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Yaël Farber

Molora

United Kingdom (2008)

TAGS: Aegisthus Aeschylus African Traditions Agamemnon Clytemnestra Electra Orestes Sophocles



We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	Molora
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom
Country/countries of popularity	UK, Republic of South Africa
Original Language	English, Xhosa
First Edition Date	2008
First Edition Details	Yaël Farber, *Molora: based on the Oresteia trilogy*. London: Oberon, 2008, 87 pp.
ISBN	9781783191512
Genre	Adaptations, Drama, Postcolonial Literature*
Target Audience	Crossover (Adults and young adults)
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Creators



Yaël Farber , b. 1971
(Author)

Yaël Farber is a South African playwright, actress and director. She was born in Johannesburg and studied Dramatic Arts at the University of Witwatersrand where she obtained her Bachelor's degree in this field. She attended many workshops abroad and finally opened her own production company, The Farber Foundry, in 2004. Seven years later, she became the Head of the Directing Program at the National Theatre School of Canada, alongside the Playwright-in-Residence for Nightwood Theatre. Some of her prominent plays include: *A Woman in Waiting* (2000), *Sezar* (2001), *Amajuba* (2003), *Molora* (2003), *RAM: The Abduction of Sita into Darkness* (2011), and *Mies Julie* (2012). She won many awards with her works. Some of them are the FNB Vita Best Actress Award (1996), the Standard Bank Artist of the Year Award(2003) and the Naledi Best Cutting Edge Production Award(2008), to name a few.

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Additional information

Summary

Klytemnestra appears before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and admits murdering her husband. She considers the murder as an act of bravery, and her husband's destiny. Her daughter, Elektra, then takes the floor and expresses her displeasure and indignation at her mother's deeds. Both mother and daughter are now committed to the process of unearthing the past. They take us to a period when Elektra was seven years old. The murder is re-enacted. Because of the brutal killing of her father, Elektra steals her younger brother, Orestes, from his bed and confides him to MaNosomething for her to raise him till he is grown. When Klytemnestra notices that her son has been stolen, she questions Elektra who gives her no answer. She then curses her and her future children.

At this point, Klytemnestra tells the TRC that she is tormented by guilt. Elektra then hints the audience that each night her mother dreams that she is giving birth to a baby that sucks out clots of her blood.

After seventeen years, Elektra stands before her father's grave and asks her ancestors to send Orestes to her. Her mother meets her on the grave and blames her for being there although she has been forbidden by her mother's husband from going to her father's grave. Elektra complains that her mother's husband maltreats her but her mother justifies her husband's attitude by blaming Elektra's stubbornness and her love for misery. She tells Elektra that Agamemnon had killed one of her children for the sake of a Holy War. So, killing Agamemnon is simply "the justice of a mother". She has taken "blood for blood". Elektra reminds her mother that by that same law, she too is guilty. Because she has taken a life, her life too should be taken.

Still before the TRC, Klytemnestra is asked to demonstrate how she tortured Elektra to get information about Orestes. She takes a plastic bag from her pocket, places it over Elektra's head and pulls it tightly. Elektra begins to suffocate. She later pulls the bag from her head and Elektra gasps for breath.

After this, we are taken to Xhosa land where Orestes is returning from his initiation in the mountain. MaNosomething blesses him and tells him to go back to his land and take care of his sister. He therefore

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begins his journey of return to his ancestral home.

When Orestes reaches his late father's house, he introduces himself as a stranger who brings a message for Orestes' mother. He tells Klytemnestra that her son is dead and hands her his ashes. While Elektra is shocked by the news she has just received, Klytemnestra seems relieved and satisfied. Orestes however insists on giving the news directly to the man of the house. Klytemnestra therefore proposes that he has supper with them that night while waiting for her husband.

While Orestes pretends to leave for some business in town, Elektra goes and mourns her brother on her father's grave. When she hears someone coming, she hides. She later notices that the person she is hiding from is their stranger. After his speech on Agamemnon's grave, Elektra recognizes her brother from the words he is uttering on the grave. They both thank the ancestors for this reunion and ask for their blessing in the task that awaits them. They then plan the murder of their mother and that of her husband Ayesthus.

Back at home, Klytemnestra, Elektra and Orestes are supping in the absence of Ayesthus. Orestes is shocked by the way his mother treats his sister. Klytemnestra, doubtless of the fact that her stranger could be her son, relates the murder she had committed to Orestes. She tells him how she and her lover Ayesthus murdered Agamemnon. After this supper, Klytemnestra, now drunk goes to bed and Orestes leaves the house. Out in the fields, he breaks into a run, lifts a pickaxe and strikes violently at Ayesthus (represented on stageby his boots).

After a vision of MaNosomething telling him that what he has done is terrible, Orestes brings Ayesthus' heart to her sister who receives it with satisfaction. She encourages him now to go and kill their mother. They both call on their ancestors' assistance in this task.

When they find their mother, she stares widely at Orestes and finally recognizes him as her son. Elektra shows her Ayesthus' heart and tells her that she is the next on the list. She is so blinded by vengeance that she chooses to carry on her the curse after killing her mother. Conscious of her plight, Klytemnestra pleads with her son not to kill her. She succeeds in softening Orestes' heart. He reasons with her sister and tells her that vengeance is not the solution. Elektra, who does not accept any reasoning from her brother, is grabbed and overpowered by the Women of the Chorus. They take away an axe

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from her hands and she weeps for all the injustices done to her, her brother and her father. The play ends with Elektra and Orestes finally forgiving their mother for all her deeds.

Analysis

Farber's *Molora* is a South African (specifically Xhosan) adaptation of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* trilogy and Sophocles' *Electra*, both based on the Atreidae myth. Farber uses almost the same character cast and cuts across the trilogy to demonstrate the desire for vengeance, the quest for justice and the lust for power. Like Aeschylus' Clytemnestra, in *Agamemnon* (the first part of the trilogy), Farber's Klytemnestra conspires with her lover Aysthus (Aeschylus' Aegisthus) to murder her husband Agamemnon under pretext that he killed their daughter. Klytemnestra's act is not just for vengeance and/or justice but also for power as she inherits the throne after murdering her husband. Again like Aeschylus' Orestes and Electra, in the second part of the trilogy *The Libation Bearers*, Farber's Orestes and Elektra are angered by their mother's murder of their father and also plan revenge against her and her lover. They succeed in killing Aysthus while their mother pleads for forgiveness. Though Elektra does not wish to forgive her, the cycle of vengeance is stopped by the chorus but continues in Aeschylus through to the third part of the trilogy, the *Eumenides*.

Though based on Greek tragedy, Farber's *Molora* is allegorical to the South African situation in its transition into a democracy. The ills of apartheid, which can be epitomized by Klytemnestra's murder of Agamemnon and her illegal occupation of the throne, sparked anger in the native South African people, who felt deprived of their birthrights (epitomized here by Elektra and Orestes), and who stood for a violent revenge against the Apartheid government. However, the Chorus of women, who play the role of the TRC, comes in to mediate and stop the spread of continuous violence by opting for forgiveness and reconciliation.

Vengeance, justice and the desire for power are common themes that span time, religions, places and cultures and have played significant roles in determining history. However, their destructiveness is immeasurable and so care must be taken when such actions are planned for their expectations might not always be positive. Forgiveness, on the other hand, is a positive act that bypasses the need for vengeance and the perpetuation of evil. Farber's *Molora* can thus be read as an encouragement to South Africans to continue the

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	process of reconciliation so as to stop the continuation of violence that has destroyed people for too long. This remains the wish of the younger generation, and a legacy from adults.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Aegisthus Aeschylus African Traditions Agamemnon Clytemnestra Electra Orestes Sophocles
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Good vs evil Justice Reconciliation Revenge
Further Reading	Collard, Christopher, *Introduction to and translation of Oresteia*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. Goward, Barbara, *Aeschylus: Agamemnon*, Duckworth Companions to Greek and Roman Tragedy, London: Duckworth, 2005.
Addenda	First published by Published April 9, 2008 by Oberon Books and the Kindle Edition under which is *Molora* and Sutherland's two other plays, with the title Farber Plays One, was published in London by Oberon Books Ltd, (March 27, 2015).

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