

The Question of Genre Classification in the Drama Series “*Ubizo: The Calling*
(2007)”

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A dissertation submitted in *fulfilment* of the requirements for the award of the degree
of Master of Arts in African Cinema (s).

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University of Cape Town

2022

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any
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DEDICATIONS

To my daughters, sisters and friends, be true to yourself and be patient with the knowledge you seek. Your spirits are forever.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank my supervisor, Dr. Litheko Modisane, who has been invested in my work since 2015. I thank you for your patience during some of the hardest times we have gone through in getting this work finished. I thank you for seeing potential in this research by also talking about it in your television seminar and allowing me to present it in your course. I thank you for going beyond your scope of being a supervisor to mentoring and counseling me at times. Most of all, thank you for giving me a platform to teach my research in the Mystery Seminar class under FAM2013 S class of 2017.

To Alex Gwaze, I thank you for the time you took out of your busy schedule to look at my work. Without your brutality and bluntness, this research would not have taken the shape it did. To the administrative staff, Petros Ndlela and the late Soraya Shaffie, thank you for the support and administrative assistance for the duration of my studies; going beyond the call of duty and inducting me into the career and motherhood worlds. Rest in eternal peace Soraya, you remain in my heart always!

To the National Research Foundation, the National Film and Video Foundation as well as the Centre of Film and Media Studies, I am grateful to you for giving me funds to do this research. To my sisters, Zikhona and Kwanele Mjoli, I thank you for being fans: reading and citing my work. To my late fiancé Themba Thela, thank you for spending sleepless nights with me encouraging me to finally finish this project. May you continue to rest in power! And, lastly, to my daughters; Azania and Hlosi, I thank you for the patience you have given me as your mother and for sharing your time with this research when I should have been in the maternity ward, preparing for your arrivals.

Abstract

The paper argues that the South African television series, *Ubizo: The Calling* (d/Krijay Govender, 2007) blends elements of psychological thrillers, horrors as well as the gothic genre. The relationship of these subgenres is discussed in this paper in the context of the African spiritual practice of divine calling that is narrated by the series. The paper concludes that genre classification in this series is left unclear, whether it is horror or psychological thriller as suggested by its producers. For most parts of the series, horror conventions can be identified from the way the characters are set to the types of props and iconographies, as well as the set design and shot sizes of most scenes. Towards the end of the series, however, it changes focus thematically to fit a category that cannot be confined to one genre type. The effort of this research is to present concerns about the way in which some African spiritual practices are likened to sorcery due to the obsession with madness and ghosts. I used Indigenous Knowledge Systems together with genre analysis to arrive at my findings which were important in shedding light to the fact that some genres become less effective when they have been ideologically moved to other cultures. Upon embarking on this research, I wanted to arrive at the certainty that western borrowed genres were bastardising African practices using foreign jargon and visuality to depict African spirituality. Indeed, the research was constructed in a manner that it simply wanted to confirm something that I, the author desperately wanted to believe. However, my own work has challenged me to acknowledge that these two can coexist.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	1
DEDICATIONS	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3
ABSTRACT.....	4
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	
Aim.....	7
Background of television in Apartheid South Africa.....	7
The Stigmatisation of "Ubungoma" (spiritual healing)	11
The significance of <i>Ubizo: The Calling</i> (2007) in South Africa.....	13
Rationale of Study.....	14
Structure of the Study.....	15
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	
Introduction	16
<i>Ubizo</i> : a Description.....	16
Television and Genre Theory	20
Psychological Thriller Genre and Family Trauma	21
Horror and Race	22
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	
Introduction	27
Justification for using Qualitative Methods.....	28
Defining a Thematic Content Analysis	28
Data Collection.....	29
Ethical Considerations.....	29
CHAPTER 4: HORROR THEMATIC ANALYSIS.....	31
CHAPTER 5: NARRATIVE ANALYSIS.....	41

CHAPTER 6: PSYCHOLOGICAL FAMILY GENETICS AND MENTAL HEALTH.....	43
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION.....	46
REFERENCES.....	48

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Aim

The goal of this inquiry is to enquire into the effects of representing traditional African healing in a Horror or Psychological Thriller genre. The generic elements used in the South African television series, *Ubizo*: (Govender, 2007), are characterised as a mix of the Psychological Thriller and Horror genres. This research, therefore, focuses on why *ubizo* as a spiritual practice was portrayed under such a classification.

1.2. Television in Apartheid South Africa

The television medium was introduced in the 1930s. Germany and France began limited broadcasting in the same year. South Africa did not introduce television until 1976 due to political reasons. According to Holt (1998), South Africa's delay in introducing the television medium was a result of the government's fear of having its citizens 'brainwashed' by what they deemed as international 'propaganda'. As Dr J. C. Otto explained to parliament in 1966, "...liberalists, communists and leftists all use television to influence people. In many programmes the white man is presented as a bad person, the suppressor and exploiter of the black man. The white man is depicted as the person causing misery and frustration for the black man," (Nixon, 1993). Such depictions instilled fear in the Africans and perpetuated inferiority.

At the time of its launch, TV1's programmes were aimed at an all-white audience divided between Afrikaans and English speakers (Holt, 1998). "'Black ethnic' TV was not introduced at the same time as 'white' TV mainly due to economic and logistic reasons" (Holt, 1998). Therefore, even though there were black student protests going on all over the country in 1976 that resulted in the Sharpeville massacres, no images of black people appeared in the newly introduced medium.

By the end of 1982/1983, TV2 and TV3 were introduced. TV 2 catered to Nguni speakers. While there were various groups within the Nguni, namely, isiSwati, isiHlubi, isiBhaca, isiMpondo, ultimately, isiZulu and isiXhosa were two major Nguni languages for broadcast, TV3 was for Sotho speakers: (sePedi, seTswana and seSotho, with, other ethnic groups like seLobedu,

Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Xishangaan are compressed between these major ones). The television content in these channels was administered by the apartheid government's National Party and directed at "Bantu" issues. In 1984, TV4 was launched. "TV4 seems to have been aimed as an additional entertainment channel with programmes mainly in English. It is possible that this channel was also intended to address the needs of some advertisers who wanted to reach a racially integrated consumer market." (Holt, 1998).

The racially integrated market of TV4 was a response to the political pressure in the 1980s from international communities. The apartheid government claimed that it did not know how to include black people in their programmes when it first introduced the medium in the '70s (Holt, 106). Interestingly, the broadcasting policies at the time were clear and concise in visual representations of black people. Imagery of a black character on television was prejudiced or stereotyped to enforce white hegemony which sought to retain a superior position at the expense of black people. For example, one of the most potent uses of the media by the apartheid government was the propagation of the term '*swart gevaar*' (black danger). "*Swart gevaar*" was a term used during Apartheid to refer to the perceived security threat of the black majority to the white South African government and the white minority population," (Davidson, 2017).

In the height of the '80s, the apartheid government started noticing blacks with spending power and started luring the black consumer market. Typically, the blacks with spending power consisted of people deemed as non-European, that is Africans, Indians and Coloureds. The South African government still uses these racial categories. Amongst the emerging blacks with spending power, some subscribed to the apartheid government's ideas of a 'New South Africa'. What contextualised the 'New South Africa' was altered representation on shows whereby people of colour appeared more on television. However, most of the decision-making in productions remained white and male dominated. The 'New South Africa' ideology was propagated "to prove to the suspicious international world that racial discrimination was non-existent in South Africa," (Holt, 1998).

The 'New South Africa' began including black characters interacting with white characters on screen. Furthermore, in 1991, black people started being appointed to

positions of power in the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). Holt (1998) claims that these appointments reformed the SABC for the better in terms of representation and autonomy.

According to Holt (1998), by 1994 English had gained more influence on television and more political clout than Afrikaans in all the country's institutions. Thus, the SABC took a political decision to cut vigorously on Afrikaans programming. However, the SABC had allowed *M-Net* an hour-long slot to broadcast free-to-air content to attract potential subscribers, and this time slot came to be known as “open time” (Gwaze, 2013). In 1992, *M-Net* extended ‘open time’ (where the station would be ‘free’ and open to those without private access to enjoy it) to two hours and produced South Africa's first local soap opera, *Egoli*. Gwaze (2013) states that despite being free, only the black middleclass minority of the 90’s could fully appreciate *Egoli* because it was in Afrikaans, a language which the black majority had come to associate with repression, racism and apartheid. It catered for the white minority Afrikaans speakers and Afrikaans speaking South African audiences.

To sum up, the history of South African television is characterised by a white Afrikaans outlook and the exclusion of blacks in the production process. Furthermore, black South African audiences have been cultured into understanding Western genres through their exposure to imported American programmes. However, after the first racially inclusive democratic elections in 1994, the television series, *Yizo Yizo* (Mahlatsi and Gibson, 1999–2003) marked a notable change in black-centered content in South Africa, in particular how it represented the South African-livelihoods

Yizo Yizo was a three-season television drama commissioned by the state, specifically the South African National Department of Education called Culture of Learning, Teaching, and Service (COLTS). According to Litheko Modisane (2013), the series was part of the Departmental strategies to address problems besetting township schools. For Modisane (2013), “*Yizo Yizo* stands as an excellent example because it was made to animate engagements on national issues of schooling and education in essentially black areas,” but used generic strategies such as explicit language and highly suggestive sex scenes.

For Smith (2001: 45), as quoted by Modisane (2013), *Yizo Yizo*

commodifies images of violence both to “reflect reality” and as “a stylistic device” to accentuate its dramatic nature. In addition, similarly to *Ubizo*, *Yizo Yizo* was produced for African audiences by white creators, namely Desiree Markgraaff, Angus Gibson, and Barry Berk, with director Teboho Mahlatsi as a significant collaborator. Furthermore, both series were made for the prime time (evening) television on SABC 1. However, they differ in their use of generic elements. Whilst *Yizo Yizo* demonstrated how generic elements can be entertaining and still stimulate public debates and educate the masses about township schools, *Ubizo*: sought to enlighten South African viewers about the practices of *Ubungoma*, or the title subject of the show - *Ubizo*.

The Stigmatisation of “Ubungoma” (spiritual healing)

Ubungoma is a branch of South Africa’s Indigenous Knowledge Systems whose emphasis is African Spirituality or divinity. Traditionally, this may vary with different ethnicities, but often those who practice *ubungoma* must first go through the sacred training of *ukuthwasa* (initiation into the African knowledge of healing), after they have accepted their ancestral ‘calling’ or *ubizo*. After they have completed their training, they become *isangoma*, meaning a spiritual healer. Historically, in South Africa, colonial policies and Apartheid laws made it impossible for Indigenous Knowledge Systems to thrive. For instance, the Natal Code of Law of 1891 demonised traditional healing and prohibited *izangoma* from practicing traditional medicine (Masondo, 2011). Subsequent Apartheid laws such as the Witchcraft Suppression Act 3 of 1957 institutionalised the practice of witch-hunts and stated that those declared as “witch doctors” could spend up to five years in jail (Roberts, 1935:).

Between the periods of 1970 to 1994, over four hundred witchcraft-related crimes were reported to the police; more than three hundred suspected witches were killed; and a total of eighty-two people were violently attacked after being accused of witchcraft (Niehaus, 2001). It is for this reason that during colonial times, most practitioners in the field of *ubungoma* kept their training as traditional healers a secret. In recent times, being a *sangoma* is no longer shrouded in secrecy. South African celebrities like Boitumelo Thulo, Kelly Khumalo, Dawn King, Nandi Nyembe, Dineo Ranaka,

Bongani Masondo, Buhlebethu Mda, Letoya Makhene, Baby Cele, Lerato Mvelase, Masechaba Ndlovu, Siphokazi (Camagwini) Buti, Thokozani (L'vovo Derrango) Ndlovu, Mlungisi Mathe, Zodwa Libram (Zodwa wa Bantu) and many others publicly revealed they have accepted *ubizo* and are in the process of *ukuthwasa*.

Whilst South African celebrities' public revelations of their spirituality have renewed the public's interest in or acceptance of *ubungoma* in African communities as well as in other racial groups, the country is still grappling with the hangover of its historical negative imaginings of African spirituality. The portrayal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems in film and television still retains some of the negative stereotypes initiated by historical policies that attempted to dissuade black citizens from fully practicing their customs since their rituals were seen as dangerous. *Ubizo* (Govender, 2007) is the only South African drama series on (SABC 1) that attempts to depict the sacred training of *ukuthwasa*. In 2018, *Emoyeni* (Thisiwe Ziqubu, Mmabatho Mmontsho), also a mini television series took interest in the theme of *ukuthwasa* and depicted it in one episode. Currently, on DSTV's *Moja Love*, *Ubizo* (Vusi Menzi, 2018-) is reality television show depicting African Spiritual matters. The show consults/ divines for its subjects live on television.

The significance of *Ubizo: The Calling* (2007) in South Africa

Ubizo: (Govender, 2007) is a mini-series first shown on South African Broadcasting Corporation channel one (SABC 1), a public access channel that caters for the black African majority with a weekly viewership of 22 million. *Ubizo*: (Govender, 2007) aired for an hour (with commercial breaks) every Thursday on SABC 1. The duration of the series was a period of four weeks from February 15th to March 8th 2007. According to the AMR TV ratings at the time, *Ubizo*: (Govender, 2007) was the fourth most watched show on public access television in the prime-time slot (Muller, 2009). The most popular shows in South Africa were *Generations* (Vundla, 1993-2013), *Soul City* (Chauke, Kau and Mabaso 1994-2009), *Tshisa* (Moja Movie Factory, 2006), *Ubizo*: (Govender, 2007) and *A Place Called Home* (Omotoso, 2007). The popular South African blogsite known as ZAlebs, praised the show by writing, "If there's one thing we enjoyed about *Ubizo*., it's how accurate and truthful the writers and directors were to African cultural practices and the importance of understanding and respecting *amadlozi* (ancestors)" (ZAlebs, 2020). However, Nokuzola Mndende (2007) criticised it for glamorising ancestral spirits as ghosts that could be seen 'flying on the wall'. Nonetheless, the mini-series

was picked up by DSTV's Showmax (an online streaming platform). Overall, the comments I

received on the researcher's vlog about the series expressed the horror and scary moments they experienced while watching the show. Nonetheless, there is a plea for a continuation of this mysterious series. It is important to investigate whether the chosen genre depicts the practice of *ubizo* well. From a general perspective, the horror genre mainly depicts terrifying and monstrous ideas of society. From watching psychological thrillers, the researcher learned that mental instability is often a theme in this genre. This research is written to enquire about genre codes and how they may help in better understanding *Ubizo*: (Govender, 2007) as a televisual text and the motive behind classifying it as a psychological thriller.

Rationale of Study

The focus of South African productions is mostly centred on soapies, drama, romance, comedy, song and dance. Past works on television in the local and global market that make either passing or substantial reference to *ubungoma* include *Kwakhala Nyonini* (Sanepoel, 1987), *Mr. Bones* (Hofmeyr, 2001), *A Reasonable Man* (Hood, 2001), *Ubizo*: (Govender, 2007) and *Mr. Bones 2* (Hofmeyr, 2008). Not much has been dealt with regarding the issue of having a spiritual calling.

Looking at the visual representation of the subject, one notices the same misconceptions whether from an African or a non-African director. For example, in *Dingaka* (Uys, 1964), *Ngaka* (Sabela, 1974), *Kwakhala Nyonini* (Swanepoel, 1987), *Shaka Zulu* (1989), *Isibaya* (Markgraaff, 2013-2021) and *Generations* (Mvundla, 1994-) acts of killing and bewitching are highlighted over and above spiritual healing. Furthermore, when acts of spiritual healing are portrayed in popular films, they are comically depicted as evidenced by the films *The Gods Must be Crazy* (Uys, 1980) and *Mr. Bones* (Hofmeyr, 2001). These stereotypical representations have done very little to aid the public's understanding and acceptance of those who practice *ubungoma* in South African society; especially women who are frequently stigmatised by South African communities.

Without doubt, there have been directors that have attempted shifting towards a complex, layered outlook of the practice. *A Reasonable Man* (Hood, 2001), for example,

raises interesting points which must be considered about African spirituality. However, the film falls short because it concentrates on reasonable believability using Western lenses. *Muvhango* (Ndlovu, 1997-) also carries a decent storyline about African healers without bastardising them. Furthermore, *Ubizo*: sheds light on some of the aspects of the practice.

Additionally, a quarter of a century into democratic dispensation, the Film and Television studies institutions of higher learning and training remain without a single module or course that deals with *ubungoma* in the media. Yet, ‘cults’, ritual killings, prophets, and *izangoma* are always trending in South African news, soaps, celebrity news, and tabloids such as the *Daily Sun*. Undoubtedly, *ubungoma* is still an overlooked area of academic study in Film and Television.

After reviewing popular representations of *ubungoma* in screen media productions, this researcher discovered that those who have attempted to tell *ubungoma* inspired story lines either: (1) lack depth; (2) mock the religion, custodians, rituals, and culture; or (3) bastardise the practice by linking it to mental disorders, blood-lust, or witchcraft. Thus, *Ubizo*: (Govender, 2007) was identified as a case study because (despite how problematic the program was), for over a decade, it is still the only television drama that portrayed an aspect of *ubungoma* in South Africa. Furthermore, because the mini-series is accessible to a global audience, the ways in which it represents a minority group (female *sangomas* in South Africa) cannot be discounted. Generally, having a calling is a very tormenting and often violent experience. Under the horror or psychological thriller genre where this experience has been represented, it remains a wonder how this representation has impacted on the spiritual aspects of *ubizo* as an African practice. This will be assessed in terms of presenting and packaging knowledge about *ubizo* under this genre and answer the question: What were the shortcomings and interesting aspects of this choice?

Secondly, during the initial phase of considering the mini-series as a case study, research applicants commented on how ‘exciting and scary the show was’. The feedback from teaching the series inspired an interest to inquire into the genre representation of the series as the researcher previously spent time looking at knowledge production as well as how the traditional healers were shown in the series for

an Honours dissertation. The feedback continually received finds the series to be more ‘scary’ than informative as confirmed by an informal interview with one of the producers of the show, Isabelle Rorke. Through a WhatsApp interview held on the 17th July 2017, Rorke (2017) said, “initially the series was meant to fit the Psychological Thriller genre, even though it took a turn in becoming a horror”. To a considerable extent, the question of why *ubungoma* was made a Horror or Psychological Thriller proved to be a more useful approach to understanding how *ubizo* is represented.

In addition, some could argue that fictional films or series have no obligation or desire to adhere to accurate representations because by making *Ubizo*” (Govender, 2007) a Horror / Psychological Thriller rather than a documentary, it became more appealing to a wider South African audience especially since the primary goal of the show was to entertain prime time audiences. This research focuses on unpacking the characteristics, codes and conventions of Horror and Psychological Thriller, in terms of how they shaped the understanding of *ubizo*.

The objectives of the study are to a) identify and isolate the generic narrative devices and tropes that are uniquely Western; b) discuss the possible interpretations of those devices and c) identify tropes that are misleading and could result in the stigmatisation of *ubungoma* and *izangoma*, in South Africa.

Guided by the central question: “What does it mean for a South African prime time television miniseries to represent African traditional healing through the framework of a Horror or Psychological Thriller in post-apartheid South Africa?”, this study developed two sub-questions to better clarify the effects of using these genres to frame the practice of *ubizo* to contemporary South African audiences:

- a) What narrative devices and tropes (setting, plot, conflict, costume, effects, music and more) were employed by the show’s creators to illustrate African Spirituality to mass audiences?
- b) How does situating spiritual healers within these genres affect the understanding of the women’s role in African traditions, past and present?

Structure of the Study

Chapter one introduces the focus of the study, which is the representation of *ubungoma* in South African films and television. It contextualises the South African background, which has historically institutionalised a negative view of “*Ubungoma*”. It also explains the rationale of using *Ubizo*: (Govender, 2007), which is the only South African produced series that attempts to depict *ubizo* (the acceptance of their ancestral ‘calling’) and the first entry point into sacred training of *ukuthwasa* (initiation into African knowledge of healing). It further states the study’s goals, objectives and research questions, and provides the structure of the research.

Chapter two reviews the literature related to the historical character of South African television in the context of genres often used to represent African cultures. Chapter two also includes a critical discussion of Genre theory underscored by an analysis of the Horror and Psychological Thriller genres. Chapter three outlines the research methodology, data analysis and limitations of the study. The gathering and presentation of the findings of the study is done in chapter four. Chapter five analyses and discusses the data gathered, and Chapter six is the conclusion to the research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The following literature review will help to unpack the levels of analysis related to the genre and representation in the series *Ubizo*: (Govender, 2007). It relies on scholarly articles as well as journals written locally and abroad which engage with discourses of horror, television in Apartheid South Africa, African spirituality, *ubungoma* and voodoo among others. In addition, there will be engagement with the literature detailing the nature of *ubizo*, and assessing how far the series manages to represent the practice. Thirdly, there will be a critical discussion on the Genre Theory and how genres work as a shorthand for cultural representations in the West. Fourth and fifth, there is a respective outlining of how the Horror and Psychological Thrillers genre conventions were conceptualised to help disclose the motivations of *Ubizo*: (Govender, 2007) creators.

Ubizo: A Description

Authors like Nokuzola Mndende, Joe Wreford, Harriet Ngubane, Lesiba Baloyi and Jethro Mdlalose have made remarkable contributions towards the literature on Traditional Healing for the Nguni people that this researcher extensively relied upon. For this chapter, extracts from Mndende and Mdlalose's arguments are used as they touch on the spiritual anatomy of the Nguni people who have encountered *ubizo*.

Jethro Mdlalose (2009) argues that rituals (*isiko*) play a vital role in African culture since they unite families and nations. He adds that a particular ethnic group tends to perform its rituals in a uniform way, which helps in separating the cultural groups (Mdlalose, 2009). This passage is of interest in understanding how Nguni *zangoma* do their own rituals in contrast to other Southern African nations which differ even from how voodoo practices are performed. Such distinctions are necessary in ascertaining how far the series goes in presenting an accurate form of the practice. Mndende further purports that, "In order to maintain this peaceful state of existence, the living need to perform all the necessary rituals and fulfill the obligations and responsibilities prescribed for each individual" (Mndende, 2002). According to Mndende, *Isiko*

is a communal ritual performed by a community to communicate with their ancestors (Mndende, 2002). In other words, *isiko* forms part of the ritual practices or ceremonies enacted from time to time at differing stages of a human's life. One of the examples of *isiko* is *imbeleko* (a ritual equivalent to baptism in Christian doctrine), which is done when a new member of the family (an infant) is introduced to the ancestors. Ritual sacrifice in this instance refers to the object used to convey the communication. In most instances, a goat becomes this instrument, as seen in the episode with the slaughtering of the goat and drinking of its blood. On other occasions, a cow, chicken or sheep, as well as *impepho* (incense) and white-spirited alcohol are some of the instruments employed as a ritual sacrifice.

Ubizo is thus another form of ritual in the African spirituality. As part of the rites of passage stages, some must undergo a process of *ukuthwasa* so that they may be useful members to their respective societies. According to the Nguni cosmology, *ubizo* is regarded as a form of illness, *ingulo* to be specific. Mdlalose purports that “when the spirit wishes anyone to become a diviner, they make their wishes known by causing him to dream constantly and making him ill”. (Mdlalose, 2009). Moreover, *isiNtu* believes that a person's thinking, seeing, feeling and motivation to live is affected when they have a call to divination (Mdlalose, 2009).

Ubizo may manifest itself as an illness in many forms such as the inability to walk or wake up, temporary blindness or, tormenting dreams or visions that might make one restless during the day or at night. Additional symptoms are paranoia, severe mood swings, talking to oneself, obsessive thinking, increased wanderings or lone times, short temperedness, suicidal thoughts and constant dreaming (Mndende, 2002). However, *ubizo*, *amafufunyane* (schizophrenia) and *ukuphambana* (state of lunacy) are also often likened to the others but they are distinct. While there are forces that work for the light within African spirituality, there are also those that are tirelessly used for dark magic. Authors like Harriet Magubane understand *amafufunyane* to be negative spirits that seek to only harm the person, thus someone may mistakenly diagnose patients as either demented, crazy or psychotic because of this experience (Ngubane, 1977). Someone could be bewitched into becoming a lunatic out of jealousy or for power. And at times, people use *tikoloshe* to abduct others to become zombies.

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Intwaso which is a noun for *ukuthwasa*, meaning a 'call to divination', is associated with 'sickness' in that the individual undergoes a transformation which, in some cases, manifests itself as profound changes in behaviour. During *intwaso*, dreams are no longer analysed in a conventional sense and become 'real' in the sense that they are regarded as messages which must be taken literally," (Mndende, 2002). "*Ingulo*" is a longing to be whole. The idea of sickness here is not only limited to physical illness as the one who is called to divination is often sick for some time before they realise they have a calling. Secondly, dreams play an important part in determining those who are called since they end up being spiritual messages from the ancestors (Ngubane, 1981).

Mndende argues that dreams and visions for a person with a calling play a larger part than the other symptoms listed above. Often, people take a while to accept the calling because most of them tend to ignore or to be unaware of the power of their dreams and possible meanings (Mndende, 2002: 75).

The divination process requires that the diviner listen to the voices of the ancestors and involves the performance of certain rituals as well as a strict observance of taboos. In order to affirm, restore and sustain the relationship between the diviner and the ancestors, s/he refers to the ancestral and spiritual world on a daily basis. (Mndende, 2002: 64)

Mndende argues that accepting the call to divination is symbolically allowing spiritual forces to use you to become a medium vessel between the living and the dead. It is for this reason that one must pay close attention to their dreams so that they can decipher what the spirit world is trying to say to them.

To summarise, in general, *ubizo* is a tormenting and such a painful experience which often disrupts a person's 'normal' way of living. It is often through vivid dreaming that a calling can be identified. The authors have specified the number of ways that rituals for *ubungoma* are exercised. The information is useful to break the jargon used in the series. In addition, it will help in opening a discourse about the way in which this phenomenon has been presented.

Television and Genre Theory

In order to make proper enquiry about genre classification of the chosen series, it is crucial to first consult the relevant literature concerning genre. Employing David Chandler's theory will help to determine the concepts and give understanding of how grouped texts operate. The theory will help in locating the look, feel and rules of each genre. Perhaps, this will enable an association or a justification for *ubizo* with a particular type that is different from the one that the series has stipulated.

According to Chandler (1997), television texts are usually grouped into various forms of genres and this helps audiences to identify what they are watching. "Conventional definitions of genres tend to be based on the notion that they constitute particular conventions of content (such as themes or settings) and/or form (including structure and style) which are shared by the texts regarded as belonging to them" (Chandler, 1997). In other words, a genre is a type or a category of texts which have similar or the same character traits. Illustratively, although the style of presenting differs, *One Day Leader* (SABC 1, 2011-2014) and *The Big Debate* (SABC 2, 2009-) fall in the same classification as Current Affairs shows. Both shows deal with the same theme and have a similar set up on the stage where experts are invited to debate the socio-economic and cultural issues affecting South Africa.

Chandler maintains that "contemporary theorists tend to describe genres in terms of 'family resemblances' among texts" (Chandler, 1992). That is to say, audiences are subconsciously able to relate to a particular text because they watch shows that share similar traits. For example, the audience of a new show like *The Good Wife* will automatically classify this series as a legal drama due to their familiarity with previous shows like *L.A. Law* (NBC, 1986-1994), *Law and Order* (NBC, 1990-2010), *Judging Amy* (CBS, 1999- 2005) or *The West Wing* (NBC, 1999-2006). This is because these texts have a lot in common in terms of the plot structure, setting and issues they deal with. It is worth noting that these programmes usually have repetitive or recycled iconographies received from previously produced shows which tend to set the trend on texts under that category.

Naturally, some texts branch out to subgenres or contain a mix of more than two sets of genres. Chandler argues that this is called a genre hybrid and it is said to occur when the text is dynamic enough to fit more than one category (Chandler, 1997). For example, *Lost* (ABC, 2004-2010) as a television series dealing with an issue of Science versus faith, can fit over four genre categories. Primarily, it can be viewed as a mystery text, then a Science fiction, also as a serial drama and then it can also be an adventure or even a supernatural text. While this allows for a fluid description of a text, Chandler argues that the shortfall of genre hybrid is that anyone can make it seem like all the texts are similar to each other (Chandler, 1997).

Finally, genres are also subject to change and they evolve with time. For this reason, Chandler criticises television stations for economising on them by having a rigid definition of each so that they may determine audiences (Chandler, 1997). This research also inquires on classification and the politics around it and the article helps in shaping how genres work and progress over time.

Psychological Thriller and Family Trauma

Psychological Thrillers borrow largely from Horror and cannot be analysed separately from it. Horror in turn borrows largely from the Gothic genre and cannot be analysed without it. The following is a background and analysis of the link between all the mentioned genres.

Patricia Highsmith (1921-1995) and Jim Thompson (1906-1977) have contributed largely to the Psychological Thriller genre. They have been adapted into film by directors like Alfred Hitchcock, who has come to be recognised as a filmmaker that laid the foundations of Psychological Thriller with films like *Strangers on a Train* (Hitchcock, 1951) and *Psycho* (Hitchcock, 1960). Films like *Psycho* (1960) exemplify the Psychological Thriller genre because they tend to focus on how a psychotic mind thinks. As Mecholsky (2003) writes, “genres usually tell what will take place in the narrative events (as in the espionage thriller, the legal thriller, the medical thriller, and so on), but psychological thrillers also describe the effect they have on the reader”.

Getting into the minds of the characters, especially their memories, is an essential component of a Psychological Thriller. Their work will help in understanding the rules and culture of thriller subgenres. It is only after this article that implications of showing *ubizo* under such classification can be assessed.

One could say Psychological Thrillers give recognition to the complexities of human life, especially a life burdened with inaccessible memories. According to Mecholsky (2013), there is much that could be gathered about a person's behaviour based on where and how they are brought up. Causes of childhood trauma (or any trauma for that matter) often drive the plot while the character arc is fueled by a suppressed past. The character's mind becomes a focal point in the story. In *Psycho* (1960), Norman Bates becomes a stunted adult and social outcast as a result of family trauma, that is, his mother's death. It is interesting to note that stories that involve psychopaths often include social outcasts. Social outcasts often turn into the monsters in horror films like *Carrie* (de Palma, 1976), *Halloween* (Carpenter, 1978) and *Candyman* (Rose, 1992).

Horror and Race

Initially, the Horror genre borrowed elements from the Gothic genre. The Gothic genre dates back to the 19th Century but it became prominent in television texts around the late 1960s in the hardboiled detective stories centered around the soul of a human being. According to Halberstam and Halberstam (1995), "Gothic fiction in the nineteenth century specifically used the body of a monster to produce race, class, gender, and sexuality within narratives about the relation about the subjectivities and certain bodies".

Monsters in Horror have a long-intertwined history with race, particularly slavery. It is worth noting that race in the 1900s was more of a factor in the early periods of cinema, especially the interactions between black male bodies and white females. Monstrous black characters were created by white writers and performed by white characters in 'black face' in racist films such as the *Birth of a Nation* (Griffith, 1915). Brigid Cherry (2009) writes that it is certainly not uncommon for minority and marginalised groups to be the subjects of explicit racism or other forms of prejudice that

are thus encoded in Horror. She cites as an example the formulaic element of the torch-wielding mob that hounds the monster to its (seeming) death used in American horror films. Black audiences are familiar with the American “torch wielding mob” generic codes and come to understand African witch-hunts and witch-killings from that slanted position, especially when the monster in the film is depicted as a zombie.

In popular culture, the depiction of voodoo is in the same vein as witches and less of the magical *negros* trope. Twohy (2008) makes the observation that zombies are “corpses which a sorcerer has extracted from their tombs and raised by a process which no one really knows”. He argues that the inspiration of zombies is taken from the idea that it is a corpse that neither lives nor dies, but just wanders around in confusion due to insufficient burial rites of the body. Due to slavery, Twohy (2008) explains, many families could not afford to bury their dead in tombs that were deep enough to keep the departed beneath the ground, thus they struggled to rest peacefully. Furthermore, their bodies were exposed to witches that could use the bodies for their own dark magic before the body could decompose (Twohy, 2008). She adds that this is why most poor families chose to bury their dead around a busy street so that workers of evil could not do their works due to the absence of privacy. Others even went to the extent of shooting the dead once more to ensure that they were really dead and not prone to be used as zombies once they are buried.

In literature, the advent of monsters in Gothic texts was initially birthed by the idea of foreignness. The monster was conceived during a time when Europe was overthrowing aristocratic rule and the writers at the time were trying to write about subjects that aided the establishment of a nationalist identity. And as the Gothic genre spread to other continents, the gaze shifts to race, specifically non-white bodies, thus everything that did not resemble Europeans became monstrous or alien. McGee (2014) argues that monsters and zombies in film are an instrument used to speak to dire societal issues suppressed in the society. The idea of a monster is an icon for repression and bad things that happen at night. Writers within the Horror genre often explore what makes a monster and tend to create characters that can be defined by their punishable actions. Furthermore, in more nuanced films the emphasis shifts from race to class, religion, personality or gender.

Twohy (2008) argues that earlier zombie films of the colonial period entailed the exorcism of characters who were often insane and troubled in people's homesteads. She adds that this characterisation was set aside for female characters – unlike the 1960s whereby the perpetrators became violent males. “The implication exists, of course, that women are the weaker gender and therefore as prone to voodoo spells as the black natives” (Twohy, 2008: 13). The “psychotic zombie” is usually a black woman known to be acting ‘sassy’. Being ‘sassy’ is a characteristic of the Sapphire trope used to stereotype representations of black women. It is also known as the angry black woman. “Such stereotypes include the myth of the angry black woman that characterizes these women as aggressive, ill tempered, illogical, overbearing, hostile, and ignorant without provocation” (Shley, 2014); The Take, 2020). “In 2006, Walt Disney Pictures introduced the character Tia Dalma in the second installation of the *Pirates of the Caribbean* (Verbinski, 2003-2017) trilogy. Her character, in keeping with a disobedient sassy Voodoo ‘sapphire’ slave, even though she is also framed as a scary, otherworldly, and sexually aggressive ‘jezebel’ type. Despite the seemingly novel creation of a Voodoo sapphire jezebel, she (Tia Dalma) is ‘exceptionally othered in this film; her black femininity is carefully coded to perpetuate African women and spirit work as unsightly and unclean” (Qulity, 2015).

Being “unclean” is a characteristic of the Horror genre that triggers our general fear of infections, disease and contamination. In films like *Resident Evil* (Anderson, 2002), *I Am Legend* (Lawrence, 2007) and *28 Days Later* (Boyle, 2002) blood, contamination and zombies are fundamental plots and codes used to propel the stories of these films forward. The kind of “virus” films rely on zombies that feed on human flesh or by spreading disease upon humans. These representations reflect real-world problems such as “radiation, viruses [Covid-19, HIV, Ebola], medical procedures or government projects that have come to be complete disasters for the health of the citizens” (Twohy, 2008: 21). Interestingly, this virus or contamination trope is particularly potent when it is mixed with religion, which has its own ideas of morality and evil.

In films like *Carrie* (de Palma, 1976), *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992), *The Exorcist* (1973), and *The Witch* (Egger, 2015) the sexually mature, adult female body (fertile, menstruating, maternal, controlling, oppressive) is also coded as unclean and therefore

abject (Cherry, 2009). The young female ‘virgins’ in these films must ward off the evil spirit from entering and transforming them, like in *Dracula* (1992), *Carrie* (1976) or *The Witch* (Egger, 2015), or remove it from them like *The Exorcist* (1973), using religion. In these films, the monster is clearly beyond human and the metaphysical element has a religious aspect (Cherry, 2009). This is because according to Cherry (2009), in any religion, uncleanness gives rise to rituals of cleanliness which are frequently found in religious codes of practice that contain taboos and rites surrounding the elimination of waste and other biological processes (some religions, for example, prohibit contact with menstruating women). These rituals or prohibitions are intended to project the ‘clean and proper body’ (Creed, 1993).

These religious codes of proper, clean ‘virgin’ female bodies is also explored in slasher movies like *Halloween* (1978), *Nightmare On Elm Street* (1984) and *Cabin In The Woods* (Goddard, 2011) without the religious overtures. “In several slasher films the sexually active teenagers are killed and the final girl is either literally a virgin or not interested in boys; virginity/purity versus sexual activity/impurity thus becomes a key organizing syntax in these slasher films” (Cherry, 2009). In this respect, it is also interesting to note that the Horrors of the early 1900s have been criticised for being a misogynistic genre, having a tendency of glamorising monsters and sexualising women (Jancovich, 2002).

For example, in *Nosferatu* (Murnau, 1921), the woman anticipates the vampire’s night visits. When he comes and sucks out her blood (an act of love?), the framing is intimate and backlit, emphasising the slow caressing touches from the vampire grotesque’s hands. A reverse shot shows the woman in a close up, her eyes are closed and she is seemingly concentrated on the effects of the vampire’s long and sharp nails on her skin. She moans softly in this pseudo-dream-like sequence even when he begins sucking the blood out of her neck. In this film and other Horror films, the combination of the mise-en-scène with the psycho-sexual themes, with religious undertones, camouflages what is essentially predatory, stalker-like behaviour targeted at women.

Nonetheless, it is worth noting that *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984), is a film that pushed the boundaries of these codes by integrating *Nosferatu*’s (1921) dreamlike

setting with zombies and slasher films and introduced “a much stronger supernatural theme into the formula in the shape of a monster who can invade and kill through dreams” (Cherry, 2009). Jancovich (2002) argues that in Horror, dreams play as a window to the aborted and pregnant desires that rest in the subconscious. According to Cherry (2009), psychoanalysis may be useful when discussing the fact that elements of horror cinema represent the anxieties, fears, fantasies and desires that are relegated to the unconscious during childhood either because they are too unpleasant in and of themselves or because they conflict with more acceptable/ appropriate mental content.

The above factors may help explain why *Ubizo: (Govender, 2007)* creators ended up in Horror when they started out in the Psychological Thriller genre. The series utilises the dreams to illustrate *ubizo*, which is plausible because dreams do play a significant role in *ubungoma*. However, the use of the Horror/Psychological Thriller genres, coupled with the character of Zondi – who is the antagonist of the series and embodies the slasher-zombie-Ghost-vampire tropes and behaviours – has more to do with Western ideas of “unclean” spirits than a woman who is a *sangoma*, coming to terms with accepting her ‘calling’. As Chandler (1997) notes, some genres are more powerful than others because they are used by the state to promote certain ideologies, meaning the genre’s conventions ‘positions’ the audience to naturalise the ideologies which are embedded in the text (Chandler, 1997).

2.7 Conclusion

This literature review examined the historical culture of South African television, along with an analysis of the Horror and Psychological Thriller genres to reveal some of the ideologies already embedded in the text and how South African audiences have been positioned to interpret them. South African television has always been segmented along racial lines in terms of production and the audiences of each channel. SABC 1, where both *Yizo Yizo* and *Ubizo* aired, caters for black audiences. However, shows that are meant to have cultural significance like the aforementioned are often made by white creators. Additionally, whilst *Yizo Yizo* borrowed generic conventions for action and explicit films, it demonstrated how generic elements can be entertaining and still be able to stimulate public debates and educate the masses about township schools.

Ubizo's (Govender, 2007) use of generic conventions seemed motivated by the SABC's history of creating entertaining shows to attract advertisers rather than a need to "reflect reality" (Smith, 2001). Therefore, despite their hybridized use of the Horror and Psychological Thriller genres, they somehow managed to perpetuate a Western view of *ubungoma* that characterises *ubizo* as unclean and in opposition to Western religions. Nevertheless, the implications of the Horror and Psychological Thriller genre codes, in relation to the ideas of African culture and women, requires a further analysis of the mini-series to unpack.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In an informal interview conducted via WhatsApp on 17th July 2017, one of the *Ubizo*: (Govender, 2007) producers, Isabelle Rorke, classified the mini-series as a Psychological Thriller and Horror Genre. To unpack the implications of employing the Psychological Thriller / Horror genre to represent *Ubungoma* to SABC1's black majority audience in post-Apartheid South Africa, this study employed qualitative research methods.

Justification for using qualitative methods

Author Gary Shank (2002: 5) defines qualitative research as “a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning”. This means qualitative methods are interpretive; they rely on linguistic rather than numerical data. Qualitative methodologies seek to show audiences subjective understandings of texts and they are useful in terms of discovering something new (Elliott and Timulak, 2005).

Defining a thematic content analysis

Content analysis is one of the most utilized qualitative research methods. According to Jackson et al. (2007) a content analysis is a generic name for a variety of ways of conducting systematic, objective, quantitative, and or qualitative textual analysis that involves comparing, contrasting, and categorizing a set of data primarily to test hypotheses. Essentially, Jackson et al. (2007) state, a qualitative content analysis involves interpreting, theorizing or making sense of data by first breaking it down into segments that can be categorized and coded, and then establishing a pattern for the entire data set by relating the categories to one another. This technique allows the researcher to “deconstruct a text to help us understand the social realities of human beings” (Jackson et al., 2007). Furthermore, it allowed for the coding of the series into ‘themes’ that could be compared and contrasted. the researcher will be comparing and contrasting how the texts of horror have worked locally and across the globe, and further

analyse how stories with a similar theme as the one in *Ubizo*: (Govender, 2007) have addressed the issue of representation. It must be stressed that a large portion of this research has been developed from the root due to the lack of literature that addresses some of the fundamental discourses around *ubungoma* and *ubizo*.

Data collection

A case study is an approach that can be used to collect data to compare and contrast using qualitative methods. A case study allows the researcher to collect “multiple artifacts or kinds of data” that can be used “as evidence to refine, dispute, support or detail a concept, model, or theory” (Jackson et al., 2007). *Ubizo*: was identified as a case study, especially since the mini-series is accessible to a global audience, and therefore the ways in which it represents a minority group of “izangoma” in South Africa cannot be discounted.

To collect the data, the researcher conducted a thematic content analysis of the entire series, primarily to identify narrative devices and tropes (setting, plot, conflict, costume, effects, music and more) that were employed by the shows’ creators to illustrate “*ubungoma*” to mass audiences. Episodes 3 and 4 were identified as focusing more on depiction of “*ubizo*” rather than the family drama leading up to it shown in episodes 1 and 2. The second content analysis of episodes 3 and 4 was to identify elements of Horror and Psychological Thriller in these episodes, and in the series as a whole. These depictions of “*ubungoma*” and “*ubizo*” were categorised and coded into the corresponding Horror / psychological Thriller patterns identified in the series that will be further analysed and discussed in chapters 4 and 5.

Ethical considerations

There were no ethical issues to consider as the research was conducted on a mini-series produced for the public and broadcast on SABC1 in 2007, and subsequently on DSTV’s Showmax streaming platform. However, the University of Cape Town’s DVD copies of the mini-series were used for this research, instead of Showmax. The Durban University of Technology also possesses copies but unfortunately, these are the only institutions in the

country with this access as the other universities with copies of the miniseries are Columbia University, Emory University, and Stanford University .

CHAPTER 4: *UBIZO: THE CALLING* (GOVERNDOR, 2007) HORROR THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Introduction

One of the producers of *Ubizo: (Govender, 2007)*, Isabelle Rorke (2017) stated that, “initially the series was meant to fit the Psychological Thriller genre” but “it took a turn in becoming a Horror”. The Psychological Thriller genre often utilizes Horror elements (Halberstam and Halberstam (1995)). The Horror patterns and codes were identified, noted them and arranged into themes. Episodes 3 and 4 contained the most horrific elements but the series as a whole was also analysed. To make this analysis more concise, the focus was on the antagonist (Zondi) and scenes that depicted “ubungoma”, “ubizo”, “ukuthwasa”, and being a “sangoma”. Furthermore, the three reoccurring Horror themes will be discussed in relation to gender relations to foster a deeper understanding of how the series may influence perceptions of female “izangoma” in South Africa. Moreover, the researcher will rely primarily on Mdlalose (2009) and Mndende’s (2002, 2008, 2013) research.

Darkness, evil and rural superstitions

The Horror elements of *Ubizo: (Govender, 2007)* are introduced in the opening sequence. The scene opens in a sepia tone with the sound of a thunderstorm. It is night-time in the rural wilderness, and we see a *kraal* and a Nguni *rondavel*. Through the mist and low-key lighting emerges a young girl (Mary) with a beaded pouch in hand. Her mother (dressed in a “isangoma” cloth with a lion print in red on each side) and her sister are running after her, pleading. They catch with her and kneel before the younger Mary. Mary is filmed from a powerful low angle, as she holds the fate of the two women that are kneeling before her in her hand. The subtitles on the screen, read: “please do not throw away the bag”. The young Mary throws the pouch in the spring where it floats in a slow motion. The score changes from typical Horror music to a frenzy of beating djembe drums, and Mary’s mother jumps into the water. Suddenly, Noma’s face appears in colour, and we realize that it was Noma’s dream, later revealed to be a flashback of Mary’s past presented to Noma in her dream, because of her calling. Chapter 4

discussed the roles that dreams play in “*ubungoma*”, therefore in this chapter the focus will be on this opening scene.

When looking closely at the details of this opening scene, the scary music gives us a clue as to which genre we ought to ascribe to the fictional events that will transpire in the series. Furthermore, the darkness and low-key lighting and items infused with powers, like Mary’s mother’s pouch, are familiar Horror codes associated with superstitions and occultic beliefs. Mary’s mother wears a cloth with an imprint of a lion, a costume that represents “*izangoma*” or a spiritual vocation. Specifically, cloths with a lion represent royalty (Ulwazi, 2012). More importantly, this specific design on the print represents a sacred cloth worn by Thokoza Gogo “*sangoma*” around the Southern African region. Specifically, these type of healers are from the Ndawe warriors who trekked eSwatini, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Lesotho as well as South Africa (Keene, 2013). The darkness, the props and the costume together signify something more sinister about “*Ubizo*” before we are even introduced to the story elements. In addition the setting, in particular the wilderness and the traditional Zulu hut known as “*uguqa sithandaze*” connotes certain iconography or symbolism that South African audiences might be familiar with because of previous series like *Kwa-Khala Nyonini* (Sabela, 1987). Often, drama series with a rich Nguni tradition and story line encompass rondavel architecture in their mise-en-scene.

Some older South African audiences (who have watched *Kwa-Khala Nyonini* which was shown on TV1 in the late 1980s [and later rebroadcasted in the early 2000s for SABC 1]) would pick out similarities of the setting, costumes and style in *Kwa-Khala Nyonini* and *Ubizo*: (Govender, 2007), especially since both programmes took place in Nguni communities and dealt with issues of faith versus science. Additionally, *Kwa-Khala Nyonini*’s storyline focused on wealth, polygamy, jealousy and rural wives in polygamous unions as well as powerful witches. As Chandler (1997), noted “some texts borrow from the same texts within the same genre”, and “the audience can predict a genre by looking at the iconic signs and symbols appearing in that text” (Stadler and McWilliam, 2009). The iconography, music, setting, costume and especially the presence of the three women in the opening sepia-tone dream sequence of *Ubizo*: (Govender, 2007) and the South African audience’s familiarity with *Kwa-Khala Nyonini* storyline, foreshadows not only the ending of the film but the ideological framework

encoded by the creators. The contrast between the rural Edlozini and suburban Johannesburg settings is also noteworthy. For example, the city scape is shown with skyscraper buildings, large pools and a detailed focus of science facilities such as the laboratories. Interestingly, the cinematographer's interest with the rural set up is the fauna and flora. Long takes of trees and animals roaming in the wilderness last more on screen than any dialogue between the initiates. The soil is extraordinarily filtered brown to represent what seeks to be a true version of a nature that technology has not tampered with. Furthermore, the musical score is a unique drumbeat each time there is a transition from urban to a village scene.

Despite adhering to authenticity in the costumes and the buildings (huts and *kraals*) in the rural setting, there is no such place called Edlozini. In the story, Edlozini is a self-governed tribal land belonging to the Swati people that is near Johannesburg, but it is not clear which province it is in. As a typical self-governed territory, Edlozini has a male tribal leader that oversees it. Noma comes across this land when she steals the bulbs for her research. During her training, she goes to ask for forgiveness from the chief who then grants her into the sacred caves of “*izangoma*”. Eventually, Noma becomes the protector of this land when multinational corporations want to exploit it for their own financial benefit. Because the creators of the series decided to create a fictional space (where tribal chiefs, “*Ubungoma*”, and evil spirits reside), it reveals some of their pre-existing ideas about the space “*Ubizo*” occupies in postcolonial South Africa. No such place like Edlozini exists, therefore “*Ubizo*” occupies an invented space in contemporary South Africa. Furthermore, the creators must have been aware of the stigmatization of “*izangoma*” and were aware that they could potentially offend certain communities with their inaccurate characterisation of “*Ubungoma*”. Similarly, *Mr Bones* (Hofmeyr, 2001) also invents a backward rural place, Kuvukiland, where tribal chiefs, “*Ubungoma*” and “*izangoma*” coexist. However, in *Mr Bones* (Hofmeyr, 2001) the white “*sangoma*” in a black face is a widely loved type who openly carries his pouch and practices “*Ubungoma*” openly. This is in direct contrast to *Ubizo: The Calling* (Govender, 2007), where Mary's mother pouch is immediately destroyed in the opening scene under the cover of darkness. In addition, both Mary and her mother are sacrificed for superficial compromises –in the end Noma returns to her life and has a costume change. The ending deal

more with Noma understanding her mother's past than her deeper understanding of "Ubizo".

Nonetheless, the end of the series reveals that this throwing away of the pouch incident was the source of the curse of Mary's family. By rebelliously throwing away her mother's pouch (with the ritual bones), Mary cursed her bloodline and even affected her granddaughter Thandeka. Symbolically, throwing away the pouch of bones means Mary rejected her mother's "ubungoma" practicing beliefs. In the end Mary admits she hated the practice so her choice to throw away mother's bones was not to spite tradition. It is interesting to note that even without practicing any form of "Ubungoma" or 'witchcraft', *Ubizo: The Calling's* (Governdor, 2007) narrative still finds a way to assign the curse or misfortunes of the family to Mary. As Okonkwo et al., (2021) noted, societies have a way of assigning blame to the poor rural women who are often patriarchal scapegoats. Mary for example is a victim of a jealous and patriarchal religion which converted her thinking to deem her family's spiritual beliefs as barbaric.

As a stout Catholic, she quotes from a book that is very hostile towards women in order to justify how her daughter is being possessed by an 'evil' cult practice. Due to her Christian beliefs, Mary was secretive about African practices but admits that she knows what is causing Thandeka's sickness. Ironically, Mary, the devout Christian who does not have 'the calling', not only knows how evil works, but was also possessed by Zondi as a teenager and becomes the 'sacrificial lamb' for the family's salvation from the monster, Zondi. In episode 4, Mary becomes Zondi's final victim and through her death Zondi is destroyed forever. Furthermore, by the end of the series we come to realise that Mary was also the victim of a certain trauma that resulted in the loss of her mother. She spent all her life believing she was the cause of her mother's death, but it is shown that Zondi took advantage of her fragile mind as a child and used the opportunity of the loss of her mother to occupy a space in Mary's mind.

However, there is an interesting theme that *Ubizo: (Governdor, 2007)* cultivates: the killing of the mother. In Horror films like *Carrie* (Peirce, 2013) *The Faculty* (Rodriguez, 1998) and *Hereditary* (Aster, 2018) the death of mother is a key motif as a rite of passage into the world of 'darkness'. And in *Ubizo: (Govender, 2007)*, the same motif can be observed. First Mary's mother dies in the spring, and Mary dies in the same waters, then Noma almost jumps in after her. However, as if to justify the rural women's

death, the story informs us that this curse started when Mary threw the sacred bag inside the waters where the antagonist Zondi resides. Nonetheless, when Mary dies, only her shoe remains afloat. Despite seeing the floating shoe Noma still hopes that her mother may still be alive and attempts to go back into the water. It is only when Dabulamanzi stops her to let her know that her mother has passed on to a ‘better place’ that she makes peace with her departure. After Zondi’s defeat the pouch emerges from the water and Noma collects it. This signals that the curse has been lifted from the family bloodline. To prove it, Noma takes the pouch and shows it to the resuscitated Thandeka while exclaiming, ‘this is our heritage, and we should protect it with all our might’.

At this point it is important to note that early Horror films had been criticized “for being a misogynistic genre, having a tendency of glamorizing monsters and sexualizing women” (Jancovich, 2002). The series applies the same horror theme when Mary falls victim to the same predicament. Zondi possessed her from a young age and stripped her of the power to call her body her own. These ideas are also indicated by the rural setting, the series iconography, reminiscent of *Kwa-Khala Nyonini* (1987), and the sexualisation of the Zondi character.

Monsters, bloodlust, and patriarchy

Often in Western Horror films, “the breakdown of the family unit is either the source of the horror or an entry point for evil spirits or monsters to invade” (Cherry, 2009). In films like *The Brood* (Cronenberg, 1979), *The Shining* (Kubrick, 1980), *The Exorcist* (1973) and *The Witch* (Eggers, 2015), family members are either driven to madness, rage, body changes, murder or demonic possession by evil spirits. And in each of the examples I have given sex or explicit reference to sex is an indication that the monster has invaded the family or a character in the film. In *Ubizo*: (Govender, 2007), Zondi’s lust for Thandeka’s teenage menstrual blood, coupled with his usurpation of Mary’s body when she was a teenager, and Noma’s ‘weak legs’ are subtle yet noticeable references to sexual conquest of the women in the series – therefore it is worth exploring the other elements of the series antagonist.

Zondi is the antagonist of the series, but what Zondi is in terms of “*Ubungoma*” is hard to define. It is better to understand how he is portrayed in the Horror genre first to get

a better understanding of where he fits in the understanding of “Ubizo”. Firstly, Zondi possesses vampire-like traits because he lusts after blood, in particular blood of the Mkhathshwa bloodline (Noma’s family). He is a supernatural figure that feeds on young women during their coming of age, specifically when they start menstruating. These girls are abducted so that he can live on their blood. But Zondi is not just one thing; he is characterized as a hybrid of several supernatural figures often depicted in Horror films. Secondly, he is invisible and has ghost-like powers. For example, in the hospital when Thandeka (Noma’s daughter) lies sick, Zondi’s bizarre shadows can be seen. But because at that time that Noma is a graduated “*sangoma*”, she can sense him but can’t really see him. Interestingly, Zondi is also an air-mass that can close taps. Thirdly, Zondi has demonic powers in that he can possess female bodies and control their actions. For example, towards the end of episode 3, Zondi possesses Mary who then attacks her daughter till she bleeds and collapses on the floor. According to Cherry (2009: 5) supernatural, occult and ghost films involve interventions of spirits, ghosts, witchcraft, the devil, and other entities into the real world and often feature uncanny elements. One of the most utilized otherworldly entities in Horror are zombies.

Twohy (2008) argues that in the Caribbean mythology, one became a zombie due to not receiving a proper burial rite, which in turn caused the corpse to be suspended between life and death. Furthermore, Mdlalose (2009) noted that in the Nguni spiritual practices, those whose spirits were abducted remained wondering between the land of the living and of the dead.

However, the character of Zondi comes from another world but he is not a corpse. He is alive and he feeds on women’s blood. Twohy (2008) also notes that zombies have a certain capturer or master since they are slaves themselves. Authors like Harriet Magubane, Nokuzola Mndende, Patrick Harries also note that there are those within African spirituality that use it to enslave others. “*Amafufunyane*” and “*Isithuthwane*” are understood to be negative spirits which seek to only do harm to the person, thus someone may mistakenly diagnose patients as either demented, crazy or psychotic because of this experience, not unlike the diagnosis of Mary’s possession by Zondi. And at times, people use a “Tikoloshe” to abduct others to become zombies. A “Tikoloshe” or a Goblin is a manufactured spirit that can enter people’s houses unseen. This creature would be sent out at night to terrorise people, have sex with them or steal money from

banks (Khokhovula, 2021). Undoubtedly, Zondi has the characteristic of a “Tikoloshe”, but how he is different from a “Tikoloshe” is worth exploring.

Firstly, it is difficult to argue that Zondi is “Tikoloshe” because according to popular myths, these creatures are often noticeably short and Zondi is a tall man. Secondly, Zondi has no master; he is working for himself. As an addition, it’s hard to characterize him as a zombie in terms of Twohy’s (2008) definition because in the series the master-slave role is reversed and it’s Zondi who is holding Mary’s body captive. At this point, I think it is also particularly important to also observe the kind of spirit that enters a person when they have received the calling. There are several spirits in the Southern African region that are capable of entering another living body. Some are easily picked out in the manner the person with “Ubizo” behaves. People with “uMndawu” for example tend to exhibit very extreme changes and are sometimes aggressive. Mdlalose, (2009) notes that “uMndawu” spirits are mostly people that died during the uMfecane wars along the lands of modern-day Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Mozambique as well as South Africa. Because of the wars, they died tragic deaths and remain unburied. These spirits could be the source of Zondi’s behaviour in terms of “Ubungoma” but the way he is depicted in the series suggests that he is something else.

Ultimately, women’s blood seems to be Zondi’s driving force through the series. The opening sequence hints at this as well. One of the captions in *Ubizo*: (Governder, 2007) reads, in Swati, “*Ingati- ingati* [blood], *Ingati yakho ingumthombo wako konkhe*” (your blood is the source of everything). It is not explained how this blood is source of everything but by the end of the series we at least understand that statement to have been referring to Thandeka’s menstrual blood which nearly causes her death, and Mary’s bloodline. Furthermore, Zondi drags the women to the bloody water and Dabulamanzi’s hand is shown to be bloody in a close up. In addition, blood is spilled when the goat is killed for Noma’s ceremony. It is also worth noting that Noma does not eat meat and can't handle the smell of it. However, later we see her drinking blood from a goat.

The literature of Mndende and her explanation of “*isiko*” a ritual done as parts of the rites of passage will be used in unpacking some of the African practices that would best explain rituals linking to a zombie’s manifestation. According to Mndende (2002:

11), “*Isiko*” is a communal ritual performed by a community in communicating with the ancestors. “*Isiko*” is done when a new member of the family (an infant) is introduced to the ancestors. During the ritual, an object/animal is used to facilitate the communication. In most instances a goat becomes this instrument, but on other occasions a cow, chicken, sheep as well as white spirited alcohol are employed. “*Isiko*” is probably the source of the Noma’s goat blood drinking scene. However, it is also interesting to note how the series uses blood in conjunction with the soil. Zondi feeds on the soil of the bulbs. The first time, we see a reaction of the bulbs when Mary’s blood touches the soil that fell from the bulbs which Noma stole from the “*isangoma*”; suddenly the blood attacks her. The soil becomes a symbol in the story because it represents crops and the earth, and therefore is a giver of life. Zondi’s reaction to the soil when it is mixed with blood stirs up images of corpses/zombies being reanimated. Nonetheless, because of his many monster-like characteristics borrowed from several subgenres of Horror, it seems more appropriate to describe Zondi as a supernatural dark force who is the embodiment of Western ideas of the occult/evil.

Ultimately, Zondi’s characterisation is an epitome of the patriarchal horror of the 1960s whereby male monsters were after young girls for voyeuristic pleasures and bloodlust, like *Psycho* (1960). Zondi chooses the youngest blood in the family to feed on as it is still pure and untouched. First it was Mary in her tender ages, and then he tried with Thandeka upon getting her first period. Certainly, there are no explicit sex scenes in *Ubizo*: (Govender, 2007). We can rely on what we hear about what Zondi does to young women from oral accounts of Babe’s description of him. She purports that Zondi’s aura roams around looking for menstrual blood. However, given that this series was targeted as the primetime audience, one could presume that the creators of the series had to self-censor some of their ideas. Nonetheless, the hyper-sexualised overtures of the black male figure were encoded in other notable conventions. Like the figure of Yasuke, an African slave who became a black samurai in Japan by the 1500s, Zondi has extremely long dread locks and wears a dreadful costume. His strength resembles a fighting warrior and the only difference is that he fights for dark forces.

Blackness and uncleanliness

Halberstam and Halberstam (1995: 6) argue that horrors tend to play around the notion of race and specifically use the body of a monster to produce race, class, gender, and sexuality. Racially, the series exaggerates ‘blackness’ by having the character of Zondi in black face. By putting black make up (make up that looks like shoe polish) on the character of Zondi, instead of the grey tones we are accustomed to when we see ghosts or zombies to symbolize their lifelessness, it seems like Zondi’s darkness is the key element that the producers intended.

Why the creators of *Ubizo*: (Govender, 2007) would use dirty ‘unattractive’ characters with exaggerated ‘blackness’ remains in question but Cherry (2009) notes that cleanliness is something that recedes as characters becomes more monstrous. Regardless, it is interesting to note how Noma, a lighter shade of black, beautiful, slim, well dressed, and well-spoken woman stands out in contrast to both Babe and Zondi. Nevertheless, we cannot overlook the use of water in the series.

According to Cherry (2009) in *Carrie* (Palma, 1978) and *The Exorcist* (Friedkin, 1973), the sexually mature, adult female body (fertile, menstruating, maternal, controlling, oppressive) is often coded as unclean. And uncleanliness often gives rise to rituals of cleanliness which are frequently found in religious codes of practice in which an unclean spirits must be cast out (Cherry, 2009). Furthermore, Cherry (2009) observed that the religious and sexual iconography associated with Horror films, in particular the linking of sex and death, may well instill typically horror-related responses in some viewers.

Conclusion

Using the Horror genre to elicit responses from the South African audience proved to be remarkably unsuccessful, mainly because the genre reduces African practices to merely a fascination with dark magic. The languages and the characterisation offered allows the viewer to understand the practice of “*ubungoma*” as a cult obsessed with blood-thirsty beings that are experts at soul taking. Horror often glorifies the

monster/antagonist at the expense of the victim(s). Whilst Zondi is presented as an invincible embodiment of evil, Noma and her family are cast as victims who even as devout Christians, scientists and “*izangoma*” cannot prevent the loss of a life. In the end the tragedy cannot be avoided, as if to say “it is in the blood”.

Furthermore, despite Noma’s acceptance of her calling, she returns to her middle-class life and her role as custodian of Endlozini somehow indicates that those with a education and upbringing are inherently better suited at ‘fixing’ African spirituality’s purpose in contemporary society. Under the stipulated genre, we are unable to discern the underlying cosmic knowledge which the series was trying to communicate. Issues of dreams and visions as transmitters of knowledge between the dead and the living are then watered down to a western understanding of the Freudian analysis of psychosis linked to trauma. Noma’s quest to initiation is depicted as an adventure she was embarking on only to silence her dreams and then defeat the monster. This clean ending recycles horror narratives whereupon the zombie is either destroyed or reformed back to society. Therefore, this cannot be a satisfying genre to best explain that “*ubizo*” is a spiritual practice that has no ending. Noma will still be called by other clusters of spirits to do yet another task that harmonises all planes of the universe. Her closing words in episode 4 offer this assurance, as she says, “No, I have not completed. This only the beginning of many great journeys ahead”.

CHAPTER 5: *UBIZO: THE CALLING* (2007): NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

In African cultures, the cosmos is treated with great secrecy and respect. So, it is of particular importance to be mindful of the way the practice of “*ubungoma*” is presented. It is with this that we should ask what is acceptable and what is not in its portrayal in the series. Mdlalose notes that ancestral things should be treated with respect since the knowledge is sacred, mysterious and often private from the public exhibition (Mdlalose, 2009). Mndende (2002) adds that “*isangoma*” must be able to decipher the hidden meaning behind arbitrary messages of the spiritual world. Furthermore, she stresses that some dreams may not necessarily be literal, “since ancestors could employ objects or animals to speak to a certain issue” (Mndende, 2008).

Ubizo presents this secrecy well by playing with symbols and vague images. For example, Noma constantly dreams the same dream and always wakes up sweaty and fearful. The dream here becomes part of the narrative; an image of a younger girl (Mary) throwing a patch of bones inside a pond. A direct interpretation of this dream alludes to the fact that bones carry a heritage of a people. Once thrown or tossed away, the clan loses its valuable knowledge. Yes, it may be a literal presentation of what once happened in the past, yet it can also be a symbolic indication of what the ancestors have long been showing her. The young girl throwing a bag of bones inside a spring water may stand in for a female figure that was irresponsible with carrying on her lineage towards a cluster of diviners. Symbolically, the throwing away of the bag may mean that Mary erroneously gave up on her beliefs and family’s heritage. The symbolism of bones can be understood in terms of the belief within the African traditions “that the bones of the deceased are 'vocal' and can communicate with the living on behalf of the deceased” (Mndende).

In a creative and refreshing manner, *Ubizo* disturbs the usual pattern of horror sub-genres where the supernatural is usually left alone. Traditionally, dreams in horror tend to attack the subconscious mind. Jancovich (2002) argues that dreams act as a window to the aborted and pregnant desires that rest in the subconscious. Alfred Hitchcock, a master in the genre, had a very famous sequence in

Vertigo (Hitchcock, 1958) that explored dreams, fears and the subconscious. Often, as is the case with *Silence of the Lambs* (1991), the protagonist is encouraged to explore their dreams/nightmare to overcome their childhood traumas. Causes of childhood trauma (or any trauma for that matter) drive a Psychological Thriller plot forward. But, in *Ubizo*: (Govender, 2007), dreams are a reservoir of information and messages from the other plane of living. Similarly, dreams or their interpretation in “Ubungoma” often leads to revelations. Unlike horror, *Ubizo* adopts a narrative that forces one to suspend one’s belief for a moment and allow for a space to engage another realm of living.

Another unusual pattern which *Ubizo*: (Govender, 2007) brings forth under the classified genre is the way it lays out its characters. For example, it is unusual for a psychological thriller to feature animals as part of the characterisation. A lion is seen roaming about in four different shots. Further, it forms part of the narrative as it is a symbolic meaning of the Mkhathswa ancestor. The lion is there each time Noma is in danger seeking supernatural powers to come to her aid. The lion’s name is Lakhoza. Unlike the common glamorisation of the fauna from Hollywood, here the lion has character and one can see through its emotion. In episodes 2 and 4, Lakhoza represents the ancestral totem for her family. In actuality, it is Lakhoza (Noma’s grandmother’s) resuscitation. Since she is spirit without a body or face, she chooses to appear in this way so that her presence can be verifiable. She eventually shows her true form only at the sacred cage where only graduated “izangoma” can enter.

In conclusion, dreaming in the series is another way in which *Ubizo*: (Govender, 2007) revolutionised traditional horrors. By presenting dreams as repressed memories rather than visions with hidden meanings, it makes the series feel like a typical version of the horror text. Chandler has sustained that, “Each new work within a genre has the potential to influence changes within the genre or perhaps the emergence of new sub-genres (which may later blossom into fully-fledged genres)... it is important to recognize not only the social nature of text production but especially the role of economic and technological factors as well as changing audience preferences,” (Chandler, 1997).

CHAPTER 6: *UBIZO: THE CALLING* (2007): PSYCHOLOGICAL FAMILY GENETICS AND MENTAL HEALTH

In this research and through various observations, it was noted that representations of “Ubizo” are often characterized as madness or evil possession. Although this phenomenon has not been expressed clearly in other television texts, storylines with an African practicing indigenous healing often reveal ideas about African people being backward or superstitious. This representation is seen in *Ngaka* (Sabela, 1974) where the woman is portrayed as possessed by demonic spirits. As the commonplace saying goes in Freudian psychology “it’s always about the mother”. And in the case of *Ubizo* it is the mother Mary who is to blame for Noma’s curse, and it is Noma who is to blame for her daughter Thandeka’s haunting from Zondi. But first let’s start with the source – Mary.

Mary, Noma’s mother, was born and partially raised by a “sangoma” mother. When her mother died, she was raised by missionaries who in turn turned her into a devout Christian Catholic. Mary believes that evil exists in the practice of African spirituality and as a product of her upbringing, she has turned her back on “Ubungoma”, disconnected from her past and raised a daughter (Noma) who embraces science. Mary is essentially an outcast who left the rural areas to live in the suburbs. The significance of Psychological Thrillers is often societal rebellion. Usually, the story gives us some kind of an explanation as to how / why a person became an outcast or a psychopath as is the case of *Psycho* (1960), *Halloween* (1978) and *Silence of the Lambs* (1991). In each of these films, the outcast / rebel has undergone or is sent to therapy. Similarly, Mary is portrayed as a mysterious woman with a dark family secret. She also cannot be trusted with her granddaughter (Thandeka) or with herself because of her multiple- personality disorder. This disorder could be hereditary and pass on to her daughter Noma who suddenly shows symptoms of “Ubizo”, not mental health issues.

Mary is also suffering from a repressed childhood memory, a theme often used by psychological thrillers, and in *Ubizo* Mary’s potential turn from social outcast to psychopath provides some of the series thrilling moments. But it is with psychotherapy that repressed memories and mental disorders are believed to be cured

(Anderson et al, 2004). However, when Noma receives ‘the calling’, we learn that it is a family curse and to avoid the cycle of ‘evil’ in the family, Noma must accept her “*Ubizo*” and undergo the sacred training of “*Ukuthwasa*”. The idea of “*Ubizo*” being a curse is misinterpreted but is in line with some of the Horror elements of Voodoo myths. However, according to Mdlalose (2009) it is not very common that one receives a call to heal if there has never been a family member with the same calling, therefore there is convincing evidence that “*Ubungoma*” is “passed on from generation to generations genetically” (2009). Nonetheless, when Noma gets the call, it is also associated with mental issues.

Initially Noma is seen struggling to cope with therapy in the series because the nature of her ‘condition’ is spiritual and not psychological. This representation utilizes ideas from the Psychological Thriller genre and reflects the ideas in the South African medical community. There is a persistent pattern of diagnosing “*Ubizo*” as a mental disorder by South African health practitioners. Booie (2004) critiques psychiatrists who have sought to fit “*Ubizo*” within the description of mental conditions such as schizophrenia. Mndende (2013) characterizes “*Ubizo*” as a ritual performed for the rites of passage. The ritual of accepting a calling is therefore an eventful stage where one accepts divine gifts from the departed spirits. The act of “*Ukuthwasa*” consequently is accepting the responsibility to receive what has been bestowed unto to you from a community of healers. Because “*sangoma*”, as Mndende (2002) emphasises, do not become a healer for individualistic benefit, but through their initiation, “the entire family as well as society is helped by this noble gesture”.

However, the ritual of “*Ubizo*” is not a smooth process. It is an inner conflict that could manifest itself as a ‘sickness’. The idea of sickness here is not only limited to physical illness as the one who is called to “*Ubungoma*” is often ‘sick most of the time before they could even realise they have a calling’ (Mndende, 2002). Initially Noma does not take her sudden health condition seriously, but her sudden inability to walk forces her to take her ancestors’ call seriously. It is also interesting to note that only a few numbers of “*izangoma*” are given ‘the calling’ by Nguni spirits like the Amakhosi, Abalozi or Chaminuka that are said to be of high-grade medium (Mdlalose, 2009). The spirits often lead to distinct dances, trances and even whistles as a form of communication

that could easily be misunderstood as some form of madness. However, these manifestations are often temporary and periodical.

Nonetheless, “Intwaso”, which is a noun for “Ukuthwasa” meaning a 'call to divination' is often associated with 'sickness' in that the individual undergoes a transformation which, in some cases, manifests itself as profound changes in behaviour. One of those 'sicknesses' is “Ingulo” – a longing to be whole. Another is dreams; dreams play an important part in determining those who are called since they end up being spiritual messages from the ancestors. Furthermore, during “Intwaso”, “dreams are no longer analysed in a conventional sense and become 'real' in the sense that they are regarded as messages which must be taken literally” (Mndende, 2002).

4.5 Conclusion

The context of “Ubungoma” has changed from colonial times where one would have a practice at home or in the mountain and have clients coming to him/her to consult. Nowadays, “izangoma” attend to their spiritual callings while maintaining their careers, education and family unit. Moreover, de-colonialism has challenged Western science to incorporate aspects of “Ubungoma” as accepted healing practices. This is demonstrated in the series whereby Noma’s training in both western and traditional healing allows her to be a vessel of both epistemologies. This also serves as a way in which indigenous knowledge systems collaborates with modern medicine for producing knowledge about healing. Finally, by framing “Ubungoma”, “Ubizo”, “Ukuthwasa” and “ubizo” through the Psychological Thriller genre using mental health theme and dreams, the series speaks more to a Western understanding of these indigenous knowledge systems.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

To recap, *Ubizo* tells the story of a biochemist by the name of Nomathemba “Noma” Mkhathshwa who is suddenly called to become an “isangoma”. Initially, she is presented as a successful biochemist who researches plants and herbs for a private organisation. Due to her ‘unique’ occupation, we can read Noma’s character as a bridge between the indigenous knowledge systems and the Western scientific process. We could even go further and view Noma as an example of what represents “izangoma” in the modern era. Similarly, to the reality of most, Noma is presented as conflicting with her roots as the narrative tells the story of a black middle- class woman using western methods to steal from indigenous Nguni “sangoma”.

Ubizo focused more on depiction of “Ubizo”. The notes, patterns, and codes that corresponded to the Horror / Psychological Thriller genre were identified and categorized into themes to show the consistency of the ideas projected in the mini-series. A theme is a unifying idea that is a recurrent element in literary or artistic work. By examining these codes and how they support and inform certain Horror / Psychological Thriller themes, in contrast with Mndende’s (2002) research on “Ubugoma”, “Ubizo”, “Ukuthwasa”, and being “isangoma”, we may obtain a deeper understanding of portrayal of “Ubizo” and how it may influence perceptions of used woman “izangoma” in South Africa.

Past work from television has been found lacking in substance and proper representation of the subject as well as practitioners of “ubugoma”. *Ubizo* stands out as a unique text that has gone against the traditional culture of the narrative. It is important to note that despite its criticism, most notably from Mndende (2008) who discredits the series for being inaccurate in some of its representation of African traditional practices, the researcher’s reasons to use it as a case study were motivated by several significant personal observations. Firstly, in the initial viewing of *Ubizo* it was noted that the representation of “Ubizo” in the series focused on and emphasised a view of the spiritual practice as a form of madness and evil possession. As a film and media student, the researcher sought to understand why it was classified under horror sub-genres.

After conducting this research, the findings were that it is impossible to study and analyse the notion of genre without first giving close attention to the influence and role of the audience's viewing habits. As a future study, it will be interesting to look at the interrelation between the text and the power of its audience. Initially, the researcher set out to find out how effective or ineffective it has been to present issues of "ubungoma" under the horror genre. I found out that *Ubizo*: (Govender, 2007) appears to be doing both; it conforms to some of the horror conventions while disrupting the conventional flow.

Firstly, the depictions diminish the essence of the practice and further perpetuate misguided information about "ukuthwasa". It is assumed by the edit that initiation is a terrifying experience compounded by surreal looking creatures. Secondly, the series divulges too much of sacred knowledge and it is done with poor or little consideration for the practice. For example, the rituals performed during Noma's "intwaso" rather glamourise than show the significance of blood drinking during completion. Moreover, the narrative is incomplete which further makes it seem senseless. It is arguable therefore that some of the horror codes used by the series clash with "ubizo" as a spiritual practice. Lastly, some of the language used by the manner of characterisation does not drive the story towards a positive outlook of the practice. Although there is a reformation for some, there is great skepticism about the power of traditional remains.

Nevertheless, the series brought a new outlook that negotiates the understanding of African practices as psychotic or evil acts. This is an insufficient explanation to show how "ubizo" works, therefore there are constraints in using the horror genre to depict what "ubizo" seeks to be. When the basis of "ubizo" as a spiritual practice is understood, perhaps there would be no need to classify it under restrictive genres which may limit or link it to discourses that it does not fit. The findings have also revealed that research on horror is mainly interested in a singular-exit explanation rather than having an open conclusion which could explain *Ubizo* in more than one way. This leads us to consider the idea that hybrid genres could co-exist in one text. With the set of multi-layered

narratives presented throughout the series; it is simply not enough to look at the text simply as a horror.

Furthermore, there seems to be a focus on group-themed analysis rather than individual series analysis. This is to say that there is pressure to classify *Ubizo*: (Govender, 2007) under an already established genre rather than looking at it as an individual text that has elements which may be similar to others but is certainly unique and deals with the issue of African spirituality in a new and fresh way, staying away from bastardising the practice. Perhaps other genre types that may qualify in issues related to spirituality may include supernatural, magic realism or even a newly conceived genre that best represents issues of spirituality holistically.

In the final conclusion, *Ubizo* must be commended for its unique treatment around the issues of gender and race. The series perpetuates violent racial connotations of the past by using sets and language. On gender, the series challenged the long-standing iconographies of screen media as a whole whereby a male protagonist tends to lead the story. Not only is the cast and production led by women, *Krijay* also shows through the practice of “*Ubizo*” that women were and still are holders of knowledge within the practice. Moreover, it further challenged the sexualization of women that are usually found in most horror texts.

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