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Fictionalization of South African Apartheid History in J.M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron*

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Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Binod Prasad Upadhyaya has completed his thesis entitled "Fictionalization of South African Apartheid History in J.M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron*" under my supervision. He carried out his research from September 2017 to February 2018. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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Approval Letter

This thesis entitled “Fictionalization of South African Apartheid History in J.M. Coetzee’s *Age of Iron*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Mr. Binod Prasad Upadhyaya has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

The research entitled “Fictionalization of South African Apartheid History in John Maxwell Coetzee’s (1940)Age of Iron” (1990) examines how Coetzee’s novel fictionalizes South African Apartheid history during the late 1980s and analyzes the politics of Coetzee behind the narration of South African history. Coetzee’s novel fictionalizes South African Apartheid history as an alternative history. South Africa (1980s) depicts as an age of iron where apartheid holds the country in a tight grip and the media are controlled by the Afrikaner government to keep the people ignorant. MrsCurren, narrator refers to South Africa as the hell on the earth and tells her daughter this story to learn about the contemporary situation of South Africa. The research applies new historicism as a literary theory to examine Coetzee’s novel. It based on John Brannigan’s book of New Historicism and Cultural Materialism in which he argues that new historicism as a mode of literary studies in exploring the relationship between literature and history, and in demonstrating the ideological and political interest operating through literary texts. Furthermore, it depends on Peter Barren’s book of Beginning Theory: An Introduction of Literary and Cultural Theory in which he argues that new historicism is a method of parallel reading of literary and non-literary text with in its certain context and historical period. In short, by narrating the reality of South African Apartheid history, Coetzee attempts to build the identity of blacks and helps to establish peace as well as harmony between whites, colored and blacks.

Keywords: New historicism, Truth, Textualization, Fictionalization, History, Africa.

Fictionalization of South African Apartheid History in J.M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron*

This research work based on John Maxwell Coetzee's *Age of Iron* (1990) as a story of apartheid in South Africa. In particular, it tries to see apartheid South African history in the form of fiction. In his novel, Coetzee presents the details of the fictional city, Cape Town, in fact the history of South African. Through the different events and characters, it will specify on the new historicism as a theoretical modality to study *Age of Iron* and show how and why the writer has used such historical technique to elaborate on the situation. Fictionalization of history means the presentation of actual historical figures and events alongside fictitious characters and events. Narrating the history of South Africa, Coetzee foregrounds the suffering of the marginalized people whom were being ignored by the official history of South Africa. He also represents apartheid as a racial segregation lunched by National Party whom brought many Acts to restricted blacks, colors and Asian and treated them as a savage, uncivilized, barbaric and rude.

As a story of South Afrikaner, *Age of Iron* raises the issues of sufferings and difficulties faced by blacks, colors and Asian during Apartheid period. The novel has four parts in which the first part unfolds the story bringing the first person narrator, Mrs Curren coming to term of her knowledge that her cancer incurable and the same day, a homeless man, Mr Vercueil starts camping out on her house. She takes him and permits to live at her house as her supporter. The second part deals with the episode of the return of Florence, Mrs Curren's housekeeper, and her children into her house. Bheki and his friend, John drive Vercueil away by beating him. Mrs Curren realizes that the police are watching her house. The police hit them while they were cycling when John is seriously injured and taken to Wookstock hospital but Bheki's injury is

minor. Likewise Schools are closed in Gugulethu. The third part contains the climax of the story. Death of Bheki in Gugulethu and John at Mrs Curren's home is crucial moments of the story. Then next day, the police raid Curren's house and killed John. John's murder took place in her home and she feels huge sense of violation. The last part includes suspense and conclusion of the episode in her letter to her daughter. Curren leaves her home and fall asleep under a bridge. Vercueil takes Curren to her home and her health continues to decline. Vercueil gets in bed with her and hold her in cold embrace so as to release her from her respiration process.

Coetzee's novel depicts the result of apartheid that had restricted more people in South Africa. Apartheid was a racial segregation institutionalized with the arrival of National Party in government in South Africa in 1948. It based on a particular historical moment of South Africa when he began to write it in 1986, after the declaration of a State of Emergency in South Africa in 1985 and finished in 1989, before the abolishes of Apartheid in 1994. He presents his protagonist as the victim of racism and political instability of South Africa. Moreover, her daughter shifts to America from South Africa, Florence and her children are also shift from Gugulethu to Cape Town because of violence circumstance.

In South Africa, different policies implement by the White government to segregate mostly the colors, blacks and Asian population. Prohibition of Mixed Marriage Act, 1949 prohibited marriage between non-whites and whites; black people had to enter public buildings through the back door; they had to take different buses to go to different building and they were not allowed to own land or property. In 1950, the population Registration Act was passed and all South Africans were racially classified into three categories: white, black (African) and colored (mixed of Asians and Indians). Similarly, in 1951, the Bantu Authorities Act established a basis for

ethnic government in African reserves, known as 'homeland'. These homelands were independent states for blacks. All political rights, including voting, held by white and blacks were restricted in designated homeland. In this way, in 1953 the Public Safety Act and the Criminal Law Amendment Act was passed which empowered the government to declare stringent states of emergency and increased penalties for protesting against or supporting the repeal of a law. The penalties included fines, imprisonment and whipping. In 1960, a large group of blacks in Sharpeville refused to carry their passes. To hold the Public Safety Act and the Criminal Law Amendment Act, the white regime had no intention of changing the unjust laws of apartheid. Whites always wanted to kept supremacy upon blacks. In short, in the 1940s, the Afrikaner government introduced the apartheid system that brought total segregation between black, colors and white people. Blacks are segregated in education, medical care, public serves and other opportunities. Many rights applied to white people did not hold for black people. Black people were not allowed into white areas i.e. city centers, they could be rejected for jobs at all occasions and they could only take the bus especially for black people. White people were oppressors and black people were oppressed. But all white people were not agreeing with this system.

Different Acts discriminate people in South Africa such as Population Registration Act classified people in three different categories i.e. Native, White and colored groups which was launched by National party in 1950. As Margaret Robert, critic argues that "The population Registration Act of 1950 required every person in South Africa to be classified and registered as belonging to a particular group. There were a broad classification into Native, White and colored groups" (Robert 54). This act brought racial classification of people in different categories such as native, white and colored. Likewise, there was also discrimination in legislation in which White can

only vote for member of the House of Assembly, colored can merely vote for House of Representation, Asian can only vote for the House of Delegates and black can merely vote for their homeland. Robert remarks:

Under existing legislation those classified as white can vote for members of the House of Assembly, those as colored for the House of Representatives and those classified as Asian for the House of Delegates. Those classified as Black can vote only for officials in their black townships or their so-called homeland. (Robert 55)

Each group had different right for vote such as white can vote for House of Assembly, Colored can vote for House of Representative, Asian can vote for House of Delegates and black can vote for Homeland. Thus there was discrimination in legislation process. Nationalist party passed many Acts to discriminate blacks, colors and Asian during apartheid period. The Immorality and Group Areas Act promoted the placement of blacks and white. Further, Amenities Act enforced segregation in the use of public facilities and Bantu Education Act separated school and curriculum. K. Hartshorne argues that Nationalist party passed a series of laws that prohibit of mixed marriage; the immorality Act and the Group Areas Act of 1950 that promoted the placement of blacks and whites in separate residential areas; the Reservation of separate Amenities Act of 1953 that enforced segregation in the use of public facilities such as transport, cinema, restaurant and sports facilities and Bantu Education Act of 1953 separate school and curriculum on the basis of race and the abolition of missionary school (206). There was restriction in inter-race marriage. Likewise the Immorality and Group Area Act promoted the placement of blacks and whites in separated residential areas as well as Amenities Act enforced segregation in the use of public facilities. And Bantu Education Act separated school and curriculum on the

basis of race. Therefore, these acts brought discrimination in marriage system, placement of blacks and whites in separate areas, segregation in public facilities and school as well as curriculum. Bantu Education was based on Afrikaner Nationalist ideologies which mainly focus on the dominance of white. According to Y. Zungu, Bantu Education was based on the Afrikaner Nationalism ideology whose intention was to consolidate the dominance of White Afrikaners at the expense of the poor blacks and other racial minorities in every realm of the country(206). Education system also influence by Afrikaner nationalist ideology whose intention was to dominate of blacks, colors and Asian in every aspects of society.

Coetzee's *Age of Iron* becomes a historical narrative where he presents socio-political environment of South Africa and life style of black and white people in powerful and impressive ways. He also characterizes violence that shows resistance on black youths in response to the state's Apartheid policies. Michael Marais, critic, argues that this novel as "the portrayal of history as the apartheid state's text "(229). He opines that this novel depict apartheid history. History combines facts and fiction within a novel rather than only the collection of factual events. Thus, his novel reflects the history of South Africa. Similarly, Coetzee combines historical contents within a fiction to mediate the reality of the contemporary time. Johan Geertsema, critic, argues that Coetzee's fiction presents historical contents. He opines:

Coetzee's novel mediates between a reality which keeps intruding into the discourse of fiction, which can't be kept outside, but which remains outside because, paradoxically, mediation is precisely mediation. So the novel at once seeks to mediate... it seeks to engage with history, history has already irrupted into the text. (98)

Johan views that Coetzee's novel already combines history within a fiction. Fiction is

not only the collection of imaginative things but it is the combination of facts and fiction. Therefore, Coetzee's novel mediates a reality of the contemporary time.

Age of Iron linkages the relationship between historical events and fictional creation. A novel has both equality i.e. history and fiction. David Attwell reviews that on the "Reader who follows Coetzee closely will have become wary of too easy a linkage between historical events and their fictional reprisal in his novels" (865). It means that it is not too easy to linkage historical events within a fiction but Coetzee's *Age of Iron* combines history and fiction. He presents actual historical figures and events alongside fictitious characters and events. In this way, Coetzee rewrites Dante to question the nostalgic imperial vision at the heart of Dante's theory of history rather than to locate us in South Africa. Another critic, David E. Hoegberg argues that Coetzee rewrites Dante not only to locate us in South Africa but also to question the nostalgic imperial vision at the heart of Dante's theory of history. Coetzee's novels imitate and reproduce the damaged life of Apartheid society.

As a fundamental way of literary studies, literary realism explores truth. Jeanne Colleran reviews conclude that Coetzee suggests unrepresented issues about South Africa history states that literary realism as fundamental to any act of truth-telling (582). It shows that realistic literature is one of the best ways of truth telling. In short, literary realism is the best method of truth telling. Likewise, historical act is a figuration of tension between text and history. David Attwell, critic analyzes "Coetzee's figuring of the tension between text and history is itself a historical act, one that must be read back into the discourses of South Africa where one can discern its illumination power" (3). It means that true history combines the text and context (history) or fiction and fact. Thus historical act refigures the tension between text and history. Coetzee's fictions carry historical circumstance Such as Vietnam War, Steve

Biko's death, torture of South African security force, violence of early eighties and State of Emergency. Susan Vanzanten Galloghee remarks:

A convincing story of Coetzee's response to changing historical circumstances: *Dusklands* as a reaction to the U.S. – Vietnam war; *Waiting for the Barbarians* in the shadow of Steve Biko's death and the outcry over the systematic use of torture by the South African Security forces; *Michael K* against the background of the increasingly violent struggle of the early eighties; *Foe* as a product of Coetzee's own sense of his growing eminence and *Age of Iron* as a reflection of the state of Emergency and the involvement of children in war of the townships in the period 1986-89. (Arridge 322)

Coetzee's fictions reflect historical aspects i.e. *Duskland* as a reaction of U.S., *Waiting For Barbarian* reflects Steven Biko's death and outcry, *Michael K* is against violence, *Foe* as a product of Coetzee's own sense of eminence and *Age of Iron* as a reflection of the state of Emergency. Therefore, his fictions fictionalize the history of South Africa within a text.

Age of Iron had been diversely criticized and interpreted by many critics. Most of them focus on transition and changing circumstance of social, political and economic phase of South Africa. In this regard, Michael Marais, critic, focuses on the politics of representation of South Africa. National party, group of white, hides their social and political reality through state power and media. Marais argues that "the stark realities of the world which Mrs. Curren encounters in Guguletu question the white bourgeois world whose presence depends on its absence. They make her realize that the world and her experience that the very fabric of her society is baseless" (4). Marais insists that Curren's questions in Guguletu are the questions for white state. There is a vast difference between ideology and reality repressed by state. Similarly,

David E Heogberg argues that both Dante's spiritual journey and Mrs. Curren's journey to Guguletu are same. He states:

Direct experience is proposed as the key to Dante's education and salvation. Through texts can be important, Dante must see the Christian after life for him, for experience brings as type of knowledge no text can be provider...Coetzee novel also highlights the value of direct experience over reading. As a Classic teacher, Mrs.Curren reads widely within the boundaries of European tradition. (30)

According to Hoegberg, Both Virgil and Mrs. Curren does similar acts and go to reveal the reality of the place. Their journey gives the reality picture of the place rather than media can provide. Mrs. Curren's journey makes her conscious about the real condition of blacks in South Africa in which blacks are treat as an inhuman creature. Furthermore, Johan Greetsema, critic, analyzes *Age of Iron* and talks about the tension between the reality and novel; and irony and iron. He mainly raises the questions about how does on speak the unspeakable thing? He analyzes "... Mrs. Curren is speaking about those unspeakable things. She is, ironically, speaking the unspeakable at precisely the movement that she proclaims the impossibility of speaking it. But, what could this speaking mean?" (93). Unspeakable concerns the right to speak for blacks. Mrs. Curren asks Florence to speak of unspeakable thing is irony. Blacks have not right to speak against whites' deed but Mrs. Curren tells Florence to asks question against police brutal acts whom kill Bheki and his Friends in Guguletu. Thus, *Age of Iron* raises the voice of marginalize people to questions against whites' supremacy.

Despite all aforementioned claims of various critics on *Age of Iron*, the present research examines how this novel fictionalizes South African Apartheid history and

dissects the politics of Coetzee behind it. This novel depends on apartheid of South Africa in which the sufferings of marginalized people are depicted. During apartheid period, blacks were fight against whites' policy in order to establish equality and freedom. It becomes more effective interest for the present researcher to analyze the novel from the new historicist perspective because it helps to dig out marginalized histories along with social, political, cultural and economic aspect of the contemporary society. New historicism is a currently developed literary theory which attempts to refigure the relationship between texts and social context. It focuses on the way that the literature was written by realizing the social context of the time and how the social context greatly influence the way when the literature was written. Further, new historicism focuses ona critical interpretation of literary texts. John Brannigan thus defines new historicism as “a mode of critical interpretation which privileges power relations as the most important context for texts. As a critical practiceit treats literary texts as a space where power relations are made visible”. (6) New historicism takes as a mode of critical interpretation that privileges power relation as the most important context for texts. According to Michel Foucault, power is everywhere, not because it embraces everything but because it comes from everywhere. The main aim of new historicists is to look at practice as exposition, revelation and operation of power. Brannigan alsonotes that “New historicists usually see their practice as one of exposition, revealing the systems and operation of power so that we are more readily equipped to recognize the interests and stakes of power” (8). Therefore, new historicism is a mode of critical interpretation that privileges power relations.

Coetzee especially attempts to explore the contemporary circumstance of apartheid South Africa during 1986 to 1989 through his novel, *Age of Iron*. It was the time of anti-apartheid movement where the blacks were participating in revolution of

authority and equality as well. They demanded for the end of apartheid through the revolution. It fictionalizes several actual events, lives and death of ordinary South Africans whom are caught in apartheid system that upheld the rights of whites and limited the rights of blacks. It takes place in the middle of a nationwide state of Emergency in which anti- apartheid sentiment was at its height and violence was spreading out of control. Coetzee tries to capture all these incidents with in his novel and turns more realistic in his narrative to employ a figurative or allegorical narrative technique. He wrote this novel in the form of an extended letter to contains the final thoughts of Mrs. Curren, an elderly Cape Town resident. She relates her last days of suffering circumstances from bone cancer, encounter with South Africa injustice and struggle to redeem her soul. Moreover, this novel linked to particular historical moment of South Africa when we see the dates recorded on its final page- 1986-1989- which presents the years of unparalleled violence as the crisis in the townships degeneration. Many blacks, colors and Asian were died in that violence. The change of personal life work by the apartheid system became more widespread and both parents and children found themselves unable to function in their traditional roles. In 1985, student-led educational boycotts became one of the most important battlegrounds for black protest in which thousands of students stayed away from school for months, leaved university entrance exam and marched in the township streets, demanding the withdrawal of military and police units from campuses. The black youth movement adopted slogan such as, "Liberation now, education later" and "Liberation before Education" which affected black children.

Coetzee symbolically represents himself as a narrator and tells story about apartheid South Africa. But he presents female mouthpiece, MrsCurren as a narrator who tells you, her daughter this story about South Africa and expresses reason behind

it as a "I [Mrs. Curren and Coetzee] tell you this story not so that you feel for me but so that you will learn how things are. It would be easier for you, I know, if the story came from someone else, if it were a stranger's voice sounding in your ear" (95).

MrsCurren tells you this story about violence of South Africa to show the actual condition of South African. She also narrates the places where you and her friends used to play "There is an alley down the side of the garage, you may remember it, you and your friends would sometime play there. Now it is a dead place, waste, without use, where windblown leaves pile up and rot" (3). The place was beautiful where children used to play around the alley and the side of the garage but now it becomes waste. There were tussle between government and people in which government lunched different Acts to subjugate people whereas people raised voice against government. Coetzee suggests this age as an age of iron where African government's attitude and actions are like as an iron. Likewise Michael Marias, critic argues that Coetzee's fictions such as *Life and Times of Michael K*, *Foe* and *Age of Iron* imitate and reproduce the damaged life of apartheid society, it means that Coetzee's fictions represents contemporary society of South Africa. Marias also opines that "History by implication is to be viewed as a fictional creation, a narrative construction" (232).

History regards as a form of fictional creation and narrative construction.

Furthermore, new historicism provides an insight for the interaction of literature with other texts and gives ways of analysis how literatures are shaped by the discursive practices and power relations. John Brannigan notes:

New historicism is not simply a way of reading literature in its historical contexts. It is also about power relations, ideological functions, epistemic transformation, modes and systems of representation, transgressions of genre, discursive formations and the production of objects of knowledge. It provides

useful insights into how literature interacts with texts of all kinds, produced and shaped by the discursive practices and power relations which those texts in turn produce and shape. (151)

As a literary theory, New historicism is not merely a way of reading literature in its historical context but it is about power relation; ideological functions, modes of representation, discursive formation and the production of object of knowledge. It also gives insight about how literature interacts with texts. There are two modes of new historicist method: relating a text with other texts and relating a text to history and politics. Brannigan purposes two lesson of new historicist methods of analysis: the first is a means of relating a text to other texts of the same period, it means a way of practicing a kind of inter- textual criticism and the second is a means of relating literary to history and politics. In short, Coetzee's novel fictionalizes South African apartheid history through the narration of his protagonist who expresses her thoughts as a historical consciousness and a part of national narrative.

Age of iron depicts the issue of misuse of power. Coetzee shows how people become immoral by abuse of power. In the novel, police are using their power to dominate the blacks and they hit Bheki and his friend when they were riding on the cycle. Further, Mrs. Curren criticizes on the misuse of the media by the Afrikaner government. In the fourth part of the novel, Mr Vercueil is helping Mrs. Curren who becomes unable to care of herself and offers her to bring the television up to near on her bedroom. But she refuses and says that it will make her feel sick. As he states "Television can't make you sick. It's just pictures" (165) but she replies that "There is no such thing as just pictures. There are men behind the pictures. They send out their pictures to make people sick". (165). Mrs Curren hates the way of the government whom influence people through television. The government uses media in their favor

to broadcast propaganda. Likewise, the media are also used to keep people ignorant about the struggle of South Africa. Once Florence tells MrsCurren that in certain areas in South Africa, black teenagers have burned down their school out of protest against the apartheid regime. MrsCurren feels that she would not know about it if Florence had not told her. She states:

Of trouble in the school the radio says nothing, the television says nothing, and the newspapers say nothing. In the world they project all children of the land are sitting happily at their desks learning about the square on the hypotenuse and the parrot of the Amazonian jungle. ... What I know about events in Guguletu depends solely on what Florence tells me (36)

It demonstrates that how the Afrikaner government tried to keep their citizens ignorant of the entire situation of a civil war by providing them with incorrect and insufficient information. They broadcast other programs rather than actual events of South Africa. So the Afrikaner government used media as a means to hold a tight on the people in order to remain in charge and keep them ignorant of the struggle going on. As a literary theory, New historicist practice supports to concern the totalizing nature of power, history and representation. WaicheeDimock evaluates “new historicist practice typically may concentrate on the totalizing nature of power, history and representation. So every text or event reproduces the same effect of power, containing subversion and promoting coherence” (qtd in Brannigan 122). Power, history and representation are essential important elements of new historicism. Thus, new historicist mainly focuses on the totalizing nature of power, history and representation.

Furthermore, New historicism excavates multifaceted truth existed in the society and dismantles the so-called universal or broad-scale truths. Dwight W.

Hoover insists “new historicism argues that there is no universal meaning or truth in history and that meaning imputed to history reflects power relations at the time of writing as well as the time of the events’ occurrence” (356). New historicism believes on multifaceted truth rather than universal meaning or truth of history that reflects power relations of contemporary time. It is a method of literary analysis that becomes a history of possibilities. Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt critique “new historicism becomes a history of possibilities: while deeply interested in the collective, it remains committed to the value of the single voice, the isolated scandal, the idiosyncratic vision, the transient sketch” (Gallagher and Greenblatt 16). New historicism becomes the history of possibilities that interest in collective and remain a value of the single voice and vision. It takes literary texts as an awareness of the subversive forces.

Coetzee uses marginalized characters of that period in society like MrsCurren, Vercueil, Florence, Bheki and John to break the boundaries of grand narrative. Further, he gives the main position of the novel to the marginalized characters such as blacks and women whom are deprived from society. New historicism address issues related to the center and periphery, thereby focusing on the margin as equally important in the literary texts. New historicist method also assists to construct exchanges between diverse texts within particular historical period. It depends on the construction of fruitful dialogue between many texts within same period.

Branniganremarks:

New historicist methods are useful ways of constructing exchange between diverse texts in a given historical period. ...It involved the construction of meaningful dialogue between many primary texts within the same period, including conduct books, penal documents, journal entries and travel narrative

as well as canonical literary texts. (11-12)

New historicist method assists to exchange between distinct texts such as book, penal, document, journal entries and travel narrative in a particular historical time. It goes against hegemony thereby raises the voices of the marginalized, suppressed, oppressed and backward. It also highlights the voices of females, working class and other sidelined groups.

Age of Iron represents violence of South Africa during 1980s. MrsCurren narrates the contemporary situation of Guguletu where she saw Bheki and four dead bodies, in the letter to her daughter:

Those people are going on all the time. The killings are going on all the time. Those are just bodies they picked up from yesterday. The fighting has subsided for the time being, but as soon as the rain stops it will flare up again. I don't know how you got here- they should have closed the road- but this is a bad place, you shouldn't be here. (98)

It is the difficult situation not for particular character but for all of the African. Likewise, Florence tells MrsCurren about the circumstance where she witnesses "I saw a woman on fire, burning, and when she screamed for help, the children laughed and threw more petrol on her" (45). Children become irresponsible to save a woman from being burn that shows the inhuman behavior of the people. Moreover, Derek Attridge, critic in his article review argues that Coetzee directly and vividly represents township violence of Goguletu and neighboring township of South Africa during 1980s in his novel. He remarks "Coetzee's representation of township violence in *Age of Iron* in untypical of his work in depiction directly and vividly the horrors of life under Apartheid and accuracy of his account can be verified by examining other documents referring to the events in Goguletu and neighboring

township in 1986" (8). Coetzee portrays township violence where there is horror of life under apartheid in Guguletu and neighboring township in 1986. Guguletu as a town of horrors where life is in danger in every walk and fear of state armed vigilantes. New historicism promotes to understand the project of reading literature in relation to history, society and politics. It suggests that literature mostly study and interpret within a context of both the history of an author and the history of the critics. It evaluates how the work is influenced by the time when it was produced. Chung Hsiuglai evaluates:

New historicists have done so far it actually to situate the literary text in its context and to recover the repressed, contradictory and unknown historical meanings of the text. Then they examine the relationship between these historical and cultural meaning of the text and the situation of the reader in order to arouse the reader's cultural wonder at the resonance in both the past and the present. (Lai4)

New Historicism suggests that a literature must be studied and interpreted within the context of both the history of the author and the history of critics. Literature and history are completely intertwined and the interpretation of literature without regarding history is worthless and fruitless attempt. New historicists examine the relationship between historical and cultural meaning of the text and the situation of the reader. Therefore, new historicism becomes a literary theory to interpret literature within its context. In short, Coetzee's novel directly and vividly depicts actual events of South Africa during 1980s.

Coetzee presents the historical facts in the form of fiction. In this novel, he takes the account of blacks' revolution for authority and equality as well. Bheki and his friends are united to raise voice against government whom brought many Acts to

segregate the black people. Anton Kaes, critic defines new historicism as the historicity of texts and the textuality of histories. It means that every text has its own history and every history has its own textuality that can be analyzed. He remarks:

New Historicism offered the richness and resonance of a multi-voiced textuality and the never-ending sense of wonder and surprise that derives from the contingencies of history. ... New historicism has become a blanket term for all critical work that emphasizes the historicity of the text and the textuality of history. (Kaes 148)

New historicism provides multi-voiced textuality and never-ending sense of wonder and surprise that become a capsule term for all critical work which focuses on the historicity of text and textuality of history. Thus, Coetzee's novel textualizes the history of South Africa during 1980s.

All white South Afrikaner were not for apartheid system. Coetzee also revolts it through his narrator and he feels ashamed being as a white South Afrikaner. There are several incidents to increase this feeling of shame such as Bheki and his friend are deliberately hit by a police car. Bheki's friend died up in hospital and Bheki becomes injure. MrsCurren witnesses the crash and goes to police to report about that incident. But they are indifferent toward her complain and ask why she came to them because she was not affected by that incidents. She replies that I am affected, very directly affected. Do you understand what I'm saying? (86). She affects by this incident because she is white like racist policemen who show indifferent toward other suffering and pain. As a white woman in South Africa she feels ashamed that I should simply accept that that is how one must live from now on: in a state of shame (86). As a white, police deliberately hit Bheki and his friend on the way and show rude behavior toward them.

Furthermore, new historicism refines previous historicism. Brannigan argues “New historicism might be understood as a refinement of the previous historicism but it is also difficult to separate the modes of understanding the relationship between the past and the present (31). Thus new historicism functions as a refinement of previous historicism. Likewise, new historicist critics use literary texts as to describe and examine the linguistic, cultural, social and political fabrication. Brannigan opines that “New historicist critics were intent on using literary texts as equal sources with other texts in the attempt to describe and examine the linguistic, cultural, social and political fabric of the past greater detail” (12). Therefore, new historicist critics use literary texts to interpret social, political and cultural situation of contemporary time.

The novel depicts the inward journey of Mrs. Curren. Her personal and emotional state of mind is affected more during the novel. At the beginning of the novel, MrsCurren’s attitude seems relatively indifferent toward the situation of the country. She becomes aware of the situation in the country and says “There were not so many of these homeless people in your time. But now they are part of life here” (6). She tells you about the situation of the country where many people become homeless due to the cause of war and destruction. She tries to keep reality out of her perception of the environment in the initial time. When she sees Bheki’s dead body, she tells:

Against the far wall, shielded from the worst of the rain, were five bodies neatly laid out. The body in the middle was that of Bheki. He still wore the grey flannel trousers; white shirt and Maroon pullover of his school, but his feet were bare. His eyes open and staring, his mouth open too. In the corners of his eyes there were grains of sand. There was sand in his mouth. (94)

She describes the actual scene of Bheki’s body who wore grey trousers, white short

and his feet were bare. His mouth was full of sand and grains of sand in his eyes. Her attitude changes radically after saw that condition and states “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 ... I am not indifferent to this war” (95). Her newly open eyes look many aspects of South African life i.e. the chaotic turbulence of the townships, the black and the white violence, and the corruption of the South African police. These entire things makes her to rage against the men who have created these times (117). She realizes that power is the mechanism to create such destructive and shameful situation of the time so she wants to rage against government in which power is the mechanism and the government is the machine. Further, New historicist mainly focuses on reading literature as a source of reading past and power relation of the societies and culture. Brannigan emphasis on “reading literature as one source for reading the past and power relations of past societies and cultures is the common focus of new historicist analyses and ... more a matter of addressing the role of discourse” (81). New historicist analysis emphasizes on reading literature as a source for reading the past and power relation of past societies and cultures. New historicism also focuses on discursive participation in constructing and maintaining power structures. Brannigan argues that new historicism has brought to the relationship between literature and history to have shifted the methodology from a simple application of historical facts of literary texts to a complex understanding of level of discursive participation in constructing and maintaining power structures. At the beginning, new historicism was a literary method to analysis historical facts of literary texts but now it become complex method to understanding the level of discursive participation in constructing and maintaining power structures. Thus, Coetzee’s novel depicts power as a mechanism to create such destructive and shameful situation of the

time in which power is the mechanism and the government is the machine.

The apartheid invited racial war, violence, poverty, lack of security and peace in South Africa. Coetzee reveals the racial war between the white and black communities and captures the dirty secret of South Africa reality. In the novel, MrsCurren reaches Guguletu, she listens to sound of gun, as she expresses, “Distinctly I heard the pop of gunfire, one, two, three shots, not nearby, but not far away either” (89). It is the condition of racial war where group of races are fighting with each other but the blacks especially young black boys are victimized by the apartheid government. New historicism analyzes the literary and non-literary texts with in its certain context and historical period. According to Peter Barren new historicism is a method of parallel reading of literary and non-literary texts usually of the same historical period. New historicists primarily explore specific details and anecdotes from history. They examine how those details are interconnected with each other or contradictory to the literary work and the period’s prevailing ideology. Brannigan argues that one of the methods of a new historicist analysis is to recount an anecdote which contains a microcosmic image of the power relations which the critic seeks to elaborate in relation to the main texts of discussion (133). To recount of an anecdote is one of the method of a new historicist analysis which contains a microcosmic image of the power relation. Thus apartheid becomes the main cause of racial war, violence, poverty, lack of security and peace in South Africa.

As a literary theory, new historicism explores the relationship between literature and history to see the impact of each other. Brannigan, critic argues that “New historicism and cultural materialism have been most useful to the discipline of literary studies in exploring the relationship between literature and history and in demonstrating the ideological and political interests operating through literary texts”

(11). New historicism excavates the relationship between literature and history; and demonstrates the ideological and political interest of texts. Coetzee demonstrates actual situation of South Africa to the uses of metaphors in his novel. First of all, MrsCurren herself is used as an allegory for the nation. Her ill body compares with nation. Just as there is no cure for the cancer, there seems to be no cure to turn the direction of South Africa. The apartheid regime' actions are growing like cancer cells that cause damage. Coetzee expresses his worries about South Africa's future through Curren's pessimism about South Africa's future when she says that "life in this country is so much like life aboard a sinking ship" (19). She is aware things are directed in wrong direction but she becomes unable to prevent the ship from sinking or unable to prevent the wrong way of the Afrikaner government which is destroying South African society. This inability makes her frustrate to do some effort to improve South African society "the spirit of charity has perished in this country" (20). She insists that the people who need charity hate it and the people who give charity are hopeless so the essence of charity dies. Furthermore, MrsCurren' house used as another metaphor to represent the condition of South Africa. She narrates about her house as a house built solidly without love whose walls the sun, even the African sun, has never succeeded in warming. Her house resembles to the country that is also built without love and gradually falling apart. There is debate on to whom it will belong after she dies. The same debate rises for South Africa that who will own South Africa after apartheid? MrsCurren states:

A land in process of being repossessed, its heirs quietly announcing themselves. A land taken by force, used, despoiled, spoiled, abandoned in its barren late years. Loved too, perhaps, by its ravishers, but loved only in the

bloom time of its youth, and therefore, in the verdict of history, not loved enough. (23)

South Africa is in process of being repossessed whenever it was exploited by its colonizers whom do not love enough to keep it from destruction. A softer age, an age of clay or earth needs to bring back warmth and love for South Africa. The time has come for a new generation or heirs to take over and start over. They are young blacks whom will introduce an age of clay or earth in which there is harmony and unity.

Moreover, new historicists present their reading of texts as a negotiation between past and present. They examine the function and representation of power and also focus on the way of power. Arthur Redding argues that new historicists typically examine the functions and representations of power and focus on the way in which power contains any potential subversion (333). Likewise, new historicism also focuses on the marginalize subjects and concerns with extra-literary matters i.e. letters, diaries, films, painting, medical treatise, to reveal opposing historical tensions in a text. New historicists attempt to show how literary works are implicated in the power-relations of their time. As Michel Foucault, the new historicists are concerned with the issues regarding the mechanisms of power, authority and repression in the production of writing itself (Kaes 150). New historicism also examines the circulatory representation of literature. Kaes presents “new historicism examines the circulation of representation both inside and outside the domain of literature, the borders of which have themselves become porous” (156). New historicism examines the circulation of representation both inside and outside the domain of literature.

New generation of black youngsters has being creating due to the repression practice of the apartheid state whose radicalism bodes a long period of extreme violence. Blacks’ youngsters emerge to revolt against apartheid regime but MrsCurren

longs for better times for South Africa. She expresses her longing that “How long, how long before the softer ages return in their cycle, the age of clay, and the age of earth?” (46). She waits the age of earth where there remains harmony, union and cooperation in the country rather than violence and destruction. But it is difficult to turn in current situation of the society because both white people, who lunched apartheid as well as black radicals, who drive the community apart by their violent activities, are responsible for it. Although, she desires to establish harmony and union of the nation where all people will live freely. She hungers for love “Hunger, I thought: It is the hunger of the eyes that I feel ... I am hungry with love of this world” (16). She hungers for love and peace of the South African society. Likewise there is strong generalized conception of black people about white as a racist and radical. While MrsCurren tries to make a distinction between blacks South Africans, Bheki has the tendency to generalize about white people. MrsCurren asks why they let a stranger into her house when his friend John comes along to her house. Florence replies that he is not a stranger but a visitor. Bheki also said that must we have a pass to come in house (47). It demonstrates that while MrsCurren has the right to ask about the people who enter her house in which Bheki and John consider her as a racist woman. Black people need pass to get access to certain areas of the country during the apartheid system. Moreover, Bantu Authorities Act restricted blacks’ rights during apartheid period. Blacks were limited to buy land but whites can brought many land. Roberts remarks that the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 established separate administrative structures for the homeland in which blacks were allowed to buy land and property only in the 13 percent of the land and 87 percent of the land was for the white population and white ownership (56). Whites had supremacy upon land rather than blacks. Therefore, Bantu Authorities Act restricted blacks’ right in land.

Moreover, new historicism concerns with the modes of supremacy. Paul Hamilton points out that new historicism still concerned with the modes of domination rather than ways in which the structures of power may be resisted from specific social and cultural positions (qtd in Brannigan 124). New historicism more concerned on the mode of dominance rather than the structure of power. In short, Coetzee's novel also portrays the modes of domination of white upon land.

Coetzee presents the issue of family in surface level but in the deeper level it is the history of South Africa. New historicism characterizes an interest of the historicity of texts and the textuality of history. It gives priority in place between textualism and contextualism. Chung Hsiuglai argues "By breaching disciplinary boundaries between the text and history and between fiction and reality, new historicism, eventually and inevitably, has now come to terms with the decision to set up its priority in a place between textualism and contextualism" (4). New historicism blurs the boundary between history and fiction and tries to show that how the creation of truth in history is like that of fiction. But historicism depicts the distinction between history and fiction, and said that history is the collection of facts whereas fiction is the collection of imagination. In short, new historicism mostly focuses on historicity of text and textuality of history that blends history and fiction within a single text.

MrsCurren witnesses the cruelty of the apartheid regime through Florence. Although MrsCurren herself never experienced any violence and she has fears about the young black rioters "It is the roaming gang I fear, the sullen-mouthed boys, rapacious as sharks, on whom the first shade of the prison house is already beginning to close" (6). She becomes worried about Bheki who has dropped out of school after knowing the aggressive attitude of black youngsters. Black youngsters unite in group

to revolt against white whom boycott school. She asks Florence why she does not intervene and send Bheki back to school. Florence replies that he can decide for himself about what to do with his life. Bheki's view for quitting school is that school is a place where black people fit into the apartheid system. School boycotts begin during 1983 to 1985 by black youngsters with that slogan "Liberation before education". MrsCurren experiences many things after walks in South Africa. She states "when I walk upon this land, this South Africa, I have a gathering feeling of walking upon black faces. They are dead but their spirit has not left them" (115). She collects many experiences of black faces whom were dead. Further, Florence admires her son's decisions and respects his generation for being brave enough to stand up against the apartheid regime. Florence argues that "These are good children, they are like iron, we are proud of them" (46). She wants her son become brave who raises voice against apartheid system. But MrsCurren objects on Florence's view and says that education is most important to fight injustice or cruelty. MrsCurren replies to Florence that you told me you admire your son's generation because they are afraid of nothing but this admiration is not best (48). She argues that bravery becomes the cause of cruelty rather than good force for this case. Florence replies that "But who made them so cruel? It is the whites who made them so cruel!" (45). It means that black boys become cruel because of whites' activities. But Curren can't satisfied with Florence' replies and insists that parents are responsible for their children's actions. MrsCurren's view radically changes and accepts for radical revolutionary change. She realizes the people of South Africa themselves should stand up against the wrongdoing of their leaders. Although she becomes convince that apartheid will come to an end and knows it will take time: "Apartheid is not going to die tomorrow or the next day" (62). Apartheid lies as a racial segregation that will not finish

tomorrow but it will take time to end and remain unity in South Africa. Moreover, new historicism tends to blur the distinctions between literature and history and history and social science. It depends on the fact that there is similarity between literature and history. Brannigan views “new historicism is also useful practice for its practice of interdisciplinary. It tends to blur the distinctions between literature and history, between history and social science, between what is assumed to be background information and what is read closely in the foreground” (152-53). New historicism becomes an applicable practice for its interdisciplinary that blurs the distinction between literature and history; history and social science and background and foreground. It situates literary texts in relation of power, revealing political acts and historical functions of texts. New historicism plays a vital role to situate texts in a network of power relations, revealing the political acts and historical functions of those texts. The function of new historicism is to situate texts to power relation and revealing the political acts and historical functions.

As an approach of literary theory, New Historicism mainly emphasizes on historization of text and textualization of history. It foregrounds on the way that the literature was written by realizing the social context of the time and how the social context greatly influence the way when the literature was written. Similarly, new historicism concentrates on the marginalizesubjects and look up from below or down from on high. New historicists insist that the impossibility of objective analysis because historian lives in a particular time and place and their views of both current and past events are influenced by their own experience within their own culture. They insist that history is also a narrative like literature and both are in the form of discourses. They try to show the operation of ideology in the production of various cultural artifacts. Furthermore, New historicism excavates multifaceted truths existed

in the society thereby dismantling the so-called universal truth. Coetzee's novel depicts the contemporary circumstance of apartheid South Africa during 1980s. He symbolically represents himself as a narrator through the mouthpiece of MrsCurren. He criticizes on the misuse of the media by Afrikaner government.

MrsCurren's personal and emotional state of mind is affected more during the novel. Metaphors are used to demonstrate actual situation of South Africa. MrsCurren herself uses as an allegory for the nation and her house compares with nation. She narrates story to you about the circumstance in which she witnesses the cruelty of the apartheid regime.

Coetzee's *Age of Iron* blurs the demarcation between history and fiction, especially 1980s South African apartheid history. It foregrounds the suffering of the marginalized people whose stories were never told by mainstream history. The official history of South Africa becomes the history of racial apartheid which is the legal separation and discrimination of various racial and ethnic groups. Coetzee has attempted to voice out the feeling and experiences of the suppressed and under privileged people and deals about the poor people whom coping with tragedy, cruelty and injustice. Moreover, *Age of Iron* explores human suffering, operation and pain because of the Apartheid which was lunched with the arrival of National party in government. It upheld the right of whites and limited the right of blacks, Asians and Colored. Likewise, the 1980s South Africa described as an age of iron in which apartheid holds the country in a tight grip and Media are controlled by the Afrikaner government to keep the people ignorant about contemporary time. MrsCurren refers to South Africa as a hell on earth through which she gets a guided tour by MrVercueil. She witnesses the cruelty of apartheid regime after visit Guguletu. Then she realizes inhumanity of Afrikaner government toward blacks and wants to rage

against Afrikaner government. She also wants to cure the country after know the actual condition of South Africa. But it is impossible to cure the country like as there is no medicine to cure of her cancer body. She is dying and wondering who will inherit her house; just like the Afrikaner government is slowly dying and wondering who will take over South Africa. It may be that blacks South African will take over South Africa but there is doubt , will they be able to bring softer age?, whereas she longs for a softer age. At the beginning, Curren rejects the violence used by the black rioters but later she understands that this government needs to be fought against whereas the blacks' violence brings change. The only hope for people is that the new generation of black South Africans will introduce an age of clay or earth.

Coetzee is a so-called politically committed writer who revolts against apartheid system through his novel. He presents Mrs Curren as a narrator who faces the truth about apartheid in South Africa. But she is taken away from the situation of her country and wonders what the future will be like, whether the age to come will be a softer age or the age of iron. Furthermore, many white people are not positive toward the future of South Africa. But Mrs Curren thinks a lot about the future of her country and longs for a softer age in which there remains harmony, unity and cooperation. In this sense, Coetzee tries to break the wall of ignorance through the voice of his protagonist. He also attempts to show how quite a few white people feel oppressed by the Afrikaner government as well and how it makes them feel ashamed of their fellow white South African.

Coetzee's *Age of Iron* fictionalizes South African apartheid history through the narration his protagonist, Mrs Curren who tells you this story to understand the actual situation of contemporary South Africa that becomes an alternative history. She starts to narrate the story after return from hospital and ends with last condition of her life.

She comments on the misuse of the media by Afrikaner government. Moreover, many metaphors are used to express his worries about the direction of South Africa.

MrsCurren herself uses as an allegory for nation. It is impossible to cure the country as there is no medicine to cure against the cancer of her body. Her housemetaphorically represents South Africa. She is dying and wondering who will inherit her house as the African government is slowly dying and wondering who will take over South Africa. She witnesses the struggle of black peoples when she drives Florence to the place where a riot has raged in order to find her son Bheki. They find five dead bodies wherethe body in the middle was Bheki; MrsCurren realizes the horror of violence. Although at the beginning, she rejects the violence used by the black rioters, later on she understands the need for action to change the countryin which new generation will set up an age of a unity and harmony. Thus, Coetzee demonstrates the real world of South African Apartheid history for establishing brotherhood, unity, and collaborationbetween the Whites, the Colors, the Asian and the Blacks.

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