

ABSTRACT

a) Dr. des. Elke Steinmeyer
Classics Programme
University of KwaZulu-Natal
4041 Durban
South Africa
Tel: 00 27 31 260 1306
Fax: 00 27 31 260 3104
Email: steinmeyerel@ukzn.ac.za

b) 6. Turning Points in the Reception of Classical Antiquity

c) The reception of the Electra myth in Yael Farber's "Molora"

d) 20 minutes

e) Over the past years scholars have developed an increasing interest in the reception of Greek myth in African literature, especially drama. The works of Lorna Hardwick, Betine van Zyl Smit, Barbara Goff and others have contributed a lot to make African adaptations of Greek myth more widely accessible and have stimulated interest in an hitherto rather neglected area of research. Given the multitude of African literatures, however, there are still many works to be discovered and investigated, mostly unbeknown, but still rewarding and thought provoking.

During my research I came across four adaptations of the ancient Electra myth in South Africa: Tug Yourgrau: The Song of Jacob Zulu (1993); Mark Fleishman et al.: In the City of Paradise (1998); Mervyn McMurtry: Electra (2000) and last Yael Farber: Molora (2003). The historical and political framework for the adaptations of Fleishman, McMurtry and Farber is the Post-Apartheid era in South Africa and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) - an institution which tried to deal with the aftermath of the Apartheid regime. All these three producers make extensive use of the hearings and findings of the TRC and reflect the climate in South Africa at this crucial time in its history in their productions. In my opinion, Farber's adaptation is still the most "African" one, because it is firmly rooted in Xhosa culture. There is a constant code switching between English and Xhosa, there is traditional Xhosa singing by the women of the chorus and several other references to Xhosa culture. Farber's acclaimed production had its premiere at the international festival at Grahamstown (South Africa) and has toured all over the world in the meantime.

In my paper I would like to explore the political and cultural background for Farber's adaptation and to investigate how the ancient myth of Electra has been adapted to this particular South African context. I would like to conclude with some general remarks on the way how ancient Greek myths have been used by African writers in order to reflect the postcolonial situation of most African countries.

Elke Steinmeyer
Classics Programme
University of KwaZulu-Natal
4041 Durban
South Africa
Tel: +27-31-260-1306
Fax: +27-31-260-3104
Email: steinmeyerel@ukzn.ac.za