

Age of Iron

Overview

Chapter 1

1. Discovery and chasing away of Mr Vercueil in alley
2. Revelation of Terminal Cancer
3. Mrs Curren's explanation of Writing: Own sake > Daughter's
4. Mrs Curren's charity to Mr Vercueil
5. Mrs Curren's Job Offer
 - a. Vercueil's Rejection and Spitting
6. Mrs Curren's Collapse and Vercueil's Help
7. Mrs Curren's rejection of Vercueil's idea of a Boarding House
8. Task given to Vercueil to cut Grass
 - a. Gives up after an Hour
9. Mrs Curren's passing out and Sighting of Vercueil's Theft
10. Drive with Mr Vercueil
 - a. Mrs Curren's Sobbing
 - b. Vercueil's Indifference
11. Mrs Curren's offer to pay Vercueil for Odd jobs
 - a. Vercueil Questions if anyone Deserves anything
 - b. Mrs Curren Shoves her Purse at Vercueil
12. Mrs Curren plays Classical Music and Vercueil listens, hidden from sight
13. Neighbour asks if Mr Vercueil is a trespassing vagrant
 - a. Mrs Curren claims that Vercueil works for her
 - b. Decision to stop answering the phone
14. Mrs Curren worries about House after death
 - a. Yearns for the good old days
15. Mrs Curren criticises South Africa
16. Comment on how Bars make her feel as if she is in a Zoo

17. Mrs Curren asks if Vercueil would send papers to her daughter
18. Vercueil agrees after some Resistance

Chapter 2

1. Florence returns with Hope, Beauty and Bheki
 - a. Mentions chaos in Gugulethu
 - b. Mentions that Schools in Gugulethu have closed; Children now running around getting in Trouble
 - c. Disapproval of Vercueil's Presence
2. Vercueil plays with Hope and Beauty
3. Conversation between Florence and Mrs Curren reveals that Children are burning down schools and acting in a defiant manner
4. Mrs Curren compares her life to that of Florence and her Family
 - a. Mrs Curren recollects visiting Florence's Husband
5. Vercueil, John and Bheki's Fight
 - a. Vercueil asked for water
 - b. John pours out Vercueil's Brandy
 - c. John calls Vercueil a Dog
 - d. Vercueil Curses at John
 - e. Mrs Curren laments that John is self-important
 - f. Fight Begins
 - g. Vercueil leaves
6. Florence calls Vercueil a Rubbish person and Mrs Curren objects
7. Mrs Curren criticises Florence letting John and Bheki get away with disrespecting elders
8. Florence blames their behavior on White people > Parenting
9. Mrs Curren notices police and tells them that Bheki and John have permission to be around house
 - a. Tells Florence to send them home
 - b. Florence objects claiming that shootings are common in Gugulethu
10. Mrs Curren thinks about dead mother
11. Vercueil returns with another woman
12. Vercueil's sleeping reminds Mrs Curren of her daughter

13. Mrs Curren gets agitated about people swarming her house before her death
 - a. Makes Florence chase Vercueil's lady friend out
14. Police van chases after Bheki and John as they are Cycling
15. Boys crash into the door of a van
16. Mrs Curren stems Bleeding on John's forehead
17. Mrs Curren chides Florence for Running away
 - a. Florence claims that she does not want to deal with Police
18. Mrs Curren unable to find John at Hospital after calling
19. Mrs Curren, Florence, Bheki and Vercueil go hunting for John
20. Mrs Curren remains in the car with Vercueil due to pain
 - a. Accustomed to Vercueil's stench
 - b. Parallel to evils of South Africa
 - c. Mrs Curren considers giving herself over to the care of nurses
 - d. Vercueil recommends telling her daughter about Cancer
 - e. Discussion about daughter
21. Florence rants about Bheki being left with a room of people awaiting death
22. Mrs Curren and Vercueil go to visit John
 - a. John's indifference
 - b. Story of Thucydides
 - c. "Be slow to judge"
23. Mrs Curren and Vercueil watch TV and read books
 - a. Vercueil reveals that he worked at sea
24. Mrs Curren tries to press charges against the two policemen but she cannot because only people directly affected by an action can do so.
 - a. Bad excuse
25. Mrs Curren complains; Vercueil asks for money

Chapter 3

1. Mrs Curren brings Florence to Find Bheki
 - a. Call indicating that he was in trouble

- b. Vercueil refused to follow
 - c. Police approach car: Mrs Curren claims that she is bringing housekeeper home
- 2. Mrs Curren enters one of the houses with Hope and Beauty; Allegory
- 3. The duo meet Thabane who guides them to Gugulethu
- 4. Chaos at Gugulethu
- 5. Mrs Curren asked if she could lend a car to a “friend of Bheki’s”; Refused, insisted on leaving for home
- 6. Mr Thabane criticises Mrs Curren, asking her to consider all the people who had Gugulethu as home
 - a. Crowd gathers around duo
 - b. Mrs Curren claims that the scene is terrible but states that she needs to find a way to condemn it in her own words
 - c. People stare in disbelief
- 7. Sighting of Bheki dead alongside four other boys
 - a. Mrs Curren’s own desire for death
- 8. Mrs Curren drives home and asked an Officer if he knew what was going on
 - a. Officer claims that she should not jump to Conclusions as to who is responsible
- 9. Mrs Curren thinks about her family and starts describing a photograph of herself as a child
- 10. Mrs Curren and Vercueil drive around in Car
 - a. Find two women collecting Florence’s items when they return
 - b. Mrs Curren writes a cheque for Florence
- 11. Vercueil asks if “today is the day”; Mrs Curren plans to commit suicide but does not go through with it
- 12. Mrs Curren discusses how hard it is to decide if she should commit suicide
- 13. Mrs Curren starts talking about her mother, her thoughts on the country, and how everything she loved has passed
- 14. Vercueil encourages Mrs Curren to commit suicide
- 15. Mrs Curren and Vercueil drink and drive
- 16. Mrs Curren discusses Bheki’s death
 - a. Mrs Curren’s past perception of death as old white people dying in hospitals
 - b. Mrs Curren worries that kids these days are growing up too fast because of the terrible things they witness
 - c. Does not want get over Bheki’s death
- 17. Mrs Curren’s refusal to get drunk angers Vercueil
 - a. Takes her car keys and throws them into the bushes
 - b. Mrs Curren is unable to find keys
 - c. Mrs Curren wonders if she should have visited daughter when given opportunity

- d. Recollects last telephone call
- e. Considers trust of Vercueil to pass letter
- 18. Mrs Curren goes shopping and spills food in pain
- 19. John arrives at Mrs Curren's house, looking for Bheki
 - a. Informs him that Bheki is dead
 - b. Asks for money to return home by Bus
 - c. Mrs Curren refuses in fear of endangering John
 - d. Mrs Curren considers how she fears John
- 20. Mrs Curren thinks about the letter she's writing to her daughter. It's becoming more abstract. She had expected it to be more geared towards pulling her daughter towards her, and now it feels as if she's writing it from the stars
- 21. Mrs Curren discusses her disturbing dreams
- 22. Mrs Curren bandages John
 - a. Expresses her views on South Africa's situation
- 23. Mrs Curren notices John hiding something
- 24. Mrs Curren calls and asks Thabane to send someone for John
 - a. Claims that Bheki and John have stashed a weapon in her house
 - b. Mr Thabane's indifference
 - c. Mr Thabane pretends that the phone has a bad connection
 - d. Mr Thabane expresses support for the boys' comradeship in struggling for the same cause
- 25. Police officers arrive at Mrs Curren's house
 - a. Mrs Curren attempts to defend John
 - b. Mrs Curren is dragged out of the house; relishing screaming that she had cancer
 - i. Claims that pain is in her heart
- 26. John is killed
- 27. Mrs Curren refuses to return home, claiming that her house was not her home any longer
- 28. Mrs Curren sits under a bridge
 - a. Realises she forgot her pills but does not care about survival
- 29. Wakes up finding children trying to see if she has Gold teeth to steal
 - a. Claims that she has a contagious sickness
- 30. Vercueil arrives and carries Mrs Curren to a dark wooded space where they sleep on cardboard
 - a. Mrs Curren Realises that their relationship is stronger than what she has with her daughter

- b. Mrs Curren discusses her views on the situation in South Africa; says that she thinks that she's been a good person, but sometimes being a good person just isn't enough
- 31. Mrs Curren buys Vercueil a new Hat
- 32. Mrs. Curren tells Vercueil that she had a dream about him. In her dream, he looked totally different but she knew it was Vercueil. He was teaching her how to swim, but all of the water was turning into oil
 - a. Tells him that the first time they met was the same day she found out that she was going to die. She has been wondering maybe if he's the angel who was sent to "show [her] the way"
- 33. The duo return to trashed home
- 34. Policeman asks Mrs Curren about her relationship with John
 - a. Mrs Curren lies that the gun is hers and that she had lent it to John
 - b. Claims that they should close the case since everyone involved is dead
 - c. Claims that Vercueil is her right-hand man
 - d. Mrs Curren calls Thabane, leaving a message to be careful

Chapter 4

- 1. Mrs. Curren dreams that she is supposed to be putting on some kind of public show, but Florence doesn't pay attention to her
 - a. Florence appears as a Goddess
 - b. Mrs Curren performs tricks with fire
- 2. Vercueil brings Mrs Curren's television to her room
 - a. Republic's Anthem plays
 - b. Mrs Curren screams for Vercueil to turn the television off
 - c. Afraid of going to hell and listening to that song forever
- 3. Mrs. Curren writes about how she doesn't want to be put to sleep, but how sleep is the only break she gets from her suffering
- 4. Mrs Curren gets a new prescription after realising that she is drawing on walls
 - a. Vercueil encourages her to overdose
- 5. Mrs. Curren asks Vercueil why he chose her. He says he didn't. She asks why he came to her house, and he said that she didn't have a dog and wouldn't make trouble
- 6. Vercueil offers to strangle Mrs Curren who cries for him to stop
- 7. Mrs Curren tells Vercueil to sleep on her bed for warmth
- 8. Mrs Curren signs off with Mrs V.

9. Mrs. Curren shows Vercueil some old photographs, and he remarks that her house is like a museum
10. Vercueil helps Mrs. Curren wash her underwear
11. Vercueil asks Mrs. Curren what Latin is
 - a. She tells him that it's a dead language that she used to teach
 - b. He asks if she can teach him
 - c. She said that she could have taught him a lot if she had time
12. Mrs Curren realizes that she has no relationship with her grandchildren
13. Mrs. Curren talks about how she needs Vercueil's help, but Vercueil needs her help, too
14. Mrs Curren is strangled by Vercueil
 - a. Cannot smell him anymore

Overarching Idea

- Age of Iron explores an elderly woman's struggle upon experiencing first hand the horrors of the Apartheid System and the Backlash of Black-on-white racism that preceded it
- Told from the story of a Dying woman struggling in defining her identity in hopes of finding meaning in self-actualisation

Causes of Racism

- Environment
- Parents
- Preference of people with similar background, interests, culture and language
- Stereotyping
- Media
- Political Movements
- Finger-Pointing
- Ideological Encouragement

Cyclical Nature of Racism

- White-on-Black → Black-on-White
- Parents → Children

- Lack of Interaction → Segregation → Racism → Lack of Contact

Allegories

1. Mrs Curren's Body // Decaying political health of South Africa
2. Parent-Child Relationships: Country's Relationship with its successors
 - a. Bheki and John
3. Love of Unclean Vercueil and Florence
 - a. Violation of Racial Expectations
 - b. Arbitrariness of the divisions of the self and other
4. Gugulethu // Hell
 - a. Christian Salvation: Lost soul saved by learning to love the unclean and unl of lovable other
5. Iron/Blood/Decay/Fire/Doll/Crab

Key Ideas

- Age of Iron depicts the self which is made aware of its mortality and temporality due to its physical weakness, which pushes it to assert its values to achieve some form of eternal persistence in its culture
- The self seeks transcendence in altruistically seeking the good of the other
 - Most stark in how Mrs Curren defines herself as a mother
 - The mind's individuality erodes as it grows increasingly defined by the other in seeking eternal persistence
- However, the self is entrapped under self-imposed societal judgement as the validity of its virtues are questioned and it grows increasingly alienated from society
 - Mrs Curren's fear of complicity in Racism vs Desire to uphold the morals of her times & Condemn the violence at Gugulethu
 - Wisdom as a mother and University Professor; roles that she plays is called into question
 - Efficacy challenged as the self struggles to shift the heavy expectations of society
- Ultimately the self finds comfort in the soundness of its virtues in its shame that implies self-awareness
- The self seeks to Transcend Death through writing
 - The self's morality and perspective is preserved in writing that bridges the gap between self and society
 - A different kind of motherhood: The passing on of the self's perspective
- The racial aspects of the self's personal voice is diminished into the abstract-- a martyr speaking beyond the dead

- Demonstrates a commitment to truthful self-expression without selfish ulterior motives or the expectation of any response
- The self submits to the other: Demonstrates the need to grow in reliance on the other in order to define self by cooperation rather than power and demonstrate an irrational faith > racism-- love of the unlovable other
 - The need to grow in reliance on the other in order to define self by cooperation rather than power

Guiding Questions

1. Effect on the Self: Definition → Perception → Representation
2. PORN: Nature, Role, Process, Outcome
3. Type → Process → Outcome
 - a. Process: Problems in the process? Worsening/Vicious Cycle?
4. Are there any Binaries?
5. What Personal Adjectives can we include?
 - Puns
 - Curren → Current
 - Black-and-White
 - Race

Themes

Key Questions:

- What is the process of/experience of X as featured in the text?
- What is the effect of X on Mrs Curren's identity/perception of self/state of mind?

Points/Incidents/Quotes	Techniques + Effect	Significance
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Theme: The Mind & Self <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identity ○ Self-Perception ○ State of Mind ● Plot / Character / Memorability / Reader

Aging/Sickness/Mind-Body Connection

Aging: The process of Growing Older

- Increase in Maturity
- Consideration of Death
 - Forces one to seek value in life
- Degradation of Physical Body
- Separation from Society and Youth
 - Ideas grow Outdated considering the Context
 - Creates Doubt of one's Efficacy
- Inevitable Nature

Possible Points

- Creates Uncertainty
- Creates Fear
- Deteriorates one's state of mind by stripping away one's competency until their body is rendered useless
- Sick and Weak → Expect Pity

TYPE: Debilitating due to self-pity of inefficacy

Sickness is presented to be **debilitating** to the self as it creates a sense of **self-pity** due to its **perceived inefficacy** which leads to a **turbulent state of mind**

Her physical sickness heightens her perception of inefficacy of the self, further showing the self's reliance on physicality to define its identity and worth in relation to society.	sickness → self-pity as the self is defined by inefficacy (marginalisation) → turbulence →	Coetzee shows that the self is heavily anchored on the physicalities of concrete and material experiences
Mrs Curren screaming that she has cancer as she is dragged out of her house		

PROCESS: Paradigm shift in Self Reinterpretation

Sickness is portrayed to be a **paradigm shift** in self-definition as the self undergoes a process of **renewal** and **reinterpretation** of what its identity is defined by beyond its physicalities to find a definition that is more sustainable

Definition of Self by biological motherhood →
Definition of self by love and care in motherhood

“To be full enough to give and to give from one’s fullness”

“For the same reason I gave you my breast”

Description of bloodlessness when tending to bleeding boys

Epanalepsis → interconnectivity and intuitiveness

OUTCOME: Desire for Transcendence in Writing

Vercueil spitting out her coffee

Doubt of her Role as a mother due to John

“It is my thoughts that you think, my despair that you feel” (p103)

“Through me alone do you find yourself here on these desolate flats”

“It would be easier for you...if the story came from someone else...attend to the writing not to me...even this adjuration, with a cold eye”

Imagery + Self-Reflexivity → Subverts expectations and causes readers to be conscious that imagery comes from Mrs Curren’s perspective

Use of writing post-mortem/as a suicidal and dying person to assert her truth, without the possibility of selfish ulterior motives

TYPE: Greater Concern for the Other

The dreadful nature of sickness and ageing is presented to kindle a growing concern for the other rather than the self, as the self becomes desperate to make the best of its last dregs of life

Limitation: Lack of Reciprocity devalues Altruism and thus Meaning

- Daughter would be unaware of pain until death
- Vercueil spit out her Coffee

“to resist the craving to share my death...Loving you, loving life...to embrace death as my own, mine alone” (p6)

“How I longed for you!”

“My daughter will not come back until things have changed here. She has made a vow.”

Hid the truth of her cancer from her daughter to spare her from worry and the dilemma of whether she should break vow and return to the apartheid-struck land she hated

- Values comfort of Daughter over receiving Daughter’s love and comfort

Anaphora in repetition of “to” highlights how there is an important action or “task” at hand highlights the admirable sense of responsibility she feels to selflessly keep her pain from her daughter

Pain of Dying is embraced as part of Mrs Curren’s Identity

Motivated to define self through Altruism in preventing others from suffering pain to cope via the comfort that she had led a meaningful and moral life

Gave food to Vercueil to as “out of their withered bodies even the old try to squeeze one last drop” (p7-8)

Desire to have a positive impact on the lives of others given the finitude of her life

Imagery draws parallels between Physical draining with age and the Moral effort to spread kindness highlights how the latter naturally motivates the former

Pain reveals temporary nature of life

- Motivates Mrs Curren to define her self as an Altruistic person which creates a sense of responsibility and thus meaning in her life

“I am just a shell, as you can see, the shell my child has left behind” (p76)

TYPE: Uncontrollable Physical State → Desire for self-actualisation

The saddening and disruptive nature of Mrs Curren’s sickness highlights how her body; the physical aspect of herself; was ungovernable. This incites a desire for control in leading a meaningful life by fully actualising her self, hence causing Mrs Curren to define herself as a person who lives life to the fullest.

- Encourages self-definition through other means: Mother

Criticises Vercueil for Laziness after revelation of Cancer “You are wasting your life” “Something in me revolts at the lassitude, the letting go, the welcoming of dissolution” (p8)	Reveals insecurity that her struggle to make herself significant in her dying was worthless <ul style="list-style-type: none">• And she was better off living carelessly like Mr Vercueil Emphatic Diction reveals desire to lead a purposeful life was integral to identity	Death creates a reveals one’s helplessness in controlling the physical aspect of themselves Mrs Curren reacts by creating the ideal that she should realise the potential of her life fully and incorporating this characteristic as part of her Identity
“To do with a life that isn’t worth much anymore. I am trying to work out what I can get for it” “An old woman sets herself on fire, for instance. Why?”		

PROCESS: Assertion of the Values that define the Self

The process of ageing throws the self into **desperation** as it catalyses a **deeper urge for control and agency** in **asserting the moral principles** that define oneself

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PROCESS: Ageing → Alienation

The process of ageing is presented to alienate the self from society as the values and expectations it formed in its past of white privilege have become Irrelevant and Incongruent to the current state of affairs, throwing the self into despair at its inefficacy

- Can combine with Process above to show that the assertion of values is a struggle

<p>“Children cannot grow up without mothers or fathers”</p> <p>“They are like iron, we are proud of them”</p> <p>“Where is my heart in all of this?...a time out of time”</p> <p>Expressed in her reversion to child-like behavior p109</p> <p>Realises severity of Apartheid when Police chase Bheki and John</p>	<p>Raised in a Culture with concerned and involved Mothers and Fathers ≠ Current lack of involvement by Parents and Independent Children</p> <p>Unable to Comprehend Florence’s pride in the hardening of Children as she lacked a direct experience of the rampant racism and oppression between black and white South Africans that explained Iron-like nature of Children</p>	<p>Mrs Curren’s beliefs that were built in a time of peace and security aged alongside her</p> <p>Irrelevance to Current Affairs creates doubt as to whether she is Justified in Criticising the state of South Africa and acting upon those Criticisms</p> <p>Cast doubt about the value of her opinions in the current moral paradigm</p>
<p>Description of Cancer as a Child</p> <p>“The sickness that now eats at me is dry, bloodless, slow and cold, sent by Saturn”</p> <p>“Children inside me eating more every day, not growing but bloating, toothed, clawed, forever cold and ravenous” (p64)</p>		
<p><u>OUTCOME: Ageing → Death</u></p> <p>The dreadful process of ageing ultimately causes the self to crave relief through death as a form of self-annihilation, in order to sacrifice the self as an outward rejection of the apartheid regime and its rulers and atone for its complicity as a White South African</p>		

Shame/Guilt

- Complicitness in Racial Segregation due to Skin
 - *Seems to be Racial Segregation applied to itself*

Possible Points

- Shame for the state of affairs causes one to reconsider their principles and beliefs to accommodate the moral paradigm shift
- Defines the self as it finds moral grounding in shame

TYPE: Shame is inescapable due to Complicit Racism

The tragic experience of shame is presented to be inescapable for the self, as it arises from the definition of the self by her racial identity which renders it complicit in the atrocities committed by her race

Feel complicit when the boys are bleeding after being chased by the police

TYPE: Shame is Inescapable due to Pervasive Political Wretchedness

Shame towards the political situation is presented to throw the self into inescapable despair as the self's expectations of authority clash with the reality of a broken system subjugated under incompetent white rulers, which the self is helpless to change

"You won't let me lay a charge because you say that I am not affected. But I am affected, very directly affected"

"I made such a fool of myself" on "the edge of tears"

"Perhaps shame is nothing more than the way I feel all the time" (After Police, Page 86)

Challenge to her faith in Authorities reveals an incongruity between beliefs and current affairs

The collapse in Mrs Curren's faith in Authority creates self doubt in the relevance of her beliefs

PROCESS: Downward Spiral of Self doubt '.' Hypocrisy

The conflict between the self's racial and cultural identity and her moral principles causes the process of shame to be a downward spiral into self-doubt, as the self recedes and fears to express its values in fear of Hypocrisy and Dishonesty

“There are many things I am sure I could say...but then they must truly come from me”

“I felt like crying; but here, beside Florence, what right had I? “It lives inside me and I live inside it” (p103)

- Interweaving of the epistolary form and direct speech —> Draws attention to the distinctness of the writer
 - Fluidity of I’m talking to someone and I’m talking to you

“They are to be condemned. But I cannot denounce them in other people’s words. I must find my own words, from myself

Clash between her racial and cultural identity as a white person and moral identity as a person opposed to racism

- Leading her to be afraid of expressing her opposition to racism in Gugulethu in fear of
- Hypocrisy and Dishonesty in self-expression

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Doubt of Identity as a Loving Mother when she cannot Love John

“A state of ugliness...How shall I be saved...I must loved, first of all, the unlovable”

“I cannot find it in my heart to love, to want to love, to want to want to love”

“How true can I say is my love for you? The more I love you, the more I ought to love him”

Repetition

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OUTCOME: Shame → Suicide as Atonement
The self's shame in its identity as a White South African under White Oppression pushes the self to seek atonement through suicide and self-annihilation as a statement against the White political powers

<p>“Let me hurry and put an end to it, to this worthless life”</p> <p>“I want to rage against the men who have created these times...accuse them of spoiling my life in the way that a rat or a cockroach spoils food...simply by walking over it and sniffing it and performing its bodily functions on it”</p> <p>“But why should I accept that my life would have been worthless no matter who held power in this land? Power is power...it invades one’s life” (p116)</p>	<p>Symbolism</p> <p>Metaphor</p>	
<p>Pg 119: Finds solace in her shame that she still has a moral grounding</p>		

Denial/Escape and Inescapability/Acceptance and Rejection

Possible Points

- Change of Cultural Context + Stagnation of the Self

TYPE: Denial = Calming through other Definitions
Initially, denial is presented to provide solace and escape for the self from the horrors of post-Apartheid Africa, as the self finds efficacy in asserting its values and identities and denying its complicity as a White South African

- Calms state of mind
- Protects one’s sense of self

<p>Self's definition as loving Mother calms her state of mind</p> <p>"I have seen her safely to a new life...that thought is the pillar I cling to when the storms hit me" (p72)</p> <p>Vivid description of Mundane affairs in Daughter's Life</p> <p>"I may long for her but I don't want her here" (p74)</p>	<p>Vivid description exemplifies Mrs Curren's joy in Daughter's safety</p>	<p>Hiding of Cancer → For sake of Daughter's happiness → Defines herself as such to find solace</p>
<p>When advised to start a boarding house → Asserts values through lies</p> <p>"The spirit of charity has perished in this country"</p> <p>"I wish you would learn something... a lie: charity, caritas...what does it matter if my sermons rest on false etymologies" (p22)</p>	<p>Self-Reflexivity on the unreliability of language and its use to assert power</p>	
<p>Assertion of Values as a Denial of Powerlessness in the Self's Political Situation</p>		
<p><u>PROCESS: Calm Diminishes</u></p> <p>However, the calming effect of denial on the self is depicted to diminish over time as the self gradually learns that its ideals are irrelevant and incongruent with the harsh reality, throwing the self into <u>despair</u> as it is stuck in an inescapable shame</p>		
<p>"Children cannot grow up without mothers or fathers"</p> <p>"They are like iron, we are proud of them"</p>	<p>Raised in a Culture with concerned and involved Mothers and Fathers ≠ Current lack of involvement by Parents and Independent Children</p>	<p>Mrs Curren's beliefs that were built in a time of peace and security aged alongside her</p> <p>Irrelevance to Current Affairs creates doubt as to whether she is Justified in Criticising the state of</p>

<p>“Where is my heart in all of this?...a time out of time”</p> <p>Expressed in her reversion to child-like behavior p109</p>	<p>Unable to Comprehend Florence’s pride in the hardening of Children as she lacked a direct experience of the rampant racism and oppression between black and white South Africans that explained Iron-like nature of Children</p>	<p>South Africa and acting upon those Criticisms</p> <p>Cast doubt about the value of her opinions in the current moral paradigm</p>
<p><u>OUTCOME: Acceptance + Denial in Death</u></p> <p>Coetzee unites the binaries of acceptance and denial through death, through which the self rejects the cultural aspects of its white identity whilst embracing and expressing its values and perspective on reality through writing</p>		
<p>“Let me hurry and put an end to it, to this worthless life”</p> <p>“I want to rage against the men who have created these times...accuse them of spoiling my life in the way that a rat or a cockroach spoils food...simply by walking over it and sniffing it and performing its bodily functions on it”</p> <p>“But why should I accept that my life would have been worthless no matter who held power in this land. Power is power...it invades one’s life” (p116-117)</p> <p>Written by a suicidal person: Removes all possibility of selfish ulterior motives whilst allowing Mrs Curren to express and preserve her true self</p>	<p>Symbolism</p> <p>Metaphor</p>	

Power/Race/Politics/Violence/Injustice

- Book Discusses the Reparation of Self after the Apartheid
- Black: Retributive Violence
- White:
 - Police Brutality
 - Complicit Participation by Ethnicity
 - Personal Responsibility
- Does one have control over his own identity? Or is it socially constructed?
- Are there points where the universality of the human condition > race is shown?
- Power Relation: The Oppressor and the Oppressed
 - Stereotypes
 - Authority
 - Faith & Distrust in Systems and Institutions
 - "Power is power...invades one's life"
 - Cockroach
 - Roles and Responsibilities
 - Issues with self-definition given collective conditions in flux
 - Perception of others of the self's power
- Definition of the Self as Oppressor/Oppressed/Complicit
- Distrust and Denial of Society

Possible Points

- Power brings Complicit Responsibility: Causes the mind to lose control over the self
- The self is defined in a hierarchy in terms of its separation from the other in terms of power
- TYPE: The self that is pressured by the truth of its powerlessness under the rule of incompetent leaders is thrown into horror at the state of affairs
 - Binary of Expectations and Reality
- Process: The self that is oppressed under the incompetence of political powers undergoes a downward spiral into despair and the gradual acceptance of their outrageous behavior as commonplace, which numbs the self's horror over time
- Outcome: The self subjugated under the incompetence of power ultimately craves self-annihilation through suicide to demonstrate its defiance to its white racial heritage and find liberation from its complicit guilt as a white South African

TYPE: Unexpected elevation

Power is portrayed to unexpectedly and insidiously elevate the self's pride, as the self is unconsciously defined by power from its white heritage which makes it distinct above the other, causing her to believe that she has superior ideals and standards

PROCESS: Morphs into Guilt

The effect of power in elevating the self gradually diminishes as the self is faced with the harsh reality of South Africa, and her White privilege gradually morphs into oppressive guilt as she feels complicit in the atrocities committed by the white political leaders

“Children cannot grow up without mothers or fathers”

“They are like iron, we are proud of them”

“Where is my heart in all of this?...a time out of time”

Expressed in her reversion to child-like behavior p109

Comparison of John and Bheki's Accident // Daughter's accident “What did our timid thimbleful count for beside this torrent of black blood” (p63)

“What times these are when to be a good person is not enough”

Raised in a Culture with concerned and involved Mothers and Fathers ≠ Current lack of involvement by Parents and Independent Children

Unable to Comprehend Florence's pride in the hardening of Children as she lacked a direct experience of the rampant racism and oppression between black and white South Africans that explained Iron-like nature of Children

Mrs Curren's beliefs that were built in a time of peace and security aged alongside her

Irrelevance to Current Affairs creates doubt as to whether she is Justified in Criticising the state of South Africa and acting upon those Criticisms

Cast doubt about the value of her opinions in the current moral paradigm

Difficulty in loving John

OUTCOME: Death The pervasive inescapable guilt created by the self's complicity in the atrocities committed by those in power causes the self to seek death in order to revoke her cultural identity and make a statement against said authorities		
Mrs Curren's disgust toward the Manipulation of people in Power and how they Ruined South Africa causes her to forcefully reject her cultural identity as a South African and Disrupts her state of Mind		
Symbol of the Television "There are men behind the pictures. They send out pictures to make people sick" <i>"Switch it off!"</i> "Because I am afraid of going to hell and having to listen to <i>Die stem</i> for all eternity"	Manipulation of politicians through television creates a sense of spite towards them Irony in how she considers listening to national anthem as Eternal Damnation mocks the song and highlights that she feels that South Africa is far from worthy of celebration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Going to Hell: Reminds her of complicity in Racism 	Mrs Curren's emphatic disgust towards the corrupt and deceptive nature of South African leaders as seen in her infuriated response towards the the South African anthem and the television creates Shame in being South African thus causing her to reject her Cultural Identity as South African
Mrs Curren's disappointment in how the authorities causes her to realise the dissonance between her beliefs and the current state of affairs, creating self-doubt concerning her efficacy, thus changing her perception of herself		
"You won't let me lay a charge because you say that I am not directly affected. But I am affected, very directly affected" "I made such a fool of myself" on "the edge of tears"	Challenge to her faith in Authorities reveals an incongruity between beliefs and current affairs	The collapse in Mrs Curren's faith in Authority creates self doubt in the relevance of her beliefs
Mrs Curren's shame towards the pervasive wretchedness of the Authorities in South Africa that made her feel complicit in the Apartheid causes her to struggle for any shred of control over her sense of self, thus motivating her to commit suicide and end her life to prevent further shame from her identity as a White South African		

<p>“Let me hurry and put an end to it, to this worthless life”</p> <p>“I want to rage against the men who have created these times...accuse them of spoiling my life in the way that a rat or a cockroach spoils food...simply by walking over it and sniffing it and performing its bodily functions on it”</p> <p>“But why should I accept that my life would have been worthless no matter who held power in this land. Power is power...it invades one’s life”</p>	<p>Symbolism</p> <p>Metaphor</p>	
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Truth

- Mrs Curren’s hiding of Cancer

Possible Points

- Presented as Harsh and Unforgiving, creates a sense of Responsibility in Mrs Curren to resolve issues of South Africa
- Jarring as Mrs Curren realises that her opinions formed by her past experiences are growing irrelevant as she ages and society is shaped by harsh conditions, creates sense of Alienation
- Reality of the inevitability of Death
 - Forces change in identity beyond physical body
- Writing

TYPE: Truth is subjective to the Self

Truth is portrayed to be subjective to the self, as the self’s perception of what ideals and morals are true is portrayed to be heavily influenced by its upbringing under white privilege

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PROCESS: Truth is harsh → Self-Doubt

However, some perceptions of truth are portrayed to be more objective than others, causing the truth to be harsh and unforgiving. The self is ultimately thrown into a downward spiral of self-doubt when it realises that it's supposedly true ideals are incompatible with the current society, causing the self to recede and fear to express its values in fear of Hypocrisy and Dishonesty

“Children cannot grow up without mothers or fathers” “They are like iron, we are proud of them” “Where is my heart in all of this?...a time out of time” Expressed in her reversion to child-like behavior p109	Raised in a Culture with concerned and involved Mothers and Fathers ≠ Current lack of involvement by Parents and Independent Children Unable to Comprehend Florence’s pride in the hardening of Children as she lacked a direct experience of the rampant racism and oppression between black and white South Africans that explained Iron-like nature of Children	Mrs Curren’s beliefs that were built in a time of peace and security aged alongside her Irrelevance to Current Affairs creates doubt as to whether she is Justified in Criticising the state of South Africa and acting upon those Criticisms Cast doubt about the value of her opinions in the current moral paradigm

OUTCOME: Truth in writing

Ultimately, the self is able to reconcile its perspectives and values with a more objective conceptualisation of truth through writing post-mortem, as it demonstrates a commitment to truthful self-expression without selfish ulterior motives or the expectation of any response

In age of Iron, Mrs Curren’s perceived Truth about Right and Wrong is depicted to be subjective to her Upbringing, and the clash of ideals with different upbringings and changes in society cause her to doubt her efficacy, changing her perception of herself		
“Children cannot grow up without mothers or fathers” “They are like iron, we are proud of them”	Raised in a Culture with concerned and involved Mothers and Fathers ≠ Current lack of involvement by Parents and Independent Children Unable to Comprehend Florence’s pride in the hardening of Children as she lacked a direct	Mrs Curren’s beliefs that were built in a time of peace and security are incompatible with the current times and Florence’s upbringing Irrelevance to Current Affairs creates doubt as to whether she is Justified in Criticising the state of

<p>“Where is my heart in all of this?...a time out of time”</p>	<p>experience of the rampant racism and oppression between black and white South Africans that explained Iron-like nature of Children</p>	<p>South Africa and acting upon those Criticisms</p> <p>Cast doubt about the value of her opinions in the current moral paradigm</p>
<p>In Age of Iron, the melancholic Truth of Mrs Curren’s Cancer is portrayed as something incredibly hurtful which she had to embrace herself to keep her daughter from worry and pain, thus motivating her to define herself as an <u>altruistic person</u> to alleviate the heartrending pain of suffering in silence.</p>		
<p>“to resist the craving to share my death...Loving you, loving life...to embrace death as my own, mine alone”</p> <p>“My daughter will not come back until things have changed here. She has made a vow.”</p> <p>“On the telephone, love but not truth”</p> <p>“After the dying? Never fear, I will not haunt you...The moth is simply what will brush your cheek ever so lightly”</p>	<p>Hid the truth of her cancer from her daughter to spare her from worry and the dilemma of whether she should break vow and return to the apartheid-struck land she hated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Values comfort of Daughter over receiving Daughter’s love and comfort <p>Anaphora in repetition of “to” highlights how there is an important action or “task” at hand highlights the admirable sense of responsibility she feels to selflessly keep her pain from her daughter</p> <p>The use of epistolary form vividly elucidates Mrs Curren attempting to console her daughter and render her death as painless for her daughter as possible</p>	<p>Pain of Dying is embraced as part of Mrs Curren’s Identity</p> <p>Motivated to define self through Altruism in preventing others from suffering pain to cope via the comfort that she had led a meaningful and moral life</p>
<p>Truth is believed to be something that must arise from earnesty and honesty, thus Mrs Curren’s definition of herself through truth makes her unable to express her opposition to racism as it causes a clash between her racial and cultural identity as a white person and moral identity as anti-racist, therefore causing her to fear expressing her criticism of Racism in fear of Hypocrisy and Dishonesty</p>		
<p>“There are many things I am sure I could say...but then they must truly come from me”</p>	<p>Clash between her racial and cultural identity as a white person and moral identity as a person opposed to racism</p>	<p>-</p>

“They are to be condemned. But I cannot denounce them in other people’s words. I must find my own words, from myself	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leading her to be afraid of expressing her opposition to racism in Gugulethu in fear of• Hypocrisy and Dishonesty in self-expression	
Mrs Curren is shown to believe that true love is a characteristic that is earnest and without judgment or partiality. However, her inability to cater to the demands of her shame causes her to doubt her identity as a moral and loving mother.		
“A state of ugliness...How shall I be saved...I must loved, first of all, the unlovable” “I cannot find it in my heart to lover, to want to love, to want to want to love” “How true can I say is my lover for you? The more I love you, the more I ought to love him”	Repetition	-
Truth is depicted to be subjective and dependent on society for its weight, thus causing Mrs Curren to doubt her efficacy given how alienated she feels from the said society, thus changing her perception of herself		
“I was entitled to my opinions...I did not change his mind” “To have opinions in a vacuum, opinions which touch no one, is, it seems to me, nothing” “Opinions must be heard by others, heard and weighed” “Vercueil got up, went behind a tree, urinated” (p163)	Metaphor “It seems to me”: Now extremely wary of Opinion Anticlimax: Passionately expressed opinion disregarded	-

Relationships

- Mother-Daughter
- Neighbour
- Master-Servant
- Caretaker-Charge
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Power Relations: Oppressor, Oppressed, Complicit

Possible Points

- Mother-Daughter: Defines self as mother for comfort that even though she has not lived her life successfully, she has made it possible that another can live a peaceful and meaningful life
 - BUT: Altruistic Nature of Relationship is emotionally exhausting

TYPE: Empowering

Maternal relationships are portrayed to be empowering for the dying self, as the self finds meaning in caring for the other in the form of her daughter as it finds self-worth in defining itself as a loving mother

Process: Diminishes and Morphs

However, the dignity gained from the mother-daughter relationship is portrayed to diminish over time and morphs to torment the self, as the self's definition of herself as a mother is challenged by circumstances

Mrs Curren's description of bloodlessness (p64)

Motif that represents her distance from her daughter

Outcome: Selflessness of Post-Mortem Writing

Ultimately, the self uses its maternal love past death as a demonstration of its selfless love for South Africa in its writing, as writing post-mortem without expectation of response reflects an altruistic desire to express one's perspective

Writing

- First Person Epistolary Form: Addressed to Daughter but available to readers
 - Perspective of White Female Intellectual
- Metafictional: Self-Aware that it is written from a perspective
 - Separation: Reading
- In Defiance of Death: The last Words of a dying woman with nothing left to strive for
- As a tool of self-definition

“I write about x, I write about myself”

“Truth and love together at last”

“Soul of me that will be left with you” (p129)

“Body of truth will never take on flesh” (p130)

- Truth is reliant on the perception of others of the self’s writing
- Language as the thing that stops death