

MEMORIES OF PAIN AND THE QUEST FOR HEALING IN POST-APARTHEID DRAMA: A NEGOTIATION OF ETHICS OF FORGIVENESS IN Yael FARBER'S *MOLORA*

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Abstract

The South African Truth and Reconciliation project, officially instituted in 1996 following the collapse of apartheid, and socially encouraged since then, continues to attract imaginative and critical scholarly interests, with attention to different issues pertaining to the project. This article selects two of such issues, namely revenge and forgiveness, for critical engagement. It examines the dilemma over which of the two offers a better way of dealing with the painful memories of past injustices and oppressions, using Yael Farber's *Molora*, an adaptation of Aeschylus's classical play, *Oresteia*. Drawing insights from Jacques Derrida's conception of forgiveness, the article argues that not just forgiveness, but unconditional forgiveness offers a more enduring balm to soothe the pains of dehumanization, past injustices, oppressions and allied indignities.

Key Words: Post-apartheid drama, Truth and Reconciliation, Revenge, Forgiveness, Pain, *Molora*

Introduction

As a critic aptly observed, the most momentous event in the post-apartheid South African political history was the convening of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), whose activities lasted between 1996 and 1999 (Adebiyi, 2014). The commission was essentially charged with the responsibility of hearing the stories of victims and perpetrators of apartheid's injustice and inhumanity with a view to encouraging or facilitating reconciliation at both personal and national levels. In two years, which is between 1996 and 1998, more than 21,000 victims documented over 38,000 allegations of human

rights crimes, which included 10,000 murders, with the TRC (Mussi, 2016). These figures, while pointing to the scale and enormity of the destruction that apartheid inflicted on South Africa, are nevertheless a fraction of the actual evil perpetrated. This is because those allowed to enter statements at the Commission in this regard were people who suffered bodily harms such as rape, murder, and other kinds of physical abuse or violence motivated by political considerations. By excluding millions who suffered psychological violence of social discriminations of all kinds, even when politically motivated, it is obvious that the figures would have been in six digits.

To be certain, for a period of nearly five decades, South Africans of different racial groups were sucked into a spiral of violence and vengeful disposition to settling differences. However, in the last decade of the forty-six years during which apartheid lasted, incidence of violence and reprisal attacks increased geometrically as the oppressed majority intensified its armed struggle and guerrilla activities, while the minority white government responded with greater force. When both sides realised the futility and retrogressive consequences of their underground and open confrontations, they opted for peaceful negotiations. After a period of four years, the negotiations culminated in the first democratic elections of 1994 and a peaceful transfer of power from one erstwhile foe to the other.

Despite this peaceful shift, which was widely regarded as 'miraculous', apprehensions still hung in the air about the possibility of an implosion in the country. It was feared that with power in the hands of the hitherto oppressed and brutalised group, reprisals and revenge might take over the land. Indeed, besides pervasive genuine fears in this regard, there were pockets of racial animosity and hate-inspired violence from members of one racial group against the other while the negotiations were still on-going.

Fortunately, the setting up of the TRC by the new government to manage the challenge of dealing with the pains of past injustices, brutalities and injuries did its bit to salvage the situation. While submitting its final report in 2003, the Commission, through its Chair,

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, admitted that the project of national reconciliation must, of necessity, continue. At the cultural front, literature has risen up to the challenge.

Through her play, Yael Farber, the author of *Molora*, partakes in South Africa's continued search for ways of dealing with the past and facilitating reconciliation. According to the playwright, the play is a materialisation of her deep desire to explore 'the cycle of violence and the dilemma of survivors who have to choose between the impulse to avenge and the impulse to forgive' (*Molora*, 10). In her self-imposed undertaking, she adapts Aeschylus's *Oresteia* by appropriating some thematic and stylistic aesthetics from the famous classical trilogy.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and South African Literature

That the TRC has had a very serious impact on post-apartheid literature is unarguable. Indeed, writers have continued to draw afflatus for their works from the project without bating breath, even as it is doubtful whether the potentials the TRC has to offer creative writing could be exhausted in a long time. Correspondingly, critical engagements with such works have been stimulating and enriching, especially on the contiguous subjects of truth, testimony, confession, memory, forgiveness, reconciliation and healing. In addition to numerous essay articles, valuable book length studies in this regard include *Ambiguities of Witnessing: Law and Literature in the Time of a Truth Commission* by Mark Saunders (2007), *South African Literature after the Truth Commission: Mapping Loss* (2009) by Shane Graham, and *Literary Legacies of South African TRC* by Francesca Mussi (2020).

While Sanders's work investigates human rights violation, mourning, forgiveness and reparation in the context of the TRC, Graham brings to scrutiny the Commission's notions of truth, justice, history, and memory. The more recent study by Mussi also engages with these same issues and similar ones; all of which reinforce the enduring significance and influence of the TRC on literary production in the post-apartheid era. Mussi's work, however, expands on Sanders's and

Graham's significantly by exploring the implications of these issues for reconciliation and healing at personal and national levels. This aspect intersects with the interest of this article.

It is quite interesting to note that these seminal works cut across different genres and sub-genres of literary compositions, from drama, poetry, prose fiction, memoir, to the documentary. While this underscores the amenability of the TRC contents, its proceedings and procedures to creative inventions, revisions and interventions, it is vital to note that different plausible reasons motivated the choice of genre privileged for attention in each of the works. For instance, Shane and Mussi are of the view that the novel genre has greater capacity for engagement with the subject. And, to be certain, more writings in the genre of prose have engaged with issues around the TRC more than the other genres. However, since the unique contributions from the other genres cannot be ignored, this article elects a preoccupation with the dramatic form.

In fact, as Mark Gevisser (1997) and Geoffrey Davis (1999) remind us, theatre is the first creative medium to engage with many of the issues raised by the TRC. Some of the plays that do so include, among others, Lara Foot Newton's *Reach!*, Craig Higginson's *Dream of the Dog*, John Kani's *Nothing but the Truth*, Jane Taylor's *Ubu and the Truth Commission*, and Yael Farber's *Theatre as Witness*, a collection of three plays. These plays productively engage with the TRC in diverse ways. Craig Higginson's *Dream of the Dog*, for instance, explores memories of pain, past injustices, as well as the quest for reconciliation between individuals in erstwhile master-servant relation archetype that characterised white-black relation in apartheid South Africa. The play mainly calls attention to the unreliability of memory and questions the veracity of truths purveyed by individuals in their quests to facilitate reconciliation.

Foregrounded in the message of the play is the debate over the necessity to forget the past as a requirement for true reconciliation or to always remember the past in order to forestall its repeat. The protagonist of the play, Smart, visits his former master's family with the

sole aim to make Patricia, his adopted mother and boss, experience a sense of guilt for watching Grace, his supposed lover, violently killed by Patricia's husband. Ironically, the vengeful ice-cold disposition between Smart and Grace thaws following some revelations; and, reconciliation is eventually engendered.

Lara Foot Newton's *Reach!* centres on the notion that the search for truth and reconciliation is a continuous, rather than finite project. Like Higginson's play, it also explores the role of memory, forgetting and remembering in the quest. However, it pays greater attention to truth-telling, testimony and confession. In a bid to get rid of the guilt that is tormenting him, Solomon Xaba, a witness to the violent murder of Jonathan, the son of Marion the play's protagonist, plucks up courage after a long vacillation, to come forward and tell the truth about Jonathan's death. Despite the difference in their perspectives about the contentious issues of remembering or forgetting the past, Solomon and Marion not only agree on the need for reconciliation, they also work to achieve the same.

John Kani's *Nothing but the Truth* is also preoccupied with the issues of truth and reconciliation. Though largely framed around two brothers who are enmeshed in sibling rivalry, the play, right from its title, privileges the importance of truth in the process of reconciliation. To a great extent, it also underscores the importance of forgiveness as a means to enduring reconciliation (Adebisi, 2015).

While the above plays engage with issues that form the bedrock of the TRC's mandate, with little or no titular reference to the Commission's project, Jane Taylor's *Ubu and the Truth Commission* announces its concern with the project in a most direct manner through its title. However, it focuses more on human rights violations and social injustices of the apartheid era. Unlike what we see in the plays above, some of the survivor-victims in *Ubu and the Truth Commission* are filled with so much bitterness that they doubt if they would ever forgive those involved in the death of their loved ones. In fact, one of the witnesses expresses her readiness to exact revenge if given the opportunity. A disposition such as this underscores the

possibility that the TRC might not have achieved total reconciliation between victims and perpetrators of injustice, human rights abuse and sundry vile deeds during the apartheid years.

Yet, much as the possibility of the TRC's achievement in terms of reconciliation cannot be absolute, it must have contributed immensely to it. A victim's view, cited in the foreword to the play *Molora*, articulates this tellingly, viz.:

This thing called reconciliation... If I am understanding it correctly... if it means this perpetrator, this man who has killed my son, if it means he becomes human again, this man, so that I, so that all of us, get our humanity back... then I agree, then I support it all. (2008: 7)

As noted in respect of plays such as *Reach!* and *Dream of the Dog*, Adebisi has noted that "this woman's view echoes that of many who eventually embraced reconciliation" (2012:195). Thus, the kind of inclination for revenge noted earlier is seen in many imaginative writings, including *Molora*. Consequently, this article examines how reconciliation is negotiated from the urge to revenge to the resolve to embrace forgiveness; even when reluctantly doing so.

Before turning attention to the play, it is necessary to note one or two more things about the South Africa Truth and Reconciliation project. Firstly, in the foreword to the play under study, the author of the play admits, even if in not so many words, that the play was inspired by the TRC project. Secondly, while the issue of "truth" is inconsequential to the analysis at hand, that of reconciliation is not only central to its critical interest, it is still crucial in the efforts to build a truly rainbow nation out of the several groups making up South Africa. According to Mussi (2016:1), while speaking of post-apartheid writings, "one fundamental aim of literature after the TRC is to represent the past, and particularly the victim of that past, trying to accommodate all the contradictions, opacities, and ambiguities unearthed by the truth commission". This observation is particularly apt in terms of the representations seen in *Molora*, and also calls attention to the contradictions in the actions of some of the characters in the play.

Ostensibly, these are impressive and incisive commentaries on the imaginative responses to the TRC project. However, there are many less felicitous, though objective, remarks about the literature as well. Andrew Foley, commenting on the motifs of truth and reconciliation in post-apartheid literature in general, captures this quite tellingly by observing that the “utilisation of these motifs has been handled clumsily and simplistically” (2007:131) by some writers. For him, the issue of reconciliation is depicted in such a simplistic manner that it comes across as something achievable in a few years. He laments, “as if all that were needed for its accomplishment is some well-meaning encouragement from the text itself” (132). The object of this article is to examine how Farber’s *Molora* contributes to the critical engagement through its interrogation of a much-neglected variable in the discourses on the TRC project, namely forgiveness.

Exploring Aeschylus’s Alternative to Reprisal Violence

In Aeschylus’s classical play, *The Oresteia*, the story revolves around the curse placed on the House of Atreus, the violence and cycles of revenge into which the family is sucked and the eventual stoppage of vengeance as a means of settling scores. This is facilitated by the elders of Athens under the guidance of the Greek goddess of reason and protection, Athena. For killing their daughter, Iphigenia, as a sacrifice, Clytemnestra plots and kills King Agamemnon, her husband, on his return from the Trojan War. To avenge the death of his father, Orestes kills his mother, Clytemnestra. For the matricide, the Furies, goddesses of Revenge and Remorse, pursue Orestes in order to kill him in turn as punishment. This is the point at which Athena intervenes, constitutes a jury of elders who listens to both sides and eventually tempers justice with mercy, as Orestes is acquitted. In a nutshell, the personalised and vindictive approach to getting justice by the principle of ‘an eye for an eye’ paves the way for a jury system whereby mercy is privileged over harshness, and forgiveness is privileged over revenge.

In line with the observation that the play draws influence from the TRC, the procedures and processes of the Commission inform the

structure and contents of the play. Like most of the witnesses at the TRC hearings, Elektra is cast as both a victim and a victim's relative. Often at the TRC, most of the victims belong to the tribe of people who neither speak English nor Afrikaans, languages of the oppressors. Consequently, their testimonies are translated by the TRC-employed translators. In the play, Elektra's initial lines and most of the subsequent ones are rendered in one of the native African languages and later translated into English. On the other hand, Klytemnestra speaks English, one of the languages of the oppressors, all through. By this linguistic strategy, Farber not only tries to situate the play in the context of real TRC processes, she deploys multiracial and interracial codes to facilitate mutual understanding between the erstwhile oppressed and oppressor. She also re-inscribes the recognition of all South Africans as cultural equals and promotes social intercourse through linguistic diversity.

Indeed, to give encouragement and legal backing to multilingualism in the country, the South African 1996 Constitution would go on to recognise eleven languages as official languages in the country. This is contrary to the apartheid era policy where Afrikaner and English were the only recognised official languages, and attempt was even made to force blacks to adopt the former as the language of instruction in schools. It is, perhaps, pertinent to note that the tendency for translation and glossing, which suffuses the play, has been observed as one of the linguistic strategies in post-apartheid literature to foster national integration (Adebiyi, 2015). Testimonies of painful memories, however, saturate the play.

The play begins with Klytemnestra's testimonial confession about the murder of her husband. She takes a position behind a table at one end of the stage, reminiscent of the TRC hearings' setting, and provides a detailed account of how she struck Agamemnon down with an axe three times and dispatched him to a painful death. And she rationalises her action as borne of justice. At the opposite side, behind the witness table, is Elektra who has been listening to her mother's confession and testimony. Perplexed, she wonders which of her

mother's long list of evils she could, in her cross-examination, begin or end with. She ends up pointing out that her mother's deeds have poisoned and terrorised her, and she resolves that the mother deserves to be paid back only 'with blood for blood' (*Molora*, 24).

After the foregoing initial testimonies, much of the rest of the play re-enacts memories of a tragic past steeped in pain. It begins with Klytemnestra recalling and miming the murder of Agamemnon, while Elektra screams in pain upon the discovery of her father's death. For the death, she believes her mother should be recompensed with death as well. She painfully recalls the murder of her father and how she saved her brother, Orestes, from becoming another victim of murder in the family. She reminisces:

It is seventeen years since she hacked my father like a tree with an axe HACKED HIS HEAD IN TWO WITH AN AXE - AND SPLIT HIS BRAINS INTO THE SOIL]... I saw her and Ayesthus -her lover- dance in his blood that night. I tried to help him - but I was only a child.... I stole my little brother Orestes from his bed that night (*Molora*, 28)

Here, Elektra not only implicates Ayesthus, her mother's lover, as an accomplice in the murder of Agamemnon, she also recalls her own helplessness while her father was being killed. This left her broken and traumatised. As Cathy Caruth (1996) says of trauma, this event continually returns to torment Elektra. But because she could not get over it, she begins to contemplate revenge. In addition to the psychological tortures resulting from this, which she daily struggles with, she also recalls the physical and emotional pains she suffered in her mother's hands in the intervening seventeen years. This personal ordeal, which is allegorical in a sense, is deployed metaphorically to comment on the pain and suffering endured by blacks while apartheid lasted. Though she stoically endured the pain and suffering, Elektra invokes the severity of the same with references to the methods employed by state security agents to deal with blacks during apartheid. The use of wet-bags, electronic shocks, and other kinds of physical

violence is called attention to. Klytemnestra, a symbolic conflation of violence, oppression, death and evil that apartheid represents, equally captures her own pain as she wonders:

What is guilt? What is memory? What is pain? Things that wake me in the night...

By day I stand by what I have done. But at night I dream-and dreams don't lie (*Molora*, 32).

These are expressions of the psychological trauma she has had to battle with, especially at night when every soul is supposed to be at rest. While she has the capacity to brazenly live with the memory of her criminal act during the day, she is usually overwhelmed by pain and guilty conscience at night. Despite this burden of nocturnal pain and guilt, she is not penitent. However, as a way of negotiating away the pain, she justifies her action by constantly reminding herself that Agamemnon deserved his murder. According to her, not only did Agamemnon kill their daughter as a sacrifice, he had also killed her former husband, as well as a child by the same man, before marrying her. With these unjust and vile acts, it seems logical and perhaps fair to punish such a cruel man in kind. Unfortunately, the killing of Agamemnon in revenge does not remove the bitterness in Klytemnestra's life. Transposing this on the South African historical experience, Farber simply demonstrates the futility of revenge. As I hope to show later on, the playwright proposes forgiveness instead. Yet, she recognises the dilemma in which victims of brutality are placed. This is captured in an anguished reflection by Elektra:

The years pass-and the grass grows over the grave of a loved one. They told me I was caught in grief. People said I must just move on. But how? How could I forget? How can we move on until the debt is paid? (*Molora*, 33-34)

The ethics of remembering and forgetting surface here. Indeed, this is one of the most highly debated and controversial issues that dogged the principles which informed the setting-up, the processes and

the outcome of the South Africa Truth and Reconciliation Commission. How does one forget past pains and injustices? How easy, if possible, is it? How does one obliterate memories of psychical wounds in particular? Is this even possible for millions of South Africans who were or still are victims of the horrendous experience?

In the last line of the above speech, Elektra returns us to her burning urge to avenge her father's death. Framed as a rhetorical question like the previous two sentences, the line particularly underscores her dilemma over what she considers an obligation to her father – revenge – and the social and psychological virtue of letting go of painful memories. As she struggles over this dilemma, she however gets more inclined to avenge her father's murder. In a bid to justify the inclination, she gives the impression that some forces beyond her control, voices of the dead, whisper the need to revenge into her ears every night. While it may be difficult to establish the veracity of this, as this is not demonstrated in any way in the play, it is important to take note of the implication of her use of the first person pronoun, 'we,' in the last line of the excerpt. Obviously, the use of this pronominal implies that Elektra is not the only one that is concerned here. However, it is very important to note that that choice of word also speaks to the fact that the dilemma associated with the ethics of choice concerning the desirability of revenge or forgiveness affects many victim-survivors of apartheid inhumanity. Her reference to 'voices', rather than 'voice' of the dead, who still pine for revenge, further supports this. Therefore, if the urge to revenge is not personalised, the understanding and embrace of forgiveness must necessarily be dis-personalised.

Elektra's obstinacy in her quest for revenge seeks inter-textual validation in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, where a Jewish merchant tries to justify his vengeful resolve, using the following rhetorical questions:

If you prick us – do we not bleed? If you tickle us – do we not laugh?
If you poison us – do we not die? And if you wrong us... Shall we not
revenge? (*Molara*, 66)

In the famous Shakespearean play, Antonio defaults as a guarantor on a sum of money lent to his friend Bassanio by Shylock, a Jewish moneylender. In line with the terms of the loan agreement, Shylock insists on taking a pound of Antonio's flesh, even after the beneficiary of the loan, Bassanio, later offers to pay twice the amount of the original loan. Shylock would not shift ground until the table is turned against him when a judge in the case argues that he can go ahead to take a pound of Antonio's flesh, but must not shed a drop of the latter's blood; otherwise, he would forfeit his land and goods to the state. The appropriation of Shylock's argument, which is a reaction against the prevalent anti-Semitism in Europe of the time, can be read, given the framing of the subject in plural number, as a reflection of the attitude of black South Africans to their white oppressors under the apartheid system. In other words, the ill-treatment and oppression suffered by Elektra in the play, including the murder of her father and its concomitant psychological effects, is symbolic of the experience of black South Africans under apartheid. This is what incites their obsession with revenge, Elektra also seems to argue.

In an effort to justify her inability to transcend hatred and forgive her mother, Elektra queries the truthfulness of the mother's reason for killing Agamemnon. She contradicts her mother, insisting that the evil her mother perpetrated was not motivated by any desire to avenge the death of any daughter but for selfish adulterous reasons. On the part of the mother, however, she did not only kill her husband to avenge Iphigenia's killing, she believes that revenge 'is and will always be men's only truth' (*Molara*, 42). This divergence of opinion with regard to what constitutes truth recalls Amanda Fisher's (2008) and Greg Homan's (2009) contention about the nature of truth. For them, as in postmodernist assumption, truth is always subjective and experiential.

Still unyielding in her resolve to pursue revenge, Elektra recalls some of the things that keep inflaming her vindictive temper. She poignantly recalls:

Years passed between us Mother and daughter. But I was not permitted at the table ...No-one ever talks about the night you spilled my father's blood. It is as though the past never happened.

But a daughter remembers (*Molora*, 43-44).

In the main, this testimony speaks to the controversy on amnesia, which trailed the reconciliation project of the TRC. Whereas some argue that it is important and advisable to forget and bury the past, others insist that the past must not be forgotten, if only to guide against its repeat. As noted about *Nothing But the Truth* and *Dream of the Dog*, the propriety or otherwise of forgetting the past as a catalyst for genuine reconciliation is also raised here. The playwright also appears to be of the view that the past needs not only be remembered, but also talked about. In an interview with Fisher (2008: 24) she expresses a profound belief in speaking as a means of healing. She thinks that 'Until you've told your story - even if you intellectually understand you have been wronged-the memories may remain a source of secrecy, pain or shame' (*Molora*, 24). Consequently, if victims are asked to forget their past or desist from talking about it, it is like punishing them again, causing them more pain by not acknowledging the previous one. Considering the way, the conflict in the play is finally resolved, it would seem that Farber's panacea to past injuries is forgiveness, talking about or remembering the injuries notwithstanding.

The importance and ethical superiority of forgiveness and reconciliation to revenge is well explored in the play. Time and again, Elektra is preoccupied with revenge. She sees revenge as justice, and as a means of obtaining freedom from the bondage and subjection into which she has been put by her mother and step-father. Even when her mother who, from benefit of hindsight, knows about the pain and the haunting guilt of taking another's life, counsels her against revenge in form of killing, Elektra insists on the same. Also, when Orestes decides to back out of killing their mother, she again insists that 'There can be no forgiveness!' (*Molora*, 76), and she tries to kill the mother all by herself. The Chorus however intervenes, overpowers her and restrains

her from killing Klytemnestra. She and Orestes finally embrace, forgive their mother, and the cycle of revenge is broken. The Diviner, among the women of the Chorus, apparently speaking as the play's message bearer, steps forward and prays for forgiveness, reconciliation and 'UNITY BETWEEN BLACK AND WHITE as well as the grace to enable them 'SPEAK THE TRUTH' (*Molona*, 78).

Meanwhile, in spite of the extremes she goes in the quest to make her mother and step-father pay for the killing of Agamemnon, her biological father, and her stubborn disdain for forgiveness, it is ironic to hear Elektra say at some point that forgiveness is the only thing that can save her mother from the wrath of God over the things she did to her family. Recognising the grace of forgiveness and yet refusing to grant the same to another, in this case her mother, Elektra continues to court bitterness, resentment and hatred. Hatred, which she admits to harbouring towards her mother, is an emotion that has clinically been proven to be injurious to health (Gaylin, 2003). Little wonder therefore that she seems paranoid for the most part of the play and appears to be struggling with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD).

In his essay "On Forgiveness", Jacques Derrida (2001) problematizes the concept of forgiveness. He attempts a bifurcation of the idea into two, namely, pragmatic conditional forgiveness and pure unconditional forgiveness. Whereas he associates the former with the order of law, politics and social contexts, he links the latter to nothing, absolutely nothing. In other words, he observes that while the former demands something, the latter demands nothing. He would go on to espouse the latter, arguing that conditional forgiveness, by its logic of exchange, is no more than an economic transaction. Specifically, he challenges the idea that forgiveness should be given on the condition that it is asked for, and that there is manifest regret, repentance or contrition on the part of the one to be given. Could it be inferred, therefore, that Elektra is not predisposed to forgiving her mother precisely because she does not demonstrate any of the above? Perhaps.

However, at the end of the play, and after much pressure, Elektra surrenders and lets go of the past. Yet, the mother does not ask

her for forgiveness. The fact that her reconciliation with her mother is not predicated on asking for forgiveness or demonstrating repentance suggests that the forgiveness she extends to the mother is surprisingly pure and unconditional. She forgives what Derrida would categorise as “the unforgivable”. For Derrida, any forgiveness at the service of any finality is not pure. In fact, any forgiveness worthy of its salt is one that “forgives only the unforgivable” (32).

Conclusion

As demonstrated so far, *Molara* is explicitly a story about revenge, forgiveness, reconciliation and, implicitly, about healing. In the play, Klytemnestra finds it necessary to murder Agamemnon in revenge for the killing of Iphigenia, their daughter, to appease the gods, but her surviving daughter, Elektra, faults and condemns it. Ironically, the daughter would later on advance arguments in favour of vengeance while the mother advises to the contrary and tells her: ‘Do not choose to be me’ (*Molara*, 77). These contradictions drive the plot of the play and eventuate in the recognition of the insidious and toxic properties of revenge; consequently, encouraging forgiveness and engendering reconciliation and healing. In a nutshell, the playwright deplores the idea of revenge as a response to injustice or acts of violence and oppression. Instead, she commends forgiveness and reconciliation. Significantly, the contextualisation of the pursuit of revenge and or forgiveness in the play within the same family inscribes the metaphor of the South African nation as one family. Since membership of a particular family is not informed by voluntary choice of its members, the argument seems to be that South Africans must learn to live together, as a family, in peace, unity and love, regardless of whatever differences they may have.

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