

Inter-Racial Violence and Narrative Representation in Coetzee's *Age of Iron*

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Abstract

Coetzee's Age of Iron holds the chance of pardon on both the individual and national plane. Coetzee, in any case, is reluctant, the finish of the novel appears to me increasingly disturbed (in the sense the ocean can be grieved) than you suggest. In the final figuring, Mrs. Curren finds recovery through death, which for the reader guarantees no feeling of trust later on. Her letter deifies herself, incomprehensibly, that may never be conveyed and its message lost, gives just declaration to the time of iron, it might fill in for instance of how not to live, yet offers no answers for the now. Mrs. Curren is mighty in her moral determination and in getting herself understood, yet destitution lives in her ideas of noble cause, trust, etc, showed by the vulnerability and sadness of her activities to which Coetzee reluctantly alarms us. Her scholarly authority is debilitated by her inclination for the reflection that her home realities import.

Keywords: - South Africa, race, class, history, politic, morality, violence

Introduction

Death is the only truth left.

If the white writer is to break out of his double alienation, he too [like his black counterpart] has to recognize a false consciousness within himself, he too has to discard a white-based value-system which it is fashionable to say "no longer" corresponds to the real entities of South African life but which in fact never did.

The protagonist Mrs. Curren of J. M. Coetzee's 6th novel *Age of Iron* (1990) is biting the dust of malignant growth and the content notionally comprises the letter she is keeping in touch with her girl who, in emblematic remains against politically-sanctioned racial segregation, has stopped South Africa for the U.S. The letter incorporates exchange and depiction and is composed over a time of three years from the mid to late 1980s, the disappearing yet most destructive long periods of politically-sanctioned racial segregation, making it, as Dominic Head watches, an impossible correspondence to her little girl. The epistolary vanity speaks to an admission of sorts by which Mrs. Curren uncovers her inner

feelings: hers is the confessant's battle for endings. Her monologue is routed to both her little girl and to the lethargic and unapproachable transient Vercueil who has taken home, excluded, in her home and whom she demands to go about as her dispatcher. Vercueil is required to post the letter after her passing that is the significant part, all together she infers that the motion isn't interpreted as self-intrigued and an endeavour to convince her girl to come back to home. In any case, what is started as a token of warmth at the same time fills in as a revisioning of Mrs. Curren's own ethico-political cognizance in which she verbalizes her significant tension at her reluctant complicity, as white, in politically-sanctioned racial segregation mistreatment. The letter offers her the chance to appease and find exculpation from her feeling of blame and disgrace for remaining on. "Though colonialism was not a crime I asked to be committed, it was committed in my name".

Mrs. Curren is making progress toward certainties, both private and political ones. Through the way toward composing and etymological forming, she battles to get her voice publically heard. As Edward Said has proposed with regards to the open scholarly, knowing how to use language well and knowing when to intervene in language are two essential features of intellectual action. By methods for a conscientious respect for language similar to Coetzee's (she is an etymologist by calling), she not just voices her doubt of standard conviction by testing the powers of state mistreatment and aggressor opposition that she sees as going out of control in 1980s Cape Town, in any case is constrained by her own understanding of these brutal occasions to reevaluate her own ethico-political perspective. It is disputable that through this language work, Mrs. Curren goes to the acknowledgment that her political conviction is undermined by her private anguish, rendering the open professions that she makes illogical in the "*Age of Iron*".

Through the theme of final words, the content expects us to ask whether Mrs. Curren's condition of close passing encourages an honest, what Coetzee would call "sincere", rendering of the setting from which she talks. Does writing even with death adjust her situating towards the dark progressives the novel depicts? She is unflinchingly and totally against brutality and her morals are humanist. "Her visceral response to violence, including the violence of revolutionary struggle, would also be Coetzee's, who is ready to admit he is "unable to, or refuse to, conceive of a liberating violence"

Discussion

Mrs. Curren learns of her own disaster on the day that Vercueil arrives in her life. Vercueil, as seal of a national discomfort, is along these lines permanently connected to Mrs. Curren's infection. Mrs. Curren discloses to John that her disease is the birthing of an individual and aggregate emergency of heart about politically-sanctioned racial segregation mistreatment: "I have cancer from the accumulation of shame I have endured in my life. That is how cancer comes about: from self-loathing the body turns malignant and begins to eat away at itself ". While she grieves the loss of her relationship with her daughter – there is no correspondence between them during the hour of the story as the letter has not yet been posted – she imagines the updates on her tumor as a sort of ghastly homecoming with an infant: " It was

for me to take in my arms and fold to my chest and take home, without headshaking, without tears ". Afterward, as she grasps the draining head of John, who has been run off his bike by the police, she is tormented by the picture of this awful birth: "Monstrous growths, misbirths: a sign that one is beyond one's term". Disease subsequently flags not just Mrs. Curren's up and coming passing yet additionally the unthinkable birth of an afflicted country.

The story maps a strain among open and private completely pertinent to its specific circumstances, the interregnum of 1980s' South Africa: that time of vulnerability between systems. The approach of complete procedure, a term begat by the French general Beaufre who, as per William Beinart, "emphasized that in modern warfare the whole society should be involved in a 'dialectic of two opposing wills'", was during the time of the narrative initiated by the government in a last- ditch attempt to shore up its rapidly diminishing power". Both Florence, mother of kid progressive Bheki, and the Afrikaner police demand the space of the private is finished, and that Mrs. Curren, thinking of her private papers, is hence out of sync with the occasions. Rifing through her letters, the criminologist looking through her home is solid: "This is not private, Mrs. Curren. You know that. Nothing is private any more". So also, tested by Mrs. Curren for losing authority of her kid, Florence answers: "It is all changed today. There are no more mothers and fathers". For sure, Mrs. Curren's candor on issues of governmental issues, her antipathy for political authoritative opinion of any tint, is undermined by close to home nervousness. In spite of the fact that the letter is her final correspondence to a missing girl, it turns into a conductor for getting her voice heard on what she views as the wanton viciousness of the state as well as of the progressives also. However, as her show of cognizance unfurls through the letter, she addresses her entitlement to stand up on issues of governmental issues from a position – radicalism – that has been maligned by the South African left as political quietism. In addition, as her endeavours to recognize the political from her case of protection become all the more clearly vain and uncouth, she perceives that her open protestations are defaced by close to home personal responsibility and a degraded dread of death.

Coetzee takes note of that his books frequently stage a challenge of translations between the moral and the political. Distinguishing a proclivity for the moral in his fiction, he contends, regardless, that "the last thing I want to do is to defiantly embrace the ethical as against the political. I don't want to contribute, in that way, toward marking the ethical pole with the lack ". Put another way, Coetzee upholds the moral as a remedial to the political. Derek Attridge defines the terms as they are appointed in the oeuvre: " the ethical involves an always contextualized responsiveness and responsibility to the other (as unique) and to the future (as unknowable), while the political is the realm of generalizations, programs, and predictions" ". It is Mrs. Curren's battle to apply her moral code to address the political, a battle that on a political level falls flat, whereupon in this novel Coetzee's "challenge of translations" reluctantly turns.

Additionally profoundly established in the open disfavour of politically-sanctioned racial segregation, that the novel precisely depicts the possess of Witdoeke, unsettled by the security powers, torching the casual shanties of the Cape Flats, for example, and that the little girl's choice to stop South

Africa in 1976 corresponds with the Soweto fights implies that the novel can be promptly historicized. It would not be unlikely to envision that in *Age of Iron* Coetzee answers Gordimer's reactions that the previous *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983) precludes the vitality from securing the will to oppose malicious and that Coetzee neglects to perceive the genuine accomplishments of "the victims, who no longer see themselves as victims". *Age of Iron* unequivocally and intensely draws in with the political and, likewise, for the first time in the oeuvre dark voices are depicted with substantial political organization. As dark protection from politically-sanctioned racial segregation assembles quality accordingly, for example, to the States of Emergency of 1985–90 and restriction to politically-sanctioned racial segregation universally develops increasingly compelling, Coetzee's evaluate shifts center to the way and method of political responsibility itself.

The political unmanageability Mrs. Curren finds so troubling goes to the core of the novel, caught in its title: period of iron alludes differently to the iron will of the dark kid progressives, to the little girl's iron determination not to come back to South Africa while the National Party holds power, to Mrs. Curren's persistence both in not convincing her little girl to return and her own political will, and to the iron laws of child rearing to which the two Mrs. Curren and Florence are party. Most clearly, the time of iron is additionally the unyielding law of the system and state mistreatment and communicates the feeling of captured improvement that described politically-sanctioned racial segregation's traditionalist patriotism. In a novel that depicts the conflict between the state and the extremists who are dark, just as alleged dark on-dark brutality white is identified by Mrs. Curren as the shade of limbo.

Mrs. Curren is spooky by the quieted dark voices in South Africa's history of pioneer and politically-sanctioned racial segregation rule. Reviewing the re-emerging dark body in Nadine Gordimer's *The Conservationist* (1974), she composes:

When I walk upon ... this South Africa, I have a gathering feeling of walking upon black faces ... Millions of figures of pig-iron floating under the skin of the earth. The age of iron waiting to return.

South Africa's mistreated at this point enthusiastic dark nearness is allegorized as hanging tight for its snapshot of return. By envisioning that she strolls upon the essences of the dead and the ground soaked up by the heritage of politically-sanctioned racial segregation, Mrs. Curren recognizes her benefit and power and thusly her complicity in dark persecution. This is a gathering feeling is characteristic of awareness experiencing significant change. Dominic Head identifies an irregularity, nonetheless, between this novel and Coetzee's contention in *White Writing* (1988) about *The Conservationist* that, in Head's words, "casts doubt on the validity of the symbol of ownership of the land, contained in the motif of the resurfacing corpse". By the by, Head goes on, Coetzee places the theme to a similar reason in this novel in a steely picture which increases a feeling of white complicity.

The South Africa Coetzee depicts is whole-world destroying and, similar to a scene from Bosch, is inhabited by the crazy and portrayed by pictures of sickness, fire and perdition. To be sure, Hell in Mrs. Curren's account radiates from South Africa's unavoidable belief systems. It is ghoulishly fitting that Mrs. Curren expects to challenge the system by setting fire to herself; however, she later reneges on this choice. Made up for lost time in the brutality of the Witdoeke vigilantes, she is angered and jumbled by the stubbornness of the Afrikaner police which she understands as a sort of craziness: "All of us running mad possessed by devils. When madness climbs the throne, who in the land escapes the contagion?" What Coetzee expounds on the scene in Gordimer's novel *Burger's Daughter* (1979) in which the hero Rosa Burger observes a man beating his jackass reverberates here: "The spectacle comes from the inner reaches of Dante's hell, beyond the scope of morality"

Mrs. Curren joins the positions of Coetzee's still; small voice-stricken authors for her letter is an admission of sorts in its quest for individual and political facts. Unmistakably she likewise comprehends that there can be a virtue in lying in light of the fact that, for selfless closures, she lies on three events: to spare Vercueil's poise, she deceives the neighbor who advises her that a transient has been seen on her property; she misleads the police all together that she may go looking for Bheki, and she guarantees responsibility for weapon to shield him from the police. Mrs. Curren additionally lies when she clarifies the importance of noble cause to Vercueil, a point that I expound beneath. Through her cooperations with Vercueil and John, Mrs. Curren understands that what she calls her restoration, in a natural Coetzean figure of speech, will just come through adoring the unlovable since selflessly putting resources into the different guarantees the most morally unadulterated activities:

That is my first word, my first confession ... I want to be saved. How shall I be saved? By doing what I do not want to do ... I must love, first of all, the unlovable. [John] is here for a reason. He is part of my salvation. I must love him.

Up until this point Mrs. Curren has been not able to earn the internal assets to carry on of adoration, however she has indicated noble cause. She misleads shield John from the police and is unafraid to stand up with all due respect, getting her appall at his treatment on account of the police heard – he is only a kid she opposes with them. In like manner, through the obligation of trust with Vercueil that gradually develops, she accepts she will find asylum self-absolution inside herself. Her round feeling of rationale advises her:

Because I cannot trust Vercueil I must trust him ... I give my life to Vercueil to carry over.
I trust Vercueil because I do not love Vercueil. I love him because I do not love him.
Because he is the weak reed I lean upon him.

Mrs. Curren has not even been sure of Vercueil's name; she tells Florence: His name is Mr. Vercueil ... Vercueil, Verkuil, Verskuil. That's what he says. In Afrikaans verkuil means to cheat and verskuil means to hide or conceal emphasizing the inscrutability otherness such as Vercueil's vagrancy and racial identity encodes.

Mrs. Curren accordingly looks for recovery through her associations with John and the abandoned Vercueil, whom David Attwell names her blessed messenger of death in light of the fact that in the end grouping Vercueil crushes the life-power from her body. Not exclusively does the consideration she shows these to fill the hole left by her self-banished girl, it drives her to reconsider her view of those from whom she felt distanced, including the political activists. Along these lines private experience shapes and defines her origination of the political. Under politically-sanctioned racial segregation, politico-verifiable realities were effectively smothered and contorted at this point, Mrs. Curren accepts, the powers of restriction are likewise purveyors of falsehoods. Calvin Triumphant renewed in the dogmatists and witch-trackers of the two militaries. Her own mission for truth, be that as it may, both her spirit looking and addressing of political orthodoxies, prompts a political revelation, to the acknowledgment following the disclosure of Bheki's body presently her eyes are open and she can never close them again.

Conclusion

In *Age of Iron*, physical agony, which signals Mrs. Curren's up and coming passing, gives her the mental fortitude to have her state, where different roads, not least her exchange with her little girl, have been closed down. Elaine Scarry, talked about in chapter, contends that the quiet caused by torment opposes objectification in language, while for Mrs. Curren, torment, both physical and enthusiastic, encourages free discourse or, in her own words, empowers her to go "Endlessly". Enduring her torment, she isn't not normal for Coetzee's other disfigured or disfigured heroes the brute young lady in *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), in *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983), Friday in *Foe* (1986)– whose self-sufficiency, hazardously, is figured in their woundedness. The white Paul Rayment in *Slow Man*, who loses his leg in a bike mishap, is disfigured and independent, showing that physical incapacity in Coetzee signifies racial or gendered persecution. In a country whose legislature has prevented essential human rights from claiming just about 9/10 of its populace, the enduring body loans assurance. As Coetzee contends; The body with its agony turns into a counter to the unlimited preliminaries of uncertainty. Not elegance, at that point, yet at any rate the body. By the by, however feeling her way in the open area through her private rope of words, Mrs. Curren's own battle against disease wins and she yields; The nation seethes, yet with the best will on the planet I can just half-join in. My actual consideration is all internal, upon the thing, the word, and the word for the thing creeping through my body. Her agony has diminished language to signs that can't be formed.

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