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Do Traditional Female Stereotypes Still Exist on South African Television? An intricate case study analysis of *The River* and *The Herd*

By

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Faculty of Humanities

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Declaration

I, **Nicollete Nehanda**, declare that Do Traditional Female Stereotypes Still Exist on South African Television? An intricate case study analysis of *The River* and *The Herd* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. Furthermore, this research represents my own opinions and not necessarily that of the University.



Date: 15/04/2020

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I have been incredibly fortunate to work with a great supervisor, Prof Lieza Louw who has consistently gone above and beyond the call of duty in providing rigorous feedback, advice and encouragement at every stage of this project. I am very grateful for her compassionate understanding of the competing personal demands that periodically hindered the progress of this study. She has been instrumental in providing a wealth of invaluable comments and guidance and I am particularly thankful for her insights into the specific requirements of this research. I am greatly indebted to her for her unwavering support, and belief in this project and my abilities.

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I appreciate the love and support from my parents, brothers and sister Londiwe. I value all the relentless efforts to offer insight regarding your own viewing experiences of South African television drama. Your love and support is indeed beyond description.

Dedication

For my two beautiful daughters and the millions of other black women across the African continent who "carry six mountains on their back," (Ogundipe-Leslie's 1993: 107).

I hope this work can inspire and repair your broken dignity.

ABSTRACT

This research focuses on why the representation of the fatal woman is constructed and recycled by patriarchal structures in South Africa. Using the feminist film theory and the theory of representation, this dissertation evaluates the fatal woman stereotypes that women are boxed into when represented on South African screens. This researcher analyses two case studies, *The Herd* and *The River* to illustrate that some television narratives are designed to limit the power that women possess in society. Drawing on historical cinematic accounts, this research illustrates how the fatal woman archetype has many iterations, which seek to maintain the patriarchal hegemonic imperative. The study focuses on the matriarchs of each case study, Lindiwe Dikana, and MaMngadi. The gendered modes identified from each character are similar to the *noir femme fatale* trope, as this study identifies key fatal woman characteristics such as manipulation, seduction and destruction. Overall, this study found that the corpus of the episodes of the individual case studies did not offer a nuanced and dynamic representation of black women, but rather ascribed them roles and statuses that encourage the perpetuation of patriarchal domination within the South African societal fabric. Hopefully, this study, by pointing out the glaring retrogressive representation of women on South African television, could encourage the emergence of a new wave of television content that offers an anti-racist and anti-sexist narrative.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Soap operas and telenovelas are a common viewing tradition for most South African households. This has increasingly resulted in the creation of numerous local dramas which, like many other international soap operas and television dramas, work as mediums that promote and shape cultural texts (Bignell 2004). Since the dawn of democracy, the stories projected in these telenovelas and soap operas have dominated prime-time television as they attract women, children and male audiences, mainly because they represent a reconstructed reality closely linked to that of its audience. In essence, telenovelas and soap operas act as self-reflexive tools used by audiences, as the characters and their experiences assist audiences to understand their existence (Adia 2014:1). The storylines of many of these local soap operas and telenovelas, often revolve around women, who in most times, are shown under two banal binaries of the evil manipulative seductress or the typical good girl. Given the significant shifts in the socio-political roles played by modern-day South African women, one would assume that filmmakers would take a more nuanced approach when portraying women on soap operas and telenovelas, which, Adia argues, are important fictional texts which "provide values, images, rituals, symbols, and models that act as reference points for their people's perceptions" (Adia 2014:1).

This study investigates if indeed South African telenovelas/soap operas still perpetuate the stereotypes of women as evil and manipulative or as good girl types. Essentially, this research illustrates that South African filmmakers do indeed, reinforce the generic stereotypes usually accorded to female characters in telenovelas and soap operas. To this effect, this research then offers an intensive character analysis on the matriarch Lindiwe Dikana, the main character from the award-winning telenovela *The River* (2018) and the matriarch, Mamngadi from the television show *The Herd* (2018). In closing this researcher asks what possible benefit, if any and to whom, do these stereotypes serve.

This chapter will introduce the two case studies and offer a historical perspective that traces the origin of the evil seductress trope on television. Later, the objectives, rationale, methods and key theoretical framework will be laid out.

Understanding the *Noir* Fatal Woman

The post 2nd World War era, saw some significant changes for 'women in pictures', as films, especially, those categorised as film *noir*, sought to offer a new perspective on female characters. No longer were women portrayed as the mater patriae or as the damsel in distress. Rather, filmmakers, because of shifts in the socio-economic space, begin to show women as stronger and more independent, yet sinister.

The evil seductress is described by Doan (1993) as a "figure of a certain discursive unease… For her most striking characteristic, perhaps, is the fact that she never really is what she seems to be" (1993:1). She is what most film scholars refer to as the fatal woman. Intrinsically, fatal women are framed as dark and fatal, with the prerogative to lure male counterparts into lethal dispositions. We see such representations in the films *Double Indemnity* (1944) and *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), where Brigid O'Shaughnessy and Phyllis Dietrichson are seductive and noticeably evil characters who use "both cunning and sexual attractiveness to gain their designed independence" (Antonio 2015:3). Based on these two films and a series of other examples from the same period, it is clear that the idea of the fatal woman is designed to reaffirm a patriarchal ideal. It, therefore, becomes a concept produced by cultural ideation, one that is socio-historically based, and cemented by real-life socio-economic changes of the post 2nd World War era, which encouraged a more independent and self-sufficient woman. The fatal woman, therefore, becomes a "symbol of fears about absolute female power" (Grossman 2009:5).

The growing misogynist fears led to the seductive villain representations to infiltrate even spaces specifically designed for female audiences such as soap operas, which traditionally, functioned to create an idealistic world for housewives through depicting worlds were the patriarch is heroic and the matriarch is hardworking, nurturing and subservient. Strangely, as a female-centred genre, it seemed soap opera storylines were traditionally situated around men,

and little attention was given to women's struggles. Women then, in soap operas tended to be represented as 'good girls' (vulnerable and needing protection) who, to a large degree conformed to the mannequin image of tall, slim and conventionally beautiful (Neophytou 2012). If they are presented as financially empowered, inevitably, the storyline pushed them to become indebted to their male counterparts, or their lives seem incomplete without romantic affections. In essence, soap operas pushed the heteronormativity ideology, which alludes to the powerful myth, that women need men. Take for example, the character of Marlena Evans from the iconic soap opera *Days of Our Lives* (1965), who, despite her success as a doctor, mother and wife, still needed to be rescued countless times by her lover John Black. In later years, however, contemporary soap opera storylines started to slowly subvert the heteronormativity ideology and started to confine female characters to two types of roles, the evil seductress and the 'girl next door' type, also known as the femme attrappe.

In recognition of these two-character archetypes, this study offers an intricate investigation into whether South African women are still represented in these somewhat archaic binaries in contemporary South African television. Using the female leads from the *River* (2018) and The *Herd* (2018), this dissertation examines the extent to which women are a reflection of traditional female stereotypes in television or if they break from the traditional norms, to reflect a new kind of woman, one who is complex and more in tune with contemporary South Africa.

In seeking to address my research questions, there is a need to look briefly into the history of female representation on screen to establish what is happening and why it is so. As Chinua Achebe would put it, "to know who we are today, we must know where we went wrong, where the rain began to beat us, as a prerequisite to begin to dry ourselves" (Achebe 1958:3).

Although *film noir* brought the concept of the female vixen into the foreground in filmic contexts, the portrayal of women as "dangerous, but irresistibly attractive and sexual" (Murlanch, 1996:106) has been around for centuries in literature and in art. Take for example biblical references to Delilah, Jezebel and Eve, or Michelangelo Caravaggio's illustration of *Medusa* (1598), the Greek monster, who, according to mythology, turned men who looked at her into stone. Even Queen Elizabeth the 1st was not spared from being seen as a fatal woman. After her coronation in 1558, and her further refusal to get married, a myriad of literary works showing women as evil and dangerous came into being. Antonio (2015) refers to as these

representations as the ‘Renaissance fatal woman’ who appeared in literary works including Shakespeare’s play Macbeth, whose central character Lady Macbeth is a fatal woman. It is clear, from this, that men used their works as a tool to try and usurp the growth of “women who were beginning to declare their sexual and political freedom” (Antonio 2015:4).

The absence of men during the 2nd World War also further developed the sexual, political, and economic freedom for women. With a large populace of men at war, western governments, were forced to encourage women to enter the workspaces to ensure the growth of industrialisation. To encourage women to fill the job fields once cultivated by men, the American government used the ‘Rosie the Riveter’ propaganda tool, as a means to draw women into the munitions factories, which had increased productions to support the war effort.



J. Howard Miller, Original Rosie, (1942)

What resulted from this was that the traditionally male-dominated societies were now awash with women with a newfound sense of independence. However, returning veterans, according to Snyder (2001), were reluctant to accept a new social status quo which allowed for assertive and self-assured women who were able to run their lives outside of the male. The symbolic threat posed by independent women to the patriarchal order, thus results in the proliferation of misogynist fantasies, aimed at creating disparaging images of women as "evil, duplicitous vixen, sexually powerful and poisonous to the male" (Snyder 2001:159). Going one step further, to ensure women retain their prescribed roles, we start to see the juxtaposition of the fatal woman and the good girl, who seems to represent what is more acceptable to society, that is, an intrinsically male supportive female constantly in need of male rescue, who is sheltered, kind-hearted and beautiful. During this period, the images are not only spread through literature and art but also through new media modes offered by television including *film noir* and other genres such as telenovelas and soap operas. So, in films like *Double Indemnity* (1944) Phyllis the prototype fatal woman, is contrasted to Lola, the innocent, sweet, young virgin idealistic woman, the femme attrappe. In most cases, these women appear side by side, so as demonstrate the acceptable and the unacceptable.

Antonio (2015**)** offers an in depth analysis of the two-character archetype in film, primarily arguing that men, in demonising what they fear, i.e. the fatal woman, they, in turn, create a quintessential opposite, i.e. the femme attrappe, as a model of what they deem a woman must represent. He maps out three narrative tropes that filmmakers tend to follow in their depiction of their fatal women.

1. The masquerade, where the fatal woman 'fools the male protagonist into believing that she embodies everything he desires' (Antonio 2015:4).
2. The fatal woman vs the girl next door, where good takes on evil in an attempt to save the blinded male protagonist, and
3. Finally, the fall of the fatal woman, where the fatal woman's actions lead to her self-destruction (Antonio 2015: 4).

The African woman on screen

Traditionally, the African woman is portrayed as an entity oppressed by her sexuality and her existence in the third world. According to Sikoki (2014), The African woman is one who is labelled as "having multiple children, some dead or dying of malaria and/or typhoid fever, poor nutrition, etc. She has no control of her future, and 'third world' oppression to add to her women's homogenous oppression. Living amid abject poverty, underdevelopment and squalor, this is the woman that NGOs are trying to save. She is still the subject of 'white men saving brown women from brown men', although now it seems everyone is trying to save her" (Sikoki 2014:10). Despite her representation as a person under dire circumstances, women are fetishized, as painters, show her with "a baby nestled comfortably on her back as she carries a bucket or basket on her head, the piece of cloth draped on her seemingly bare body blown seductively by the wind. Sculptors may represent her with two equally full-figured women, bent over performing a ritual dance" (Sikoki 2014:11). From the assumptions made by Sikoki, one can conclude that the 'body' of black African women have been long sexualised by the western gaze. This is despite the notion that black bodies, especially during the colonial era were

> compared to apes with the same animalistic childishness, savageness, bestiality, sexuality, and lack of intellectual capacity. Female bodies were regarded with similar types of measurement and since the times of Aristotle the female body had only been studied as it deviated from the male. Females across the animal kingdom were viewed as primarily sexual beings (Story 2010:27).

In a sense, African women, during the exploration period, were a spectre of fear and fascination to the western eye. Take for example Sarah Baartman who became the representation of the quintessential black female erotic body. On the other side, black bodies are viewed or portrayed as savage and barbarous. In Conrad's fictitious work, *The Heart of Darkness* (1899) black bodies of both men and women are perceived as being 'black shapes. Here the black body is negatively described as an animal and naked human body.

> Black shapes crouched, lay sat between the trees leaning against the trunks, clinging to the earth, have coming out, have effected with the dim light, in all the attitude of pain, abandonment, and despair (Conrad 1899:79).

Later in the book, we are introduced to two female characters, one being the protagonist's (Marlow) 'intended' and the other being his native mistress. It is clear from the descriptions that the 'intended' is saintly whereas the mistress is savage, careless, and masculine (Bernard 2016: 3-6).

In a more postmodern setting, the African woman is still portrayed under similar dichotomies of being either hyper-victimized, with little control over what happens in her life, and solemnly dependent on a dominant male, or as hyper-sexualised fatal woman, "depicted as the 'city-girl', a knowledgeable 'gold-digger' who uses her body and 'feminine charm' to convince the man she chooses to spend excessive amounts of money on her" (Sikoki 2014:11). This is the major thread running through many Nollywood film productions.

Such depictions of black people stem from a colonialist effort that sought to use film as an instructional medium, as it was believed that Africans were of inferior intellect, and therefore would not be able to differentiate fact from fiction.

The Central Film Unit, an organisation set up to produce films for Nyasaland, Southern and Northern Rhodesia, and eight other countries in East and West Africa basically sought to promote films that depicted Africans disparagingly. Africans were usually grouped into types of character archetypes in these CFU films. They were either good and submissive or they were barbarians, depending on the message the CFU was trying to push. During the first world war, for example, the film *Pilot-Officer Peter Thomas, RAF* (1943) about a Nigerian who was the first African to qualify for a commission in the Royal Air force during the colonial era was produced to depict how Africans supported the war effort, while *We Want Rubber (*1944) was designed to exhort Africans to produce more rubber during the critical shortage of this commodity in 1944.

Such films are an illustration of how colonial powers actively developed films that were in "many ways paternalistic and racist" (Diawara 1992:4). These films, essentially sought to deny the colonised peoples elementary human qualities of reason, deeming them too primitive to follow the complex techniques employed in cinema. (Diawara 1992:4).

To further reinforce the idea that Africans were intellectually inferior and hence unable to govern themselves, the colonial film industry, later promoted films like Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Tarzan the Ape Man* (1932) and Robert Stevenson's *King Solomon's Mines* (1937). Africans in these films are again either barbarians and savages or they are good Africans who collaborate with colonial masters. Another important facet regarding the films produced during this period is that African women were depicted as sexual objects. In the film *Sanders of the River* (1935) the audience is presented with young slave girls who are sexually permissive as they giggle about their sexual encounters with one of the main characters Bosambo.

The representations of Africans, as described above, would later be reversed in literary and film works like '*Things Fall Apart'* (1958) and Sembeme's post-colonial films *La Noir de* (1966) and *Xala* (1975) which fundamentally sought to undo the fabricated mythical stereotypical images formulated mostly by the western eye, which orient, not only the African woman but, the black person as an outside or as an inferior (Aboutaha 2015:5-6).

South African Television and women representation

The first walk on the moon, televised worldwide except South Africa and a few other countries, was the catalyst that resulted in public pressure, which forced the Nationalist Party to reconsider the introduction of television in South Africa; this after two other attempts in 1953 and 1964 had been shelved, with the National Party claiming that 'the time was not ripe'. Finally, after careful consideration of what television would be in South Africa, the National Party allowed for television to debut in January 1976. Underpinning the story of television is the notion of separateness (the main facet of apartheid). As such the absence of television in itself was an element of separateness from the rest of the world. Nevertheless, the introduction of television was an attempt by the apartheid government to connect the country with the rest of the world. Separateness, however, still dominated the domestic media space, as the Nationalist party sought to use television to further sow division within the country. So, the South African

television space was defined by a separate audience, with different stations for blacks and whites (Bevan 2008:63).

Shifts in political power brought some changes within the television space, but only on a superficial level. To entrench the new government's ethos of 'togetherness', the South African television state broadcaster promoted several programs centred around the rainbow nation ideal, such as *Suburban Bliss* (1996). However, this was short-lived, as it seems television, reverted to its apartheid forms of separateness. Take for example, the commercial platform DSTV, which has created different channels and programming for different 'cultural spaces'. kykNET is a channel with programs designed for the Afrikaner speaking sect in society, whereas Mzansi Magic is for traditionally Nguni speaking people (Smit 2016:5).

In observing the programming on both channels, the researcher noticed that white women on kykNET are characterised differently to those in programming from Mzansi Magic. White female characters are prototypical 'good women' whereas the predominantly black programming somewhat allows for the appropriation of the two-character archetypes of the good-girl and the fatal woman. This is reminiscent of pre-1994 television shows such as *Kwakhalanyonini* (1989), where all of the main female characters, although independent and strong, are all portrayed as fatal women. This is similar to another 1992 television series, *Hlala Kwabafileyo,* where Manxumalo plots the murder of her husband Zakhe, to inherit his wealth. His second wife, Jessie, although is initially represented as the femme attrappe, falls short by having an illicit affair. On the flip side of it, the predominantly white-dominated cast dramas such as *Orkney Snork Nie* (1989), white female characters were hardly represented as the fatal women but were rather the quintessential housewives and the black females were reduced to menial roles. To some extent, such representation could be viewed as an extension of real-life experiences, where white women, because of the colour of their skin, were generally treated better than their black counterparts and also, economically better off.

What is interesting with South African fatal women of the pre-democratic society is that they seem to take a lead from a male counterpart. In the series *Hlala Kwabafileyo*, Manxumalo and her son Muzikayise, plot the murder of her husband Zakhe. Muzikayise's character works to limit Manxumalo's influence on critical family matters involving ownership of property. This

representation of women is not surprising, as these two shows were created in apartheid South Africa, which is not only a racist society but also an extremely patriarchal space.

Some positive representation of women is apparent though. Women take on lead roles, as complex but inherently good characters in shows like the *Behind the Badge* (2002) and *Soul City* (1994) and in more recent times *Die Byl* (2020) and *Trackers* (2019). Shows with female leads such as those described above are few and far between. What is more prevalent is what we see in soap operas such as *Generations* (1994-2014), where the fatal woman and good girl concepts take centre stage. Take the character of Ntsiki Lukhele (1994-2004) for example, who is openly seductive, manipulative and more career-oriented which is in stark contrast to the good girl trope, Karabo Moroka, (1994-2014) whose character follows the general stereotypes of the good woman, dedicated to family. Further representations of such female tropes are apparent in shows such as *Isidingo* (1998-2020) and *Egoli* (1992-2010), which, like *Generations,* were meant to follow the transformative agenda of South African society at the post-democratic space, as articulated by the *Egoli'*s show's creator Franz Marx, "I do hope that this series will be able to contribute to transformation in the country. I am merely trying to mirror our society as it is today. Actually, I just have a story to tell and my zeitgeist toreflect" (Marx 1992). The transformative agenda which Marx speaks of here, is that of racial integration and the rise of independent women in the South African societal fabric.

One can link the above contemporary female representation to Kord and Krimmer's (2005) statement, which highlights the notion that women,

> when at their best, movies give birth to new visions of female strength and freedom. At their worst, movies ridicule, denigrate, deny what real women have long achieved, and replaced it with spectres from the past (Kord & Krimmer 2005:59).

This, to me, is testament to the fact that the portrayal of women as either submissive, dependent and fragile or as uncontrollable, seductive and inherently evil represents the mind-set, thinking, apprehensions, or prejudices of the general public. These are the ideals that I wish to probe.

The researcher initially started with the hope to discover the underlying misogynist fantasies which underpin the subjugation of female characters on screen in post-colonial South Africa.

However, the literature reviewed led the researcher to many post-colonial texts, including Bhabha's post-colonial theory (1994) which clearly outlines the disdain held by white males towards black female bodies. Since the production side of television and film in South Africa is still predominately underthe control of white males, it is not surprising that such sentiments find their way onto our screens. In chapters three and four, I explore how psychoanalysis, within the confines of feminist film theory, plays a significant role in the unravelling psyche of filmmakers and how their thoughts and fantasies transcend onto cinematic art forms.

Statement of Intention

As intimated earlier, I intend to understand the roles assumed by women specifically in two television drama series on the DSTV platform, that is, *The River* (2018-2019) and *The Herd* (:2018-2019) The gist of the study will be to offer character analyses of Lindiwe Dlamini, the lead female from the telenovela *The River* and MaMngadi the lead from *The Herd* in a bid to decipher if these characters exemplify the traditional female stereotypical binary of the evil seductress.

Lastly, it may be of interest to establish if South African women may be at risk of developing certain ideological selfhoods as a result of the representations presented in the two case studies. I ask, do the characters offer a more progressive shift from the traditional norms or do they simply reinforce the fatal woman/good girl tropes, which distort how women see themselves and the way they are viewed by the other?

The ultimate goal here is to suggest new ways of representation for women on screen, hence contributing to the under-explored area of female film-makers and their role within the South African film sector. In the last chapter, I suggest that the incorporation of more women in the production of films and television shows may be the remedy to the stereotypical representation of women on screen.

The Case studies: Key information

The River (2018-2019)

The River is a telenovela that revolves around a rich and ambitious but conniving and evil matriarch Lindiwe Dikana. Created by Gwydion Beynon and Phathutshdzo Makwarela, the drama focuses on her family business (Khanyisa Diamonds) and the community of Refilwe. The discovery of a diamond '*The Heart of Africa'* sets Lindiwe and the community on a collision course, which results in Lindiwe eventually murdering all those who get in her way of achieving success. The casualties of Lindiwe's empire include those closest to her, her employees and even her children.

Lindiwe's empire crumbles and she loses everything. Her family kicks her out of the family home out of the family business Khanyisa Diamonds. She moves to Refilwe where she must face extreme poverty and some vengeful enemies. Later regaining her financial status, Lindiwe loses something even more precious than money, her daughter Mbali.

To date, *The River* is a success story, bagging ten Golden Horns at the 2019 South African Film and Television Awards including one for Best Telenovela

Target Audience

Using the household affluence measure called the living standard measure, popularly known as LSM Groups, I would place the target audience for *The River* the 7-10. I say this because *The River* airs on 1Magic, a channel on the pay channel's DSTV premium package.

According to SAARF TAMS (2019), on the 5th of December 2019 *The River* had 622 126 viewers, which is a fair number of people.

The Herd (2018-2019)

This television drama, also co-written by Gwydion Beynon, is set on a commercial cattle farm in KZN, focuses on the Mthethwa family matriarch, MaMngadi who uses witchcraft to control those around her. She is seen to have encouraged her husband Nyambose to kill his first wife and feed her blood to their special cow named Samkeliso, to multiply the herd. Her plan works, but to retain the wealth and status the family now holds, human sacrifices must be done. She

even sacrifices her son, and tries to force her husband to kill her stepdaughter. MaMngadi has two female sidekicks with whom she practices her evil deeds with.

(Season Two: April 2019)

In season two, MaMngadi, after being thrown off the farm by her children, tries to redeem herself by quitting witchcraft. However, a new sinister patriarch joins the Mthethwa family and tries to destroy everything MaMngadi and her family has built. This forces her to re-join the dark world to save her family.

Target Audience

Again, based on the LSM groupings, I locate the audience for *The Herd* to be between the 4-6 LSM group as the program aired on the DSTV compact package. Again, this television drama is targeted at women, but more specifically black women. This assertion is based on the language used on the show and the subject matter (TVSA 2020).

Research Problem

Many African feminists have critiqued African filmmakers for casting women in roles that either disparage them or confine them to domestic spheres where they are portrayed mostly as victims. This Orlando (2006) argues, shows that African women's reality has been inscribed by men or by the West (2006:215). In Africa, the film industry is still dominated by men, specifically, white men. In colonial Africa, black women's imagery was mostly controlled by white producers, who attributed the de-sexualised 'Mammy' role to most of its black female actors. With changes in socio-politics, this kind of application changed, as the film industry has started to accommodate black directors and producers coming into the film industry (Martin 2003:190).

Questions around the changes of images of black women have however been raised, as it seems that black filmmakers have perpetuated the idea of women as amoral Jezebels. This type of imagery of black women specifically, stems from the habitual repetitive depiction of black women as sexual beings, with exaggerated sexual organs, as a means to highlight black women's sinfulness (Monatau 2003:17). Such images of women in South Africa are common,

as the film industry here, is one largely compromised by apartheid and therefore marginalised not only black people but black women specifically.

In a study conducted by the National Film and Video Foundation in 2018, it is affirmed that the South African film industry remains a 'boys club' with limited representation from women, especially women of colour. The study purports that at least 73% of women appear onscreen, whereas a mere 27% work behind the scenes. What this illustrates is that 'behind the scenes, it is still very much a man's world, with white men, in particular, in key roles as heads of departments. 'It is seen as an environment that requires more brawn than brain and women are regarded as not strong enough to do the job' (NFVF 2018:29). This is where the problem lies, as there exists barriers to how black female film-makers refute the claims of the fatal woman and the girl next door trope, and begin to offer nuanced female representations in such a space?

It is, therefore, no surprise that television dramas such as *The River* (2018-2019) offer negative representations of women in modern-day South Africa. The show, conceptualised, written and directed by two men, revolves around Lindiwe Dlamini Dikana who is a conniving, ruthless businesswoman willing to do anything for power and money. Her male love interest Zweli Dikana, a naïve straight shooter, is completely ignorant of his wife's true colours and therefore becomes the biggest victim to her misdoings. Lindiwe's character as a domineering wife and mother works to emasculate the men around her. Lindiwe continuously creates a world that is ominous and unstable for her male counterparts. She, therefore, could be considered a classical example of a fatal woman, and therefore is the perfect subject for this study, as she, in my opinion, is a personification of masculine fear of female usurpation. The complete opposite of Lindiwe Dlamini, is Malefu, a Christian woman, content in her life, and dedicated to her family. She, therefore, becomes the good woman who defines herself through her husband and her children.

Since *The River* (2018-2019) is a conceptualisation of two male writers, it may be of significance to test whether male anxieties about independent women like Lindiwe Dlamini, result in the stereotypical representation of the female protagonist. Interestingly, the second case study, *The Herd* (2018-2019), is also written by men, is centred around an evil matriarch who uses witchcraft to ensure power, money and control over male characters. She, again, is

juxtaposed against the morally upright character, who prioritises family and love over power and money.

The precarious position of womanhood

It is important for this study to also problematize the concept of woman itself. Besides the biological categorisation, the term woman, according to Hekman (1994) is one that is created by the social, cultural and psychological worlds in which they exist. This is important as Butler (1990) cites that gender is a cultural phenomenon. One, she argues, is not born a woman or a man, they are essentially 'sexed' by society. Thus, "females become women through a process whereby they acquire feminine traits and learn feminine behaviour" (Zalta et al 2018:15). With that said, it seems, however, as Hekman (1994) notes, that all cultures and languages seem to form a foundation that explicitly marginalises women.

McDonald (1995) agrees with this sentiment, claiming that universal values are created by men, who have manipulated language to reflect their social power and the lack thereof for women. As a result, women have been left out of defining how to talk and how to be talked about. It is therefore not surprising to find that the English language has a wealth of derogatory terms used to describe women and their bodies, for example bitch, slut, and whore. The inverse is true for men, who use English to accord themselves words that relate to strength and power, for example, an unmarried woman whose time to marry is perceived to have passed is often referred to as a spinster whereas her male equal is referred to as a bachelor, which denotes youthfulness. This is so as a woman in her twenties cannot be a spinster, but is rather a bachelorette, yet men are bachelors regardless of age. The term bachelor also refers to a sense of sexual freedom (Lakof 1973:23). So, women's identities are often warped within discourses of the binary opposites.

Women are almost always identified within their physical or social relationship to the other, i.e. somebody's mother, wife, sister and daughter. Women hence, only exist only in relation to men. An example of this is during a traditional wedding ceremony, the service concludes with, I now pronounce you man and wife. What is problematic here is that the 'man' comes to the

ceremony and leaves ceremony with the same title, that of man. However, women are transformed, they become the 'wife'. She is now defined according to her husband. He further points out that the titles or Miss/Mrs, additionally point to the fact that language places the woman as the man's possession. The title itself serves to offer some information regarding the woman, but what of the man Lakof asks? Why does his title never change after marriage? Other terms like widow and mistress, Lakof claims, occur with a possessive pronoun proceeding them. Spender (1980) therefore argues that it is impossible for women to positively define themselves, when using a language that is inherently and pervasively masculine. It is this very notion that feminism seeks to dismantle.

When feminism was conceptualised, it aimed to create a new discourse around 'women'. This was developed to disenfranchise the hegemonic masculine cultures. This was to be achieved through women working together to address subordination and subjugation of all women across all ages and races by males. Feminism, henceforth, aimed to bind women together to constitute a new culture. Since its inception into ideological discourses, feminism has managed to argue for different ideological approaches (Ranjan 2019:121). It however does have some faults. The most problematic, especially to this study, is that feminism seems to be an ideology predominantly representative of white middle-class women. I say this because feminism claims to speak the language of women. Feminism, therefore, assumes on a superficial level that; all women are the same. This is not necessarily true, as black women, for example, historically do not have the same priorities as white middle-class women. Black women, according to McDonald (1995) may be subject to subjugation by their white counterparts. An example of this is the 1965 Women's March in South Africa, which saw over 2000 women-of all races, take to the streets regarding the pass laws that were to be implemented on black women. The problem here is that the white women who partook in this march showed support for a specific issue, i.e. that of pass laws for black women, but implied little or no resistance towards the system of apartheid as a whole, which systematically subordinated black people. Feminism also assumes that all women have the same attitude towards patriarchy, which, McDonald (1995) again challenges. African men, McDonald (1995) says, have limited socio-political

power due to colonial systems. What this means is black women have different masculinist cultures to deal with.

Such representational problems regarding black women is what this dissertation seeks to debunk and lay bare. This is done with the view of understanding how women can meaningfully enter the film industry, so as to encourage more positive female representation.

Significance of Study

This study seeks to contribute to several fledgling academic debates related to the role of African women in cinema. Although many studies have been conducted about African women on TV, this study will be unique in that it seeks to understand the underlying male anxieties that result in the stereotypical representation of women in the two prescribed case studies. With the growing representation of black women on television, it is important for scholars to continually analyse and critique how women are depicted and how their stories are told, especially since the film industry is still dominated by men. Academic work constantly offering critique may hopefully re-direct these negative representations of black women, through encouraging filmmakers to represent women more positively. Moreover, this study also seeks to highlight the stark disparities apparent within the filmmaking sector, resulting in "hegemonic male-centred constructions of females" (Gadzekpo 2011:399). This study argues that, if more female film-makers enter the fray, the more positive images of women are likely to be brought to the fore. Therefore, this study seeks not only to serve as an intellectual inquiry but also to take on an activist role to influence industry policy and practice. It is however important to note that, in some instances, the presence of female film-makers does not necessarily result in positive images of women. An interesting example of this is *The Queen* produced by Connie Ferguson, which revolves around two evil black women who use seduction and murder to get what they want.

Since telenovelas and soap operas are sometimes viewed as "transmitters of values and moulders of behaviour" (Thabethe 2008:22), with audiences perceiving characters as 'real', it may be of importance to try and glean the possible self-hoods or ideological conceptions derived by women through the repeated consumption of negative imagery of themselves. This

is particularly important in the context of Africa where the perception persists that"academics reside in an ivory tower conducting research of little relevance to Africa's developmental needs" (Gadzekpo 2011:404).

Justification of Case Studies

As mentioned earlier, *The River* and *The Herd* both have iconic examples of the fatal woman and the good girl trope, juxtaposed to illustrate some measure between good and evil or acceptable and unacceptable. Both shows are written by male writers and henceforth will allow the author of this study to understand the extent to which misogynist anxieties about strong black women, contribute to the representation of women in such a disparaging manner. In essence, both telenovelas also reflect the deep entrenchment of ideological contrivance, which seeks to quell any social change that threatens patriarchal dominance.

I draw parallels between these two productions, as both seem to follow a three narrative trope similar to that seen in *noir* films, i.e. the masquerade, the fatal woman vs the femme attrappe and the demise of the fatal woman (Antonio 2015:3).

In attempting to understand how these telenovelas work to socialise black women in a certain way, I take into consideration the use of cinematic realism used by both productions, who utilise this trope to give the impression that they reflect the everyday lives of ordinary people (Mdenge 2014:48). This in turn affects how the film is received and interpreted.

Problematizing the Case Studies

Although *The Herd* is not categorised as a telenovela, I feel that the key characteristics of the program reflect the typical emotional and melodrama pitch associated with telenovelas. *The Herd*, like *The River*, tends to use what Ada (2014) refers to as cultural proximity. This practice "incorporates educative, cognitive and emotional elements and aspects related to the audience's immediate surroundings" (Ada 2014:2) which functions to mix fiction and fact into the narrative structure in a bid to make the program recognisable to audiences as the world we live in. With that said, it is of interest that the two case studies and other similar local programs, do not follow the concept of cultural proximity, especially when it comes to the characterisation of women. South Africa has 50% women in cabinet and a considerable number of women in

senior work positions, yet the telenovelas tend to portray women in domestic spheres and as damsels in distress. We see the domestic obligations for Itumeleng, Paulina, Dimpho and Sis' Flora who are mostly depicted cleaning or cooking. Even Lindiwe herself is sometimes shown doing household chores. Moreover, the show like many international telenovelas places the matriarch as a prominent character who is not only a "mother, wife, home expert and figurehead of a home, also she is the installer of values in the home either good or bad" (Onuh 2017:10). What is then of importance here is that the values instilled by this matriarch are not influenced by prevailing social behaviour. So, if telenovelas do indeed follow the model of cultural mirroring, why then do we not have representations of women that reflect the current success stories of women in South Africa? What we seem to have is the generic western notion of a matriarch who is either good and submissive or one who is inherently evil.

Framing the Study: Theory and Methodology

The gist of this inquiry is underpinned by four main theoretical frameworks and many postmodern texts that debunk women's representation on television. Although most texts do not speak directly to the representation of women on South African television, one can draw inferences from the works to be discussed in this section

Many academics have explored this topic, the most prolific of the cause being Stuart Hall. In most of his work around representation, Hall (1997) argues that culture and language are related systems of representation. According to Hall, representation is 'the production of meaning through language' (Hall 1997:25). He further states that

> To belong to a culture is to belong roughly the same conceptual and linguistic universe, to know how concepts and ideas translate into different languages, and how language can be interpreted to refer to or reference the world. To share these things is to see the world from within the same conceptual map and to make sense of it through the same language systems (Hall 1997:23).

What this points to is that certain meanings or representations can only be given through language, for example, signs and images that are invariably linked to a certain conceptual universe, i.e. a certain culture.

Stuart Hall's Theory of Representation

To fully understand the roles attributed to the fatal woman and the girl next door types on the selected telenovelas, it will be imperative that this study uses Stuart Hall's theory of representation as its backbone. Earlier, the researcher mentions how Hall views representation as a product of language and culture, as language (a series of codes and images we use to communicate) will only bear meaning to people who share a similar cultural perspective. So, in essence, representation is a process in which meaning is produced between people existing within the same cultural context (Hall 1997:23-24).

In his study of representation, Hall pays particular attention to Saussure's study of semiotics, which implies that different codes and conventions mean different things to different people. People existing within the same cultural context, therefore can interpret the same codes and conventions, for example 樹 is the Chinese symbol for TREE can only be understood by those who understand the Chinese language. Moreover, Saussure analyses the signs into two elements, the signifier and the signified. According to Saussure, there is no tangible relationship between the signifier and the signified, as the signs do not hold a fixed meaning. For example, with traffic lights, although the colour RED signifies STOP, there is no natural or inevitable like between these two elements (Hall 1997: 9-10). The main point is that meaning does not inhere in things, in the world. It is constructed, produced. It is the result of a signifying practice – a practice that produces meaning, that makes things mean (Hall 1997:10). Building from the understanding of representation and how it is derived, Hall constructs three approaches to representation, i.e.

i. the reflective approach, which purports that language mirrors meaning as it exists in the world, so a ROSE is a flower,
ii. the intentional approach, where the words mean what the author intends them to mean. Here the rose may be used as a signifier of something other than what it is, i.e. as a symbol of love

iii. lastly, the constructionist approach, claims that "social actors who use the conceptual systems of their culture and the linguistic and other representational systems to construct meaning, to make the world meaningful and to communicate about that world meaningfully to others" (Hall 1997:18)

Hall, using, mainly the last approach and some of Foucault's work on the power of language and discourse, builds an argument that suggests that dominant social actors in society use various codes and signs to illustrate certain objects and people in certain ways. This power encompasses various forms, including symbolic and economic forms, which, according to Hall, are used by the dominant groups to exert hegemonic control over minorities (Hall 1997: 19).

To symbolically exert their hegemonic control over minorities, the dominant group makes use of stereotyping to 'otherize' or exclude the minority group. Stereotyping is a tool used to split the dominant from the minority by deeming them unworthy or outside societal norms. For example, white men would deny black men the attributes of a grown man, by referring to them as 'boys', e.g. garden boys. In South African prisons, black prisoners were even denied long trousers and forced to wear shorts. All this was done to show blacks and childlike and unable to take up adult responsibilities. But in these stereotypical representations, Hall (1997) notes that on "the conscious level, the notion that blacks are childlike and are not to be given adult responsibility is a cover-up for the deeper and more troubling unconscious level that points to the perception that blacks are insatiable sexual supermen" (1997:20). This assertion is backed up by claims made by Fanon (1952), who in his most famous works, 'Black Skins, White Masks', argues that the othering of the black person, is based on the assumption by the white male that the "Negro is extremely sexually potent" and the "Negro woman has an abnormal sex life" (Fanon 1952:29).

Both assertions by Fanon (1952) and Hall (1997) point to the idea that what we see on South African television today, especially around the sexualised black female, is invariably linked to a Eurocentric ideology regarding Africans. Importantly, when linking Hall's (1997) representation theory to South African television, it is fair to believe that the eye that records and tells, does so in the context of its situation, location, and position. It is, therefore, this position

that determines how the cultural identity of the other will be represented. This representation may hence be defined in terms of one shared culture, reflecting common historical experience.

So, it can be argued that the representation of women on South African television is one derived from Eurocentric ideas. One can also see influence from the draconian laws passed by colonial governments, which have somehow found their way into the African socio-political framework and contemporary television screens. Take for example, the *Witchcraft Suppression Act* of 1899, which although passed in Zimbabwe, had some seemingly dire implications for the South African society. Under this law, it is implied that witchcraft, which in essence is the ability for a person to "harm fellow humans by ritually manipulating and employing materials drawn from nature" (Shoko 1980:65), is the domain of African women. Those mostly accused of witchcraft are middle-aged un-married women and elderly women, and this may be due to their defencelessness within societal structures. The attack on middle-aged women can also be attributed to their failure to fulfil their gendered expectations, while old women are targets due to their particular "physical features such as drooping breasts, eyes that are yellow or red, wrinkled skin, missing teeth, and a hunched stance" (Quarmyne 2011:479).

Traditionally, accusations of witchcraft emanated from tensions within community members and were attributed to both men and women. However, after the establishment of the colonial governments, it seems that witchcraft was used as an excuse for the "spiritual and ideological onslaught on African culture" (Sibanda 2018:20) by European actors. The colonial powers anchored their strategy on a socio-psychological education among blacks to hate themselves and hate each other as well as their culture (Sibanda 2018:20). It is under this strategy that the Suppression Act of 1899 came into effect, and was subsequently used to prosecute spirit mediums Ambuya Nehanda and Sekuru Kaguvi who were antagonistic of European encroachment into African societies. The strategy to alienate the African from his religious practice was also filtered across the borders into South Africa. It is hence not a surprise that South African black women (fitting the description) may be susceptible to accusations of witchcraft to this day. Take for example, the character of MaMngadi and her two assistants from *The Herd*. By season two, all three are single middle aged women with an insatiable thirst for evil and sorcery. MaMthembu, the grand witch and also mother to MaMngadi, is also a classical representation of the black witch, as she is elderly, unmarried and lonely.

Such representations of women are not only limited to *The Herd* but also on other South African television shows such as *Ubambo Lwami* (1989), *KwakhalaNyonini* (1989) and *Igazi* (2018), which again, used the prescribed tropes of middle-aged and elderly women as powerful and evil witches. Even in American shows such as *Charmed* (2018), which, although, centres around three 'good' witches, still represents the black witch as being inherently evil and dark. This is despite the fact that the other two good Caucasian witches are her half-sisters. The continued portrayal of black women in this manner, especially in the postcolonial age, is discouraging. One would have thought that assimilation of minorities into the mainstream socio-political space would be more pronounced at this stage. Given this phenomenon, the researcher needed to consider Homi Bhabha's (1994) theories around representation and the postcolonial era.

Laura Mulvey and The Politics of the Male Gaze

It is difficult to discuss gender representations without referring to Laura Mulvey, who argues that, through the use of scopophilia, dominant and sexist ideologies through an active male gaze are established in most films. 'Women are constantly "looked at and displayed" for the male spectator's pleasure' (Mulvey 1975:57). So, in essence, women in film, are viewed through the lens of a patriarchal system that seeks to represent women as passive erotic symbols. Mulvey's ideas around women tie in well with the scope of this study, as she argues that males dictate the realities presented on television. Women become an object to satisfy the fantasies of the spectator, created by the very same spectator. What is even more unfortunate, as Mulvey further points out is that the male realities or representations regarding women are inherited and accepted by female audiences.

Mulvey posits that the male exerts power by objectifying the woman, who in turn is disempowered by the look. Contrary to this belief, Doan (1993) argues that the fatal woman uses her position in patriarchal culture as an object of visual pleasure to her advantage, as she embraces her objectification by a male gaze, to achieve independence from or even power over the men around her. She may even return the gaze, and become the 'gazer' (Doan 1993:152).

Films like Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954) are a good illustration of how men themselves can become objects of the gaze.

Monatau (2003) delves deeper into the representation of women, by specifically looking at the depiction of marginally represented women, such as black women. Fundamentally, Monatau (2003) argues that black women's roles in Hollywood are highly sexualised so as to illustrate the sinfulness of the black body. This is in stark contrast to roles given to their white counterparts. The crux of her ideas around black female representation is "that filmic images helped promote a climate of misrecognition of black women by explicitly, vividly and repeatedly carrying forward the 'other' ideology of black women's sexuality, helps explain the stereotype's staying power today" (Monatau 2003:23). Moreover, Monatau reflects on the ideal of Blaxploitation, which is an extension of black stereotypes, seen mostly in films from the 1970's such as *Sweet Back's Bad Ass Song* (1971).

Bhabha's Post-Colonial Theory

In his postcolonial theory, Bhabha (1994) attempts to redefine, reformulate and reconstruct the colonized self. For Bhabha, the colonized does not need to appease nor mimic the ideas/ideals of the colonizer. He refutes the notion that the colonizer and the colonized must be metaphorically identical as per the desire of the colonizer. However, he also does not encourage reverting to a pre-colonial era of cultural purity, but rather, he argues in his work, The *Location of Culture* (1994) that through the concept of cultural hybridity the colonized must form a new sense of cultural identity. For Bhabha, the postcolonial space does not allow for a pure and uncontaminated culture. All cultures are therefore hybrid. Cultures, as Bhabha puts it, are fluid and ever-changing. This notion henceforth breaks down the binary of a superior Western culture and an inferior African culture (Bhabha 1994:43).

Bhabha's concept of mimicry also suggests that the superiority of the Western culture can be subverted. In an attempt to create a new class of the colonized, the colonizer attempts to encourage a group of the colonized to mimic his culture, so that they can become 'almost white'. The problem with this assertion is that the colonizer assumes that the colonized cannot catch up to the colonizer. However, today, we have black women like Michelle Obama, who

according to Guerrero (2013) exemplify American womanhood, as she dresses appropriately and conservatively, speaks well and is viewed as the quintessential mother (Guerrrero 2013:70). Later, this scholar dissects the fatal woman characters presented in the case studies in relation to the quintessential woman. This is done in an attempt to understand how the fatal woman's subversion of what is 'acceptable' may result in the construction of certain black self- hoods in South Africa.

It is clear from the literature that the key questions proposed by this study may positively add to the discussions around the depiction of black women on screens. The academic works surveyed assisted me in putting together a nuanced research project regarding the representation of women on South African screens.

Methodological approach

This research pursues two qualitative case studies in dealing with the objectives of this study. I use the qualitative approach "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" (Flick 2009:13)

I explore the different storylines, production elements, and key characters, to establish if indeed the fatal woman is a manifestation of male anxieties, and how the representation of women in such a way, influences the viewer's ideological conceptions of the world.

Case Study Approach

As Berger (1998) suggests, case studies are a systematic way of examining empirical data collected on institutions, to produce a better understanding of aspects impacting on particular cases within real-life contexts. Case studies significantly provide for a structured way through which organisations can be looked at, data can be collected and results reported. Importantly, case studies usually allow for the identification of future research focal points, as they allow for what could be looked at more extensively in similar research environments (Jagun 2009).

So, as mentioned prior, an intricate case study is done on the three selected television fictional series' *The River* and *The Herd*, in an attempt to answer the proposed research questions. The choice to employ multiple case studies was based on the aspiration to draw "literal replications

and theoretical replications" (Yin 2003) between the two shows. An in-depth review of existing literature is conducted to relate the two case studies with other conceptualizations of Telenovelas, to unveil whether narrative tropes employed by *The River* and *The Herd* are justifiably representative of similar shows across the country. Irrespective of this effort, it is worth mentioning that, although the case study method is the best procedure that a study of this magnitude can undertake, it is important to note that the use of this type of methodology could falter with generalization, as case studies usually do not offer introspection into larger population pools and organisations. This could then put the results of the study at risk of being considered as that which are subjective and hence holding limited universal truth.

The adaptation of Hill's (2003) analysis design, essentially allows this researcher to bring out the relevant data sourced from the data gathering methods, thus allowing this research to sufficiently respond to the research questions.

Table 1.

TASK	QUESTIONS GUIDING ANALYSIS PROCEDURE
1. Prepare data for analysis	What data has been collected for each research question or objective?
2. Go back to research questions	What did the study aim to do? What are the issues involved?
3. Go back to the literature review	Who said what about your research focus? Whose work seems most important? Does your data seem to match/contradict the work of others?

Adapted from Hill (2003)

Character Analysis

To assess the characters of MaMngadi and Lindiwe Dikana, character analysis is undertaken to examine if these two fit into the fatal woman trope. Using the theoretical frameworks, this research deciphers the extent to which Lindiwe and Mamngadi exemplify the typical fatal female stereotype.

Since 29 January 2018, *The River* has aired five hundred and twenty episodes as of 24th January 2020. The author watched 50 of these episodes noted when the Lindiwe Dikana character exemplified the fatal woman stereotype. The author watched all 26 episodes of *The Herd*, and also made notes when the MaMngadi character exemplified the evil woman trope.

Data was further analysed in line with the literature and theoretical frameworks. In addition to this, Stuart Hall's (1997) encoding and decoding tools were used to interpret the representations of women on the case studies under investigation.

Research Questions.

To understand the key objectives of this study, the following questions are to be used to answer the vital rudiments of this study:

1. To what extent do the female characters in *The River* and *The Herd* perpetuate the evil seductress/ girl next door binaries? Do they challenge the traditional ideological conceptions about women within the South African societal fabric or do they simply reinforce the traditional female character tropes? In what ways do the two matriarchs compare to traditional western fatal women and good girl tropes?
2. What possible self-hoods can be derived from the depiction of the female characters in *The River* and *The Herd?* How do the characters portrayed by the two women represent or stereotype the average South African female?
3. To find out the benefit, if any, of this kind of representation.

Ethical Considerations

This research is focused on character analysis and therefore will not require any interviews. However, adhering with Wits University requirements, an ethics approval has been attained in this regard

Structure of Research

This dissertation is divided into four chapters. This chapter has delineated the key objectives and rationale of this research and has offered an extensive overview of the evil woman trope as per the case studies under investigation.

The next chapter reviews the literature relevant to the contextualisation of this study. As fully fleshed out later, the literature includes a selection of local and western scholars who specialise in female representation on screen. The chapter also includes a presentation of theories that underpin the study, that being, the Feminist Film Theory, Stuart Hall's Representation theory and the Post-Colonial theory.

Chapter three provides details on the methods used in data collection, showing the key research design, sampling and the form of analysis adopted.

Chapter four deals with the primary data collected through the textual analysis conducted. The data is analysed in context to the research questions, theoretical framework and literature review.

Chapter five concludes this research by offering a synthesis of the main findings in response to the key questions. It also offers some suggestions as to how to remedy the problems highlighted by this research.

CHAPTER 2

A Historical Textual Analysis: From Mythical Manifestations to Medieval Monsters

Having highlighted the motivation behind the topic under investigation, a review of relevant literature will now be undertaken, to delineate key study concerns around the research problem, and to locate and debunk key findings made by key scholars with regards to the representation of women on screen. In essence, this chapter's pre-occupation will be to analyse texts produced by key media academics who have researched the representation of women on the television screen.

It must be noted that, in dissecting the literature around this topic, I encountered some problems. The biggest challenge is that a large body of the gender studies literature relating to television is almost exclusively about western societies and white women. The little work written about African societies and African women is outdated, emerging mostly from the 1970s and 1980s. Texts specifically dealing with the stereotypical representation of South African black females is virtually non-existent. Nevertheless, one can draw inferences from the available literature when answering the questions posed by this inquiry. What this means is that my dissertation henceforth becomes one of the few extended projects attempting to fill the gap in the literature.

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, it aims to demonstrate that more research is needed on the ways that women are presented not only in South African telenovelas but on television in general. Secondly, this dissertation aims to highlight the foundational stereotypes that seem to underpin the representation of women on television. To fully illustrate this, I underpin three main theoretical frameworks, namely The *Feminist Film Theory*, as conceptualised by Mulvey (1975), Stuart Hall's (1997) *Theory of Representation,* and Homi Bhabha's (1994) *Post-Colonial Theory.*

As a point of departure, this chapter will seek to understand the stereotype of the evil seductress vs the girl next door. This will be done in relation to the African experience, as

the main agenda here will be to illustrate how these western terms/phenomena can be applied to the African context.

The evil seductress. Who is she?

> Wherein our everyday lives as women we are bombarded by the evidence of our increasing vulnerability and limited social power, the fatal femme's embodied social, sexual and physical powers offer an imagined point of contact, if not simply identification –an imagined momentum or venting of rage and revenge fantasies the importance of which cannot be underestimated. (Henson 2007).

Doane (2013) speaks of the evil seductress as a fatal woman, who essentially is a "figure of certain discursive unease, a potential epistemological trauma" (2013:1). Historically the fatal woman has roots in literary and pictorial work; however, she seems to have special relevance in early 20th century cinematic representations.

While the evil seductress trope was not popular up until the 20th century, the fatal woman has been represented in a myriad of cultural epochs, such as biblical times, medieval Europe and classical antiquities. In all of these spaces, she has been shown as a sexually uninhibited, but also as an independent woman who leads men to their demise (Bronfen 2004:106).

If we go back to classical antiquities and pay special attention to Homeric texts, it is evident that even during this period, fatal women were commonplace. Take Pandora for example, the first human woman, created by the mythical God, Hephaestus, is said to have unleashed the 'ills of the world', i.e. strife and sickness amongst other things. First conceptualised by Hesiod around 700 BC, Pandora, is a clear representation of the insatiably greedy woman, who destroys the world's innocence because of her curiosity. It is hence not surprising that Pandora is often compared to Eve from the bible, who, like Pandora, is responsible for the end of utopia (i.e. paradise) and the unleashing of pain and suffering. What is more interesting about Eve is that her sin is not the mere eating of the 'fruit' but rather her involving Adam in this act. Does this mean that Eve, if she had not

involved Adam, would have simply been labelled a weak woman? Does she only become a fatal woman because she is presented as having coaxed Adam into the ultimate sin? (Smith 2015:3). Nevertheless, Eve can only regain her respect in the societal infrastructure through her biological capabilities of childbearing, as illustrated in 1st Timothy 2:11-15, which states

> Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty

What is of interest in this verse is not only the fact that child-bearing will result in the prosperity of the woman but also to the fact that she must be governed by men.

This is not the only instance in the bible where women are explicitly regarded as inferior to their male counterparts, take for example Genesis 3: 16, where God says to Eve "I will make your pains in childbearing very severe, with painful labour you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you. "It is clearly established here that, females who do not fulfil the requirements of the optimal woman, i.e. bear children and be subservient to her husband, ultimately become detrimental to their male counterparts. Proverbs 31:10-31 describes a wife of noble character as a woman who brings her husband "good, not harm, all the days of her life" and has her children who "arise and call her blessed". The last statement of this verse is even more interesting as it warns against charm and beauty which is here described a deceptive and fleeting. Such assertions are indicative of patriarchal fears in societal hegemony present at the time. It could, therefore, be argued that the bible is used to reinstitute the myths proposed by earlier works of Greek mythology (Anderson 1995:34).

Medieval Europe saw the rise of the Catholic Church and because of the prescribed biblical notions about women, opportunities for their independence became scarce. Those who had been previously regarded as 'local wise women' with healing powers/knowledge,

some even referred to as physicians in the 13th century, became labelled as witches. The only source of healing that was deemed acceptable, was that associated with midwifery (Da'rcy 1998:8). In 1487, the notion of women as witches intensified with the publishing of *Malleus Maleficarum* (1487) by Heinrich Kramer, a famous witch-hunting manual which essentially linked women to witchcraft. The manual targeted women who tended to exist outside of the societal norms of the times, i.e. the unmarried women who dared to assert themselves, barren women and women above the age of fifty. The reason for this? According to *Malleus Maleficarum* (1487), these women were simply more susceptible to evil forces, as they are more likely to give in to sexual overtures from demons because they are anxious for any kind of male attention and charm (Da'rcy 1998:9). Karen Armstrong, in the book '*The Gospel according to Women'* (1986), asserts that the events of the 16th and 17th centuries mark a period where women became sexually deprived beings with the diabolical aim of destroying men (1986:95).

It is during this period that the witch craze is born.

The renaissance years brought about a certain level of enlightenment, especially in the realms of science. This however did little to diminish the existence of the idea of the diabolical woman. During this period, she has become more evolved. She no longer is considered to necessarily use magical operations to cause harm, nor is she hanged and burnt at the stake. The evil woman during this period becomes the castrating bitch. Shakespeare draws a perfect picture of this woman in his portrayal of Cleopatra, who destroys Marc Anthony by causing his death and the loss of his virility. Cleopatra, like other characters in Shakespeare's other works, such as Lady Macbeth is a secular version of the medieval diabolical witch/bitch. They, like their predecessors, are described as "magical, enchanting, ravishing and bewitching". (Da'rcy 1998:13)

So, where do these assumptions about the fatal woman originate from? Doana (2013) argues that these premises are (similar in several diverse cultural discourses) serve to quell any social changes that may upset the patriarchal infrastructure. As Doana (2013) puts it, fatal women are a clear extent of fears and anxieties prompted by shifts in understanding sexual differences (2013:7).

The Fatal Seductress débuts in Western Cinema

As the symbolic threat posed by independent women to the patriarchal order grew, we start to see the proliferation of misogynist fantasies, aimed at creating disparaging images of women as "evil, duplicitous vixen, sexually powerful and poisonous to the male" (Snyder 2001:159) in filmic texts. The fatal woman becomes a central protagonist in film *noir*. She is essentially depicted as "rejecting traditional gender and familial roles, reflective of the patriarchal anxiety that existed within '1940s America. She is motivated by the desire for wealth and independence, and through her ability to manipulate the male protagonist represents a constant threat to the patriarchal order" (Fletcher, 2007:6).

The ideological power of cinema becomes a key conduit for patriarchal ideological dissemination, as Jean Louis Baudry in his 1986 essay, *"The Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematic Apparatus"* notes, "the specific function fulfilled by the cinema is a support of ideology…its apparatus is destined to obtain a precise ideological effect" (1986:295). Put differently, the manifestation of the fatal woman as seen in *film noir* is set to belie female chastity vs male promiscuity. Sex is what underlies the male paranoia in *noir*, as the fatal woman is usually void of the passivity and selfless solitude, (qualities elevated by patriarchal ideologies of female virtues). She rather embodies the opposite, as she refuses monogamy, maternity and emotional attachment of any form. She is the ruthless violent criminal, as seen with Dietrichson in *Double Indemnity* (1944), Mary Astor of the *Maltese Falcon* (1941) and Gilda in the film *Gilda* (1946).

Women in these films, like in most art forms, are framed from the point of view of men or through patriarchal logic. It is henceforth not surprising that the violence we see perpetuated by the women in these films is in fact, a stark contrast to social reality. However, another view of this would at least celebrate the fact that the fatal woman is a central character in these films. They are unlike the usual passive character archetypes usually presented on screens, i.e. the 'good girls' (vulnerable and needing protection) who, to a large degree conform to the mannequin image of tall, slim and conventionally beautiful (Neophytou 2012). It can hence be argued that fatal women, in their villainess bitchiness represent the quintessential independent woman.

The characteristics of the fatal woman work well with the concept of *film noir*, as *noir*, is shadowy in its narrative. Most characters in *noir* never fully reveal themselves, enticing audiences to want to delve deeper and deeper into the darkness offered by *noir* films. *Film noir*, as put by Naremore in the introduction of '*Panorama of American Film 1941-1953'* (2002) provides "an opportunity for the audience to… indulge in private fantasies" (2002: xiii). She allows for audiences (both male and female) to cast out their desires and/or fears onto the fatal woman subject. Since the fatal woman in *noir* becomes popular in the early 1940s, a time of social and cultural changes brought about by World War 1, some scholars believe that the fatal woman is simply a response reverberated by returning veterans who found male economic and social monopoly threatened by empowered women. Snyder (2001) argues that the wartime necessity that pushed women out of the home and into the workspace enfranchised numerous women during that era resulting in shifts in the socioeconomic in American societies. Sensing this threat to the patriarchal order, the returning veterans led many campaigns prompting women to return to domestic roles. This Snyder argues, led to peacetime propaganda, which sought to dismantle the new status quo. This resulted in the disparaging images of women on *film noir*.

The first portion of the 20th century saw the rise of technological expansionism as a result of World War 1 and 2. While the men were at war, western societies relied heavily on the female workforce to ensure the growth of industrialisation. This dislocated the men from their former sense of being as the prime movers of resources. Women then found a sense of agency through labour. This, however, according to Grossman (2009) resulted in social trauma for men, who, fearing the "weakening of the male-directed hierarchical system" (Anderson 1995:49), sought the "resurgence of misogynistic discourse that provoked gender distress" (Grossman 2009:13). This manifested itself through cinematic narratives.

However, scholars like Jancovich unseat Synder's ideas around the background of the fatal woman in *noir,* as he claims that it is impossible for the national campaigns that called for women to return to work to have propelled the fatal woman image in *noir*. According to Jancovich the timing is simply off, the dates of the campaigns and the period in which the fatal woman is at its peak do not correspond claims. To substantiate this

Jancovich points to the fact that iconic fatal woman films such as *The Maltese Falcon* and *Double Indemnity* debuted before and during the war (Jancovich 2010:175,176).

Anderson (1995) agrees with this, as she points out that the female Vamp (an intensified version of the fatal woman) came into prominence around 1911 after a group calling itself the *National Association Opposed to the further extension of Suffrage of Women* started to gain momentum in America, supported mostly by the Catholic Church, who believed a woman's place was in the home, politicians who were scared of the female vote and the liquor industry who feared women's rights may lead to prohibition. The anti-suffrage movement had to play on societal fears to push across their message hence the birth of the mother of all fatal woman/ the Vamp (Anderson 1995:53). I also tend to agree with these two authors. It seems to make little sense to link the wartime factory worker, as 'she' was independent and hardworking, whereas the fatal woman is a 'slacker' who operates through men to gain financial advantage. Nevertheless, despite these patriarchal attempts to disempower women, an argument that purports that the heterosexual female audience was drawn to the *noir* fatal woman is apparent. The fatal woman/vamp represented a new womanhood. She drives the narrative, she is good looking, dresses well and she seeks the unattainable, i.e. the capitalist patriarchal values of wealth status and a pliable spouse. "What she falls short of is questioning the status quo; she, however, at least exploits it" (Dennon 2017:33,34).

The Hollywood recreation of the fatal woman results in the growth of the vengeful and evil woman, who uses her sexuality to punish male characters, who metaphorically, represent patriarchal domination. Rather than explore the gender issues of the time such as female suffrage, *noir*, resuscitates and aestheticizes the gender politics of prior decades (Dennon 2017:36). More interestingly, *noir* brought to the forefront the intra-female binary of good girl vs bad girl. The fatal woman vs the good girl. These women appear side by side, to demonstrate what is acceptable womanhood. In *Double Indemnity*, Phyllis is the fatal woman, and Lola the typical girl next door type represents what patriarchy deems acceptable femininity while Phyllis is the strong woman in a world of weak-willed women, she strives to control men through their emotions (Maxfield 1996).

The Evil seductress in African Cinema: Representation of black women as the 'other'.

> You've heard them dividing me up, in their own best interests. So either I don't have any 'self' or else I have a multitude of 'selves' appropriated by them, for them, according to their needs and desires (Irigaray, 1985:17).

So, is the fatal woman archetype relevant in African film and television?

Before discussing the characterisation of women in African film and television, it may be of significance to define African filmic texts/cinema. Important to note that, while the definition of African film is exclusive to film/cinematic texts, one can draw some inferences to television dramas and telenovelas.

First conceptualised in the 1950s African Cinema is an attempt by African film-makers to examine their reality with their own eyes and to describe it authentically. It strives to reverse alien influences and according to Odhiambo, African film performs an important social role, as it is mostly positioned to assist its viewers to interpret their experiences and their society. African film "borrows its subject matter from the public on issues of contemporary importance to that public in particular contexts and it strives to be of immediate relevance to the people's worries, questions, experiences, and lives" (Odhiambo 2004:33). I agree with this, as African film-makers tend to draw from the environment and time in which they exist, henceforth, mostly representing the violence, poverty, strife and disease that often plague most African countries.

When representing black women, African cinema presents them as entities oppressed by their sexuality and their existence in the third world. Women are shown as having no control of their future, and living amid abject poverty, underdevelopment and squalor.
Take for example the character of Yesterday in Darrell Roodt's *Yesterday* 2004, who is dying from AIDS whilst living in abject poverty in an abusive marriage. Yesterday is the woman that NGOs want to save. In the television show *Yizo Yizo* (1999), we also see women occupying sites of struggle. Take the character of Snowy for example, who is shown as an alcohol dependent, young unmarried, unemployed mother representing the 'welfare' mother (Peach 1998:95).

If film-makers are not representing women as victims, they are depicting them in domestic spheres. We see them as mothers, housewives, and cooks. This is as a result of the society's cultural values which mainly place women within marginal traditional roles, which surprisingly, is at variance with the modern-day realities of contemporary African women. The domesticated woman is usually presented against the binary of the evil/bad woman. If she is not fulfilling the patriarchal role and identity prescribed to her, she is the home-wrecking murdering bitch.

Since most of Africa has always been a patriarchal society, where "the exclusion of women from participation in the major decision-making structures and processes, and from ownership of the critical productive resources is norm" (Muwonwa 2000:452), one cannot argue with where the characterisation of women comes from. This was, however, later exacerbated by colonial masters, who codified patriarchal traditions into customary laws, which were applied to Africans. Even to this day, one cannot dismiss the fact that there are similar situations and scenarios in the African, English and Afrikaans cultures. Moreover, colonialism is responsible for the introduction of Christianity to African societies, which may have resulted in the solidification of domesticated roles of women in African societies. One may also argue that the humiliation and subjugation of the black man by his white master may have been transposed to women at home. Black men were degraded in the worst ways during the colonial period. This was mostly due to sexual fears inhibited by the white colonialist towards the black males. Colonial imagination henceforth ascribed black men's excessive and dangerous sexualities to validate their masculinity. Black men were also said to be child-like and anti-intellectual (hence referred to as house- boy's/garden boys). These notions were perpetuated through filmic texts such as D.W Griffiths *Birth of a Nation* which depicted black males "as unable to verbally express themselves, deeply unintelligent and violent individuals with sexual frustrations" (Howard 2014: 33). The subjugation of the black males in this manner may have directly resulted in a need to enact the same abuse to African women, in an act of attempting to rebuild a lost sense of masculinity chipped away by colonial masters.

Colonialism not only sought to degrade the black male, but it also sought to systematically diminish the role of the black woman. Since colonialism was introduced towards the end of the 18thcentury, a time where European societies had a restricted view of women, it is hence not surprising that these ideals were implemented in new colonial outposts. This led to the demotion of female societal roles. In some instances, like in the Limpopo region of South Africa where the Rain Queens were highly regarded and in some Igbo societies in Nigeria, women held positions of power, such as the 'female king' Ahi Ugbabe. What this means is that black males in some spaces were not entirely threatened bypowerful women, hence sought no means to disparage them in any way. Black women were also highly fetishized and sexualised. This is despite the notion that black bodies, especially during the colonial era, were compared to apes with the same animalistic childishness, savageness and bestiality.

This is well illustrated in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness,* where Marlow's African mistress is described as attractive and yet savage. She is a mixture of fear and desire for Marlow (Carr 2014:44). A non-fictional quintessential example of Marlow's African lover is Sarah Baartman. Sarah Baartman left South Africa in 1810, to be paraded naked around Europe, her genitalia preserved and displayed at a museum in France post-mortem. She is a clear example of how the white colonial masters appropriated and subjugated the black female body, representing the black woman as represented as "infantile, irrational and prey to primordial sexual lust, and consequently as a mysterious and inherently subversive" being (Ponzanesi 2005:166).

In *Notes on the State of Virginia*, (1787) Thomas Jefferson presents the black women as having an unlimited and an undiscriminating sexual capacity. Jefferson suggests that the black woman's hyper sexuality essentially paved the way for a rape culture within the framework of American slavery. So even with laws preventing sex between blacks and whites, rape of female slaves by white owners was pervasive. This was also true of colonial farmers or the white 'baas' of colonial times, who tended to treat black women as sexual and commercial commodities (Holmes 2016:3,4).

What is also important to note, is that black women are constantly juxtaposed against their white counterparts. Because most of the media texts relating to black female bodies are created or written by white men, the white woman is presented as the Madonna whilst black women are accorded a more devilish association as seen in the image below



Fig 1: OlivieroToscani for the United Colours of Benetton (1991)

According to Peach, (1998) women associated with the Madonna are idealized and sentimentalized as pure, good, modest, at once virginal and material (somewhat of a logical contradiction). In stark contrast, women associated with the whore are disdained and treated with contempt as sexually promiscuous and manipulated temptresses (Smith, 1992:58). "Women who fail to fit the Madonna image are labelled as whores or lesbians for refusing to conform to the prescribed parameters of women's sexuality." (Peach 1998:92)

The juxtaposition of the black body and the white body to imply purity vs darkness is important to this discussion. In chapter four, I will lay out some observations made around race in South African television representations, as my findings suggest television roles on South African television ascribe to the colonial ideologies around black women. *The River* season two replicates the above-mentioned assertion in pitting the black protagonist, Lindiwe Dlamini, who we all know is a vicious fatal woman, against the almost angelic, Caucasian Gail Mathabatha. Gail is the complete opposite of Lindiwe in both domestic spheres and business spheres. As the new C.E.O of Khanyisa Diamonds, she is more

progressive in her business strategy, highly ethical in all her business dealings and is well liked by the employees. In the domestic space, she treats Zweli with love and respect, she is kind to the children and Ma'am Flora, and she is even shown extending a helping hand to Lindiwe herself, who at this point, is down and out.

The fact that some African films and television dramas employ the binaries established by colonial architects is disappointing; given the role that African film/television is meant to play in African societies. Fortunately, however, some film-makers have attempted to take different routes, seeking to present women in a more progressive light. Cornwall (2005), claims that the end of colonisation led to common representations of black women (as discussed prior) to decline. We see this with Ousmane Sembene, regarded as the father of African cinema, who has presented some strong female characters such as Colle from his film *Moolade* (2004) and Faat Kine *of Faat Kine* (2000). Colle manages to challenge pervasive male dominance and religion by inciting women in her village to fight against female circumcision, whereas Faat Kine inhibits characteristics that defy the norm. To a large extent, the character of Faat Kine resembles a fatal woman. She smokes (a hallmark of the classic fatal woman), she is not afraid to use force to get her way, men find her attractive and most importantly, she is a threat to the patriarchal order. However, parts of her character and experiences are distinctly different from that of *film noir* fatal woman. Firstly, Faat Kine is represented as a woman who has managed to become a successful bourgeoisie head of household riches on her own. Men are shown to have sought to destroy her, causing her shame by not marrying her and stealing from her. What I found interesting about the many disappointing male characters around Faat Kine is that they themselves are fatal men, in that they sought to destroy her to attain financial gain. Hence, the plot is not hinged on a male character which Faat Kine seeks to destroy. Instead, the plot is female-cantered and essentially aims to illustrate the struggle, resilience and triumphs of single mothers.

The film also uproots the traditional roles accorded to women and men. The men in the film are dishonourable as they failed to care for their children and seem to abuse proper masculine roles. Female characters, i.e. Faat Kine and her mother seem to have taken on

masculine roles, amassing their own wealth and henceforth, in Faat Kine's mother's case, having the option to choose her 'own' partner. Faat Kine on the other hand is presented as promiscuous and cruel, sleeping with a married man and later insulting him by offering to pay him for the sexual favours rendered to her. His attitudes are hence more ascribed to males rather than women nor fatal woman. (Oscherwitz 2014:50-53).

The film *Faat Kine* (2000) also uses its female characters to comment on the African European relations in the post-colonial era. Many European systems are rejected by the character Faat Kine who insinuates that the African systems/ways are more superior. In a key sequence in the film, Faat Kine refuses to accept the European currencies from a female customer, insisting that her gas station only accepts Senegalese money. In another scene, Faat Kine refuses to accept a loan from the bank as she believes the terms are usurious. She rather makes use of the tontine system, a uniquely African system, whereby members contribute a certain amount every month and a member is allowed to take the whole lot and pay it back by the next meeting (Stockvel in South Africa) which the film depicts as communitarian and equitable.

Similar to *Faat Kine*, the film *Hyenas* (1992) by Djibril Diop Mambéty, also, presents a quasi-fatal woman, Linguere Ramatue. Unlike Faat Kine, Ramatue's wealth is attained through prostitution. This wealth likened to the world bank, is what she plans to use to destroy the male protagonist Draman Drameh, who, like the male characters in *Faat Kine*, is also somewhat of a Homi Fatale in that he too, abused his masculine role, by abandoning Ramatue when she was pregnant, leaving her for the wealthier Khoudia.

Ramatou, like the classic fatal woman, also smokes, and although now older and disabled, is said to have been beautiful in her youthful days. What is interesting about her character is that Mambéty, like Sembene and western film-makers, presents Ramatou as a highly sexualised being with witch-like characteristics, which are illustrated through her appearance; she is half 'real 'insinuating that there is something supernatural about her. This is reinforced in her first interaction with Dramen, where Dramen refers to her as a witch.

> **Linguere Ramatou:** "What was it you used to call me? My little wild cat?"
> **Dramen Drameh**: "I also called you my little witch."
> *Hyenas* (1992)

The use of the above-mentioned leitmotifs borrowed from western ideologies is problematic for African film-makers like Mambéty, who, in my opinion, should have sought alternative character archetypes. Nevertheless, the film is successful in its use of female characters to offer meaningful political commentary. According to Mudede (2015), Ramatou represents the World Bank/IMF who give African countries loans to enforce economic development programs that do not work, while the people of Colobine represent African governments who sell their countries short for instant gratification. Similar to the thematic approaches in film *noir*, *Hyenas* (1992) fundamentally works to critique the existing social and economic order, which Mambéty describes as having decimated the moral fabric of African societies.

> We are done. I'm not speaking only about us here in Africa but of humanity, of man. We have sold our soul too cheaply. The feeling I have is that we are done for if we have traded our souls for money (Mambéty 1992).

In an earlier film *La Noir de* (1966), Sembene also offers post-colonial political commentary regarding Senegal and the west. Once more, the film's narrative is female centred, although, in this instance, the focus is not on the threat of a powerful woman to patriarchy, but rather on the "subjugation of a black woman by a white woman" (Oscherwitz 2014:57). Madame is the classical fatal woman of this film, powerful, self-serving, ambiguous and dangerous. The only difference is that Madame is not a threat to male patriarchy. Her power, as suggested by the film, is derived from the subjugation of other women, black women, to be specific.

It must be noted however that, Madame's husband, Monsieur is shown to be powerless and emasculated. This powerlessness, as Oscherwitz suggests, represents France's loss of power towards the end of its colonial reign (2014:58).

In *La Noir de*, whilst Madame aims to establish a new colonial hierarchy in her household, Diouana seeks the key tenants associated with the fatal woman, as Diouana is enthralled by the women she sees in French magazines. She desires their clothes, shoes and their 'things', which she perceives will give her a sense of social and economic power. For Diouana, these 'French' things will give her some sort of agency she does not possess within Senegalese society. Ironically, these are the very same things used by Madame to maintain her pre-colonial stature, allowing her the power to abuse Diouana until she commits suicide (Oscherwitz 2015:58). From this, one can conclude that Madame represents the colonial power, which, in attempting to maintain power over the colonial subject, uses consumer culture to trap the colonial subject back into subversion.

The three films discussed above, illustrate how women are used more as signifiers of changes in post-colonial African spaces, where women can hold positions of power which is equal to or supersedes that of men.

Fast-track to the early 2000s and we have Nigeria films representing women as treacherous and dangerous. The fatal woman appears in numerous Nollywood films such as *More than a Woman* (2005), *Omata Women* (2003), *Forbidden* (2018), *Betrayal* (2019*), Deadly Affair* (2016), *Evil Passion* (2014) and *Widows* (2017), just to name a few. In all of these films, women take on roles of witches, bitches, gold-diggers and killers. Older women often use witches, who deny progress to younger generations. The caricature of the witch is usually accorded to mothers-in-law who is often shown to compete with daughters-in-law for their son's affection. To ensure victory, mothers-in-law often use 'juju' or supernatural powers to coax people into doing what they want. On the contrary, fathers-in-law are shown as peace-makers who support their daughters-in-law. The perpetuation of this stereotype in Nigerian film has had some far-reaching social ramifications, as Ukata (2010) claims that elderly women in Nigeria have in reality, been branded as witches who are responsible for broken marriages across the country (2010: 44). Ukata's observation here supports the idea that the most important is the role of the cinema is the construction of people's consciousness, as it fundamentally penetrates the minds of our people, influencing and direction their everyday social behaviour (Hondo 1996:40)

It is no surprise that Nigerian women are often branded as husband killers, prostitutes, gold diggers and lazy trophy wives dependant on their husband as per Nollywood's caricatures (Ukata 2010: 45, 46). This, as Aniagolu–Okoye (2006) notes, it to the contrary, as Nigerian women are generally hard-working and industrious

> Nigerian women are perhaps one of the hardest working African women who have excelled in almost every endeavour in life. Yoruba women as far back as the 18th century, were recognised as great merchants and traders and played major roles in the then Oyo Empire. The Igbo woman has always been the consummate matriarch of her family who works very hard to ensure the welfare of her family (2006:63).

If the representations are not indicative of social realism, as the African film tenets assert, then can we attribute the representation of women in this manner to male anxieties?

It is however important to note that not all women in Nollywood films are presented as evil gold-digging whores. Nollywood also makes use of the housewife trope. This is in line with the patriarchal social order prevalent in the country. The housewife is usually presented as fully submissive, and has her place in the 'kitchen', making her financially dependent on her husband. In some cases, she is the victim of abuse from men around her, take for example, in *Widow's Fate* (2014), the female protagonist Queen Nwokoye is falsely accused by her brother-in-law of killing her husband. She is then subjected to cruel treatment by her brother-in-law, who is the actual culprit. The housewife caricature is often derived from certain traditional folklore, which Ukata argues are tied to Western society. She points to the Cinderella trope as a great influence on gender relations in relationships, as most Nollywood films often present a neglected girl/wife who suffers because of no fault of hers but eventually, luck smiles on her and all her wishes come true (Ukata 2010:21). Conjoining western tropes with traditional folklore works to reinforce patriarchal ideologies, as girls are encouraged to conform to societal values when it comes to marriage.

According to Ibbi (2017) women in Nollywood films are also presented as objects of rituals, objects of exploitation and objects of barter. Ibbi claims that in some Nigerian films, young women especially, are often used as sacrificial lambs to attain riches for men. Ibbi makes mention of the film *Seven Rivers* (2014) where a rich man deceives girls to come to his apartment where they are used for sacrifice. Women are also bartered in most of the Nollywood films, with the majority of girls being offered to men by their parents to pay off a debt. In some cases, Ibbi argues, parents may just be greedy for material things that the suitor may be able to offer. Lastly, Ibbi claims women are often subjects of sexploitation in Nollywood films. In most cases, 'house girls' are sexually harassed by their bosses. This is can be said to be derived from real cases, as noted earlier, of how white male colonialists would sexually subjugate black female slaves for their enjoyment. But why reinforce such ideals in African cinema? The answer Ayari (1999) claims is the fact that

> the image of African women in African cinema remains essentially that created by men. Of course, African films, however modest, do present us with a fairly representative kaleidoscope of female figures. However, these are women fabricated within the imagination of the men who make the films, regardless of how close to reality their imagination maybe. The image of women in African cinema is the result of a male gaze in a mostly male society (1999:183).

This is despite the efforts made by directors such as Sembene who have created progressive films representing females, there is the constant issue of the monolithic view by men. (Nobee 2018:8). To remedy this, it may be imperative to encourage the increase of female voices within the African cinema and television industry. Unlike literature which has had numerous feminist appraisals which have resulted in some writers such as Ngugi WaThiong'o to revise their presentations of women, to highlight their positive contributions to African societies. It is imperative, therefore, that similar work must be undertaken within film and television spaces to allow for some revisions of female characterisations. More so, inquiries around why there is little appetite to break down tenets that infringe upon women's rights, especially those that reduce women to voiceless

types need to be undertaken, not only for African film and television but also in Hollywood, as there too, women are not given ample space to self-express. Hopefully, this study will offer limited perspectives, as to why women allow men to use the "camera to privilege the position of men at the expense of women" (Ukata: 2010:47). This will be done against the backdrop which suggests that some work is being done to rectify the representation of women on screen, for example, results of the Sundance awards were several female-directed films received awards, on these being *"I'm Not a Witch" (*2018). It is imperative to now take a deeper contextual look at South African television specifically, to specifically decipher if the tropes of the fatal woman/attrappe have been apparent to our specific area of study.

The Evil Seductress on South African Screens

Before discussing television in the South African context, it is of importance to note that the body of work around this topic, although growing for the last 20 years or so, it is still relatively small. It will, therefore, be, difficult to offer a thorough understanding of black women on the television landscape in the country. Nevertheless, key theorists such as Keyan Tomaselli (1996) do give some interesting insight into how the changes in the socio-political and cultural landscapes in South Africa and how this has altered thematic discourse on television regarding race and gender.

Underpinning the roots of South African television is the dialect of separateness and connectedness. Separateness comes from apartheid ideals and connectedness from the subsequent post-apartheid ideals of the rainbow nation. These two binaries are what have dominated discourses on South African television since its inception in 1976. In both these periods, the characterisation of women is seemingly shaped by the non-racial institution of patriarchy. African women, according to Frankel (2008) inherit a sexualised narrative from European ideology from the 19th century onwards. This is later carried forward to apartheid television screens where black women were presented as 'Black Venus' stereotypes (Ponzanesi 2005:170).

The above contextualisation is important, as it attempts to illustrate that the succeeding illustrations of the fatal woman do not exist in a vacuum, but rather have been perpetual over time as a symbol of male fear. Before delving into the theoretical aspects of this study, I will contextualise by considering Feminist Film Theory and the status of women on television/cinema both in the west and in Africa. Given a background, one is better positioned to understand feminist film theory and how it affects television /cinema in Africa and the west. This background will hopefully serve as a yardstick to measure whether the selected case studies still reinforces the fatal woman/attrappe binaries on South African television.

The Feminist Film Theory

Since its inception in the 1970s, feminist film has questioned a range of complex and powerful gender norms that have been reinforced in the media (Chaudhuri 2006:16). Feminist film theory has provided the impetus to several academic developments in the realms of film studies. It has even led to some avant-garde films that link theory to practice. At the centre of the feminist film-theory is feminism itself. As a movement, feminism has many branches and approaches, for instance, Budig (2008) posits that radical feminism claim that the root of women's oppression is one anchored by sexuality whereas "Marxist and Socialist feminists root gender inequality in capitalism" (2008:1). Despite the different avenues available within feminism, the essence of it is to advocate for gender equality within institutions of marriage, the economy and the church. Since there are some social issues dictated by men, that deprive women of their rights, feminism as a theory seeks to "provide a multidimensional vision about women who are treated as 'the other sex' or 'weaker sex' by men in all avenues of life political, cultural, racial and social - and suggests awareness and awakening in ameliorating their condition". Therefore, feminism aims to "wrench power from the male oppressors and establish an egalitarian society in which sexual difference and sexual hierarchy will no longer exist" (Davidson 1988:41).

As important as feminist tenets may be to women in general, some disagree with some of the concepts presented by the theory. Although it is generally accepted that feminism speaks to equality between all men and women, black women feel this is untrue as many consider 'feminism' as elitist and markedly white (Ward and Herndl 1997:259). Hooks (1984) argues that this is because "white women used the power granted to them by being part of the dominant group in American society to interpret feminism in such a way that it was no longer relevant to all women" (1984:149). Take for example, white feminists can declare complete independence from their male counterparts, absolving them from any financial and familial responsibilities, whereas women of colour may not be able to necessarily do this because of their socio-economic backgrounds. Liu (1994) agrees with the assertion stating that:

> White feminists assume that when talking about themselves, they are talking about all women, and many white feminists have unthinkably generalised from their own experience, ignoring those of black women…they even project western concerns and priorities to the rest of the world. (1994:574).

Feminism is regarded as a term conceptualised by the white middle class, to address the needs of middle-class white women. What this essentially meant is that, women on the fringes like African women who carry problems far more complex than just degradation by men, are left out of the umbrella which is 'feminism' Steady (1992) agrees with this, as she asserts that for many black women, "racism has been the most important obstacle in the acquisition of the basic needs for survival... What we have, then, is not a simple issue of sex or class differences but a situation which, because of the racial factor, is cast like on both a national and global scale" (1992:18,19). Izgarjan &Markov (2012:308,309) It is because of these circumstances that Alice Walker was prompted to create the womanist movement, which objects the tenets of white feminism, rather preferring to values important to women of colour. Building on the exclusionary paradigms of mainstream feminism, womanism allows women of colour a framework of empowerment which insists on self-confidence as they need it in the face of constant racism denigration. Dr. Hare quoted in Phillip, *Black Issues in Higher Education,* (1993) says that women calling themselves black feminists need to re-evaluate this, as feminism tends to ignore

the plight of black women because "the white race has a woman problem because the women were oppressed. Black people have a man and woman problem because black men are as oppressed as their women" (1993:15).

Offering a more African based feminism framework, Hudson-Weems (2018:27) put together ideology on womanism, which, unlike Walker's conceptualisation, seeks to offer a distinct movement for African women, designed to address the challenges of historically poor and working-class women. The African Womanist movement importantly does not make men the primary enemy, as African men have never had the institutionalised power to subjugate women, as white men have. Contrariwise, Walker's approach does not apply in contemporary South Africa which in the aftermath of apartheid and the development of new democracy still battles with issues of lack of transformation. There are still few women in powerful positions, female rape and femicide cases are on the rise.

According to Franklin "black men are relatively powerless in the African continent, and their attempts at domination, aggression, and the like, while sacrificing humanity, are ludicrous". (1988: 112). Black women hence "do not perceive their enemy to be black men, but rather the enemy is considered to be oppressive forces in the larger society which subjugate black men, women and children" (1988:277,78). Another reason why Weems suggests that African female movements use African womanism as an ideological framework and not feminism is because of the distrust that African women have towards white institutions, which historically have been used to oppress them. (Hudson-Weems 2018:31)

Africana Womanism is a plausible and workable concept, a theoretical framework useful in expressing the reality of the Africana woman within the context of the Africana community. It is important to this body of work as it allows me to address the challenges of the African woman within an African context. Africana Womanism will also form the basis for a later suggestion made by this study, i.e., that which seeks to propose a new way of representing women on television, as Africana womanism encourages a representation based more on social realities of African women, as people who value family and community, without necessarily expecting;

> their male counterparts to single-handedly provide for all their financial whims. Instead, they participate in efforts to realize their needs and wishes by working along with their partners. When their partners become unable to assist them in this area (they may become unemployed from time to time), the Africana womanists try to stand by their male counterparts and help them maintain their sense of pride (Hudson-Weems 2018:28)

It was vital to point out these issues inherent in feminism as they inform the role of the feminist film theory, which according to Smelik (2016), is a theoretical approach designed to understand the "cultural practice that represents and reproduces myths about women and femininity" (2016:1) Feminism film theory arose after a thirst for more realistic images of women on the screen. With the women's movement at its height in the 1970s, pressure builds towards transforming myths and practices regarding the representation of women on the screen, whom, until this point, was "portrayed as passive sex objects or fixed in stereotypes oscillating between the mother("Maria") and the whore ("Eve")" (Smelik 2016:1). So, to dismantle these ideologically laden images of femininity, feminists sought to conceptualise a framework that would assist women to identify and understand the false stereotypical femininity which they were made to identify with, to fulfil male fantasies. It was imperative that this framework shows real life-like women devout of sexual clichés and essentially remove the lie that women are inferior.

Drawing from the Marxist critiques of semiotics, psychoanalysis, and deconstruction as key building blocks the feminist film theory was formed in response to the second wave of feminism of the 1960s which sought to reveal the hidden power structures apparent in the home, family, fashion, politics, and media (Chaudhuri 2006:7). This is so, as Marxist critiques insist that false consciousness is used to disguise the real conditions of existence. To debunk these 'real conditions of existence' different strands of what would form the feminist film theory were promulgated mostly by Laura Mulvey in her article *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975) and Claire Johnston in her work, *The subject of Feminist Film theory/practice* (1980), who, fundamentally put together the theoretical tools of psychoanalysis and semiotics to initiate critique and develop more perspectives on women issues on film and television.

Semiotics as a Feminist Film paradigm

Alongside psychoanalysis, semiotics exists as a key aspect to the feminist film theory in its endeavour to offer a much more provocative and challenging form of film analysis, in that it would allow scholars to not only decipher what film/television texts mean but also illustrate how and why those meanings came into being.

First conceptualised by Saussure, semiotics or semiology is the study of language as a system of signs, whose relationship with the inferred must never be viewed as natural, but rather as arbitrary social conventions. In the context of the film, De Lauretis (1984) says that the 'unholy' alliance between semiotics and film theory is a long-standing one, as semiotics offers an avenue through which codes of lighting, editing, the scale of shot, camera angles, dialogue, and narrative can be analysed to decipher deeper meanings. In essence, semiotics allows for an understanding of how images work as signs which represent a particular ideology.

Fundamentally, semiotics/or semiology explains the existence of a pre-determined structure that is used to make sense of the world. So, for individuals to co-exist, they need to be aware of semiotic conventions and rules, meaning that audiences must ascribe to meanings as they are designed by their creators. Audience members can also decipher meanings from their own experiences. The audience is thus at times, encouraged to see themselves in terms of the meanings promoted by film and television creators. Since feminist film theory aims to illustrate how sexual difference in film produces a set of meanings, semiotics hence provided an impetus that allowed for the understanding of the signification of women in film. However, before going into the signification of women in film, it is imperative to exhaustively discuss semiotics in the pretext of female representation. One way to approach this is to use Hall's conceptions around representation, as this allows this study to also consider how semiotics and psychoanalysis as elements to the feminist film theory is representative of a particular community who share similar cultural codes. The un-universality of the feminist film theory then, therefore, becomes a problem which will be fully eviscerated at a later stage.

Stuart Hall and the Theory of Representation

According to Hall, representation, simply put, is "the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. It does involve the use of language, signs and of images which stand for or represent thing". (1997:5) To represent therefore is to describe, depict and to symbolise a particular item or phenomenon. To do this, we require language as a conduit for understanding the "world, people, objects and how to express a complex thought about these things to other people" (Hall 1997:16).

Using Saussure's study of semiotics, Hall implies that language is made up of different codes and conventions that mean different things to different people. People existing within the same cultural context, therefore can interpret the same codes and conventions, for example 樹 is the Chinese symbol for TREE can only be understood by those who understand the Chinese language. Moreover, Saussure analyses the signs into two elements, the signifier and the signified. According to Saussure, there is no tangible relationship between the signifier and the signified, as the signs do not hold a fixed meaning. For example, with traffic lights, although the colour RED signifies STOP, there is no natural or inevitable like between these elements. What is however significant is that meaning does not inhere in objects or things. It is constructed, produced. It is the result of a signifying practice – a practice that produces meaning, that makes things mean" (Hall 1997:10). What this essentially means is that, language uses signs to represent people's concepts, ideas and feelings in a manner in which others can read and decode. The meaning derived must be roughly what was meant to be communicated.

Hall (1997:10) uses the theory of representation to expand on cultural studies. He suggests that culture is representative of a group of individuals with a shared value system and make sense of the world broadly in the same way as they have the same cultural codes. It is hence the participants of a certain culture who give meaning to objects and events. Objects themselves therefore never have a set meaning, as Hall points out; a stone can be pavement marker or a piece of art depending on perspective.

To better eviscerate representation and how it influences culture, Hall put together three approaches, namely the reflective approach, the intentional approach and the constructionist approach. This is done in an attempt to underpin where meaning comes from, and what gives images/objects meaning (Hall 1997:24).

The Reflective Approach

This approach suggests that 'language functions like a mirror' and what is reflected exists as it is in the world. So, objects are mimetic to their function and appearance in the real world.

The Intentional Approach

Here, objects and events are given meaning by the author or the orator. This is based on how this individual's perception of the world.

The Constructionist Approach

Here "social actors who use the conceptual systems of their culture and the linguistic and other representational systems to construct meaning, to make the world meaningful and to communicate about that world meaningfully to others" (Hall 1997:18).

If following Hall's perspective, these approaches can be used to broadly illustrate the practice of signifying the 'other'. It is through these instruments that repertoires in racial and sexual difference can be analysed in film and television, as through these approaches, one can deduct how;

> language and representation not only produces meaning but how the knowledge which a particular discourse produces connects with power, regulates conduct, makes up or constrains identities and subjectivities, and defines the way certain things are represented, thought about, practiced and studied (Howarth 2011:6).

What this means is that certain cultural identities become dominant, and therefore create a framework through which people communicate with each other and about each other.

In essence, culture informs the way we think and the way we approach things. The power yielded by 'white males' in contemporary society henceforth points to the fact that 'certain meanings' are derived from them. To achieve this, Hall infers that the dominant group, here being white males, make use of stereotypes as central signifying codes in the representation. In essence, stereotypes are classifications of certain persons. Those existing within the dominant culture, often, using their way of thinking about things, typify people into what they perceive as appropriate clusters. So, stereotypes work to split the normal and the abnormal, creating a 'them and us' society. It is clear that stereotypes only work in spaces where there are 'gross inequalities of power' (Hall 1997:258).

The power aspect is crucial to this study, as stereotypical representations are apparent in the characters of Lindiwe and MaMngadi as these are the two case studies to be examined here. The characters tend to be shown in an imagined fantasy. Little social reality is applied to the lives of the characters examined. This I fear is what is perceived as 'real' to audiences. My argument follows the work of Gilman (1985), who claims that stereotyping is not just about splitting what is good from what is bad, but it is also about 'projecting anxiety about the other (1985:23). What we tend to see from the two characters being examined here is that the stereotyping does not end with just projecting anxiety of the other, but also has some element of fetishism, where fascination and desire are both indulged and denied simultaneously (Hall 1997:267). Fetishism then becomes a strategy of having it both ways, i.e. representing the forbidden and dangerous as alluring and desirable. Two good examples are that of MaMngadi and Ayanda, both from *The Herd* (2018). Though the two represent the 'dark' world of witchcraft and evil', they also appear as highly sexualised through the choice of costume, which portrays them as deadly seductresses who invariably become the object of male desires both on and off-screen (Tasker 2013: 355,356).

MaMngadi **Ayanda**



Fig 2: https://mzansimagic.dstv.com/show/the-herd



Fig 3: The Herd Season 2, Episode 13

From the images above, it can be argued that the MaMngadi and Ayanda are coded conventions, i.e., they are signifiers of a certain male ideological object, who theorists such as Mulvey (1975), assert is a figure whom men can derive some sought of a voyeuristic pleasure from. To understand why this is so, Mulvey and fellow theorists turn to psychoanalysis. Before delving into Mulvey and her ideas around voyeurism and the female body, it is important to note the contributions made by Homi Bhabha through his post-colonial theory, as his work is an extension to that of Hall when in come to representation and the African woman (Mulvey 1999:835).

Homi Bhabha's Postcolonial Theory

Like Hall, Bhabha's work is essentially designed to dismantle the stereotypes put forward by dominant cultures, specifically in post-colonial spaces.

Post-colonial theory colonialism is important to this study as it fundamentally deals with how colonial forces have shaped modern narratives, including those seen on South African screens today. Bhabha, in his essay, '*The Location of Culture'* (1994) speaks acknowledges Halls' ideas around superior cultures and how they work to undermine other cultures through systematic stereotyping. Bhabha, like Hall, claims that cultural

difference was used as a tool by colonial powers to divide the world into self and others as a means to justify "material inequalities central to colonial rule" (Huddart 2006:5). Post-colonial theory then becomes a way of doing things differently. Instead of shifting the tables and make the coloniser inferior, i.e. "to challenge the oppression of women by merely turning the tables and oppressing men instead is not going to offer any long-term solutions for anyone" (Huddart 2006:5).

What needs to be done, according to Bhabha as referenced in Rukundwa and Van Aarde (2007) is to allow for a 'third space' where the dominated can regain equity in their social space, not through declaring war on past transgressors, but through "engaging the psychology of both the colonised and the coloniser in the process of decolonisation" (2007:20) in an attempt to revolutionise the mind of the dominant and inferior to allow for equity to prevail. This element is crucial to this study as it offers a framework through which one can start to fix the prevailing stereotypical representations of women on screen.

Psychoanalysis as the second paradigm of Feminist Film Theory

Reverting to Mulvey (1975) and her ideas around femininity on television and film, I will now debunk the role of the psyche in the production of the female stereotype. This section essentially aims to explain the relationship between the signifier (male/dominant cultural cluster) and the signified (women/inferior cultural cluster).

According to Mulvey (1975), psychoanalysis in film is essentially derived from the Freudian work related to psychoanalysis, which suggests that large parts of human thought (especially that which society deems undesirable) is often repressed, and mostly comes to the fore either in slip of tongue, dreams or artistic creativity. Because of this, the unconscious becomes a way in which we internalise the beliefs of our society, as according to Freud (the founder of psychoanalysis) the motives behind many human actions is one driven by the unconscious ego. It is hence not surprising that some of those repressed thoughts unconsciously make their way onto cinematic screens. Mulvey has thus sought to use this Freudian concept to illustrate how cinema is used to reproduce sexual difference, where women retain the

position of 'the object of desire' and men drive the narrative. Mulvey's use of psychoanalysis in film theory places the male as a sadistic voyeur over the object, which is a woman.

> Psychoanalytic theory provided...the ability to see through the surface of cultural phenomena as though with intellectual X-ray eyes. The images and received ideas of the run of the mill sexism were transformed into a series of clues for deciphering a nether world, seething with displaced drives and misrecognised desire (Mulvey 1989a: xiv).

So, in essence, Mulvey spells out the male scopophilia of male protagonists and male audiences on females who, in many cases play the 'traditional exhibitionistic role'. Female bodies are presented as objects of the male gaze; they are objects which men can project their fantasies on. Narrative film, therefore, underlies the voyeurism and fetishes of the patriarchal unconscious.

However, the use of the psychoanalytic framework as prescribed by Mulvey in her early works in 1975, is somewhat limited, as it essentially leaves out the female spectator. Mulvey seems to leave some questions un-addressed with regards to the female audience. Since psychoanalysis always presents a male subject, it is therefore impossible to speak of the female spectator. So, where do we place the female spectator? Does she identify with the look of the male protagonist and audience? In a later re-thinking of her first essay, Mulvey in '*Afterthoughts on "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema",* inspired by *Duel in the Sun'* (1981), reconsiders the role of the female spectator, suggesting that female spectators tend to accept temporary masculinisation, and therefore identify with the active masculine position, which positions female spectators as 'transvestites', which Mulvey claims sit uneasily with women because it turns women into sadistic viewers when they occupy male positions, However, Feminist Film theorists such as Doana (1991) expands on Mulvey's paradigm, stating that the female spectator has at least two other options, outside of accepting the masculine position. She, as Doana argues that she, "can also over identify with the woman on the screen, and become emotionally invested with the character, or "to take the heroine as her narcissistic object of desire" (1991:31). Another limiting factor to the psychoanalytic framework within feminist film theory is the fact

that, even when the female spectator is taken into consideration, as illustrated by Doana (1991), factors such as race and class are completely ignored. Feminist film critics Mayne (1990) and Gaines (1988) agree that the female spectator of the psychoanalytic film theory is white, heterosexual and middle class. *In 'White Privilege and Looking Relations: Race and Gender in Feminist Film Theory'* (1988), Gaines, explains how different women who have been shaped by different experiences, offer different socio-cultural readings to narrative films. She even suggests that "black males in other mainstream American films do not have the power or privilege of sexual looking" (1988:14) and therefore do experience the same visual pleasure as do white males. In essence, what Gaines is arguing here is that black women and even black men play a limited role with women and how they are represented on screen.

Lastly, Mulvey, in *'The Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' essay* (1975) offers a rendition of the psychoanalysis within the paradigm of feminist film theory does not speak of the female artists, writers, and film-makers, as psychoanalysis from Mulvey's perspective, allows only for male fetishes and suppressed fantasies to surface in artistic forms. So, what of the fantasies of women? How do they present themselves within artistic formats? Surely if applying the tenets of psychoanalysis, it follows that artistic outlets such as cinema produced by women would reflect the suppressed fantasies of women. Silverman (1988) however states that female cinematic texts tend to be "created through the impersonal force of language or discourse rather than through the author's personal choice" Silverman (1988:62). This, once again, results in the very same misogynists' fantasies perpetuated in male-authored cinema.

It is apparent that although psychoanalysis and semiotics have been vital to the intellectual development to the feminist film theory even though psychoanalysis has been met with some serious criticism for over-generalising sexual paradigms and essentially ignoring the female spectator. Psychoanalysis in this study will assist me in attempting to break down the binary between reality and fantasy. In chapter four, I show how reality is not separate from fantasy and that fantasy is indispensable to human life, as it offers us avenues of diverging from reality. This is what we experience from watching television programs and

films. Television then becomes a critical functionary which offers us an image of something better, or something we deeply desire in our everyday lives. However, the desires depicted on television seem to subscribe to what seems more of a male utopia, hence the prevalence of the highly sexualised female characters, who if not presented as 'good girls', is presented as 'the taboo' or as threatening subjects. This, according to Kotsopoulos 1989, is an act to "bypass the censorship of the unconscious through converting the unthinkable and forbidden into a safe daydream that is comfortable and palatable to the conscious mind" (1989: 69). Psychoanalysis will then, assist this study in analysing the two main characters in the selected case studies, in understanding the extent to which suppressed male fantasies manifest themselves in the characterisation of the Lindiwe Dikana in *The River* (2018) and MaMngadi of *The Herd* (2018). The concept of psychoanalysis may also be useful in deciphering how the female spectator is affected, i.e., what possible self-hoods can emerge from the internalisation of the images depicted by the chosen studies.

Having offered a comprehensive review of the literature, I now move on to outlining the procedures followed in the collection of data in chapter three.

CHAPTER THREE

Data Collection Strategies and Structures.

This chapter explores the data gathering methods employed by this study in deciphering the extent to which Lindiwe and MaMngadi are reflective of the evil seductress trope. The prerogative here is to map out the methodological approach, commencing from research design to data collection, ethical considerations, limits of study and reliability of the study. The purpose herewith is to clearly show how the extrication of data was undertaken. I use the qualitative research tradition, as I believe it is in tune with the locus of this study, as it offers a "systematic empirical inquiry into meaning" (Shank 2005:5). Data was collected through the case study approach which was later elucidated by a basic textual analysis of a few episodes.

The approach used and the reason for this selection is done to achieve the main objectives of this study which are to decipher the extent to which Lindiwe Dikana and MaMngadi can be considered as dangerous and evil women. The figure below offers a schematic summary of the process that was used in conducting the study.

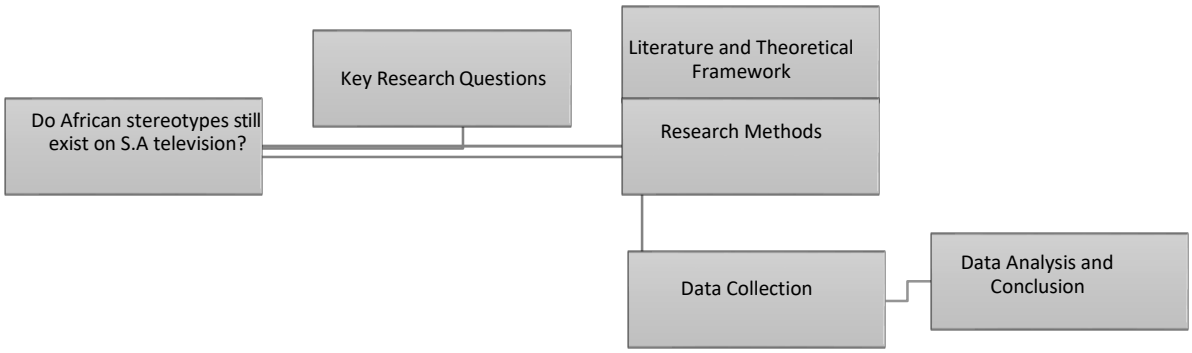

Fig 3: *Schematic Process of study.*

Research Design

Having highlighted the dynamics of this chapter, it is important to outline the specific data collection aspects used by this study. To start, I describe qualitative research, in an attempt to illustrate why it is the best-suited tool for unravelling the questions underpinning this study.

The scholar Leedy (1986) postulates that a research design is an appropriate and logical structure of inquiry that must function as a tool that enables the author to answer research questions as unambiguously as possible (1986:96). The research design is basically "a blueprint or detailed plan for how a research study is to be completed" (Thyer 1993:94). It mainly focuses on justifying and balancing the phenomenon and how it could be explored. It, therefore, becomes the hinge on which the entire research hangs on.

Based on the hypothesis made by this research, the qualitative conceptual framework is employed here.

Qualitative Research Approach

In the past two decades, researchers have turned to the qualitative research tradition for a variety of reasons, including the recognition of the flawed nature of quantitative and positivist epistemology methods. While both qualitative and quantitative approaches serve as legitimate investigative tools for social phenomenon's, the qualitative approach, as noted by Fitch (1994) outplays the quantitative approach as it fundamentally "examines the qualities of communications phenomenon through emphasising on description and explanation rather than measurement and prediction" (1994:32). Due to this aspect, the qualitative research approach presents the most strategic tools for fulfilling the requirements of this particular research.

According to Babbie (2007), qualitative research is designed to discover the underlying meanings and patterns in society. Creswell (2007) goes on to define qualitative research as a research fundamental that aims to "understand the human problem" (2007:39). This is so as participants are usually empowered to have their voices heard in respect to a particular social phenomenon. Their voices are however represented through the eyes of the researcher, meaning that the qualitative process pays more attention to subjectivity rather than objectivity. Its exploratory nature seeks to explain how and why certain social phenomena or programs exist. Likewise, Shank (2002), states that qualitative research is concerned with describing social phenomena as they occur naturally, without manipulating the situation under study. In essence, qualitative research seeks to undertake a "systematic empirical inquiry into meaning" (Shank 2002:5), where the opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals producing subjective data are taken into consideration.

Qualitative research hence emphasizes words instead of quantification in the collection and analysis of data. This assists the researcher to understand why, how and what the processes and contexts are influenced by within the specific points of observation. To understand the nature of social relationships and how they occur, the qualitative approach allows one to explore people's experiences in detail through a set of research methods, including in-depth interviews, focus groups, ethnographic observation and content analysis. These data gathering methods, advantageously, allow researchers to acquire rich in-depth data which is essential to qualitative research.

Qualitative research fundamentally aims to provide a detailed understanding of human behaviour, emotions and attitudes. It uses psychological and interpretive approaches to gain insight into "perspectives, feelings, and experiences of people, and what lies at the core of their

lives" (Haradhan 2018:2), as the purpose of qualitative research, is to offer a deep understanding into the social grouping under investigation. It, therefore, offers a point of view from those being studied, resulting in new theories or new ways of thinking. For this study, the qualitative method is not only used to test the validity of already formulated ideas but also, aims at developing new empirically grounded ideas around how to better the representation of women on South African television. This study will henceforth use qualitative research as a key facet in understanding social life more fully, as it allows the researcher to make use of personal insights and descriptive evidence to make sense of the social phenomenon under investigation. My reflections and actions became part of the data interpreted for this study, consequently, allowing me to gain a better insight into the intended meaning encoded in *The River* and *The Herd*.

Qualifying the use of Qualitative Research

Before going into the specific qualitative research gathering methods, it is of importance that I delineate why qualitative research was the best suited to answer the questions posed by this study. According to Krambeck et al (1979), qualitative research offers reasons for scientific facts, as quantitative methods still require some qualitative interpretation. Hence, qualitative research can stand alone, without quantitative methods, whereas the latter cannot. Moreover, qualitative research is based on human experiences and observation, allowing for results that are more powerful and compelling. Qualitative research, therefore, offers more illustrative results, which allow for opportunities to develop "empirically supported new ideas and theories, for in-depth and longitudinal explorations of certain phenomena, and more relevance and interest for practitioners" (1979:352).

According to George and Bennett (2005) case studies are advantageous because they have a high potential to achieve conceptual validity, they offer strong procedures for the development of new hypothesis and since statistics are not used, and uses a more descriptive, narrative style; and gains new insight. However, case studies are not without shortcomings. Starman (2013) cites that case study findings are generalisations, as one is always applicable to the other. Maree (2007) further argues that case studies are not effective when it comes to testing hypotheses, as they tend to be biased towards the preconceived propositions of the researcher. I however overcame these limitations by referencing several television soap operas on South African television.

The Qualitative Approaches

Creswell (2009) claims that qualitative research, as a term, encompasses many theoretical and methodological designs, as "various theoretical approaches and their methods characterise the research practice" (Flick 2014:17). Qualitative approaches include narrative research, grounded theory, action research, ethnography, phenomenology, case studies, and content analysis. In line with the research questions asked here, the case study and content analysis will be used to investigate aspects of the current state of female representation on South African television.

The Case Study Method

Creswell (2009) defines a case study as an in-depth analysis of a program, event or activity of special circumstances, which needs exploration. Considering the mandate of this research, the critical instance case study was thus chosen as the most appropriate system of analysis, as it essentially drives at answering the "cause and effect" questions about a specific phenomenon

under study, in calling into question the generalized and universal assertions around the representation of women on screen.

Mann (2006) suggests that case studies can be approached in different ways, depending on the epistemological standpoint of the researcher. To effectively address the concerns of this study, I employ the 'theory-testing case study', which "assess the validity and scope conditions of single or competing theories" (Haradhan 2018:13), and the 'building block case study' which "The studies of particular types or subtypes of a phenomenon that, when put together, contribute to a more comprehensive theory" (Haradhan 2018:13). I use multiple case study approaches as it makes my findings strong and reliable. I also chose to employ two case studies, *The River* and *The Herd* in endeavouring to answer the research questions posed by this study. I do this, to produce a more accurate picture regarding the depiction of women on television, as it was paramount that this research compares and contrasts two closely related programs to decipher if the series (representation of female characters) directly replicate each other. This is done in a bid to show the extent to which the two case studies, present their matriarchs as evil manipulative fatal women.

Through the process of pattern-matching, a "technique linking several pieces of information from a case to some theoretical proposition" (Zainal 2007:2), multiple case studies prove more fruitful in strengthening the proposed theoretical standing taken by the researcher. For this research, the use of multiple units of analysis was done to allow the researcher to draw important comparisons which would in turn help raise the level of confidence in the robustness of the critical instance case study method.

Multiple Case Studies

Jack and Baxter (2014) assert that multiple case studies allow the researcher to explore differences within and between case studies. Since the goal is to replicate findings across cases, it is "imperative that the cases are chosen carefully so that the researcher can predict similar results across cases, or predict contrasting results based on a theory" (Yin 2003). This researcher uses the multiple case study design in an attempt to predict similar results between *The River* and *The Herd* when it comes to the representation of the two matriarchs.

Data Collection

Before undertaking the analysis of data, it was important to prepare and organise the data. This study, therefore, made use of basic content/textual analysis to elicit meaningful data.

The Data

The researcher, as previously intimated, analysed six episodes per case. In each episode, the author looked for instances where the two matriarchs exemplified the evil seductress and when other female characters are represented as good girl types. There are two-hundred and sixty episodes in each season of *The River* which is running its third season now. To get a nuanced understanding of the portrayal of Lindiwe Dlamini Dikana, the researcher had to watch numerous episodes from season one and season two, before selecting the three episodes analysed here. It is important to note that throughout seasons one and two, there are many instances where the researcher found that the matriarch in *The River* is represented as an evil and manipulative seductress. The three selected episodes, therefore, are the most reflective of the evil seductress trope. In season one of *The River,* this study analyses episode one titled,

‘Blood Diamond’ and episode two-hundred and sixty, titled ‘Life is a River’. In season two, the researcher analyses episode one-hundred and forty-five titled the ‘Pretoria Massacre’. With the television drama, *The Herd*, the researcher analyses episode four and ten in season one, and episode 11 in season two. Again, the selection of the episodes under study here was only done after the researcher had extensively watched all twenty-two episodes in seasons one and two.

Content Analysis

Content analysis is a generic term for textual analysis. It is used by social sciences to examine the contents of a particular body through analysing and interpreting words and images of that particular text. Schrier (2014) states that qualitative analysis “is a method for systematically describing the meaning of qualitative data through assigning successive parts of the material to the categories of a coding frame” (2014:170). It, therefore, is used to identify relevant data from case studies, appropriately codifying and categorising it for the purpose of appropriate evaluation. Although content analysis involves some level of statistical support, i.e. sampling, this research paid more attention to the fact that it allowed the researcher to make sense of data by breaking it down into segments so that it can be categorised and coded in the bid of establishing a pattern. It is important to note that this study did use purposive sampling when selecting the six episodes analysed here. This selection was made as the storylines depict the two matriarchs from *The River* and *The Herd* at their most stereotypical.

This study adopts Mayring’s (1983) general content analytic process model as presented below in Fig 5

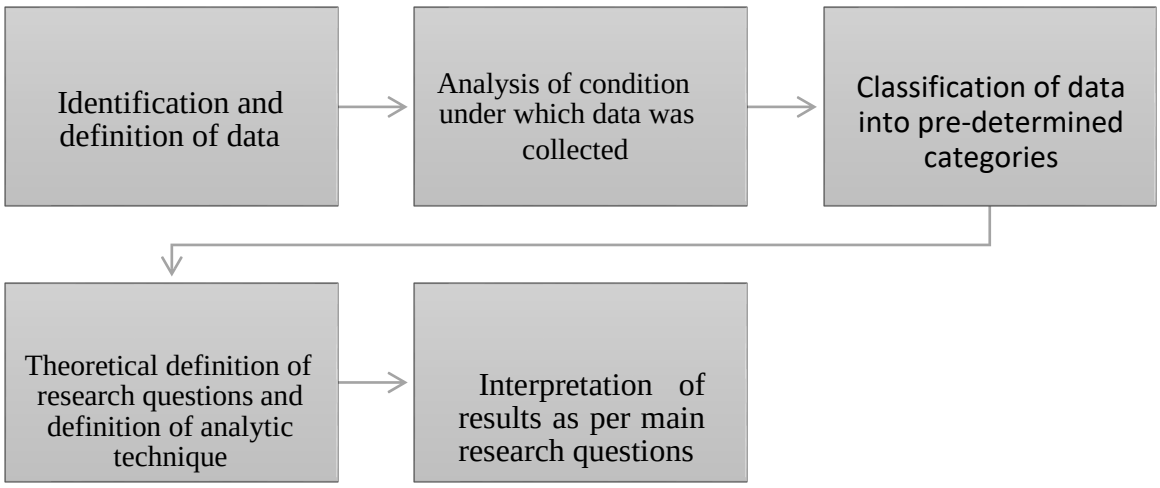

Fig 5: General Content Analytic Process (Mayring1983).

Analysing Qualitative Data

Case studies are complex in that they present the researcher with large volumes of data to undertake in-depth analyses that will produce concise and logical results. It is then imperative that a good analysis method is adopted. According to Flick (2014) data analysis within the qualitative framework is "the interpretation and classification of visual or linguistic material with the express aim to make statements about implicit and explicit dimensions and structures derived from the data" (2014:370). Based on Flick's sentiments, data analysis is essentially weaving together the recognition of themes after all relevant data has been collected. The goal here is to test the hypothesis presented earlier in this research.

When analysing the data gleaned from the six episodes, it is important to start with data management. Since the researcher conducted mostly desk research, the researcher's notes were the primary source of data. These notes were diligently preserved for any future reference. As a second step of the analysis, qualitative research required that I do coding.

Coding

Coding is the process of labelling and categorising data as per the appropriate heading. The purpose of this is to organise the data in a way that makes the underlying messages embedded in the data, more apparent to the researcher. In order to follow good coding practice, Nueman (2003) suggests steps to guide the researcher in developing a coding system. These steps are; labelling, defining, describing, flagging, and then giving examples of the codes. Below is an example of how this coding system was used in this study.

Table 2.

Label	Definition	Flag	Example
Social Artefacts, Clothes, Transportation, other	Artefacts that characters use to express their identity	Social artefacts are recorded. The types of cars and cell phones used by characters are recorded	Lindiwe wears flashy designer clothes and drives a fancy Mercedes reflecting her status in society.

The raw data is further broken down into the coding agenda below, to identify non predetermined categories

Raw Data	Preliminary Code	Emergent Code
In the show, *The River* Lindiwe kills Thato Mokoena and frames Happy for the murder.	The character exudes traits of evil	Evil and manipulative killer.
In *The Herd*, Ayanda uses her sexual favours to convince Muzi to sign over the Mthethwa farm to her.	The character uses sexual allures to get what she wants.	Manipulative Seductress

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/215666096_Qualitative_Content_Analysis

To further illuminate the research questions and the literature reviewed, this research undertook an additional coding agenda which sought to illustrate how layered the characters of Lindiwe and MaMngadi.

The River

Table 3.

Lindiwe as a Mother	
Raw Data	Emergent Code
Leaves Tumi at the river as a baby.	Abandons her children

Lindiwe as a Business Person	
Raw Data	Emergent Code
Kills Thato Mokoena because she does not want to give her mine workers a fair share of the proceeds from the 'Diamond of Africa'.	Ruthless businesswoman. Unfair and uncaring about her employees.

The Herd

Table 4.

MamNgadi as Wife	
Raw Data	Emergent Code
Cooks for her family. No help is apparent in the home, she seems to do all the work Puts potions in her husband's food so that he can do her bidding	Domesticated quintessential house-wife. Manipulative witch.

Validity and Reliability.

The goal of qualitative research is to examine the text and provide an understanding of the phenomenon under study. The emphasis here is an 'in-depth understanding 'of the contextual meaning of the phenomenon under investigation (Hsieh & Shannon 2007:111). So, to have this

study considered as ‘rich and reliable’, this researcher decided to use qualitative research as this methodology allows for the researcher to “continuously look for evidence that could be considered discrepant to the hypotheses” (Pascoe 2012:91). What this means is, credibility in qualitative research is continuously being established throughout the research process. With regards to external validity, the findings of this study are easily transferable, as this study follows a constructionist trajectory, which means that the findings of this study may be used to provide a framework for future studies around the representation of women.

Weaknesses of the Qualitative Research Approach

Although qualitative research has its strong aspects, purely qualitative research has its share of disadvantages. For one, qualitative research is heavily dependent on the researcher’s skills and therefore is open to my biases, meaning that data cannot be objectively verified. Also, scholars like Haradhan (2018) believe that findings are less likely to influence policy as they are not scientific. The researcher, however, disagrees with this as I believe that social meaning is best understood through human experience and observation.

Also qualitative researchers, according to Haradhan (2018), may struggle with data quantities which tend to be time-consuming when it comes to analysis and interpretation. This did pose a challenge to this study, as the six episodes chosen for analysis offered a lot of rich data which was worth debunking. The selection of the six episodes under analysis here was also difficult, as both case studies offered a wealth of information regarding the representation of women on screen, as the researcher was looking to see if the stereotypical representation of women is still relevant, the researcher found that most of the episodes in both *The River* and *The Herd* reflect women in the stereotypical binaries of evil seductress vs the good girl type.

Ethical Considerations

Research involves a series of resources, ideas and sometimes human interaction. When human interaction is involved, the researcher must take ethical issues into account. Since this research only involved desk research, ethical considerations did not affect this study much. It was however important for the researcher to ensure that personal biases did not affect the data collection and data analysis. Nevertheless, the ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Committee at the University of Witwatersrand before the commencement of this research.

This chapter has discussed the steps that were taken in the data collection and data analysis for the study. The next chapter will present the findings made from the data collected. The findings will be discussed in relation to the literature reviewed and the theoretical framework. This will be done in a bid to answer the research questions which underpin this study

CHAPTER FOUR

Why Did She Have to be Bad: Understanding the Matriarchs in *The Herd* and *The River*

In this chapter, the researcher presents the data gleaned and analyse it, in a bid to answer the research questions posed earlier by this study. The data analysis will be mostly guided by the theoretical framework and the literature reviewed in chapter two. These two facets are instrumental to the appropriate interpretation of data. Therefore, the gist of this chapter is to analyse the six episodes from both case studies with the view of deciphering whether the stereotype of 'the evil seductive and manipulative' female still takes centre stage in South African television narratives. The analysis will be presented comparatively according to the following categories, character interaction, and treatment, clothing makeup, and hair, body language, place and setting and script i.e. what they say and do. Setting will also be considered as a unit of analysis, though to a limited extent, as the river in *The River* plays a symbolic role in the lives of the matriarch Lindiwe Dikana, whereas the farm in *The Herd* is what sets the matriarch and the good woman on a collision course.

Over and above this, this chapter will offer a comprehensive character analysis that seeks to unpack the nature of the two matriarchs under study, to understand who they are as wives, mothers, and businesswomen. The section also shows the use of the binary opposition of good and evil in both case studies.

To begin, an overview of the selected episodes is necessary.

The River Season one

Episode one: *Blood Diamond*

The dominant narrative of this episode is the discovery of the 'Heart of Africa', a diamond worth millions of rand, and the killing of Thato Mokoena. The episode begins with scenes from episode one season two. In the opening scene, the main character and matriarch Lindiwe

Dlamini Dikana goes into her beautiful expensive home and shoots herself. From there, the episode cuts to one year before. We see Lindiwe is depicted as the quintessential wife and mother. She is preparing breakfast for her family. She is the perfect wife and mother, her husband Zweli Dikana even says that she is good both in the kitchen and in the bedroom.

From here, we cut to the boardroom, Lindiwe is now shown as a cut-throat businesswoman, who is ruthless and seems to care less about her employees. Her business is on the brink of collapse, and she is desperate to save it at all costs. The audience is also given a glimpse into Lindiwe's tough upbringing by a drunkard of a father and prostitute for a mother. It is because of this that she is determined to succeed at all costs. Her younger self is even shown to sacrifice her baby at the river.

Existing on the other side of the tracks, the audience is introduced to the Mokoena family, who, unlike the Dikana family, live in abject poverty. Their patriarch Thato Mokoena directly challenges Lindiwe Dikana to give workers better wages after discovering the 'Heart of Africa' diamond he found at the river banks. After this confrontation, Lindiwe selfishly decides to murder Thato Mokoena at the very same river banks where Thato found the diamond. Her nephew and henchman, Zolani, stands by as she drowns Thato. He is visibly shaken. Ironically, Thato Mokoena, years before, is shown as having rescued Lindiwe's abandoned daughter on the very same river banks that he is murdered.

What is most disturbing about this episode is that we are given a glimpse into Lindiwe's state of mind, as after murdering Thato Mokoena, she goes home to entertain guests at braai held at her lavish home. She arrives wearing her white dress, half covered in mud. This dress has later significance, when she trials for the murder of Thato Mokoena, she is unable to explain why she had mud on her dress. She changes into a new outfit, and it here that she notices she has left her earring at the scene of the crime. In later episodes, the loss of this earing results in Lindiwe murdering Happy, her domestic helper's son, and coincidentally, Lindiwe's own son's lover.

The title of this episode is important as it points to the fact that Lindiwe's money is blood money, which will ultimately destroy and corrupt the matriarch.

Season one: *Life is a River*

In this episode, Lindiwe gives an impassioned plea to once again try and save Khanyisa Diamonds. The episode begins in the Dikana household, with Lindiwe speaking about the importance of family. This is however ironic, as it is in this episode that Lindiwe attempts to bury her first daughter Tumi Mokoena.

After believing that she has buried Tumi alive, Lindiwe is again seen to rush home and prepare to attend a dinner party with her husband. The last scene of this episode is mirrored with that of season one, as when Lindiwe realises that she has just buried her firstborn daughter alive, she shoots herself. Out of the two-hundred and sixty episodes in season one, this is the only episode that shows Lindiwe as an empathetic human being. Her children make her vulnerable.

Season two: *The Pretoria Massacre*

It's the wedding day for Zweli Dikana and his new soon to be wife Gail Mathabatha. A group of men dressed in army apparel has stormed into the wedding killing all in sight, and demanding to see Gail Mathabatha. Everyone is in a panic, and the show's main cast cowers inside the Dikana mansion. One of the army commanders gets a hold of Andile, Lindiwe's middle child and threatens to kill him unless Gail gives them the 'code'. In what seems to be an act of heroism, Lindiwe, dressed in red, swoops in and saves her son, and starts to kill the army that has held her familyand the wedding guest's hostage. Zweli and Zolani team up and also assist Lindiwe in taking out the militia.

As Zolani and Zweli fight off the militia, Zweli asks Lindiwe to take Gail into a bedroom upstairs and make sure she is safe. Gail thanks Lindiwe for her heroism and explains that she does not know the men and does not know what they want. At this point, Lindiwe explains that

she had orchestrated the entire incident with the militia to destroy Gail and Zweli's union. Gail then calls Lindiwe evil, to which she replies "they call me Madlabantu, Satan himself has suckled my breast" (Quote from subtitle episode 145). She then shoots Gail and places the gun on one of the soldiers lying in the room unconscious. Zweli and Zolani come into the room to find Gail shot dead, and as Zweli tries to resuscitate Gail, he is shot in the back by the soldier whom Lindiwe had assumed was unconscious.

The Herd
Season one: *Episode 10*

This episode revolves around the matriarch of *The Herd*, MaMngadi murdering her youngest son Nkosana. The episode opens with Bheki, the patriarch rushing his daughter Kayise to the hospital after she collapses. He is deeply concerned about her condition and urges doctors to assist her. In the following scene, Dingani, MaMngadi's firstborn son, appears in a state of confusion. He refuses to talk and just stares into space. When his younger sister, Dumazile tries to snap him out of him, the audience is shown what Dingani is seeing in his head, which is MaMngadi in bed with him, laughing and telling him what to do. She has bewitched him, turning him into her side-kick/henchman

MaMngadi, dressed in a red dress, tries to convince Bheki to offer his daughter Kayise, as a human sacrifice. Bheki slaps MaMngadi for this suggestion, prompting her to decide to offer Dingani as a sacrifice instead "Dingani, I will make you my sacrifice, I will rip you alive and take your liver and give it to Bheki" (Quote from subtitle Episode 10). Before MaMngadi can kill Dingani, she overhears Nkosana plotting to kill his father. She then decides to poison him and after he dies, she rips out his liver. She later convinces Dumazile to cook this liver and give it to her father Bheki. Feeding him Nkosana's liver gives MaMngadi power to bewitch Bheki and therefore control him. This is for one end; to kill Kayise.

Once Bheki is done eating his son's liver, MaMngadi appears on the bed, wearing red lingerie. Even though earlier in the episode the audience is made privy to the fact that MaMngadi has been kicked out of her matrimonial home, she, after bewitching her husband, is welcomed back.

After having sex, MaMngadi, Bheki and Kayise appear in the Mthethwa kraal. MaMngadi implores Bheki to “use your daughter's blood, to write our surname in the stars” (Quote from subtitle Episode 10).

Season two: *Episode 11*

This episode revolves around MaMngadi’s struggle to choose good over evil. The opening scene puts MaMngadi at a church, where she tries to reach out to God. She seeks advice from a priest who gives her holy water to protect herself and her family. Meanwhile, a six-month pregnant Dumazile has been coaxed into drinking a potion that induces early labour. Ayanda, who seeks great power from the Great Witch MaMthembu, has teamed up with Smanga to remove the foetus’s heart so that MaMthembu can eat it. Once this is done, Smanga takes the baby’s heart to MaMthembu who prepares a small ceremony before she eats the heart. Smanga makes it a point to exclude his partner in crime, Ayanda from any rewards he may get from MaMthembu.

MaMngadi, Kayise and Muzi find out that Smanga has taken the baby’s heart to MaMthembu. MaMngadi, heartbroken by this, vows revenge for her grandchild, deciding to go back to the ‘dark side’ indefinitely. She does so by throwing away the holy water and changing her hair and clothing to suit her new dispensation.

Ayanda, introduced in episode one of this season as Muzi’s girlfriend decides to get into witchcraft in a bid to entrap Muzi into a loveless marriage. She undergoes an initiation process put together by MaMngadi’s former assistants, MaMzobe and Nomathemba. She emerges from this, a powerful witch.

Season two: *Episode Twelve*

This episode opens with the battle between mother and daughter, MaMthembu and MaMngadi. Surprisingly, MaMngadi easily defeats her mother and turns her into a snake. After this, she proceeds to eat her grandchild's heart, to regain all of her power as a witch. At the Mthethwa farm, Smanga realises that MaMthembu tricked him and gave him no powers at all. This leaves him vulnerable and defenceless when MamNgadi comes to kill him. After he dies, MaMngadi reduces Smanga to a puddle of water.

After realizing the power, she now has, Ayanda puts a potion in Muzi's food. When he is under her spell, she seduces him and has sex with him. She is also able to manipulate Muzi into marriage and thereafter, convinces him to sign a will that benefits her. When MamNgadi finds out what Ayanda has done to her son, she and Ayanda engage in battle, which results in the death of MamNgadi, and the emergence of a new matriarch and witch, Ayanda.

Analysing the two evil matriarchs of *The Herd* and *The River*

This section aims to answer the key question of whether the evil seductress trope is still apparent in contemporary South African television. Using the key facts (of script, place and setting, costume and character interaction), the researcher now shows how the characters are representative of the western fatal woman. The key identifiers of script, place and setting, costume and character interaction will also allow this study to show the extent to which these are reflective of women within the South African society. To completely address the research question posed in chapter one, this section of the study will also draw on previously reviewed literature, especially the Feminist Film Theory and Bhabha's representation theory.

Understanding Lindiwe Dikana of *The River*

Lindiwe Dlamini Dikana is a middle-aged wealthy black woman with three children, Mbali, Andile and Itumeleng (the daughter she abandoned as a young woman). She is married to Zweli Dikana a police commissioner. She is a self-made C.E.O at Khanyisa Diamonds. Her wealth

and success are visible in her interaction with other characters, her clothes and make-up, her house and what she says. But all that glitters is not gold, as Lindiwe will do anything, including manipulation and murder to maintain or acquire more wealth.

Lindiwe as a Mother

On the surface, Lindiwe Dikana seems like a good mother. She seems to genuinely care about the welfare of her two children, Andile and Mbali. In episode one of season one, she is shown cooking breakfast for her children. This means she does assume some qualities of a care-taker, who, to some degree is involved in the physical care of her family. She also, in the same episode, says that all her actions, good or bad are for the benefit of her family. Her presence as a mother immediately subverts one of the key ideas around the fatal woman, whom Doana (2013:13) describes as an existentially non-maternal being, who produces nothing for the world, but is rather a cruel predator.

Although she may be a present and somewhat caring mother to her two children Mbali and Andile, she assumes a completely different parental persona for her first daughter Itumeleng. As presented in episode one, Lindiwe is seen leaving her infant at the river banks. She essentially abandons her, in an isolated and hazardous space, with no concern whether her child would die. Lindiwe abandoning her baby, is, therefore, in line with the western ideal of the fatal woman, whom, according to MacAuthor (2013), tends to "reject all marital and maternal duties in pursuit of wealth and power" (2013:1). Lindiwe goes further than just abandoning Itumeleng as a child, she later, in season one, episode two hundred and sixty, tries to kill Itumeleng, because she threatened to expose Lindiwe.

It seems, if something, including her children, threaten Lindiwe's ability to generate or maintain wealth, she easily discards them. This is also true of her son, Andile, whom Lindiwe, in episode one attacks viciously during a meeting for failing to do his job, which costs Khanyisa Diamonds money. She later, after discovering that he is gay, posts a sex tape of him engaging in homosexual sex, to embarrass him. Important to note, Lindiwe's desire to embarrass her son publicly is not because she is homophobic, but is rather driven by her anger towards the loss of

revenue since Andile was engaged to the Minister of Mineral Resources' daughter. Thus, his sexual preference directly affects Lindiwe's business as her relationship with the Minister, resulting in a loss of income for Lindiwe.

Although Lindiwe seems to care the most about her daughter Mbali, she once more abandons her, when she is at her most vulnerable. In season two, Lindiwe is chased away from her marital home by her husband. Heartbroken by this, their youngest daughter Mbali, turns to drugs and alcohol to numb the pain of her parent's looming divorce and the destruction of her happy home life. On several occasions, Mbali tries to reach out to Lindiwe for motherly comfort but receives no response. This pushes Mbali to the edge, and she almost loses her life to drugs.

Lindiwe is exceptionally cruel to her stepdaughter, Nomonde. This hate, although not well articulated in the episodes being studies, it is apparent in other instances where Lindiwe is shown to have several spats with stepdaughter. For example, in one incident Lindiwe gifts all her children with a million rand for Christmas, but intentionally leaves out Nomonde. She also threatens to kill Nomonde several times. Being the evil stepmother, to some extent, likens Lindiwe to traditional *femme fatales* such as Phyllis Dietrichson of the *Double Indemnity* (1944) who show little affection towards her stepdaughter Lola. Characterising Lindiwe this way edges her even more towards the evil manipulative seductive trope associated with Phyllis and other *noir* fatales of the 1940s.

Interestingly, Lindiwe has a complex relationship with her nephew Zolani, whom she, by all intent and purpose, has adopted. She seems to genuinely care for Zolani and has a closer relationship with him than she does any of her children. In a '*Behind the Scenes'* interview with Sindi Dlathu, who plays Lindiwe Dikana, she explains that her character adopts and raises Zolani in an attempt to fill the hole left by the daughter she dumped at the river bank. "Raising Zolani as her own is an attempt to try and redeem herself. It is her second chance to raising the child she has abandoned" (Dlathu 2019). Despite the love Lindiwe has for Zolani, she exposes him to her dark secrets which involve murder and corruption, things that one would assume a parent would protect their child from. Over and above burdening Zolani with her secrets, she also relies on him to do her dirty work, for example, in episode one, after she kills Thato

Mokoena, she turns to Zolani to go and find the earring she had left at the crime scene. In a later episode of season one, Lindiwe also asks Zolani to kill Happy (a family friend who finds out Lindiwe killed Thato Mokoena), essentially turning him into a murderer. Such actions by Lindiwe, once again strip away any sort of maternal traits she may have had.

It is important to note that Zolani, in season two, episode eight, eventually realises that Lindiwe is not at all the mother figure he assumed she was, in a heart-wrenching monologue, Zolani laments his relationship with Lindiwe

> **Zolani**: I was thinking, that time when I was a child. You came to my house to fetch me. You found me smelling like urine. Vero was nowhere to be found. You told me you were going to be my mother. That you'd take care of me. I believed you Lindiwe. Thought I was finally going to have a mother. So, the first time you asked me to do something illegal for you, I didn't mind or ask a lot of questions because you had done everything for me. So, I believed we shared a mother-son bond. Then you asked me for a second time and a third time. All this time I was telling myself you loved me, but no! you were training me to become your puppet (Quote from subtitle, episode eight)

After expressing his true feelings to his aunt, Zolani tries to smother Lindiwe to death with a pillow.

The characterisation of Lindiwe as a bad mother, therefore, reinforces the historical ideological continuum around the fatal woman, which suggests that only a good nurturing mother is beneficial to mankind. According to Anderson (1995), "the selfish and single-minded woman who is only concerned for herself is abhorrent" (1995:24). The former therefore becomes a necessity within patriarchal structures, whilst the latter must be either re-inscribed within the safe workings of the status quo or be destroyed (Anderson 1995:24). Drawing from the above statement, it then comes as no surprise that Lindiwe, is at some point punished severely by her children. After the Thato Mokoena murder trial, they all abandon her and leave her to suffer in extreme poverty. Itumeleng tries to kill Lindiwe on two occasions, the first in season two, where she tries to burn her alive in her shack, as punishment for all the hurt and pain Lindiwe

has caused her and later in season three, where she attempts to kill Lindiwe by cutting her brakes. This however leads to the death of her younger sister Mbali. The characterisation of Lindiwe as a mother, hence, is similar to the mother Studler (1985) refers to, who is "both sacred and profane, loving and rejecting, frustratingly mobile yet the essence of rhythmic stability and stillness" (1985:609). The act of punishing the mother figure is, again, one that is similar to what women in *noir* films go through, for example, Phyllis of *Double indemnity* (1944) is ultimately shot down by Walter Neff.

Lindiwe the Business Woman

According to Coombes (2003), the post-independence era saw the rise in the telling of 'new stories' about the home and nation, due to paradigm shifts in the socio-political space. Instead of focusing on the traditional representation of apartheid times, where black people were marginalised characters on screen. The post-independence representations, saw these marginalised groups take on new roles on screen. Women, especially, are shown to tackle the patriarchal order, occupying powerful roles in the workplace. This is what we see with the character of Lindiwe, a strong black woman, at the top of the mining industry. Her characterisation as a high profile C.E.O is unusual as the telenovela genre is one that tends to revolve around family, with most characters depicted in a family setting at home. Characters like Zweli Dikana, for example, are never depicted within a work setting, even though the audience is privy to the fact that he is a police commissioner. The audience is only given a glance at what his work entails by introducing his colleagues such as Detective Tshabalala, who meets Zweli at the Dikana mansion, and never at his 'office'. Lindiwe, therefore, becomes one of the few characters in the telenovela who is frequently depicted at work as the C.E.O of Khanyisa Diamonds. She is smart and capable in her job, yet she is ultimately motivated by money, and making more of it without doing the bulk of the work. She is compelled to prove her power over males, for instance, in a scene in episode one, speaking to a room full of male employees, Lindiwe demands that they find ways to rescue Khanyisa Diamonds from what is presented as imminent closure. This is similar to the actions of the classic *femme fatale* Bridget O'Shaughnessy in the *Maltese Falcon* (1941), who degrades her workers by calling them

‘maggots’ and ‘bastards’. Lindiwe, like Bridgit, also constantly refers to her employees and ‘*izinja’* (dogs). Lindiwe, like many fatal women on screen, makes use of foul language, contradicting her well-groomed exterior and feminine characteristics, and therefore challenging the social expectations of her gender, in that “she reverses male and female roles … and, above all, she embodies the female desire for power, which is both produced and frustrated by control, not over men, but over feminine passivity” (Fiske 1995:346).

Traditionally, the narrative in the scene described above would have been driven by a male character. So what we see here then becomes a subversion of gender roles, where Lindiwe calls the shots in the boardroom, without the aid of a man. Her power is also apparent in her home, as, although Zweli has his career, Lindiwe’s work takes precedence, as it is all they talk about, little is ever mentioned about Zweli and his work. She also makes more money than he does and has more power and influence within the social strata in which they exist. Lindiwe’s power within the home and her work setting, therefore, point to effect that feminism has had on postcolonial African societies, where “the feminism culture emphasizes educational and professional opportunities for women and girls; freedom of choice with respect to work, domesticity, and parenting; and physical and particularly sexual empowerment” (Tasker & Negra 2007:2)

Her ability to offer her family all the comforts they desire, it can be argued, presents Lindiwe as the embodiment of the ‘woman’ described in chapter two, who is hardworking and industrious in her endeavours to feed and clothe her family (Ukoyo 2006:63). However, true to the nature of the fatal woman, Lindiwe, unfortunately, is caricatured as an iron lady/viper, who masterminds many deaths in the pursuit of wealth. So even though her work allows her to take care of her family, her hunger to make money is driven by her selfishness.

It is of interest to note that, those that enjoy the profits from Lindiwe's murderous labour, retain their high rostrums in society. Take Zweli for example, who, despite knowing that Lindiwe uses unscrupulous ways to generate income, continues to enjoy the proceeds of crime.

Despite spending a significant amount of time in her workspace, Lindiwe spends little of that time, attending to actual business affairs. This may be linked to the fact that Lindiwe does not necessarily work out of necessity. I suggest she works to prove that she can beat social expectations about women. Her time at the workplace is therefore spent scheming and plotting against her enemies, for example, in episode one, Lindiwe and Zolani plan to kill Thato Mokoena in Lindiwe's office, then, in episode two hundred and sixty, she attempts to bury Itumeleng at the mine. We also know that Happy, was also killed and buried at the mine and in season three, Lindiwe and Zolani start to use the mine work-shop as a torture space, torturing three people, including her previous henchmen Tshabalala.

Since Lindiwe does little of actual work, she is more immersed in using brute force, bribery and unfair practice to ensure revenue generation. In episode one, she fails to negotiate with Thato Mokoena regarding the proceeds of the *'Heart of Africa'* diamond. Instead of considering Thato's suggestions to reward miners for their hard work, she opts to murder Thato to avoid doing this. In later episodes, Lindiwe bribes government officials (something she does consistently throughout the telenovela) such as Minister Joyful, to get the mining rights she and she even tries to bribe community leader, Walter in an endeavour to cheat her workers out of fair remuneration.

Lindiwe's position within the mining industry cannot be attributed to having business skillsets, but rather to trigger her nefarious activities. Her actions play into the ideology that women are incapable of handling powerful positions. One could also argue that Lindiwe's criminal behaviour is an attempt to reflect broader societal issues. I say this, as, South African soap operas tend to adopt a social realist approach by showcasing characters grappling with social issues such as crime, substance abuse, rape and domestic violence, among others (Marx2008).

Still, I believe that the portrayal of Lindiwe's work-life in this manner is most unfortunate, as, there are a fair number of a new generation of women, who are free from traditional burdens and are succeeding in the work space. So, one would then ask, what then is the benefit of presenting Lindiwe Dikana as a corrupt businesswoman? Besides the entertainment value it carries, such portrayals may act to either offer reflections for possible change or to 'stabilise and rectify the existing order' which implies that women abandoning their homes and children for their professional career upsets the societal fabric.

Lindiwe as a Wife

The River, typical to the feminine centre held by soap operas and telenovelas, the main focus is around family and romantic interests. The show does, however, as mentioned earlier, allow for women, more specifically, the main character, to be financially independent. Despite this independence, Lindiwe is still represented as 'incomplete' without romantic affection. It hence comes as no surprise that Lindiwe puts a lot of effort into keeping her marriage intact.

In episode one, Lindiwe is described as the perfect wife by her husband, who says that Lindiwe is not only a good cook, she is good in bed. This statement is one that reflects a culturally approved perception about women, that women are tasked with taking care of men. Lindiwe seems to align with this cultural sentiment, as in many instances, she does 'take care' of Zweli. An illustration of this is when Lindiwe practically dedicates her life to caring for Zweli's when he is in a wheelchair in season two.

Their marriage is mostly characterised by Lindiwe's obsession to keep Zweli as her own. She does this mostly by eliminating any threats that may come in between herself and Zweli. For example, she kills Zweli's lovers in season one and season two. She does this to punish them for trying to take her husband from her. Interestingly, she never punishes Zweli for stepping out of their marriage. I believe she does this, not only because she loves Zweli, but also because she regards Zweli as her possession, one that she views as essential to her being successful. What is important to note here is that, although Lindiwe does fall into the *femme fatale* binary

because of her affinity to violence, she, however, unlike the classic femme fatales, does to some degree, love her husband, even though she manipulates him in several instances.

Clothing and Make-up

As previously intimated, to better understand the characterisation of Lindiwe, this researcher looked at Lindiwe's make-up and clothing. According to Hobson (2003), make-up, hair and clothing can be used to further understand the character's personality and how this character develops from stage to stage (2003:68). The aim here is to align make-up and clothing to the characteristics described above, with the intent to ultimately unveil the extent to which Lindiwe conforms to the stereotypical representation of women.

Lindiwe, in all three case study episodes, is always dressed in expensive designer clothing. All her clothes are classy and she appears mostly in high-heels. She also wears a lot of diamonds, either as earrings, bracelets or necklaces. This is a symbol of her wealth and prestige. Her hair is either kept in a natural bun or modern hair extensions.

In episode one, Lindiwe wears a tight-fitting white dress. This dress gets soiled in the river during the Thato Mokoena murder. In later episodes, this dress becomes the centre of the investigation around Thato Mokoena's murder. This dress, to some degree, becomes the symbol of her undoing, as witnesses, including her son Andile and her domestic worker MaMflora, testify that Lindiwe's dress was muddy, without a credible explanation. The choice to dress Lindiwe in a white dress when she murders Thato is interesting, as white is usually associated with purity. One can argue that in the opening scene of episode one, the audience is presented with a Lindiwe who is angelic and is a quintessential home-maker, however, as the episode progresses, the portrait of the first scene is slowly undone and the audience begins to see Lindiwe for what she is; a wolf in sheep's clothing. Symbolically, the white dress is tainted with mud from the river where she drowns Thato Mokoena and therefore signalling that Lindiwe is not pure.

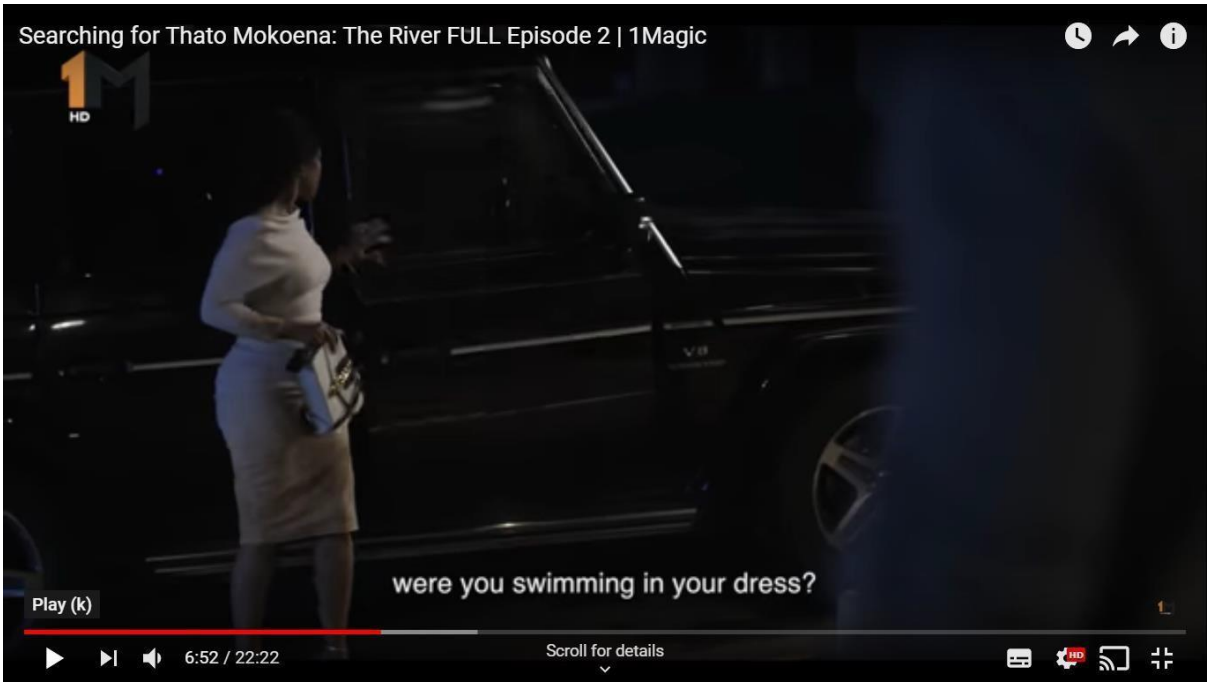

Fig 6: The River Season 1, Episode 1.

It is however important to note that *noir femme fatales* also appear in white apparel when committing murders, take for example Mildred Pierce from the film Mildred Pierce *1945* and Phyllis from *The Unholy Wife (*1957).



Fig 7: The Unholy Wife 1957



Fig 8: Mildred Pierce 1945.

https://za.pinterest.com/penta0555/femme-fatales-film-noir-and-beyond-with-guns/

To further illustrate Lindiwe's evilness and savagery, her hair becomes undone during the murder, making her look barbaric or Medusa like. She, in this instance, is the personification of all evil.



Fig 9:http://medusathenandnow.weebly.com/

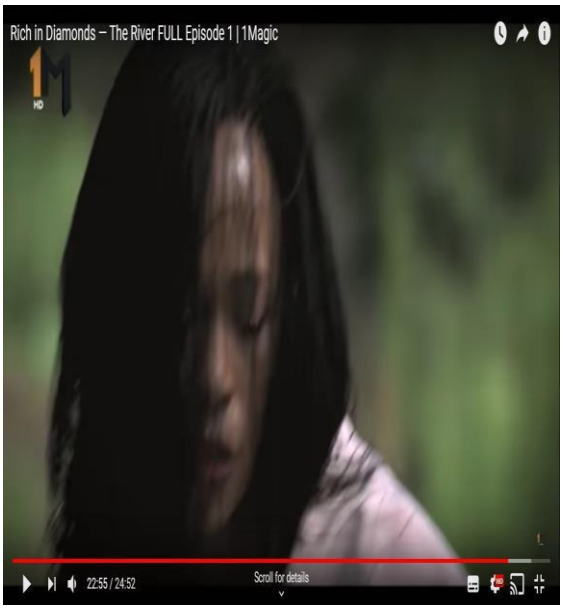

Fig 10:The River Season 1, Episode 1

In season two episode one-hundred and forty-five, it is Zweli's wedding to Gail Mathabatha, and Lindiwe is dressed in a bright red top, her nemesis, Gail Mathabatha is dressed in her white wedding gown. In the last scene of this episode, Lindiwe shoots Gail, because she believes Gail

has stolen her life. What is interesting here, are the codes presented by the clothes worn by Lindiwe and Gail. The colour RED, as described in chapter two, is used to present danger, whilst WHITE represents purity. Cleary, the codes here signify the dangerous nature of Lindiwe, whilst depicting Gail as innocent. This is also reminiscent of the Madonna image discussed in chapter two, where Gail is the Madonna, and Lindiwe is the devil. She even describes herself as being worse than the devil, saying "the devil himself suckled my breast" (Quote from subtitle episode one hundred and forty-five). Therefore, the representation of Lindiwe and Gail in this manner could be said to ascribe to the colonial ideologies, which seek to cement the notion that black women are inherently bad, whilst white women are good and pure. One can also pick up some historical connotations in that Gail, from Lindiwe's perspective, has taken away everything from her. Gail, therefore, represents the forefathers of white South Africans, whom natives, here represented by Lindiwe, are regarded as having stolen their land, and whom, they hold in much contempt.



Fig 11: The River Season 2, Episode 145.

When Zweli takes another lover, in season one, Lindiwe again does everything in her power to eliminate her rival. Sheree, Zweli's lover, is very much like Lindiwe, as she is manipulative and does everything in her power in pursuit of the perfect family and money. She wants Zweli and Khanyisa Diamonds. In the scene where the murder takes place, Lindiwe is once again dressed in red. Her rival is in all black, which portrays her as a black widow of sorts. This is

done to illustrate that she is not as innocent as Gail, because she drugs Zweli, to easily seduce him. Nevertheless, it is clear here that black women assume villainous roles in *The River*, whereas white characters like Gail Mathabatha assume virtuous and righteous roles. This could be linked to assertions made by Lavani (1995), who states that women of colour are often placed on film and television platforms for the enjoyment of white males. However, once their inhibitions are freed, they tend to become caricatured into fatal women, as now they pose an exponential threat to colonial identities.



Fig 12: The River Season 1, Episode 134.

Place and Setting

The river is a central location in this telenovela, as it propels the action that takes place in the telenovela, setting the main characters on a collision course. For one, the river is symbolic as it is the place where Lindiwe dumps her infant daughter, who is later found by Thato Mokoena. It is also the place that the alluvial diamond, the '*Heart of Africa'* is found, and later, the place where Thato Mokoena is murdered. The river, therefore, is pivotal to the story, so much so that Lindiwe, in episode one does acknowledge that the river would shift the course of all of their

lives, and therefore shaping who she is, and what she stands for "you see this place will change our lives forever" (Quote from subtitles episode one)

The telenovela also revolves around the mine, Khanyisa Diamonds. In this space, as mentioned prior, Lindiwe and Zolani do little 'work' and tend to use it as plotting ground., devising most of their devious plans here. In some instances, the pair even executes their plans at the mine, as it is a burial ground for many of Lindiwe's enemies. In season one, Lindiwe even attempts to murder her daughter Tumi at the mine.

Another significant space is Lindiwe's home office, which, in episode one, illustrates Lindiwe's power, sophistication and wealth. It is also of significance as it places Lindiwe away from the traditional telenovela norms, where women are often confined to the kitchen. In this sense, this space challenges gendered norms, as Lindiwe tends to assume a masculine deportment in this space, by consuming large amounts of whiskey and constant swearing. She becomes what Bonovich (2015) describes as 'phallic girls' who attain equality with their male counterparts and yet are still able to remain attractive to them (2015:56).



Fig 13: River Season 1, Episode 1.

The Dikana home, itself is an important space as all the action in season two, episode one hundred and forty-five, takes place here. The home, although big and opulent, clearly seeks to establish the matriarch as the key character. I say this because one of the biggest and most

pronounced props in the house is a portrait of Lindiwe Dikana, which hangs at the top of the staircase, for all to see. This portrait is significant because, in many instances, it gets destroyed or displaced, but always seems to find its way back to the top of that staircase, and therefore signifying the turbulence experienced by Lindiwe, who, although may fall, always seems to make it back to the top.

Lastly, it may be of importance to discuss 'Refilwe' the township in which the poorer characters exist. Although Lindiwe does not frequent the township in episodes analysed here, the township importantly offers a backdrop that enables us to understand why and how Lindiwe became a fatal woman. In episode two-hundred and sixty of season one, Lindiwe speaks of her childhood in Refilwe, and how the hardships of Refilwe shaped her to become a hardworking and successful woman. Refilwe, consequently, is important as it illustrates the troubled upbringing Lindiwe had. This, then helps audiences to relate to Lindiwe, as one of their own, who, through all odds, made it out of the gutter.

Character Interaction

Lindiwe is a no-nonsense character, who does not like to interact with those in lower classes than she is unless it has something to do with money. In episode one of season one, she chastises Zolani for being a weakling after he expresses his discomfort at the fact that he had just witnessed a murder. She essentially tells him to stop being weak and to accept that the murder was necessary for the survival of their family. Asking Zolani to be strong, is a replication of what Zulu men are expected to be, and invoking this in Zolani, is a tool Lindiwe uses in this instance, to manipulate him into doing her bidding. Manipulating Zolani plays into the stereotypical trope of the fatal woman, who manipulates everyone to get what she wants.

In episodes one hundred and forty-five of season two and two hundred and sixty in season one, Lindiwe shows that she has little regard for human life, as she callously kills Gail Mathabatha and attempts to kill Tumi. Her lack of remorse during these two acts, again, is an identifying marker of the fatal woman trope.

Body Language and Script

As mentioned earlier, body language and script (i.e. what the character says) play a pivotal role in presenting who the character actually is, and what they seek to represent. Lindiwe often speaks in Zulu and is scripted very often to use foul language, often snapping and screaming at those around her. The script dictates that she is assertive as she promotes the strength of women in a male-dominated space. Most of her script asserts her as a criminal (often referring to herself as Kalashnikov, a reference to a Russian assault rifle, popularly known as the AK-47 and widely used by criminals). She also refers to herself as 'Madlabantu, which means person/people eater or as the devil's mother "the devil himself has suckled my breast" (Quote from subtitles episode one hundred and forty-five). This type of dialogue is all designed to illustrate Lindiwe's evil persona. This evilness is further exemplified through the character's facial expressions.



Fig 14: The River Season 2, Episode 145

The characterisation of MamNgadi of *The Herd*

MamNgadi is a middle-aged housewife who lives on a farm in rural KZN with her husband, three children and step-daughter. She, like Lindiwe, will do anything, including murder, to amass wealth for herself and her family.

MamNgadi as a Mother

The plot in this drama revolves around the matriarch, who is trying to perform a ritual killing of her stepdaughter Kayise, to ensure that the family retains their wealth. MaMngadi has nothing personal against Kayise, her motive is to strictly ensure that MaMngadi's biological children and herself, continue to enjoy the luxuries that come with wealth. To ensure their continued wealth, MaMngadi, therefore, believes that "that it was better to sacrifice one life for the good of the community than for all to perish" (Awolalu 1992:168). MaMngadi is therefore considered to be a witch, who uses "mystical or supernatural power that causes harm including death (Offiong 1979:82).

MaMngadi not only wants to kill her stepdaughter, but she also wants to kill her son Nkosana, whom she suspects wants to destroy the family. After his murder, she removes his liver and feeds it to her husband, in an act of witchcraft, designed to control her husband. Filicide shows the extent to which MaMngadi is cold-hearted and how far she is willing to go to ensure that she retains power and wealth. MaMngadi even eats her own grandchild's heart, also in a bid to attain more power.

What is interesting about MaMngadi is that she does not fit into the binary of the barren witch, described in the *Malleus Maleficarum* (1487), as she has a husband and children. Nevertheless, she is still presented as having the core characteristics of a witch who lures, controls, and conspires against her kith and kin.

Like Lindiwe Dikana, MaMngadi abandons her first daughter at a stream, as a younger woman. Now a woman with resources, she does little to try and find the daughter she abandoned, but

rather, tries her best to indulge the children she has produced in her current marriage. Her children are her world, especially her firstborn son Muzi, whom she is grooming to take over the family farm. Despite her love for Muzi, she, like her counterpart Lindiwe, manipulates him and exposes him to the dark world of witchcraft and murder.

Like many *femme fatale's,* MaMngadi is later punished by her children who try to kill her by setting her house on fire.

What is of most significance with the character of MaMngadi is that her actions as a mother are directly linked to her mother and how she was raised. In episode eleven of season two, one comes to the understanding that MaMngadi manipulative and evil manner is derived from the behaviour of her mother, MaMthembu, the 'Great Witch'. MaMthembu, fits the traditional criteria of a witch, as she is old and husband-less. The differentiating aspect that she has from the witches described in *Malleus Maleficarum* (1487), is that she has a child. However, MaMthembu hates her daughter, and she considers killing MaMngadi, telling her, "no one would miss you anyway" (Quote from subtitle episode 11). In the final scene of episode eleven, MaMngadi finally destroys her mother, an act similar to that of her children in season one.

MaMngadi as a Wife

True to the nature of the evil seductress trope, the character of MaMngadi often uses sexual allures to control the men around her. Each time she bewitches Nyambose by feeding him liver, she lures him into bed, almost as an act of 'sealing the deal'. She has to have her husband hooked sexually, as it seems that sex is the only way she can exploit him into giving her what she wants. MaMngadi, like the traditional evil fatal woman, uses her allures to draw her husband into a dangerous situation, which results in her murdering him to evade prison. She, unlike Lindiwe of *The River,* does not love her husband. He is simply a tool that she wishes to use to attain wealth.

In season two, episode six, there is further testament to the fact that MaMngadi never loved her husband, as it is revealed that MaMngadi was unfaithful to Nyambose, bearing a child with his

older brother Bheki. She manipulated Nyambose into believing this child is his, therefore successfully entrapping and ensnaring Nyambose into marriage. Pregnancy is not the only way she wins Nyambose over, as she also orchestrates the murder of Nyambose's first wife. She, like her counterpart in *The River,* murders to secure her marriage

Despite the power she wields against Nyambose, MaMngadi, is somewhat submissive. We see this in the instance where Nyambose slaps her, and she does not respond. She also refers to Nyambose as 'Baba' (Father/Man of the house) which is a sign of respect and high regard. In season two, she is also physically attacked by her husband's brother Smanga. The fact that MaMngadi allows men to treat her this way is perplexing, as the audience is privy to the fact that MamNgadi does not respect nor fear her husband or any man. So why does she allow herself to become a victim of physical abuse? Is it simply her manipulative nature which she uses to appear as though she subscribes to the traditional social hierarchy where women existed under the strict confines of obedient wife and mother? Or is this act by Nyambose, an attempt by the writers to re-affirm the disrupted masculine order.



Fig 15: The Herd Season 2, Episode 6.

The television drama does hint at the fact that men are MaMngadi's weakness, which is in contravention to the fatal seductress trope. What is problematic is the inclusion of this scene

without proper contextualisation. It is difficult to empathise with MaMngadi, as her character refutes empathy, and encourages apathy. What this does, unfortunately, is that it dismantles all government and civil society efforts to curb physical and psychological abuse of women, as this scene asserts male dominance. Nevertheless, the scene highlights an important notion regarding violence, domestic abuse can happen to any kind of woman, whether successful or powerful. Whatever the motivation behind this patriarch type motivated reaction from Nyambose, it is one that is should be avoided, especially in a country like South Africa, where crimes against women are exceptionally high. It may then be of interest for this researcher to expand this idea in a later project, to better understand the motives of the writers to present such characters on South African television.

Essentially, MamNgadi' s characterisation is similar to the *femme fatale* in soap operas as described by Fiske, as she

> turns traditional feminine characteristics (which are often seen as weaknesses ensuring her subordination) into a source of strength. She uses pregnancy (real or alleged) as a weapon, she uses her insight into people to manipulate them, and she uses her sexuality for her own ends, not for masculine pleasure. She reverses male and female roles … and, above all, she embodies the female desire for power, which is both produced and frustrated by the over men, but over feminine passivity. (Fiske 1995:346)

MamNgadi as a Career Woman

MamNgadi does little to no work regarding the family farm. She is not a career woman, as per modern prescriptions, but rather does some 'work' in the supernatural space. She then could be regarded as a professional witch, who even has a 'workspace', where those that require her services can visit. We see, in episode four of season one, her younger daughter Dumazile, suggesting to her boyfriend who is suffering from a strange disease, to consult with MamNgadi.

MamNgadi works with two assistants, and together they conjure "harmful medicines, charms, magic and any other means or devices in causing any illness, misfortune or death in any person

or in causing any injury to any person" (Mafico 1986; Simmons2000). They aim to acquire wealth using these clandestine methods, as it is widely believed in African societies that the best way to be a successful businessperson, one must engage with the occult. MaMngadi is a no-nonsense boss and takes her 'work' as head witch very seriously. She is harsh towards her assistants, and in one episode, demands that they get on with work and stop lazing around "leave the tea alone and get to work! I don't keep you here just for you to laze around" (Quote from subtitle episode 1, season 1)



Fig 16: Season 1, Episode 4.

Witchcraft in *The Herd* is, therefore, a central economic feature, as the distribution of wealth is skewed towards MaMngadi, who uses sorcery to acquire wealth at the expense of others. This reflects a broader societal issue, where people tend to turn to witchcraft to acquire wealth. In South Africa, this is evidences by 'Get rich quick' schemes usually advertised on pamphlets and newspaper classifieds. These pamphlets invite people to certain traditional healers to get prescriptions for wealth (Chireshe et al 2012:6,7).

As witchcraft is passed down a family line, MaMthembu is also a professional witch, who uses her supernatural powers to grant people what they desire. It is insinuated that MaMthembu and

her daughter would form a formidable force if ever they would work together, but this can never happen as they hate each other.



Fig 17: The Herd Season 2, Episode 1.

Clothing, Hair, and Make-up

In episode ten season one, MaMngadi is dressed in a tight red dress. Again, we see the colour red used as a signifier of danger, as, in this episode, she kills her son Nkosana. Generally, MaMngadi dresses in black, which signifies her affiliation to the dark occult. She also always has red lipstick on. In one instance, however, she dresses in a white dress, during a supernatural ritual. However, this white dress is, as depicted in *Fig 16* smeared in blood, portrays MaMngadi as a butcher.

Largely, her clothes signify her social station, but are somewhat provocative, especially for the space in which she exists, that being rural KZN. In episode four, season one, she appears in lingerie, as she attempts to lure her husband into bed. This kind of dress is associated with the fatal seductress trope, commonly seen in *noir femme fatales* like Gilda in the 1946 *noir* film *Gilda.* Importantly, the act of women parading themselves scantily dressed, provide sexual pleasure for the male characters and for the gazing eyes of the male audiences. When women

use their bodies in this way, they present themselves as individuals who use sex to solve their problems.



Fig 18: Gilda. (1946)



Fig 19: The Herd, Mzansi Magic (2018)

In season two, the MaMngadi's choice of dress changes, as she seeks redemption from her family. We start to see her dress in conservative suites, which are age-appropriate. She also starts to wear head scarfs, which more representative of women who live in rural settings. This, however, abruptly changes in episode eleven, where MaMngadi decides to return to the dark occult. In the last scene of this episode, MaMngadi undergoes a dramatic wardrobe shift, as she returns to her black clothing.



Fig 20: The Herd Season 2, Episode 12.

Important to note that, MaMngadi usually has her hair neatly combed, yet in the scene illustrated in *Fig 20* her hair resembles that of Medusa. Her resemblance to Medusa in this scene is particularly important, as we see her nemesis, MaMthembu and Smanga, avoid direct eye contact with MaMngadi. This could be a direct reference to the mythology that surrounds Medusa, who when looked at, can turn people to stone.



Fig 9:http://medusathenandnow.weebly.com/

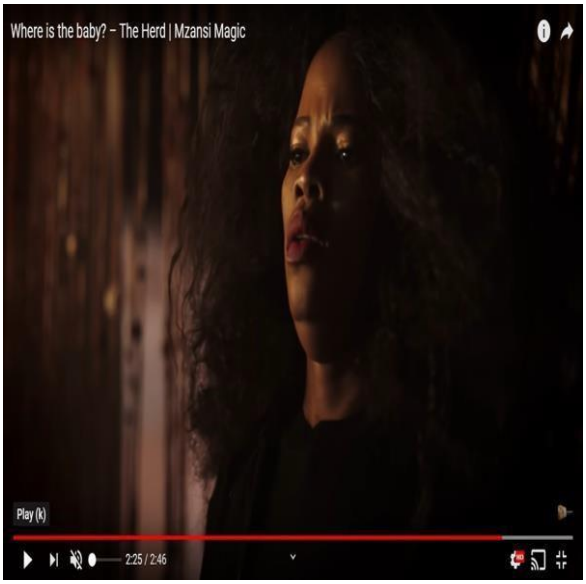

Fig20: The Herd Season 2, Episode 12

MaMngadi, in season two, episode eleven, dresses in her witchcraft apparel. This gown represents her position in the supernatural world. The gown and her crown, illustrate that she is the most powerful witch in her district. Her daughter in law also appears in this episode, dressed in her witch apparel, and proves to be even more powerful than MaMngadi.

Place and Setting

The Herd is set on a cattle farm in rural Kwazulu Natal, and MaMngadi is usually depicted in her home, or her secret hideout, where she performs her witchcraft practices. In all three case study episodes, she appears in the home. She, unlike the traditional Zulu woman, however, spends little time in the kitchen or doing domestic chores. She, instead, spends her time at home, scheming. The choice of the props in her home, imply opulence. Nothing is homely about this home, as no pictures of the family hang on the wall.

The space which best represents the character of MaMngadi, therefore, is her secret enclave where she practices witchcraft. This enclave is MaMngadi's old house, and it reflects the poverty she experienced before her marriage to Nyambose. In fact, this small enclave is almost identical to the witch camps in the Zambian film *'I am not a Witch'* (2017) which are simple and not extraordinary, and mostly populated by old women (Nyoni 2017).

MaMngadi's enclave, thus, represents a poverty-stricken past, which she does not wish to return to. Symbolically, this enclave is burnt down at the end of season one. This represents the destruction of MaMngadi's hold and power over her family. It could also be said it represents the cleansing of MaMngadi, who appears reformed in season two.



Fig 21. The Herd Season 1, Episode 1.

Character Interaction

Since MaMngadi is the main character, she interacts with all of the characters in the drama. Besides her husband, MaMngadi is brash with all those with whom she interacts with. She also tends to deal with people decisively, for example, she kills her son Nkosana for even entertaining the idea of destroying the family.

Script and Body Language

MaMngadi speaks the Zulu dialect as prescribed by her surroundings. Her existence within a rural setting, where people are often regarded to be passive and calm, does not hinder her from constantly using foul language. MaMngadi, like Lindiwe, also has a signature evil expression, which we see each time she does an evil deed or has evil thoughts.

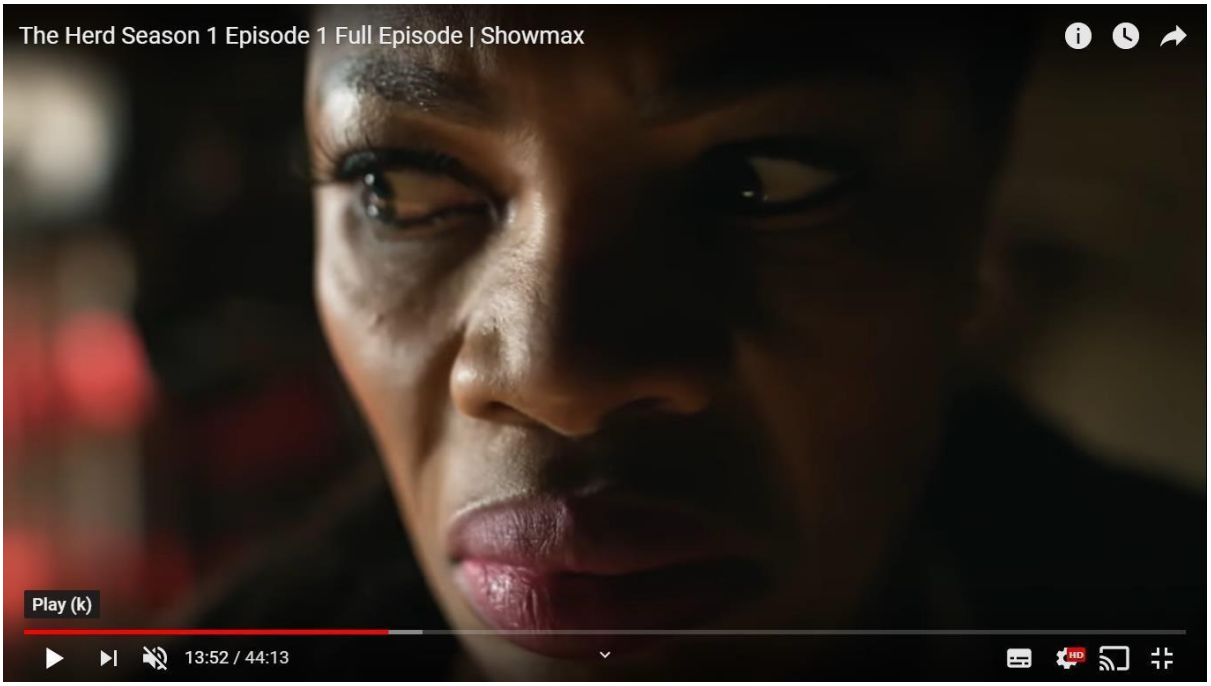

Fig 22: Season 1, Episode 1.

Similarities between local matriarchs and western fatal women

Having delineated how the two matriarchs from *The River* and *The Herd* are represented, the researcher now draws a comparison between these evil women, to those presented on western platforms. The objective is to try and identify if the characters of Lindiwe and MaMngadi simply mirror the traditional fatal women seen in western television, or if they are unique to the South African context.

The results of this study, strongly suggest that both Lindiwe and MaMngadi have similarities to the traditional *femme fatale* or fatal women who dominated the *noir* films of the 1940s. like their predecessors, both women are smart, ambitious and are mostly driven by money. Also, like the women in classical *noir*, MaMngadi and Lindiwe subvert many forms of femininity, tending to assume masculine roles, which often involve the extreme perpetration of violence by these women. The theme of the vicious woman is, therefore, one that is recurrent in these two case studies and western television and film.

On the other hand, the vicious woman of the noir period is often depicted as "figures of greed, selfishness, and idleness" (Lang 1946), take for example Kitty of *Scarlet Street* (1945) and Cora of *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1981). The facet of 'idleness' is one that does not resonate with Lindiwe and MaMngadi, as both do not simply rely on a man to provide for them. They, rather, are more proactive in bringing in wealth, and therefore are married for other reasons outside of wealth, as their husbands seem to depend on them to provide for their respective families. South African fatal women are, therefore, able to transform the traditional weakness into a strength, as both Lindiwe and MaMngadi do not need husbands to acquire and retain wealth. When it comes to enacting violence, it is also important to point out that the South African villain, does most of the dirty work herself, as for most parts Lindiwe and MaMngadi kill their enemies on their own. The act of murdering without the assistance of a male counterpart is another variable that sets local fatal women from traditional *noir femme fatale's*, who, more often than not, manipulate men to do their dirty work for them.

Another significant difference between local fatal women and traditional *noir femme fatales* is the notion of motherhood. Traditional *femme fatale*s are often depicted as "barren, sterile and sexually aggressive beings who want to destroy family values, and by extension, the male hegemony which comes with it" (Farrimound 2011:83). The matriarchs discussed here, however, both have children. I believe that this is done to invite audiences to identify with the two characters even though this identification is later wrenched away, once the matriarchs are revealed to be bad mothers, who abandon their infants and without conscious and have no qualms with murdering their children. The representation of MaMngadi and Lindiwe as bad mothers who must be punished shows how women are often represented under narrow maternal lifestyles and are judged according to their relationship with their children. It is important to note that these women are often judged by the 'spectator mother', who expect Lindiwe and MaMngadi to be representative of their own experience of motherhood, which is aligned to complete devotion and sacrifice to their children. MaMngadi and Lindiwe therefore, are punished because they pursue their desires and needs before those of family thus refusing to conform to the traditional selfless mothering, which patriarchy paints as the most rewarding.

One more important facet to consider regarding motherhood and the two matriarchs under study is their relationship with their daughters. As mentioned earlier, both MaMngadi and Lindiwe have strenuous relationships with their eldest daughters. Both women gave birth to these children as teenagers, and both decide to dump these children. For the quintessential mother, this is unthinkable, but for the fatal woman, who is shown as selfish and inept, this is not a difficult choice. What is interesting about the relationship that fatal women have with their daughters is that they themselves are portrayed as psychologically damaging individuals yet their daughters are wise, nurturing and devoted. Take for instance, Lindiwe's daughters Tumi and Mbali, who are, in every right what one would consider good girl types. Tumi especially is not only a morally upright character, she fits into the domesticated role quite well, as she is often shown in the kitchen, cooking or cleaning. Her dress sense is conservative, and she speaks like a lady. She then could be regarded as the femme attrappe, a woman patriarchy paints as acceptable and inherently good. Mbali, Lindiwe's youngest daughter, could also be regarded, as such because Tumi is honest, sweet, somewhat carefree and gullible. Lindiwe's daughters, completely contradict her character, and therefore juxtaposed against her character to illustrate what is acceptable and what is not.

MaMngadi's relationship with her daughters is quite remarkable. Her youngest daughter is without any doubt, a girl next door type, who genuinely loves her partner and her unborn child. She, although spoilt and not accustomed to doing chores, she openly embraces learning how to care for her husband and soon to be born daughter. Her older sister Lwandle, although strives for truth and justice, she does not fit into the girl next door typology. This is so she assumes a male persona, in that she dresses like a man, her sexual preference is that inclined towards women and she is a modern-day South African cowboy. So, Dumazile, the youngest daughter in *The Herd* is used as the binary opposite to her evil, seductive mother.

The characterisation of MaMngadi and Lindiwe can be related to the representation of women in *noir* and *neo-noir films*. Like most women in *noir/neo-noir films*, MaMngadi and Lindiwe reflect misogynist anxiety around independent women who strike against domestic virtues, in their attempt to thrive in patriarchal structures. These women thus can be regarded as symptoms of male fears around feminism and female agency.

MaMngadi and Lindiwe, however differ from the classic fatal woman in that, they generally get away with deception betrayal and murder. While the classic fatal woman must inevitably die, the matriarchs of the case studies get away with despicable crimes. Thus, MaMngadi and Lindiwe seem to fit under a subverted tradition, which undoes the "conservative act of punishing the wrongdoer, allowing the fatal woman to emerge victorious" (Farrimond 2011; 95). This trend was popularised by neo-noir films where the punished fatal woman of the 1940s and 1950s is replaced with the bad woman who defies her fate and becomes celebrated, because of her ability to emerge unscathed from their crimes. This encouraged audiences (especially the disenfranchised female viewer) to gain pleasure from the destructive victories gained by fatal women.

The western fatal woman is an extremely sexualised being, who is depicted as glamourous and appealing. Take Brooke Logan of *The Bold and the Beautiful* (1987-2020), who challenges societal norms by sleeping with three generations of men from one family. Brooke can allure all three of these men to bed her, and some to even marry her because she is the object of their desire. She is a young, childless, beautiful, glamourous and childless woman. She is different from the wives and mothers, who are often represented as asexual. It seems, in many soap operas and telenovelas, depicting married mothers as sexual beings is abhorrent, it actually, reflects some type of reflects disharmony. In relation to this, the results of this study indicate that, unlike Brooke, Lindiwe fits into this married mother archetype, as she is never depicted as a sexualised being. MaMngadi, on the other hand, is in many ways like Brooke, in that she too, is a glamourous and desirable woman who sleeps with two brothers. The only difference between MaMngadi and Brooke is that she is a married mother. This is what makes it difficult for MaMngadi to settle into a natural familial setting, where the mother is chaste and asexual.

Lastly, it is worth noting that South African matriarchs exist in a setting closely associated with real socio-political issues experiences by ordinary South Africans on a daily basis. The use of social-cultural realism in this regard is key because it brings to the fore the notion that MaMngadi and Lindiwe are not mere misogynist constructs, but are characters modelled on real women living in South Africa, as to some extent, the two represent women who have

situations that have forced them to take the place of leadership in protecting their home and children. The portrayal of the matriarchs in the two case studies, as the protectors of their homes, the de-facto heads, and decision-makers, is a situation that is familiar in the context of South Africa.

From this, it is fair to say that, largely MaMngadi and Lindiwe do exist within the confines of the western traditional fatal woman who is rendered as violent and inherently seductive. *The Herd* and *The River*, therefore, follow narratives which utilise the fatal woman epoch. The use of such a narrative works to quell any social change which may undermine patriarchal infrastructure. The case studies can thus be regarded as responses to the improvements we have seen in women's economic, political and social positions in South Africa, which fundamentally undermine the previously demarcated boundaries around male authority. They work to weaken the development of women in socio-political institutions like the government, which recently ensured 50% female representation. So, the fatal woman in the South African context is existentially a symptom of male anxiety, she is a necessary evil for patriarchal exploitation and therefore, mostly re-surfaces in times where patriarchal infrastructure is under stress.

Women are Bad in General: A overview of other female characters in *The Herd* and *The River.*

Having delineated how the two matriarchs, MaMngadi and Lindiwe can be classified under the fatal woman trope, it is also important to show how other female characters are represented in the two case studies. This is important as it further cements the notion that women, in general, are represented as deceptive, evil, and promiscuous in the case studies.

As noted earlier in this chapter, Lindiwe is not the only evil woman in *The River*. The researcher has already discussed Sheeree, Zweli's mistress, who tries to destroy the Dikana family through deception and seduction. There are many others, take, for example, Nomonde, Lindiwe's stepdaughter who, in conjunction with Lindiwe's brother's wife, Veronica, attempt to kill Lindiwe to gain control over Khanyisa Diamonds. Not only are Veronica and Nomonde ruthless murderous schemers, but they are also represented as sexually promiscuous. Veronica, in one instance, even marries a pensioner for monetary gain. Veronica constantly engages in

petty schemes to get money, and it is because of this pre-occupation that she abandons her son, Zolani at a young age.

Another one of Lindiwe's sister-in-laws', Dambisa Dikana is also a petty crook, who manipulates her own family, including her naive nephew Andile, into giving her money to fund her extravagant lifestyle. Dambisa, also constantly tries to come in between Lindiwe and her husband Zweli. This is because Dambisa believes she can better manipulate her brother Zweli if he is unmarried.

Sandra Stein, Lindiwe's lawyer is also a questionable woman, who is shown to do anything for money, including defending Lindiwe, even when she knows that Lindiwe is guilty of murder. This ruthless lawyer is a cross over character, who also appears in the television telenovela *The Throne* (2019) and the Mzansi Magic soap opera *The Queen* (2017-2020). In both these shows, Sandra Stein defends the unlawful, ensuring that the bad women, for example, drug dealer and matriarch Harriet Khoza of *The Queen*, remain unpunished for their crimes. Similar to Sandra, Minister Joyful is another greedy corrupt female, who sells her soul to Lindiwe for money.

Even those who seem to occupy the good girl/girl next door trope, like Tumi and Malefu also, have underlying evil characteristics, which undermine their purity. Take Tumi, for example, who, by all intent and purpose is a hard-working, ambitious and honest young woman, yet she is often consumed with anger and tries to kill her mother on two separate occasions. Malefu, Tumi's adoptive mother, seems on the surface, a dedicated quintessential housewife and mother, who does all she can to protect her children. In season two, Malefu however abandons her children, leaving them with no parental or financial support. Although Malefu is not as bad as the oedipal mothers, Lindiwe and Veronica, who are cruel and cold, she is not a masochistic ideal either. She then is something in the middle, a warm, nurturing and protective woman, who on the other hand is aggressive, vindictive and cruel.

One unanticipated finding is that the supporting female roles of *The River* are often given lower-class status as evidenced in their place of residence and occupational status as shebeen queens,

domestic workers and homemakers, whereas their white counterparts, for example, Sandra Stein, occupy more nuanced and professional jobs. One could argue here that the relegation of black women to largely insignificant jobs and derelict corrugated homes is a reference to pre-independence assumptions about the life of black women and the social station they ought to exist in.

The results of this study indicate that *The Herd* also has more than one evil woman. the most poignant of these are the two evil witches, MaMzobe and Nomathemba, who use witchcraft to acquire wealth and power. In season two, the drama introduces a further two witches, MaMthembu, MaMngadi's depraved mother, often referred to as the 'Great Witch' and Ayanda, a manipulative, gold-digging witch who uses magic to entrap Muzi.

The 'good girl' in *The Herd*, Kayise is interesting in that, she, like Tumi of *The River* is a young, honest and ambitious woman, yet she transgresses heterosexual norms because she is a lesbian. Inscribing her as a lesbian here could signal sexual deviance, and therefore suggesting amorality because lesbianism in itself is a rejection of the feminine codes of submission. Lesbianism can also be aligned to barrenness, and thus, further becomes something perceived as unnatural. Lesbians, therefore, are seen by patriarchy as 'masculinised women', and because of this, pose a threat to the patriarchal social order as they threaten to enter into the realm of male supremacy (Hart 1994:141)

Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated that the matriarchs in the two studies predominantly resemble those presented on western films and television shows, especially those of the *noir* and *neo-noir* period. It is clear from this chapter that this study produced results that corroborate the findings of a great deal of the previous work in this field.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion: What is the Pleasure of all of This?

The fatal woman figure is one who holds a vexed but significant position on South African film and television criticism as well as wider discourses around femininity. Having examined the contemporary fatal women in *The Herd* and *The River*, this dissertation serves as an illustration of how women are portrayed in the complex socio-cultural dynamics that exist within the South African context. I conclusively say this after a survey of many South African television shows and soap opera, such as *The Queen* (2017-2020), *Igazi*, (2017-2018), *The Omen* (2019), *Ifalakhe* (2019), *Lockdown* (2018-2019), *Sara se Gaheim* (2017-2020) and the two case studies eviscerated here. I found that there is little meaningful progressive representation of women on South African television. The little progressive representation of women seems to follow strict masochistic confines around what a woman should be. So, in South Africa, it seems women are depicted under a set of dichotomies that confine women as quintessential housewives, house servants, docile, dull, ugly and dependant on men or as, immoral, violent and promiscuous Jezebels.

This researcher reviewed literature that identified the source of disparaging images of black women in film and television as influenced by colonialism and apartheid. In contrast to what many authors like Botha (2003), who assert that post-apartheid film and television programming would offer a more progressive reflection of women, the findings of this study, however, suggest the inverse, as they illustrate that the stereotypes of yesteryear survived the rapture of independence in 1994 and still actively exist on South African screens. Given the shifts in socio-politics and economics and improvements in gender representation since independence, why then does this kind of representation of women continue? The answer as suggested by this researcher is linked to male anxieties, especially white males, around the independence and power black women are fast accessing in post-apartheid South Africa. I point to male anxieties as the key to the stereotypical representation of women on South African television, as both *The Herd* and *The River* are written and conceptualised by two men,

Gwydion Beynon and Phathutshedzo Makwarela. The female characters they create are reminiscent of the *femme fatale* of the *noir* period, who, as previously mentioned, is an indication of an attempt by patriarchy to reinstate the power and status of diminishing patriarchal order. The researcher thus argues that the creation of characters like Lindiwe and MaMngadi are a direct rejection of legislations that the government has put in place to level the playing field between men and women in South Africa. These figures are therefore designed to please male audiences at the expense of women, who are often objectified as erotic vamps.

Another plausible reason as to why, Gwydion Beynon and Phathutshedzo Makwarela chose to represent women in this way may be attributed to the desire for commercial success, which can be easily derived from caricaturing women in common stereotypes about black women, celebrated in American film and television in the form of Blaxploitation.

Nevertheless, the absence of black women in more positive roles fails to provide insight into the positioning of black women in a transforming South Africa and thereby excludes them from being recorded in history, since film is regarded as a mirror to the concerns of society at any given time. This one-dimensional representation of women, therefore, fails to capture the full experiences of South African women and rather continues to perpetuate the stereotypes embedded in the historical legacy of the country. There is no benefit to this kind of representation of women. What emerges from this is the erasing of the black woman's worth and the legitimization of patriarchal structures.

Recommendations of the Study

> Women are the best kept secret in the film industry. I am the change I want to see.
> Okule Dyosopu (2020)

Since the results of this dissertation point to the reinforcement of traditional stereotypes related to black women, in particular, the best remedy would be to chart new ground that breaks away from the pre-existing misconceptions about black women. It would be interesting to see women as more dynamic and complex characters, whom Bordwell and Thompson (2008) describe as

“characters who engage our interest on many levels, create a multiplicity of relations among many separate elements and create intriguing patterns of feelings and meanings” (2008:63). If South African film-makers and telenovela producers follow in the footsteps of African pioneers in film like Sembene and Mambéty, it is possible that black women, in particular, could be afforded roles that illuminate current societal trends. Another way to achieve this goal would be to encourage the progression of women into prominent roles in the production of filmic content. This would, in the opinion of the researcher, reframe the gaze, which would invariably impact on how female characters are represented on screen. Fortunately, there has been a growing number of female directors in the African space such as Cameroonian Yolande Welimoum, South Africa’s Thishiwe Ziqubu, Kenyan born Joan Kiragu and Zambia’s Rungano Nyoni, who are lauded for creating female characters who are unconventional, well rounded, strong and are fighters.

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