** **the office floor** ☐ **He stands over his** **brother's 'grave'** **site**	☐ **MaNgcobo applauds his** **work. She tells him that she is** **proud of him** ☐ **She is satisfied that**

				☐ MaNgcobo fetches a mop and bucket and starts mopping the floor ☐ Mxolisi has proven himself to be a Xulu after what he has done (initiation) ☐ Mxolisi is so mortified by what he has done that he gets physically ill ☐ MaNgcobo is irritated by the fact that Mxolisi is not being emotionally strong	no one will ever find the body. This has become their secret. This is the bond that ties them to each other ☐ She encourages Mxolisi to take his feelings out of the situation ☐ MaNgcobo tells him to toughen up because they had a tough decision to make and they chose the best decision
13	16:21-18:07 26 seconds	Mdletshe home- MaNzuza's Bedroom	MaNzuza	☐ MaNzuza tries to call Nkosinathi but she cannot get hold of him ☐ She lays on her bed looking at his picture ☐ This is the first time the audience witnesses darkness in the Mdletshe home (symbolic lighting effect)	☐ MaNzuza leaves a voice message on his phone ☐ She scolds Nkosinathi for not being home and then tells him how proud she is of him
14	18:08-23:18 5 minutes 10 Seconds	Backyard of Xulu Panel Beaters	MaNgcobo and Mxolisi	☐ They are burning Mxolisi's clothes outside ☐ Mxolisi looks disturbed ☐ The viewer cannot see MaNgcobo's facial expression because of the smoke distorts her face, but Mxolisi's face is in full view of the audience ☐ It is only when she speaks about how they are bound together that the audience witnesses emotion from MaNgcobo, but even still, her expression is not captured	☐ Mxolisi says that they have killed his brother ☐ He talks about how he is buried beneath them under the office they work in ☐ She says that they had no choice, Nkosinathi was going to destroy them. She tells him that they are one (she is crying) ☐ She tells him that fate has brought them together, that they are united through this death. This is their secret
15	23:30-23:45 15 seconds	Xulu panel beater	Office	Splash of Nkosinathi's blood	

Source: Landers (2016).

APPENDIX 7: TURN IT IN DIGITAL RECEIPT

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