

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE OF UKRAINE
O. M. BEKETOV NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
of URBAN ECONOMY in KHARKIV**

Methodological guidelines
for independent work
on the subject

**“TRENDS IN MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY
ENGLISH-LANGUAGE LITERATURE”**

*(for 3d-year full-time and part-time students educational level “Bachelor” specialty
035 – Philology)*

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Pace № 1
AN ESSAY “SHOOTING AN ELEPHANT”
by George Orwell

“When I sit down to write a book, I do not say to myself, ‘I am going to produce a work of art’. I write it because there is some lie that I want to expose, some fact to which I want to draw attention, and my initial concern is to get a hearing”.

G. Orwell, “Why I write” (1946).

Key vocabulary:

Imperialism, colonialism, the Far East, control, autobiographical content, trust, an internal conflict, personal morals, weighty considerations behind, the white man’s reputation, condition and circumstances, acceptance, the white man turning tyrant, duty to his own country, the evil-spirited little beast [the Burmese], a tame elephant, through his conscience, anticipation of the impending finality, the irony of power, geo-political gain, the concrete detail, personal values, a symbol, metaphor

“Shooting an Elephant” is a reflective essay, presenting an account of George Orwell’s, originally Eric Blair, life in Burma where he was posted as a subdivisional police officer of the British. Burma was a major inspiration for Orwell and his works and remained an important influence throughout his literary career. His experiences in Burma shaped his career in a way and its effect could be clearly felt in his works including his best one “1984”. “Burmese Days” presents a detailed account of his life in Burma but apart from that there are other works including “A Hanging” and “Shooting an Elephant” that highlight the beautiful and ugly aspects of life as the author got to live and experience in Burma.

1. *What is defined by the term “essay”? Is it synonymous with a story or a paper or an article? What types of essay do we differentiate and what is their format?*
2. *What is the relationship between colonialism, conquest, and religion as linked to the European imperialist era?*
3. *Give a brief spotlight on British colonialism. How did colonization affect the colonizers? How does it impact life in the modern day?*

George Orwell
Shooting an Elephant



In Moulmein, in Lower Burma, I was hated by large numbers of people — the only time in my life that I have been important enough for this to happen to me. I was

sub-divisional police officer of the town, and in an aimless, petty kind of way anti-European feeling was very bitter. No one had the guts to raise a riot, but if a European woman went through the bazaars alone somebody would probably spit betel juice over her dress. As a police officer I was an obvious target and was baited whenever it seemed safe to do so. When a nimble Burman tripped me up on the football field and the referee (another Burman) looked the other way, the crowd yelled with hideous laughter. This happened more than once. In the end the sneering yellow faces of young men that met me everywhere, the insults hooted after me when I was at a safe distance, got badly on my nerves. The young Buddhist priests were the worst of all. There were several thousands of them in the town and none of them seemed to have anything to do except stand on street corners and jeer at Europeans.

All this was perplexing and upsetting. For at that time I had already made up my mind that imperialism was an evil thing and the sooner I chucked up my job and got out of it the better. Theoretically — and secretly, of course — I was all for the Burmese and all against their oppressors, the British. As for the job I was doing, I hated it more bitterly than I can perhaps make clear. In a job like that you see the dirty work of Empire at close quarters. The wretched prisoners huddling in the stinking cages of the lock-ups, the grey, cowed faces of the long-term convicts, the scarred buttocks of the men who had been flogged with bamboos — all these oppressed me with an intolerable sense of guilt. But I could get nothing into perspective. I was young and ill-educated and I had had to think out my problems in the utter silence that is imposed on every Englishman in the East. I did not even know that the British Empire is dying, still less did I know that it is a great deal better than the younger empires that are going to supplant it. All I knew was that I was stuck between my hatred of the empire I served and my rage against the evil-spirited little beasts who tried to make my job impossible. With one part of my mind I thought of the British Raj as an unbreakable tyranny, as something clamped down, in saecula saeculorum, upon the will of prostrate peoples; with another part I thought that the greatest joy in the world would be to drive a bayonet into a Buddhist priest's guts. Feelings like these are the normal by-products of imperialism; ask any Anglo-Indian official, if you can catch him off duty.

One day something happened which in a roundabout way was enlightening. It was a tiny incident in itself, but it gave me a better glimpse than I had had before of the real nature of imperialism — the real motives for which despotic governments act. Early one morning the sub-inspector at a police station the other end of the town rang me up on the phone and said that an elephant was ravaging the bazaar. Would I please come and do something about it? I did not know what I could do, but I wanted to see what was happening and I got on to a pony and started out. I took my rifle, an old .44 Winchester and much too small to kill an elephant, but I thought the noise might be useful *in terrorem*. Various Burmans stopped me on the way and told me about the elephant's doings. It was not, of course, a wild elephant, but a tame one which had gone 'must'. It had been chained up, as tame elephants always are when their attack of 'must' is due, but on the previous night it had broken its chain and escaped. Its mahout, the only person who could manage it when it was in that state,

had set out in pursuit, but had taken the wrong direction and was now twelve hours' journey away, and in the morning the elephant had suddenly reappeared in the town. The Burmese population had no weapons and were quite helpless against it. It had already destroyed somebody's bamboo hut, killed a cow and raided some fruit-stalls and devoured the stock; also it had met the municipal rubbish van and, when the driver jumped out and took to his heels, had turned the van over and inflicted violences upon it.

The Burmese sub-inspector and some Indian constables were waiting for me in the quarter where the elephant had been seen. It was a very poor quarter, a labyrinth of squalid bamboo huts, thatched with palmleaf, winding all over a steep hillside. I remember that it was a cloudy, stuffy morning at the beginning of the rains. We began questioning the people as to where the elephant had gone and, as usual, failed to get any definite information. That is invariably the case in the East; a story always sounds clear enough at a distance, but the nearer you get to the scene of events the vaguer it becomes. Some of the people said that the elephant had gone in one direction, some said that he had gone in another, some professed not even to have heard of any elephant. I had almost made up my mind that the whole story was a pack of lies, when we heard yells a little distance away. There was a loud, scandalized cry of 'Go away, child! Go away this instant!' and an old woman with a switch in her hand came round the corner of a hut, violently shooing away a crowd of naked children. Some more women followed, clicking their tongues and exclaiming; evidently there was something that the children ought not to have seen. I rounded the hut and saw a man's dead body sprawling in the mud. He was an Indian, a black Dravidian coolie, almost naked, and he could not have been dead many minutes. The people said that the elephant had come suddenly upon him round the corner of the hut, caught him with its trunk, put its foot on his back and ground him into the earth. This was the rainy season and the ground was soft, and his face had scored a trench a foot deep and a couple of yards long. He was lying on his belly with arms crucified and head sharply twisted to one side. His face was coated with mud, the eyes wide open, the teeth bared and grinning with an expression of unendurable agony. (Never tell me, by the way, that the dead look peaceful. Most of the corpses I have seen looked devilish.) The friction of the great beast's foot had stripped the skin from his back as neatly as one skins a rabbit. As soon as I saw the dead man I sent an orderly to a friend's house nearby to borrow an elephant rifle. I had already sent back the pony, not wanting it to go mad with fright and throw me if it smelt the elephant.

The orderly came back in a few minutes with a rifle and five cartridges, and meanwhile some Burmans had arrived and told us that the elephant was in the paddy fields below, only a few hundred yards away. As I started forward practically the whole population of the quarter flocked out of the houses and followed me. They had seen the rifle and were all shouting excitedly that I was going to shoot the elephant. They had not shown much interest in the elephant when he was merely ravaging their homes, but it was different now that he was going to be shot. It was a bit of fun to them, as it would be to an English crowd; besides they wanted the meat. It made me vaguely uneasy. I had no intention of shooting the elephant — I had merely sent for

the rifle to defend myself if necessary — and it is always unnerving to have a crowd following you. I marched down the hill, looking and feeling a fool, with the rifle over my shoulder and an ever-growing army of people jostling at my heels. At the bottom, when you got away from the huts, there was a metalled road and beyond that a miry waste of paddy fields a thousand yards across, not yet ploughed but soggy from the first rains and dotted with coarse grass. The elephant was standing eight yards from the road, his left side towards us. He took not the slightest notice of the crowd's approach. He was tearing up bunches of grass, beating them against his knees to clean them and stuffing them into his mouth.

I had halted on the road. As soon as I saw the elephant I knew with perfect certainty that I ought not to shoot him. It is a serious matter to shoot a working elephant — it is comparable to destroying a huge and costly piece of machinery — and obviously one ought not to do it if it can possibly be avoided. And at that distance, peacefully eating, the elephant looked no more dangerous than a cow. I thought then and I think now that his attack of ‘must’ was already passing off; in which case he would merely wander harmlessly about until the mahout came back and caught him. Moreover, I did not in the least want to shoot him. I decided that I would watch him for a little while to make sure that he did not turn savage again, and then go home.

But at that moment I glanced round at the crowd that had followed me. It was an immense crowd, two thousand at the least and growing every minute. It blocked the road for a long distance on either side. I looked at the sea of yellow faces above the garish clothes-faces all happy and excited over this bit of fun, all certain that the elephant was going to be shot. They were watching me as they would watch a conjurer about to perform a trick. They did not like me, but with the magical rifle in my hands I was momentarily worth watching. And suddenly I realized that I should have to shoot the elephant after all. The people expected it of me and I had got to do it; I could feel their two thousand wills pressing me forward, irresistibly. And it was at this moment, as I stood there with the rifle in my hands, that I first grasped the hollowness, the futility of the white man's dominion in the East. Here was I, the white man with his gun, standing in front of the unarmed native crowd — seemingly the leading actor of the piece; but in reality I was only an absurd puppet pushed to and fro by the will of those yellow faces behind. I perceived in this moment that when the white man turns tyrant it is his own freedom that he destroys. He becomes a sort of hollow, posing dummy, the conventionalized figure of a sahib. For it is the condition of his rule that he shall spend his life in trying to impress the ‘natives’, and so in every crisis he has got to do what the ‘natives’ expect of him. He wears a mask, and his face grows to fit it. I had got to shoot the elephant. I had committed myself to doing it when I sent for the rifle. A sahib has got to act like a sahib; he has got to appear resolute, to know his own mind and do definite things. To come all that way, rifle in hand, with two thousand people marching at my heels, and then to trail feebly away, having done nothing — no, that was impossible. The crowd would laugh at me. And my whole life, every white man's life in the East, was one long struggle not to be laughed at.

But I did not want to shoot the elephant. I watched him beating his bunch of grass against his knees, with that preoccupied grandmotherly air that elephants have. It seemed to me that it would be murder to shoot him. At that age I was not squeamish about killing animals, but I had never shot an elephant and never wanted to. (Somehow it always seems worse to kill a *large* animal.) Besides, there was the beast's owner to be considered. Alive, the elephant was worth at least a hundred pounds; dead, he would only be worth the value of his tusks, five pounds, possibly. But I had got to act quickly. I turned to some experienced-looking Burmans who had been there when we arrived, and asked them how the elephant had been behaving. They all said the same thing: he took no notice of you if you left him alone, but he might charge if you went too close to him.

It was perfectly clear to me what I ought to do. I ought to walk up to within, say, twenty-five yards of the elephant and test his behavior. If he charged, I could shoot; if he took no notice of me, it would be safe to leave him until the mahout came back. But also I knew that I was going to do no such thing. I was a poor shot with a rifle and the ground was soft mud into which one would sink at every step. If the elephant charged and I missed him, I should have about as much chance as a toad under a steam-roller. But even then I was not thinking particularly of my own skin, only of the watchful yellow faces behind. For at that moment, with the crowd watching me, I was not afraid in the ordinary sense, as I would have been if I had been alone. A white man mustn't be frightened in front of 'natives'; and so, in general, he isn't frightened. The sole thought in my mind was that if anything went wrong those two thousand Burmans would see me pursued, caught, trampled on and reduced to a grinning corpse like that Indian up the hill. And if that happened it was quite probable that some of them would laugh. That would never do.

There was only one alternative. I shoved the cartridges into the magazine and lay down on the road to get a better aim. The crowd grew very still, and a deep, low, happy sigh, as of people who see the theatre curtain go up at last, breathed from innumerable throats. They were going to have their bit of fun after all. The rifle was a beautiful German thing with cross-hair sights. I did not then know that in shooting an elephant one would shoot to cut an imaginary bar running from ear-hole to ear-hole. I ought, therefore, as the elephant was sideways on, to have aimed straight at his ear-hole, actually I aimed several inches in front of this, thinking the brain would be further forward.

When I pulled the trigger I did not hear the bang or feel the kick — one never does when a shot goes home — but I heard the devilish roar of glee that went up from the crowd. In that instant, in too short a time, one would have thought, even for the bullet to get there, a mysterious, terrible change had come over the elephant. He neither stirred nor fell, but every line of his body had altered. He looked suddenly stricken, shrunken, immensely old, as though the frightful impact of the bullet had paralysed him without knocking him down. At last, after what seemed a long time — it might have been five seconds, I dare say — he sagged flabbily to his knees. His mouth slobbered. An enormous senility seemed to have settled upon him. One could have imagined him thousands of years old. I fired again into the same spot. At the

second shot he did not collapse but climbed with desperate slowness to his feet and stood weakly upright, with legs sagging and head drooping. I fired a third time. That was the shot that did for him. You could see the agony of it jolt his whole body and knock the last remnant of strength from his legs. But in falling he seemed for a moment to rise, for as his hind legs collapsed beneath him he seemed to tower upward like a huge rock toppling, his trunk reaching skyward like a tree. He trumpeted, for the first and only time. And then down he came, his belly towards me, with a crash that seemed to shake the ground even where I lay.

I got up. The Burmans were already racing past me across the mud. It was obvious that the elephant would never rise again, but he was not dead. He was breathing very rhythmically with long rattling gasps, his great mound of a side painfully rising and falling. His mouth was wide open — I could see far down into caverns of pale pink throat. I waited a long time for him to die, but his breathing did not weaken. Finally I fired my two remaining shots into the spot where I thought his heart must be. The thick blood welled out of him like red velvet, but still he did not die. His body did not even jerk when the shots hit him, the tortured breathing continued without a pause. He was dying, very slowly and in great agony, but in some world remote from me where not even a bullet could damage him further. I felt that I had got to put an end to that dreadful noise. It seemed dreadful to see the great beast Lying there, powerless to move and yet powerless to die, and not even to be able to finish him. I sent back for my small rifle and poured shot after shot into his heart and down his throat. They seemed to make no impression. The tortured gasps continued as steadily as the ticking of a clock.

In the end I could not stand it any longer and went away. I heard later that it took him half an hour to die. Burmans were bringing dash and baskets even before I left, and I was told they had stripped his body almost to the bones by the afternoon.

Afterwards, of course, there were endless discussions about the shooting of the elephant. The owner was furious, but he was only an Indian and could do nothing. Besides, legally I had done the right thing, for a mad elephant has to be killed, like a mad dog, if its owner fails to control it. Among the Europeans opinion was divided. The older men said I was right, the younger men said it was a damn shame to shoot an elephant for killing a coolie, because an elephant was worth more than any damn Coringhee coolie. And afterwards I was very glad that the coolie had been killed; it put me legally in the right and it gave me a sufficient pretext for shooting the elephant. I often wondered whether any of the others grasped that I had done it solely to avoid looking a fool.

1936

THE END

Questions for discussion:

1) Who is the narrator and what is his position in the Burmese village? Why do you think Orwell's voice as narrative is the only one readers hear? Is the absence of a dialogue a strength or weakness in "Shooting an Elephant"?

2) According to Orwell, how did the Burmese subjects and their British rulers interact?

3) What is the implied assumption in the opening sentence? *“In Moulmein, in Lower Burma, I was hated by large numbers of people — the only time in my life that I have been important enough for this to happen to me”*.

4) What is the narrator’s attitude to the British presence in Burma? What is the narrator’s basic internal conflict, even before the incident with the elephant occurs? What is “the dirty work of Europe” and why does the protagonist feel guilty for his role in colonialism? What is the relationship between conflict and structure in the essay? Find examples of foreshadowing.

5) Why doesn’t the narrator want to shoot the elephant? *“As soon as I saw the elephant I knew with perfect certainty that I ought not to shoot him”*. Why, then, does he decide to shoot the elephant? Was the protagonist a victim or oppressor?

6) Why is the elephant behaving as it does?

7) *“And it was the moment, as I stood there with the rifle in my hands, that I first grasped the hollowness, the futility of the white man’s domination in the East. Here was I, the white man, with his gun, standing in front of the unarmed native crowd – seemingly the leading actor of the piece; but in reality I was only an absurd puppet pushed to and fro by the will of those yellow faces behind. I perceived in this moment that when the white man turns tyrant it is his own freedom that he destroys”*. Who “those yellow faces” are in the excerpt and why are they referred to like that? Was it necessary for the police officer (the protagonist) to use force in his decision making? How was the police officer influenced by his working environment? What, if anything, does this story teach us about political decision, even in a local scale?

8) What might the elephant’s slow death symbolize?

9) What central idea about the value of life in imperial Burma is revealed by the *“endless discussions about the shooting of the elephant”* in the final paragraph?

10) Think about the essay in the light of the Cultural Criticism lens by reviewing the underlying ideas of that perspective, presented in the text.

11) What is the most powerful symbol in the essay?

12) Analyze the author’s use of language. (simple, complex, straightforward, logical, stream of consciousness).

Writing task:

After reading “Shooting an Elephant”, write an essay on the issues of European colonialism and colonization through the lenses of the British authors of the XXth-XXIst centuries (the texts by Rudyard Kipling, Somerset Maugham and others).

Topics for self-study, reports and Power Point presentations:

- 1) George Orwell – the writer as a social thinker.
- 2) The essays by George Orwell (“Inside the Whale and other Essays” (1957); “Selected Writings” (1958) and others).
- 3) “The black world” and “blackness” in English literature.

Recommended reading:

- 1) “The Lottery” by Shirley Jackson.
- 2) “Paul’s Case” by Willa Cather.
- 3) “Khagam” by Satyajit Ray.
- 4) “The Betrayal” by Ahmed Essop.
- 5) “The Far Pavilions” by M.M. Kaye.
- 6) “A Thousand of Splendid Suns” by Khaled Hosseini.

Pace № 2

“LINBER” by Galit Dahan Carlibach WITHIN THE SCOPE OF “TRAUMA THEORY”

“I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented”.

Elie Wiesel.

“One of the ways that Holocaust literature treats the unthinkable reality it represents is by avoiding a precise description of horror, and assuming instead different strategies of displacement. Strategies of displacement are stylistic devices which shift the fictional action away from the center of historical reality, toward marginal areas. This displacement occurs at different levels – in time and space, in the description of seemingly minor human states, by concentrating on the interior world of the protagonist, and so on”.

Rotem Wagner and Inbar Raveh, “Liberation”, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, 1999, p. 3.

Key vocabulary:

The transmission of mood, collective and national trauma, traumatic memory, characteristics of traumatized voice, intertextuality, fragmented voice, post-holocaust Germany / Berlin, negative experience, mystery, dream-like quality, awakening from a dream

Postmodern literature is associated with the decades following the Second World War, which boosted the production of a so-called ‘trauma text’ that employs intertextuality, repetition, fragmentation, and language manipulation in order to create meaning due to extreme traumatic stress. In a sense trauma theory can be also conjoined with postcolonial studies. Psychological research distinguishes other various traumatic events – assault, rape, war, famine, incarceration, etc. The impact of trauma theory on the literary studies was felt from the publication of essays by critics in trauma: “Exploration in Memory” (edited by Cathy Caruth, 1995) and her monograph “Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History” (1996). The

growth of interest in trauma within humanities stems from the memoirs of Holocaust survivors and war veterans, and the topics such as sexual violence in women's fiction.

Considering the multiple models of trauma and memory presented in trauma novel, the attention is drawn to the role of place, which functions to portray trauma's effects through metaphoric and material means. Description of the geographic place of traumatic experience and remembrance situate the individual in relation to a larger cultural context that contains social values that influence the recollection of the event and the recognition of self. The trauma prose by Galit Dahan Carlbach demonstrates how a traumatic event (the Holocaust) disrupts attachments of the traumatized protagonist to a beloved person, a German man. Within the first encounter with Linber (the metathesis of Berlin) the main character experiences an imaginary reconstruction of the events, that happened to the members of her family in the times of the rule of fascism. The initial denial of the vulnerable part of family history leads to the inner psychological conflict and the subsequent awakening from a romantic dream, which becomes no more possible after the mysterious re-experiencing of the painful history. The story is deeply intertextual and rich in symbols.

1. Define the term 'Holocaust'. Why is it important to confront the brutality of this history?

2. What is Kristallnacht? What led to the Night of Broken Glass?

3. Give the definition of the notions: 'The Third Reich' [raich], stolpersteine, shin and yud.

4. Comment on the following within the idea of individual responsibility: "In Germany, the Nazis came for the Communists and I didn't speak up because I was not a Communist. Then they came for the Jews and I didn't speak up because I was not a Jew. Then they came for the labor unionists and I didn't speak up because I was not a labor unionist. Then they came for the Catholics and I was a Protestant so I didn't speak up. Then they came for me... by that time there was no one left to speak up for anyone". – Martin Niemoller.

Galit Dahan Carlbach Linber

If you take me to Berlin, I won't ask any questions. If you take me to Berlin, I will change its name to Linber, just for you. The city will twinkle at us in all its glory, and we won't go rummaging through your past. I won't have to know if your father, a certain Heinrich Ludwig, was ever an S.S. officer, nor will I feel compelled to find out what your mother, a certain Giselle, was doing on Kristallnacht. I simply won't know. My mind will remain in the present. The fluid, pliable present. The present that will flow through me like honey and fill my entire being.

We'll land in Berlin-Tegel and head straight to the city, which will greet us with a smile.

And I promise: I won't look at the *stolpersteine* beneath my feet, the stumbling stones that line the streets of Berlin. The stones that are adorned with brass plates inscribed with the names of Holocaust victims. Stones upon stones, names upon names. Names of disembodied Jews. I won't look down, I won't let them blind me, I will close my eyes and let the sun warm my eyelids and cradle me through the Linberian streets.

From there, we'll merrily meander on. I might trip once or twice, and you, as my love and as my lover, will hold me with a sure hand, and we'll skate over the smooth tiles that conceal the clean, efficient, and precise sewage system. You will look at me and say, "You look tired." I'll shrug my shoulders and go back to feeding the ducks. The world will start spinning in a jumble of white wings, and right before I collapse on the grass, on the fine, padded German grass, you will anxiously tilt your head towards me and tell me I look very pale.

In the Linber clinic, you will give the nurse a questioning look, and when they come at me with a needle you will speak to her in German, and I will remain calm, even as you are watching the concentrated Jewish blood – fifty percent Moroccan, fifty percent Ashkenazi – flowing out of my arm and into the test tube. "You have the blood of royalty," you will whisper to me in the glossy Hebrew of a new speaker.

I won't give a thought to the blood that is going down to the labs for a lymphocyte count. I won't think about how they might discover the fifty percent Holocaust survivor on my father's side. And not thinking about Aba will instantly make me think of Ima: "Don't go looking for any Holocaust, do you understand? Your father gave me more than enough Holocaust. Go have fun with him." The tests will come back negative. Just another bout of anemia. The nurse will look at me with scrutinizing eyes, then thrust the needle into my arm. One shot of iron and already I'm getting back to myself, walking with you, hand in hand once again.

If you take me to Linber. No vampires will rise up from the sewage canals onto the *stolpersteine*. They won't don masks, they won't conscript anyone into the army, they won't rape anyone. They won't suck anyone's neck.

And later on, that night, you will demonstrate your love for me. Ruddy and rugged, you will love me and make me laugh. With your large palms that could easily hold another pair of troubled hands. A strange cloud will burst through the window, and on the nearby dresser a cigarette will be burning in an ashtray. Your hands will travel over my skin, not over the skin of a doomed concentration camp prisoner, not over skin that is desperately pleading to be covered in a shroud. And it will no longer matter which city she was born in and what she did between '33 and '45. And there would be no separating between Gentile and Jew. And there will be no conjoining of Gentile and Jew.

And when I look up I will see that the cloud knocking on my window is nothing more than fog.

The next morning, the city will ply us with even more of its delights. We'll gorge on ice cream on the Friedrichstrasse. We'll look at the silvery present of the city. The quicksilver present. The gilded, grizzled, yearned-for present.

Hand in hand we'll stroll past the Konzerthaus. And we will never venture out of Linber. We won't go down into the forests. We won't go down to the train tracks. We won't go off the tracks. We won't stand on the *stolpersteine*, trampled on to the point of erosion. We won't veer off towards the train-line, we won't join the Partisans, we won't tattoo our brains with meaningless numbers, like the tattooed man from my neighborhood whom Ima abhorred, whom she tried to keep away from us, insisting that we continue to live in her private reality, where there is no Holocaust and no Memorial Day and no siren and you're allowed to leave food on your plate.

And then we will sit down with your friends at Linber's bar. Lynn-bar. Lynn will slide my beer, dark and murky, across the bar, and I will stare at it, and the polite sounds of laughter will grow more distant and I'll sink into my glass. 100% German beer. 100% wheat picked by fat, red-cheeked Linberian girls, village girls who never complain about the hard work in the field. Your hand is on my back and your friends are all around us and their laughter is getting louder. Their hair is fair and honey-colored, like the *stolpersteine*. I won't think about the *stolpersteine*. I won't let my mind wander off to the pitchforks in the hay stacks, to the babies buried inside them. Covered in sheaves, I will stick to the drunken present.

If you take me to Linber, I won't ask you about your hometown, I will just marvel at how the city is filled with your grandeur.

In the hotel, you'll collapse on the bed, and, babbling drunkenly, you'll try to hold me. All that movement will make you tired, and you will fall asleep. I won't change my clothes. I'll lie next to you, my body folded into yours, and stare out the window. The gathering fog will turn into a dense, black cloud with bits of coppery-purple brass. I'll burrow my head in the crook of your arm, and I'll laugh at myself. After all, the window is sealed; there's no hand to open it and let the cloud in. The psychedelic cloud will fly around the room, and out of it will emerge my mother: first her head with its mane of curls, and then her hand, waving my identity card in the air.

"I'll never tell," she'll shout. And I'll try to rip the card from her hand, but the cloud will close around me; it won't let me get close enough to see what's written next to "Father's Name." Well-meaning letters dance in the air and almost succeed in coming together, but Ima manages to separate them. I catch a glimpse of the Hebrew letters *shin* and *yud*, but then she steals them away.

The cloud comes closer and settles on my neck. Its touch is cold and metallic.

"Just tell me his name," I beg my mother.

"I'll never tell. I'll never tell."

And a forest starts to grow all around me, and drummers are swinging from the branches and the bushes and the vines, beating their drums to the rhythm of her voice: "I'll never tell. I'll never tell. Never ever." The rhythm of the drums will singe my ears and my eyes. And I'll wake up and blink and try to push the forest away, but there is no forest, everything is already pruned and trimmed. And you are next to me, cutting back the trees.

And I will remember the first time you met my mother. "You had to bring home a German?" she said. "There aren't enough Moroccans?" But her manners were

impeccable, because when you're in the presence of so much tall, blonde attractiveness, you don't behave crassly.

You are next to me, cutting back the trees, but even so, everything around me is fuzzy. The cloud condenses on the window and the letters dance on top of it, but when I try to catch them they fall away, crumbling like cigarette ash. You toss and turn and mumble in your sleep, and I realize that I am fully immersed in the present moment. Everything around me is compressed into this present. I get dressed and head to Linber. Even in this dense and darkening night, the streets shimmer like the armor of a Crusader embarking on a holy war.

Linber is imposing at night. Cold. Chilling. And there are no people. Everyone is sleeping. The cats are sleeping, the party-goers are sleeping, the drunks are sleeping, the tourists are sleeping. All the Linberians are sleeping. Linber sleeps, and amid all the torpor only one old woman holds my attention. Her back is hunched, and her footsteps on the sidewalk are shaky, as if she's been doing this nightly walk for centuries.

I follow her. She continues to walk, bending down every now and then. She's on a mission; its purpose is unclear. I maintain a safe distance from her, and I keep my head down. When she reaches the intersection, she glances at me, then turns right. I look down at the sidewalk. A wet *stolpersteine* twinkles at me in the darkness. Gertrude. The Gothic letters jump out at me. Ander. Markovich. Schultz.

.....

I walk over more *stolpersteine*. I don't step on the names and numbers, I just float above them. The woman leads me to a building. I can't identify it right away, even though it looks familiar. Rows and rows of orphaned benches in front of my eyes. And although there is a strange-looking pillar next to the Holy Ark, I eventually realize that this place that resembles a church or concert hall is actually a synagogue. And it's nothing like the synagogue in our neighborhood, with its broken tiles and the seats arranged in the shape of the letter *het* and the faint smell of arak that lingers no matter how often you air it out, like an obstinate devil.

The old woman disappears, and she comes back holding a broom. For a moment I think she is the witch of the synagogue, but the broom doesn't look like it was meant for a witch. She sweeps the tiles with measured movements. I approach her, and the smells of old age and chlorine fill the air.

"Und das Passwort kennst du?" She extracts the question like venom from a snakebite. I recoil from her face, from her smell.

"Und das Passwort kennst du?" she asks again, and when I don't answer, she waves her broom at me.

Breathless, I run out of there and head towards Linber, which is becoming more and more engulfed in fog. The German words pound in my head while I try to clear a path between the clouds and navigate my way back to the hotel. Why did I leave there in the first place?

If you take me to Berlin. If you take me to Linber. Why did you have to take me to Berlin? You shouldn't have taken me to Berlin. Don't take me to Berlin. Oh, please, don't take me there.

I can see the hotel through the fog. Surely that's it. Yes, there's the round porch in the front, and the taut flag, but the hotel's façade is completely obscured by the clouds. I feel as if I've been hurled into a state of limbo, and I try to get out before I myself turn into a cloud. Fear rises from my throat and mingles with the muggy air.

Once again, I find myself in front of the building. Right in the middle of Linber, there is a building covered by clouds. The old woman's words are pulsing through my head, and I suddenly realize that they are coming out of the ground. I look at the floor of the building, and I see all these brass squares, these *stolpersteine*, rising up in front of me. Swelling up and turning into skinny human bodies. Brass on the bottom, clouds on the top, and me in the middle. Letters line up before me and I can't put them together. Blue identification cards prance around in my head like wild trains. The brass bodies bend towards me.

"And you still don't know the password?" they ask me, this time in Hebrew, using the same tune the old woman had used. I stand there, unable to move. But there is no hotel and no porch and no north and no south and no guidebook.

"Everything you have is ours," they shout. "You really ought to tell us the password."

And one of the women hugs me, her brass arm slinking over my body; her eyes are full of compassion. "You don't have a choice," she says. "You have to do it. You have to come with us." And all the other brass bodies are chanting, "Look at the mouth. And the nose, and the hair. They all belong to us."

"The hair is mine," an old brass woman says, her afro sticking straight up from her head.

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"There's no time," the chlorine woman with the broom calls out.

Everyone nods at me. And all of a sudden, I understand. I know. And they know that I know. A small brass girl holds out her hand; her fingers scratch my skin. The smell of earth, of the *netherworld, of roots and rot, fills my nostrils. Another life is waiting for me. Different than the glistening life my mother had contrived for me, the life that released me from Holocaust Memorial Day, the life that refused to stand during the siren, all because he had abandoned her when she was pregnant. The Armenian Holocaust? Absolutely. Somalia-Biafra-Nigeria? Let's do it. Pancreatic cancer? We're on it. But the Holocaust won't set foot in here, do you hear me?*

"Your hair is so pretty and shiny," the girl says, her voice brimming with sympathy. Her brass hands get tangled in my roots.

"Like my hair used to be," the afro woman shouts.

"Really?" a man with a pug nose says. "When was that?"

I try to tune out their voices. I am sinking deeper and deeper into a swamp, and there's nobody to help me.
.....

Half of my body is already underground. And everyone is chanting the old woman's password. I smell the brass-scented ground, and the old woman turns to me and, switching back to German, asks me again. And everyone stands around her humming. Password. Password. "Und des Passwort kennst du?"

And it doesn't look like they're waiting for an answer.

I think about the identification card, and five letters dance in front of me. I beg them not to scatter, to keep dancing, and for a brief moment they line up, then immediately disperse, but I already know my father's name. "Stein!" I yell. You can see the disappointment on their brass faces, and they won't relent. I'm still half-submerged, but my body gets stuck there and I can't move. And everyone is crying, shedding brass tears, and the little girl releases my hand with a sigh and an accusatory look. They start to sink, and the old woman sweeps them up; when I look into the building, I see that all the *stolpersteine* are perfectly arranged.

Exhausted and dirty, I leave Linber. The clouds lift. What is that standing on the side and twinkling at me? Linberians walk past me. They are all strong and gracious, and they point me in the right direction. I whisper the password over and over again. Tomorrow I will confront you, I will look for the photos and search for the names, but right now you're waiting for me at the end of the road, between Linber and Berlin. Between the past and the future. And when we sail away, Berlin will disappear from view, and when I look behind me and ahead of me, I will see that Linber is gone as well.

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2016.

Questions for discussion:

- 1) Analyze the significance of the title of the short story by Galit Dahan Carlibach "Linber".
- 2) Analyze the setting in the story.
- 3) What are the major themes in the text?
- 4) What point of view is the story told from?
- 5) Examine the four structural elements of the story (exposition, complication, turning point, resolution).
- 6) Find the examples of foreshadowing / flashbacks. What effect is produced?
- 7) In what way can the author's use of language be characterized (simple, complex, straightforward, logical, stream of consciousness)?
- 8) The traumatized protagonist intentionally attempts to create a false version of the reality to protect herself from the traumatic effects, to forget the experience of her nation. What are the means the narrator uses to achieve that?
- 9) What are the two layers of reality in the text?
- 10) How in the 'German lover' depicted? Why is he almost silent in the story?
- 11) Characterize the events in the story, and the protagonist, her emotions and behavior through the following:
 - the lack of controllability over happening;

- a high-magnitude stressor;
 - posttraumatic factors;
 - persistence of symptoms following traumatic events;
 - transformation of the reality;
 - a coherent sense of identity, a public trauma;
 - illusionary self-deceptive version of reality;
 - impressionability and vulnerability;
 - re-experiencing.
- 12) What symbolizes the protagonist's awakening from her romantic dream?
- 13) What are the other voices in the story?
- 14) The text is deeply intertextual and symbolical. What are the parallel senses in the story, and what symbols have been used to achieve a powerful effect on the reader?

Writing task:

Write an essay on one of the following topics: a) 'The Voices of Victims' (focusing on the importance of personal writing as means of understanding the Holocaust – diaries, stories, poems); b) 'Survivor Testimony and Literature' (the biographies and memoirs that can help to personalize historical events and to establish real faces in the overwhelming sea of facts and statistics); c) 'Accounts of resistance' (thousands of unsung heroes of the Holocaust, both Jewish and non-Jewish, who resisted the Nazis in ways big or small, these remarkable stories of defiance counter the myth that Nazi victims passively submitted to their fate); d) 'The German Experience' (the focus is on life in Germany during the rise and rule of the Third Reich); e) 'Aftermath: Response and Reflection' (critical analysis of fiction, drama and poetry that honor the victims and survivors of the Holocaust).

Topics for self-study, reports and Power Point presentations:

1. 'Trauma theory' and psychoanalysis.
2. Representation of trauma in narrative.
3. Narrating gender and trauma in twentieth-century English literature.
4. Ill-effects of war as experienced by soldiers through the range of narratives by men and women writers.

Recommended reading:

- 1) "Music Box" by Deborah Chiel.
- 2) "Fatherland" by Robert Harris.
- 3) "The Runner" by Christopher Reich.
- 4) "Captain Corelli's Mandolin" by Louis de Bernieres.
- 5) "Beloved" by Tony Morrison.

Pace № 3

THE DEVELOPMENT OF FEMINISM IN ENGLISH LITERATURE OF THE XXth- XXIst CENTURIES

“Women should remain at home, sit still, keep house, and bear and bring up children. A woman is, or at least should be, a friendly, courteous, and a merry companion in life, the honour and ornament of the house, and inclined to tenderness, for thereunto are they chiefly created, to bear children, and to be the pleasure, joy and solace of their husbands”.

Martin Luther

“Do you think I can stay to become nothing to you? Do you think I am an automation? – a machine without feelings? and can you bear to have my morsel of bread snatched from my lips and my drop of living water dashed from my cup? Do you think because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soul and heartless? You think wrong! – I have as much soul as you, – and full as much heart ... I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh; — it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God’s feet, equal, – as we are!”

Charlotte Brontë, Jane Eyre

No woman can call herself free who does not own and control her body. No woman can call herself free until she can choose consciously whether she will or will not be a mother”.

Margaret Sanger

Key vocabulary:

The perception of an independent woman; gender difference issues; the oppression; the equal position in society; marriage and sexuality; motherhood; male-dominated world; British feminism; feminist men; the suffragette movement; deeply politicized aspects of personal lives, reflecting sexist power structures; equal education opportunity; the embodiment of the New Woman; post-feminism; the slight shift of the movement’s focus; the influence of prejudice in the society; far-reaching change

During the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century a new literary style emerged – modernism. That meant that literature was more naturalistic and the authors had more freedom to express sexual content. However, it wasn’t until the World War II when there was a shift in attitudes in sexuality and gender. The sexual revolution started in 1960s and lasted up to 1980s and the effect this movement caused was enormous, the revolution changed traditional behaviour related to sexuality and to relationships in general. The sexual liberation led not only to the acceptance of heterosexual relationships, but also to the open formation of

homosexual or polygamous models. There was also increased acceptance of public nudity, pornography or legalization of abortion and contraception. Many significant literary works were written during the sexual revolution, which was not only the result of to the historical turn in the Victorian scholarship but also to the increased number of women writing in that period. Subsequently, most scholarly work incorporated to some extent attention to gender and sexuality, emerging primarily from the women's movement as well as from civil rights. The literature during this period was born out of feminist interests and focused primarily on middle-class white women. The writings tended to privilege the history of feminist activism and consciousness and attempted to recover forgotten literary history of women's writing. As Pamela K. Gilbert says in her book "Gender" the early literature of this era also focused largely on "reading women writers' resistance to patriarchy and on the representation of female characters."

Colonialism and patriarchy have been closely entwined historically, but an end to formal empire has not meant an end to the oppression of women in the former colonies. Postcolonial feminists point out the ways in which women continue to be stereotyped and marginalized. The status and roles of women vary according to complex interactions between factors such as ethnicity, class, culture, and religion. Although it is difficult to generalize about postcolonial feminism, we can foreground Third World women as a broad category, within which we can explore the histories and struggles of postcolonial women against colonialism, racism, sexism, and economic forces.

A short story by Ukamaka Olisakwe focus on the female experience of African women. Ukamaka Olisakwe writes TV scripts (most recently the series "The Calabash"), essays, short stories, and has one novel, "The Eyes of a Goddess" (2012). Selected in 2014 by the Africa39 Project as one of the continent's most promising writers under the age of 40, she has had her work appear in *New York Times* and on the *BBC*, as well as been published in *Jalada*, *Saraba*, *Sentinel Nigeria* and *Short Story Day Africa*. She lives in Lagos.

1. *What is the history of women's rights in the United Kingdom? What does the notion 'suffragette movement' imply?*
2. *How might the rein of Queen Elizabeth I dictated the way Elizabethan writers were permitted to present women? How did each British male poet handle the challenge of depicting women?*
3. *What are the differences between depictions of women written by male and female novelists?*
4. *What are the different problems faced by wealthy female characters in English literature as opposed to poor?*
5. *How far have women's rights advanced within the scope of the XXth-XXIst centuries?*
6. *What is the position of a woman in the former British colonies and today's Africa in particular?*

7. *Comment on the two quotes by Barack Obama: “We need to keep changing the attitude that teaches men to feel threatened by the presence and success of women”; “It is absolutely men’s responsibility to fight sexism too”.*

Ukamaka OLISAKWE
Nkem’s Nightmare

I visited my mother in Kano, in the same two-bedroom apartment I had grown up in, to say I was leaving my husband. Nothing had changed here since I moved away with my husband Edu to Onitsha in southeastern Nigeria. The sitting room ceiling had the same brown patch, the long stuffed chair was coming off at the seams, and the black-and-white Philips TV still sat atop the old cabinet whose wooden shelves held all our important family memorabilia – from my father’s Frederick Forsythe books on top of the shelf, to the Kenwood turntable, and the old records of Nelly Uchendu, Onyeka Onwenu, King Sunny Ade, and Ebenezer Obey. But my father’s favourite part of the chair was unoccupied, and I wondered if my mother allowed anyone to sit in it since his death three years ago.

“You still have papa’s books,” I said to my mother, breaking the awkward silence.

We had been sitting, facing each other. While my mother went through the bag of beverages on her lap, I rubbed my swollen feet. I had sat in the bus for over 12 hours, the longest journey I had ever taken in my adult life. As a child, I always looked forward to Christmas. When we all travelled down to our hometown Abagana, I and my four siblings and my parents cramped in the small space of the Ekene Dili Chukwu bus, because my father would only buy tickets for three seats. Back then, my siblings and I would count the hours in excitement, barely sleeping, until we got to the village. Now, I wonder how we survived that ordeal.

“I was going to give them away,” my mother said and it took me a while to realise she was talking about the books. “He bought all of Fredrick Forsythe books because he heard that the man wrote something about Biafra.”

We looked so different, like strangers. My mother’s faded blue and yellow kirikiri star wrapper paled against my red gown, a gift from Edu when he returned from Italy.

“You still have the Philips stabilizer,” I said, my gaze settling on the small brown box in one of the shelves.

“It doesn’t work anymore.” My mother put the bag away at her feet and said, “Daalu for the gifts.”

I stared at the tired lines around her eyes. “Do you still have papa’s Mario game? Papa always locked it up in his drawer.” I laughed, but my mother had stopped smiling.

“You didn’t sit in a bus all through the night to come and talk about the things your father left behind,” she said.

I thought of how to begin. Her eyes bored holes in mine, searching for answers that didn’t need sugar-coating. And so I simply told her I was leaving Edu.

“What?” She sat up, her English clipped. “What?”
“I am done with that marriage. I am not going back.”

She opened and closed her mouth, a baffled expression wrinkling her forehead. “What do you mean you are leaving your husband?” She finally said. “Did God not bless you with four sons?”

“I was too young to know what I was getting into,” I said, almost shouting.

She folded her hands over her chest, removed them, and folded them back again. “You were too young? You were too young? I married your father when I was fourteen.”

I stared at her, and then at their wedding photograph on the wall. I had always imagined my mother an adult. “What do you mean fourteen?”

But my mother was already saying things, her words rushed, as she talked about how proud she had been when I got married, that she had danced at the market when she got the call about the birth of my first son, Ogenna. Now she had to deal with the shame I was planning to bring. She asked questions whose answers I couldn’t give – Why would you do this to me, your mother? How could you think of ruining your father’s good name? Her chest rose and fell.

“Only women who have affairs leave their peaceful homes,” she continued, “and I know you are not one of those women because I raised you well.” Her voice shook as she spoke. “I can’t talk about this now.” When she stood up, her wrapper slipped to the floor, revealing her black knee-length underwear. She grabbed the frail cloth. “I have akara to sell. Go and take your bath. I left the mkpuruoka wrapper on my bed for you.”

I stood up to do as she had said, but my mind was overwhelmed by the foggy reality of her words, and I struggled not to think of the man I was seeing, the reason I had left Edu and my children to seek my mother’s permission to end my marriage. Ebuka.

Ebuka was no different from the men who disliked my feminist posts on Facebook, but unlike the others who said the cause was turning women to devil worship and lesbianism, Ebuka said it was lack of problems that made people talk nonstop about patriarchy and abortion rights when they could channel that energy to important problems like child marriages, the children dying in poor African countries and the rate of unemployment.

When I started my women empowerment campaign on my page, I blocked so many of the men who criticized my posts. There was Olukoye who said that I was possibly in an unhappy marriage. Before Olukoye was Kene who said I was abused as child. Festus had asked if I was unmarried. The angry men tramped to my page with the gallantry of commandoes rushing to defend the male kingdom from female derision. They did not deliberate on the points I raised but made personal attacks as though they knew me beyond Facebook. I added as many names as possible to my list of blocked angry men. It was only after other friends pointed out my lack of tolerance in these discussions that I began to ignore the diversionary voices.

I was my parents' first daughter. At sixteen I was married off to our neighbour Edu, who lived on the floor above ours. I had never liked him. Actually, I had liked him once, when I was eight or nine.

He was the uncle in the compound who fended off the bullies and gave us treats of biscuits and sweets. He cracked his knuckles and thumped Ikenna on the head once, for mocking my height. He had jokes for every child, and helped us with our difficult homeworks. On weekends, he let us watch Indian movies in his large sitting room after we had done our chores. At the end of every term, he assembled us in front of his door and he gave us gifts according to how well we performed at school.

I always came first in my class and so I received the best shoes or dresses, and he would crush me in his bosom and swing me in circles until I was giddy with laughter. Those early days, Edu's words and gifts propelled me to stay up at night to read my books.

But things changed after I turned twelve. He began to hug me a little longer, my small breasts crushed against his chest. He played with my fingers when he held my hands and asked me to sit on his lap when I took things to his flat. At first, I thought nothing of it, but I grew uncomfortable under his intense stare. Being in the same space with him became an ordeal. I stopped joining other children to watch movies in his room, and avoided him at every turn, except when he ordered akara and bread from my mother's stall in the evenings. He would try to hold my eyes, or call my name but I would pound the pestle against the peppers and onions in the mortar, loud enough to pretend I didn't hear him. Afterwards, my mother would drag me by an ear and ask me why I was rude to him. Didn't I know that he was her best customer?

It became a routine. I avoided him or pretended he was not there when he was close by, but he never stopped visiting our stall, or trying to get me to talk to him.

A day after my senior WAEC, Edu appeared at our door. I still remember very clearly, the blue cord lace up-and-down he wore that day, how his black sandals shone. He said he wanted to see my parents and my father appeared behind me and welcomed him in. They talked for hours. Later, that evening, my mother sang as she spooned in bean dough into boiling oil, and she sang Igbo songs of praise as she wrapped akara for perplexed customers.

After dinner and my sisters had gone to bed, my father offered me his favourite seat. He called me 'ada m', the affectionate term he used when he was happy, which was rare, and then he launched into the meat of the story, his eyes glistening. He said Edu had asked for my hand in marriage, that he had promised to send me to the university. I looked at my mother; this was surely a joke, but her eyes were wet with tears, and she was bobbing her head up and down, smiling and wiping her face with the end of her wrapper.

"God has remembered us," she said, rubbing her hands which were speckled with scars from hot oil burns.

My father suddenly seemed younger; the lines that always furrowed his brows had disappeared. My refusal began, but it died in my throat when he said Edu also promised to give my mother money to set up a proper business.

Everything happened so fast. In three months, I was married to Edu, we moved to Onitsha, and I was pregnant. Ten years, four sons and three miscarriages later, I had yet to go to the university, and only found succour on Facebook after a friend introduced me to a closed women's group.

And so, when Ebuka hopped on my post to tell me how I should have been channelling my energy to child marriages and children dying in poor African countries, I wanted to laugh.

I ignored his comment until he launched into a long talk about the evils of abortion, and how he believed that no sane society should grant women that right.

“Why would you want to abort it when you can close your legs?” He continued. “Why would you want to kill an unborn child when you can choose not to get pregnant in the first place?”

I read his comment and was puzzled by how easily people who would never go through an experience lord it over others who could never escape them.

“Abortion is like dropping bombs on children in middle-east Asia,” Ebuka said. “It is inhumane. I am disappointed that you, who I have come to respect, would associate with such evil.”

I was struck by his assumption, by how he had said that women who didn't want children had no business getting pregnant, as though it were as simple as he thought. And then, I worried that I cared too much about this stranger's opinion; this stranger whom I could not remember accepting or adding as a friend.

I felt an urge to tell him about my four pregnancies, the miscarriages I suffered, and how Edu insisted that he wanted six children. But I picked up my phone again and wrote him a stinker.

I have the right – no, I have the moral right to choose what to do with my own body. I have the right to live. I am a human being. You are ignorant of the fact that childbirth completely affects the life of a woman. You do not even acknowledge the need for abortion under certain conditions; to you: I, and other women fighting for that right are murderers, senseless, unreasonable murderers. I should know better than engage to a man on a subject men will never experience. But if this discussion, this waste of time, has proven one thing, it shows that I have shameless misogynists lurking on my timeline. Please do me a favour and jump off a bridge. Save the world one more menace. I logged off. That night, I slapped Edu's hands off when he reached for my breasts and yelled at my house help when she turned the volume of the TV too high. I locked myself in the bathroom and stood under the shower. Something warm burned the back of my eyes. At only twenty-six years old, I finally questioned the path my life had taken, why I gave in to my parents' wishes, if I was built to be a mother. I stood there, tasting the salt of my tears as warm water hit my back.

When I logged on to Facebook the following morning and saw Ebuka's lengthy response to my last comment, I expected a harsh riposte, but I saw that he had withdrawn his previous words. He didn't mean it personally, he said, as if saying this excused the gravity of his ignorance, and he was not targeting women who had valid conditions that required the procedure. His comments were directed at those who said they could choose to get pregnant at first and not want to go ahead with it later because to them, getting pregnant was like ordering jollof rice and changing their minds about the delicacy when it was served. I laughed; I had never imagined that anyone would liken childbirth to something as ludicrous as eating jollof rice. I went to his wall.

With my Opera Mini browser, I could never quite see the avatars of the people I engaged with unless I visited their walls, and I had become comfortable with it. Seeing Ebuka reaffirmed why I continued using that browser.

He had an enviable elegance. I squinted at his photos – at the warm eyes hidden behind bold-framed Ray-Ban perched atop a remarkable nose. His groomed, full beard swallowed half his face and his skin was so clear and so fair, like it had never toiled under the sun. He had the body that hinted at a man towering at over 6'4, and his muscles were taut under his shirt, stretching from shoulder to shoulder. I had never seen a man so beautiful.

I wrote him a message, read it and rewrote it again. I searched for a balance between confidence and sincerity. I didn't want to come off as weak, and also didn't want to be perceived as arrogant.

I should not have said what I said. But bear in mind that your words were offensive, borderline ridiculous and hilariously arrogant. I should have showed you why you were ten ways wrong. I shouldn't have called you a misogynist. Biko don't jump off a bridge. I clicked Send. There was a brief moment when I regretted the note; what if he misread my intent and published it on his wall to shame me. That would kill me. I wished I could recall the message. I worried about the reputation I had overtime earned on the platform, and how it would all be flushed down the toilet all because of one unguarded moment. I wanted to slap myself and then I scrolled down his timeline and clicked on 'Block this person'. Perhaps if he wasn't able to find me on the platform, the shame would be less. But I didn't confirm the request.

I stayed online all day, waiting for his reaction, refreshing my page over and over again. By the end of that day he still hadn't replied. What if he published the private message when I was asleep? I would wake up to find my image tattered and splayed from wall to wall on Facebook. Other angry, sulking men would mock me to no end. I sat with my children in the sitting room, watching them watch Cartoon Network, my mind returning again and again to that message. I refused to go to bed. I tried to think of damage control, but tiredness reached to the verges of my mind. I was still debating whether to block him when I dozed off.

I woke up with a start, and it was just me and TV. My neck ached from resting in one position and when I saw that my phone was blinking from the floor where it

had slipped to, I snatched it. The battery had dwindled to three percent, but as I hurried to plug it to charge, the phone went off and NEPA struck at that moment.

It was the longest night as I lay in bed. I prepared my mind for a robust response, and then it occurred to me that Facebook was the only place I flourished, the only world where I truly lived. I fiddled with the Samsung Galaxy phone. Edu had given it to me on my birthday and had told me how much he bought it in China, as though by letting me in on that information, I would appreciate it better. I wondered what life would have been if there was no Facebook, if I had no cell phone. Onitsha was a dead place, a thriving commercial town that was dead because it lacked the diversity Kano had. I had no friends. Edu wanted me to associate only with the wives of his friends, those women who talked only about the latest clothes and shoes and called themselves by their husband's aliases – Nwunye Emeka Japan, Nwunye Edu China, Nwunye Nonso London – monikers that set my nerves on edge. I was still rummaging on these thoughts when I fell asleep.

By morning when I saw Ebuka's response, my stomach caved in, and then I wanted to laugh and laugh after I read his message.

Nkem, daalu. Your message just made my day and it has increased my respect for you. The truth is I was not angry when you said I hate women, I only felt you misread my point. But that misunderstanding didn't diminish my respect or how much I enjoy reading your posts and the insightful points you bring to the board. Earlier on today, I was writing an app for Vodatek Inc. before NEPA struck and I lost all the work I did today because our company's UPS was not switched on in the morning and my computer didn't back up all I had done. I wanted to smash something before I saw your message, and now it's the best thing I've seen all day. Thank you, Nkem. Thank you for brightening my day.

I read it the tenth time and then I made a screenshot of it. I returned to stare at his photos. There was no reference to what he did for a living, but he had just told me that he wrote apps and even mentioned the firm he was currently writing one for. And I knew that he wanted me to check him out, else why would he add that detail? I Googled him and he had over 160,000 mentions. He had won the best award for writing an app for most of the major banks in the country. He was the managing partner at Nigeria's top IT company and had represented his company at top IT conferences all over the world. I felt proud that I, who did not attend a higher institution, was able to have his type following me religiously. I quickly checked my photos, all 47 of them, and looked out for his comments or likes, I found none. That realisation, that he had been drawn to me because of what I had to say other than my physical appearance, made me smile. And I carried myself with extra pride.

I sent him a reply, "I'm glad you are not offended. But, mind you, I do not agree with you one bit!" I made to click Send but felt that it sounded too harsh, and so I added a face-with-tears-of-joy emoji.

His reply came in seconds, along with a face-with-stuck-out-tongue-and-winking-eye emoji.

"It will be a day when you agree with me! Ha, I will frame that response and hang it on the wall in my room!" He wrote.

My face grew warm. There was something intimate in the way he said it. I sent him another inane reply, adding the necessary emoji to explain how fast my heart beat at the sight of his messages, and he sent quick replies, laughed at how I had told him to jump off a bridge, said he was saddened that I dismissed him like he was nothing, and pointed how many of my posts he always returned to. My head felt stuffed with wool. Later, I stood before my mirror, frowned at my reflection and wondered what was special about my bland, unremarkable face, what Ebuka really saw in me beyond my posts.

But by morning, I had run out of excuses to strike up another conversation with Ebuka and feared that anymore messages to him would come off as trolling. So I began to search for the legit reason to kick off another conversation, something that wouldn't give me away.

I looked him up again on Google, downloaded the seminar topics he had given, and read his papers all day and by morning of the following day, I was bustling with questions about why Nigeria was yet to catch up with Information Technology like Rwanda, a country still recovering from war. I wrote and rewrote my question, sifted it of sentimental thoughts that wouldn't tell how much I yearned to read from him. Ebuka replied immediately, as though, he, too, had been looking for reasons to hit up a conversation. He asked how I was, if I had a good night rest, how he had missed talking to me; his words submerged in the warmth of a man that would rather talk about us than IT. Then he launched into a brief explanation on why Rwanda had become Africa's IT centre.

The next day, after my children had gone to school, I sat through breakfast with Edu, picking through my food. It was only after he had left for work that I began to live. I scrolled through my chat with Ebuka, read up all of our conversations, counted how many times he had started a chat trail, and soaked up the words that gave away what he felt. After I had convinced myself that I was not imagining the new relationship, I sent him a message, a simple 'good morning, Ebuka. Hope you slept well?' His response came immediately. We stayed online, talking, and when I checked the clock thirty minutes later, it was time to get my children from school.

In a month, we knew each other's responses, had shared our growing up stories, and I was comfortable enough to talk about my sons. In two months, he sent me his private numbers and when we talked for the first time, his words were rushed like he had just returned from a marathon. Our conversations stretched from my knowledge about music, to the apps he wrote, and my dreams of going back to school. He applauded my posts and argued strongly when he didn't agree with my views. We yelled at each other but the fights had become tamed; we disagreed with the enthusiasm of people who had grown to know each other like the lines in the palms.

It was so easy to talk to him, to say anything without feeling awkward, and misstep without feeling stupid. He listened and then he said the right words or he said nothing at all, and it was always the best conversations. I could not understand how I hadn't met someone like him before Edu, where he had been all my life, if people around him were also left breathless by the sound of his voice, the hum of his

laughter, the care in his words. He made me see my strength and brilliance. For the first time in years, I recognized myself in the mirror, laughed a lot louder and fell in love with my own voice.

One evening, I served Edu and our children joll of rice and fried plantain, and then moimoi I had prepared with corned beef, fish and eggs. Edu finished his first serving and asked for more.

“The moimoi is so sweet!” Nonso, my second son, said. “I want more!”

“What are we celebrating,” Edu said. “It’s been a long time since you prepared my favourite dish. Or what do you want me to buy for you? You deserve anything you ask for today.”

He was smiling, his eyes wet with eagerness. He rubbed my back, winked and returned to his food. I realized I always served him his favourite food when I wanted to ask for something, like going back to school, but each time, he repeated his promise to send me back to any university of my choice after I had given him two more children.

I moved my moimoi in my plate with my spoon, and said, “I want to go to Abuja.”

Edu pushed back his plate, his shoulder defiantly set. “What?”

“I want to visit my sister Nonye,” I said. His eyes searched mine. “She has been hospitalized. My mother can’t visit because she is not feeling too well either.”

Edu resumed eating, his spoon clashing against the enamel plate. I stared at this man I had called my husband for years. Though we had shared the same bed every night since our wedding, he still looked like the old stranger I had been wary of.

He mumbled something about thinking about it, got up and left the room, his footsteps heavy on the floor. “Are you traveling, mummy?” Nnamdi asked, my last boy, his plate of moimoi untouched.

“Yes, I am travelling. Just for a few days and I will be back.”

Later, in bed, Edu lifted my dress, pulled down my underwear, and slid in his finger, his other hand squeezing my breast. I looked at the ceiling, at the familiar spot that had become the lone spectator to our lovemaking. As Edu’s breath quickened and he heaved and jerked above me, I began to count the boards. His moans filled the room as I counted twenty boards, and he got off before I was done counting all forty of them, as always. I sighed, relieved. Something wet dripped down to the back of my leg, staining the sheet.

“You will go tomorrow,” Edu said, pulling on his shirt. “But you must be back in three days.”

There was a moment when I wanted to leap up and hug him, but I stayed back as warm tears trickled down the sides of my eyes.

After Edu’s snores ricocheted around the walls, I reached for my phone and began to send Ebuka a message.

“I will be in Abuja tomorrow,” I wrote, “to see my sister. If you are in town, lucky you.” But I didn’t click Send. I knew he would reply immediately he saw the

message, and he would want to know all the details of my arrival. I switched off the phone, saving the excitement for when I got to Abuja.

I dreamt I was sitting in an exam hall, my papers laid out before me, but I didn't know the answers to the questions. I was shrouded with a sense of failure so frightening that when I woke up, I was shivering. I didn't want to go on the trip anymore. My mind bubbled with questions as Edu dropped me off at the Enugu airport. I wondered how Ebuka would react when he met me, if he would be put off.

The air was different when we disembarked from the Arik flight. Abuja smelled of freedom so crushing I took in deep breaths. The people carried themselves with extra puff on their shoulders, talked with accents and young girls drove nice cars, girls much younger than me, who didn't have wedding rings.

Later, I checked in at a hotel in Apo which I had looked up. The room – 411 – was a small quaint place with generous splash of colours, and a bed wide enough to contain a family of five. It was only after I had showered I checked my phone. Edu had called three times, and Ebuka had sent ten messages, asking why I wasn't responding to his chat. I called Edu. He wanted to know if I had seen my sister, and I said I was at the hospital. I sent Ebuka a 'good afternoon', and he responded in seconds, asking if I was okay. I said I was. He talked about his day, said he was yet to order lunch.

"I don't know what to order," I said.

"Order? What do you mean 'order'? Where are you Nkem."

"Somewhere far away from home."

He called immediately, his words tripling over themselves. He wanted to know that everything was ok – Just tell me where you are Nkem.

I told him.

"What?"

"I'm some minutes away from your place of work."

He hung up.

I dialed his number again and he didn't pick up. I tried to settle in, thought of ordering lunch, but I was worried because he had refused to take my calls. I called Nonye to fill her in and said we would meet later in the evening. Ebuka's call came as I ended Nonye's call.

"What's your room number?" His breath came in short gasps.

I stood in the middle of the room, my stomach knotted in tension. A knock came to the door, and I forgot how to walk. They came again, soft tap-tap, like a plea. My knees carried me to the door, my lungs struggled to suck in air. I pulled the latch open and he stood there, as tall as an iroko, with a chest wide as a board. He made a sound – or I did, something incomprehensible, that sounded like a moan – and then I was crushed in his arms. Time took flight, nothing else mattered, my heart thudded in my ears, and hot breath fanned my ear. Ebuka tightened his grip. "This is you, Nkem," he said.

"You are so tall," I said.

He kicked off his shoes, made me climb on his feet. At my six feet, he was still taller. He held my head in place against his shoulder, warm air fanned the back of my neck.

“See?” His breath smelled of fresh mint, “We are both tall.”

There was a moment when air was sucked out of the room. I rubbed against him, kissed his neck, eyes, nose. He made small sounds, rubbed his nose against my cheeks. I removed his glasses, searched his eyes, for the juju that held me captive. He held my face in his hands and said, “This is my happiest day”, before holding me in another long hug.

“I wanted to surprise you,” I said.

“You gave me a heart attack.” He pressed his lips against my forehead. “This is the best thing, ever.”

There was no hurry about him. He did not tear at my dress, or rush to know my body. We only lay in bed, cuddling and whispering things I never remembered, and occasionally, he pushed my hair to the back of my ears, talking and looking me in the eyes. It was all I ever wanted, all that mattered.

The day rolled by before I could blink and Ebuka did not stay for the night. I felt a certain pride that for the first time, a man was not itching to grab my breasts and part my legs. After he left, at a few minutes past 11 pm, I lay in bed, all through the night, even after he had sent message to confirm he had gotten home. I wondered if it was a crime to want this kind of freedom, to live all by myself, to have the right to choose what I wanted, for the first time in my life.

The second day, I met up with Nonye at a Chicken Republic in Wuse and told her a story about how I had come to seek for admission at the University of Abuja. She hissed.

“So he finally allowed you to breathe? Odikwa egwu.”

Nonye never talked to Edu. I longed to tell her about Ebuka, and wondered if she would approve of him. It had been years since I left home, and Nonye was no longer the thirteen-year old child who wept on my wedding day. She had acquired the airs Abuja girls carried. After she left, I realized I envied her.

The remaining days flew by. Ebuka worked from my hotel room, his laptop cradled in his lap, his feet buried under his thighs, and he pushed his glasses further back his nose when he wanted to punch the keyboard. He would take short breaks, cuddle against my back, and doze off, only to wake up to return a call or type a few more words.

“You will come back again,” he said on our last night together. He sounded desperate, holding my face, squeezing my shoulders, enfolding me in a hug. “You will come back again.”

A dark cloud loomed as we landed in Enugu. Edu stood by his Toyota SUV, talking into his phone. He simply got back into his car when he saw me, and still talking into his phone, nodded when I mouthed greetings.

The trip back to Onitsha was the longest. After he had ended his call, he turned to me and said, “And how is that rude sister of yours?” He continued, “She is finally getting better?”

I stared at him, his gaze darted between the road and my face. “I allowed you to go only because of your mother. That your sister does not deserve my niceness. I wonder where she picked up that rude attitude from.”

“I did family planning,” I said.

“Eh?”

“I am not going to have any more kids,” I said. “I am done.”

Edu rolled the car to a stop along the road. It was just me and him and the vast bush. Cars whizzed past us. “What did you just say?” he asked, his voice strained.

“You took advantage of me.”

“You are not yourself,” his words were clipped, “You have been fed poison by that sister of yours.”

“I did that by myself, after my last miscarriage. I took contraceptive injections.”

He grabbed my collar, asked who gave me the permission, if I knew the gravity of what I did, why I betrayed him.

“I will never have another child,” I repeated, like a song. “I won’t go through that again.”

I saw the dark lines that streaked his palm before the slap pelted my left cheek, a punch followed, he was yelling, asking what demon had possessed me. I was consumed with pain, and then a crushing happiness, as he kicked and slapped. He had given me the reason to leave. It wasn’t until hands pulled me away from him did I realize that I had been screaming.

“She is my wife! She is my wife!” Edu said to the two men dragging him. They looked at me, and then they left him.

One man told him he shouldn’t have hit me, the other said he should have waited until we got home. Other cars had rolled over, men and women asking what had happened. Edu talked with the men and some women asked me to go beg my husband.

I could have begged Edu when he got back into his car. I could have gotten into the car with him as the people urged me to, but I stood back, watching as he drove off in a huff, until his taillights disappeared at a corner.

2016.

Questions for discussion:

1. How does Olisakwe’s description and analysis of the protagonist indicate her own feminist agenda?
2. Can women’s financial and social rights be separated? Why? Support your idea.
3. What is the connection of motherhood and a personal freedom of a woman in the story?
4. What is the setting in the story? What point of view is the story told in?
5. How are the characters depicted (are they flat or round, controversial, thick with details)?

6. What are the signs of confusion between the protagonist and her mother? Analyze the body language of the characters in the story.

7. In what way does the life, social status of the protagonist and her personal attitude towards her own role in the society change on the different stages of her life?

8. How is the social position of an average Nigerian woman reflected in the text?

9. Analyze the smells and sounds, depicted in the story. What is the role of the artistic details in the story?

10. In what way the title, the names of the characters and the numbers are related to the plot? What additional senses do they convey?

11. What are the stylistic devices in the work by Nigerian author? In what way can the author's use of language / tone be characterized (simple, complex, straightforward, logical, stream of consciousness)?

12. A feminist reading of Osofovo's work is focusing on the representation of women in the story, reveals a subordinate status of women in African society. What is the role of male characters in the text? In what way is their behavior predicted by social norms?

Table 1. *A Timeline of Struggle for Women's Rights in Britain*

Date	Achievement
1135-1154	Matilda claims the throne of England but there is another claimant called Stephen and the two fight a long civil war
1553	Mary Tudor becomes queen of England. She is the first woman to rule England in her own right.
1637	Amye Everard Ball is the first woman in England to be granted a patent (for making tinctures from flowers)
1660	Margaret Hughes becomes the first professional actress. (Before then women's parts were played by boys).
17th century	In towns boarding schools for girls are founded. Girls are taught writing, music and needlework.
1693	The first women's magazine "The Ladies Mercury" is published
1792	Mary Wollstonecraft publishes "A Vindication of the Rights of Women"
1804	Alicia Meynell is the first recorded woman jockey
1811	The first women's golf tournament takes place in Scotland
1842	A law bans women and boys under 10 from working underground in mines
1847	A Factory Act said that women and children could only work 10 hours a day in textile factories
1853	In Britain an "Act for the Better Prevention and Punishment of aggravated assaults upon women and children" is passed. A man who beats his wife can be imprisoned for up to 6 months with or without hard labor.
1867	A law forbids women to work more than 10 hours a day in any factory
1868	Women are first admitted to university in Britain but they are awarded certificates of proficiency not degrees
1869	John Stuart Mill publishes "The Subjection of Women"
1870	Married women are legally allowed to keep their own earnings
1878	In Britain a new law bans women from working more than 56 hours a week in any factory. A law allows a woman to obtain a separation order from a magistrate if her husband is violent.

1880	In Britain three women are awarded degrees by the University of London. They are the first women to be awarded degrees by a British university.
1882	In Britain a law allows married women to own property in their own right
1884	Women first play tennis at Wimbledon
1888	Women are allowed to vote in county and borough elections
1892	Isabella Bird becomes the first woman member of the Royal Geographical Society
1894	Women are allowed to vote in urban district, rural district and parish councils
1895	Lilian Lindsay becomes the first woman in Britain to qualify as a dentist
1898	Ethel Charles becomes the first woman in Britain to qualify as an architect
1899	Hertha Ayrton becomes the first woman member of the Institution of Electrical Engineers
1908	Aldeburgh becomes the first town in Britain to have a woman mayor (Elizabeth Garrett Anderson)
1913	Emily Dawson is the first woman magistrate in Britain
1914	Britain gets its first policewomen
1917	In Britain the Women's Royal Naval Service is formed
1918	In Britain women over 30 are allowed to vote if they meet a property qualification
1919	A new law opens certain professions to women. They are allowed to be solicitors, barristers, vets and chartered accountants. They are also allowed to be magistrates and members of juries. The Women's Engineering Society is formed. Britain also gets its first female MP.
1922	Ivy Williams is the first woman called to the bar of England and Wales
1923	Ethel Mary Colman is the first woman Lord Mayor in Britain (of Norwich)
1928	In Britain all women over 21 are allowed to vote the same as men
1929	Margaret Bondfield becomes the first woman cabinet minister in Britain
1946	Lilian Lindsay becomes the first woman president of the British Dental Association
1955	Barbara Mandell becomes the first woman newsreader on British TV
1956	Rose Heilbron becomes the first woman judge in Britain
1958	Hilda Harding becomes the first woman bank manager in Britain
1970	An Equal Pay Act is passed in Britain
1972	Rose Heilbron becomes the first woman judge at the Old Bailey (The Central Criminal Court of England and Wales)
1973	In Britain women are allowed to join the stock exchange for the first time
1975	"The Sex Discrimination Act" makes it illegal to discriminate against women in employment, education and training
1976	Mary Langdon becomes the first female fire fighter in Britain
1979	Margaret Thatcher becomes the first woman prime minister of Britain
1983	Mary Donaldson becomes the first woman Lord Mayor of London
1995	Pauline Clare becomes the first female chief constable in Britain

Writing task:

Write an essay on one of the topics suggested: a) "How has feminism either positively or negatively changed society?"; b) "Feminism in the post-colonial civilization"; c) "XXIst-century feminism"; d) "A Doll's House Feminism"; e) "Black feminism in Britain"; f) "The global picture of women's status in the world"; g) "Violence towards women today".

Topics for self-study, reports and Power Point presentations:

- 1) A definition of feminism. A brief historical background.
- 2) Perception of feminism today.
- 3) Male and female writers on the topic of feminism (Charlotte Bronte “Jane Eyre”, Thomas Hardy “Far from the Madding Crowd”, Virginia Woolf “Mrs. Dalloway”, Jeanette Winterson “Oranges are not the Only Fruit”).

Recommended reading:

- 1) “Women and Power. A Manifesto” by Mary Beard.
- 2) “Wife of Bath” by Geoffrey Chaucer.
- 3) “The Roaring Girl” by Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker.
- 4) “Tess of the d’Urbervilles” by Thomas Hardy.
- 5) “Lady’s Chatterley’s Lover”, “Women in Love” by D.H. Lawrence.
- 6) “Emma” by Jane Austen.

Pace № 4

LITERATURE AND HUMAN RIGHTS ON A GLOBAL SCALE

“Literature needs freedom – and freedom needs literature”.
The Guardian, 2013.

“Literature allows the victim to become a survivor and stand up to the past to ensure a better future. It is literature that carries the human experience, reaches our hearts, and makes us feel the pain of those who have been treated unjustly. Without literature and narrative, we would lose our dignity as human beings and will dissolve in the darkness of time and our repeated mistakes that lead us from one preventable devastation to the next”.
Marina Nemat, “Leila”.

“Wherever men and women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must – at that moment – become the center of the universe”.
Elie Wiesel

“The rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one man are threatened”.
John F. Kennedy

“Knowledge makes a man unfit to be a slave”.
Frederick Douglass

“Because to take away a man’s freedom of choice, even his freedom to make the wrong choice, is to manipulate him as though he were a puppet and not a person”.

Madeleine L’Engle

Key vocabulary:

The age of human rights, basic freedom, social democracy, the West narratives, the images of human rights, the affluent West, street campaigns, to structure the ways of thinking, the array of texts-historical, to expand understanding, the representation in details, a variety of angles, the current political landscape, spectatorship, power, a vital debate, the myriad constitutive disciplines of law, unlawful literature, ‘a prisoner of applause’, humanitarian grounds, the concept of “Engaged Literature”

Throughout modern history, literature has been vital to cultivating respect for human rights and the many values tied to their norms. Literature is a tool for empathy, for education and for awareness-raising. A range of social issues central to the development of contemporary rights thinking embraces slavery, private property, empire, women’s rights, refugees, labor rights, which were reflected in some canonical literary works by Melville, Kafka, Mary Shelly. We trace the rise of a global human rights movement in the late XXth century, focusing on key issues like torture, censorship, genocide, mass incarceration, and apartheid, and key authors (Solzhenitsyn, Cortazar, Goldimer, Ondaatje).

Ma Thida is a Burmese human rights activist, surgeon, writer, and former prisoner of conscience. In October of 1994, she was arrested and sentenced to 20 years in Insein Prison on the charges of “endangering public peace, having contact with illegal organizations, and distributing unlawful literature.” In 1996 she was the recipient of that year’s PEN/Barbara Goldsmith Freedom to Write Award, but she was not released until 1999, after serving six years in harsh conditions. She was released on humanitarian grounds due in part to her declining health, international pressure, and advocacy on the part of human rights organizations like Amnesty International and the PEN network.

1. *What are the major social issues in English literature of the XXth-XXIst centuries?*
2. *What stands behind the term ‘the coming-of-the-age novel’?*
3. *Comment on the ethnicity in literature.*
4. *In what way the formal qualification of the writer / their basic profession influences / are reflected in their writings?*
5. *Comment on ‘the dependence on prior cultural knowledge’ as a device for understanding art / the work of literature.*

Ma THIDA
A Brief Biography
(An essay and a story)

1966

I was born.

England defeated West Germany 4-2 in London to win the World Cup of soccer.

American poet Adrienne Rich publishes her fourth collection of poetry, Necessities of life, written almost entirely in free verse.

Indira Gandhi became head of the Congress Party and the first female prime minister of India.

General Suharto took power after bloody coup and civil war, and then Indonesian forests became open for foreign concessionaries resulting widespread deforestation.

1967,68,69,70

My body, mind and heart were nurtured by my dad and mom.

My body was developed.

My mind was raised.

My heart was cultivated.

Latin American author Gabriel Garcia Marquez completed his epic novel 'One Hundred Years of Solitude'.

South African surgeon Christian Barnard carries out the first human heart transplant.

American women organized marches to protest the Vietnam War.

Apollo 11's American astronaut Neil A. Armstrong became the first human being to step onto the moon's surface.

Golda Meir became the first woman prime minister of Israel.

British and American medical researchers develop the CAT scan, which integrates thousands of Xray images into a detailed picture.

1971,72,73,74,75,76,77,78,79,80,81,82,83

My various birthdays were passing.

My hair's birthday.

My eyes' birthday.

My ears' birthday.

My mouth's birthday.

My throat's birthday.

My right hand's birthday.

My left hand's birthday.

My body's birthday.

My legs' birthday.

My mind's birthday. My heart's birthday.

Women in Jordan got the right to vote.

The world's population surpassed four billion.

In Berlin, the World Congress for International Women's Year opens with almost 2000 delegates from 141 countries.

Labour minister Tina Anselmi became the first woman in the Italian Cabinet.

Margaret Thatcher became the first woman prime minister of Great Britain.

The first birth of a human child conceived through in vitro fertilization, a technique pioneered by British doctors Patrick Steptoe and RG Edwards.

The World Health Organization declared that smallpox had been eradicated three years after the last known case.

The internet was invented.

1984

Ma Thida (sanchaung)1 was born.

In Bhopal, India, a Union Carbide chemical plant explosion killed 3300 people and injured thousands seriously.

American researcher Robert Gallo and French researcher Luc Montagnier announced independent discoveries of the virus later named HIV.

Desmond Tutu, later Archbishop of Cape Town and head of the Anglican Church in South Africa, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his leadership in the national struggle against apartheid.

1985, 86, 87

My right hand, tongue and heart were reborn on pages of paper.

My right hand prominently developed, tongue consistently fluent, heart steadily warm.

My brain, right hand and tongue re-grew up at the hospital.

My brain prominently developed, right hand consistently active, tongue steadily warm.

The Nigerian playwright and novelist Wole Soyinka wins the Nobel Prize for Literature.

An accident in one of the atomic reactors at Chernobyl in the Soviet Ukraine led to the worst disaster in civilian nuclear power.

1988-89

I was born by myself.

My right hand, tongue, brain and heart no longer developing and active, becoming burnt.

However, a new "me" was reborn from the organs remaining from original "me".

The deforestation rate in Brazil's Amazon region peaks and attracts increased international concern.

Benazir Bhutto became the prime minister of Pakistan.

1990

Dr Ma Thida was born by myself.

But I was slowly turning frail.

My right hand was no longer developed, my tongue no longer fluent, my heart became boiled.

My brain was no longer developed, my right hand no longer active, my tongue became burnt.

Some parts of “me” were dead.

I got the opportunity to attend the funeral of my body parts.

I didn't offer a bunch of red roses.

I didn't light the honey candle.

I didn't show my portrait picture.

But I was silent as I was at other funerals.

The world population surpassed five billions. (That means that in other parts of the world, there might be other births and other developments.)

In Saudi Arabia, women drove cars in Riyadh to protest laws preventing them from operating motor vehicles.

Violeta Barrios de Charmarro is elected president of Nicaragua.

1991, 92

Some of my body parts went on dying.

I was still attending those funerals.

Didn't offer a bunch of red roses.

Didn't light the honey candle.

Didn't show my portrait picture.

I tried to hide my shame-filled mind behind my crossed hands, as I usually did at other funerals.

There were Hindu-Muslim riots in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Erwin Neher and Bert Sakmann, two German cell physiologists won Noble Prize in medicine.

Someone won prizes.

Someone offered prayers.

Someone's wishes didn't come true.

1993

I temporarily died.

My hair's funeral.

The freely flying and never pony-tailed hair was tied with a black hair band.

My eyes' funeral.

Usually far- and wide-seeing eyes were limited to see the distance just over the eyelashes.

My ears' funeral.

My ears, preferring knowledge and information over earrings, were corkscrewed by the constantly ringing tune of “How are you all?”.

My mouth’s funeral.

My mouth, preferring worthy and right words over sweet and pleasant ones, went mute in a tradition of grinding teeth and biting lips.

My throat’s funeral.

My throat, ready to vomit as it doesn’t want to swallow, was swallowed by a tradition of absorbing the vomitus.

My right hand’s funeral.

My right hand, always trying to reflect physically the mind and the heart, went tired from massaging my forehead and neck.

My left hand’s funeral.

My left hand, which had tried to support the old and help the young, was captured by days spent resting still on my knees.

My body’s funeral. My body, chest opening up, heading up, was pressed down, forced to lie flat for days and nights.

My legs’ funeral.

My legs, which had tried to walk until the horizon, grew tired by running in a closed circle.

My mind,

My heart,

Never die.

Never die.

I never ever attend the funeral of my mind and heart.

Tony Morrison became the first African-American woman to win the Noble Prize for literature.

Tansu Ciller became first woman prime minister of Turkey.

Kim Campbell became the first woman prime minister of Canada.

After 40 years' dilemma, the world greatest dam,

The Three Gorges, was built on the Yantze river in China.

1995

My birthday was celebrated without me but with many people whom I have never known.

I slowly died and gradually reincarnated.

I attended the funeral of me.

My birthday was celebrated without me.

The United Nations’ fourth world conference on women met in Beijing, China.

965,000 people attended the Claude Monet exhibit at the Art Institute of Chicago.

82% of Poland’s forests were damaged by acid rain.

1996, 97, 98

I was adopted again by the World.

I was still attending the funeral of me.

They were celebrating the adoption ceremony without me.

Protease inhibitors provided a new treatment for AIDS which dramatically improves rates of survival.

East Timorese Roman Catholic bishop Carlos Felipe Ximenes Belo received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1996 for his nonviolent efforts to draw international attention to East Timor and promote independence from Indonesia.

In Afghanistan the ruling Taliban government places strict restriction on women, forbidding them to work outside home and receive an education.

1999

I reincarnated but still was attending some funerals.

There might be a knot when you tie two pieces of rope.

My hair, eyes, ears, throat, body and legs were reincarnated.

I was still attending the funerals of some of my body parts.

The AIDS epidemic worsens in Africa as reports indicate that some 9400 people on the continent are infected with the fatal virus everyday.

Mireya Moscoso became the first woman president of Panama, and in December oversaw the US handover of the Panama Canal.

Elizabeth Dole resigned her position as president of the Red Cross to explore a run for the Republican nomination for US president.

1999, 2000, 2001

The days of Dr. Ma Thida being reconstructed, piece by piece.

My hair, eyes, ears, throat, left hand, body and legs were reincarnated.

The eyes stretched their legs, the tongue visited around, the throat refused swallow if felt like vomiting, the left hand supported elders, helped youths and joined talented people, the body laid as trench, the legs ran in three-sixty degree direction.

But I was attending the funeral of me.

Didn't yet offer a bunch of red roses.

Didn't yet light the honey candle.

Didn't yet show my portrait picture.

Y2K got the world worrying.

The Akashi Kaikyo Bridge, linking the Japanese island of Awaji to the city of Kobe on the main island of Honsh, opened to traffic.

The bridge, 3911-m (12,831-ft) long, is the longest suspension bridge in the world.

The Al-Qaeda international terrorist network founded by Osama bin Laden attacked the World Trade Centre in New York.

3047 people were killed.

3152 children became orphans.

Most of the deceased people's bodies weren't found.

Several nationals and citizens including police, fire-workers and medical personnel who were rescuing the victims were killed.

There were serial funerals.

There was a big funeral, carpeted with flowers: black and white roses in bunches, bouquets, baskets.

There was a big funeral, flame-lit by honey candles.

There was a big funeral, walled with portraits and pictures.

Tears, sobbing, grief, weak fingers, frail body and pathetic legs were the shapes of the sorrowful funeral.

A national flag on the coffin, great sympathy and violent support from the authorities, interviews with victims' family members, papers and pages of missing notes and poems.

All of those expressions made those left behind accept this funeral in a more even spirit.

They didn't need to attend their funerals.

Their funerals were attended by several world citizens including someone whom they never know. Their funerals were attended by more crowd than their birthdays were.

Actually most of them were not heroes.

They were only ordinaries.

Most of them died without knowing anything.

World citizens buried their bodies as they were the dead evidence of result of terror and violence.

Their funeral was world famous.

They lost their lives.

From now every year their death would warn the world about the value of peace.

Tongue and hands must still stay alive instead of their bodies which died.

They didn't really die.

2002

Ma Thida-Sanchaung, my pen name, was nearly totally reborn.

My hair, eyes, ears, throat, left hand, body and legs were reincarnated.

The eyes stretched their legs, the tongue visited around, the throat refused swallow if it felt like vomiting, the left hand supported elders, helped youths and joined talented people, the body laid as trench, the legs ran in three-sixty degree direction.

But I was attending the funeral of me.

My right hand and tongue were not yet reincarnated.

Didn't yet offer a bunch of red roses.

Didn't yet light the honey candle.

Didn't yet show my portrait picture.

Bin Laden was not arrested.

*Terrorism didn't stop.
The World is still getting warmer.*

September 2002

Questions for discussion:

- 1) What is the theme of the essay/story? What is expressed most clearly in the story?
- 2) Identify the main conflict.
- 3) What is it saying about human rights, justice and the major political, social and cultural events in the world?
- 4) What images reinforce the meaning behind the essay/story? Identify the physical setting.
- 5) What are the historical circumstances surrounding the text? List the most important events in the plot. What is the political context in the story/essay?
- 6) Assess how the setting affects the story. Define the mood of the whole story.
- 7) How do you feel about the ideas expressed in the work?
- 8) Analyze the compositional elements of the plot (exposition, complication, turning point, resolution). Divide the plot into its main parts.
- 9) What is the character's role in the text? In what way is he/she presented? Why did the author give her/him this role? Identify the major character's traits. Assess the motivation of the protagonist.
- 10) Is the narrator's perspective limited?
- 11) Research the author's personal and literary background.
- 12) Determine the intended audience.
- 13) What literary devices have been used in the essay/story (allusion, foil, foreshadowing, irony, symbolism)?
- 14) Summarize the plot.
- 15) Offer a review of the text. Discuss whether you feel the text is successful.

Writing task:

“Human rights literature” is based on the idea of “engaged literature” that was first formulated by the French writer and philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre in his book “What is literature?”. Write an essay about human rights by choosing one of the topics: a) “Human rights in the era of Global terrorism”; b) “Is gay marriage about to win?”; c) “Right for a fair trial”; d) “Freedom from torture and slavery”; e) “Freedom of thought, conscience and religion”; f) “Is an environmental right a human right?”; g) “What are the contributions of ecofeminism?”; h) “Child-renting practice and its consequences”; i) “Has the term ‘straight white male’ really become an insult?”. Support your arguments with the evidence/quotes from English literature.

Topics for self-study, reports and Power Point presentations

- 1) English literature and the human rights movement.
- 2) English-language major essays on human rights.

- 3) Ecofeminism and its reflection in English literature of today.
- 4) Examining the gender roles in British literature.
- 5) A woman's place in British society and the purpose of a woman's rights.
- 6) The oppression of white America.

Recommended reading:

- 1) "The Tremendous Power of Literature", an essay by Vered Cohen Barzilay.
- 2) "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights".
- 3) "The Satanic Verses" (1988), a novel by an awarded British-Muslim novelist and essayist of Indian origin Salman Rushdie.
- 4) "To Kill a Mockingbird" by Nelle Harper Lee.
- 5) "Uncle Tom's Cabin" by Harriet Beecher Stowe.
- 6) "The Path of Thunder" by Peter Abrahams.

Pace № 5

THE DARK SIDE OF A POET: A BRILLIANT BRAIN TRAPPED INSIDE A DAMAGED BODY

"From the gutter of my defeated dreams you pulled me to heights almost your own".

Christy Brown

"My disability exists not because I use a wheelchair, but because the broader environment isn't acceptable".

Stella Young

"I am neither an optimist nor pessimist, but a possibilist".

Max Lerner

"Some people are always grumbling because roses have thorns; I am thankful that thorns have roses".

Alphonse Karr

Key vocabulary:

Disability as fully owned by English Literature; textual representation; 'the disability world'; western disability-related strategies; social, medical and educational responses; web bibliographies, isolated in odd corners; appeal to a new readership; 'lost in the post-' (post-colonial, post-modern); post-breakfast literature; 'advanced on the way'; beaten by some, cherished by others; the moral emptiness of souls; transgressive 'anomalies'; the 'moral swamp'; dispassionate observers; promoting the legend; during 'the difficult century'; gender

ambiguity; cruelties of ordinary life; to live in a culture obsessed with physical beauty; a face disfigured as a result of cancer treatment

Representation of disabled personages have always been found in literature, whether oral or written. Along with run-of-the-mill characters they try to create spaces of their own in stories. But, the fictional space or position accorded to such characters is never the same as that of other standard characters. They are presented antithetically or as derivatives to the normal characters surviving at the periphery of the world of the normals.

Christy Brown was born a victim of cerebral palsy. But the helpless, lolling baby concealed the brilliantly imaginative and sensitive mind of a writer who would take his place among the giants of Irish literature. "My Left Foot" (1954) is Christy Brown's own story. He recounts his childhood struggle to learn to read, write, paint and finally type, with the toe of his left foot. In this manner he wrote his bestseller "Down all the Days". "The Irish Times" reviewer Bernard Share claimed the work "the most important Irish novel since 'Ulysses'". Like James Joyce, Brown employed the stream-of-consciousness technique and sought to document Dublin's culture through the use of humour, accurate details and intricate character description.

Besides prose-fiction Christy Brown was an author of a book of poetry. The earliest attempts "Poems of a Primitive" were recorded in his copybook and predate "My Left Foot". A group of nearly thirty poems are preserved in manuscript and typescript. 27 typescript poems were sent to Katriona Maguire (and dated by her); other poems sent to his brother Sean. His three volumes of poetry include: "Come Softly to my Wake" (1971), "Of Snails and Skylarks" (1978) and "Background Music" (1973). The poems were written after Christy had married Mary Carr, his nurse, and the poems encapsulate the joy and sense of impossibility in capturing this love. He writes with a beautiful simplicity, a sharp humour and almost teenage romanticism.

1. *Comment on the glimpses of disability in the literature and cultures.*
2. *Think of the novels, short stories, biographies, autobiographies, materials from philosophy, anthropology, folklore and literary criticism, in which disability, deafness or mental disorders play some significant part?*
3. *Make connections between literary portrayals and real-life situations.*
4. *If you were a writer yourself, what aspects might you want to consider?*

Christy Brown **Mother**

I remember very clearly my mother teaching me to write. She would bring me up into the front bedroom and spend hours teaching me one letter after the other. She would write down each letter on the floor with a piece of chalk. Then she would rub them out with a duster and make me write them down again from my memory with the chalk held between my toes. It was hard work for both of us. I often used to howl

loudly when she was in the kitchen cooking dinner to make her come and see if I'd spelt a word correctly. If I was wrong, I'd make her show me the right way to do it. I remember the first thing I learnt to write was my initials 'C.B.', though I'd often become confused and put the 'B' before the 'C.' whenever anyone asked me what my name was I'd grab a piece of chalk and write 'C.B.' with a great flourish.

Soon afterwards I learnt to write my full name instead of just two initials. I was tremendously proud of myself when I could do this. I felt quite important.

*"You touched my flawed life so gently with love
burning upward in dark steady flame
burning me, burning me into healing."*
Christy Brown, "Of Snails and Skylarks"

"Girl in the wind
blowing wide open
the closed doors of my life –
which way are we going?"

Standing against the lurid sky
on the stark brink of ocean
arms outstretched
as if your love and hunger
would embrace the world
and I in my inner room
playing my poetic permutations
can only look and ask the unanswerable.

Brave and cunning I speak to my typewriter
knowing it will not answer back
knowing it will not reply
what I ask and do not want to hear
as you with the vast sunset merge
a multitude of dreams away
uniquely alone and outside of me
in the purity and rarity of this moment
immeasurably beyond my love and my rage

and with the dying call of gulls
the echo resounds:

Girl in the wind
throwing aside
the tight shutters of my life –
which way are we going?"

- **Christy Brown, “Of Snails and Skylarks”**

“Between sky and sea and sand shall be written
In broad brilliant asterisks of truth
The journey that led us unerringly towards morning
Caught briefly and forever in a puzzled glance.”

- **Christy Brown**

Questions for discussion:

- 1) Why did Christy Brown use his left foot to write? How did his mother begin to teach him?
- 2) How did he use to attract his mother’s attention? What was the first thing he learnt to do? What did he often do wrong?
- 3) Why do you think it was hard work for his mother to teach him? What made him feel proud?
- 4) ‘Unpack’ what the poem “Girl in the wind” is about. What is the author reflecting on?
- 5) Is there a dominant rhythm? Does it dance, frolic, meander, slither, or march? What is the tone (or mood) of the poem?
- 6) Who is speaking in the poem? Who tells the poem? Does the poem give any clues about speaker’s personality, the point of view, age or gender? Who is the speaker addressing? Does the speaker seem attached or detached from what he said?
- 7) When and in what country was the poem written? Can readers pin point a time frame? What details specify the time?
- 8) Analyze the figurative language in the text by Christy Brown. Is it terse, direct, modern? Does the poem appear in the original language?
- 9) Comment on the structure and imagery of the poem. Is it free verse or something more classical?
- 10) Does the poem work for you? Why / why not? What was your first impression of the poem (e.g. mixed)?

Writing task:

Write an essay on one of the topics suggested: a) “The alienation lack of disability representation in literature”; b) “Race and disability in US literature”; c) “Disability in genre fiction”; d) “Disability in women’s writing”; e) “Disability in children’s literature”; f) “Disability in episodic narrative”.

Topics for self-study, reports and Power Point presentations

- 1) Representation of disabled characters in English literature.
- 2) From “Richard III” to “Captain Ahab”: what literature reveals about how we treat disabilities.
- 3) Monsters, saints and sinners: disability in Medieval literature.
- 4) Disability and deformity: function impairment and aesthetics in the long XVIIIth century.

- 5) Embodying affliction in XIXth-century literature.
- 6) Paralyzed modernities and biofutures: bodies and minds in Modern literature.
- 7) The rise of D literature in publishing.

Recommended reading:

- 1) "A Shadow on Summer" (1974) by Christy Brown
- 2) "Wild Grow the Lilies" (1976) by Christy Brown.
- 3) "On Being Crippled" by Nancy Mairs.
- 4) "The Birth Mark" by Nathaniel Hawthorne.
- 5) "The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time" by Mark Haddon.
- 6) "Good County People" by Flannery O'Connor.
- 7) "Cathedral" by Raymond Carver.
- 8) "Thinking in Pictures: Sensory Problems in Autism" by Temple Grandin.
- 9) "Creeps" from "Beyond Victims and Villains: Contemporary Plays by Disabled Playwrights" by David Freeman.
- 10) "Autobiography of Face" by Lucy Grealy.
- 11) "Epileptic" by David B. (a graphic novel).
- 12) "Of Mice and Men" by John Steinbeck.
- 13) "To Kill a Mockingbird" by Harper Lee.
- 14) "The Sound and the Fury" by William Faulkner.
- 15) "The Door in the Wall" by Marguerite de Angeli.

Pace № 6

**TOMORROW'S WORLD: CYBER-LITERATURE IN MICRO-STORIES
AND THEIR EXPLORATION**

"Cyber void is so full of amazing emptiness that makes us feel fulfilled".
Munia Khan

"Essentially, it is not that technology or cyberspace is some parallel universe that operates tangentially from the world we know; it is simply a new front in the international system".
Jared Cohen

"Like gods, we have created a new universe called cyberspace that contains great good and ominous evil. We do not know yet if this new dimension will produce more monsters than marvels, but it is too late to go back".
David Horsey

Key vocabulary:

‘Cyber cultures’, the impact of technology, artificial intelligence, cyberspace, a virtual character, futurology, new galaxies, a web spider, cyber bullying, textual elements, hypertext, digital infrastructure, cyber essentials, born-digital literary art, communicative daily web, extratextual reading, stealing the network, a totally new platform for storytelling, reflect the world’s strengths and speeds, the global trends, robots in literature

Every technological breakthrough tends to be accompanied by anxious announcements of its catastrophic effect on literature. TV or tablet computers or smart phones threaten the book’s cultural authority, shatter the attention or destroy reading. Each new technology is heralded by someone as the death of serious literature. In 1992, just as personal computers were becoming genuinely pervasive (although before the World Wide Web had been invented), Sven Birkets wrote “*The Gutenberg Elegies*”, in which he predicted that the printed book would rapidly decline and become merely part of a ‘vestigial order’, taking with it not just our sense of historical depth and continuity but our very selves as selfhood gets distributed into limitless, random access networks.

The new communication technologies often produce new frameworks that adjust the ways in which literature appears: the page, the screen, the website, the file window. Electronic literature is not just a “thing” or a “medium” or even a body of “works” in various “genres.” It is not poetry, fiction, hypertext, gaming, codework, or some new admixture of all these practices. E-literature is, arguably, an emerging cultural form, as much a collective creation of terms, keywords, genres, structures, and institutions as it is the production of new literary objects.

Cyber literature is sometimes wrongly associated with the depiction of robots / cyborgs in a literary text. It should be noted that, artificial humans and autonomous artificial servants have a long history in human culture, though the literary role of artificial life has evolved over time: early myths present animated objects as instruments of divine will, later stories treat their attempted creation as a blasphemy with inevitable consequences, and modern tales range from apocalyptic warnings against blind technological progress to explorations of the ethical questions raised by the possibility of sentient machines. Traces of robots or Artificial Intelligence can be found in several literary genres. Sometimes as a protagonist and sometimes only as a minor character like the mechanical hounds that are chasing public enemies and book owners in Ray Bradbury’s dystopian novel “Fahrenheit 451”.

John Wyndham Parkes Lucas Beynon Harris (1903 – 1969) was an English science fiction writer best known for his works written using the pen name John Wyndham. Some of his works were set in post-apocalyptic landscapes. His best known works include “*The Day of the Triffids*” (1951) and “*The Midwich Cuckoos*” (1957), the latter filmed twice as “*Village of the Damned*”. He is the author of the short story collections including: “*Jizzle*” (1954) ; “*The Seeds of Time*” (1956) ; “*Tales of Gooseflesh and Laughter*” (1956); “*Consider Her Ways*” (1961); “*The Infinite Moment*” (1961).

1. *Comment on the connection of modern literature and technology.*
2. *Can the appearance of robots in a literary text be accounted for the beginning of cyber literature?*
3. *List fictional robots and androids.*

John Wyndham
Compassion Circuit

By the time Janet had been five days in the hospital she had become converted to the idea of a domestic robot. It had taken her two days to discover that Nurse James was a robot, one day to get over the surprise, and two more to realize what a comfort an attendant robot could be.

The conversion was a relief. Practically every house she visited had a domestic robot. It was the family's second or third most valuable possession, the women tending to rate it slightly higher than the car, the men, slightly lower. Janet had been perfectly well aware for some time that her friends regarded her as a nitwit or worse for wearing herself out with looking after a house which a robot would be able to keep spick and span with a few hours' work a day. She had also known that it irritated George to come home each evening to a wife who had tired herself out by unnecessary work. But the prejudice had been firmly set. It was not the diehard attitude of people who refused to be served by robot waiters, or driven by robot drivers or who disliked to see dresses modelled by robot mannequins. It was simply an uneasiness about them, about being left alone with one—and a disinclination to feel such an uneasiness in her own home.

She herself attributed the feeling largely to the conservatism of her own home which had used no house-robots. Other people, who had been brought up in homes run by robots, even the primitive types available a generation before, never seemed to have such a feeling at all. It irritated her to know that her husband thought she was afraid of them in a childish way. That, she had explained to George a number of times, was not so, and was not the point, either. What she did dislike was the idea of one intruding upon her personal, domestic life, which was what a house-robot was bound to do.

The robot who was called Nurse James was, then, the first with which she had ever been in close personal contact and she, or it, came as a revelation.

Janet told the doctor of her enlightenment, and he looked relieved. She also told George when he looked in in the afternoon, and he was delighted. The two of them conferred before he left the hospital. "Excellent," said the doctor. "To tell you the truth I was afraid we were up against a real neurosis there—and very inconveniently, too. Your wife can never have been strong, and in the last few years she's worn herself out running the house."

"I know," George agreed. "I tried hard to persuade her during the first two years we were married, but it only led to trouble, so I had to drop it. This is really a culmination. She was rather shaken when she found out the reason she'd have to come here was partly because there was no robot at home to look after her."

“Well, there’s one thing certain. She can’t go on as she has been doing. If she tries to she’ll be back here inside a couple of months,” the doctor told him.

“She won’t now. She’s really changed her mind,” George assured him. “Part of the trouble was that she’s never come across a really modern one except in a superficial way. The newest that any of our friends has is ten years old at least, and most of them are older than that. She’d never contemplated the idea of anything as advanced as Nurse James. The question now is what pattern?”

The doctor thought a moment.

“Frankly, Mr. Shand, your wife is going to need a lot of rest and looking after, I’m afraid. What I’d really recommend for her is the type they have here. It’s something pretty new, this Nurse James model. A specially developed high-sensibility job with a quite novel

contra-balanced compassion-protection circuit – very tricky bit of work that – any direct order which a normal robot would obey at once is evaluated by the circuit, weighed against the benefit or harm to the patient, and unless it is beneficial, or at least harmless, it is not obeyed.

They’ve proved to be wonderful for nursing and looking after children. But there is a big demand for them, and I’m afraid they’re pretty expensive.”

“How much?” asked George.

The doctor’s round-figure price made him frown for a moment. Then he said:

“It’ll make a dent. But, after all, it’s mostly Janet’s economies and simple-living that’s built up the savings. Where do I get one?”

“You don’t. Not just like that,” the doctor told him. “I shall have to throw a bit of weight about for a priority, but in the circumstances I shall get it, all right. Now, you go and fix up the details of appearance and so on with your wife. Let me know how she wants it, and I’ll get busy.”

“A proper one,” said Janet. “One that’ll look right in a house, I mean. I couldn’t do with one of those levers-and-plastic-box things that stare at you with lenses. As it’s got to look after the house, let’s have it looking like a housemaid.”

“Or a houseman, if you like?”

She shook her head. “No. It’s going to have to look after me, too, so I think I’d rather it was a housemaid. It can have a black silk dress, and a frilly white apron and cap. And I’d like it blonde—a sort of darkish blonde—and about five feet ten, and nice to look at, but not too beautiful. I don’t want to be jealous of it...”

The doctor kept Janet ten days more in the hospital while the matter was settled. There had been luck in coming in for a cancelled order, but inevitably some delay while it was adapted to Janet’s specification – also it had required the addition of standard domestic pseudo-memory patterns to suit it for housework.

It was delivered the day after she got back. Two severely functional robots carried the case up the front path, and inquired whether they should unpack it. Janet thought not, and told them to leave it in the outhouse.

When George got back he wanted to open it at once, but Janet shook her head.

“Supper first,” she decided. “A robot doesn’t mind waiting.”

Nevertheless it was a brief meal. When it was over George carried the dishes out and stacked them in the sink.

“No more washing-up,” he said, with satisfaction.

He went out to borrow the next-door robot to help him carry the case in. Then he found his end of it more than he could lift, and had to borrow the robot from the house opposite, too. Presently the pair of them carried it in and laid it on the kitchen floor as if it were a featherweight, and went away again.

George got out the screwdriver and drew the six large screws that held the lid down. Inside there was a mass of shavings. He shoved them out, on to the floor.

“What’s the matter? We shan’t have to clean up,” he said, happily.

There was an inner case of wood pulp, with a snowy layer of wadding under its lid. George rolled it up and pushed it out of the way, and there, ready dressed in black frock and white apron, lay the robot.

They regarded it for some seconds without speaking.

It was remarkably lifelike. For some reason it made Janet feel a little queer to realize that it was her robot – a trifle nervous, and, obscurely, a trifle guilty...

“Sleeping beauty,” remarked George, reaching for the instruction-book on its chest.

In point of fact the robot was not a beauty. Janet’s preference had been observed. It was pleasant and nice-looking without being striking, but the details were good. The deep gold hair was quite enviable – although one knew that it was probably threads of plastic with waves that would never come out. The skin – another kind of plastic covering the carefully built-up contours – was distinguishable from real skin only by its perfection.

Janet knelt down beside the box, and ventured with a forefinger to touch the flawless complexion. It was quite, quite cold.

She sat back on her heels, looking at it. Just a big doll, she told herself – a contraption. A very wonderful contraption of metal, plastics, and electronic circuits, but still a contraption, and made to look as it did only because people would find it harsh or grotesque if it should look any other way... And yet, to have it looking as it did was a bit disturbing, too. For one thing, you couldn’t go on thinking of it as “it” any more. Whether you liked it or not, your mind thought of it as “her.” As “her” it would have to have a name; and, with a name, it would become still more of a person.

““A battery-driven model,”” George read out, “ ‘will normally require to be fitted with a new battery every four days. Other models, however, are designed to conduct their own regeneration from the mains as and when necessary.’ Let’s have her out.”

He put his hands under the robot’s shoulders, and tried to lift it.

“Phew!” he said. “Must be about three times my weight.” He had another try. “Hell,” he said, and referred to the book again.

““The control switches are situated at the back, slightly above the waistline.’ All right, maybe we can roll her over.”

With an effort he succeeded in getting the figure on to its side and began to undo the buttons at the back of her dress. Janet suddenly felt that to be an indelicacy.

“I’ll do it,” she said.

Her husband glanced at her.

“All right. It’s yours,” he told her.

“She can’t be just ‘it.’ I’m going to call her Hester.”

“All right, again,” he agreed.

Janet undid the buttons and fumbled about inside the dress. “I can’t find a knob, or anything,” she said.

“Apparently there’s a small panel that opens,” he told her.

“Oh, no!” she said, in a slightly shocked tone.

He regarded her again.

“Darling, she’s just a robot—a mechanism.”

“I know,” said Janet, shortly. She felt about again, discovered the panel, and opened it.

“You give the upper knob a half-turn to the right and then close the panel to complete the circuit,” instructed George from the book.

Janet did so, and then sat swiftly back on her heels again, watching.

The robot stirred and turned. It sat up, then it got to its feet. It stood before them, looking the very pattern of a stage parlormaid.

“Good day, madam,” it said. “Good day, sir. I shall be happy to serve you...”

“Thank you, Hester,” Janet said, as she leaned back against the cushion placed behind her. Not that it was necessary to thank a robot, but she had a theory that if you did not practice politeness with robots you soon forgot it with other people.

And, anyway, Hester was no ordinary robot. She was not even dressed as a parlormaid any more. In four months she had become a friend, a tireless, attentive friend. From the first Janet had found it difficult to believe that she was only a mechanism, and as the days passed she had become more and more of a person. The fact that she consumed electricity instead of food came to seem little more than a foible. The time she couldn’t stop walking in a circle, and the other time when something went wrong with her vision so that she did everything a foot to the right of where she ought to have been doing it, these things, were just indispositions such as anyone might have, and the robot-mechanic who came to adjust her paid his call much like any other doctor. Hester was not only a person; she was preferable company to many.

“I suppose,” said Janet, settling back in the chair, “that you must think me a poor, weak thing?”

What one must not expect from Hester was euphemism.

“Yes,” she said, directly. But then she added: “I think all humans are poor, weak things. It is the way they are made. One must be sorry for them.”

Janet had long ago given up thinking things like: “That’ll be the compassion-circuit speaking,” or trying to imagine the computing, selecting, associating, and

shunting that must be going on to produce such a remark. She took it as she might from—well, say, a foreigner.

She said:

“Compared with robots we must seem so, I suppose. You are so strong and untiring, Hester. If you knew how I envy you that!”

Hester said, matter-of-factly:

“We were designed. You were just accidental. It is your misfortune, not your fault.”

“You’d rather be you than me?” asked Janet.

“Certainly,” Hester told her. “We are stronger. We don’t have to have frequent sleep to recuperate. We don’t have to carry an unreliable chemical factory inside us. We don’t have to grow old and deteriorate. Human beings are so clumsy and fragile and so often unwell because something is not working properly. If anything goes wrong with us, or is broken, it doesn’t hurt and is easily replaced. And you have all kinds of words like pain, and suffering, and unhappiness, and weariness, that we have to be taught to understand, and they don’t seem to us to be useful things to have. I feel very sorry that you must have these things and be so uncertain and so fragile. It disturbs my compassion-circuit.”

“Uncertain and fragile,” Janet repeated. “Yes, that’s how I feel.”

“Humans have to live so precariously,” Hester went on. “If my arm or leg should be crushed I can have a new one in a few minutes. But a human would have agony for a long time, and not even a new limb at the end of it—just a faulty one, if he were lucky. That isn’t as bad as it used to be because in designing us you learned how to make good arms and legs, much stronger and better than the old ones. People would be much more sensible to have a weak arm or leg replaced at once, but they don’t seem to want to if they can possibly keep the old ones.”

“You mean they can be grafted on? I didn’t know that,” Janet said. “I wish it were only arms or legs that’s wrong with me. I don’t think I should hesitate...” She sighed. “The doctor wasn’t encouraging this morning, Hester. I’ve been losing ground and must rest more. I don’t believe he expects me to get any stronger. He was just trying to cheer me up before...”

He had a funny sort of look after he’d examined me. But all he said was I should rest more. What’s the good of being alive if it’s only rest—rest—rest? And there’s poor George. What sort of a life is it for him, and he’s been so patient with me, so sweet. I’d rather anything than go on feebly like this. I’d sooner die...”

Janet went on talking, more to herself than to the patient Hester standing by. She talked herself into tears. Then presently, she looked up.

“Oh, Hester, if you were human I couldn’t bear it. I think I’d hate you for being so strong and so well. But I don’t, Hester. You’re so kind and so patient when I’m silly, like this. I believe you’d cry with me to keep me company if you could.”

“I would if I could,” the robot agreed. “My compassion-circuit—”

“Oh, *no!*” Janet protested. “It can’t be just that. You’ve a heart somewhere, Hester. You must have.”

“I expect it is more reliable than a heart,” said Hester.

She stepped a little closer, stooped down, and lifted Janet up as if she weighed nothing at all.

“You’ve tired yourself out, Janet, dear,” she told her. “I’ll take you upstairs. You’ll be able to sleep a little before he gets back.”

Janet could feel the robot’s arms cold through her dress, but the coldness did not trouble her any more. She was aware only that they were strong, protecting arms around her. She said:

“Oh, Hester, you are such a comfort. You know what I ought to do.” She paused, then she added miserably: “I know what he thinks—the doctor, I mean. I could see it. He just thinks I’m going to go on getting weaker and weaker until one day I’ll fade away and die. I said I’d sooner die, but I wouldn’t, Hester. I don’t want to die...”

The robot rocked her a little, as if she were a child.

“There, there, dear. It’s not as bad as that – nothing like,” she told her. “You mustn’t think about dying. And you mustn’t cry any more. It’s not good for you, you know. Besides, you won’t want him to see you’ve been crying.”

“I’ll try not to,” agreed Janet obediently, as Hester carried her out of the room and up the stairs.

The hospital reception-robot looked up from the desk.

“My wife,” George said. “I rang you up about an hour ago.”

The robot’s face took on an impeccable expression of professional sympathy.

“Yes, Mr. Shand. I’m afraid it has been a shock for you, but as I told you, your house-robot did quite the right thing to send her here at once.”

“I’ve tried to get on to her own doctor, but he’s away,” George told her.

“You don’t need to worry about that, Mr. Shand. She has been examined, and we have had all her records sent over from the hospital she was in before. The operation has been provisionally fixed for tomorrow, but of course we shall need your consent.”

George hesitated. “May I see the doctor in charge of her?”

“He isn’t in the hospital at the moment, I’m afraid.”

“It is – absolutely necessary?” George asked, after a pause.

The robot looked at him steadily, and nodded.

“She must have been growing steadily weaker for some months now,” she said.

George nodded.

“The only alternative is that she will grow weaker still, and have more pain before the end,” she told him.

George stared at the wall blankly for some seconds.

“I see,” he said bleakly.

He picked up a pen in a shaky hand and signed the form that she put before him. He gazed at it awhile without seeing it.

“She’ll – she’ll have – a good chance?” he asked.

“Yes,” the robot told him. “There is never complete absence of risk, of course. But there’s a very good chance of complete success.”

George sighed, and nodded.

“I’d like to see her,” he said.

The robot pressed a bell-push.

“You may see her,” she said. “But I must ask you not to disturb her. She’s asleep now, and it’s better for her not to be woken.”

George had to be satisfied with that, but he left the hospital feeling a little better for the sight of the quiet smile on Janet’s lips as she slept.

The hospital called him at the office the following afternoon. They were reassuring. The operation appeared to have been a complete success. Everyone was quite confident of the outcome. There was no need to worry. The doctors were perfectly satisfied. No, it would not be wise to allow any visitors for a few days yet. But there was nothing to worry about. Nothing at all.

George rang up each day just before he left, in the hope that he would be allowed a visit. The hospital was kindly and heartening, but adamant about visits. And then, on the fifth day, they suddenly told him she had already left on her way home. George was staggered. He had been prepared to find it a matter of weeks. He dashed out, bought a bunch of roses, and left half a dozen traffic regulations in fragments behind him.

“Where is she?” he demanded of Hester as she opened the door.

“She’s in bed. I thought it might be better if –” Hester began, but he lost the rest of the sentence as he bounded up the stairs.

Janet was lying in the bed. Only her head was visible, cut off by the line of the sheet, and a bandage around her neck. George put the flowers down on the bedside table. He stooped over Janet and kissed her gently. She looked up at him from anxious eyes.

“Oh, George, dear. Has she told you?”

“Has who told me what?” he asked, sitting down on the side of the bed.

“Hester. She said she would. Oh, George, I didn’t mean it. At least, I don’t think I meant it. She sent me, George. I was so weak and wretched. I wanted to be strong. I don’t think I really understood. Hester said –”

“Take it easy, darling. Take it easy,” George suggested with a smile. “What on earth’s all this about?”

He felt under the bedclothes and found her hand. “But, George—” she began. He interrupted her.

“I say, darling, your hand’s dreadfully cold. It’s almost like—” His fingers slid further up her arm. His eyes widened at her, incredulously. He jumped up suddenly from the bed and flung back the covers. He put his hand on the thin nightdress, over her heart—and then snatched it away as if he had been stung.

“God! *NO!*” he said, staring at her.

“But George. George, darling –” said Janet’s head on the pillows.

“*NO! NO!*” cried George, almost in a shriek. He turned and ran blindly from the room. In the darkness on the landing he missed the top step of the stairs, and went headlong down the whole flight.

Hester found him lying in a huddle in the hall. She bent down and gently explored the damage. The extent of it, and the fragility of the frame that had suffered it disturbed her compassion-circuit very greatly. She did not try to move him, but went to the telephone and dialled.

“Emergency?” she asked, and gave the name and address. “Yes, at once,” she told them. “There may not be a lot of time. Several compound fractures, and I think his back is broken, poor man... No. There appears to be no damage to his head... Yes, much better. He’d be crippled for life, even if he did get over it... Yes, better send the form of consent with the ambulance so that it can be signed at once... Oh, yes, that’ll be quite all right. His wife will sign it.”

1956.

Questions for discussion:

- 1) Give a brief outline of the plot. Analyze its structure. What is the historical context? Does the story take place in the past, the present, or the future (or all three)? How does the author describe the location of the events?
- 2) Determine what major themes are in the story. How is the theme conveyed? If the author is using the story to deliver a particular message, are you convinced by it? What does the theme reveal about the author?
- 3) What is the philosophical layer of the story?
- 4) Does the narrator present a clear, straightforward account of the events, or does he deliberately mislead the reader (an unreliable narrator)?
- 5) Characterize intertextual elements and allusions in the story.
- 6) What is the point of view the story told in? Is the narrator one of the characters in the story, or an unnamed observer?
- 7) Examine how the characters change throughout the story, if at all. What are your feelings towards the characters? Does the way the characters communicate give you any information about their personality?
- 8) If the story contains minor characters, are they necessary and effective?
- 9) Identify symbols and imagery. Specify other literary devices.
- 10) Characterize the tone of the story (light and humorous, heightened, dramatic, serious, sarcastic, sentimental, humorous), the mood and atmosphere.
- 11) Does the author use any unusual words or phrases? What effect do they produce?
- 12) Is there anything in the story – an object, for example – that has any special meaning?
- 13) What would the story be like if the author used a different style?
- 14) Summarize your interpretation of what the author was trying to say.

Writing task:

Write an essay on one of the topics suggested: a) “Digital natives in cyber culture”; b) “Cyber poetry: genre or wastebin?”; c) “Literature as an ongoing system of interconnecting documents”; d) “Literature in cyberspace”; e) “Academic discourse on cyber literature at the end of 1980s”; f) “The contexts provided by the

stand-alone and networked computer”; g) “Reading in the Net”; h) “Electronic literature as world literature”.

Topics for self-study, reports and Power Point presentations

- 1) The origins of cyber literature.
- 2) Hypertext poetry.
- 3) Animated poetry.
- 4) Computer generated fiction.
- 5) Online fiction.
- 6) Contemporary e-lit texts.

Recommended reading:

- 1) “My Mother Was a Computer” by Katherine Hayles.
- 2) “Afternoon” (1987), a story by Michael Joyce.
- 3) “Victory Garden” (1992) by Stuart Moulthrop.
- 4) “Patchwork Girl” (1995) by Shelley Jacson.
- 5) “The Gravity of the Leaf”, an essay by John Cayley.
- 6) “Electronic literature: new horizons for the literary” (2008) by N.K. Hayles.
- 7) “Of two minds: hypertext pedagogy and poetics” (1995) by M. Joyce.
- 8) “The possible worlds of hypertext fiction” (2010) by A. Bell.

Pace № 7

WHAT IS ECOCRITICISM?

“Place is an indispensable concept for environmental humanists not so much because they have precisely defined and stabilized it as because they have not; not because of what the concept lays to rest as because of what it opens up”.

Lawrence Buell

“Our hope in “Postcolonial Ecologies” is to outline a broader, more complex genealogy for thinking through our ecocritical futures and a turn to a more nuanced discourse about the representation of alterity, a theorization of difference that postcolonialists, ecofeminists, and environmental activists have long considered in terms of our normative representations of nature, human and otherwise”.

Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley

“Much ecocriticism has taken for granted that its task is to overcome anthropocentrism, just as feminism seeks to overcome androcentrism. The metaphysical argument for biocentrism is meant to sustain moral claims about the intrinsic value of the natural world, which will in turn affect our attitudes and behavior towards nature’.

Greg Garrad

Key vocabulary:

Postcolonial literature; environmental issues; national identity; ecocritical movement; relationships between environment, culture and politics; the dominant ways of thinking; non-human life forms; post-Wordsworthian nature poetry; reconnecting people to nature; environmentally-oriented literary studies; the foreseeable future; ‘intratribal’ criticism; ‘tree-hugging’ images; versions of ‘deep ecology’; ‘front-page news’; first-wave ecocriticism; environmental justice; ‘environmental racism’; bearers of toxification; subaltern voices; rural or backcountry settings; thought-provoking; ecotheory, violence, impact, trace

The relationship between people and the environment has long been documented through literary works. In the foreword to “*Natural Discourse: Toward Ecocomposition*”, Edward White cites Adam and Eve’s journey through the Garden of Eden (in the Bible), and Odysseus’ dangerous trek across the Mediterranean Sea in Homer’s “*Odyssey*”, as early literary examples in which human paths cross with nature.

Though formal praxis of *Ecocriticism* – sometimes referred to as ‘Green Studies’ – is considered a somewhat recent addition to literary theory (mid to late-20th century), we can trace a distinct rise in environmental writing and its importance in American culture through the late-18th and early-19th century. For we may look in even less “literary” works, like Thomas Jefferson’s “*Notes on the State of Virginia*” (1785) to get a sense of the value colonial America prescribed to the natural environment surrounding them. “The Natural bridge,” writes Jefferson, “the most sublime of Nature’s works, though not comprehended under the present head, must not be pretermitted.” The key word used by Jefferson is *sublime*. It speaks to the way in which people (writers, artists, wanderers) saw the beauty of nature – of the landscape – as something so powerful and inspiring that it could uplift them. Then, emerging in the 1820s and 1830s – influenced by the British Romantics like Wordsworth and Coleridge, who leaned on nature in their writing – American transcendentalists (like Thoreau) wrote intimately through and about nature and how it could influence society’s spiritual and intellectual growth.

Many other great naturalists, environmental thinkers and advocates, writers and essayists arrived prior at Ecocriticism tend to become a formal theoretical study in literature: John Muir, John Burroughs, Alexander von Humboldt, Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot, just to name a few.

1. ‘*Environmental Renaissance*’ – is it a reality or a myth?
2. What is a critical review? Should it be of any particular structure?
3. What ecocritical novels / poems / or other works of literature can you think of? Why are they important?
4. What matters – the quality of a literary text or the idea it conveys?
5. What is a ‘success’ ingredient turning a book into a bestseller?

Capitalism versus the agency of place: an ecocritical reading of “*That Deadman Dance*” and “*Carpentaria*”

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Kim Scott’s *That Deadman Dance* (2010) and Alexis Wright’s *Carpentaria* (2006) have put the Indigenous novel at the centre of Australian literature for the first time and established these authors as two of Australia’s most prominent and successful contemporary fiction writers. The novels have been widely acclaimed by scholars and critics; both won the Miles Franklin Award and were short-listed for major literary prizes. And yet both these novels trouble Australia’s national identity, drawing attention to and challenging the economic project – capitalism – upon which the nation is predicated. Against the singularity of the nation and the abstracting forces of capitalism these novels posit the particularity and agency of locale, of place. This paper will argue, therefore, that only an ecocritical reading of these novels can adequately account for the challenges – formal, political, epistemological, ontological – that they pose. Through an ecocritical examination of the conflict between capitalism and regional Indigenous management embodied in these novels, I will argue that they rewrite Australia in the voice of the regional, and offer ways of reconsidering the relation of human and non-human which contest our prevailing economic models and their role in the ecological crisis.

From their opening pages *That Deadman Dance* and *Carpentaria* articulate a clash between the cosmology of Indigenous Australians and that of the British who colonised the continent in 1788. I suggest that the two cosmologies can be distinguished chiefly on the basis of how they conceptualise the relation of humans to place, and that their clash derives from their differing conceptions of place, which I will define broadly as the non-human environment;¹ in one, place is enmeshed with human life, in the other, human life is raised above place and abstracted from it.

The Indigenous cosmology of Australia assumes the agency of place, or the non-human world, and a custodial, mutually nourishing relationship between humans and ‘Country’, an Aboriginal concept which denotes land, its creatures, ancestors, law.² The cosmology of the colonising British is informed by Christianity, whose first book, *Genesis*, gives ‘Man’ dominion over ‘Nature’, and by capitalism, which extracts human interactions with nature from place through its abstracting rhetoric of profit-calculation and ‘material progress’. This rhetoric makes possible the framing of land as a commodity (increasingly formalised from 1750 in Britain by the Inclosure Acts), and its subsequent exploitation for profit, and conceives of human relations with land in terms of ‘commerce’, ‘industry’, and ‘development’. These settler, profit-seeking relations between humans and nature are exemplified by the whaling and mining industries portrayed in *That Deadman Dance* and *Carpentaria* respectively. It is because of this central importance of place in distinguishing these two cosmologies, and because of the novels’ concern with the capitalist exploitation of two areas of regional Australia, that I argue that these novels can be examined

most fruitfully using an ecocritical framework, the field of literary criticism specifically concerned with place in literature, rather than through notions of magic realism (see Joseph, Devlin-Glass, Ravenscroft), social contract theory (Brewster), modernism (Ravenscroft) or solely postcolonialism (Joseph, Devlin-Glass).

Formulated in the 1990s, ecocriticism intends specifically to address the contemporary crises in the environment (in part caused by industrial and global capitalism) from a literary perspective. In 1996 Cheryl Glotfelty broadly defined ecocriticism as ‘the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment’ (Glotfelty and Fromm XXI). More usefully for my purposes, in 2000 Lawrence Coupe called ecocriticism: ‘The most important branch of green studies, which considers the relationship between human and non-human life as represented in literary texts and which theorises about the place of literature in the struggle against environmental destruction’ (302).

Until recently, ecocriticism had focused on the literature of Europe and North America, especially nineteenth-century Romanticism, and American nature writers such as Thoreau and Whitman, with ecocritical readings of Australian texts appearing only in the last few years. The first collection of Australian ecocritical essays, *The Littoral Zone*, was published in 2007. These essays concern the work of settler writers and therefore the Australian pastoral—and pastoral industry—is a predominant theme; as are poets, especially Judith Wright, who is also one subject of an earlier Australian ecocritical essay. Tasmania too has recurred in Australian ecocriticism, notably in essays by C.A. Cranston and Tony Hughes-D’Aeth. While prominent Australian ecocritic Kate Rigby has written about this continent, her major works such as her seminal ecocritical study *Topographies of the Sacred* (2004) are about European, especially German, literature. As a result of its focus on non-Indigenous texts, Australian ecocriticism has examined the environment from the settler perspective, even where this concerns the impact of colonisation and environmental degradation on Indigenous cultures.

This paper extends the ambit of ecocriticism by focusing on two novels written by Indigenous Australians. To date these two novels have not been considered in ecocritical terms and yet they both emphasise ‘the radical ontological shift in understanding place that occurred through the process of European colonialism and Christian missionization’ (6), as DeLoughrey and Handley describe the shift from a dynamic model of land to British colonial rule in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*. As DeLoughrey and Handley argue, Achebe’s novel shows how Igbo language and being are constituted by the land and how that relationship is radically altered by ‘the social, cultural and linguistic force of empire’ (6). In doing this I will be following recent scholarship which has extended the scope of ecocriticism from its focus on Europe and North America to the rest of the world, particularly the global south. As DeLoughrey and Handley put it, in recent years there has been ‘a remarkable turn in which ecocritical methodologies have been adapted for rethinking postcolonial literature’ (9).

These ‘postcolonial ecologies’ are informed by Edward Said’s work, which helps us to see ‘that to speak of postcolonial ecology is to foreground a spatial imagination made possible by the experience of place’ (4). According to Said:

For the native, the history of colonial servitude is inaugurated by the loss of locality to the outsider; its geographical identity must therefore be searched for and somehow restored ... Because of the presence of the colonizing outsider, the land is recoverable first only through imagination. (77)

In their conceptualisation of place and history, DeLoughrey and Handley also draw on the work of Guyanese author Wilson Harris, who has suggested that in order ‘to engage a historical model of ecology and an epistemology of space and time ... we must enter a “profound dialogue with the landscape”’ (4). Following Harris, they ‘foreground the landscape (and seascape) as a participant in this historical process rather than a bystander to human experience’ (4). Such a model is essential in considering *That Deadman Dance* and *Carpentaria*, both of which work to recover the land through imagination, and both of which foreground the landscape and seascape as active participants in the historical process. This model of an active land is consonant with the Aboriginal notion of ‘Country’, which is evident in these novels and can be seen to clash with the Western understanding of ‘land’ as inert territory (*terra nullius*) available for exploitation and profiteering. This clash is seen most potently in the conflict between capital and land, or in the two very different conceptions of territory as ‘real estate’ and ‘Country’ played out in these novels (and in contemporary Australia). Capitalism is articulated most clearly in the colonising people’s management of natural resources, specifically: whaling in *That Deadman Dance*; and mining in *Carpentaria*. It is through these two industries that the two cosmologies of indigenous Australia and the British colonisers can be seen to meet and clash. Treating these two novels in the chronological order of their timeframes – *That Deadman Dance* from 1826, *Carpentaria*’s recent past – rather than of their publication, provides a useful framing of the introduction of capitalism to Australia with a nineteenth-century energy industry (whaling) and then its flourishing some 150 years later with that emblematic twentieth-century energy source, uranium.

From their opening pages these novels foreground the non-human world and its active relation to its human inhabitants – and introduce in contrast the settler’s cosmology. In *That Deadman Dance* the contrast between the two cosmologies is seen in their respective attitudes to whales: ‘Bobby came at Jak Tar, words rolling from his lips trying to explain something: old people passing, the whales, me them brothers’ (261) compared to the settlers’ view: ‘A few more whales and Captain Brother Jonathon would have all the oil he could carry ... Chaine could have all the bone; there was still a market for the fine structures from their mouths, stays and bustles for the fashionable ladies’ (271). And in *Carpentaria*, the contrasting views of place are equally clear: ‘Everyone had set up camp at the lagoon, and finally now the spirit trees knew who was there, you could see something was wrong in how they were dancing when the wind started to blow up suddenly like a telephone was

ringing' (425). On the other hand, capitalism's big company 'set about pillaging the nation's treasure trove: the publicly touted curve of an underground range embedded with minerals' (9).

And the novels' key events, including their climaxes, are triggered by the clash of these two worlds. In *That Deadman Dance*, the whales are fished out by the settlers' exploitative, profit-driven hunting sprees, which drives the Noongar to 'poach' and 'steal' food from the settlers. And so begins the inexorable unraveling of a brief period of co-existence. In *Carpentaria*, the climaxes are the destruction of the mine by human and non-human agency, and the destruction of the town by a cyclone. As well as their foregrounding of place, both novels are also notable for their generic hybridity and their hopefulness despite their traumatic subject matter – and these qualities have been remarked on by critics, among them Brewster, Joseph, Devlin-Glass, Ravenscroft, Martin Renes, Patrick Allington, Rich Carr, Martin Shaw. Both novels fuse elements of fiction and non-fiction, but what has particularly engaged critics is their mix of realism with fantasy and magic – or, as I would prefer to say, their fusion of Western realism and

Australian regional Indigenous realities. Also remarkable are the novels' narrative voices, their third-person perspectives which shift between white and black, present and past, human and nonhuman, and, especially notable in *Carpentaria*, between cosmic and earthly.

The novels' central concern with place, while frequently alluded to, has not yet been fully explored. The use of ecocriticism distinguishes my work from that of other critics by putting the question of land – and more broadly of 'Country' – at the centre of my critical concerns. Land, if understood in the broadest Aboriginal sense as 'Country', encompasses an entire Indigenous Australian cosmology, one very distinct from settler Christianity and capitalism. And in its theorization of land, ecocriticism can account not only for the novels' foregrounding of place, but also for their 'magic'. In particular I will examine Anne Brewster's application of social contract theory to *That Deadman Dance* and Alison Ravenscroft's discussion of *Carpentaria* as magic realism. While Brewster's analysis implicates land, it does not account for its centrality in the novel; Ravenscroft does not account for the multiple Indigenous realities that *Carpentaria* encompasses, but which are contained in the notion of Country.

That Deadman Dance is set in a nascent colonial outpost which clings to the southern coast of Western Australia. Over the course of the 12 years it covers, a rival commercial settlement is established nearby by Geordie Chaine, the colony's most enterprising man, praised for his energy and initiative, his ability to acquire and develop. As the narrator says: 'Chaine knows what he wants. Profits, not prophets ... Of course he'd profited from Jak Tar, same as he had from everyone he knew. The thing was, without him, none of them would be able to make a living here, except, of course, the blacks' (293). After several failed farming ventures, Chaine seizes on the idea of capitalising on the annual visits by American whale boats who hunt the whales which flock to a nearby beach each winter and extract their oil to fuel industrial North America. Driven by profits not prophets, by the abstractions of his

accounts not the rhythms of the embedded world around him, Chaine makes possible a dramatic increase in the number of whales hunted each winter – until one season no whales come.

But what about the whales?
Maybe we fished them out.
But no one could know for sure. (338)

The disappearance of the whales is the trigger for a tragic reversal in relations between Indigenous and settlers in the novel, especially between the novel's central character Bobby Wabalanginy and his white friends.

Critical response to *That Deadman Dance* has focused on four key elements of the novel, all of which are relevant here: its 'mixing together', as Brewster puts it, of Noongar and white settler experience in early south western Australia (68); its powerful evocation of place and the natural world; its unexpected hopefulness and relevance for contemporary debates on indigenous-settler relations; and its hybrid, challenging form and style. In the most extended critique of the novel to date, Brewster focuses especially on the first of these, the novel's 'mixing together' of Noongar and white experience. Her examination of Noongar and white intersubjectivity borrows from social contract theory to develop the idea of a 'cross-racial contract' and discusses whiteness and Indigenous sovereignty in this context. Brewster uses the trope of the social contract to think further about the ethics of embodied cross-racial relations figured in the novel, and argues that the trope is useful because it accentuates the participatory role of the contractors. She suggests that contracts 'can give rise to alternative forms of agency' (62). This idea of alternative forms of agency is key to my argument and essential in any consideration of *That Deadman Dance*, a novel in which, for example, frogs instruct humans: 'Frogs call out from where they're buried, sensing rain, saying move inland move inland move away from the sea' (290).

The social contract trope allows Brewster to establish two conflicting claims to sovereignty in the novel: the British settlers' legal logic of private property in which sovereignty derives from ownership of land, for example, through the building of fences and boundaries; and 'a countervailing narrative of the enduring sovereignty of the Noongar' (63). According to Brewster, this provides the geopolitical base of the Indigenous people's status within the social contract. Drawing from Brewster's use of social contract theory, with its emphasis on conflicting claims to sovereignty and the possibility of alternative forms of agency, I argue that an ecocritical reading of the novel best accounts for its emphasis on these two things, that is, on the conflict between British and Noongar conceptions of sovereignty, and of human relations to land and on the possibility of new forms of agency unacknowledged by British settler culture, specifically, the agency of place and of the non-human world.

Brewster argues that the 'alternative subjectivity' epitomised by the relationship between retired British military doctor Joseph Cross and Bobby, is subtended by 'a rudimentary white recognition of indigenous sovereignty and its

embeddedness in country by white characters in the novel' (63, my italics). For Brewster, *That Deadman Dance* is 'centrally concerned with the psychological nature of whiteness' (61). While I agree with Brewster's claim here about the novel's suggestion of an Indigenous 'sovereignty' which is embedded in Country, I would argue that white perceptions of it are not the novel's primary concern. Instead, I argue that the fact of Indigenous 'sovereignty' and its embeddedness in Country are the novel's primary concerns. Although rather than 'sovereignty' I would prefer the words used by Scott, such as 'confidence', 'strength', 'inclusiveness' rooted in place. As Scott says in his Author's Note: 'I wanted to build a story from [Noongar] confidence, their inclusiveness and sense of play, and their readiness to appropriate new cultural forms – language and songs, guns and boats – as soon as they became available. Believing themselves manifestations of a spirit of place impossible to conquer, they appreciated reciprocity and the nuances of cross-cultural exchange' (398, my italics).

The narrative itself attests to this, as the ending shows. Here Bobby attempts to contest British law with his own story rooted in place, told in dance and song – 'a few words on paper ... What was that against dance and song?' Bobby is gifted at expressing place and community through his body:

Bobby Wabalanginy knew that he could sing and dance the spirit of this place, had shown he could sing and dance the spirit of any gathering of people, show them what we gathered together here really are. He reminded them he was a dancer and singer, what Dr Cross called a gifted artiste, and by these means and by his spirit he would show them how people must live here, together. (390)

Brewster also remarks on the novel's generic hybridity and use of historical and oral records as being directly linked to the 'theme of Noongar people and culture's survival and continuance' (68). While I agree with Brewster's suggestion that the novel's fusion of fiction and non-fiction is directly linked to the continuance of Noongar people and culture, I would suggest that the trope of the contract – so deeply rooted in British law and in particular commercial law – is not the best frame within which to situate the novel. I foreground instead the Noongar conception of Country – 'Because you need to be inside the sound and the spirit of it, to live here properly. And how can that be, without we people who have been here for all time?' (Scott 394) – and its variance with that of British settler capitalism – 'The land awaits development ... Land would be granted here, too, they insisted, to those with capital and without need for the purse strings of government' (Scott 141-42) – which demands an ecocritical approach. Brewster's approach, then, is useful for addressing one of the novel's core concerns, the relations between Noongar and white settlers, and the implications of this for Indigenous sovereignty, but in my view it sidelines what for me is the key difference between the world views of Noongar and white settlers: their relative conceptions of place. I argue that it is the Noongar's beliefs about place that are the source of their strength in the novel, as well as of the sense of hope and joy it leaves with its readers, unexpected because of the traumatic story it

tells, and therefore of its relevance for Indigenous-non-Indigenous relations today. And also, more broadly, for human beings generally on a planet threatened with ecological destruction.

That Deadman Dance opens with young Bobby Wabalanginy writing in chalk on a blackboard, as he has been taught by the novel's exemplary white settler, Dr Cross. Bobby's story is deeply connected to the 'right whale' (species). Their intimate, fraternal relationship is established from the outset and is continually refigured in the novel. As is the whales' connection to the elder Menak, who gives Bobby his whale story. And it is Menak who oversees the sustainable management of the Noongar's particular patch of ocean, the interactions of local human and nonhuman realms.

The plot moves from one relationship between Bobby and place to its opposite; that is, it opens with Bobby being inducted into the white language and its understanding of place, and ends with him deliberately reversing this process. In the opening scene, Bobby is writing, using the settlers' tools to record his sightings of whales. At the novel's end (although not the story's end) he divests himself methodically and ritualistically, in dance, of the settlers' trappings in order to stand for his people and his land.

The first word of the novel is Noongar, '*Kaya*' (hello) and it is written by Bobby. So already the novel is focused on the two worlds contained in that written word: the writing, the letters, of British communications technology and its materials; and the language of the local inhabitants, the Noongar. 'Nobody ever done writ that before, he thought. Nobody ever writ hello or yes that way!' (1) This is a welcome to the reader as well as an indication of how Bobby's people have greeted the strange newcomers. They have welcomed them, said yes to them.

Bobby writes about a whale – '*Roze a wail*' – and then he writes about himself writing about a whale, making a connection between himself and the whale, using alien, fragile tools: chalk 'brittle as weak bone' and 'thin' slate. He remembers himself as a baby,

when he first saw whales rolling between him and the islands: a very close island, a big family of whales breathing easily, spouts sparkling in the sunlight ... Bobby wanted to enter the water and swim out to them, but swaddled against his mother's body, his spirit could only call. (2)

From this halcyon memory the narrative moves to an overt reference to Western cosmology and its clash with the local story: 'Unlike that Bible man, Jonah, Bobby wasn't frightened because he carried a story deep inside himself, a story Menak gave him wrapped in a memory of a fiery, pulsing whale heart ...' (2).

The narrative then breaks off into the story Menak has given Bobby. The telling fuses the animate and inanimate worlds, all is alive, fluid: there is 'a long arm of rock'; the water 'bulges' as if giving birth and gives forth a whale; the whale is 'barnacled' like a rock, barnacles 'stud' its smooth dark skin and 'crabs scurry across it', as across a rock; until the whale and shore (the arm of rock) are conflated: 'That

black back must be slippery, treacherous like rock' (2). Here whales are rock and rocks have arms. And both have blowholes: 'But you see the hole in its back, the breath going in and out, and you think of all the blowholes along this coast' (2). This is a coast of rock and an ocean of whales, continuous, rock becoming whale, whale rock.

But Bobby is shocked back into the present. He is beginning to see with Western eyes, courtesy of Dr Cross and his English, his writing: 'It wasn't true, it was just an old story, and he couldn't even remember the proper song. There was no whale' (3). Bobby cannot *even* remember the *proper* song. And without it, the whale is gone. Already he is beginning to lose his story and his place. Now Bobby sees in 'boat lengths' and the sea is 'scuffed' (like shoes) and 'agitated' – 'and then there was no sea, no sky and the world had compressed itself into a diagonally grey space for him' (3). Here in this grey scene without Bobby's story is the first abstraction of European Euclidean geometry – 'diagonal', 'space' – and immediately it is followed by the abrupt arrival of the novel's embodiment of capitalist profit-seeking, the entrepreneur and developer Kongk Chaine, who bursts in: 'Bobby heard the heavy tread, and Kongk Chaine thrust himself into the little hut' (3). There is '[h]ardly enough space for the two of them beneath this roof, these three flimsy walls' (3) – and so it will prove to be; there is not enough room for them both in this locale which is being transformed by the settlers into abstracted 'space'. 'Space' is an empty word, not at all like Noongar place. Kongk and Bobby sit side by side and despite the great man's warmth, Bobby feels cold for the first time. And now he becomes one with the settlers' technology: his 'fingers *were* chalk', his body is the writing tool: 'He drew on the wet slate with his finger'. And what does he write, now he has become one with the white man's world? 'Fine we kild a wail'. And so whale killing enters the novel – and the Noongar's world.

The capitalist transformation Kongk wreaks on the land and its people will bring a new relationship between the human and non-human world, and place, which supplants the Noongar one. Nowhere does the cultural clash take place more powerfully than in the being of Bobby, who is eventually torn between the worlds of Kongk and of the Indigenous elder Menak. It is Menak who speaks in the novel for the Noongar cosmology:

He turned to the ocean. A whale, almost touching the rock Menak stood upon, rolled to one side. Crab and shell mean nothing to this one; this whale wants the company of people, wants to be ashore. ...

Firelight reflected in a whale's eye; himself dissolving there. Be the whale.
(245)

Menak is merged with his place, its ancestors and creatures – the non-human world – which he understands as shaping his life and place as he shapes them.

As with the destruction of the whaling industry in *That Deadman Dance*, the destruction of the mine in *Carpentaria* triggers the novel's climaxes. *Carpentaria* is

set in a small town called Desperance founded as a port for the transport of ore on a river near the Gulf of *Carpentaria* – until the river one day changed its course and left the town without a purpose, abandoned and strangely cut off from the nation. But the local mining continues regardless – until it is sabotaged by one of the novel’s central characters, Will Phantom, rumoured to be a terrorist with the power to make atomic bombs from stolen uranium.

The novel’s generic hybridity has troubled critics, especially its apparent fusion of ‘realism’ with ‘fantasy’ or ‘magic’. This particular blend has preoccupied many critical appraisals of the novel to date and has led to its consideration as magic realism. For example, *Carpentaria* moves ‘beyond the form of realism’ to ‘engage a politics of fantasy’ (Joseph 1); ‘This ambitious novel molds satire with a new form of magic realism based on Indigenous knowledge’ (Devlin-Glass 392); and ‘It quickly becomes clear that magic-realism has been taken up in the name of literary postcolonialism’s interests in the possibilities of reading and writing difference between the coloniser and the colonised’ (Ravenscroft 195). In the most extended critique of this tendency to date, Alison Ravenscroft argues that many critics ‘remain at a loss’ when attempting to make sense of *Carpentaria*. One very popular response to this, she continues, is to ‘fit the text within the constraints of magic realism’ (195). In this approach ‘magic’ and ‘real’ are used to describe ‘two distinct representational codes at work in a text’ and two distinct worlds (Ravenscroft 196). Ravenscroft criticises this strategy for its designation of Indigenous colonised subjects as ‘magic’ while attributing ‘realism’ to the colonisers (196). With her interrogation of magic realism, Ravenscroft makes a welcome break from this mode, but I would argue that her subsequent reading of *Carpentaria* through a ‘poetics of uncertainty’ as ‘a novel that presents a white reader with its own quite specific qualities of unknowability, and undecidability’ (214), is an inadequate response to a novel of such power, energy and political purpose, one which demands its reader enter a vividly realised and very particular and localised Gulf world.

In contrast, I argue that the novel’s hybrid, challenging form and style, its foregrounding of Country from the first page and the agency with which it endows the non-human world are part of a deliberate strategy on Wright’s part to embody in a Western literary form her contemporary Indigenous cosmology—with serious political intent and real world implications. That this is a move intended not to alienate her audience, but to invite them to enter into this world. This is something the novel form does—and that Wright explicitly considers it to be capable of. As she wrote in ‘Politics of Writing’: ‘Literature gets to the very personal. It invites the reader to fully experience our stories’ (13). Rather than seeing *Carpentaria* in terms of a poetics of uncertainty, a politics of fantasy, or as magic realism, I see it as attempting to embody in novel form a complex multivalent mesh of Indigenous realities related to place and their active interconnection with the human world that I would call, following Timothy Morton, ‘ecological’. And this is contrasted in the novel with white settler culture, especially in its forms of Christianity and capitalism. And so I would argue that the novel does not distinguish two forms of ‘reality’ – a ‘real’ world familiar to Western readers as distinct from a ‘magical’, Indigenous

world unfamiliar to them – but multiple realities: specifically, a Western dualist, abstracted mode of apprehending the world and an Indigenous polyvalent, embedded mode. I suggest that only an ecocritical approach to the novel can encompass such a reading.

Wright herself vouches for this multiple realities reading (rather than ‘magic’ versus ‘realism’). Here is her understanding of the multiple realities *Carpentaria* encompasses: ‘The world I try to inhabit in my writing is like looking at the ancestral tracks spanning our traditional country which, if I look at the land, combines all stories, all realities from the ancient to the new, and makes it one—like all the strands on a long rope’ (Wright, *Politics* 20). As Ravenscroft says, *Carpentaria*:

inscribes different worlds and representational modes in the space of a few lines or phrases; it brings different objects, different worlds, into such close proximity that their placement in a rational or magical mode is undecidable. It makes the very division into magical and rational, living and dead, body and country undecidable – at least for this white reader. (206)

Carpentaria collapses these (Western) binaries into a continuum, a new metaphysics and ontology, an ecological one, a particular Indigenous one. Among other things, the Indigenous cosmology of *Carpentaria* articulated through its genre-blending and fluid narrative voices (which speak for a range of human and non-human forms) collapses the binaries of Western cosmology and philosophy, whose limitations ecophilosopher Val Plumwood so thoroughly analyses in *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*.

It is this challenge to Western dualism that has so troubled critics. For example, Ravenscroft notes that it unsettles conventional European arrangements of ‘objects into reality and fantasy, interiority and exteriority, country and culture, earth and body’ and the text ‘morphs, it shimmers’ (206). But, as others have argued, such as Joseph and Devlin-Glass, *Carpentaria*’s breaking down of European object arrangements and its shimmering text are nevertheless embedded in ‘the mundane and everyday real’ (Devlin-Glass 393), in a particular local Indigenous world specific to the Gulf country – in place. And it is through the agency of this specific world of the Gulf country, this particular ecosystem, that the novel argues against the forces of mining and global capitalism.

In *Carpentaria* the fate of capitalist exploitation of local resources is reversed: here the introduced industry, the mine, is destroyed by an improvised contingent of local saboteurs led by Will Phantom – assisted by the non-human world. Just as their plan seems to be going astray, the fire they light to be dying, suddenly the wind and the hills intervene, in concert with the will and cries of the human would-be destroyers:

It looked as though the fire was going to peter out ... Our men looking from the hills continued staring at the little flame flickering there fizzing out. What could they do? It looked like defeat was imminent. And, that same old defeated look, two

centuries full of it, began creeping back onto their faces. But, it was too late now, they had a taste of winning, so they projected their own sheer willpower right across that spinifex plain, calling out with no shame, Come on, come on, willing the little flame not to fizzle, believing magic can happen even to poor buggers like themselves. (410-11)

And, somehow, '[t]he unbelievable miracle came flying by. A whirly wind ... just as a matter of fact sprung up from the hills themselves ... It happened so fast when the fiery whirlwind shot into the bowsers and momentarily, lit them up like candles. ... the explosion was holy in its glory. All of it was gone. The whole mine' (411). As in *That Deadman Dance*, it is ancestral story that ties the Aboriginal characters of *Carpentaria* to their place, that intimately binds them to the specificities of their land. Will Phantom's father Norm is a keeper and teller of these stories of the old country. And Norm knows intimately the river that has shaped their land, which was gouged from the earth by the ancestral serpent: 'The Pricklebush mob say that Normal Phantom could grab hold of the river in his mind and live with it as his father's fathers did before him. His ancestors were the river people, who were living with the river from before time began' (6). And their conception of the wealth that lies underground, beneath their land, is vastly different from the way it is conceived by the multinational mining company which has paid for the right to extract its ore: 'hauling up rich ore scraped from the mother load embedded in sequences of rock that looked like the growth rings of a powerful, ancient being' (10).

As in *That Deadman Dance*, the non-human world and its relations with its human inhabitants is foregrounded in the opening pages of *Carpentaria*. And further, I suggest, here more strikingly than in *That Deadman Dance*, the ancestral land and its creation story and guiding spirits are the novel's central concern. And its nature argues against its mining. Here is how *Carpentaria* opens:

The ancestral serpent, a creature larger than storm clouds, came down from the stars, laden with its own creative enormity ... Looking down at the serpent's wet body, glistening from the ancient sunlight, long before man was a creature who could contemplate the next moment in time. It came down those billions of years ago, to crawl on its heavy belly, all around the wet clay soils in the Gulf of Carpentaria. (1)

This spirit laden land – Country – lies at the heart of these two novels. And it is Country and its interactions with the human which make them so challenging for non-Aboriginal readers, formally, epistemologically and ontologically. Both novels conclude with radical reversions to Indigenous visions of place. As they open with Christian-capitalist settler visions of it. And so I would argue, by focusing on this centrality of Country an ecocritical reading of these novels is a richly productive way in which to consider their rhetorical intent. And the vision of human-nonhuman relations rooted in place that this yields can inform our understanding of and approach to environmental destruction more generally. The environmental crisis shows that the Aboriginal understanding of human relations to place as custodial and

interdependent is a more accurate conception than that of capitalism's view of human relations to place as a one-way relationship of extraction, one which exhausts place, paying it no respect on its own terms, according it no being. Or, to put it in capitalist terms, the environmental crisis demonstrates that 'the environment' is not an 'externality' to the economy, but the superstructure in which the economy – and all human life – is embedded.

Through their focus on the specificities of place – the oceanic worlds off today's Albany and the gulf country of *Carpentaria* – these novels not only contest the logic of the settlers' capitalistic enterprise, which abstracts its endeavours from place, reconceiving them in the rhetoric of profit making, but through this they challenge the idea of a particular settler-Australian literature which apprehends the land as other. This ecocritical framework not only allows the novels to speak to the nation from their embeddedness in place, but also to the many places that comprise the planet as the forces of global capital increasingly impinge upon them. Their vision of a custodial relation between the human and non-human world offers a new way of conceiving human relation to place, one which I would argue is critical in an era of climate change and ecological destruction.

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Questions for discussion:

- 1) What kind of article is it? Does it have a clear, concise thesis in the introductory paragraph?
- 2) What is the central concern? What are the key inferences and conclusions the author makes?
- 3) Does it conclude a powerful statement? If yes, what is it?
- 4) What particular subject or period does it deal with?
- 5) Is the account given in broad outline or in detail? Give some evidence.
- 6) Is social history or political history emphasized?
- 7) What is the source of information or evidence?
- 8) Is the text balanced, fair / biased?
- 9) Are there any mismatchings / discrepancies in the text??
- 10) How well do all these issues relate to the literature on the topic? How do they relate to your own experience, ideas, views?
- 11) Who is the intended audience?
- 12) How would you characterize the tone / mood of the article?
- 13) What do you agree and disagree with in the article?
- 14) Make a brief summary of the review.

Writing task:

Write an ecocritical review on one of the books suggested: a) "Of Whales and Men" by R.B. Robertson; b) "The Orchard Keeper" by Cormac McCarthy; c) "Child of God" by Cormac McCarthy; d) "Wilderness and the American Mind" by Roderick Frazier Nash; e) "The Land Ethic", an essay by Aldo Leopold; f) "A Sand County Almanac" by Aldo Leopold; g) "Silent Spring" by Rachel Carson; h) "Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics" by Timothy Morton; i) "The Almond Tree" by Michelle Cohen Corasanti; j) your own choice.

Topics for self-study, reports and Power Point presentations

- 1) The problems of environmental criticism: some emerging trends.
- 2) Ecocriticism and Ecofeminism.
- 3) Nature, women and human others.
- 4) Ecocritical theory: new European approaches.
- 5) Ecocritical explorations in literary and cultural studies.
- 6) The contemporary English novel and its challenges to ecocriticism.
- 7) The traditions of Literary Ecology in British / American / New Zealand / Australian / Canadian Writing.

Recommended reading:

- 1) "Environmental Renaissance: Emerson, Thoreau, and the Systems of Nature" (2003) by Andrew McMurry.

- 2) “Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation” (2002) by Brian Massumi.
- 3) “This New Yet Unapproachable America” and “Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome” by Stanley Cavell.
- 4) “Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed” (2002) by William E. Connolly.
- 5) “American Literary Environmentalism” (2000) by David Mazel.
- 6) “Ecocritical Literature: Regreening African Landscapes”, edited by Ogaga Okuyade.

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