

## Guy Butler's Interrogation of Two Colonial Ideologies in *Demea*

South Africa was at a turning point in 1990. Having reached the end of apartheid, citizens faced the question of how to construct a new life for their nation. National mythologies had been struck down, and people were left to reframe their memories according to the new South African socio-political paradigm. Even good change is difficult.

Scholar and poet Guy Butler, an English-speaking South African native, had been waiting for the day that apartheid would crumble. In the nineteen-fifties, using Euripides' masterwork, *Medea*, as a starting point, Butler had penned *Demea*, a play that carried with it a strong message against apartheid and a possible solution for South Africa's future. Finally, in 1990, Butler's play could be produced and published, and its message received. This paper will examine Butler's adaptation of *Medea* into political play, depicting two colonial ideologies (Greek Archaic and European colonialism) in order to suggest an alternate history that may have prevented apartheid in South Africa.

*Demea* is set loosely in the 1820s, during the time of the Great Trek across South Africa. This umbrella term covers several treks, or migratory journeys of Dutch settlers (Boers; called Voortrekkers) to the land beyond the English-settled cape. In Butler's play, *Demea* (the *Medea* character) is a South African native from the Tembu tribe. She has rejected her tribe and her status as a princess in order to be with Jonas (the Jason character). Jonas is the English leader of a unique mixed-race trek. He has found social and financial success with this trek, because the non-white members are able to gain access to tribal territories which may be hostile to an all-white trek. Kroon (the Creon character), leader of a true (historically accurate) Boer trek, is the embodiment of apartheid ideology. Jonas has been converted to Kroon's way of thinking, and he announces his change of heart regarding the mixed-race trek during a tense scene involving a "Boer" couple, Mr. and Mrs. Van Niekerk, whose newborn has a dark complexion. Jonas plans to abandon his fifteen-year marriage to *Demea*, and their children, in favor of a Christian marriage to Kroon's daughter, which will solidify him as a leader in Kroon's new state. Jonas plans to send the children to a missionary village—the only community who will associate with colored (mixed-race) people. The members of the trek are each paid out their due salary. Jonas offers the white men (tutor Fitzwilliam and bookkeeper Rodney) positions in Kroon's trek, but both men refuse on grounds of Jonas' moral elasticity. The black and colored men, of course, are not offered any sort of home or position in Kroon's trek. They are left to find their own way in the South African wilderness. *Demea*'s revenge on Jonas takes the form of a surprise attack on the Boers by two neighboring South African tribes. *Demea* convinces the tribal leaders to go back on their respective treaties with Kroon and they plan for the ambush to take place at Jonas' wedding ceremony. Instead of killing her children herself (as *Medea* does), *Demea* sends them to the wedding where she knows they will be killed. While the massacre is happening, *Demea* ceremoniously changes out of her "European clothes" and returns to her traditional tribal dress. Jonas returns to *Demea* a broken man, admitting that he has been Kroon's puppet, and begging for death. Instead, *Demea* instructs Cobus, a former slave and Jonas' wagon driver, to tie Jonas to his wagon wheel and flog him, as he has wished to do since Jonas announced his betrayal. *Demea* then exits in triumph, leaving a bare stage and the audience alone with the sound of cicadas.

By placing the events in *Demea* during the Great Trek of the nineteenth century, Butler is able to criticize the present and conceive a possible future by looking through the lens of the past. Butler sets this framework up with a sort of prologue: a chorus of three men dressed in contemporary clothing discuss the imminent “something” that has happened, is happening, and is going to happen. The men then leave the stage and return in period appropriate costumes. The 1990 audience would easily be able to draw the conclusion that although *Demea* is primarily set more than one hundred and fifty years in the past, it is speaking to the present as well as the future. In her dissertation entitled “*Medea Adapted: The Subaltern Barbarian Speaks*,” scholar Olga Kekis further explains the effect of this Brechtian structure of *Demea*: “This historically intertextual framework contributes to defining the play in historically relevant terms and simultaneously ensures the audience’s increased awareness of the theatricality of the action, and arouses their desire to alter it” (36). Butler takes this construct one step further by imagining a trek that is composed not of Boers, but of people of many racial and national backgrounds. This imaginary trek, led by Jonas, mirrors the Greek Archaic colonial ideology in much the same way that Kroon’s trek (a historically accurate trek, composed of Voortrekkers) exemplifies European colonialism.

Butler’s choice to create an adaptation put the characters and the events of *Medea* in a more readily accessible and relatable form for his contemporary South African audience. This is a scholarly and artistically sound practice. “As part of the post-Afrocentric discourse,” Wetmore explains,

African playwrights, drawing upon the similarities between African and Athenian cultures, deconstruct Greek tragedies and reconstruct them within an African context in which knowledge of the original tragedy and its context is no longer needed and the adaptation becomes its own entity with its own identity serving its own purpose within the African society for which it has been written. (37-8)

Butler has effectively created an entirely new play in *Demea*, inspired by Euripides, however without dependence upon Euripides’ play to construct meaning. Butler’s play can be seen by someone who is entirely unfamiliar with *Medea*, and still convey a strong anti-apartheid message. The reason for this phenomenon lies in the priority of culture over text in the adaptation process.

In order to understand the culture of apartheid-era South Africa, it is necessary to examine the historical colonization of the nation. The origin of apartheid can be traced to the nineteenth century treks of the Boers. Called Voortrekkers, these Dutch settlers migrated north and east of the English-settled cape in search of land they could call their own. These treks spanned from the 1810s into the 1830s, and became known collectively as the Great Trek. Stories of the plight of the courageous Voortrekkers are part of the national mythology of the Dutch South Africans, who eventually became known as Afrikaners.

The Great Trek mythology depicted good prevailing over evil. The Voortrekkers were cast as heroes who, after enduring hardship and making sacrifices, won the land by the will of God; while the black South Africans were cast as dangerous savages who threatened to destroy the Voortrekkers. This fear mentality would become a guiding principle of apartheid. Derek Cohen, a South African Jewish man who grew up watching his mother resist apartheid in the latter half of the twentieth century, explains that the fear of black South Africans was given “form, mythology, and religious mystery” by the Afrikaners’ Great Trek narrative (548). Further, the Afrikaners “coined the phrase *die*

*swart gevaar* (the black peril)—a brilliant term ... suggesting a horde of muscular, half-naked black men with spears descending upon South Africa ... with the desire of overwhelming and occupying South Africa and raping its white women” (548). The Group Areas Act of 1948 was a natural outgrowth of this culture of fear and distrust. Justified by the myths of the past, apartheid took hold in South Africa.

In order to devise an alternate history that might prevent apartheid, Butler first had to reconstruct the European colonial history. He did so in Kroon’s trek. European colonialism was focused on power; colonies existed to serve the colonizing nation, and the colonizing nation had absolute control over the colonies. Kroon’s trek (i.e., the Great Trek) existed to escape British control and establish a state where absolute power belonged to the Dutch. Historically, European colonizing nations became power centers, around which the colonies’ political and economic practices revolved. According to Irad Malkin, post-colonialist scholar and author of the article, “Postcolonial Concepts and Ancient Greek Colonization,” the idea of a colonial “center” emerged with Spanish imperialism and became a key aspect of all European colonialism. Malkin further explains that “the center was expressed in terms of political cohesiveness organized around the Spanish monarchy” (347).

In *Demea*, Kroon is representative of the colonial center; his focus is on the economic and political well-being of his trek. This is apparent in Kroon’s candid conversation with Demea regarding his motivation for marrying his daughter to Jonas: “Our state, I admit openly, needs Jonas, needs Englishmen; their skill, their knowledge of manufacture and trade. Tomorrow is the inauguration of our state. It would be incomplete without his presence” (Butler 36). Kroon’s singular goal from the start is political gain at any cost.

A key to preserving the power in the appropriate colonial “center” was the economic structure that privileges the colonizers over the colonized. Cohen acknowledges that native South Africans are “an essential part of the economy which was built upon their labor” (548). In *Demea*, Mr. Van Niekerk reports that Kroon spends most of his time drafting and signing treaties with tribes with whom he comes into contact. These treaties include provisions “fixing this range of hills and that river as frontiers to keep them neatly apart” (Butler 16). Cooperation of the native people is essential to the colonialist’s power, and thus to Kroon’s power. Further, Demea was able to take her revenge on Kroon only after she successfully convinced tribal chiefs to go back on their treaties with him. That this plotline is nonexistent in Euripides’ play (Aegeus does offer Medea asylum, however he is not forced to damage his relationship with Creon in order to do so) exposes the less personal, more political nature of Butler’s adaptation.

European colonialists knew that power is earned and can be taken away; therefore they strived for total control of their colonies. Malkin states plainly that “the colonizers focused on the capture of large territories that they then carved up for direct control” (348). Cohen corroborates this focus on absolute control, particularly in South Africa. He explains the far-reaching arm of the colonials into twentieth century politics in South Africa, discussing what he calls “the great objective of controlling the African population and keeping them oppressed, dependent, and quiet” (551). Cohen explains that during the mid-twentieth century, “both of the two major political parties recognized the necessity of passing a slew of laws designed to keep the black population under control” (551). The methods employed to maintain this control were to “keep the

blacks in their own townships, deny them the vote, and watch them carefully” (Cohen 551).

This fear mentality and legal inequality is reflected in *Demea*. The black former slave Cobus describes the punishment he received for escaping slavery in comparison to the punishment that the white British tutor Fitzwilliam received for stealing wine from a church: “My thirst to be free got me flogged. His thirst for a drink got him—a serious warning!” (Butler 8). The colonial powers in *Demea* saw it as a deeper offense to deny a white man the privilege of owning a human being than to steal from the church to feed an alcohol addiction. In the eyes of the colonialist, a sober black man roaming the streets is a far greater threat to society than an inebriated white man with a propensity to steal.

This episode is a further illustration of the white South African fear of the native South Africans, whom Cohen describes in colonialist terms as “the vast overwhelming horde of black Africans excluded at every turn from the process of nation-making, a mass of people seen but ignored as rules and laws began to develop to exclude them physically and legally from that process” (547). Not only did the colonialists create laws that inhibited the basic rights of black citizens, but they eliminated the black voice from the political process. Whatever laws may have existed in communities before the colonists arrived would be deemed invalid by the incoming powers that be.

Butler depicts this denial of existing laws of the colonized land in Fitzwilliam’s explanation to Kroon, Jonas’ fifteen-year marriage to Demea, which became official when Jonas paid a bride price to Demea’s tribe, was completely invalid. Fitzwilliam simply states that “as Kroon sees it, black law cannot bind a white man” (Butler 15). Kroon has bought into the power/fear narrative, and has come to the same conclusion that Verwoerd will come to in the twentieth century: the best way to control the black South Africans and ensure that they cannot overtake the white colony is to confine them. Butler foreshadows the Group Areas Act of 1948 in Kroon’s vision of “a state for white people only who will not be spoilt or bastardised [*sic*] as we are being now” (11).

Butler has altered the power structure depicted in *Medea* in order to better illustrate the European colonial power structure. In *Demea*, Kroon is first, and always, an authority figure. He is only concerned with how he can further his power in South Africa and maintain a positive image as a leader. He explains this motivation to Demea: “It is important to me that all who must suffer in the name of my state should understand and accept their suffering as just and necessary. I want as clear a name as the world will allow for myself and my people” (Butler 30). Butler has created in Kroon a man who is unable to see past fear-mongering and politics. Consistent with the ideology of apartheid, fear of the other goes hand-in-hand with religion in *Demea*.

European colonialism began on the premise of bringing the Christian religion to the indigenous people groups of Africa and other continents. Missionary work went hand-in-hand with the colonial priority of gaining control over the land. Missionaries were among the first colonists to arrive after military forces took control of a new territory. Dutch (and English) missionaries believed it to be their duty to bring the Christian faith to the tribes of South Africa. According to Bransby Key, a missionary serving in the 1860s, “the cape authorities appear to have awoke at that time to a conviction that they had a duty to perform to the natives – a mission to bring about a better state of things, and enforce peace and good order” (516). White missionaries would enter a tribe, learn the language, teach literacy skills, and then attempt to convert

tribe members to Christianity. Along with this conversion came implementation of new laws, which often ran contrary to the tribe's cultural customs, and were often offensive to the members of the tribe. Out of fear, the native people would attempt to comply with the new mandates, but this could not last long. Those individuals who held their spirituality most dear would eventually take a stand against the new practices. The standard response to this rebellion was use of force. Some missionaries didn't personally endorse this methodology; however it was still widely used. Key describes this dilemma:

It is no use attempting to exercise force and oblige people to give up their old customs and institutions and habits of thought; they may conform outwardly, but they will fail to understand the newfangled notions. "Your rule is very heavy," said an intensely conservative petty chief to me, alluding to some small grievance. I could not see the hardship, for he himself was far better off than yet he had been before; and yet he was sincere. (528)

While it is possible that the missionaries could have acknowledged the unreasonable demands being made of the indigenous people, they were not at liberty to release themselves from the burden of controlling the tribes. Furthermore, in addition to their obligation to control the native people, the missionaries truly believed their way of thinking to be superior to that of the tribes. The European colonialist ideology included a firm assurance that God wanted the colonists to reform the natives.

Butler illustrates the colonial belief in control of the tribes by the will of God in Van Niekerk's report that Kroon "hears nothing except the voice of God. God will look after everything!" (Butler 16). Kroon himself also argues frequently that he is working in service to God. During his confrontation with Demea, Kroon articulates, in religiously pious terms, the doctrine of apartheid: that God created people as unique and gave them color to show their inherent spiritual difference:

God made all the races of men to dwell on the face of the earth. He delights in their differences, their variety, giving to each a spirit of its own, and, as outward and visible signs of inner differences of soul, these badges of different speech, flags of different colour. ... Look at this belt of beads. It is bright, beautiful. But it would not have been possible unless the red, the blue and the white had been kept pure. Design is impossible without distinction. Whenever through man's lust distinction of race is lost, tragedy follows, misery abounds... (Butler 31-2)

Kroon (and the European colonists after whom he is modeled) believed that failure to acknowledge and preserve racial difference is to go against the will of God. Furthermore, Kroon argues that God designed all races of people as different for the purpose of keeping them separate from one another.

Butler seems to be criticizing the colonialists' use of religion to create dissension in *Demea* and has been careful to highlight in more than one way the central role of spirituality (and its misuse) in *Demea*. Cohen explains the lasting effect of the religious narrative of European colonialism on apartheid. At the time of *Demea's* production, Cohen describes a "large majority of white people who profoundly believe[d] in apartheid and who would mow down its detractors without a second thought. These true believers [were] a legion of white men and women, mostly Afrikaners, who [saw] opponents of apartheid as a satanic force" (542). The fear narrative initiated by the Voortrekkers had taken such a hold that by the mid-twentieth century, those who did not support apartheid were seen as literally demonic.

The mere attempt at conversion does not eliminate indigenous spirituality. In the book *Literary Expressions of African Spirituality*, editors Carol Marsh-Lockett and Elizabeth West rightly assert that “more than bodies remained for those who escaped capture but endured the legacy of Colonialism on their homelands” (1). The tendency of colonists (missionaries and otherwise) to actively ignore indigenous spirituality is insensitive at best, and destructive at worst. As discussed earlier, even those who have gone through the motions of conversion will return to their religious roots. Marsh-Lockett and West explain that in their research, “diasporic and continental African experience points concentrically to a return to origins— and repeatedly the language sought is that of the spirit, that is, the spiritual essence that defines, anchors, and orders the world” (5).

Butler illustrates this retention of spiritual origins in Demea’s backstory. She was raised in a missionary community, and was described as having embraced much of the white missionaries’ culture, even wearing European clothing. The one thing that Demea would not do was to be baptized into the Christian church. This refusal was confusing and off-putting to the missionaries. Demea’s nurse, Kantoni, and Fitzwilliam recount the missionaries’ conversation with Jonas about Demea:

Kantoni: The Missionary and his wife came to see him, sitting by his fire. They said: 'One of our pupils is too much trouble. She refuses to be baptised.' 'Why?' asked the Captain. They did not know.

Fitzwilliam: No doubt she asked too many questions. She has not changed.

Kantoni: They asked him, 'Will you take her back to the kraal of her uncle?' 'Yes,' he said. She came out of the Mission house in her tribal dress, to show she had finished with them. (Butler 13).

Demea, like Medea, had joined a community which saw her otherness and attempted to change her into one of them. In Creon’s kingdom, as in Kroon’s South Africa, it was assumed that Medea/Demea would want to become part of the dominant culture, so much so that rejection of the culture was confusing and repellant to the Corinthians/colonizers.

Butler clearly reflects the European colonial ideology that led to apartheid in Kroon’s trek. In order to affect change, it was necessary for Butler to imagine a history that may have resulted in a different present. This alternate history takes the form of a mixed-race trek, modeled not after the European colonial ideology, but after the Archaic Greek colonial practices. Jonas’ trek is representative of this alternate approach to colonizing, and suggests what may be a peaceful alternative to apartheid. In stark contrast to Kroon’s familiar European colonial power structure, Jonas’ trek reflects the colonial practices of the Archaic Greeks.

Long before the Europeans began colonizing, the Greeks explored the world beyond their borders. Malkin explains the point of view of the Archaic Greeks in contrast to the view of the European colonists: “Greek colonization indicates... the existence of a world diametrically opposed to the hierarchical, centralized concept of the Christian-territorial kingdom or empire: a decentered political space comprising numerous sovereign, geographically noncontiguous city-states” (363). This “decenteredness” indicates that the Greek colonies were not established to reinforce the political power of Athens, but, rather, to simply expand Greek knowledge of the world and other people groups. Power was never an issue, as Malkin clearly states that Archaic Greeks “lived in hundreds of small, sovereign, and autonomous city-states” (346). This

lack of a power center allowed for freedom of the individual and promoted community among the colonies. According to Malkin, the Greeks “developed closely knit, small, homogeneous political communities that eventually made room ... for the concepts of *koinonia* (partnership and rotation) and *polites* (citizen)” (346).

This culture of partnership and sharing is reflected in Jonas’ trek, which scholar Albert Wertheim describes as a “microcosm of a relatively harmonious and generally prosperous racially mixed world” (339). Butler’s depiction of a community of people who recognize that they are the same, yet different, suggests a reimagining of Euripides’ Jason not as an otherwise traditional colonialist who is inexplicably enamored with a foreign woman, but as a man who recognizes the value of all people and is open to exploring points of view other than his own. Jonas is not a prideful lover (like Jason), but a community builder.

Because power is not a concern for the Archaic Greek colonist, there is no pressing need for control by Athens. Malkin explains that the numerous Greek cities that we call, for lack of a better term, ‘colonies’ were founded during the Archaic period as independent entities ... There were a great variety of ‘mother cities’ (i.e., home communities recognized as the initiators of settlement), but they rarely had political control over the new settlements. These were largely independent, sovereign entities with ritual ties to the *metropolis* (lit. mother city). (347)

In other words, archaic Greeks allowed the natives of the lands they explored (and often took up residence in) to govern themselves. The idea of a land of native people who exist to serve one colonizing nation is purely European. Malkin elaborates on the distinction: “in terms of political culture, the Greek polis was radically different both from the centralized Spanish-Christian monarchy and from Victorian Britain... Each polis emphasized its own distinctiveness even as each was part of a network of hundreds of city-states. ‘Ancient Greece’ may exist in book titles, but it may not be used to denote a unified political entity” (348). City-states operated as individual entities, without political interference from Athens (or any other metropolis). This set up the city-states as equals to the metropolis, rather than servants or adversaries.

Like the Greek city-states, Jonas’ trek operates without hierarchy (with the exception of Jonas’ status as captain). As becomes evident after Jonas’ betrayal, outside of the trek, each individual has a specified place in the socio-political structure of South Africa. Only within the trek, when under no obligation to a higher authority than their own, do they operate as equals. *Demea* seems to be suggesting that there is a way for all people of South Africa to live in harmony with one another, but it is going to take a shift in the political landscape of the entire country, including the leaders, in order to make it happen.

The Archaic Greeks were far more accepting of ethnic and racial difference than the European colonialists. “In contrast to the colonizers of the New World,” Malkin points out, “the ancient Greeks did not perceive the lands they reached as inhabited by ‘absolute others’” (348). There was a sense of being different, yet, the same that opened communication between Greek colonizers and the native people of the territories they colonized. Malkin describes the friendly relationships among city-states and Athens. According to Malkin, since city-states maintained their own government, “Greek aristocrats regarded other aristocrats not as aliens or savages but simply as *xenoi*

(foreigners)... The term *xenoi* also carried the meaning of ‘guest-friends,’ personal allies who could exchange ritual gifts and whose guest-friendship was inherited” (349).

Jonas’ trek operates on this principle of guest-friendship. Jonas met Demea through the friendly relationship he had cultivated with the missionaries. His trek had a reputation for friendly commerce, as evidenced in the visit from the neighboring tribal chiefs who were in need of supplies for impending wars. Even Jonas’ relationship with Kroon (prior to his betrayal of Demea and the trek) is reflective of the Archaic Greek colonial concept of guest-friendship. Fitzwilliam defends this ideology to the Van Niekerks, who, coming from Kroon’s traditional trek, are simply unable to comprehend the idea:

Fitzwilliam: It's our one hope. Africa is small; or again, the Africa of the future.

Van Niekerk: What do you know about Africa?

Fitzwilliam: I know something about Africa's people.

Van Niekerk: She hasn't got people, only peoples. We must be ourselves, stay ourselves!

Fitzwilliam: We?

Carollus: We?

Van Niekerk: The Boers. (Cobus laughs.) (Butler 19)

In this episode, Butler has brought to light the very real phenomenon that the two approaches to colonialism ultimately yield two entirely different nations. One nation is composed of people, who engage one another as friends, while the other nation, the nation that would embrace apartheid, is composed of peoples, struggling to preserve their individuality and at odds with one another.

In addition to the Greek ideology of equality among city-states, citizens also enjoyed equality and were valued as individuals. Malkin reports that “Greek identity in the Archaic period was neither formed nor reinforced oppositionally, and the Greeks did not regard the civilizations to the east as peripheral, inferior, poor, or young” (349). In contrast to the superiority of the European colonialists, the Archaic Greeks did not see the customs of individuals as in need of change. Instead, each person was an equal citizen with something of value to offer to the community.

Following this model, Jonas’ trek is inclusive and recognizes the different life experiences of each individual as beneficial to everyone. The Van Niekerks, who reached out to Demea for help, were nervous about Demea because of rumors that she is a witch. This was viewed as a highly negative distinction in Kroon’s trek, but is just part of who Demea is in Jonas’ trek:

Van Niekerk: They say she's a witch.

Rodney: Well now, yes and no. She knows a lot about witchcraft and healin' 'erbs and all that. You see, she grew up with one foot in the church and the other in the witchdoctor's ring of bones. (Butler 17).

Jonas’ trek used the gifts of each individual to contribute to the overall success of the trek as a community. Wertheim illustrates this principle in terms of Jonas’ success, which, he explains, “has come from his black common-law wife, Demea, whose knowledge of African tribes and whose renowned skill in native medicine have given Jonas access to otherwise hostile black customers and to consequent financial gain” (339). The monetary success is a small part of the overall well-being of the community that embraces Archaic Greek colonial thought. In Jonas’ trek, *Demea* presents a case not



just for a way to make those who have been marginalized by apartheid have a better quality of life, but for all South Africans to experience a better life. This is also yet another example of Butler taking the personal struggle depicted in *Medea* and making it political, thus broadening the story's sphere of influence to include an entire nation.

In contrast to the European colonial priority of religious conversion, Greek polytheism eliminated the notion that inhabitants of new territories needed to be converted (Malkin 363). Malkin suggests that the idea of a "false god" would have been "ridiculous" to the Greeks, who believed that land was owned by gods, not men (350). It was a natural conclusion, then, that the gods of an unfamiliar territory may be unfamiliar to the settlers. Rather than trying to change the spiritual identity of the natives, Malkin suggests that for the Greeks, "settlement implied the need for a lasting peace and ritual rapport with the gods" (351). Malkin further explains that to the Greeks, "The gods of 'others' were either unfamiliar ('new gods') or the 'same' but known by different names and attributes." Malkin uses the example of the Greek god Zeus aligning with the Egyptian god Ammon. The Greek mindset is that "'Ammon' is how you say 'Zeus' in Egyptian" (350). The Greeks prioritized common ground and reverence when it came to colonial religious practice.

This humble rapport-building is reflected in Jonas and Demea's marriage. Jonas, being the outsider, did not insist on a Christian wedding, but instead adhered to Demea's Tembu marriage ritual. Kantoni recounts Jonas' faithfulness to the Tembu tradition: "And she did marry him! Yes, afterwards, to make his name good in Tembuland, he paid that old uncle a big bride price—a hundred cattle!" (Butler 15). Jonas, in accordance with Archaic Greek colonial ideology, has put his own understanding of religious truth aside for the sake of developing a rapport with the gods of the land he is in. This high regard for the traditions and gods of others is not typical of his Greek counterpart, whose status as tragic hero depends, in part, upon his unwavering pride. The Jonas who was committed to Demea and his mixed-race trek was humble and willing to go the extra mile for the sake of the community. This is a true representation of the Archaic Greek colonist. *Demea* suggests that had Jonas remained faithful to these ideals, perhaps South Africa's history might never have included apartheid.

In his adaptation of *Medea*, Guy Butler has interrogated the European colonialist Great Trek mythology and constructed an alternate South African history modeled after Archaic Greek colonialism as a possible alternative to apartheid. Demea herself articulates this during the episode involving the Van Niekerks: "we think we are a few, but there are thousands of others like [us], from here all the way to the cape... We need to stand together, to give each other courage, that is all... Think, Jonas: a big trek, a trek of two hundred wagons, you in command: a trek for the sake of this child, for our children; all children" (Butler 25). Wertheim explains that "Demea's idealism ... projects a state based on the multi-colored and multicultural unity of the many" (342).

While Wertheim is correct, it is short-sighted to attribute this idealistic vision solely to Demea. Fitzwilliam states that "Our trek is a vanguard, the first of many" (Butler 14). Not only does Fitzwilliam suggest, like Demea, that there are many people in South Africa who share the ideals upheld by Jonas' trek; he also takes ownership of the trek himself ("our trek"), effectively suggesting that he is not simply following a colonial leader, but that he believes in the values behind the mixed race trek. For Fitzwilliam,

and, the play suggests, the other members of the trek, “the mind and heart of a man are too strong to accept the skin as a prison” (Butler 14).

Butler further illustrates the concept of the unity of many individuals in the way the script is structured. The characters in the play often form a chorus and comment on the events of the play in a figurative singular voice. Wertheim illuminates the impact of this dramatic choice: “That the trek members vacillate between separate, distinct voices on the one hand and Chorus on the other emphasizes the idea that South Africa has the possibility of splintering into separate, disjunctive groups, or becoming productively harmonious though choral unity” (340-1). Butler’s 1990 audience of Afrikaners, black South Africans, and English-speaking white South Africans had a choice to make: they could come together in the spirit of the Archaic Greeks to create a nation of unified individuals, or they could fall back, like Jonas, into the trap of the traditional European colonial fear-control mythology.

In *Demea*, Butler offers an alternative to apartheid in Archaic Greek colonialism. By focusing on the political, rather than personal, themes in his adaptation of *Medea*, Butler is able to interrogate two approaches to colonialism which result in strikingly different national attitudes toward power, cultural difference, and religion. In Kroon’s trek, Butler illustrates the historically accurate European colonization of South Africa which resulted in xenophobic state control of people of color. In Jonas’ trek, Butler illustrates an alternative path which would lead to a nation of individuals respected and celebrated for their difference, committed to working together for the good of the collective. While the past cannot be changed, Butler’s play suggests that even post-apartheid, there is still an opportunity for the people of South Africa to write a different future for their nation. As history has proven, the choices made by a nation today, for better or for worse, will reach forward into many tomorrows.

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