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ISSN 2278-9529
Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal
www.galaxyimrj.com

Theme of Heroism and Salvation in J. M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron*

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Abstract:

This paper's aim is to describe the story technique through giving fictional events. My focus of this paper is not the track of a death foretold in the fiction's starting part but the trail of salvation. This paper is also discussed about its heroism and salvation, which is the prominent theme of this novel. As we have come to suppose from Coetzee's characters, Mrs. Curren does not simply hit this track. She tries to defend herself from both the reality of death and want for salvation with her significant logical and emotional sources. My main attention is Mrs. Curren's resolve through the first half of the fiction to pursue the literary rules she recognizes, given her learned past as a traditionalist and her Western European creative flavors. From the heroic Mrs. Curren uses, such thoughts as heroic detachment and a source of legend. Mrs. Curren preserves the differences between her heroic storytelling and her personal arbitrations for entirely one-half of the fiction, a disparity that are discovered in Part one of this fiction (*Age of Iron*) in conditions of voice and story shape. Part two of this fiction (*Age of Iron*) inspects him as the pivotal figure in her salvation, who examinations the power of her confidences to nourish the starving and protection the homeless and who also pay attention to her self-assurances lacking judging her. Mrs. Curren's story argues a place and time within modern history and the racial conflict of the time literally resolves in Mrs. Curren's garden. Until the fiction's middle, Mrs. Curren pursues a reliable story model. Thus the heroic act should stand effects as impressive as the surrender itself, in this case, ending the dishonesty and altering life. She comes back to the model of heroism in the perspective of John's death. Coetzee does not classify heroism, leaving it to readers to decide how the text defines it. Cruelty is not heroism, but cruelty might make a hero or heroine, as it does when Mrs. Curren attempts to end the police force from murdering John and afterward, when Vercueil picks up Mrs. Curren from the earth where she lies beneath the public road.

Keywords: Homeless man, racial violence, salvation, Heroism, Logical and Emotion life.

"I do not want to die in the state I am in, a state of ugliness. I want to be saved. How shall I be saved? By doing what I do not want to do. That is the first step: that I know. I must love, first of all, the unlovable" (*Age of Iron* 136).

Elizabeth Curren starts her narrative by telling two incidents: a homeless man whom she depicts resting on her belongings and "the news from Dr. Syfret" that her cancer has metastasized to the bone. This mysterious opening replicates the dim minute in the South African past enclosed by the fiction the time of its writing, 1986-89. Mrs. Curren as a storyteller is sated in this current time border to present witness proof on the wounded of racial violence in the declining times to the apartheid government. The bleeding deaths of the five adolescent black rebalances in Guguletu are standing the truth, and "The killings are going on all the time,"(106) as an armed officer tells Mrs. Curren. The topic of death takes in the structure founded on white racist primacy. Really, Mrs. Curren's cancer is studied by reviewers as a symbol of the unhealthy Afrikaner declared, where there is death; though, there also is the likelihood of salvation. The Mrs. Curren faces death is also the description of how she redeems herself, the homeless Vercueil being one of the managers of her salvation. The similar story of salvation also passes throughout gloomy seconds for instance, when she agrees to her responsibility in the fault of tribal unfairness. Still the story of salvation is one of glow, not gloom, at its heart is the self-aware matter. The movement of character, which is indirect by salvation, thus is connected to Mrs. Curren's aware life, mostly her re-inspecting and analysis during her history and her cruel self-decision. My focal point in this paper is not the pathways of death prophecy in the fiction's starting part, but the pathway of salvation, a doubt until the fiction finishes. Coetzee's characters, Mrs. Curren does not simply hit this pathway. She tries to defend herself from equally the reality of death and require for salvation with her significant logical and poignant sources.

The Mrs. Curren structure of the traditional epic by attempting at a number of points to reconstruct a romanticized earth in a far remote history. My main concentration is Mrs. Curren's resolve through the first half of the fiction to follow the fictional meetings, she understands, given her logical past as a traditionalist and her Western European imaginative feels. Beginning the heroic Mrs. Curren uses, such thoughts as heroic detachment and a source of legend, and her present to The Aeneid to depict her trip to the smooths away from the rural community of Guguletu. However, it cannot maintain the anxieties of the present that haze her dream of a model globe in the past. She clutches equivalent dislike for the Afrikaner patriarchy that looks forward to describe the state reason stranded on apartheid and for radical black South Africans. Who assigns their family to be heroes?

Altman inspects, the addressee go down into two groups either friend or lover. Mrs. Curren's daughter is neither friend nor lover, and so Mrs. Curren wishes to hold back sure self-belief from her, mainly her terror of death and her self-loathing. These sincere emotions are proofed by Mrs. Curren in the shape of considerations. It is not printed to the daughter, but to herself. Mrs. Curren maintains the differences between her epic storytelling and her confidential considerations for entirely one-half of the fiction, dissimilarities that are discovered in Part one of the fiction in words of voice and story shape. When Mrs. Curren goes to the rural society of Guguletu in search of the boy Bheki and finds him dead, she re-enacts discuss between the Pre-platonic thinkers and lyricists in the Homeric ritual, a discuss over logos, worldwide fact, the

manner to describe actuality, and language itself. At this mark epic thing is set sideways, and the voice hitherto stored for her private consideration directs the second half of the fiction and the mission of salvation. Yet the narrative of salvation previously had started with Mrs. Curren's performs of generosity in the direction of Vercueil.

Part two of the fiction inspects him as the central shape in her salvation, who analysis the power of her confidences to nourish the starving and protection the homeless and who also listens to her self-assurances without judging her. His gullible posture supports Mrs. Curren's personal voice to talk, the merely voice with which she truthfully can interview herself. His significance in my understanding is not as the angel of death, but as a mediator between Mrs. Curren and her daughter and between the descriptions of the reality that Mrs. Curren tells herself, When Mrs. Curren studies that she is dying of bone cancer she sets an unfeasible work for herself, "to resist the craving to share my death" (6). She not at all tells her daughter by phone of her prediction; instead she writes a letter. The act of writing at once "resists the craving" (because she does not send any piece of the letter, though she is breathing) and gives into "the craving" as the letter will carry the nearness of her death on the Schoonder Street in Cape Town. The opposing reasons not to distribute by phone or a barter of letters and to distribute by writing a lengthy letter generate a narrative anxiety.

In Part one of the story, there is no one she can revolve to for calm, so she must describe on her logical and emotional sources to agree the reports of her cancer as "mine, for me, mine only, not to be refused" (4). Heading for writing presents her the means to sketch on those resources. The happiness of the narrative her mother's childhood trip to the sea and nightmare of death-takes the shape of a legend of source. Afterward, in the novel, Mrs. Curren repeats Vercueil of the story and pointedly depicts it in terms of an individual legend. Mrs. Curren says, "I told you a story once about my mother. ... I have held on to that story all my life. If each of us has a story we say to ourself about who we are and where we come from, then that is my story" (120). She tells Vercueil:

One of their stopping places was at the top of a mountain pass. My grandparents would spend the nights in the wagon itself while my mother and the other children had their bed underneath it. So here the story begins-my mother lay at the top of the pass in the stillness of the night, snug in her blankets with her brothers and sisters sleeping beside her, watching the stars through the spokes of the wheels. As she watched, it began to seem that the stars were moving: the stars were moving or else the wheels were moving, slowly, very slowly. She thought: What shall I do? What if the wagon is beginning to roll? Shall I call out a warning? What if I lay silent and the wagon gathers speed and rolls all the way down the mountainside with my parents inside? But what if I am imagining it all. At last she fell asleep, and her sleep was full of dreams of death. (17)

As a story of representing ideas and emotion, Mrs. Curren's mother generates her inheritance to Elizabeth. Though, the rules of legends of source power and bravery, good quality and wisdom--

give manner of depiction a child's nightmare of panic, puzzlement, and powerlessness. As a girl, the mother was paralyzed by indecision of two types. The former indecision spaces two laws of physics in competition with each other: stars emerge to irritate the nighttime sky because of the earth's turning round, and wheels rotate downward because of the power of gravity.

Bheki and John are "children of Soweto," having been toddlers in nineteen seventy six, when school children in the township outer Johannesburg objected to being trained in Afrikaans - from their point of view, the speech of the oppressors and planned community objections. The initial discuss between Mrs. Curren and Florence exemplifies the breakdown of the conversation and suggests the distinctions between their metaphorical cultures. The sight is offered as a flashback to the prior year when Florence's son Bheki connected the school refuse.

'In my day we considered education a privilege,' I said.' Parents would scrimp and save to keep their children in school. We would have thought it madness to burn a school down.' 'It is different today,' replied Florence. 'Do you approve of children burning down their schools?' cannot tell these children what to do,' said Florence. 'It is all changed today' (21).

The essential issues forceful Mrs. Curren's questions are conceptual ideas of household love and fundamental human sympathy in a perfect globe. She directs her kindness in the direction of the thought of children, in spite of race, a thought she preserves still for the unloved John. According to this thought, children require to be loved, want to be sheltered, and should be untroubled and pleased. Having shattered the idea of parents, the children, demolish not only the power that would compel maximums on the war they now pay in the streets and gardens but also the resource of love, safety, and pleasure.

In search of Bheki, Mrs. Curren narrates being quantity of its only one time and gives her journey, one of the fiction's greatest dramatized scenes lacking conversation. The passage starts as a mimetic appearance with Mrs. Curren's reminiscence of driving Florence to meet her husband William at his place of job on a Saturday. Here she sees something she never had seen before: William butchering chickens with two other black men. Though this sight happened the previous year, Mrs. Curren brightly tells her upset with details of view and echo: a "struggling body... squawking and flapping". She also expresses the physical nature of the men's task: "pounce," "swing," "grip," "twist," "pass," "hang," "drew," "cut," "toss" (41-42).

She currently to use, the manner of mimetic appearance in the earlier paragraph with a dominance of active verbs incomplete sentences, the person who reads might consider that Mrs. Curren really saw this until she uses the modal auxiliary "must" in the next paragraph. Her dream is so believable to herself that she goes from state to sureness with the episodic sentence in the present tense that ends in the story region of heading for writing, "this is how life should be." Though, her dreams of calm oppose her real knowledge at the Boucher house and rapidly are replaced by other pictures that depict the problem of white liberal South Africans. While Mrs.

Curren does not write that black South African men and women do this work, since the Boucher house is her structure of reference, the separation of work according to race is implied. The rights of race defense her from the world of work and also connect her in the apartheid structure looking out the casement, thinking and writing concerning "how life should be," then how life is, for black South Africans passes the license of race.

The extended branch of the Boucher house, William and Florence's Sunday depicts that Mrs. Curren is not numb to the results of apartheid strategy, but a life span of detachment cannot be overturned in a single anemone. When John and Bheki are hurt in a bicycle calamity intentionally caused by an Afrikaner police officer, Mrs. Curren finds out that the price of once investment herself remote is that her public voices triumph over her personal voice even when she wishes to convey her kindness.

Mrs. Curren does not desire the racial detestation used in the people at huge to divide them. She once more starts to talk to John, sketch Thucydides into the South African situation. In a New past of traditional rhetoric. George Kennedy recognizes the first feature of epideictic public speaking: "The speaker should acknowledge that his words will be inadequate to the occasion" (Kennedy. *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* 22). Mrs. Curren declares the shape by saying her words will not do fairness to the happening. Her shortened speeches stand contrast with Pericles' funeral discourse, proofed by Thucydides as a replica of such rhetoric. In his starting comments Pericles says:

Many of those who have spoken here in the past have praised the institution of this speech at the close of our ceremony. It seemed to them a mark of honor to our soldiers who have fallen in war that a speech should be made over time. I do not agree. These men have shown themselves valiant in action, and it would be enough, I think, for their glories to be proclaimed in action, as you have just seen it done at this funeral organized by the state. Our belief in the courage and manliness of so many should not be hazarded on the goodness or badness of one man's speech.... However... it is my duty to follow the tradition and do my best to meet the wishes and the expectations of every one of you. (144)

Thus Pericles places the culture of voice, his honesty in the middle of his opening. By abbreviating her language, Mrs. Curren unreservedly discards oratory and its model of culture. In Benita Parry's analysis of the novel, she examines Elizabeth Curren's language as a "failure of her own discourse to find a noun adequate to the scale, intensity and ramifications of white oppression in South Africa." The unsuccessful rhetoric thus denotes to Parry the fiction's "principal and principled concern with its own failure to find 'a word for the thing'" (Benita *Thanatophony in South Africa* 10-11).

According to Nicole Loraux. She and other intellectuals examine the speech of Pericles' discourse in the conditions of the complexity of using the word "democracy" to relate to a

structure that identify the "aristocratic ideal" (Loraux. *The Invention of Athens: The Funeral Oration in the Classical City* 172,186-187). The anxiety between language and perform similarly happens in the novel Mrs. Curren converses of "truth"; the man in the mob describes her dam for the honesty of language shift. The searches of Bheki's corpse lastly falls down the remoteness between Mrs. Curren, the present and entire her procedure of relating her learning in South Africa with one more hint to the Aeneid. This incident understands the Sibyl's caution to Aeneas: "A further thing is this: your friend's dead body--Ah, but you don't know!--lays out there unburied" (217- 219). After considering the child in death, Mrs. Curren's free not direct dialogue interprets: "I was shaking: shivers ran up and down my body, my hands trembled. I thought of the boy's open eyes. I thought: What did he see as his last sight on earth? I thought: This is the worst thing I have witnessed in my life. And I thought: Now my eyes are open and I can never close them again" (102-3). Mrs. Curren eyes "are open" not only to the visual picture of violence, but to the narrative of detestation heading for against black South Africans, a story that she recognized only in small piece and part. Nothing readies her to cross the bay between the truth, that is said by administration channels and the "truth" of her observer attendance.

The salvation story govern the second half of the fiction when Mrs. Curren discussions and writes her method throughout self-hatred, suicidal anguish, and sorrow for Bheki, then his friend John, previous to lastly creating a "full confession" to Vercueil (165). With the reminiscence of Guguletu, she must ask herself how and why racial detestation presents. She got her reply in the past, pathway a fundamental link between her lack of compassion to the results of apartheid, her mother's and grandfather's equal need of compassion to the life's of black South Africans. This examination stresses the behavior of deepness and sincerity that initially were connected with her personal voice. Dissimilar the first half of the fiction, however, when the personal voice passed symbolized idea, she now incorporates this investigation into her theatrical appearance, either in direct lecture to her daughter or in conversations with Vercueil. Yet the salvation story has been an issue not only of self-examination, confession, and reparation but of love.

The fiction that explains the terrors of racial war talks also of the opportunity of love as the means of the spirit's salvation, not after death, but here, on the "body of earth" (13). Though, Mrs. Curren discards this tag in the soul of contributions and racial tolerance, counterclaims to the regime of death in the *Age of Iron*. Another reviewer similarly identifies his possible as a savior, Derek Attridge examines Mrs. Curren's "respect for and openness to the other, which implies a readiness for self- reinterpretation of the kind Mrs. Curren goes through during the course of the novel... a difficult, unprogrammable, but absolutely necessary part of the refashioning of a society" (Attridge in "*Literary Form and the Demands of Politics*" 257). Likewise Benita Parry explains Vercueil's work as that of "ensuring that in the disgraceful state of South Africa, she will die in a state of grace" (Benita "*Thanatophony for South Africa*" 11).

Remember the symbol of iron to depict the power of reason better than the power of love between mother and child, Mrs. Curren recognizes herself and her daughter with Florence

and Bheki. Vercueil illustrates the veil end that Mrs. Curren did after her discuss with Florence: lady of iron produces a child of iron. After Vercueil blames Mrs. Curren of the alike determine at the price of emotion, her indirect dialogue "inside me, something broke interprets to direct conversation; though she does "not know how to go on," she does go on, with evidence of the spirit. Next this conversation Mrs. Curren explains in a free indirect discussion how she identifies Vercueil's function as interlocutor. She writes: "He was learning to talk to me. He was learning to lead me on. I felt an urge to interrupt: 'It is such a pleasure!' I wanted to say. After long silence it is such a pleasure: tears come to the eyes" (76). The long silence is the state of both Mrs. Curren's private existence and race affairs in South Africa. In this conversation Mrs. Curren and Vercueil shatter the quiet of generations of white South Africans whose instructions to black South Africans frequently crossways words invited no answer. However, Florence, Bheki, John, and the mob in Guguletu listen to her as an "old white woman" and at once reduce the cost of her languages. Vercueil, in contrast, does not record the equal racial injustice against Mrs. Curren: his honesty is as significant as hers in contravention the long silence.

Dishonor is state and emotion, reverse to a condition of elegance. The symbol of ashes seats humiliation of the kind of purpose knowledge along with the offense of racial detestation for which it is repaired, and thus creates it more touchable than respect. Having evaluations her offense and her reparation, Mrs. Curren next diverts how one might be saved by heroism. She thinks the idea of heroism once previous, after Bheki was murdered and she imagines an impressive self-immolation in front of an administration house. But afterward she discloses in a passage of directed text,

There was always something false about that impulse, deeply false, no matter to what rage or despair it answered. If dying in bed over weeks and months, in a purgatory of pain and shame, will not save my soul, why should I be saved from dying in two minutes in a pillar of flames? Will the lies stop because a sick old woman kills herself? Whose life will be changed, and how? (141).

Thus the heroic work should tolerate consequences as stunning as the sacrifice itself, in this case, ending the dishonesty and altering life. She comes back to the model of heroism in the perspective of John's death:

What the times call for is quite different from goodness. The times call for heroism. A word that, as I speak it, sounds foreign to my lips. I doubt that I have ever used it before, even in a lecture. Why not? Perhaps out of respect. Perhaps out of shame I would have used the word heroic status instead, I think, in a lecture (165-166).

Mrs. Curren would have written her speeches to be delivered in her public voice, which was well-behaved in the policy of estrangement. The use of phrase "heroic status" is such a plan, creating a previously conceptual idea even extra theoretical. Using the word "heroism" in this discussion, she knows they require for direct speech, not only on behalf of her listeners,

Vercueil, but also on behalf of her own consideration. Heroism involves method of acting, continued over time, not a solely perform of oppose like suicide. Heroism, in addition, is not limited to the legends, but is probably in the present. Mrs. Curren does not explain heroism, leaving it to readers to decide how the text defines it. We understand what it is not: it is not injuring boys as they do lofty Jinks on a bicycle; it is not murdering children, even if their canny weapons; it is not blazing public or burning homes.

Brutality is not heroism, but brutality might create a hero or heroine, as it does when Mrs. Curren attempts to prevent the police force from murder John and afterward, when Vercueil picks up Mrs. Curren from the earth where she lies below the main road and asks her, "Who put you here?" (160). These bodily actions are few evaluated to the nonstop questions that Mrs. Curren asks herself after Bheki's, then John's, deaths, a procedure which also needs heroism. Different her heavenly complement, Mrs. Curren is imperfect, and her heroism consists of disclosing her unconcern was at fault and committing herself to the huge scheme of understanding racial injustice and trying to recompense for her division in it before he dies. Her consideration on respect, dishonor, liberty, kindness, and heroism is a critical piece in this plan because she describes her long monologue a confession. In the context of explaining theoretical ideas, the word "confession" itself is beneath inspection. Having spoken without disturbance, Mrs. Curren finds out Vercueil is sleeping, and she surprises "how much had passed him by unheard? Is a true confession still true if it is not heard? Do you hear me, or have I put you to sleep too?" (166). By definition, a confession is the fact, but the superfluous "true confession" inquiries this definition. A true confession is a subject of prejudice; only the confessor recognizes if he or she is telling half- reality, dishonesty, or the reality.

The victory of story form is only probable owing to Mrs. Curren's inexorable self-examination; completed public in the second half of the fiction throughout her extended passages of direct speaks to to the daughter and her discussions with Vercueil. Crossing the limits of mimesis, Mrs. Curren's final sentences do not cooperation the previous staged depiction of scenes and dialogue but are consistent with it. In a story regarding the terror of the children's war with pictures that Mrs. Curren never could have expected, is it not also probable that an old white woman might prove the scene of her death? The doubtful reader will reply, No; but in my understanding, Mrs. Curren receives this moment on the power of her directed text. Her last terms also show to her willingness for death, analytic that she has made calm with her destiny. Her self-examination and her confession required sincerity; now, being truthful with herself about the whole thing, counting whom she loves, carries her evaluate of calm. Her last sign to Vercueil is one of love: she feels "his arm, his high, peaked shoulders, and the bony ridge of his spine."(173). His reaction is similarly that most person sign of love-a hug. Yet it has been deaths who hug her.

Coetzee focuses to text as his sense to discover the conditions of awareness and coma in social and historic situations unfavorable in the life of the brain. South Africa offers him a structure of location for such situations where authority has been imposed throughout injustice,

racism, and uncontrolled violence. Because the structure of apartheid in South Africa regulates to far too numerous other places, we readers who exist outer that the kingdom might see ourselves among those who either mistreatment our authority or winner rational life. This option is qualitatively unlike from those options countenanced by Coetzee's central character, which will not postpone to either location and in its places generates places between detachment posts. Whether Coetzee thinks a universal political idea, for example, imperialism in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, or a particular case such as Afrikaner patriotism and black militancy in *The Age of Iron*.

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