

WHEN INDEMNITY BECOMES DISDAINFUL: REVENGE AS METAPHOR FOR 'UNFINISHED BUSINESSES' IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICAN DRAMA

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ABSTRACT

Revenge, as an instance of oppositionality, typifies past wrongs, evils, violations and disregard for human dignity which have been imputed and for which the offender must be reprimanded. The foregoing sequence is remindful of the dastardly apartheid dispensation in South Africa, which is a strong metaphor for strife and 'ruptured' human interactions. While the transition of South Africa to constitutionality was substantially heralded by the negotiating preponderances of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), a number of people have adjudged the TRC to be a mere attempt to draw a curtain on the past - in sharp contrast to the spirit and letter of the commission. By so doing, there is a popular opinion that there are still some 'unfinished business' that ironically link the present with the past. Therefore, it is considered a 'must' that these 'silences' be addressed in order for the present and future of South Africa not to be intractably burdened by the past. Bhekizizwe Peterson's and Ramadan Suleman's *Zulu Love Letter* (both film and scripted play) has joined this discourse by artistically amplifying the need for an engagement with these 'deafening silences'. It is in the light of the aforementioned that this article investigates the process of wrong and attempts by the hegemony to expiate such wrongs, in the context of impervious agents, who disregard the processes for peaceful engagements, but rather scorn and threaten victims of their vicious actions for daring to seek

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justice. The article sees such a repudiation of one's evil act and the conciliatory stance of the government as capable of breeding revenge. However, the article concludes that when medicated, using certain cultural and religious beliefs, the bleeding heart that is prone to seeking revenge or retaliation (vengeance) might also be a carrier of forgiveness and collectivism.

Keywords: post-apartheid South Africa; reconciliation; revenge; silences

INTRODUCTION

Amidst the critical observations that have been made in relation to the role of literature in post-apartheid South Africa, and in view of the 'combatant' deployments witnessed in the fight against the monstrous regime of racial oppression, literature in the new socio-political order has continually embarked on the 'textualisation or narrativisation of history' as part of the role of making 'history accessible as a text' (Peterson 1997, 2). Similarly, much has been written about South Africa's commitment to forge ahead as a democratic nation, notwithstanding the lopsidedness imposed by the apartheid past, through the inauguration of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). In my PhD research, which forms a part of this plethora of work, an effort is made to explore the memory of the past and the implications it has for identity, citizenship and stable polity in post-apartheid South Africa.¹ One element central to the convocation of the TRC was the need for forgiveness and reconciliation in the overall demand for a new South Africa that is divested from the inglorious past. However, while the state tried very hard to secure a semblance of 'reconciliation' after victims had the opportunity to externalise their grief, and past perpetrators of dastardly acts amnestied to be a part of the new transition, the process was also critiqued for failing to create a level playing field for both past victims and victimisers. As a result, the desire for revenge loomed large among the underprivileged victims, who felt they were being short-changed by a set of people they considered to be state collaborators, who were predominantly representatives of the defunct National Party (NP) and the ruling African National Congress (ANC). Even though the emphasis in this article is on revenge, copious references shall be made to forgiveness, not only because it is asymmetrical to the central point, but because of the dominance it enjoyed in the ontology of the TRC and, more so, because of the fact that 'the teleology of forgiveness is reconciliation' (Govier 2002, 77).

As mentioned above, the South African TRC was borne out of the complications of the apartheid past and the need for transition to a democratic regime, following the demise of the racist apartheid National Party-led government. After its inauguration by President Nelson Mandela, the commission commenced its activities on 1 February 1996, ended its functions on 31 July 1998 and submitted its report on 29 October

1998. The ‘sacred’ treatment accorded the commission by the state was reinforced by the enigmatic personality of the chairperson, Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The TRC ‘amnesty provisions were designed as a “third way” between Nuremberg-style trials and a general amnesty, which would have amounted to “national amnesia” (Sanders 2007, 95). The ‘third way’ approach depicts compromise and peaceful transition and a designation of the TRC as ‘a bridge from the old to the new’ (Boraine 2000, 143). As an umpired space, venues of the commission’s hearings allowed past violators to make an absolute disclosure of past heinous crimes against fellow human beings, even as victims were also given the opportunity to witness how they were maltreated in the past. The absolute revelation that is required from the perpetrators would afford them the consideration of amnesty for politically motivated crimes, while victims were to be considered for reparation, which eventually did not materialise in concrete terms. Njabulo Ndebele (1998, 20) appraises the condition, experience and testimony of victims and submits that ‘where in the past the state attempted to compel the oppressed to deny the testimony of their own experience, today that experience is one of the essential conditions for the emergence of a new national consciousness’. While the TRC has claimed that its activities permitted reconciliation between past violators and the violated, as well as healing and expiation for the former and the latter, respectively, it has been upbraided for its attempt to conjure a new positive order at the expense of the formerly oppressed, who ended up losing out for the sake of transition and nation building. Ndebele (1998, 25) hints at the imbalance suspected in the actions of the TRC when he suggests that as we negotiate the difficult task of normalizing freedom, it will be important for us to realize that a political accommodation such as we have achieved does not imply that all the moral, intellectual, and philosophical questions have been solved. To stop at that point is to risk repeating the apartheid mistake of making politics everything.

Even though the TRC was believed to have had an impact on the psyche of the generality of South Africans, most especially by allowing for a ‘public acknowledgement of the trauma experienced by victims’ (Bundy 2000, 9), it was only a small part of that which was representational of the whole. This thinking is informed by the following view expressed by Wilmot James and Linda van de Vijver (2000, 1):

The Commission has a brief that, constitutionally and legislatively, limited its work to a period of history from 1960 to 1994, and to ‘gross violations’ of human rights, which in ordinary language means murder, torture and serious harm to persons. The Commission therefore evokes the memories of some, but not all South Africans. The dead cannot speak. Only some of the individuals who were victimised testified. Only those perpetrators who applied for amnesty told their stories.

This implies, therefore, that while political points were scored using the TRC, there are a whole lot of moral and philosophical issues that have remained unresolved. One such is the idea of forgiveness and the attendant difficulty of the quest for revenge. It

is on this note that we shall be looking briefly at what forgiveness and revenge entail as moral and philosophical concepts.

BETWEEN FORGIVENESS AND REVENGE

It is saying the obvious that hurts and wrongs are a strong part of human relationships. While some are deliberate; others are not. At the same time, and within the dual possibilities of human behaviours, ‘the impulse to get back for injuries is probably universal and often culturally sanctioned’ (Phelps 2004, 12). Drama, as part of what John Kerrigan (1996:3) calls ‘the long love affair between revenge and drama’, continually explores this aspect of human dealings through reflection and refraction. By so doing, ‘vengeance offers the writer a compelling mix of ingredients: strong situations shaped by violence; ethical issues for debate; a volatile, emotive mixture of loss and agitated grievance’ (Kerrigan 2004, 12). The moral acceptability of revenge has attracted the attention of scholars. Trudy Govier’s work, titled *Forgiveness and Revenge* (2002), is evidence that this subject has attracted scholars. There are several indications in Govier’s book to suggest that forgiveness is favoured – morally, ethically, humanly and for the sake of peace – over revenge. For instance, there is a reiteration of Mahatma Gandhi’s proposition that ‘if everyone took an eye for an eye, the whole world would be blind’ (2002, 1) and Nelson Mandela’s submission that ‘the oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of humanity’ (2002, 70).

Govier earlier prefaced the above on the argument that ‘the moral objection to revenge is that to respond “proportionately” or “in kind” to a wrong will, in the end, entail committing a wrong of equal magnitude’ (2002, x). This is corroborated by Kerrigan (1996, 5), who notes that ‘revenge is a building-block, the seed from which something larger can grow, since one man’s vengeance [is] another man’s injury’. Going by the reasons advanced by these authors, the oppressed would literally become an oppressor after seeking revenge against oppressors. No doubt, such a cyclic trend is best avoided in all human compasses. Among other things, Govier (2002) argues against the concept of revenge as a natural desire in humans and holds that it cannot be accepted as a moral justification. It is, however, implied in the justification she gave to her work that the quest for revenge is natural to human beings. This is without prejudice to the fact that such an urge can be differently mitigated, depending on the individual that is involved. One central reason that Govier gives for examining the politics of forgiveness was the visit she paid to South Africa in March 1997. She identifies other reasons, which included: newspapers’ reportage of ‘tales of people pursuing lurid forms of revenge against ex-spouses and former lovers’; the inauguration of truth commissions by different countries, where victims asked for ‘compensation and restitution’; the institutionalisation of legal processes by the victims and survivors of the Holocaust against the Swiss government to ‘retrieve lost assets’; and the rejection of the Pope’s apology on anti-Semitism by Jewish leaders.

Her conclusion is that all these are indicative of ‘the problem of how to respond realistically and sensitively to wrongs of the past’; which, according to her, ‘remains a perplexing one’ (Govier 2002, vii).

It is prudent to quickly concur here with Govier’s view that ‘revenge and forgiveness do not, of course, exhaust the possibilities in terms of attitudinal responses to wrongdoing. They mark ends of a spectrum’ (2002, vii). What this means is that the absence or presence of one does not signify the presence or absence of the other. Mark Sanders (2007, 112) sees forgiveness as ‘complicated, not annulled, by the mediation of religion, law, and psychoanalysis’. In another effort, Avishai Margalit (2002, 92) submits that ‘forgiving means overcoming anger and vengefulness’. Margalit (2002, 92), however, further warns that ‘overcoming anger and vengefulness can also take place without forgiveness’. Akin to an attempt to define the indefinable, Margalit (2002, 93) ventures to summarily describe forgiveness as ‘a conscious decision to change one’s attitude and to overcome anger and vengefulness’. Govier (2002, viii) defines forgiveness as ‘a process of overcoming attitudes of resentment and anger that may persist when one has been injured by wrongdoing’. She, however, warns that forgiveness is not tantamount to ‘condoning, excusing, and forgetting’.

Forgiveness, in Govier’s estimation, can either be bilateral or unilateral. Bilateral forgiveness requires that the perpetrator should acknowledge his or her wrong, show some remorse and possibly seek pardon from the victim. On the other hand, unilateral forgiveness is not consequent upon the attitude of the offender, when the victim forgives without any acknowledgement on the part of the offender. The latter was demonstrated by Nelson Mandela, who forgave the apartheid government and, by extension, whites, who personified the oppressive apartheid regime. While Mandela’s position has been explained principally based on his ability to eschew resentment – his ‘broad trust and an attitude of hopefulness ... his insistence on treating each person as an individual with dignity and worth’ (Govier 2002, 70), it might also be true that the ember of resentment felt by Mandela must have not just been diminished, but had likely been extinguished by his protracted incarceration. Such thinking is reinforced by the fact that imprisonment is designed as a reformatory process, which has the capacity to, among some other intentions, break strong wills and resolve. At the same time, the diminishing of a particular trait would lead to the formation or emergence of others. The ‘magnanimous’ position maintained by Nelson Mandela is fundamentally inconsistent with the baseness of human nature that he, at one point or the other, exhibited. For instance, in an autobiographical personal account, Mandela portrays himself during his teenage and early adult days as cowardly, sly, and brutish.² While the first is indicative of extreme loss of confidence, the third was evidenced in his recommendation of armed struggle against the apartheid government and is at variance with the conciliatory proposition of unconditional forgiveness. Be that as it may, the moral acceptance of forgiveness and rejection of revenge, as demonstrated by Nelson Mandela, coheres with the opinion of Margaret

Holmgren, reiterated by Govier (2002, 62), that ‘the appropriateness of forgiveness has nothing to do with the actions, attitudes, or position of the wrongdoer. Instead it depends on the internal preparation of the person who forgives’. Forgiveness is, therefore, ‘a matter of working over, amending, and overcoming attitudes, and it is a process, not an event’ (Govier 2002, 43).

Govier (2002) gives illustrative and descriptive details about revenge or vengeance, using the term deployed by Robert Solomon, and these details help us come to a definition of revenge. Some of the descriptive features are: wrong done, suffering or humiliation occasioned by the wrongful act, the feeling of rage and resentment by the victim, and the desire ‘to “get one’s own back”, or “get even”’ (2002, 2). Govier (2002) further opines that the victim is expected to act as an agent in bringing harm to the offender in order to produce a sense of relief and satisfaction in himself or herself. It is plausible to posit, therefore, that revenge is the desire to carry out a harmful act on someone who has earlier wronged the one seeking revenge. The whole trajectory is not just an expression of rage and resentment, but a quest to secure psychological relief, ‘get even or restore a balance’ (Govier 2002, 3). While ‘successful revenge might be argued to be a good thing because there is justice in the suffering of the wrongdoer and the victim has restored self-respect’, such would be ‘plausible only superficially’ (Govier 2002, 11).

One major rebuttal to or renunciation of revenge, given in the instance of South Africa, which is based on moral consideration, is that of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who argues that ‘revenge is atavistic, the law of the jungle’ (Govier 2002, 2). Other than the wildness credited to revenge by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Francis Bacon (Govier 2002, 2/23), it might be probable to receive revenge based on the perspective of human ethical virtues promoted by Robert C. Roberts, who argues that persistent anger and resentment have some destructive capacity to both the victim and the offender. According to Roberts, anger and resentment ‘can cause health problems, damage relationships between individuals and groups, and destroy people’ (Govier 2002, 4). In another vein, Phelps (2004, 23) holds that revenge has been demonised by the state and argues that the ‘suppression of private revenge’ and the promotion of retribution instead was consequent on the need for an orderly society. Phelps concludes that revenge is passionate whereas retribution is dispassionate.

SYNOPSIS OF THE TEXT

Zulu Love Letter (both the scripted play and the film, although the script is used in this article) is about the traumatic memory of violence, the disruption of personality, brutal murder, the use of acts of terror, the quest for revenge and the pacification of the dead. The story centres on Thandeka, a journalist, who witnesses the assassination of a black female activist, Dineo, by the apartheid killer-squad. The assassination of Dineo, the brutal murder of Peter (a photographer, who also witnessed the killing of

Dineo and an acquaintance of Thandeka), as well as Thandeka's own incarceration by the apartheid regime, leave Thandeka deranged. The impact of all these traumatic experiences is imaged by the eventual birth of Simangaliso, who is born deaf and dumb. Other than the personality dysfunction that confronts Thandeka, her social relationships (most especially marital) seem to be in tatters, as she lives separately from Moola, Simangaliso's father, and courts other boyfriends as well. This condition provokes negative reactions from both her parents and her daughter at different times. Thandeka's dealings with Me'Tau, Dineo's mother, who seeks the help of Thandeka to find Dineo's killers and possibly see how to appear before the TRC, reveal her sustained commitment to the struggle. Me'Tau's desire to get justice for her daughter is thwarted as she gets threatened by one of Dineo's killers, Dhlamini. Moola, who shows a great commitment to his daughter, is also killed in a motor accident, under controversial circumstances.

Amidst accusations levelled against previous activists, who have now secured one opportunity or another in the new South Africa, the TRC, which serves as a platform for transition and reconciliation, is brought to the crucible. The character of Bouda'D, who also shares some closeness with Thandeka, dismisses the TRC as trash, calling for the inevitable wind of change to blow. While Bouda'D unequivocally calls for revenge against the destructive apartheid forces and agents, a new wave of hope is rekindled in the artistic work of Simangaliso, the metaphoric deformed offspring of the old South Africa, one of which she 'presents' to her late father during the cleansing ceremony. The purification ceremony with which the play closes is meant to placate people who were killed and left without graves by the apartheid underdogs. It is envisaged that this ceremony will get their spirits to come home to rest.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Zulu Love Letter depicts Dineo, Peter, Moola, Thandeka, Me'Tau and Simangaliso, as both direct and indirect victims of the apartheid rage. While the first three die physically, the demise of the last three is more psychological. It is noteworthy that the above victims are all blacks as against the offenders (Moolman, Green and Dhlamini), who are both white and black. Looking at the respective experiences shared by the black characters, it is obvious from the way they are constructed that Thandeka is hurt, aggrieved and traumatised and, by implication, seeks to know the truth that surrounds her painful experience. The hurtful acts of the apartheid agents produce in her a high sense of grief that she believes councillor Kubheka, whom she sees as the representative of the underprivileged blacks, should strive to address by seeking out former diabolical apartheid elements that have since melted into the post-apartheid society. Her adventure to 'seek' or 'know' the truth sustains her disenchantment and misdirection, most psychically, throughout the course of

her interactions with the other characters in the play. Besides this contributing to the development of the plot, it is reminiscent of the protraction that has come to define the resolution of the distrust that citizens are left to face in the new South Africa. Me'Tau is similarly hurt and aggrieved by the gruesome killing of her daughter, for whom she seeks justice.

While Thandeka appears to be more coordinated in her pursuit of 'truth', Me'Tau depends more on the assistance and directions provided by Thandeka in forging ahead with her aspiration and attaining restored dignity for her murdered daughter, Dineo. Regrettably enough, Me'Tau's quest is undermined by the unrelenting conceitedness of apartheid agents, represented by Dhlamini, who treat the reconciliation-driven post-apartheid era with disdain. The three officers in the play seem to be privileged in both apartheid and post-apartheid dispensations. While they were favoured by the inhumane policies of the apartheid regime, which provided the needed space for their brutality, the liberal post-apartheid dispensation offers the air of freedom, which provides some insulation from extra judicial propensities. The affront and the priggishness these former apartheid agents are engrossed in is reflected in Green, one of the officers, who is still very proud of his exploits under the apartheid reign, which he sees as the result of a methodological commitment carried out on behalf of the state. Green promotes his relationship with and reverence to God far and above that of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and avers that God, and not the Commission, deserves his confession and testimonies: 'I will not be testifying before any commission ... my sins I will only testify before God ... So, neither you, the bishop, Madiba, or the courts are going to reduce me to being a maverick psychopath' (ZLL, 85).

No doubt, the resentment shown by Green for the new order falls short of the participatory commitment required of the offender in the matters of reconciliation and forgiveness. Such an attitude negates the principles of one form of forgiveness that is predicated on the willingness of the offender to be forgiven. Such readiness is demonstrated through an improved disposition, behaviour, attitudes and relationship shared with the offended. Green's attitude also rekindles the old colouration of religion being used as an instrument of repression. It is commonplace that the church was used as part of the legitimising authorities of apartheid, which promoted the notion that God had a special interest in the Afrikaners and their culture. Nelson Mandela (1994, 128) specifically names the Dutch Reformed Church as a major supporter that provided apartheid with the 'religious underpinning' that 'Afrikaners were God's chosen people and that blacks were a subservient species'. Mandela concludes that 'in the Afrikaner's view, apartheid and the church went hand in hand'. Even though such thinking has since turned out to be baseless, the perceived purity of the Afrikaner culture, just like those of other isolationists, is still core to the aspiration of various groups, like the Orania Movement, to ensure the preservation of Afrikaners.

Bouda'D is one character in the play who encapsulates the various shades of happenings that form the entire plot. Presented to readers and viewers as a street poet or community clown, Bouda'D reflects some sense of dementia, which he struggles to attenuate through a heavy reliance on alcoholism or, in his own words, 'waters of Babylon' (ZLL, 71). Essentially, Bouda'D's pathetic condition is traced in the text to the psychological affront he suffers as a result of the violence done to activists like Dineo and the experiencing of such by Thandeka, Mike, the photographer, and himself. Bouda'D claims not to remember anything (apparently making reference to details about his torture) other than 'trees, man, that would go on forever and the breeze that would blow and blow and blow' (ZLL, 71).

Although Bouda'D desires that we should accept the fact that he has lost the capacity to remember the brutality of the apartheid agents, he betrays the presence of such an experience when narrating his ordeals to Thandeka thus: 'those shits were fucking me up so bad, I wanted to tell them where you were but I didn't know' (ZLL, 71). Bouda'D submits that his desire for the water of Babylon is to get the bell to constantly ring in his head. While one might argue that the ringing of the bell is symbolic of the trauma that Bouda'D and others in his shoes carry around, it is more like a reminder of sustained revulsion for the old repressive system. Bouda'D is particularly using the presence of the bell as a veritable replacement for the wind of change that should dominate his thinking. Even though the essence of Bouda'D's aspiration is change, it detracts from the one-sided, manufactured view of forgiveness and reconciliation advocated by the TRC, which is less than being genuine when viewed against the attitudes of former offenders.

The symbolic constitution of the character of Bouda'D is further reinforced by the meaning he attaches to his name. He opines that 'Bouda means brother and D is for dangerous' (ZLL, 51). It is on the basis of this implied meaning that he expresses his worries about the brotherliness between black South Africans, particularly to Thandeka. His apprehension gets some explanation from the behaviours of Dhlamini and Councillor Khubeka. While the former is unrepentant about his former role as an apartheid agent, the latter simply defies the responsibilities imposed by his office, as the representative of blacks in the new order. The entrapment of people like Thandeka, Me'Tau, Thandeka and Bouda'D by the violent past is vividly depicted through the use of the imagery of two pigeons crammed inside a wire cage (ZLL, 50). This imagery draws some parallel between the aforementioned people and the generic man, who is said to be free, according to that platitude, but still in chains.

With Bouda'D's speeches in the play sounding more like authorial intrusions, he finds it very convenient to appraise the general mood in the new South Africa, moving from plain observations to mild, as well as biting sarcasm. One of the central open references that Bouda'D makes to prevailing situations and ideas is the reminder that 'even Bishop Tutu says we must give praise where praise is due' (ZLL, 69). Tutu's recommendation is typically religious in conception and tone, but

used obviously in this case to underpin the need to appreciate people across racial divides, most especially blacks who made personal sacrifices for a new South Africa, particularly those who chose to exercise forgiveness and reconciliation in order to exorcise the new South Africa of the albatross of the apartheid past. Bouda'D is also unlike Me'Tau and Thandeka, who later toll the path of reconciliation at the end of the play, as he loudly derides the reconciliation process in the new South Africa and goes further, by asking for some compensation, central to which is a request that is hugely and elementally vengeful in nature. Bouda'D argues to Thandeka that 'so we can spook those bastards so they rot in jail ... we sue the damn state for reparations. Reparations are a must, or else we look like fools in front of the Reconciliation Commission' (ZLL, 70).

The basic desire of Bouda'D, characteristic of the wronged, is the quest for revenge which, in this case, is seeing his former violators undergoing punitive processes, such as incarceration, in order to atone for their misdemeanours. However, because of the role of the state as an arbiter between the wronged and the wrongdoers, Bouda'D recognises the desirability for peace and reconciliation, though he still believes that the state must accept and vicariously atone for the wrongs of the violators. It is noteworthy, however, that the predication of Bouda'D's argument, on the need not to look like a fool before the Reconciliation Commission, reveals that he is committed more to safeguarding his ego than displaying his humanity. Bouda'D's position reflects the view of Phelps (2004, 10), who observes that the benefits that are sought in revenge include the preservation of self-esteem, provision of physical security and 'satisfying the desire for justice'. The fact that the Reconciliation Commission in the play does not offer any reparations for victims and the absence of a role player, like Bouda'D, at the spiritually inclined reconciliation that is attained at the end of the play indicates or, better still, implies that not all offenders and the offended have been reconciled in the new South Africa. Even though a holistic reconciliation across the different shades of human relations might be a utopia, any extant grievance(s), nonetheless, portend the possibility of revenge in both the immediate and remote future.

The configuration of Bouda'D in the text also re-echoes the usual tensions found between societal miscreants and the agents of the state, most especially policemen, who willingly act as a tool to enforce the dictates of government. The tension identified in this case, in the text, touches on the complications inherent in survival and the attendant intricacies. It is common knowledge that policemen were the hatchet men of the apartheid regime. Worse still, black policemen were hoodwinked into working against the principles of black liberation and political empowerment, as they served as both spies and executors of brutality on their black community. For Bouda'D, the 'affront' he commits on the policemen, when he yells, 'Mosono wa'o maan [Your arse man]!' (ZLL, 103), is a subtle way of challenging the state and also an attempt to ridicule whatever pride the policeman parades as an agent of

oppression. It should also be noted that the contestations and commotions between Bouda'D and the two black policemen take place in a space provided by Soweto, a township which is predominantly occupied by the struggling masses. Beyond this, this particular street could be taken to be representative of the larger contested space between the state and the common people. Thandeka supports Bouda'D's decision to appropriate the public space found on this street to the detriment of the state, which is only committed to expanding its conquered territories. An effective rebuttal to the policemen by Bouda'D is, therefore, an implicit victory for the masses.

The confrontations between Bouda'D and the black policemen also highlight some revelations about citizenship, identity and stereotypes. These are specifically in the context of the reference that is made to inoculation in the text. Specifically, the size of the inoculation mark on Bouda'D is interrogated by one of the policemen to determine his identity. As a show of total distaste for the attitude of the policemen, Bouda'D declares in a vociferous manner: 'These bastards say my inoculation mark is too low. Fuck you, where's your one?' (ZLL, 103). In an apparent attempt to retain their sense of worth and inscribe their authority, the policemen threaten Bouda'D with incarceration, with the latter sustaining his acerbic attack on the integrity of the policemen and by extension the state, thus:

Fuck T-man. Imagine if some nurse suffering from a hangover twenty year ago inoculated you here ... [pointing to a spot on his arm] then you are seen as someone from Mozambique. Fuck off man. This shit is deep. (ZLL, 104)

The opinion of Bouda'D, in the above statement, introduces a new dimension to the physical characteristics used for identity formation and the inscription of citizenship. It is common knowledge that the decoding of natural physical attributes was deployed by the apartheid regime to group people racially. Such attributes included colour pigmentation, the curly nature of one's hair and the size of one's nose. However, the extension of such defining attributes to include things like inoculation marks, and not necessarily tribal marks, simply shows the ridiculous dimension of apartheid segregation. Apart from the fact that Bouda'D tries to expose how laughable such thinking is, he is also able to lay bare the follies involved in some professions, especially those that are often held in very high esteem. In this case, Bouda'D establishes the fact that nurses, who are entrusted with the wellbeing of people, with possibly precarious health conditions, could be susceptible to some physical and psychological dilapidation, as a result of socio-political and economic conditions. The sense of fallibility conveyed in the statement of Bouda'D, therefore, calls into question the sacrosanct description that is often given to some human endeavours, most especially when either racial or professional pride is involved.

CONCLUSION

No doubt, *Zulu Love Letter*, as explicated in this article, touches on some unspeakable realities about the processes of forgiveness, reconciliation and reconstruction in post-apartheid South Africa. Considering the revelations secured through an interrogation of *Zulu Love Letter*, one can concur with Phelps (2004, 9) who notes:

Truth reports have come into existence in the final decades of the twentieth century, and they are seen as filling a gap when countries do not have the will or the resources to pursue more traditional forms of justice: investigations, trials and punishment.

However, notwithstanding the seemingly lopsidedness found in the process of reconciliation in South Africa by reasons of skewed realities and propositions, a purgation on the part of all the players would, no doubt, enhance the need for wilful forgetting and guarantee concessionary dispositions in matters of citizenship and identity. Even though the foregoing cannot be attained, *Zulu Love Letter* has successfully touched on some of the silences that nurtured inequalities and injustices under the apartheid regime, an era the new South Africa is desperately trying not to return to.

ENDNOTES

1. It is titled 'Negotiating Memory and Nation Building in New South African Drama' an unpublished thesis submitted to the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa in 2010.

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