

INVICTUS AND RANSOM

Compare how the *Invictus* and *Ransom* explore leadership.

David Malouf's adaptation of Homer's Greek epic, *Ransom*, portrays heroism as a result of courage and an ability to descend to the human level of common experience. Likewise, Clint Eastwood's *Invictus*, depicts heroism as the skill to connect with one's people, and a willingness to defy societal convention. Similarly, a point of congruence in both texts is the effectiveness of characters who capitulate their hubristic disposition to cogently lead. Conversely, both texts diverge in the notion of 'unlikely' heroes who, nonetheless, enhance leaders to fulfil their roles in everyday life.

Malouf and Eastwood signify the importance of heroes who defy societal expectation to instigate change. This is foregrounded in Malouf's initial portrayal of Priam as a 'ceremonial figurehead' who keeps what is 'most human' beneath his veneer. He then transfigures into a 'man remade,' which is expedited from a defiance of convention. Effectively, this is exemplified when Priam concedes that this 'unexpected' journey demands something that is 'new and unimaginable.' This underscores his plan to approach Achilles 'man to man,' as opposed to the Trojan king. Thus, as 'the sacred spirit of Troy,' Priam's compromise of his royal status is a risk to his throne because it symbolically suggests that Troy is similarly volatile. Nevertheless, Priam's willingness to accede to this unlikely course of action sparks upheaval from his own family who are confined by the 'grey, clogging webs' of his 'dazzling eminence.' Thus, Priam perceives his role as king as an 'awful responsibility' partly because it inhibits change or development, hence, he is both intrigued and inspired by Iris' divinations that require him to exercise his free will. This elicits an indignant response as it blatantly disregards the widespread Trojan belief that one's life is solely dominated by gods' will, not human intervention. Hence, Priam's iconoclastic affinity to chance is considered 'blasphemous,' and one that will propagate 'violence and panic.' Nonetheless, he persists in his conquest for 'ransom,' a physical embodiment of this new idea, and ultimately, succeeds. Through this concept, Malouf suggests that agency is ultimately more profitable than surrendering to divine will. Similarly, as Priam must defy conservative societal values, Mandela must resist societal pressure to exact revenge, and instead opts for the 'liberating power' of forgiveness. Through the lens of post-Apartheid South Africa, there is a deeply entrenched racial discord, which sees the oppression of black natives by the white minorities. Thus, following the presidency of Mandela, it was anticipated that the perennial subjugation would cease, and they would finally achieve the reprisal they deserve. However, Mandela seeks to terminate the cycle of 'fear' through reconciliation, even if it is 'wrapped in green and gold,' alluding to the employment of the Springboks as a tool to his visionary policies. This is, hence, met with opposition by those who, justifiably, are resentful towards the whites, and cannot fathom why Mandela would seek unification with their 'oppressors.' This is corroborated in Zindzi's statement 'I don't like seeing you shake his hand. And I'm not the only one.' This highlights the deep-seated division that permeates the two races, and its perpetuation due to 'selfish thinking.' This is metaphorically alluded to in Pienaar's description of rugby as being played only by passing the ball 'backwards and sideways,' symbolic of the apparent obsolescence in reaching a goal without forging ahead. The diegetic sounds of the grunting and groaning that escape the mouths of the rugby players during the World Cup evoke a certain visceral dimension to the scene that fortifies the sheer power of the introduction of a new idea in a time of change. Mandela's capacity to then shift this stagnant paradigm is foreshadowed in the mis-en-scene of the office in his first day of presidency. The frame portrays packed boxes and new plants, while also depicting a string of phone calls. The packed boxes are symbolic of the disposal of apartheid era attitudes for the 'rainbow nation' mentality. Additionally, the plants depict genesis and regeneration of South Africa, while the phone calls imply the urgency for change. As a result, it is evident that Mandela had to defy the expectations of his community to secure his role as a leader to

the entire nation. Consequently, both Eastwood and Malouf coincide in their portrayal of the progress incurred by leaders who forge a new path by resist societal standards.

Furthermore, Malouf and Eastwood illustrate the significance of leaders who are able to discard their ego, and heed to advice shared by other leaders. From the outset, Malouf portrays Achilles' disposition as conflicted between his dichotomous nature. This volatility then spirals into a 'self-consuming rage' as he loses his 'adoptive brother' who restored his sense of 'spirit' and humanity. Malouf's initial portrayal of Achilles' "swiftness of foot" accentuates his former exalted status as a godlike warrior, which is immediately undermined by the fact his 'spirit' 'deserted' him moments after the death – connotative of abandonment and loss of his identity. Achilles warrior-like façade, therefore, deteriorates. However, where Patroclus' death disillusioned Achilles, the sight of his 'father's impending death,' however, provokes 'tenderness' and thus lays the framework for Priam's subsequent appeal. Ultimately, Achilles will stop seeing death as an insult by the gods, and yet, as a universal human experience which inspires empathy. Upon this anagnorosis, Priam appeals to Achilles 'as a father 'and 'poor mortal' instead of an 'implacable enemy.' In essence, Priam presents the idea of humanity as an ideal to strive towards on the grounds that doing so will show that [they] are men, not ravening beasts.' Hence, Malouf alludes that establishing one's humanity proves to be less about 'rising above' animalistic nature and rather, descending from a superior status, such as a demigod or king. Additionally, the progression of old men Achilles envisions—Priam, then Peleus—alludes to the universal nature of mortality. Thus, the ultimate inevitability of human fate (death) sparks a change in Achilles, who realises the importance of seizing the opportunity of common humanity while alive. This is corroborated by Malouf's depiction of Achilles whose 'heels now glow.' Ultimately, this insinuates that where compassion and empathy was once perceived to be a fatal flaw by Achilles, it is now a source of strength. Likewise, *Invictus* explores the difficulty of embracing humanity, and the necessity of a source of inspiration. Essentially, Pienaar emphasizes that leaders must 'lead by example.' It is this same mentality that evokes Mandela to inspire Pienaar in his interactions with others, and injects a greater sense of self-efficacy in winning the championship in Pienaar. Consequently, Pienaar ingratiates himself with his people through a deeper emotional appeal, captured as he huddles and motivates his teammates in rugby games to suggest a sense of solidarity. Thus, in contrast to Achilles who is rather distant to his people and his human emotion is thereby suppressed by his role, Pienaar, on the other hand, is urged to embrace his more emotional side to lead. Therefore, it is only when Francois witnesses the struggle Mandela suffered in his '30 year' sentence in a 'tiny cell' does he recognise that all was only possible through Mandela's unwillingness to submit to a fate determined for him. The non-diegetic sound of Henley's poem utilised as a voice over through the Springbok trip to Robben Island compounds this sense of inspiration, and championing fate. Rather it is the fact that Mandela sees himself as the 'captain of [his] soul' and moreover the 'master of [his] fate' that Pienaar is able to navigate his fate through freewill. As a result, Malouf and Eastwood both signify the profitability in relinquishing one's pride to learn and evolve as a leader.

Eastwood and Malouf signify the importance of unlikely heroes who equip leaders to perform their role through guidance. In *Ransom*, Malouf emphasises upon the differing statuses of Priam and Somax, yet they are still able to 'connect through the fellow-feeling of a father.' For Priam, who has felt a distinct sense of detachment from his role as King of Troy despite seeing the embodiment of himself in his people, learns with the help of Somax to get in touch with his humanity. Imagery of the natural world ("sea surface bellies and glistens") juxtaposed against all that is unearthly and divine ("teasing iridescence") depicts this pestering strain between his emotional vulnerability, and his role as 'the living map of Troy' that requires him to be of 'stone and wood.' This is amplified through Somax's impassioned 'recollections of his sons' deaths,' which results in Priam's 'eyes moisten[ing].' Priam, who was previously indifferent to humane emotions, is finally able to express candid emotion, principally expedited by the narrations from Somax. It is through this newfound unison,

Priam is able to be 'restored' as 'a man remade.' In doing so, Malouf advocates the notion that men can 'forge connections based on common grounds,' of which the most intrinsic is humanity. Contrastingly, Mandela's assistant, Brenda Mazibuko, acts as a constant check on Mandela to discern whether his intentions are propitious. However, unlike Somax's auspicious sentiments, she attempts to deter him away from his goal, and has discouraging intentions. Nonetheless, she plays an imperative role in fuelling Mandela's determination to eradicate divisive mentalities, such as those exhibited by his very own assistant. This is evident in Mazibuko's inherently vengeful thinking on behalf of 'comrade' South Africans who believe that through the reconciliation process, Mandela is 'risking [his] political capital,' and his 'future as [their] leader,' captured in a close-up shot that frames her audacious assurance in her dubiety. Therefore, through Mandela being constantly surrounded by sceptical people who are doubtful of his ability to unite the nation, he is further compelled to ensure his plan is seen to completion. Hence, it is evident that Eastwood demonstrates how the ability to forgive and change is suppressed through her apartheid era thinking. Evidently, where Malouf portrays the significance of the ordinary person championing a hero's sphere, Eastwood adopts a nuanced portrayal of those who aim to dissuade leaders as inadvertently fuelling their desire to succeed.

To conclude, Malouf and Eastwood both correlate in the stance that a leader is one who challenges societal expectations to pursue a new way. Likewise, both authors champion individuals who are able to relinquish their ego for a greater purpose. However, a point of disparity in both texts is the role everyday individuals play in either enhancing or hindering a leader's role, which nevertheless, leads to triumph.